

ANTI-COLONIALISM IN THE MICHIGAN CHICANO MOVEMENT

By

Nora Salas

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ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation I argue anti-colonial thought in Michigan's Chicano Movement was a response to a domestic/migrant colonial discourse that operated on a local and state-wide level. Between 1962 and 1967 Mexican-Americans and other Latinos lobbied Michigan's elected officials to gain the rights of industrial workers for seasonal agricultural workers. Their efforts were stymied by growers and the Michigan Farm Bureau. The MFB and its allies reinforced their opposition with a domestic/migrant colonial binary that defined all Mexican-Americans as foreigners and justifiably colonized. By 1968 Chicano anti-colonialism emerged in Michigan to counter this colonial discourse through organizing, literature and art.

I contend that the development of anti-colonial thought amongst Chicanos in Michigan demonstrates that Mexican-Americans experienced colonialism not only in the immediate aftermath of the Mexican-American War or in former Mexican territory. This dissertation demonstrates the viability of a different history wherein colonialism was not contained in the Southwest as a short-lived exception to American liberalism. By situating Michigan Chicano Movement anti-colonialism as a response to a locally based colonial discourse I emphasize the ways in which a critique of American imperialism was central to the Chicano Movement nationwide.

Furthermore Michigan Chicanos and Chicanas experienced multiple forms of colonial domination. They were not only workers excluded from the public sphere of benefits and rights but also lived as families whose private sphere was compromised. In addition to racializing

Chicanos as foreigners the domestic/migrant colonial binary gendered Chicano families as dependent, needy and ultimately female. Chicano anti-colonialism also presented a gendered narrative whose history has often been seen as synonymous with patriarchy. Instead I argue that Chicana and Chicano uses of anti-colonial ideals, especially *la familia de la raza*, included more liberatory possibilities.

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For Rosalinda Salas
(1978-2014)
No necesitamos pedir permiso para ser libres.

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INTRODUCTION

Croswell's "first demonstration" was peaceful.¹ The *Sanilac Jeffersonian*, Croswell's weekly newspaper, reassured its readers that the public protest was both unusual and sedate. A few days before, 80 pickle harvesters met with grower and processor J. Kenneth Weller to demand he pay the hourly rate he had promised. Weller refused and locked out the workers who objected. The next day, Tuesday August 6, 1970, workers brandished their recognition cards for the United Farm Workers (UFW) and demanded Weller negotiate with the union. Weller again refused. By Thursday UFW representatives arrived for a meeting with workers and Weller. Weller remained unmoved. The following day the farm workers and their supporters marched through downtown Croswell, then a small city of fewer than 2000, on their way to Weller's processing plant.² Weller left rather than face them. Marchers then made the five mile trek to Weller's home on the shores of Lake Huron. The strikers continued their picketing until the following Monday, when Weller declared the company closed for further business.³

Weller evaded the workers' demands, but doing so meant the end of his business. The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) warned the public, cast as "the farmer, the worker and the consuming housewife," that organized pickers at Weller's plant were merely one part of an effort by labor unions to take control of the nation's food supply.⁴ For Weller and the MFB Michigan

¹ "Labor Dispute Closes Weller's," *Sanilac (MI) Jeffersonian*, August 13, 1970.

² United States Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population: United States, Alabama-Mississippi* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972), 5.

³ "Labor Dispute Closes Weller's"; "Weller Cheats Migrants," *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, August 1970; "Sour Pickles in Michigan," *El Malcriado*, September 15, 1970.

agriculture could not continue without a colonized labor force. Unlike their fellow Michiganians Chicano activists in Lansing claimed the Croswell strike as an auspicious beginning, a part of an entire harvest season of activities statewide. Writing in the Lansing based Chicano Movement newspaper, *Sol de Aztlan*, they asserted organizing in Southwest Michigan, Traverse City/Old Mission and Croswell signaled a “growing militant feeling of Chicanos in the fields.”⁵

This dissonance between the portrayal of the Chicano struggle by agricultural interests in comparison with the Chicano Movement was significant. Chicanos argued growers and the state government, including Governor George Romney, were responsible for the death by drowning or in fires of migrant children, while growers and Romney argued that these were both unavoidable accidents and the result of Chicanos’ negligent parenting.⁶ The Chicano press decried the exploitative conditions farm workers labored under in Michigan, while the MFB defined farm worker discontent as a California problem manufactured by “communists,” such as Cesar Chavez. They labeled the UFW’s grape boycott as a “violence at the supermarket” that was

⁴ Gary A. Kleinhenn, “Agriculture in Action,” *Mayville (MI) Monitor*, August 27, 1970; “Collective Bargaining by Farm Workers,” *On the Front Burner*, October 1970, Michigan Farm Bureau Collection, Archives of Michigan.

⁵ “Migrants Move Against Oppression,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, July 1970.

⁶ Ruben Alfaro and Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers to Romney Governor George, September 22, 1967, George Romney Papers, Bentley Historical Library; R.G. Rice Chief Division of Engineering to John E. Vogt Acting Director Department of Health, September 25, 1967, George Romney Papers, Bentley Historical Library; Governor George Romney to Ruben Alfaro, October 2, 1967, George Romney Papers, Bentley Historical Library; Howard Holmes, “Five Children Die in Blaze!,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, September 21, 1967; “Cabin Checked, OK’d Before Fire Killed Five,” *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, September 25, 1967, sec. 2; “5 Children Die in Farm Cabin Fire,” *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, September 27, 1967; “Bulletin,” *Watervliet (MI) Record*, September 21, 1967.

equally as dangerous as “violence in the streets or violence at the college campuses.”⁷ The MFB equated the consumer boycott with lethal force that disrupted the social order, though their tendency to place responsibility for the violence on “unruly kids” was equally erroneous whether describing the Kent State Massacre or the 1967 Detroit Uprising. The summer of 1970 was not the first time Mexican or Mexican American migrant agricultural workers shouted “*Huelga!*” in the small city of Croswell, but for many rural Michigan residents the Chicano struggle brought the threatening unrest of the 1960s to their doorsteps as never before.

Despite the local newspaper editors’ reassurances, neither Mexican migrant workers, nor their discontent were new to Michigan or even Croswell in 1970. In 1951 braceros and Mexican-Americans joined together to form the Migrant Worker Defense Committee under the guidance of prominent Detroit priest Monsignor Clement Kern. These workers went on strike to protest poor living conditions and low wages at the Croswell Pickle Company.⁸ In 1948 almost 200 seasonal workers went on strike and picketed Croswell’s J.J. Gielow & Sons Pickle Company seeking higher wages.⁹ Sugar beet growers and processors recruited Mexican workers to Croswell as early as 1918, nearly a century ago.¹⁰ By 1970 Mexican workers had been traveling to the Croswell area to perform seasonal agricultural labor under poor conditions with low pay for more than fifty years.

⁷ “Accent Agriculture,” 1969, Michigan Farm Bureau Collection, Archives of Michigan.

⁸ Dennis Nodin Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 158.

⁹ “Pickle Company Strike Settled,” *Sanilac (MI) Jeffersonian*, August 26, 1948.

¹⁰ Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 136–140.

The treatment of Mexican migrant workers as anomalous recently arrived foreigners who did not belong led to the development of anti-colonialism in Michigan's Chicano Movement. In the early 1960s "Latin Americans," as Mexican and Puerto Rican activists often chose to call themselves at the beginning of the decade, pressured the state government for modest reforms in the language of loyal citizens. Their calls for reform were denied, delayed and rendered ineffectual by pro-grower implementation. Throughout the 1960s they saw their efforts achieve few material gains because growers and the MFB fought legislation and promoted a discourse that labeled and grouped all migrant workers with other Mexican Americans as foreigners who deserved no place in Michigan laws, communities or schools. By the time Chicano activists marched through Croswell with the striking pickle harvesters their political vision was no longer concentrated on complete assimilation into the rights of citizens in Michigan. Instead they focused on demonstrating that the poor conditions faced by migrant farm workers in Croswell and Chicanos elsewhere were the result of American imperialism.

In this dissertation I pursue three primary aspects of anti-colonialism in the Chicano Movement in Michigan, and by extension, Chicano history. First, I seek to understand the role of region in explaining anti-colonial thought. Simply put, what was the appeal of *Aztlán* so far from the lands formerly a part of the Mexican nation state? Making sense of the local origins of Chicano Movement anti-colonialism outside the Southwest United States is my central goal herein. My second, and interrelated goal, is to rehabilitate colonialism as a framework for understanding Chicano inequality in Michigan, the Midwest and ultimately the nation during the 1960s. Once the dominant theory, the colonial in Chicano history cannot be discussed today without reference to the precipitous decline of internal colonialism beginning in the 1980s. In this dissertation I aim to show why Chicanos and Chicanas believed their inequality could be

explained by colonialism. I posit that the nature of the American national project is a key part of evaluating colonialism's utility as a theoretical model. Lastly, I reexamine the relationship between anti-colonialism and patriarchy within the Chicano Movement. The decline of internal colonial theory was due partially to its supposed essentialism, which allegedly glossed over internal differences, most prominently those based in gender, sexuality, class and race. By examining the operation of one of these differences, gender, I aim to show that Chicanas and Chicanos also used anti-colonialism to oppose unjust gendered discourses.

The American Southwest has been the focus of Chicano History since it emerged as a field of study in the early 1970s.¹¹ Nevertheless, Chicano Movement activists also brought their heterogeneous efforts to improve the lives of *la raza* to the Pacific Northwest, Great Plains and Midwest.¹² Michigan was one of a number of inter-related sites in which The Chicano Movement took place. Chicano Movement organizations such as the La Raza Unida Party, the Brown Berets and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) had chapters in Michigan. Chicanos and Chicanas led school walk outs in Lansing, held moratoriums against the Vietnam War in Detroit, organized conferences celebrating *la raza* in Muskegon, protested police brutality in Kalamazoo, held sit-ins in Benton Harbor and painted murals in Saginaw.

¹¹ Steven Rosales, "'This Street Is Essentially Mexican': An Oral History of the Mexican American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920-1980," *Michigan Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 34; Ernesto Chavez, "Chicano/a History: Its Origins, Purpose, and Future," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (November 2013): 507–508.

¹² Carlos S. Maldonado, *Colegio Cesar Chavez, 1973-1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000); Glenn Anthony May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011); Leonard David Ortiz, "La Voz de La Gente: Chicano Activist Publications in the Kansas City Area, 1968-1989," *Kansas History* 22, no. 3 (1999): 228–44; Marc Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Well-known movement figures such as Reies Lopez Tijerina, Jose Angel Gutierrez and Rosalio Munoz spoke in Michigan on multiple occasions.¹³

Another prominent national figure, Carlos Guerra, of the Texas-based Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) was the featured speaker at the Chicano Youth Conference at Michigan State University in April of 1970. There participants also heard the same anti-war message, delivered by Rosalio Muñoz, and discussion of the upcoming Chicano Moratorium on the Vietnam War that other Chicano audiences heard across the nation. Yet the rhetoric of these Chicano Movement luminaries was deployed in a different context in Michigan. Guerra told the audience “If we in the Southwest are migrants, its not because we migrated north, but that the border migrated South.”¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Guerra had used this ubiquitous justification of Chicano indigeneity many times before, though perhaps not 1500 miles north of his hometown Robstown, Texas. Surely the audience and Guerra were away of the large physical distance

¹³ Daniel Soza Guzman, “The Spanish-Speaking Information Center (Newsletter),” December 1970, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 23 Flint, MI 197-72, Walter Reuther Archive; “Brown Berets Organize Meet,” *Escanaba (MI) Daily Press*, July 10, 1969; Jeanne Saddler, “Pattengill Protestors Plan Move,” *East Lansing (MI) State News*, March 11, 1970; unknown, “Chicano Moratorium Against the War,” 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2 Folder 45 Chicano Community Organizations, 1970-72, Walter Reuther Archive; Hilde Madrigal, “Conferencia de La Raza de 10 Estados,” *Nosotros: La Voz de La Comunidad Hispanoamericana de Detroit*, January 31, 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 6, *Nosotros* (Newsletter), 1972., Walter Reuther Archive; Tomas Sanchez to Martinez, Gilberto V., February 1971, Gilberto T. and Minerva T Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections; “Chicanos Arrested in BH as Tri-Cap Trespassers,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, November 19, 1970; Jacqueline E. Bates, “Saginaw Walls Are Looking Better,” *Saginaw (MI) News*, November 4, 1973; La Raza Unida, “La Raza Unida Issues Conference Program,” September 21, 1968, Gilberto T. and Minerva T Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections; Marj Byler, “Report on the Chicano Youth Conference,” April 4, 1970, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive.

¹⁴ John Borger, “Vandals Fail to Mar Youth Conference,” *East Lansing (MI) State News*, April 6, 1970.

between East Lansing and Robstown. Nevertheless MEChA organizers of the conference deemed it a success, in part because of Guerra's compelling speech. The significance of referring to the American conquest of Mexican territory goes beyond physical geography.

The literature provides little guidance in interpreting the use of such anti-colonial rhetoric in Michigan. Full-length histories of Mexicans in the Midwest remain comparatively few, many that exist attribute discrimination against Mexicans to cultural factors and anti-immigrant sentiment. Most of these works emphasize the Midwest as a site of comparative opportunity for Mexicans, especially in contrast to the racial caste system of Texas.¹⁵ Dionicio Valdés has challenged these histories which envision Mexicans in the Midwest as the “last of the immigrants” whose assimilation, and concomitant equality, only awaits the passing of generations.¹⁶ One of the most recent works on the post-war period in the Midwest, Lilia Fernandez' *Brown in the Windy City* also incorporates this “last of the immigrants” narrative. Fernandez posits that Mexican and Puerto Rican residents of Chicago formulated a “brown” identity in response to similar experiences with housing discrimination, urban renewal and political marginalization between the 1950s and 1970s. In explaining anti-Mexican sentiment

¹⁵ Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*, 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Valdés, *Al Norte*; Dionicio Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000); Gabriela F Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*; Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940*, Culture, Labor, History Series (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Dennis N. Valdés, “Region, Nation and World-System: Perspective on Midwestern Chicana/o History,” in *Occasional Paper No. 20* (Latino Studies Series, Julian Samora Research Institute, 1999), 7–9.

Fernandez writes, “Unlike in the Southwest, where Mexicans had a much longer history and greater presence, Mexicans in Chicago were not a colonized population on ancestral lands; they were immigrants like so many others in the past.”¹⁷ Here Fernandez argues Mexicans’ geographic distance from the Southwest precludes their characterization as a colonized population. I contend growers and the MFB were not constrained by logical geographic thinking when looking for ways to maintain an exploitable labor force. Instead they intervened in the racialization of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in Michigan to assert that both were a colonized people who they labeled migrants. Partially in response many Michigan Chicanos embraced anti-colonialism and argued they were treated as a conquered people regardless of their physical location.

Marc Simon Rodriguez argues in another recent work, *Tejano Diaspora*, that migrant workers used migration networks as a resource to enhance their Chicano Movement reform efforts in both Crystal City, Texas and Wisconsin. Rodriguez characterizes those who left Texas and traveled the country for seasonal agricultural work as *Tejanos*. He emphasizes their seasonal, circular migration patterns and deemphasizes those who settled in the Midwest or came directly from Mexico for industrial work in cities beginning during World War I.¹⁸ There were also *Tejanos* who participated in the Chicano Movement in Michigan. The most prominent *Cristaleño* was Gilberto Martinez who co-founded the *Quinto Sol* cultural center in Lansing. In addition Michigan Chicano Movement activists held the rights of migrant agricultural workers as a central concern. However a majority of the Chicano Movement authors, poets, artists and organizers I discuss were life-long residents of Michigan who seldom self-identified as *Tejanos*.

¹⁷ Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 227.

¹⁸ Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*.

Many had also engaged in seasonal agricultural work but their base was Michigan, not Texas. In addition the migrant/domestic binary did not distinguish between *Tejanos*, Mexican immigrants, Michicanos, or at times even Puerto Ricans, rendering all as “migrants” and foreigners. One reason irredentist slogans about the distant border made sense in Michigan was because so many Chicanos had experienced colonial conditions and rhetoric in the state’s fields and orchards.

Internal colonialism was one of the key political frames through which the first practitioners of Chicano history analyzed their situation. During the 1980s those who judged it overly essentialist and static increasingly discarded internal colonial theory.¹⁹ I argue that negating colonial models because of their alleged tendency to essentialize colonized populations conflates the model with the conditions it was meant to explain. Instead it was the colonial migrant/domestic binary that was a gendered process of racialization, rooted in economic exploitation, which obscured the differences between Chicanos who performed seasonal agricultural labor and those that did not. Of course there was class diversity in the Michigan Chicano population during the 1960s. Many Michigan Chicanos and Chicanas were not seasonal agricultural workers. Yet the appeal of anti-colonialism went beyond those who worked in the fields because the migrant/domestic binary functioned as a colonial discourse that amalgamated all Chicanos as migrant foreigners and all whites as domestic Americans.

In doing so growers and their allies used their historical narratives to argue that the United States had always depended upon foreign agricultural labor that was not truly American and thus did not disrupt their yeoman farmer ideal. Chicano anti-colonialism also made sense in

¹⁹ Maria E. Montoya, “Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender, and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity,” in *Voices of a New Chicana/o History*, ed. Refugio I. Rochin and Dennis Nodín Valdés (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000); Michael Hames-García, “How to Tell a Mestizo from an Enchirito: Colonialism and National Culture in the Borderlands,” *Diacritics* 30, no. 4 (2000): 102–22.

Michigan because it was never only about Chicanos as a colonized people but also about rejecting American Exceptionalism by characterizing the United States as an imperial project. Colonialism retains utility as an explanation of this situation not because Chicanos already constituted a static internally colonized population in Michigan during the early 1960s but because growers and their allies aspired to create one. In the short term their efforts were only partially successful, in part because of Chicano Movement anti-colonialism.

Even as Chicano historiography discounted the relevance of colonialism in Chicano history, historians of early America and gender have sought to bring the United States back into the colonial frame. Linda Gordon argues that internal colonialism retains utility as an “axis of analysis” as long as it incorporates gender and treats nations and subjects as products of historical processes, not naturalized and unchangeable categories. In her essay, “Internal Colonialism and Gender” Gordon asserts that internal colonialism is particularly well-suited to explaining the situation of Mexican Americans. Gordon echoes Gilbert G. Gonzalez and Raul E. Fernandez’ view that the experiences of Mexicans in the United States cannot be separated from the colonial relationship between the United States and Mexico.²⁰ Yet her emphasis on gender departs from theirs. Gordon does not ignore the economic, but instead argues that internal colonial theory usefully emphasizes the inseparability of colonial subjects from the ongoing American national project, the ways in which this is articulated at an internal, or intimate level, such as within the family, and the multiple forms colonial domination requires to reproduce itself within public policy, social relations and culture.

²⁰ Linda Gordon, “Internal Colonialism and Gender,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Gilbert G. González and Raúl Fernández, “Empire and the Origins of Twentieth-Century Migration from Mexico to the United States,” *Pacific Historical Review* 71, no. 1 (2002): 19–57.

In this way historians of women, gender and colonialism have also influenced my use of colonial theory to understand the gendered aspect of the migrant/domestic binary and its articulations of the private/public spheres. The work of Gordon, Ann Stoler, Nancy Fraser and Joan W. Scott inspired me to look closely at how the migrant/domestic binary used a gendered discourse to argue migrant neediness was proper within the bounds of the growers' family but improper if it entered the public sphere of social services and benefits.²¹ Many of the early Chicana feminist histories contributed strongly to the decline of colonial theory by arguing it was inexorably linked to Chicano nationalism and excluded women in order to universalize the Chicano male subject. Recently there has been some very limited reevaluation of what George Mariscal refers to as the common sense about the Chicano Movement, that is that "the Movimiento='nationalism' and 'nationalism'=sexism and homophobia."²² My effort to chart the gendered aspects of the colonialist discourse the Chicano Movement confronted informs my reevaluation of *la familia de la raza*.

In the first chapter, "Pablo's Problem" I analyze the dialectical relationship between the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) and Mexican-Americans' political beliefs and actions between 1962 and 1970. From 1962 to 1967 Mexican Americans and other Latin Americans sought state protections for migrant workers as American citizens. The MFB opposed these changes and was

²¹ Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 1994): 309–36; Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Joan Wallach Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove (New York: Routledge, 1993), 397–415.

²² George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 42.

able to stymie state regulation with little effort. After the end of the Bracero Program in 1965 the MFB and growers continued to successfully oppose a minimum wage, workers compensation and other regulation meant to give agricultural workers the benefits many industrial workers already enjoyed. In order to reinforce their position they promoted a discursive migrant/domestic binary that defined Mexican-Americans as “migrants” who were foreign and justifiably colonized. Between 1966 and 1968 Mexican-Americans found their efforts to assert migrant agricultural workers rights’ as American citizens were ineffective, although a greater proportion of the work force was comprised of Mexican-Americans than ever before. The lack of significant legal reforms to benefit migrants, the domestic/migrant binary and contradictions exposed by the arrival of the United Farm Workers’ grape boycott in 1968 contributed to the decline of the worker-citizen identity and the rise of Chicano Movement anti-colonialism in Michigan.

The domestic/migrant binary was based on a key aspect of American Exceptionalism; the belief that the nation’s food supply was harvested by independent yeoman farmers, not subjugated peasants. Schools were another location where Chicanos confronted the domestic/migrant binary and its links to another aspect of American Exceptionalism, the meritocracy. In Chapter Two, “We Are a Distinct People’: Defending Difference in Michigan,” I argue Chicano anti-colonial thought emerged not only from opposition to the migrant/domestic binary in the fields but also from experiences of white supremacy in schools. During the 1950s and 1960s Mexican-American children in rural areas were routinely excluded from public schooling because growers relied upon their labor. When Mexican-American children did attend Michigan schools they were punished for speaking Spanish, incorrectly assigned to classes for the “mentally retarded” and taught that their place in the United States was as a conquered

people. Chicano and Chicana activists disavowed these experiences and sought a bilingual/bicultural education that affirmed their difference and therefore facilitated their own and their children's achievement.

Chicana and Chicano activists confronted the migrant/domestic binary not only in schools, but also by creating their own historical narratives through community literature and art. In Chapter Three, "The Historical Rhythm," I argue Michigan Chicano literature and art used rhetorical strategies common to anti-colonial literature. Authors, poets, journalists and artists disavowed the idea that their exclusion was a justifiable result of their innate foreign inferiority in Michigan. Instead they argued American prosperity was rooted in the unjust subjugation of indigenous people like themselves. Despite their revolutionary intent, Chicano and Chicana writers and artists were largely unsuccessful in creating anti-colonial historical narratives that did not rely on men as the normative Chicano subject. They had greater success in claiming collective self-determination over their history. My analysis of the historical narratives produced by the photographer and activist Jesse Gonzales exemplifies how Chicano Movement cultural production rejected the idea that Chicanos in Michigan were immigrants.

Chicanas' active participation in movement activities belied their relative absence from the historical narratives and art produced by the Chicano Movement. Both Chicanas and Chicanos in Michigan lived with the migrant/domestic binary, but the gendered aspects of their experienced profoundly shaped Chicanas' evaluation of Second Wave feminism. Chapter Four, "Private Spheres and Private Property," is a gendered examination of Chicanas' critique of the American Exceptionalism within Second Wave feminism. Michigan Chicanas, like the members of the state-wide group Mujeres Unidas de Michigan (MUM), rejected the Women's Liberation Movement because they associated it with individualism and the flawed assumption that career

advancement meant liberation. They shared this critique with other lower class women, but their association with migrant family labor marked their perspective. Within the migrant/domestic binary Chicana/o families were not only racialized as justifiably colonized foreigners, but also gendered as dependent, needy and ultimately female. Just as the migrant/domestic binary characterized Chicano protest as illegitimate in the public sphere of state government, it gendered Chicano use of social services and public schooling as illegitimate because Chicanos' neediness was proper only within the private sphere of the growers' family. Chicanas were strongly influenced by this experience, which included all the confinement, but very little of the material comfort, privacy and intimacy associated with the private sphere in this period. In this way women in migrant worker families had little access to the type of private sphere that defined domestic misery for many second wave feminists. This difference and participation in a family labor system facilitated Chicanas' defense of *la familia de la raza* as an organizing strategy.

La familia de la raza was an ethnic collectivity, a bivalent construction that defined the family as a political actor and the nation, *la raza*, as being comprised of families. Scholars have criticized Chicano Movement anti-colonialism, especially *la familia de la raza*, as a patriarchal ideology designed to liberate Chicanos by confining Chicanas within the private sphere of the family. In Chapter Five, "La Familia de la Raza y Mujeres Unidas de Michigan," I argue this critique is flawed because it assumes the private sphere and oppression were completely synonymous. Instead I argue the lack of access to an intimate, private space for migrant families was equally repressive. This is the first of the three false equivalencies I identify in the literature about *la familia de la raza*. Secondly I argue promotion of *la familia de la raza* was not limited to naïve glorification of the traditional family in an imagined past, but also involved self-conscious manipulation of the image of the family as a strategy for social change. Lastly I argue

critics of *la familia de la raza* incorrectly presume genuine Chicana liberation and complete independence were inseparable. Instead I assert that *la familia de la raza* was an anti-colonial political ideal held by those who prized interdependence and privileged the family as a legitimate political subject. Chicanas who proclaimed their allegiance to *la familia de la raza* often rejected patriarchy, but they refused to let its menacing past restrain their political vision. In this way Chicano Movement anti-colonialism confronted not only the part of the migrant/domestic binary that confined them within their ascribed migrant identity in the public sphere and excluded them from domestic affairs. They also the rejected the second half of the migrant/domestic discourse that excluded their homes and families from Michigan.

CHAPTER ONE: “PABLO’S PROBLEM”

The earliest large scale colonial farmers were faced with a shortage of local labor . . . These early land owners turned to foreign agricultural labor recruiting programs. They imported back-country African natives . . . the development of our country . . it was all based on an unlimited supply of imported farm labor. The underprivileged classes from China, Japan, the Philippines, Mexican-Indians and the peasant classes from scattered places over the globe came to perform these agricultural duties. . . For the most part, the repetitive farm work has been done by foreign peasant labor. . . . As these persons die or migrate to the cities they must be replaced.¹

—M.J. Buschlen, Michigan Farm Bureau, 1969

Michigan, donde las grandes fabricas productoras de pollution por un lado y automóviles por el otro, donde los ricos granjeros constituyen el centro económico del estado y uno de los mas importantes de este imperialista país . . He ahí parte del orgullo de esta América, que ha construido riquezas explotando a la gente con sueldos de hambre . . .² (Michigan, where large factories produce pollution on one hand and cars on the other, where the rich growers constitute the economic center of the state and one of the most important of this imperialist country . . Behold, part of the pride of this America, that has built riches exploiting the people with starvation wages . . .)

—Sol de Aztlán, Lansing, 1970

M.J. Buschlen and the editors of *Sol de Aztlán* were in agreement. For both, the labor of impoverished foreign people in the fields was key to the historical development of the United States. Yet, they differed greatly on the significance of America’s reliance on “foreign agricultural labor.” Chicano anti-colonial thought in Michigan was wrought in this conflict with growers, the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) and those, like Buschlen, who saw the exploitation of “foreign agricultural labor” as an inherent part of the “greatest civilization of all time,” the

¹ M.J. Buschlen, “Potential Seasonal Labor Problems Confronting Michigan Fruit Growers,” in *99th Annual Report of the Secretary of the State Horticultural Society of Michigan for the Year 1969*, vol. 99 (Lansing, MI: Speaker-Hines and Thomas, Inc., 1969), 51–57.

² “The Misery in Which the Chicano Migrant Lives,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlán*, May 1970.

United States.³ Buschlen, head of the Michigan Farm Bureau's labor services cooperative, regaled attendees of the 99th annual meeting of the Michigan State Horticultural Society with his view of America's agricultural labor history.⁴ Speaking before a group whose annual meetings of thousands were subsidized by the state, Buschlen asserted that the critical role of the "importation" of "peasants" in past American success justified reviving the Bracero Program. In contrast, the editors of *Sol de Aztlán* could not count upon state funds to disseminate their message opposing "this imperialist nation" built by people who depended on "starvation wages."

Chicano Movement historiography contains much less agreement about the importance of colonial labor forms. Once the dominant theory, the colonial in Chicano history cannot be discussed today without reference to the precipitous decline of internal colonialism beginning in the 1980s. This decline was due to a number of factors, most prominent among them its supposed essentialism that resulted in the negation of internal differences of class, sex and gender.⁵ Eschewing colonial models because of their presumed tendency to homogenize colonized populations conflates the model with the phenomena it is meant to explain. Instead colonialism itself is a gendered process of racialization, rooted in economic exploitation, which obscures differences between people in order to create the colonized and colonizer. The interaction between the MFB and the Chicano movement demonstrates that in Michigan Chicano

³ "Power of the Plow," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 5 (May 1966): 11.

⁴ "Name Labor Co-Op Manager," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 5 (May 1966): 3.

⁵ Montoya, "Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender, and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity"; Hames-García, "How to Tell a Mestizo from an Enchirito: Colonialism and National Culture in the Borderlands."

anti-colonialism grew out of the need to combat growers' colonial domestic/migrant binary and its relationship to American Exceptionalism.

Between 1962 and 1967 Mexican-Americans pressured the state to protect migrant workers' rights through non-partisan organizations like Latin American United for Political Action (LAUPA), the American G.I. Forum and the Catholic Church. These organizations lobbied for migrants as American workers and citizens. Growers and their most powerful organization, the MFB, consistently opposed any state regulation, but paid little attention to migrant advocates prior to 1965 because they were confident in their ability to prevent adverse legislation. They promoted a conservative anti-Communist worldview wherein farmers were the embodiment of the United States as shining light of the free enterprise system in a benighted world. Any state regulation of agriculture opened the door to communism, famine and peasantry for farmers. Yet by the end of the 1960s the vision of both growers and Chicanos had changed substantially. In their attempts to continue their access to a colonized labor force after the demise of the Bracero Program growers articulated a migrant/domestic binary while vigorously opposing the minimum wage, workers compensation and housing regulation.

Meanwhile Mexican-Americans intensified their lobbying and adopted new more confrontational tactics like Chicano organizers elsewhere. The slow progress of change for migrants and lack of movement at the state level between 1966 and 1968 contributed to the decline of the worker-citizen identity that Latin American organizations like LAUPA promoted. Instead former Mexican-Americans increasingly adopted a rhetoric of difference in the language of *la raza*. The 1968 surge of grape boycott activity in Michigan heightened contradictions in rural communities throughout the state as unions, church groups and emerging Chicano activists forced growers and the MFB to defend their opposition to unions for workers and their assertion

that migrants were foreigners with no place in the public sphere. By 1970 the MFB also abandoned its political principle opposing any state regulation and supported new laws and government spending that recognized migrants as workers and citizens. Instead of arguing that migrant workers were foreigners who benefitted from their work in the colonial system they asserted migrant poverty was “society’s problem” and increasingly referred to migrants as “farm labor.” Despite this discursive shift material improvements for migrants were minimal, state regulation was poorly implemented and primarily functioned as a subsidy for marginal growers.

Cold War Colonialism: The Peasant Menace

How would you like to be called peasants?’ Marjorie Karker, Coordinator of Women’s Activities, asked hundreds of women gathered for their annual spring rallies. . . ‘Here in America, . . is about the only place in the world where farmers are not considered peasants. If we are to keep out of this category, we must preserve our free-market system.’⁶

Although the McCarthyite Red Scare had passed, a different threat stalked Michigan Farm Bureau country in 1963; the peasant menace. Mrs. Marjorie Karker, longtime coordinator of the MFB Women’s Activities, exhorted “farm women” across the state to fight government regulation lest they all end up as peasants shackled to the land as in the rest of the world. Throughout the early 1960s the MFB asserted that only America’s exceptional free enterprise system, unchained by government regulation, protected farmers from the peasant menace. Despite their stated opposition, there was one government program regulating agriculture the MFB and Michigan agriculture vigorously supported, the Bracero Program. In years to come the MFB rationalized this contradiction by portraying braceros, and migrant workers as a whole, as foreigners who benefitted from the colonial order, but prior to 1965 they were rarely motivated to address labor problems directly. Karker delivered this message to more than 1000 women at the

⁶ Donna Wilber, “Taxes Are The Prices Paid for Civilization,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 6 (June 1, 1963): 8.

MFB's eleven all-day district meetings.⁷ With the assistance of the elected farm bureau women's "chairmen," she harnessed members' opposition to peasantry for themselves into calling local voters to vote against the 1963 wheat referendum and organize for tax reform.⁸ Karker's script tied farming, Americanism and a supposedly universal opposition to government regulation to member mobilization in a way that was typical of the MFB's role as a major organized interest group in the state.

In contrast LAUPA and the Michigan chapters of the American G.I. Forum were concerned with suffering of migrant workers excluded from government regulation, though they lacked the extensive membership education and mobilization structure that the MFB had built. Founded in 1962 and 1956 respectively, LAUPA and the Michigan G.I Forum members did not fear that regulating farm labor would open the door to communism, and often based their lobbying for migrant workers in both Americanism and humanistic religious values. Their belief that Michigan agriculture could continue without the exploitation of migrant workers was in conflict with the MFB's that only in America was it possible to produce such a great bounty without a peasantry. The peasant menace, like the red menace, had a long shadow that shaped the attitudes of conservative Americans long after it was eclipsed by more immediate challenges. The roots of the Michigan Chicano Movement's challenge to American Exceptionalism were substantially in this conflict.

Labeling farmers in the rest of the world "peasants" was also a way of defining Americans and farmers' difference. Although the peasant menace was couched in cold war

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Gratiot Holds Rural-Urban," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 12 (December 1963): 10.

rhetoric, the MFB made little differentiation between farmers in the Eastern Bloc countries and the non-aligned third world. In its 1964 anti-communism policy the MFB explained the state of global agriculture, “throughout most of the world, the foods and fibers are produced by a peasant agriculture or on socialized farms. The failure of Russian agriculture . . . is one of the best lessons in the value of private, competitive enterprise on our farms.”⁹ Here, as elsewhere, the MFB grouped the remainder of the world in opposition to the successes of the American farm. The humorous and demeaning tone of the MFB’s report on the International Peat Congress in Leningrad elaborates on the essential, and essentializing difference between American farms and all others. Explaining the significance of peat production in “Russia” the MFB asserted, “It is the poor-man’s companion, filling much the same place on the peasant’s economic scale as does cow-dung in India.”¹⁰ In this way the MFB grouped the “big, weird machine” agriculture of the USSR with the hand tools it asserted were common in third world nations. In contrast to the “backward,” poor and uneducated peasantry of the rest of the world, American farmers were modern, prosperous people whose most important export was, “dignity in Agriculture.”¹¹

For MFB cold warriors the peasant menace was an immediate threat to farmers, kept at bay only through the free enterprise system, American heritage and the good citizenship of Farm Bureau families. MFB president Walter Wightman emphasized, following a visit to the

⁹ “1964 Farm Bureau Policies,” November 1963.

¹⁰ “The Russians Have Us Beat-In Peat!,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 9 (September 1963): 11.

¹¹ Walter Wightman, “Dignity of the Individual,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 5 (May 1963): 2; Walter Wightman, “Poverty Self-Imposed,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 42, no. 9 (September 1964): 2.

Dominican Republic, that the free enterprise system was the key to American prosperity. Wightman told members, “It seems almost impossible that a country like the Dominican Republic(only a short two-hour ride by jet from Miami) could be so different and so backward . . . It doesn’t take long after a short visit to one of these underdeveloped countries to understand what the competitive free enterprise system has done for the United States.”¹² The proximity of the “backward” difference that Wightman experienced on his trip was meant to highlight for his readers that Dominicans could also be as prosperous as Americans if only their capitalists were free to operate and could procure more work from the locals unwilling to labor more than four or five hours a day cutting sugar cane. Yet, the short distance that Wightman saw between the United States and the Dominican Republic, both geographically and socially, was a narrow gap that ran in both directions. Simultaneously, the proximity that Wightman emphasized also meant that Americans could become as poor as Dominicans if they lost sight of the virtues of the free market. After all, Wightman claimed that only America’s capitalist system separated the fate of hungry Dominicans from the bounty of America. The Dominican Republic’s location near Cuba in the Caribbean only emphasized they manner in which the peasant menace, like the Red Menace, was a constant threat at America’s door.

Despite their explicit adulation of the “free enterprise system” and against government regulation the MFB’s version of unfettered capitalism involved a decidedly unfree labor regime structured by government intervention for seasonal agricultural workers. While celebrating defeat of the wheat referendum Karker again referenced the high stakes of government intervention, “Had the government won this fight, it would have been one more step toward

¹² Wightman, “Poverty Self-Imposed.”

peasantry for the American farmer.”¹³ Karker’s speech to the 200 women gathered for a “Rural-Urban Program” at Alma College emphasized that avoiding poverty for farmers could also help the “city lady” because a higher income would allow farmers to “buy more products and services from city merchants.”¹⁴ Apparently the same logic did not extend to evaluating the benefits of a higher salary for farm workers. The MFB opposition to a federal and state minimum wage for farm workers in this period is easily reconciled with their 1963 anti-regulation policy, which stated, “We oppose all legislation and other procedures that would give the federal government more authority to recruit, feed, house, transport and contract farm labor to farmers.”¹⁵ It is not so easily reconciled with their support for the Bracero Program.

Began as a wartime emergency labor program in 1942, by 1964 the number of braceros in Michigan was around 13,400, small in comparison to the total number of seasonal agricultural workers, 146,000.¹⁶ Nevertheless the continuation of this particular government program was seen as critical, but in little doubt for the MFB prior to 1964. Writing in this vein legislative counsel Dan Reed informed members in 1963, “Defeat of the Mexican Labor Law (P.L. 78) extension was a surprise . . . It is probable that Congress will pass some kind of extension

¹³ “Gratiot Holds Rural-Urban.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Michigan Farm Bureau, “1963 Policies” (Michigan Farm Bureau, November 7, 1962), Michigan Farm Bureau Collection, Archives of Michigan.

¹⁶ Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1964).

measure . . .”¹⁷ Prior to the end of the Bracero Program the MFB routinely supported it and met any complaints with incredulity. Reed took up this tone in 1963 when he mocked the idea that braceros were replaceable, writing “stoop labor . . . has not seemed attractive enough to draw unemployed auto workers!”¹⁸ Pickle growers in particular asserted that domestic workers could not be expected to take the place of braceros should the program be ended. Lynn & Irene Hoover wrote to Governor George Romney asking that he “make every effort” to see the program continued because “local labor . . . cannot stand the heat in the fields.”¹⁹ The incredulous tone of the MFB and farmers’ objections emphasizes the way in which it was simply outside their worldview to consider that saying farm work was not “attractive,” too hot or arduous to draw other workers was also a demonstration of the unsustainability of their farm operations in the free enterprise system they idealized. The unexpected end of the bracero program would force the MFB and farmers to explain this contradiction. Without a government subsidized, colonized labor reserve many farms were unable to compete for workers who rationally chose the best paying, least onerous employment available.

The “free-market system” that Karker lauded as protecting the American farmer from the peasant menace relied upon the very peasants that the MFB was acutely concerned with avoiding. But the free market alone would not protect Michigan farmers. Farmers’ freedom from peasantry also depended upon maintaining agriculture as the “strongest bastion of freedom” in

¹⁷ Dan E. Reed, “As It Looks from Here,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 7 (July 1963): 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Lynn D. Hoover and Irene E. Hoover to Governor George Romney, July 17, 1963, George Romney Papers, Box 34 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

the United States.²⁰ The MFB constructed farmers as the truest embodiment of Americanism, an example not just to the world, but to the rest of the nation whose more urban redoubts were presumably in need of fortification. The MFB directly told farmers they were “Americans in the best tradition” and “more appreciative of our American heritage.” Writing in the *Farm Bureau News* MFB staff rarely missed an opportunity to draw parallels between historic symbols of American patriotism and contemporaneous farmers. MFB members attending the 1964 annual meeting in Philadelphia were there “to reaffirm their own independence,” just like the men who signed the Declaration of Independence, while farmers’ “no” votes on the 1963 wheat referendum echoed “the shot heard round the world” at Concord.²¹ Wightman explained to his members as 1963 came to an end, the freedom of American farmers also depended on their links to “great statesmen” like Patrick Henry whose “give me freedom or give me death” declaration was as applicable to the wheat referendum as to British tyranny.

For the MFB farmers were both the embodiment of America’s heritage and a national linchpin that could not be allowed to fall into communist hands. A key aspect of the MFB’s strident anti-communism in this period was the belief that should communists gain control over agriculture in the United States the Cold War would be utterly lost. Melvin Woell, editor of the *MFB News* warned readers in 1963, “Those who would tamper with the food supply are more to be feared than all armies or superweapons combined. He who controls the power of food,

²⁰ Walter Wightman, “All the King’s Men . . .,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 42, no. 11 (November 1964): 2.

²¹ “‘Heritage Tour’ to Convention Planned,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 42, no. 10 (October 1964): 8; “A Vote for Freedom,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 8 (July 1963): 14.

controls the world.”²² The MFB’s investment in the theory of creeping communist influence meant that much of government involvement in agriculture, aside from the Bracero Program and other MFB-approved subsidies, was suspect. Writing in particular about the wheat referendum, J. Delbert Wells coordinator of the Family Program, encouraged members to be more informed and vigilant about the “centralized authority” that the wheat referendum represented. For Wells government regulation of agriculture risked transforming the U.S. into a “Communist slave state” because the Communist were operating under an “internal takeover theory.”²³ The MFB’s strident anti-communism in the early 1960s promoted the belief amongst its members that anyone else who sought power in agriculture was a communist infiltrator, as dangerous as a nuclear bomb.

For Wightman victory against the peasant menace also entailed defending white Americans’ heritage as a chosen people. “We have lived to see the results of what free enterprise can do for society. It has never been equaled yet anywhere. If we fail to preserve it, then some other peoples will be raised up to do it--be they black, red or yellow.”²⁴ Promotion of the United States as an inspiration that could liberate and “feed the hungry” world was in conflict with a subtext of competition between the races. Preservation of freedom from peasantry for American farmers rested not only on freedom in the market, but also on the masses of “other peoples” who remained below. For Wightman farmers needed to maintain themselves as the embodiment of

²² Melvin L. Woell, “Sowing a Good Farm Future,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 5 (May 1963): 2.

²³ J. Delbert Wells, “A Survey of Citizenship,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 1 (January 1963): 2.

²⁴ Walter Wightman, “Key to Progress,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 41, no. 12 (December 1963): 2.

white American heritage, lest they find themselves amongst the subordinate, darker peasants. Wightman's elevated position, both materially and discursively, existed only in relationship to non-white agricultural laborers who he believed were inferior and in need of his generous direction. The way in which this particular combination of cold war anti-communism and colonized agriculture grounded farmers' American identity is critical to understanding their later opposition to migrants' rights.

MFB leadership propagated their vision of the peasant menace to their members who in turn pushed this far right anti-communist version of America's heritage in rural areas throughout Michigan. In addition to formal policy lobbying on the state and national level the MFB possessed an extensive member education and mobilization structure. Small, local "Community Groups" were the basic unit of the MFBs membership structure. In the early 1960s there were over 1,500 Community Groups, each with between 10 and 100 "member families." The community groups involved between 55,000 and 70,000 members during the 1960s in political action, rural social life and also comprised an extended support network that members called upon in times of need.²⁵ Community groups helped around 30 full-time MFB staff to promote larger MFB gatherings that focused on anti-communism in this period, such as the Freedom Conferences, Women's Camp, and the Young People's Citizenship Seminar.²⁶

The Young People's Citizenship seminar was a week-long summer camp that provided far right wing anti-communist speakers an eager audience of 140 high school juniors and seniors

²⁵ Donna J. Wilber, *In the Service of the Farmer: A History of the Michigan Farm Bureau*, 1994.

²⁶ "24 Mason County Women Attend Meeting in Shelby," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, April 13, 1960; "Farm Bureau County Presidents to Convene," *Owosso (MI) Argus-Press*, January 24, 1964.

beginning in 1964. The seminar grew specifically out of the MFB's focus on alerting people to the communist threat.²⁷ Attendees at the seminar were chosen by local farm bureaus, school officials and businessmen who sponsored their week-long stay at Camp Kett, a lake-side 4-H facility near Cadillac.²⁸ There rural Michigan youth, like Kathy Fitch and David Diesing from Mason County, attended discussions led by Harding College president Clifton Ganus and author Cleon Skousen.²⁹ Ganus was a history professor at Harding College, a small evangelical institution in Searcy, Arkansas who spoke widely on the infiltration of communists in the military, Congress and local government.³⁰ Through Harding College's National Education Program (NEP) Ganus and others made and distributed the controversial film *Communism on the Map*.³¹ *Communism on the Map* claimed that President Roosevelt was responsible for the communist victory in China and that all NATO nations except two, the United States and Portugal, were under communist control.³² Skousen was best known for writing *The Naked*

²⁷ Wilber, *In the Service of the Farmer: A History of the Michigan Farm Bureau*, 68; J. Delbert Wells to J. Edgar Hoover, n.d., 1964 April 28, <http://vault.fbi.gov/willard-skousen/>.

²⁸ "Scholarships Given Youths for Seminar," *Clare (MI) Sentinel*, July 23, 1964; "Name Two To Camp Kett," *Benzie (MI) County Patriot*, July 9, 1964.

²⁹ "Citizenship Seminar Enrollments Coming In," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 42, no. 6 (June 1964): 7; "Two Local Students," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, June 13, 1964.

³⁰ Randall Bennett Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 279; Lori L. Bogle, *The Pentagon's Battle for the American Mind: The Early Cold War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 134.

³¹ Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Nation Books, 2009), 152.

Communist, a work similar to J. Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit*, but read by those who the historian of conservatism Jonathan Schoenwald identified as "serious anticommunists" in comparison.³³ Through its member structure the MFB enlisted young people like the students from Mason county to spread Ganus and Skousen's fear of communist infiltration in Michigan. MFB staffer Donna Wilber estimated she spend 75 percent of her time sending out copies of *Communism on the Map* and *Operation Abolition* to be shown in MFB Community Groups and other rural venues. Wilber reported that the two films combined were shown on 419 separate occasions attended by nearly 40,000 people in 1960 and 1961.³⁴ Through its extensive outreach programs the MFB inculcated a significant subset of Michigan's rural population with its ultra-conservative political program.

Having taught members how to communicate and organize people for a common goal MFB staff now found that members could use their skills beyond official policies. MFB staff and leaderships' focus on anti-communism was controversial to some like MFB professional lobbyist Dan Reed.³⁵ Between 1964 and 1966 the MFB was rocked by a number of staff changes, beginning with the firing of Marge Karker, the Women's Program Coordinator since the program's inception in 1945. Karker's firing was controversial; members were unhappy and used their mobilization skills to mount a challenge to MFB President Walter Wightman in

³² Christopher S. DeRosa, *Political Indoctrination in the U.S. Army from World War II to the Vietnam War* (U of Nebraska Press, 2006), 188.

³³ Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45.

³⁴ Wilber, *In the Service of the Farmer: A History of the Michigan Farm Bureau*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

response. As a result Wightman was voted out as president and replaced by Kent county dairyman Elton R. Smith. The departure of Karker, Wightman and several other staff and member leaders diminished the MFB focus on anti-communism on the state-wide level. Yet just as members' organizing and propaganda skills could not be removed once taught, the effort the MFB put into inculcating the peasant menace in members' minds and the culture of near-apocalyptic political thought promoted in rural Michigan could also not be simply erased by a change in leadership. References to the extreme danger posed by those who sought to control agriculture lessened in official farm bureau publications, but involvement of far right wing ideologues like Skousen and Ganus continued in the leadership camps for youth and as speakers at local functions throughout the 1960s.³⁶ By the late 1960s these fears found a new focus in organizing against the UFW grape boycott.

The MFB's political program was comprised of these three elements: the free enterprise system, American heritage and the good citizenship of Farm Bureau families. These formed the bulwark that farmers were required to maintain not only for themselves, but for America and the world. It is not surprising that the MFB argued that farmers were important members of society, but the extent to which they told members that the fate of the world weighed upon their "freedom to farm" is indicative of how Cold War logic lent global importance to the most mundane of

³⁶ "Speaker for Farm Bureau," *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, March 8, 1967; "Farm Bureau Women's Group Holds Meeting," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, February 19, 1966; "Area Youth Participate in Seminar," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 17, 1965; "County Youths Attend Seminar," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, August 1, 1968; "Attend Seminar," *Hillsdale (MI) Daily News*, July 31, 1968; "Janet Russell at Farm Bureau Camp," *Cass City (MI) Chronicle*, July 18, 1968; "2 Novi Teenagers Attend Seminar," *Northville (MI) Record-Novis News*, July 20, 1967, sec. A; "On the Front Burner," *Citizenship and Farm Labor*, March 15, 1969, Michigan Farm Bureau Collection, Archives of Michigan; "Chosen To Attend Seminar," *Mayville (MI) Monitor*, June 9, 1966; "Cass Valley Farm Bureau," *Marlette (MI) Leader*, September 3, 1969.

actions. In addition it demonstrates the MFB's ability to create a group culture that reinforced their organizational power.

Although the MFB was confident they could thwart legal reforms for migrant workers in this period, Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans were actively working toward improving migrants' lives. Both groups were active in organizations like Latin American United for Political Action (LAUPA) and the American G.I Forum, as well as their churches and local unions. LAUPA members' efforts to improve conditions for migrant workers built upon the prior involvement of settled Mexican-Americans to assist needy migrants, especially efforts led by sympathetic local church leaders in Detroit. During the 1950s the fathers at Most Holy Trinity Parish in Detroit, Clement Kern, Carlos Talavera and Gabriel Torres, had been almost alone in confronting growers' efforts to quash state protections for migrant labor. Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Kern's parish did work to support needy farm workers who often arrived destitute in Detroit seeking help from other Spanish-speakers.³⁷ By the early 1960s both Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans organized in specifically Latin American organizations to pressure the state to protect migrant workers' rights as American workers and citizens. Their activities precede the popularization of the UFW grape boycott and demonstrate that the intense opposition to the exploitation of migrant workers, if not the tactics and rhetoric of the UFW, was long present in Michigan Latino communities.

Latin Americans United on Political Action (LAUPA), was the most active of these organizations, yet its capacity was very limited compared to its major opponent, the MFB. Founded in 1962, LAUPA lobbied state officials to include migrant agricultural workers in the

³⁷ Jerome Hansen, "Migrant Laborers Describe Hardships," *Detroit Free Press*, September 13, 1950; Cornejo, Angel, May 17, 1991, Box 7, Casa de Unidad Records, Bentley Historical Library; Valdés, *Al Norte*, 127–128.

legal protections that existed for industrial workers, especially the minimum wage. LAUPA was a non-partisan organization that encouraged voter registration by the Spanish-speaking and endorsed candidates for local, state and federal office. In the fall of 1962 it held its first annual convention in Detroit.³⁸ In 1963 LAUPA claimed six chapters in Lansing, Detroit, Adrian, Ecorse, Jackson and Flint, and by 1964 claimed 1500 total members distributed in 12 chapters.³⁹ LAUPA was led by Ruben Alfaro, a 28 year-old barber who first came to Michigan as a child migrant worker from Weslaco, Texas with his family in the 1940s.⁴⁰ LAUPA leaders and members were volunteers whose occupations were primarily working class; welders, line workers, corrections officers and mechanics.⁴¹ Unlike the MFB, LAUPA did not have a paid staff of more than 30 in the early 1960s. Although LAUPA's membership was increasing in the early 1960s, it could not hope to match the organizational nor financial resources of the MFB.

LAUPA's agenda for farm workers was based on their rights as worker citizens and Christian beliefs in human dignity. Developing and pursuing a 10 point-program for migrant workers was LAUPA's focus in 1964, including a minimum wage.⁴² LAUPA lobbied the

³⁸ "20 Delegates Named," *Toledo (OH) Blade*, October 16, 1962.

³⁹ Victor Hernandez to Walter DeVries, September 5, 1963, George Romney Papers, Box 34 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library; "Hold Meet On Migratory Worker Laws," *Holland (MI) Evening Sentinel*, July 18, 1964.

⁴⁰ Bob Voges, "Ruben's Barber Chair Is His Lobby Base," *Owosso (MI) Argus-Press*, March 21, 1967; William J. Duchaine, "Our Nuevos Americanos," *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, September 22, 1963.

⁴¹ "LAUPA Questionnaires," 1964, George Romney Papers, Box 349 Migrant, Bentley Historical Library.

⁴² "Seek Stronger Voice for Latinos," *Hillsdale (MI) Daily News*, January 28, 1964.

Republican and Democratic parties to include legal protections for migrant workers and were successful in having their concerns incorporated into the State Democratic Party Platform in 1964.⁴³ LAUPA argued for rights for migrant workers from both a moral-religious and civil rights perspective. LAUPA vice-chairman Victor Hernandez emphasized that the abuses migrants endured were an affront to their humanity. He wrote to Romney aide Walter DeVries and emphasized this point in a 1963 letter, “The situation of this God-forgotten people is a scandal in Michigan. They are the most exploited and ill-treated human beings. . .”⁴⁴ LAUPA believed that the “Latin American community can make progress through political involvement.”⁴⁵ Chicano Movement participants Isabel and Gumecindo Salas wrote that LAUPA was the beginning of Mexican American community involvement in electoral politics in Detroit, though they asserted LAUPA was used to promote Democratic Party political figures in the barrio at the expense of developing community control and grassroots organizations.⁴⁶

Keeping *la Raza* Down on the Farm

“Since our farmers can’t have Mexicans, “Busch” is going down round the Rio Grande to scout for ‘Texicans.”-Elton Smith, MFB President, 1967

With the Bracero Program at an end, the MFB celebrated the efforts of M.J. Buschlen, head of its newly formed labor services cooperative, to replace braceros. MFB president Elton

⁴³ Hector Luna and Malvina Hauk Abonyi, “Nationalities Division, Democratic State Central Committee (Latin American Section) Resolutions,” August 4, 1964, Julius CC Edelstein Collection, Box 060237, Folder #11, LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College/CUNY.

⁴⁴ Hernandez to DeVries, September 5, 1963.

⁴⁵ “Hold Meet On Migratory Worker Laws.”

⁴⁶ Margaret M. Mangold, ed., *La Causa Chicana; the Movement for Justice* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1972), 175.

Smith assured his members that “Busch,” as he was known, was taking care of the supposed labor shortage by recruiting “Texicans” to replace “Mexicans.”⁴⁷ Colonial thinking was one way in which the MFB justified excluding Chicano migrant workers from the rights of industrial workers in the public sphere. After all, just as they believed the low pay braceros received was “fantastic in their eyes,” the MFB and growers asserted Chicano migrant workers were better off for their efforts because the low wages “were doing the Mexican-Americans a great service” and the poor housing Chicano migrant workers received was “better than what they have at home.”⁴⁸ In this way the growers’ colonial discourse sought to foster a smooth transition from one easily controlled labor force to the next. The MFB’s colonial discourse about migrant workers was comprised of a migrant/domestic binary which defined all migrant workers as foreign and farmers as 20th century American pioneers who conquered new lands through mechanization. The domestic/migrant binary considered migrants foreign by eliding differences between braceros and Mexican-Americans, associating the conditions of migrants with the ‘third-world,’ designating national agricultural labor relations as a form of international relations, and the interrelated beliefs that for ‘migrants’ agricultural labor was a gift, while for ‘domestic’ workers it was an inconceivable toil. Defining migrant workers as foreign became even more important

⁴⁷ Elton Smith, “Farm Labor,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 45, no. 3 (March 1967): 2.

⁴⁸ Melvin L. Woell, “Editorial: Pablo’s Problem,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 8 (August 1968): 2; Michigan Civil Rights Commission, “Field Impressions of the Migrant Project Staff,” 1968, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library; “State Programs for Migrants Seen Attracting Thousands,” *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, October 24, 1969; William A. Burnette, “Now-’Weep No More’,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 43, no. 11 (November 1965): 5; Robert G. Edmonson and Rosa Morales, “When Migrant Labor Dies, What Happens to the Migrant,” *Saginaw (MI) News*, July 27, 1969; Jacqueline Korona, “Farm Labor Group Protests Migrant Conditions,” *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, April 3, 1968.

during this period because increased publicity of the poor conditions migrant workers lived in on farms in Michigan brought the peasant menace much too close to home. Between 1965 and 1968 the MFB and many growers participated in this colonial discourse while vigorously opposing the minimum wage, workers compensation and housing regulation. The MFB's success in fighting new labor regulation combined with their exclusionary rhetoric raised questions about the efficacy of lobbying based upon Mexican-Americans' worker-citizen identity. Meanwhile Mexican-Americans dissatisfied with the slow pace of change adopted new more confrontational tactics like Chicano organizers elsewhere.

The interchangeability of Mexicans and Mexicans born in Texas in the area of seasonal agricultural labor was an established part of defending the Bracero Program in Michigan. Writing in the previous decade Father Neill O'Connor had characterized both as a part of the overarching term, "migrant" when he wrote about "the migrant worker in our agricultural industry, whether he be from Texas or Old Mexico."⁴⁹ Yet, in its incipient role in 'making up people' the domestic/migrant binary took on new urgency in a time of high employment, where Mexican-Americans pressed their demands as worker-citizens. Compressing racial distinctions within the seasonal farm labor force, especially between Chicanos and Mexicans was more important, and more contested than ever before. Writing in the *Farm Bureau News* Congressman Marvin L. Esch described his efforts to restart the Bracero Program. Esch demonstrated that braceros and Chicano agricultural workers from Texas were both viewed as members of one polity, labeled 'migrants.' Esch differentiated between the "domestic unemployed" and the

⁴⁹ Neil O'Connor, "'Bracero' Problem," 1958, Alvin M. Bentley Papers, Walter Reuther Archive.

unfilled “jobs previously held by migrants,” the braceros whose absence he lamented.⁵⁰ Yet accompanying the article is a photograph of Esch with a “migrant family” in 1968, a group that could not be braceros because the program had ended 4 years previous, but who are instead Mexican-Americans. Casual use of the term “migrants” to mean both Mexican Americans and Mexicans who performed seasonal agricultural labor was present at the highest level of Michigan government. Governor Romney’s office regularly referred to Mexican-Americans pressuring for increased legal protections as “migrants” while also hoping that labor secretary Willard Wirtz would ease a 1966 apple picker shortage and “let migrant laborers in.”⁵¹ By conceiving of both citizens of Mexico and American citizens of Mexican descent as ‘migrants’ growers and their allies furthered efforts to treat Chicanos as a colonized labor group. Associating Chicanos with ‘foreign workers’ was a necessary part of limiting their access to the rights of citizens.

As Amy Kaplan emphasized in her analysis of the domestic/foreign binary to structure antebellum westward expansion the terms domestic, foreign and national help to define each other, but domestic/foreign comprise a specific meaning-making binary. As Kaplan emphasizes, “uncoupled from the foreign, national issues are never labeled domestic.”⁵² Thus the use by growers during the 1960s and 1970s of the term ‘domestic’ reinforces the defining of ‘migrants’ as foreign. The meaning held in the domestic/migrant binary is not just in the confusion of Mexican workers for Chicano workers under the term “migrant” but also in the very comparison

⁵⁰ Marvin L. Esch, “Congressman Esch Asks Bracero Policy Review,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 6 (June 1, 1968): 3.

⁵¹ “Romney Wants You! To Harvest Apples,” *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, October 6, 1966.

⁵² Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 25.

of “migrant” to “domestic.” Congressman Esch compares these two groups in a way typical of the mid-1960s in Michigan, “At the same time, we have not seen any significant interest on the part of the *domestic* unemployed. . . crops go unharvested because *domestic* workers cannot be found to fill jobs previously held by migrants.”⁵³ The use of the word “domestic,” as opposed to “citizen,” “national” or “local” is another indication that the conversation takes place in a colonial discursive space unencumbered by the juridical fact of Chicanos’ American citizenship. Similarly an inflammatory 1965 article referred to the possibility that Labor secretary Wirtz would certify growers to receive braceros, even though the program had ended, if growers attempted to use “all available domestic labor.”⁵⁴ The program to recruit this labor, called A-Teams, was aimed at high schoolers and sent recruitment materials to every Michigan school principal in search of volunteers.⁵⁵ Such students were most likely to be white, and comprised a very small proportion of the actual farm labor population. In fact the recruitment of local ‘high schoolers’ was the most often discussed ‘domestic’ solution to the labor shortage after the Bracero Program ended. Called upon to increase the use of ‘domestic’ workers, farmers thought to involve their own sons and daughters and those of their neighbors, demonstrating the narrow definition of ‘domestic’ that predominated.

It was a bitter irony that repeated references to a labor shortage caused by the implausibility of replacing braceros with large numbers of ‘domestic unemployed’ workers in the fields existed simultaneously with the dramatically increased participation of Mexican

⁵³ Esch, “Congressman Esch Asks Bracero Policy Review.”

⁵⁴ “Growers Given Two-Day Deadline!!!,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 43, no. 6 (June 1965): 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Americans from Texas. The MFB emphasized extensive crop losses, particularly in crops harvested in the late summer and fall, because “Americans either will not or cannot do the work,” and “most Americans would prefer to remain unemployed.”⁵⁶ Yet in 1965, the number of Mexican Americans from Texas in the fields actually increased over its total for the final year of the Bracero Program, 1964. For the first four years after the Bracero Program ended the number of interstate migrants was greater than for 1964, and the proportion of these migrants who were Mexican American also increased.⁵⁷ This contradiction was lost on the MFB and their grower allies who mocked the possibility of recruiting more ‘domestic unemployed’ because they simple did not conceive of Chicanos from Texas, or elsewhere, as ‘domestic’ in any sense of the word. Not in their discursive membership in the polity of United States, nor in their access to the private world of the domestic were Chicanos and Chicanas permissible. Although more in-depth discussions of ‘migrant labor’ acknowledged that a small proportion of the group were actually white and black Americans from the South, the major division in the farm labor pool articulated in public discourse was between “migrant” and “domestic” labor. In this way the migrant/domestic binary doubly inscribed migrant workers as foreign, they were ‘foreign’

⁵⁶ Lyle Wilson, “Farm Labor Crisis Confronts Johnson,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 43, no. 4 (April 1965): 10; “Wirtz’s Word to Farmers,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 43, no. 5 (May 1965): 13.

⁵⁷ Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1964; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1965); Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1966); Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1967); Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1968).

because the MFB and growers often did not differentiate between braceros and Mexican Americans, and they were foreign because unlike “most Americans” they performed migrant agricultural labor for a living.

While not all migrant workers were actually Chicanos, a transposition between these two groups also occurred at this time. The consequences of the domestic/migrant binary went beyond designating migrant workers as foreign, but were also a significant part of the process of racializing Chicanos in Michigan. Discourse around migrant workers contributed to this process by using the terms migrant, Mexican, Mexican-American, Spanish-speaking, and Chicano interchangeably. One example of this was a News Palladium article questioning the “flood” of “hungry migrants” seeking food stamps in Benton Harbor. Within the article these families, clearly all seasonal agricultural laborers harmed by the early end to the strawberry harvest, are referred to first as migrants, then Spanish-speaking, and finally, Mexican-American. While the article focuses on the increase in food stamp applications by migrant workers, it directly compares this group to applications for the previous year, stating, “Last year only a handful of Mexican-Americans applied . . .”⁵⁸ A similar interchanging of terms appeared in a 1969 article about migrant workers who wanted to settle in Michigan, although the article was a part of a syndicated series entirely about migrant workers, the editor chose to title it, “Few Chicanos Flee Nomad Life, Most Stay in the Fields.”⁵⁹ In this way the newspaper again helped to characterize all Chicanos as migrant workers, and by choice at that. Not all migrant workers were Chicanos, and not all Chicanos were migrant workers but the use of the domestic/migrant binary created a

⁵⁸ “Hungry Migrants Flooding Berrien Welfare Offices,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, June 18, 1969.

⁵⁹ Hugh Morgan, “Few Chicanos Flee Nomad Life; Most Stay in the Fields,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, August 27, 1969.

discourse in which Chicanos, migrant workers, and foreigners were interchangeable and categorically not domestic.

The promotion of the view that seasonal agricultural workers on Michigan farms were somehow linked to the third world regardless of their physical location or residence reinforced the domestic/migrant binary split promoted by growers and their allies. Melvin L. Woell, editor of the *Farm Bureau News*, articulated the injustices of ending the Bracero Program in his editorial “Pablo’s Problem” written through the eyes of “Pablo” a fictional 10-year old from Saltillo, Mexico. In his editorial Woell situated Mexico as a backward, primitive country. In Saltillo “Pablo” herds goats, the market smells of “over-ripe meat” due to a lack of refrigeration, a notary creates documents for the “illiterate,” a lack of hygiene allows women to sell tortillas “unwrapped” and cactus is, notably (to Woell), “for sale as food.” For Woell “Pablo” was denied a “brighter future” because his father, “Jaun[sic]” no longer works in Michigan as a bracero. Agricultural labor was not a burden to “Jaun” because he and other braceros had been “Hard workers . . . used to a harder life” and they were “wiry, tough, used to a hotter sun.” Woell asserted that the Bracero Program was the “most pleasant of international exchanges” claiming that for “Jaun” being a bracero was a great boon, wherein farmers got their crops harvested for a low price, while braceros had the fortune to earn an amount “fantastic in their eyes” that could enable their sons, like “Pablo” to go to school.⁶⁰ In this way Woell asserted that employing Mexicans as migrant seasonal laborers was a form of international aid, not colonial exploitation. Like so many colonial landowners before him Woell promoted the idea that employing people at low wages for whom you have no responsibility to provide reproduction was helping them, and could bring the fruits of civilization to the supposedly primitive

⁶⁰ Woell, “Editorial: Pablo’s Problem.”

conditions in Saltillo. For Woell the use of braceros was not so growers could profit through the use of low cost labor pool, but instead a form of international aid and goodwill that conveniently kept the objects of its ministrations at a distance. In this way Woell separated growers from any responsibility for the conditions workers and their families experienced.

Although critics of the conditions that migrants faced contradicted Woell in his contention that employing people for low wages was a way of helping them, they were also taken in by the idea that poor conditions in the fields and migrant housing camps were somehow “foreign” to the United States. In his review of state migrant policies from 1964 to 1968 historian Sidney Fine cited housing as a continuing problem during the period and identified the comments of a child welfare worker in migrant camps as representative of the abject conditions, “Stale water stands in low places and the smell of urine and feces pervade the ground as well as the children. I can’t speak for India, but never I thought in America! And, why in Michigan!”⁶¹ Rural newspaper the *Cass City Chronicle* similarly combined sympathy for migrants with comparisons that defined them as foreigners when journalist Larry Werner wrote, “Most of the workers have left the camp at Colling. The beets in the area are hoed clean, and, like the Nomads of the African desert, Colling’s migrants move on to find another oasis.”⁶² The MFB’s association of migrants with foreigners was pervasive. Woell and his fellow growers nostalgic for the Bracero Program as well as the child welfare worker in rural areas saw the conditions migrant worker families lived in as primitive, uncivilized and ultimately un-American. Woell and his fellow growers read these conditions as a natural part of the Mexican landscape far from

⁶¹ Sidney Fine, Bentley Historical Library, *Civil Rights and the Michigan Constitution of 1963* (Ann Arbor, MI: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 1996)., 291.

⁶² Larry Werner, “The Lost People of Shanty Town,” *Cass City (MI) Chronicle*, September 9, 1968.

growers' fields, while the more sympathetic child welfare worker, for all her outrage, also found these conditions alien to America, and especially Michigan. In this way both groups contributed to readings of "migrant" as "foreign."

A colonial discourse that defined, justified and sought to naturalize labor stratification was another key element in maintaining the domestic/migrant binary. At their most basic colonial labor systems depend on a wage and cost of living differential between the place of productive labor and the place of reproductive labor. One aspect of colonial labor systems identified by Mario Barrera in the now classic, *Race and Class in the Southwest* is labor stratification wherein some types of jobs are characterized as "suited" for the colonized and others for members of the colonizer's racial group.⁶³ As Barrera indicates labor stratification is "informal" and "often not an absolute." Thus it is not surprising that a small proportion of seasonal agricultural workers were white or black. As with much of colonial discourse, the talk itself was much more hegemonic than the situation it was meant to justify. In practice some blacks and whites were found in the fields, but the experiences of those workers, as well as the majority who were Chicanos, was defined by the belief that for domestic workers farm work was impossibly hard and incompatible with their status while it was relatively easy and appropriate for migrants.

The assertion that seasonal agricultural labor was too difficult for white workers has a long history rooted in the challenge that agricultural labor has presented since the development of market economies. During the 20th century growers, politicians and others often described the type of agricultural work that was too difficult for white workers as "stoop labor." For example the MFB's 1966 state policies held that the Bracero Program should be revived because domestic

⁶³ Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 43.

workers were inadequate to “harvest stoop labor crops.”⁶⁴ Stoop labor, literally meaning work that required bending over, was first widely characterized as specifically suited for Mexicans during the debates over including Mexican immigrants in mid-1920s immigration restrictions. Those who opposed limiting the immigration of Mexicans wanted to maintain them as a supply of cheap labor and argued that regardless of improvements in wages or housing white workers would simply find the tasks too arduous. Testifying before Congress in 1926 Idaho Representative Addison T. Smith presaged many comments made by Melvin Woell in his editorial “Pablo’s Problem” more than 40 years later. Smith argued that the work was “very tiresome work for anyone except persons who are small in stature” that Mexicans were “very much” small in stature and “also wiry” making it natural that in terms of stoop labor Mexicans “do it better than anybody else.” As pointed out by Mark Wyman in his study of itinerant labor these beliefs about the natural suitability of Mexicans for stoop labor continued to circulate in the 1960s when Senator George Murphy argued that farm labor was meant for Mexicans because they were “built lower to the ground” and thus it was “easier for them to stoop.”⁶⁵ Woell echoed these sentiments in Michigan when he described Mexican workers as “wiry, tough and **used** to a hotter sun.”⁶⁶ In this way Woell, and others who bemoaned the end of the Bracero Program, contributed to a discourse of labor stratification that labeled migrants both accustomed to and naturally made for stoop labor.

⁶⁴ “1966 State Policy Resolutions,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 1 (January 1966): 10, 13.

⁶⁵ Mark Wyman, *Hoboes: Bindlestiffs, Fruit Tramps, and the Harvesting of the West* (New York: Macmillan, 2010), 261.

⁶⁶ Woell, “Editorial: Pablo’s Problem.”

When growers and their allies argued in the 1960s and 1970s that domestic labor was impossible to employ in the fields because the work was just too hard for them they built upon a longstanding discourse defining stoop labor as incompatible with domestic labor. These links were especially evident in debate over the end of the Bracero Program because those calling for its end did so partially because they believed it contributed to ‘domestic’ unemployment. Growers routinely balked at the idea that unemployed people could work in the fields and were not merely skeptical, but incredulous at the thought. The two labor markets were not linked in their worldview because the labor stratification, which supported the domestic/migrant binary, had been naturalized. Growers elaborated on the colonial discourse of labor stratification when they argued that that agricultural work was too hard for ‘domestic’ workers in their defenses of the Bracero Program. MFB staffer Donald Kinsey stuck a similar tone in 1965 in bemoaning the end of the Bracero Program, “There is no consideration whether domestic urban workers will be willing and able to do the hard stoop labor in the fields--the real reason for hiring Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the past.”⁶⁷ Reporting on losses in the pickling cucumber fields John L. Dotson summarized similar comments by growers from the north Saginaw Bay area, “American backs were not as strong . . . Americans just aren’t willing or able to do the kind of labor that demands bending over in the hot sun all day long . . .”⁶⁸ In this way growers and the MFB naturalized the incompatibility of domestic labor and agricultural work by linking it to heat tolerance and physical strength, both imagined as inborn and immutable conditions.

⁶⁷ Don Kinsey, “Manpower, Money and Markets,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 43, no. 3 (March 1965): 6.

⁶⁸ John L. Dotson, “Pickle Growers Add Up Losses, Rap Bracero Ban,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 9, 1965.

Intertwined with the colonial belief that “stoop labor” was just too hard for the domestic worker was the assertion that access to social services made it easy for domestic workers to decide not to work in the fields. Growers complained that ‘domestic’ unemployed workers could not be found to work in the fields because they used government benefits for their livelihood. While growers were often conservative politically and opposed government benefits for others regardless of whether they were potential farm workers their characterization of “unemployed” workers as unwilling to work due to the availability of public benefits is another elaboration of the colonial thinking at work in regards to seasonal agricultural labor. When Mr. & Mrs. Leon Brush and family wrote to Governor Romney in 1965 to protest the end of the Bracero Program they questioned the availability of domestic workers, “for *this type of work*, how do you expect us to acquire workers when they are receiving State Aid, Welfare, ADC and other assistance from the Government.”⁶⁹ In a similar vein, William R. Landrum, Chairman of the Osceola County Democratic Party wrote to Congressman James O’Hara in 1963, “Every season of harvest we have many Mexicans in our area and they help us harvest crops that the white man and the negro *will not stoop* to do. This is due to Unemployment Comp., Welfare and pride.”⁷⁰ In this way Landrum pointed to another layer of colonial thought regarding seasonal agricultural labor, not only could those included in the public sphere of social spending not be expected to do the job, they also would not do it because it was a source of shame. Landrum asserted “the white man and the negro” would not harvest crops because it was, almost literally, beneath them their “pride” prevented them from lowering themselves to “stoop” and pick produce. These growers

⁶⁹ Leon Brush to Governor George Romney, March 29, 1965, George Romney Papers, Box 351 Migrant, Bentley Historical Library.

⁷⁰ William R. Landrum to Congressman James O’Hara, September 7, 1963, James G. O’Hara Papers, Box 5 Migrant, Bentley Historical Library.

emphasized that the very nature of seasonal migrant work was incompatible with receiving public benefits, in their view those receiving social services could not be expected to show up “for this type of work.” Receiving social services, while also looked down upon, was, apparently, less shameful than stoop labor. In this way the discourse naturalizing labor stratification contributed to the maintenance of the domestic/migrant binary not only by defining the work as too hard for domestic labor, but by arguing that those able to access social welfare by their legitimate membership in the public sphere could not be migrant workers.

In contrast to the view that migrant work was too hard for domestic workers the discourse of labor stratification argued that for migrants seasonal agricultural labor was relatively easy, a form of charitable assistance akin to a vacation. The *Traverse City Record Eagle* argued it would be the end of “a colorful era” when migrants “vanished” from the area depriving the farm workers of “some of the fun in life.”⁷¹ Benton Township Treasurer Ralph Dahn reacted with skepticism to the submission of a parade permit application for a march protesting discrimination against migrants. He remarked in the summer of 1970, “I always thought they had it pretty good.”⁷² Dahn was not alone in his belief that migrants “had it pretty good” in terms of their work and standard of living. Growers often argued that seasonal agricultural labor was an especially appropriate way to help migrants, just as MFB staffer Woell had argued the Bracero Program was a form of international aid. In a preliminary report of farmer interviews conducted by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission the staff reported “One farmer described Mexican-Americans as being happy, simple people who had not yet advanced to the mechanical aptitude

⁷¹ “The Vanishing Migrant,” *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, March 19, 1968.

⁷² “Group Plans to March in Protest,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 8, 1970.

of the Anglo. He thought the farmers were doing the Mexican-Americans a great service by hiring them to do farm work . . .”⁷³ Similarly in his complaints about the end of the Bracero Program Congressman Esch bemoaned the suffering of Mexican families deprived of farm labor jobs, “Such policies also cause a real hardship on the half-million dependents in the economically depressed rural areas of Mexico.”⁷⁴ In this way growers and their allies did often did not deny that farm workers were needy, but instead argued that stoop labor was the solution to their predicament and that, as Woell complained, “labor union leaders, government officials and professional social reformers” were the source of migrant poverty.⁷⁵ In this way growers denied responsibility for the underdevelopment that they had a primary hand in creating and maintaining.

When challenged regarding poor conditions in migrant camps growers instead asserted that dwellings were better than what the migrants were accustomed to and similar to vacation homes. In this way growers built upon the argument that for migrants seasonal agricultural work was a generous form of charity. Writing in the *Farm Bureau News* in 1965 William A. Burnette, chairman of the Burnette Farms Packing company in Van Buren County compared conditions in labor camps to both “hunting lodges in Northern Michigan” and places where teachers, “wouldn’t mind spending a summer vacation.”⁷⁶ Like the Idaho Representative who associated Mexicans’ short stature with adaption to “stoop labor” Burnette described not their physical

⁷³ Michigan Civil Rights Commission, “Field Impressions of the Migrant Project Staff.”

⁷⁴ Esch, “Congressman Esch Asks Bracero Policy Review.”

⁷⁵ Woell, “Editorial: Pablo’s Problem.”

⁷⁶ Burnette, “Now-’Weep No More’.”

height, but the very nature of their lives in diminutive terms. For Burnette migrants were practically on vacation from their “little homes” where they performed their “little chores” while eagerly anticipating their return to field work in Michigan, “the land of milk and honey” for migrants. A Van Buren County delegate to the MFB convention made a similar comparison in 1965 while complaining about urban support for a migrant housing camp licensing law: “Why will city people go out and live in a tent for two weeks then go back home and demand plush housing for short term use by migrant farm workers?”⁷⁷ Writing as a “housewife” in 1967 Mrs. Florence Anderson protested increased regulation of migrant housing, asserting that fruit growers were now required to build, “the equivalent of multi-room vacation homes” for workers.⁷⁸ State Representative Arnell Engstrom asserted, “Up in the cherry country where I come from . . . the conditions they work under are better than what they have at home,”⁷⁹ Within the colonial domestic/migrant binary conditions which could not possibly be sufficient to attract “domestic” workers were designated as luxurious holiday retreats when occupied by migrants.

In the discussion of labor camps the colonial discourse of labor stratification and the colonized view of reproductive labor intersected. From a practical standpoint labor camps were the physical space in which reproductive labor occurred. As the proportion of families in the fields grew this was increasingly true. Poor conditions in labor camps were seen as “relatively good” or appropriate for migrants because, parallel to what Barrera described, just as the stoop

⁷⁷ Dan E. Reed, “Resolutions Committee Hears Farm Bureau Members,” *Sandusky (MI) Republican-Tribune*, December 30, 1965.

⁷⁸ Florence Anderson, “Housewife Speaks Out,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 45, no. 4 (April 1967): 5.

⁷⁹ Korona, “Farm Labor Group Protests Migrant Conditions.”

labor jobs too hard for domestic workers were easy for migrants, poor conditions untenable in most housing were “suited” for the colonized labor force. This naturalization of poor labor conditions was given addition force by colonial logic that relegated the reproduction of the labor force to the colony, where conditions were underdeveloped and costs were lower. Thus a lack of running water and other similar poor conditions in Michigan labor camps was unremarkable to growers, just as ordinary as the lack of refrigeration in Woell’s dystopic pastoral of Saltillo.

New Frontiers

In addition to defining migrant workers as foreign and justifiably colonized the domestic/migrant binary helped farmers to situate themselves as modern pioneers whose innovative agricultural practices embodied their American heritage. Like all colonial thought the domestic/migrant binary served not only to define the colonized, but also the colonizer. On one level it defined domestic workers primarily as urban, industrial laborers who could not be expected to lower themselves, to stoop to perform seasonal agricultural labor, for their sustenance. This may seem to leave farmers, a necessarily primarily rural population, out of the equation. This is only partially accurate, some farmers were also full time industrial workers in small-town factories who nonetheless acted politically as “farmers” through organizations like the MFB. In addition, the MFB and growers turned to earlier frontier narratives in order to delineate their difference from migrants when explaining another method of meeting their labor shortage: mechanization.

Mechanization of agriculture was not new to Michigan in the wake of the Bracero Program, but technological innovation gained new significance in the context of supposed labor

shortages.⁸⁰ The MFB encouraged its members to view mechanization as an extension of American technological progress, as modern as the use of pesticides or the new grain terminal at Zilwaukee. In the May 1966 issue of the *Michigan Farm News* MFB staffer Donald Kinsey counterposed the failure of “supply management control of food supplies” throughout history with the success of farmers’ who increased production through invention. For the MFB mechanization helped to define farmers as pioneers who once conquered new lands through vanquishing Indians, and now ruled through technological progress.

It was the plow that raised men above beast and gave him the greatest civilization of all time—America . . . for centuries prior to 1837, man depended upon crude wood tools . . . During this time, our farm production growth was due largely to expanded croplands that were a part of the new frontiers. Then, almost as if guided by the hand of Providence, the early settlers discovered . . . the first steel plow.⁸¹

In this paeon to the plow MFB members could find confidence that trying a new cucumber harvester or blueberry hand vibrator made them just like the early Americans who conquered “expanded croplands” on “new frontiers” and the “early settlers” who discovered the “first steel plow.” By implementing mechanization, even though it was not always more profitable, growers were continuing the work of making the “greatest civilization of all time” while simultaneously distancing themselves from migrant workers. Many contemporaries recognized that mechanization was partially political; a result of trying to evade the material demands of

⁸⁰ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 60–61. Mechanization in the fields had been creating disruptions in the state migrant labor force since the initial introduction of tractors to the blocking and thinning of sugar beets in the late 1920s. Valdes found that about two-thirds of the work being done by hand in the fields at the beginning of the 1960s was eliminated through mechanization by the early 1970s. (206)

⁸¹ “Power of the Plow.”

migrants who were organizing for better wages and conditions.⁸² Yet the MFB narrative of equivalence between growers mechanizing in the 1960s and American pioneers on conquered croplands was also a way for growers to distance themselves from the foreignness and peasantry they, and many others, attributed to migrant workers.

The MFB further buttressed this narrative by portraying the use of technology as a path to American freedom. In a running column the MFB featured former American Farm Bureau national President Allan B. Kline's thoughts on the history of the United States. Kline described the links between Americans as the "most free people on earth" and the free market and attributed part of this phenomenon to technological advancement. Kline asserted that freedom came from "invention and machines. The steam engine replaced wind and water power, and for the first time civilization could produce its needs without the sweat of slaves."⁸³ In the latter half of the 1960s the MFB told members that mechanization could join the free enterprise system, their American heritage and good citizenship in keeping the peasant menace at bay. This narrative helped to cement the domestic/migrant binary by describing how farmers were a part of the free, modern, domestic, mechanized free market economy, unlike the workers upon whom their livelihood depended.

The MFB was certainly not alone in predicting the demise of migrant labor. The assumption that mechanization, increased production in California and Mexico and migrants "settling out" for better opportunities meant there would no longer be migrant agricultural

⁸² Norman Pearlstine, "Commodities: Housing Dispute Spurs Michigan Farmers To Switch to Machines From Migrant Help," *Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 1970.

⁸³ Allan B. Kline, "The Free Market," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 45, no. 9 (September 1967): 6.

workers was common during the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁴ Legislators allied with the MFB, like State Senators Charles Zollar and Alvin DeGrow, often used the assumption of the imminent disappearance of migrant workers due to mechanization as a reason not to take any legislative action on the poor conditions migrants faced. Zollar, who billed himself as the only farmer in the state legislature, asserted in 1966 that “I can see the migrant problem today as not existing in the future, and I mean the very near future. . . .”⁸⁵ “growers are “on their last generation of migrants now.”⁸⁵ The editor of the *Cass City Chronicle*, John Haire, was one of the few small town newspapermen who agreed that migrant workers lived in “deplorable” conditions. He criticized state senator Alvin DeGrow for arguing that the senate agriculture committee did not need to pay attention to poor conditions in the fields because mechanization would soon eliminate any need for migrant workers.⁸⁶

Nor was the MFB set apart from the popular belief that migrant workers were, like the plants they harvested, a part of the natural landscape instead of self-determining human beings. The characterization of migrants as disappearing before the march of progress, just as indigenous people had, also built upon a specialized vocabulary used when speaking of migrants that emphasized their behaviors as a part of a natural world vanquished by industrial progress. Migrants did not commute on highways to work, they followed the migrant ‘stream,’ migrants did not live in neighborhoods, but in ‘camps,’ their domiciles were not houses, but ‘cabins,’ they

⁸⁴ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 200–207; “The Vanishing Migrant.”

⁸⁵ Brandon Brown, “Marginal Fruit Farmers Are Told to Quit Trying,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, February 23, 1966.

⁸⁶ John Haire, “From the Editor’s Corner,” *Cass City (MI) Chronicle*, September 11, 1969.

did not seek state aid, they ‘flooded’ the welfare office and they did not choose to relocate for work, they ‘settled-out.’⁸⁷ These keywords associated migrants with elements of America’s ‘natural’ past; like spawning fish migrants followed the stream, they resided in a benighted frontier of ‘camps’ and ‘cabins’ before finally ‘settling-out,’ with no more conscious motivation than silt depositing in a floodplain. It was in this mode that MFB staffer Gary A. Kleinhenn and Barry Brown, director of the State Department of Labor spoke when they discussed the people leaving seasonal farm work for other employment as “the migrant stream drying up.”⁸⁸ Yet in the hands of the MFB the much over-heralded extinction of the “migrant stream” was combined with a promotion of mechanization as a form of expanding production through conquering new lands that also added a new layer to domestic/migrant binary.

By defining migrant workers as natural remnant of the past who would disappear just as the plains Indians had supposedly made way for John Deere’s plow the MFB cemented the difference between those who owned a farm and those who labored on it. Kinsey’s homage to the plow defined those who did manual labor on the farm, as opposed to those who operated machines, as elements of an uncivilized past where men were “beasts” who used “crude wood tools.” Fortunately, in Kinsey’s view, these savage people of the past were swept away, first by conquering Indians and settling “new frontiers” and then by the innovation of the steel plow. To Kinsey, were it not for these providential advances, “man would still be living a life of privation and drudgery. . . . Grubbing out an existence with hand tools would be our lot today.” In these

⁸⁷ Donna Wilber, “Mutual Confidence and Cooperation,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 9 (September 1966): 15; Elton Smith, “False Issue of the Grape Strike,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 1 (January 1969): 2.

⁸⁸ Gary A. Kleinhenn, “Labor Head Views Farm Issues,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 4 (April 1970): 14.

passages Kinsey demonstrates how the MFB characterization of farmers as modern, free conquerors of new lands through mechanization was simultaneously a way to portray those who continued to use “hand tools” in the fields, seasonal migrant workers, as different and less than farmers themselves. Kline also replicated a similar binary when he counterposed “invention” and “steam” power with the move away from slave labor. If, in Kline’s view it was mechanical devices powered by non-natural forces which separated free men from slaves, what of the migrant worker, who continued to perform primarily manual labor? At times this link was even more transparent, as when the MFB used lyrics from a popular nursery rhyme, *Ten Little Indians*, to describe the migrant worker shortage in 1966, “Five little---four little---three little Indians!’ The old song sets the trend that hit seasonal farm workers . . .”⁸⁹ The MFB’s particular iteration of the American frontier thesis conveniently associated farmers with white conquering settlers and migrants with Indians who had, in their view, naturally faded away.

While mechanization had been taking place in Michigan agriculture for decades, the MFB discussed mechanization as a ‘solution’ to the ‘labor shortage’ more frequently beginning in 1966. Earlier in the decade the MFB rarely promoted mechanization to growers as an option for lowering the costs of labor, nor to the public as a “solution” to the “migrant problem.” The MFBs promotion of mechanization also served as colonial rhetoric for the twentieth century. The MFB portrayed growers mechanizing in the late 1960s as both literal and figurative descendants of those “first settlers” who “expanded croplands” and could now provide growers with “new frontiers” through the Thar asparagus sled or the Harvey blueberry harvester. As with previous iterations of colonialist rhetoric and agriculture, mechanization was accompanied by the disappearance of a racially-marked group whose work in shaping the land was no longer needed.

⁸⁹ “Labor Picture Dim for State Farmers,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 2 (February 1966): 14.

Chicano migrant workers, like the Native Americans before them, were a dying breed. The discursive assignment of Chicano migrant workers to the category of people rendered non-existent by progress was a part of an ongoing process of racialization that attributed both foreignness and indigeneity to Chicanos thereby making them the subjects of both colonialism and its settler varietal.

In the aftermath of the Bracero Program there was more pressure than ever before to improve the condition of migrant workers throughout the Midwest.⁹⁰ The MFB's intensified colonial discourse was part of a growing public relations and lobbying campaign designed to stop new state regulation of farm labor. Michigan growers, the MFB, processors, and their political allies were largely successful in preventing, delaying or blunting the effect of laws designed to establish a minimum wage and improve housing and working conditions.⁹¹ During this period the MFB maintained its strict anti-regulation stance, with one significant exception, an "emigrant agent" law aimed at stopping "labor piracy."⁹² Labor piracy was the MFB's explanation for worker mobility. Migrant workers left Michigan farms not because they were undesirable places to work, but because unscrupulous labor contractors were able to dupe naïve migrants into thinking better jobs were available elsewhere. Like the view that the Bracero Program was solely a form of foreign policy, "Labor piracy" was a grower frame for rendering government regulation acceptable within their free market ethos while simultaneously portraying

⁹⁰ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 1165.

⁹¹ Valdés, *Al Norte*; Sidney Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights: Michigan, 1948-1968* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

⁹² Reed, "Labor Legislation Is a Concern of All Farmers," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 44, no. 7 (July 1966): 5.

migrant workers as subordinate. Meanwhile, increased public sympathy for migrant workers threatened both the economic livelihood and worldview of many growers.

“Radical Group May Demonstrate”

In April of 1966 Jose Jimenez appealed to Governor Romney to include migrant workers in proposed minimum wage legislation. Jimenez wrote on behalf of *Seglares en Acción*, a Catholic lay group associated with the Detroit Archbishop’s Commission on Human Relations.⁹³ With his letter Jimenez included a petition signed by more than 200 fellow congregants, many of them Spanish-speaking. The Spanish-speaking congregants in *Seglares en Acción* built upon efforts to assist destitute migrants who had arrived in Detroit for decades. But Jimenez’ letter arrived in the wake of a significant change in tactics for Mexican American and Puerto Ricans seeking justice for migrants in Michigan. Earlier in the month, on April 10, 1966 Easter Sunday, *Seglares en Acción* had led the first public march for migrant workers in Michigan.⁹⁴ By the following Easter Ruben Alfaro and many members of LAUPA joined a second march for migrants, eighty miles from Saginaw to Lansing. This was the “Radical Group” that Governor Romney’s aide Ted Blizzard was warned about.⁹⁵ Prior to 1967 members of both groups, and many others, had lobbied, endorsed candidates, written letters and held meetings. LAUPA in particular had been negotiating with Governor Romney and lobbying the legislature to enact regulations to protect migrant workers since its formation. Doubts regarding the efficacy of state

⁹³ John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 137.

⁹⁴ Patrick J. Owens, “Mexicans March for Wage Bill,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 11, 1966.

⁹⁵ “Memo Re: Tomas Chavez,” 1967, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

regulation contributed to the decline of the moderate tactics and worker-citizen identity that Latin American organizations like LAUPA promoted. By 1968 Mexican-Americans intensified their lobbying and adopted new more confrontational tactics like Chicano organizers elsewhere.

The success of the MFB and their allies in preventing substantive regulation between 1966 and 1968 created significant frustration amongst migrant advocates. A very limited worker's compensation law that applied almost exclusively to full-time farm workers was passed in 1965 and scheduled to go into effect on May 1, 1966.⁹⁶ In January of 1966 State Senator Zollar, who had opposed the original bill, asserted that it would mean a 50 percent reduction in the amount of harvest labor available because workers under age 16 would not be insurable at any price.⁹⁷ A week later Democrats relented and a bill delaying implementation of the law until May 1, 1967 was introduced by Democrat Floyd Mattheeussen, who later characterized Zollar's assertion as a "big lie."⁹⁸ Lansing LAUPA chairman Demetrio Saenz protested proposed delays in Workmen's Compensation coverage for farm workers and sought a meeting with Governor Romney for the organization. Romney chose an aide, Herbert DeJonge, to meet with LAUPA members instead, and said he remained undecided about delaying workmen's compensation.⁹⁹ Saenz also argued that Democrats were especially to be questioned for putting the rights of other workers above the rights of farmworkers and supporting a delay in the

⁹⁶ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 179; Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 303.

⁹⁷ Jerry Krieger, "Kids Banned in Berry Patches!," *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, January 22, 1966.

⁹⁸ "Urge Delay For Farm Labor Tax," *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, January 26, 1966; "Fears Harvest Labor Shortage," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, March 12, 1966.

⁹⁹ Governor George Romney to Demetrio Saenz, February 16, 1966, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

Democratic controlled Senate Labor Committee.¹⁰⁰ Throughout the spring the MFB mobilized its members while Senator Zollar whipped up sentiment for a delay. Ultimately Zollar and his local Democratic rival Matheusen became so committed to delaying workmen's compensation coverage for migrant workers that they engaged in a public battle over who could claim credit for the delay passed on April 29, one day before the proposed change was to take effect. When the law did take effect in August 1967 it had been further amended to exclude both those doing piece-work and those working for 12 weeks or less.¹⁰¹ Alfaro's criticism of Romney became more heated as he asserted the governor "had stabbed migrant workers in the back" with his support for the amended bill.¹⁰² Between 1965 and 1967 LAUPA and other moderate Latin American groups saw that their patient lobbying went largely unrewarded when it came to worker's compensation coverage.

The MFB and its allies were equally successful in blunting the effects of the minimum wage law for farmworkers. In 1964 LAUPA members included support for a minimum wage for farmworkers on their litmus test for endorsing candidates.¹⁰³ The minimum wage law that initially passed included farmworkers and went into effect at \$1.00/hour on January 1 in time for the coming season.¹⁰⁴ The MFB and other growers began lobbying for exceptions to the law

¹⁰⁰ Demetrio Saenz, "In Action On Pay Aid," *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, February 7, 1966.

¹⁰¹ Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 303.

¹⁰² "Migrants 'Stabbed' By Romney," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, August 2, 1967; "Says Migrants Hurt by Bill," *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, August 3, 1967, sec. 2.

¹⁰³ "Hold Meet On Migratory Worker Laws."

¹⁰⁴ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 177; Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 303.

before it even went into effect.¹⁰⁵ By February 1965 the MFB successfully lobbied for a delay in implementation while growers petitioned the wage deviation board.¹⁰⁶ The 1965 season began without a minimum wage law for farm workers. New legislation was passed by July creating a full one year delay and responding to growers' demands for minimum crop-specific piece rates instead of hourly wages.¹⁰⁷ By January of 1966 Dan Sturt, director of the Rural Manpower Center, requested two additional years to study harvests in order to set the piece rates.¹⁰⁸ When *Seglares en Acción* marched in Detroit on Easter of that year it had already been more than a year and a half since the original minimum wage law was supposed to go into effect. In April Herb DeJonge, an aide to Governor Romney, asserted that progress on the issue was being made because the study of one crop, apples, had been completed.¹⁰⁹ In May LAUPA's Pontiac chairman, Puerto Rican Pastor Tomás Chavez, wrote Governor Romney and complained that further study was only delaying substantive wage improvements. "Latin Americans at least don't want to be microscoped and polled for the economic benefit of others. . . The Latin

¹⁰⁵ Brandon Brown, "Wage Law Is Thorny Problem to Growers," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 16, 1964; "Wait Early Meet With Wage Board," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 24, 1964.

¹⁰⁶ Brandon Brown, "Cherries Getting Just Too Big," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, February 24, 1965.

¹⁰⁷ "Bill Designed to Aid Farmer," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, July 30, 1965.

¹⁰⁸ "Piece Rate Study May Take 2 Years," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, January 28, 1966.

¹⁰⁹ "Horticultural Group Asks For Piece-Rate Wage Law," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 8, 1966; Herb DeJonge to Governor George Romney, April 11, 1966, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

American wants action, not promises.”¹¹⁰ Piece rates did not go into effect that summer, the rural manpower center conducted studies of piece rates for individual crops that would allow the “average” worker to earn an equivalent amount to the minimum hourly wage through July of 1966. According to the grower representative on the State Wage Deviation Board, Ray Anderson, these piece-rates were crucial to avoid “gold-bricking” by farm workers.¹¹¹ Another season passed as Latin American activists grew restive and planned the larger march on Lansing for Easter of 1967.¹¹² A universal minimum wage for farmworkers was still not in effect when they arrived at the capitol that day and demanded an end to further delays and a \$2 per hour minimum wage. In May of 1967 piece rates were set for a few more crops; strawberries, cherries, onions, greens and radishes.¹¹³ By that point it had been more than two years since the initial law took effect and Latin American activists saw another season beginning with little prospect for complete minimum wage coverage.

Poor housing was perhaps the most provocative of all LAUPA’s disappointing lobbying efforts because the activists came to see the consequences of the ineffective law as literally a matter of life and death. A migrant camp licensing law passed in 1965 required camps with more than five residents to meet minimum safe and healthy housing standards, and mandated

¹¹⁰ Tomás Chavez to Governor George Romney, May 23, 1966, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

¹¹¹ “Horticultural Group Asks For Piece-Rate Wage Law.”

¹¹² Salvador Herrera and Sol de Aztlan Inc., *La Raza in Ingham County, 1920-1976* (Lansing, Mich.: The Firm, 1976), 14.

¹¹³ Rates were also set at this time for asparagus, but most of the season had already passed, leaving asparagus snappers to wait until 1968 to be covered. “Peg Piece Rates For 4 Area Crops,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, May 6, 1967.

inspections beginning in the 1966 season.¹¹⁴ *Seglares en Acción* included a call for “good housing” in the petition to Governor Romney in April, 1966. In May of 1966 Chavez cited the “deplorable” living conditions of migrants as one reason change was so urgently needed.¹¹⁵ In contrast to the delays on worker’s compensation and the minimum wage, camps were actually inspected as scheduled in 1966. Yet the law allowed camps with violations to receive provisional licenses and provided little follow-up; many violations went uncorrected.¹¹⁶ When the 1967 migrant march participants arrived in Oakley on Friday March 25, almost a year after Chavez had written Governor Romney to complain about the “deplorable” conditions, he again cited a need for better housing as one reason for the march.¹¹⁷ Marchers highlighted the need for better housing with signs saying “Chicken Coops Are For the Birds,” referring to growers’ continuing use of buildings designed for animal, not human, habitation.¹¹⁸ Governor Romney met with representatives from Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers in April, where they again asserted that the standards in the housing law were too low and poorly enforced. Romney assured the migrant activists that creating an Agricultural Labor Commission within the Department of Labor was the way to work on migrants’ problems.¹¹⁹ The migrant activists

¹¹⁴ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 174; Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 301.

¹¹⁵ Chavez to Romney, May 23, 1966.

¹¹⁶ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 174.

¹¹⁷ “Tre Ore Slows Protest March,” *Hillsdale (MI) Daily News*, March 25, 1967.

¹¹⁸ “Migrant Workers Ask Romney for Support,” *Buffalo (NY) Courier Express*, March 27, 1967.

largely disagreed and were weary of further studies and meetings, Alfaro told reporters, “it is the advisory boards that have given us trouble.”¹²⁰ When the Agricultural Labor Camp Unit returned to investigate in the summer of 1967 they found an average of 3.3 violations per camp, slightly less than the 3.5 violations per camp found the previous year.¹²¹ By August Alfaro and the Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers were already stung by the failure of worker’s comp legislation and the minimal effect of minimum wage laws.

Their outrage intensified when they attributed the death by fire of five children in licensed migrant housing to Governor Romney’s inaction. The five children, all under five, were alone because their parents were working in a nearby apple packing shed in September and their 13 year old babysitter, Martha Barrett, had left the cabin to use an outhouse. There was no bathroom in the 12x16 one-room cabin. The fire was discovered quickly, but could not be put out in time to save the children, whose bodies were found huddled beneath a table and a stove.¹²² The cabin was owned by Alton Wendzel, a prominent local fruit and vegetable grower who was a leader in the MFB affiliate Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association (MACMA) and President of the Coloma Cooperative Canning Company.¹²³ Alfaro quickly

¹¹⁹ “Governor Romney Thursday,” March 30, 1967, George Romney Papers, Box 326 Spanish American Migrant March, Bentley Historical Library.

¹²⁰ “Migrants’ Views Told to Romney,” *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, April 4, 1967.

¹²¹ Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 302.

¹²² Holmes, “Five Children Die in Blaze!”; “Cabin Checked, OK’d Before Fire Killed Five”; “5 Children Die in Farm Cabin Fire”; “Bulletin.”

condemned Romney's inaction as "perpetuating the shameful conditions of the farm workers" that led to the fire. Acting on behalf of a new group that came out of LAUPA, Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers, Alfaro questioned Romney, writing, "how many more children must die before you and your administration admit the total neglect you have shown to the problem of the farm worker . . . what occurred last week only shows how little has been done. . .",¹²⁴ Romney and his administration conducted an internal investigation and concluded the camp met the legal requirements, was properly licensed and could be licensed again.¹²⁵ Romney denied responsibility for the situation and suggested another round of meetings.¹²⁶

The members of Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers were actively meeting, but by the fall of 1967 their meetings were no longer simply about lobbying and endorsing candidates for election as LAUPA's had been. Nor were they only about organizing marches and protests. Members of Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers, like Robert Uribe of Saginaw, were participating in key Chicano Movement events nation-wide.¹²⁷ A month after the tragic fire at Wendzel's migrant camp Uribe attended the El Paso, Texas counter-conference in protest of

¹²³ "Elected Chairman," *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, March 15, 1967; "Managerial Change," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 7, 1967; "A. Wendzel President of Canning Firm," *Coloma (MI) Courier*, May 5, 1966.

¹²⁴ Alfaro and Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers to Governor George, September 22, 1967.

¹²⁵ Rice Chief Division of Engineering to Vogt Acting Director Department of Health, September 25, 1967.

¹²⁶ Romney to Alfaro, October 2, 1967.

¹²⁷ "La Raza Unida" (La Raza Unida, 1969), 18, Gilberto T. and Minerva T Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections.

President Johnson's Inter-agency Conference on Mexican American Affairs. He brought the idea of a new organization founded at the counter-conference, La Raza Unida, back with him to Michigan. Although activists planned another march for migrants for Easter of 1968, the aftermath of the march was not a new round of meetings with state officials about labor camp standards or workmen's compensation coverage as it had been after the 1967 march. Instead Alfaro announced he had "given up on Romney" and argued that if farm workers were not given the right to unionize it would lead to walkouts, strikes and "violence."¹²⁸ In May, a month after the 1968 Easter Sunday march, Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers and LAUPA were reborn as La Raza Unida.¹²⁹

In its earliest years LAUPA had argued that migrants deserved a better life because they were American citizens and children of God. In the popular memory of many Chicano participants, the 1967 march, led by Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers, marked the beginning of the Chicano Movement in Michigan. As with most social movements the 1967 march was not without roots. It was not only a beginning, but also signaled the decline of more moderate efforts to change migrants' situation. Prior to 1967 members of Latin American groups, and many others, had lobbied, endorsed candidates, written letters and held meetings. These activities continued, but were gradually overshadowed by other forms of dissent by 1968. La Raza Unida and its contemporaries portrayed migrant workers as an exploited people

¹²⁸ Robert Stuart, "Migrant Workers Irritated By Romney's 'No-Show,'" *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, April 15, 1968; "Farm Workers Hint They'll Try Violence," *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, April 15, 1968.

¹²⁹ Herrera and Inc., *La Raza in Ingham County, 1920-1976*, 24; Roy O. Fuentes, "Developing Strategies for Establishing Support Groups Within the Latino Community" (Michigan Department of Education, 1978), 41, Box 1, Folder 68 Juana and Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

colonized by a corrupt United States. Between 1968 and 1973 La Raza Unida and this new Chicano Movement in Michigan actively pursued unionization of farm workers and public protest. The MFB's portrayal of a colonial domestic/migrant binary and its successful effort to blunt any new regulation of farming inadvertently contributed to this transition. Now though the Farm Bureau faced a new, and much more serious threat, the fusion of the grape boycott and migrants' rights in Michigan.

“Chavez-paid Organizers” and La Raza

Efforts to support the grape boycott in Michigan heightened contradictions in rural communities throughout Michigan as unions, church groups and Chicanos forced growers and the MFB to defend their opposition to farm worker unions and their assertion that migrants were foreigners with no place in the public sphere. Between the fall of 1968 and the late summer of 1970 the MFB waged a battle against the grape boycott whose intensity far surpassed its previous campaign against state regulation. MFB leaders and members saw the grape boycott as both a practical and existential threat. They feared migrant workers in Michigan would unionize and their vision of American farmers as a bulwark against communism rested on a yeoman utopia many grape boycott supporters held did not exist. The Chicano Movement in Michigan made little differentiation between the cause of migrant workers locally and support for the grape boycott. While the MFB struggled to defend their heritage as the embodiment of an America free from peasantry, Chicanos increasingly argued that particular America had never existed at all.

The MFB's opposition to the grape boycott was predictable, but the intensity of its resistance was not. Comparing coverage of state regulation of migrant farm work to references to the grape boycott in the *Michigan Farm News* is one way to gauge the MFB's concern about the grape boycott. Between 1966 and 1967 the *Michigan Farm News* included 31 articles

addressing state regulation. In the two-year period beginning in September, 1968 the *Michigan Farm News* published 64 articles decrying the evils of the grape boycott. Several issues of the *Michigan Farm News* devoted two, three, four or more pages to detailing the threat that the grape boycott constituted to Michigan farmers, free enterprise, the nation's food supply, and the very survival of the United States. The MFB vigorously promoted its agenda through the local membership structure, resulting in the formation of 24 county level "Freedom to Market" anti-boycott committees in Michigan.¹³⁰ The MFB also engaged in a radio and print media campaign to fight the grape boycott at the local level encouraging consumers to ask their grocers for grapes and facilitating the activities of State Senator Loraine Beebe's (R-Dearborn) Consumer's Rights' Committee.¹³¹ In addition MFB staff actively monitored meetings and publications of grape boycott supporters.¹³² The MFB had an established record of fighting both legal efforts to improve the conditions of farmworkers, the power of industrial unions in state politics and competing farmer's unions like the National Farmers Organization (NFO). Yet

¹³⁰ "Notes from All Over," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 9 (September 1969): 3.

¹³¹ "Accent Agriculture"; Dan E. Reed, "Another Explanation of the Grape Boycott," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, March 6, 1969, Stanley Powell Papers, Archives of Michigan; Melvin L. Woell, "Super Market Struggle," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 6 (June 1969): 2; "Anti-Boycott Leader to Speak Here," *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, June 20, 1969; "Grape Talk at Onkama," *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, May 21, 1969; "FB Blasts Boycott," *Hillsdale (MI) Daily News*, November 5, 1969.

¹³² Stanley M Powell to Dan E. Reed, March 13, 1968, Stanley Powell Papers, Archives of Michigan; "The Pickets Who Were They?," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 9 (September 1968): 2; "Union Stir Farm Labor," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 46, no. 3 (March 1968): 5; Charles Bailey, "Unionization of Farm Labor . . the BIG Lie," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 11 (November 1968): 14; Jerry Krieger, "Recruit Students to Help Organize," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, April 4, 1969.

the UFW campaign to organize table grape harvest workers in California's Central Valley was thousands of miles away in a crop with little economic importance to Michigan farmers.¹³³

What was important to both the MFB and many Michigan farmers was the way the grape boycott threatened to restructure relations of power on the farm and bring the "peasant menace" home. Efforts during 1966 and 1967 to regulate migrant work and expose the poverty migrants labored under had already disrupted the MFB's claim that only American agriculture produced without subjecting its citizens to "stoop labor." The MFB challenged these assertions with the domestic/migrant binary that excluded impoverished migrant workers from American reality by rendering them foreign. Making migrants foreign preserved the exceptional nature of American agriculture. Now the grape boycott became a vehicle for Chicanos and unions to not only further publicize migrant workers' plight within America, but also render American agriculture just another site of class struggle, another battle between bosses and workers backed by "big labor." In order to counter the threat of unionization the MFB continued to highlight the "special" and "exceptional" nature of farming.

They also began to argue that migrant farm workers were already too powerful. Dan E. Reed, then the MFB's chief lobbyist, spoke against the Grape Boycott on the MFB's syndicated radio program. The program, called "Accent Agriculture," was broadcast as a public service radio program weekly to over 50 radio stations in Michigan. The MFB initiated its campaign against the grape boycott with one of its August, 1968 radio programs. Reed began by arguing that farm workers were better off in Michigan than at home and that they made more money than the farmers themselves. Then he related a cautionary tale about the danger of unionization for farm workers. Prompted by host Roger Brown, Reed described how a cherry grower in Manistee

¹³³ "Boycott of Grapes Not Affecting Michigan," *Hillsdale (MI) Daily News*, September 9, 1968.

County was forced to allow the workers to start working on the area, or block, of cherries that had the best crop. The grower had insisted that the workers begin with the lightest blocks, where the pickers, paid by the piece, would have had to work harder to earn the same amount of money in more time than the heaviest blocks. The workers refused to do so, and eventually the grower relented rather than lose the crew all together. Reed believed this demonstrated farm workers already had the right to “bargain.” He told the listening audience, “sometimes folks think there is no bargaining power on the part of labor, but of course there is a great deal of power to simply pull out and leave because these people are not indentured servants.”¹³⁴ Thus Reed’s cautionary tale ended with the lesson that as long as migrant workers were not “indentured servants” they already possessed sufficient workplace power.

Onekama grower Ray Anderson, the source of the MFB’s vignette on cherry pickers’ power to refuse to pick less profitable blocks, reported further on his experience with farm workers’ “harvest pressure” in the next issue of the *Farm Bureau News*. Anderson believed his experience showed that farm workers had no need for unions and should not be covered by the NLRA because they already had an excess of power. Anderson bemoaned this fact stating, “I am not in a position to resist the pressure that these people can apply during the harvest season.”¹³⁵ Although Anderson believed he was unfairly browbeaten by his workers’ power, he was able to exercise his power as a member of the State Department of Labor Wage Deviation Board that set the minimum piece rate wages for all farm workers. While the MFB so generously supported migrant workers’ right to quit their job and enact one of the central principles of free labor, it did

¹³⁴ “The Grape Boycott,” Ampex, *The Grape Boycott* (Lansing, Mich., August 1968), Michigan Farm Bureau Collection, Archives of Michigan.

¹³⁵ Ray S. Anderson, “Farm Workers Use Harvest Pressure,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 9 (September 1968): 2.

so only if their departure caused no harm to growers. *Farm News* editor Woell stated “farmers must be protected from harvest time harassment and strikes by labor organizers.”¹³⁶ Thus the labor relations law the MFB proposed beginning in 1970 included a no-strike clause and prohibited secondary boycotts.¹³⁷ The threat of unionization forced the MFB to articulate its problems with greater power for farm workers and put the MFB on the defensive. No longer was it sufficient to assert that migrants were foreigners, now the MFB had to explicitly defend the special treatment farming had long received in comparison to industry. The grape boycott shifted the focus of the MFB’s defense of the status quo from shaping the public’s view of migrants to defining themselves as farmers.

The allegations that support for the grape boycott would lead to a “big labor” takeover of American agriculture found special resonance within the MFB whose membership remained invested in Cold War logic.¹³⁸ Just as the MFB had portrayed government regulation of farming as suspect because power in agriculture for anyone but farmers was akin to a communist dictatorship they now asserted that unions for farmworkers were another sinister, illegitimate and communistic centralization of power. Writing in a 1968 editorial MFB president Smith sounded the alarm, “If the current coalition of labor, social and church groups is successful in blocking

¹³⁶ Melvin L. Woell, “Amazing System,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 4 (April 1969): 2.

¹³⁷ “MFB Board Member Heard On S-2203,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 4 (April 1970): 12.

¹³⁸ Gary A. Kleinhenn, “The Farm Labor Issue Unionization,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 11 (November 1969): 10. In 1969 MFB members continued to believe that the threat of communist takeover of the United States was significant. 98% of the over 600 community groups surveyed agreed that “communism and socialism within this country” were a more serious threat than Cuba.

the sale of all California grapes . . . they will have perfected a technique to exercise absolute control of any food product in any city in the United States.”¹³⁹ Melvin Woell, who had asserted five years earlier that control of the nation’s food supply was “more to be feared than all armies or superweapons combined” now argued that the grape boycott would give unions “an unbreakable stranglehold on the food supply of our country.”¹⁴⁰ In addition to allusions to recent communist threats, secrecy and conspiracy were other qualities that the MFB attributed to both communists and grape boycott proponents.¹⁴¹ Woell asserted that part of the grape boycott’s popularity was because of the secretive way it began, “Since open efforts to do this would quickly be recognized, a behind-the-scenes program was begun months ago . . .”¹⁴² In addition numerous MFB representatives asserted that any success grape boycott organizers experienced was due to their use of the techniques of Hitler’s “Big Lie,” manipulating the church in the way Fidel Castro had in Cuba, or because Chavez was a communist infiltrator.¹⁴³ The MFB also associated the grape boycott with the “creeping” nature of the communist threat;

¹³⁹ Elton Smith, “Labor Seeks Farm Control,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 9 (September 1968): 2.

¹⁴⁰ Melvin L. Woell, “Political Parsons,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 9 (September 1968): 2.

¹⁴¹ Elton Smith, “Freedom to Buy,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 6 (June 1970): 2.

¹⁴² Melvin L. Woell, “A Vicious Hoax!,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 11 (November 1968): 2.

¹⁴³ Cletus Healy, “Battle for the Vineyards,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 7 (July 1969): 3; Smith, “Labor Seeks Farm Control”; Bailey, “Unionization of Farm Labor . . . the BIG Lie”; “Counter Pickets’ Effective at Grand Rapids Supermarket,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 4 (April 1969): 11; Louise Rebandt, “To the Editor,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 3 (March 1969): 6.

instead of questioning which nation was the next Cuba, the MFB asked which Michigan crops would be next if the grape boycott was successful.¹⁴⁴ President Smith warned members with the rhetorical question, “Who is to say when or where they will decide Michigan milk, strawberries, celery or apples should be boycotted?”¹⁴⁵ Once again the MFB sought to reinforce its own position by arguing that nothing was more reflective of America’s glorious past than their particular vision of the “free enterprise system.” In one article it argued that American history itself was against the grape boycott, asserting “Research will show that this is the first time in the economic history of North America that our consumers have been told what they can or can’t buy in the marketplace.”¹⁴⁶ Historical inaccuracy aside, MFB representatives sought to convince members that the grape boycott was bringing the communist threat literally to their doorstep. Their success in constructing the grape boycott as a grave threat helped to mobilize members like Floyd Hilliker who attended an anti-grape boycott counter-picket in Grand Rapids. Hilliker compared his participation in the picket to his “fight over dictatorship” in World War II.¹⁴⁷ One difference that Hilliker did not note was that most grape boycott picket lines in the state were staffed not by German soldiers, but by Chicanos. Formerly constructed as foreign by the MFB’s domestic/migrant binary, now they were foreign because they were communists.

¹⁴⁴ Creston Foster, “Time to Fight,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 47, no. 12 (December 1968): 19; “Boycott Bunk, Not Grapes!,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 1 (January 1969): 3; “Grapes Today Beef Tomorrow,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 48, no. 1 (January 1969): 1; Jacqueline Korona, “Farm Bureau Raps Boycott on Grapes; Boosts State Crop,” *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, August 9, 1968.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, “Labor Seeks Farm Control.”

¹⁴⁶ “AFBF. . . A Staunch Ally,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 12 (December 1969): 19.

¹⁴⁷ ““Counter Pickets’ Effective at Grand Rapids Supermarket.”

In the process of opposing the grape boycott the MFB extended its migrant/domestic binary by maintaining that Michigan Chicano efforts supporting migrants were synonymous with outside agitation. Kaleva grower and MFB Board Member Calvin Lutz was outnumbered at a Michigan Welfare League Conference panel on migrant labor in 1970. Three Michigan Chicanos, Joseph Garcia, then Mexican-American Specialist for the Diocese of Saginaw, Fidel Garcia who worked for UMOI in Benton Harbor and Mt. Pleasant, and Roy Fuentes, who was with the Michigan Economic Opportunity Office were also on the panel with Lutz.¹⁴⁸ These three were members of an emerging middle class of Chicanos who obtained government and social service positions created to answer movement demands.¹⁴⁹ Yet for the MFB they were nothing more than “Chavez-paid Organizers” and “Chavez workers” spreading “propaganda.”¹⁵⁰ Of course none of the three was actually on the payroll of the UFW, nor were they outsiders. Each was instead intimately involved in Michigan based projects to help migrants. Fuentes was a Michigan native, born and raised in Sandusky, a 1956 graduate of Sandusky High School and Central Michigan University and the first Chicano to work for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1968.¹⁵¹ The MFB’s focus on the threat of “outside agitators” from California’s

¹⁴⁸ “UMOI Hartford,” n.d., UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 1 Folder 32 La Raza Unida, Walter Reuther Archive; Shirley Charbonneau to Jim Drake, August 16, 1971, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 2, Charbonneau, Shirley, Corres. 1970-72, Walter P. Reuther Library.

¹⁴⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 135–136.

¹⁵⁰ “Farm Labor Organizers Hit Conference,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 12 (December 1970): 19.

UFWOC, “union bosses” and “uninformed do-gooders” as opposed to the involvement of Chicanos who often comprised the vast majority of individuals who marched, picketed and supported the grape boycott revealed the extent to which they attempted to dismiss migrant workers’ grievances, nor their right to present grievances within the American body politic. For the MFB being a migrant worker was synonymous with being a contented colonial subject.

Although Alfaro’s efforts received widespread positive media coverage the MFB never characterized migrants themselves as dissatisfied. Instead they portrayed early supporters of regulation as “union bosses,” “do-gooders” and “political parsons.” Prior to August of 1968 one would never know from the MFB that migrants were marching, nor that the grape boycott was building national attention. After 1968 the MFB’s attention to the grape boycott bordered on obsession, but it also portrayed dissent in the fields as foreign to Michigan, as a product of that “Czar,” Cesar Chavez. When Michigan Chicanos were mentioned, such as Joe Garcia, Roy Fuentes and Fidel Garcia, they were also portrayed in this light. The near absence of Michigan Chicanos and Michigan migrants from the MFB’s anti-grape boycott campaign was itself a signal to members that migrant discontent was imported.

While Fuentes and Fidel Garcia were not outside agitators on the UFW payroll, they were supporters of farmworker unionization, whether it was in Delano, California or Keeler.¹⁵² The arrival of actual UFW staff people amplified Chicanos’ turn away from lobbying and provided

¹⁵¹ *Echo: Sandusky Year Book*, vol. 8, 1956; *Echo: Sandusky Community High School Yearbook*, vol. 18, 1966; “Round the Town,” *Sandusky (MI) Republican-Tribune*, May 4, 1972; Roy O. Fuentes, “Pensamientos,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, March 31, 1972.

¹⁵² Orvin Johnson, “Tri-Cap Supports Chavez’ Grape Boycott,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 4, 1969; Steering Committee, “To: Committee for the Campesino Members,” March 14, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive.

increased opportunities to participate in public protest related to migrant workers. Soon after Guadalupe Anguiano, the first boycott staffer in Michigan, arrived in June of 1968, she looked to La Raza Unida for support, speaking at their first conference in September.¹⁵³ In 1969, after Anguiano was replaced by grape striker Hijinio Rangel and his family, newly formed Chicano organizations became involved in boycott activities.¹⁵⁴ The grape boycott presented Chicanos with a ready-made cause, and took out some of the preparation between discontent and direct confrontation. Brown Berets could attend the debate of Hijinio Rangel and Lorraine Beebe, but they did not have to be as prepared as the UFW's Rangel.¹⁵⁵ Brown Berets, like Saginaw's Daniel Soza, could confront officials of the Michigan Sugar Company but did not have to make their case alone, as UFW staffer Julian Herrera was available to help. Soon after the 1968 founding of the Brown Berets in Michigan, they identified the grape boycott as one of their top priorities.¹⁵⁶ Berets were strong supporters of Chavez, but their demands for migrant workers in Michigan did not emerge because they were being compensated or manipulated by Chavez. In fact, Soza and Fuentes worked on a host of issues they considered related to Chicano liberation, the grape boycott was one of many.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ La Raza Unida, "La Raza Unida Issues Conference Program"; Chris Singer, "Huelga! Grapes of Wrath," *Detroit (MI) Fifth Estate*, January 9, 1969.

¹⁵⁴ "Detroit Grape Protest Group Grabs Groceries; 16 Arrested," *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1969.

¹⁵⁵ "Sen. Beebe Holds Debate," *Holland (MI) Evening Sentinel*, September 24, 1969.

¹⁵⁶ "Brown Berets Organize Meet."

Volunteering on the picket lines in 1968, 1969 and 1970 Chicanos passed out literature asserting migrant workers were oppressed, but did not have to figure out how to produce pamphlets, press releases or talking points on their own. Picket lines were one place where organizing around the grape boycott heightened contradictions over the place of migrants in Michigan. Chicanos were the majority of grape boycott picket lines outside grocery stores like Spartan in Lansing or Kroger in Detroit and especially in smaller cities, like Adrian and Muskegon.¹⁵⁸ Picket lines invariably involved confrontation with at least some disgruntled shoppers, who, like Fred Hilliker, thought they knew more about migrant life than the picketing Chicanos. Meetings with legislators also served to expose Chicanos directly to their elected officials responses to migrant organizing. When UFW vice-president Dolores Huerta told a group of Michigan legislators about poor conditions in California fields, one claimed that Huerta was wrong because he saw migrants arrive every year in their “big, white Cadillacs. Some of them make more money than I do.”¹⁵⁹ Although the topic of these confrontations was ostensibly the conditions of migrant workers in Dinuba or Orosi, California local Michigan Chicanos could not help but think of their own experiences, or those of their parents, in towns like Decatur or Onkama. This tendency to make connections between plausibly distant political struggles was not limited to Chicanos. Likewise the presence of uniformed Brown Berets

¹⁵⁷ Daniel G Soza, Interview by Author, April 5, 2012. Soza and Fuentes met at a meeting at Cristo Rey Community Center in late 1968 or early 1969 about starting a MAYO chapter at MSU.

¹⁵⁸ “Minutes of March 15 Meeting,” March 15, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 51, Detroit Grape Boycott Meeting Minutes 1969, Walter Reuther Archive; “Boycotters Form at Keeler,” *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, July 22, 1970; Tom Brundrett, “Grape Boycott Reaches Three BH Stores,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, November 3, 1969.

¹⁵⁹ Korona, “Farm Labor Group Protests Migrant Conditions.”

heightened grape boycott opponents' sense the debate was about more than just the unionization of farm workers in California, but also a site of conflict over two different visions of America.

Support for the grape boycott and the turn towards unionization for farmworkers also brought members of La Raza Unida, the Brown Berets and other groups into direct contact with rural growers, local government officials and townspeople opposing change for migrant workers. In the summers of 1969 and 1970 Chicanos sought to organize farm workers in Van Buren County, the Saginaw Valley, Erie and Croswell.¹⁶⁰ Their efforts occurred with little formal assistance from the UFW, whose limited Michigan resources remained concentrated on the grape boycott. Consequently Committee for the Campesino, a new coalition of Chicano activists and sympathetic whites from the Migrant Ministry and UMOI worked together.¹⁶¹ The struggles in Van Buren County provided additional evidence that migrants were oppressed and treated as second-class citizens. In the 1969 summer season local activists attempted to organize farm

¹⁶⁰ "Migrants Move Against Oppression"; William Benallack, "Michigan Migrant Ministry Annual Report 1969," January 29, 1970, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library; "Weller Cheats Migrants"; "Labor Dispute Closes Weller's"; "Sour Pickles in Michigan"; unknown, "Committee for the Campesino Meeting Minutes," March 19, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive; Ruben Alfaro, Andy Hewitt, and Eileen O'Leary, Sr., "Minutes Meeting of the Food and Bedding Committee (Committee for Campesino)," April 17, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive; "Monroe County Tomato Growers Plan Meeting on Strike Threat," *Toledo (OH) Blade*, August 19, 1969; "State Tomato Farmers Discuss Strike Threat," *Owosso (MI) Argus-Press*, August 19, 1969; "Migrant Workers May Strike Tomato Growers," *Ann Arbor Michigan Daily*, August 21, 1969; "The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee Demands," July 1969, William G. Milliken Papers, Regional Offices, Detroit, Box 905 Migrants Folder Migrants Commission on Agricultural Labor 1969, Bentley Historical Library; "Michigan Sugar Co. Denies Demands of Migrant Union," *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, July 16, 1969; Rosa Morales, "Migrants, Sugar Firm Officials Will Confer," *Saginaw (MI) News*, July 9, 1969.

¹⁶¹ Steering Committee, "Members of the Committee for the Campesino," April 22, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive.

workers in the Keeler area. John Meléndez first tried to hold an organizing meeting at the Keeler Migrant Ministry(KMM) Headquarters, sometimes called El Centro Campesino, but Migrant Ministry staff refused to allow a union meeting there. Hartford grower and Migrant Ministry board member John Babcock asserted that the KMM had agreed, “not to participate in any attempts at unionization of migrants or in the California grape boycott.” Melendez then held the meeting outdoors on the grounds of a vacant Keeler school building, but Gary Waterkamp, Hartford Schools superintendent appeared and asked them not to meet there because area growers would not like it and might vote down an upcoming school millage. Waterkamp revealed that he came to ask the migrants not to rally there at the behest of Bill Burnette, Hartford School Board President.¹⁶² Burnette’s was the same canner and member of the MFB who had called Michigan “the land of milk and honey” for migrants in 1965 and mocked claims that any abuses were occurring in the fields. In 1965 Burnette wrote of how his “humanitarian bent” sent him on a search for the “farmer scoundrels” he had read about in newspapers, but Burnette asserted that his search was “in vain.”¹⁶³

Perhaps Burnette should have continued searching, because he owned property less than three miles from Joseph Hassle’s Krohne Camp, the site of the most violent publicized conflict between growers and Chicanos during this period.¹⁶⁴ Hassle was Van Buren County’s largest grower, farming more than 2500 acres, with 15 different migrant camps housing more than 1000

¹⁶² “Migrant Rally Draws Under 100 at Keeler,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 19, 1969.

¹⁶³ Burnette, “Now-’Weep No More’.”

¹⁶⁴ Mio Directory Service Company, *Official Rural Farm Directory, Van Buren County Michigan* (Algona, Iowa: Mio Directory Service Co, 1969).

workers.¹⁶⁵ Throughout the summers of 1969 and 1970 Hassle forced visitors away from his migrant camps; by brandishing a lead pipe and a knife, smashing car windows, beatings, threats of murder and perhaps most telling, holding law student Donald Folgueras hostage with a shotgun for two hours in July, 1969. Folgueras and fellow UMOI employee Violadelle Valdez were attempting to visit George and Alicia Gutierrez at Hassle's Krohne Camp on July 23, 1969 because the Gutierrez children were ill. Hassle forcibly held Folgueras on the ground while brandishing his shotgun until the Van Buren County sheriff arrived and arrested Folgueras for trespassing.¹⁶⁶

Several people seeking access to residents of Hassle's camps were actively interested in organizing farm workers but many were not. Violadelle Valdez had been involved in promoting "Brown Power" in the Keeler area.¹⁶⁷ In 1970 Hassle drew a knife on Van Buren County La Raza Unida Vice-President and Brown Beret Jose Gongora. Gongora was assisting Juan Armando Saucedo in enrolling migrant children in a summer school program.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile

¹⁶⁵ Shirley Charbonneau, "To: Bill Gomez, Mike Uriegas, Fidel Garcia, Fr. Joe Melton," March 17, 1971, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 1, Charbonneau, Shirley, Corres. 1970-72, Walter P. Reuther Library; "Suit Seeks Federal Court Order to Restrain Keeler Area Fruit Grower," *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, March 17, 1971; "Perfectionists," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 18, 1969.

¹⁶⁶ Donald Folgueras et al., Plaintiffs, v. Joseph W. Hassle et al., 381 F. Supp. 615 (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division 1971); Steve McQuown, "It's Losing Season for Joe Hassle," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 10, 1970; "Ground Rules Established in Migrant Camp Dispute," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, May 19, 1971.

¹⁶⁷ "Keeler to Host Migrant Leaders," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, February 21, 1970.

¹⁶⁸ Joseph Hassle, *Affidavit of Joseph Hassle-United States v. Joseph Hassle* (Berrien County, MI, 1971); "Mexican Americans Organize," June 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott

Sister Betty La Budie maintained she entered Hassle's camp to locate members of the Alvarez family because one of the children and their mother had been admitted to the hospital.¹⁶⁹ James Harrington, of the Lansing Catholic Diocese, asserted Hassle had prevented priests and volunteers, including himself, from entering the camps to perform religious services for the previous six years.¹⁷⁰ Through harassment, intimidation and violence Hassle blocked all representatives of the American public sphere from entering his migrant camps and communicating with farm workers, whether they were actually trying to unionize them or not. Hassle saw no reason to differentiate between the two in any case, stating in his defense in 1971, "If there are any rights of private property left, we do not believe they can use our property to organize for Caesar[sic] Chavez."¹⁷¹ For Hassle migrant workers belonged in the field, and anyone who tried to connect with them was akin to the "Chavez-paid" organizers that his fellow grower Lutz confronted in Lansing.

Of course the people who gathered on the Keeler school grounds and the workers who UMOI was trying to reach in the camps were not organizing for Chavez, they were organizing for themselves. They were inspired by Chavez, Huerta and the UFW, but were more motivated

Collection, Walter Reuther Archive; Sandra Engle, "Chicano Is Appointed to Tri-Cap Council," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, September 22, 1970; unknown, "Minutes of Staff, Michigan Migrant Ministry," April 24, 1969, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter Reuther Archive; Juan Armando Saucedo, *Affidavit of Juan Armando Saucedo-United States v. Joseph Hassle* (Ingham County, MI, 1971).

¹⁶⁹ Betty LaBudie, *Affidavit of Sister Betty LaBudie-United States v. Joseph Hassle* (Wayne County, MI, 1971).

¹⁷⁰ James C. Harrington, *Affidavit of James C. Harrington-United States v. Joseph Hassle* (Wayne County, MI, 1971).

¹⁷¹ "Suit Seeks Federal Court Order to Restrain Keeler Area Fruit Grower."

to liberate California farm workers as a matter of solidarity rather than charity. In the midst of their efforts in Van Buren County, Chicanos organized a march in Benton Harbor, 15 miles to the west. Benton Harbor was the nearest large city, and a historical center of agricultural capital, home of the Benton Harbor Fruit Market, which accurately billed itself as the “World’s Largest Cash-to-Grower Market.”¹⁷² The march participants, three to four hundred strong, carried signs targeting local adversaries, including Hassle and Zollar. After the rally they picketed three grocery stores, demanding that California grapes be removed. This was another way the grape boycott helped to heighten contradictions. It created a practical demand that could be immediately addressed, on a local basis by individuals who could be directly confronted in person. It necessitated an immediate choosing of sides. Bill Bennalack, the head of the migrant ministry who was generally in favor of unionization and the boycott summarized, “The Grape Boycott effort in Benton Harbor . . . caused local newspapers, businessmen and members of the black, brown and white community to show their true colors . . .”¹⁷³ During the July 20, 1970 march the managers of an A&P chose to remove the grapes, the type of small victory for Chicanos that facilitated further direct confrontations of local growers.

The efforts of Chicano Movement organizations in Michigan to unionize farm workers brought the struggle from the state capital and the urban grocery store picket line directly to farms and increasingly to rural communities. There Chicanos confronted an entrenched rural power structure of local growers, canners and others who enacted the migrant/domestic binary

¹⁷² Transportation and Facilities Research Division, *The Benton Harbor Michigan Fruit Market* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, 1961); “1964-A Good Year for Growers,” *Watervliet (MI) Record*, January 7, 1965; Jennifer Gaydos and Kristin M. Szylvian, “Voices of Growers,” *Michigan History* 90, no. 3 (2006): 14.

¹⁷³ Benallack, “Michigan Migrant Ministry Annual Report 1969.”

not only discursively, but physically. In the Keeler struggle growers and canners, led by Babcock and Burnette, prevented organizing meetings from taking place, and the largest grower, Hassle, did his best to prevent migrants from having any contact with the outside world. Local representatives of the state, like Waterkamp, the school superintendent, and the Van Buren County deputy sheriff reinforced the growers and canners' position. Chicano activists tried to bring the movement to the fields to enact both American civil liberties and their emerging critique of the United States. In rural areas like Keeler the grower dominated power structure fought Chicanos' efforts directly. This geographical transition mirrored and reinforced the movement's turn toward unionization and its developing critique of the United States as a colonizer.

Conclusion

By the time that recently founded bilingual newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, conducted its first investigation of the oppression of migrants in 1970, it considered the feeble protections of state law laughable. The editors complained bitterly of the barriers to access, physical violence against migrant organizers and deplorable camp conditions. After their tour of farms and migrant housing in Van Buren County the editors pointed out that even the most abject housing was conspicuously tagged with state housing inspection signs, "como haciendo burla." (as a mockery)¹⁷⁴ But as new adherents joined the Chicano Movement in Lansing, they were not laughing, but instead decrying what they described as "*la ley del embudo*" (law of the funnel) that gave one law for the few rich growers, and another for the masses of migrant workers. Similarly, Alfaro, who in 1962 had enthusiastically registered new voters in Lansing and led lobbying efforts for migrant legislation complained that legislation was a mockery because the

¹⁷⁴ "Triste Realidad de La Vida Del Campesino En Michigan," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 1970.

workers did not have the power to enforce it, saying, “las leyes que existen son casi siempre burladas por no existir una directa hacia el trabajador.”(existing laws are almost always a mockery because the workers have no direct say)¹⁷⁵ *Sol de Aztlán*, a Chicano Movement newspaper also founded in Lansing in 1970, went even further, condemning the United States as an imperialist nation, and Michigan as a state built upon the exploitation of workers, both industrial and agricultural.¹⁷⁶

Chicanos were not the only ones who changed their view of migrant workers and the nature of their problems by 1970. The MFB was also undergoing a transition away from the migrant/domestic binary. In June of 1970, when the UFW’s grape boycott ended victoriously, the MFB enthusiastically supported state involvement in agriculture for the first time. After some preliminary early discussions, it came out in support of a state subsidy for farmers to build new housing for migrant workers, and a labor relations act that included farm workers as workers in a legal sense. Of course as proposed by the MFB these laws did little to change the conditions that Chicanos protested in the fields and camps. The housing law functioned primarily as a subsidy for marginal growers whose business acumen was insufficient to produce enough profits to improve camp housing on their own. The labor relations act, which was never passed, would have banned strikes during harvest time and secondary boycotts, further blunting farm workers’ potentially most powerful tools. This was a significant divergence from the MFB’s rhetorical anti-regulation stance of the early 1960s. These two laws were important signals that the MFB’s power was not absolute, they were not impervious to the demands of Chicanos organizers and others.

¹⁷⁵ “Reportaje de Actualidad,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 1970.

¹⁷⁶ “The Misery in Which the Chicano Migrant Lives.”

Nor was the MFB's political philosophy as absolute and puritanical as it seemed. In addition to ending its universal opposition to state regulation of farm labor, it also shifted its discourse away from the migrant/domestic binary. After 1970 the MFB no longer spoke of "migrant" workers, but soon preferred the term "farm labor." Instead of marking seasonal agricultural workers as migrants, as people defined by their foreignness to the communities where they harvested, growers marked them by their class and status in the economic system. Another significant part of this transition was the MFB's new found insistence that the problems of migrant workers' were not for growers to solve, but instead the whole of "society's problem" Writing in support of the housing subsidy MFB President Smith asserted, "society must recognize that many of the problems of seasonal workers are its responsibility and that farmers cannot be expected to carry the whole burden."¹⁷⁷ The MFB codified this stance at its 1970 annual meeting, declaring, "We are encouraged by the current arousing of social conscience and public awareness with regard to special problems related to season farm workers. In the past, these special problems have been recognized only by their farmer employers."¹⁷⁸ Although the MFB's unyielding opposition to the "arousing of social conscience" throughout the 1960s makes for a cynical attitude towards the genuineness of its concern, the fact remains that calling for "society" to acknowledge the "problems" of "farm workers," meant that the MFB was designating farm workers as needy group that was a part of an American society that actually had problems. This was, for the MFB, a significant shift from its 1962 annual meeting. There MFB members agreed that migrant workers already had "better facilities on Michigan farms than they

¹⁷⁷ Robert E. Smith, "Capitol Report," *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 6 (June 1970): 4.

¹⁷⁸ "1971 Policies Reflect 'The New Age,'" *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 49, no. 12 (December 1970): 7-14.

have in their own homes,” and they emphasized that “farm bureau members, following their philosophy that farm people have the right and duty to speak for themselves, without coercion or government intervention, take the initiative to improve conditions on their own farms and in their own communities. Much progress has and is being made . . .”¹⁷⁹ By 1970 it was no longer practical for the MFB to argue that migrants had it “pretty good” or that American agriculture was free from peasantry due to farmers’ exceptional, perhaps providential commitment to free enterprise. The combined efforts of grape boycott supporters and the Chicano Movement forced the MFB to abandon its promotion of American Exceptionalism, for a time.

Thus the MFB’s pragmatic, official stand came closer to the critics’ position regarding the treatment of migrants by 1970, but the gap between their position remained wide, if not still widening. The veracity of the MFB’s genuine concern for the “special problems” of farm workers was compromised by the actions of growers like Hassle, and the statements of MFB staff like Buschlen who still bemoaned the absence of a foreign peasantry. Despite the MFB’s rhetorical adjustment, Chicanos continued to believe that growers and the MFB were the primary barriers to liberation for migrants.¹⁸⁰ As will be addressed in the chapters to follow, the Chicano Movement was just beginning its own political shift to a different vision of the United States. The slow decline of the migrant/domestic binary and the continuing oppression of migrant workers in Michigan were a major crucible of Chicano anti-colonial thought. School experiences, where youth were explicitly taught about American and their place in it, were another.

¹⁷⁹ Michigan Farm Bureau, “1963 Policies.”

¹⁸⁰ “Apathy and Non-Support to Michigan’s Farm Worker,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, July 31, 1971.

CHAPTER TWO: “WE ARE A DISTINCT PEOPLE” DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOLS

The Chicano Movement in Michigan sought bilingual/bicultural education because it contributed to building *la raza* as a national construct and rejected assimilation participants associated with whiteness. They challenged a key component of American Exceptionalist discourse, namely meritocracy; the assumption that upward mobility awaited those who assimilated and worked hard in school. Instead, they focused on building a distinct cultural identity. Taken together, Chicano activists’ criticism of the schooling they received as rooted in white supremacy and their focus on combatting erasure by reinforcing their difference constituted a fundamental part of Chicano anti-colonial thought.

Michigan schools were places where future Chicano and Chicana activists experienced dissonance between the rhetoric of American Exceptionalism and American reality on a daily basis. Michigan growers sought to maintain Chicano families as a group subject to labor stratification whose reproductive costs were born outside the local economy in a lower cost area. To this end Michigan growers, agricultural capital, and their political allies, promoted a colonial binary which defined domestic workers as whites who belonged in rural areas and migrants as Mexicans and foreigners regardless of their actual residence, race or citizenship status. Although many Chicanos instead traced their presence in Michigan to industrial wage labor, the domestic/migrant binary was pervasive. As with many another colonial project, promulgators of the domestic/migrant binary effaced a multitude of differences amongst Chicanos in “making up (the) people” who could be defined as “migrants” and therefore “foreign.”¹ Thus, Michigan Chicanos saw schooling as promoting an American national identity that denied and denigrated

¹ Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*, 5.

them while simultaneously demanding their allegiance. Migrant children in Michigan's rural areas during the 1950s and 1960s were routinely treated as a group to be separated or excluded from public schooling. The exclusion of migrant children, punishment for speaking Spanish, and incorrect assignment to classes for the "mentally retarded" alienated not only migrant children, but resident Chicano children and their families from cities to countryside.

In their pursuit of a bilingual education that reinforced cultural differences, Chicanos in Detroit shared much with their peers in the Southwest. Yet, the schooling of Chicanos in Detroit also differed. Though certainly neglected, Chicanos were not systematically segregated from whites in Michigan's largest city as they were in many parts of the Southwest. Nevertheless, their treatment in urban areas fit with dominant school practices of excluding migrant children and the discourse of foreignness that permeated the Chicano experience in Michigan.

Though Chicanos were physically excluded from rural schools, they were excluded in Michigan's largest urban district discursively, not only from academic success, but from reality. Throughout the long court battle for desegregation in Detroit, Chicanos were routinely labeled "white" and seen as a demographic resource to desegregate Black schools. Chicanos opposed desegregation when it compromised bilingual education because they believed it endangered the success of their children and because reinforcing their children's difference as part of *la raza* was more important to them than an abstract American ideal of "integration." Furthermore, they rejected the white identity supported by school policies and legal actions in Detroit.

Education as Alienation

"It was a rare day indeed if, in those days, I didn't hear a teacher say,
"Don't speak Spanish. If you do, you will be punished!"²

² Arturo Rocha Alvarado, *Crónica De Aztlán: A Migrant's Tale* (Berkeley, CA: Quinto Sol Publications, 1977), 151.

The exclusion of migrant children from schooling in Michigan grew out of structural factors that facilitated child labor. Michigan growers' reliance on the labor of Mexican-American children increased after the Bracero Program ended. Rendering migrant children as foreign workers was a significant part of the migrant/domestic binary that growers and the MFB mobilized in this period. Migrant children had no need of the care and schooling that the growers' minors were entitled to because, as far as many were concerned, they had already reached the apex of their development. The migrant/domestic binary defined migrant children as a temporary, subordinate part of the community, as long as they remained in the fields and camps. Local farmers and grower interests organized in the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) and the Women for the Survival of Michigan Agriculture (WSAM) resisted efforts to enforce school attendance for migrant children throughout the 1960s and 70s. They often asserted that anti-child labor laws only further impoverished vulnerable farm workers and "deprived" their children of work experience. Growers and their organizations claimed to be protecting the livelihood of farm worker families when defending child labor. Like the exclusion of agricultural workers' children from public school, erroneous assignment to classes for the 'mentally retarded' and routine punishment for speaking Spanish communicated to Chicano youth and their families that they did not belong.

As established by Dionicio Valdés in *Al Norte*, excluding the children of agricultural workers from public schooling in the Midwest had deep roots in practices first established during the 1920s. From their arrival in the beet fields of Michigan, Mexican children worked alongside their parents and were seldom subject to mandatory school attendance laws. This pattern continued in the 1930s when fruit and sugar beet workers' children remained in the fields and camps as late as October without having attended school. The persistence of a piece-rate pay

system contributed to the continuation of child labor among agricultural worker families because children's labor was necessary to earn enough to survive. Though Mexican families involved in seasonal agricultural work during the first half of the twentieth century had often settled out to urban areas, such as Detroit, Pontiac and Saginaw, growers, state officials and local school districts continued to value the labor of children over their right to schooling. Agricultural employers lobbied through organizations such as the MFB, whose representative Dan Reed, testified in support of farm work for children under 16 at the 1959 U.S. Senate Subcommittee hearings on the Fair Labor Standards Act in Michigan.³ Reformers, such as the National Child Labor Committee, had limited success in offering special programs designed for the children of agricultural workers due to this type of resistance.⁴

Even as advocacy for access to education for migrant workers and former migrant workers gained ground in state institutions during the 1960s, resistance to fundamental change was linked to grower interests. Those opposed to enforced school attendance for migrant children argued they attended school in Texas during the winter.⁵ Government officials tacitly supported this logic in the early 1960s. In 1960 a U.S. Department of Labor official reminded farmers that children under 16 were prohibited from working while school was in session even, "migrant children," but with the caveat that migrant children under 16 could work if the school they last attended had closed for the year. As of the date of this public notice, April 29, 1960

³ Damon Stetson, "Use of Migrants on Farms Sifted," *New York Times*, September 29, 1959; "23 Resolutions Approved by Farm Bureau," *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, October 14, 1959.

⁴ Valdés, *Al Norte*.

⁵ Hassle, *Affidavit of Joseph Hassle-United States v. Joseph Hassle*.

there were still four to five weeks of school remaining for those children considered locals.⁶

The presence of migrant families prior to the end of the Michigan school year was an annual event, the asparagus harvest generally began in late April or early May.⁷ In addition to being in the fields before the local school year had ended, migrant children were also found in the area long after school began. Families remained in Michigan for the apple harvest as late as November.⁸ Thus many migrant children did not have the opportunity to attend school for more than five or six months, unlike the children of farmers whose “winter” schooling typically began in September and ended in June.

The sense of an impending labor shortage in the early 1960s due to the looming end of the Bracero Program led to a perception of competition with California growers for “Texas Mexicans.” Sister Lakes grower Ferris Pierson warned 300 other fruit growers at the Southwestern Michigan Small Fruits Conference that their competitors in California were already recruiting “Texas Mexicans” for the season, offering \$1.35 to \$1.50 an hour.⁹ By 1969 Michigan growers relied almost exclusively on Mexican-Americans from Texas for their labor

⁶ “Child Labor Law Terms Are Cited,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, April 29, 1960.

⁷ “Demand Is Good For Asparagus,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, April 29, 1960; Mrs. Harold Ruple, “Keeler Happenings of Past Year Are Reviewed in Capsule Form,” *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, January 9, 1964.

⁸ “Summit,” *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, November 5, 1964; Mrs. Harold Ruple, “Labor Office Shuts for Season,” *Hartford (MI) Day Spring*, November 5, 1964.

⁹ Jerry Krieger, “Growers Tell New Practices,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, January 15, 1964.

needs, they composed 80 to 90 percent of the migrant work force in the Upper Midwest.¹⁰ This only exacerbated the problem of access to education for migrant children in Michigan, as the labor of “Texas Mexicans” largely involved family groups.

Growers often viewed daycare and migrant school programs as a part of an overall anti-poverty program intended to deprive them of workers, both children and adults. They opposed any element of this program, such as a minimum wage or workmen’s compensation, partially because it compromised their access to child labor. Rebecca Tompkins’ reasoning for opposing a minimum wage for farm workers is one important articulation of the relationship between child labor and opposition to social reforms. Tompkins was a prominent cherry grower on the Old Mission Peninsula near Traverse City and served on the Governor’s Committee on Migrant Labor in 1964.¹¹ Tompkins opposed a minimum wage for farm workers and cited “family” labor as the primary reason why it was an “impossibility” for cherry harvesters.¹² Tompkins and other growers asserted family groups could not be guaranteed a minimum wage because the record-keeping requirements would be too onerous for farmers and children were not efficient enough to justify paying them a minimum wage. In a similar scenario Senator Zollar used the un-insurability of child laborers as his primary reason why workmen’s compensation coverage could not be implemented for farm workers in 1966. Zollar, himself a grower, asserted that

¹⁰ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 168.

¹¹ “Governor Names Two Study Groups,” *Greenville (MI) Michigan Farm News* 42, no. 7 (July 1964): 3.

¹² “Minimum Wage Proposal Opposed in T.C. Hearing,” *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, July 27, 1965. Tompkins generally went by “Mrs. Seth Tompkins” in this time period.

children 15 and under picked 50 percent of the strawberry crop on his land.¹³ Newspaper editor Stanley R. Banyon agreed with Zollar that enacting workmen's compensation would remove one-third to one-half of the local farm labor work force and was a "blow aimed at the very existence of Michigan agriculture."¹⁴ Both growers and their critics agreed child labor was ubiquitous and economically important. A 1965 investigation by Democratic members of the Michigan State House and Senate Labor Committees found there were often children in the fields, of "almost every age", and at times there were more children working than adults.¹⁵ Growers' use of child labor was so entrenched, so naturalized, that it seemed sufficient to stop both a minimum wage and workmen's compensation. Growers' reliance on child labor was a structural problem that affected all aspects of reform for migrants, including increased access to schooling for their children.

Nevertheless, some farm interests organized to present their case that instead of providing a path to prosperity by facilitating school attendance; anti-child labor laws only further impoverished vulnerable farm workers and deprived children of work experience. These were among the reasons cited by grower representatives from the Michigan Association of Cherry Producers in 1963 when they testified against child labor legislation. Seemingly unconcerned with lessons which might have been learned in a formal school setting, the secretary of the association asserted, "There are valuable lessons of responsibility to be gained from the

¹³ Krieger, "Kids Banned in Berry Patches!"

¹⁴ Stanley R. Banyon, "Maybe Farmers Could Stand Fewer 'Friends,'" *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, January 27, 1966.

¹⁵ Members of the House and Senate Labor Committees Studying Migrant Labor Conditions, "A Preliminary Report on Migrant Labor Conditions in Michigan," November 1965, 4-5, 14, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

employment of children, as well as the importance of keeping them occupied.”¹⁶ Similarly, Mrs. Robert Neumann, a former farmer’s wife, wrote to her local newspaper that child labor restrictions would be “denying our children the privilege of working at the harvest of our vast fruit crop” while leaving the “migrant families . . . who depend upon the little money their children bring home . . . denying them this work could mean disaster.”¹⁷ In this way farmer advocates such as Neumann claimed credit for providing migrant worker children with the ‘privilege’ they had of working in the fields while eschewing any responsibility for their need to work. They blamed poverty amongst farm workers on child labor opponents, not those who paid low wages.

Despite continued grower opposition summer schools for migrant children and specialized programs during the school year expanded over the late 1960s and early 1970s. The schools in Southwest Michigan planned to enroll 210 students and were the largest of six regional pilot program summer schools administered by the Michigan Department of Education in 1967.¹⁸ By the fall of 1967 these changes led to a reversal in policy on mandatory school attendance for migrant worker children. Once again the Southwestern Michigan newspaper, The News-Palladium, addressed the issue, but with a contrary conclusion, announcing “children of migrant workers in the area must register . . . all children between the ages of 6 and 16 are

¹⁶ Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 305.

¹⁷ Mrs. Robert Neuman, “Little Enough Left,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, January 27, 1966.

¹⁸ “Inaugurate Pilot Plan for Pupils,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, June 17, 1967.

required to be in school.”¹⁹ By 1968 the Michigan Department of Education stated it had 1500 migrant children from 24 schools enrolled during the school year and 8,000 in 62 school districts during the summer. The summer program had children from ages 2 to 13, and Southwest Michigan schools averaged 2500 students per day.²⁰ In 1969 the Michigan Department of Education held 43 centers for migrant children with Title I ESEA funds. These centers served 7,000 children throughout the state and each classroom had at least one bilingual staff person, many former or current migrants. The Michigan Migrant Ministry referred to this program as one of the “bright lights” of accomplishments for migrants in 1969.²¹ In the fall of 1970 the state received a federal education grant to serve 15,000 children during the school year in 12 counties, a ten-fold increase from 1968.²²

Despite growing mobilization amongst farm workers and their advocates, as well as increased government funded educational programming designed for migrant children, the work of children in the fields continued into the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1968 the Michigan Civil Rights Commission found that at least half of migrant laborers in the state were youth ages 12 to 18.²³ Migrant children continued to miss school in late spring and early fall because families were on

¹⁹ “Migrant School Signup Set,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, September 9, 1967.

²⁰ “Coloma Migrant Education Program Called Success,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, August 28, 1968; Donald R. Beaton to Roy O. Fuentes, “Dear Mr. Fuentes,” August 9, 1968, 1–2, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

²¹ Benallack, “Michigan Migrant Ministry Annual Report 1969.”

²² “Aid Slated For Migrant Children,” *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, November 20, 1970.

²³ Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 305.

the move for work.²⁴ For young teens working instead of taking advantage of educational opportunities remained problematic. Anthony C. Martinez, director of the summer migrant program for the Saginaw Valley Intermediate School District, linked the high school drop-out rate and lack of participation in his program from youth working in the fields when he asserted, “I can count the number of high school graduates in migrant camps in this region on one hand and not use all my fingers.”²⁵ Reports of children as young as eleven working in the fields and disrupted education continued in the 1970s.²⁶ As a staff person from the Traverse City Migrant Health Clinic noted in 1975, “It takes the whole family working to make what some people say is a lot of money.”²⁷ Low wages continued to make the labor of the entire family, including children, a necessity.

Advocates of child labor, such as Zollar, sought to shift responsibility for child labor onto migrant families when they argued that migrant families would not come to Michigan unless their children were permitted to work with them.²⁸ Media outlets that prioritized the existing

²⁴ Hugh Morgan, “Migrant Families Must Work Together in Order to Survive,” *Sault Ste. Marie (MI) Evening News*, August 26, 1969; “Area Farmers Welcome Price Bargaining Tool,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, December 31, 1974.

²⁵ “In Saginaw Valley and Thumb, Migrant Education Elsewhere,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, August 15, 1968.

²⁶ “Study Says Migrants Lack Rights,” *The Holland (MI) Evening Sentinel*, September 9, 1976; Nick Smith, “Two Growers Told Not To Hire Children,” *Benton Harbor-St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Palladium*, May 29, 1975; “Hart Farm Is Being Charged,” *The Ludington (MI) Daily News*, August 31, 1976; “Watervliet Grower Enjoined,” *Benton Harbor-St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Palladium*, March 6, 1976.

²⁷ Mary Godwin, “The Migrant Worker: ‘Something That Gets Into Your Blood,’” *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, August 8, 1975.

racial hierarchy, such as *The Herald-Palladium*, eagerly published critiques of “do-gooders and labor bosses” and promoted their belief that Chicanos found migrant farm work rewarding.²⁹ Yet, despite the supposed virtues of farm labor a survey of more than 1000 farmworkers conducted by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1968 showed that only 9 percent would stay in the fields if they could locate a good job elsewhere, and only 5 percent would want their children to become migrant farm workers.³⁰ A similar 1969 study of Mexican-Americans in Michigan cities, many of whom were former farm workers, found 1 father out of 695 interviewed who wanted his sons to go into farm work.³¹ Migrant workers chose to keep their children in the fields as one amongst a number of undesirable options for making ends meet. Both these surveys and Chicano Movement activities demonstrate that, despite growers’ claims, few saw agricultural work as a “privilege.”

²⁸ Krieger, “Kids Banned in Berry Patches!”

²⁹ “Maybe Our Farmers Should Strike the Government,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, June 17, 1974; Hugh Morgan, “Migrant Workers’ Complaints Are Viewed,” *Sault Ste. Marie (MI) Evening News*, August 27, 1969; Morgan, “Few Chicanos Flee Nomad Life; Most Stay in the Fields” The contrast between the two titles assigned to the same syndicated article by two different local Michigan newspapers is another example of how the perspective of The News-Palladium editors influenced their reporting on the desirability of being a migrant farm worker. The News-Palladium editors titled Morgan’s article in a way that emphasized Chicanos’ presence in the fields as the satisfied choice of the majority (“Few Chicanos Flee Nomad Life, Most Stay in Fields”), while other papers emphasized the group as mostly dissatisfied (“Migrant Workers’ Complaints Are Viewed”) .

³⁰ Michigan Civil Rights Commission, “Staff Report: A Summary of Farm Labor Surveys,” 1968, 16, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

³¹ Harvey M. Choldin and Grafton Trout, *Mexican Americans in Transition; Migration and Employment in Michigan Cities* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Agricultural Experiment Station, Rural Manpower Center, Dept. of Sociology, 1969), 293.

Latin Americans were frustrated with the resistance of growers and their allies to new schooling opportunities for migrant children, just as they had been by the poor implementation of labor law reforms. As the efforts of migrant advocates took a turn toward Chicano Movement strategies the schooling of migrant children remained a primary grievance. At the Easter Sunday 1967 Migrant march from Saginaw to Lansing, the official “Declaration of Grievances” denounced child labor; “The children of migrant workers must sacrifice the privilege of an adequate education in order to accompany their families to Michigan to help harvest our crops. This sacrifice is a deterrent to their ability to pursue other means of employment or to continue their education . . .”³² In this way they inverted the discourse of the growers who argued that work in the fields was a “privilege” to instead argue that it was a “sacrifice” that trapped them in the fields, unable to pursue other jobs and educational opportunities.

The exclusion of migrant children from schooling in Michigan grew out of structural factors that facilitated child labor and a discourse that defined Mexican migrant children as a temporary, subordinate part of the community, as long as they remained in the fields. The experiences of children and parents of migrants and ex-migrants who did attend school created similar feelings of alienation. A former agricultural worker, Frances Gamez, recalled how her children were treated in Holland schools during the 1960s “Instead of instilling in the child self-esteem they would make them feel like they really weren’t worth very much because they were Hispanic.”³³ Amongst the more sympathetic complaints about migrant workers received by

³² Ruben Alfaro, Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers, “Declaration of Grievances” March 26, 1967, 3, George Romney Papers, Box 326 Spanish American Migrant March, Bentley Historical Library.

³³ Frances Gamez, interview by Joseph O’Grady, 1990, Members of the Hispanic Community, Oral History Interviews, Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College,

Governor George Romney in the 1960s was a letter from a student teacher in Fennville, who decried the exploitation suffered by his students living in dilapidated housing with no running water. Yet, he was also less than tactful when he described the children, “I noticed that many of the students here were poorly clothed and very dirty . . . They eat on cardboard boxes and have no lavatory facilities whatsoever. Many of them smell so bad it is difficult to stand near them.”³⁴ While the teacher meant his comments to portray what he saw as appalling conditions, they also demonstrate how migrant children may have been stigmatized in school by conditions beyond their immediate control. Another measure of the alienation between schools and migrant families was found in a 1968 Michigan Civil Rights Commission survey in which 31 percent of farm workers said teachers had treated them unfairly, more than other public employees such as police and social workers.³⁵

Chicano activists and educators observed continued resistance to increased access to schooling for migrant children as growers and their allies fought implementation of new programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The La Raza Citizen’s Advisory Committee reported that twenty school districts eligible for migrant program funding had refused to create summer programs for migrants.³⁶ Many were in Southwest Michigan, near Dowagiac and

<http://www.jointarchives.org/Oral%20Interviews/Oral%20Interview%20Topics.htm#HispanicCommunity>.

³⁴ Fred R. Comer to George W Romney, “Dear Governor Romney,” February 11, 1962, 2, George Romney Papers, Box 352 Migrant Labor, Bentley Historical Library.

³⁵ Michigan Civil Rights Commission, “Staff Report: A Summary of Farm Labor Surveys,” 2.

Hartford, sites of heated conflict between growers, farmworkers and their Chicano allies.³⁷ Like many other critics of the treatment of migrants in general the La Raza Citizens' Advisory Committee attributed this situation to local sentiments that viewed migrants as outsiders for whom the communities had no responsibility.³⁸ A Michigan Department of Education publication for teachers in Migrant Programs concurred when it reminded teachers that their pupils "lack security schools where they never belong," and in the larger society which has never accepted them."³⁹

Rural grower allies resisted hosting summer school programs for migrants even when funding was not locally provided based on the idea that migrant children were receiving an unfair advantage not available to other children. It was under this logic that the Shelby,

³⁶ Carlos Falcon, La Raza Advisory Committee, *Quality Educational Services to Michigan's Spanish Speaking Community* (Lansing, MI: Michigan State Board of Education, 1974).

³⁷ Benallack, "Michigan Migrant Ministry Annual Report 1969"; Shirley Charbonneau to Jim Drake, March 5, 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library; "Michigan Growers Begin Fighting Back During '75," *Benton Harbor-St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Palladium*, December 31, 1975; Scott Williamson, "Berrien Board Opposes Migrant Aid Unit," *Benton Harbor-St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Palladium*, February 29, 1976; Nick Smith, "Migrants' Aide Says His Office No Threat," *St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press*, February 26, 1974; Nick Smith, "UMOI Answers Farm Wives'," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, May 17, 1974; Nick Smith, "Probing Migrant's Group: Farm Gals Attack In a Different Way," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, February 12, 1974 The types of conflict which occurred included a controversy over the UFW holding grape boycott support committee meetings in the offices of the Michigan Migrant Ministry which were disrupted by growers and later disallowed by the Migrant Ministry due to the dispute. Also notable was a campaign by WSAM, the MFB and local growers to have Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance and United Migrants' Opportunity, Inc. investigated and defunded.

³⁸ Falcon, La Raza Advisory Committee, *Quality Educational Services to Michigan's Spanish Speaking Community*, 19.

³⁹ *Handbook for Teachers of Migrant Children*. (Lansing, MI: Michigan State Department of Education, 1970).

Michigan migrant school had its water service cut off and was subject to what school supervisor Jane Moog called “harassment and hostility” when the school first opened in 1967. School Board member and local newspaper editor Elwood Huggard defended those who criticized the school by asserting the school’s employees were overpaid and that “local opinion is running real strong against it.”⁴⁰ It seems unlikely the parents of the 57 children attending the two schools in Oceana County were accounted for in Huggard’s description of “local opinion.” Opposition to spending public funds on schooling for migrant children was a prominent element in the opposition of local residents in Southwest Michigan to migrant settlement there. Superintendent of the Benton Harbor public schools Mark Lewis said he opposed the efforts of United Migrants for Opportunity to “recruit” families to settle in the area because there was no room in the public schools for them.⁴¹ Conversely, Chicanos and other advocates rejected the idea that agricultural workers who resided in Texas for a part of the year ought to be categorized differently than ‘locals.’ The chairman of the Saginaw area Bishop’s Committee for the Spanish Speaking asserted, “We profit from the work of migrants and we can’t send them back to Texas and call the whole thing a ‘Texas problem.’”⁴²

Despite the positive attention given to the summer migrant schools by some agency representatives, migrants and their advocates criticized the programs for being inadequate to the needs of the children. Movita Munguia, a former migrant and teacher’s aid in one program said

⁴⁰ “Says Shelby Migrant School Being Harassed,” *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, May 11, 1967; Associated Press, “Furor Erupts Over School for Migrant Children,” May 12, 1967.

⁴¹ “Protest Settlement of Migrants Here, ‘Area Has Enough Problems,’” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 31, 1969.

⁴² Morgan, “Migrant Families Must Work Together in Order to Survive.”

it still lacked enough Spanish speaking teachers and that insufficient attention was paid to academic work. Another employee described the program derisively as a “super-duper babysitting job” that didn’t do enough to prevent children from quitting school at “16 with only a 6th grade education.”⁴³ In 1971, under the auspices of the Michigan Department of Education, 40 local school districts held summer schools for migrant children, using federal funds. In that year the expanded program also came under more pressure to hire migrants, to have bilingual staff and to involve migrants themselves in the governance of the programs.⁴⁴

Many Chicanos living in Michigan in the 1960s and 1970s evaluated their schooling based upon their experiences in both Michigan and other states. Francisco Garcia, a former migrant worker and long-time resident of Holland attended Michigan high schools during the late 1960s, but still recalled the punishment he received for speaking Spanish in elementary school in Texas, “I remember me and several of my friends being caught speaking Spanish and we had to wear a sign around our necks.”⁴⁵ Arturo Rocha Alvarado, a child of migrant workers, who lived in Michigan during the Chicano Movement, had similar experiences in Texas. In his 1977 retrospective, *Cronica de Aztlán: A Migrant’s Tale*, Alvarado describes a comparable scene of the punishment students received for speaking Spanish.⁴⁶ Such punishments often took the form of shaming, which communicated to both the student being punished and others present

⁴³ “Migrants Tell Grim Stories at Farm Worker Hearings,” *Traverse City (MI) Record-Eagle*, August 26, 1968.

⁴⁴ Charbonneau to Drake, August 16, 1971, 2.

⁴⁵ Francisco Garcia, interview by Erin Tuttle, November 11, 1998, 3, Class Oral History Projects (1998) (Immigrant Residents of Holland), Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, <http://jointarchives.org/Oral%20Interviews/Oral%20Interview%20Topics.htm>.

⁴⁶ Alvarado, *Crónica De Aztlán*, 151–153.

that calling attention to one's difference, one's *mexicanidad*, was undesirable and deserved opprobrium.

Comparable experiences occurred in Michigan, as Andres Fierro, who first arrived in the Holland in 1955 recalled how the treatment affected his identity.

I really lost 99% of my language going through the school system here . . . that's part of being robbed of my language . . . of being robbed of identity . . . when you're told that to speak another language is a sign of ignorance, you begin to be very self-conscious of what your roots are. When there is no acknowledgement . . . of your own heritage, of your own culture, of your own sense of roots, you really become a man without a home. You begin to wonder do you belong?⁴⁷

Fierro's comments reveal his alienation, not only from the schools that "robbed" him of his Spanish language, but also from his Mexican heritage. By the early 1970's many Chicanos had begun to address this issue. Yet one representative manual for teachers in Migrant Programs still found it necessary to emphasize to teachers "remember that Spanish is a respectable language which these children have demonstrated their ability to learn. Spanish is not 'wrong.' Do not penalize children because they speak it."⁴⁸ Meanwhile local bilingual education advocates, like Jesse Soriano, believed schools in the Midwest were actually more difficult for Spanish speaking children due to increased alienation in the region. In a 1969 article, Soriano asserted that in the Midwest there was "a greater isolation from his cultural and linguistic environment than . . . his

⁴⁷ Andres Fierro, interview by Joseph O'Grady, 1990, 8, Oral History Collection, Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, <http://jointarchives.org/Oral%20Interviews/Oral%20Interview%20Topics.htm>.

⁴⁸ *Handbook for Teachers of Migrant Children*.

counterpart in Texas or California . . . The pressures to ignore or reject his culture exerted upon him by the school are correspondingly greater.”⁴⁹

The lack of belonging communicated to Spanish-speaking students further excluded them, precisely because “migrant” and “Spanish-speaking” were social constructs synonymous with being foreign and Mexican. School staff who characterized individual students as migrants when they began school in the fall were not simply observing a child’s history, but making a prediction about the child’s future residence. Michigan Migrant Ministry staffer David Moore, in response to the 1969 migrant settlement controversy in Southwest Michigan, wrote, “Migrant students, even from settled families, suffer the psychological pains of alienation and rejection. They are assumed transitory by many school officials and teachers and consequently treated with indifference.”⁵⁰ Moore identified here an important element of the treatment of “migrant” children, which included not only those who actually would not be present by the end of the year, but also those “assumed” to be from elsewhere regardless of their actual residency. Soriano identified a similar problem when he summed up his perception of rural resistance to programs for the children of agricultural workers in some Michigan school districts, “We can’t have a summer school program for the Mexican kids because recreation program funds were cut for our kids. The townspeople would be very upset if we had a program for the Mexican

⁴⁹ Jesse M Soriano and James McClafferty, “Spanish Speakers of the Midwest: They Are Americans Too,” *Foreign Language Annals* 2, no. 3 (March 1969): 324.

⁵⁰ David Moore, “The Situation of Settled Migrants in Southwestern Michigan,” n.d., UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 2, Folder 55, Michigan Migrant Ministry, 1969-70, Meeting Notes, Leaflets, Walter P. Reuther Library.

kids.”⁵¹ In this way the constructed nature of who was a “migrant” and thus foreign to Michigan further justified poor treatment of Chicano children as a group.

Urban Mexican children had greater access to the public schools, but they also experienced high dropout rates and sporadic attendance. This was an acute problem in Detroit, where Webster Elementary School Principal Donald Lahti noted that when the 1968 school year began 47 new Mexican students started at Webster, but only eight remained at the beginning of 1969. Gustavo Gaynett, director of the recently founded Latin American community service organization *La Sed*, decried the high dropout rate throughout the Detroit Public Schools. School administrators disputed Gaynett’s claims about a 90 percent dropout rate, but they acknowledged they did not know the percentage of Mexican or Latino students who dropped out because they only kept statistics for white or black students.⁵² Ruben Alfaro, a prominent Michigan advocate for migrant laborers and Chicano issues, attributed the high drop-out rate to poor treatment; “The Mexican child, who in many cases speaks only Spanish, is at a disadvantage in the school . . . Most of these children don’t drop---they are forced out.”⁵³

Another deterrent to school attendance was the erroneous assignment of Latino and “Spanish speaking” children to classes for the “mentally retarded.” The inaccurate assignment of these students emerged as a particular concern later than the attention paid to services for migrant children and punishment for speaking Spanish, but it received greater attention as

⁵¹ Soriano and McClafferty, “Spanish Speakers of the Midwest.”

⁵² John Peterson, “A Tragic Lesson: Language Barrier Cripples Mexican-American Pupils,” *Detroit News*, February 16, 1969, William G. Milliken Papers, Regional Offices, 1969-1982 Box 909 Folder Spanish, Bentley Historical Library.

⁵³ Bob Voges, “City Barber Lobbies For Migrants,” *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, March 22, 1967.

bilingual/bicultural education programs were instituted in the mid 1970s. A comprehensive 1974 report by the La Raza Citizens' Advisory Council to the State Board of Education complained that Spanish-speaking students were being erroneously placed in special education courses due to their score on English language IQ tests. In the Holland Public Schools, 43.5 percent of all students in the special education program were Spanish-speaking, though only 15.4 percent of all students in that district were Latino.⁵⁴ As a result of parents' complaints Detroit's La Sed became involved in a class action lawsuit against the state Department of Education and local school districts on behalf of Guadalupe Hernandez. Hernandez was first assigned to classes for the "mentally retarded" in 1970, but when La Sed and Hernandez parent's had her reevaluated by a Latino psychologist in 1975 Hernandez was reclassified as a "normal child." Hernandez' parents, and others involved in the suit, claimed that the erroneous assignment of their children had actually caused them to be "deficient" in their education.⁵⁵ In this way those involved in this suit asserted, quite literally, that the very state institution ostensibly charged with remedying their children's underdevelopment was causing the condition it was supposed to cure.

Schooling and Nationalism

"Many Americans proudly said that our army's victory was like the one the conquistadors had won in the 1500s. Scott rode into the center of the city . . the band played . . . "Yankee doodle" and at the end "Hail to the Chief". It was such a splendid sight that it is said even the Mexicans cheered."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Falcon, La Raza Advisory Committee, *Quality Educational Services to Michigan's Spanish Speaking Community*; Minutes of the Second Planning Meeting for the Latino Statewide Conference (January 11, 1975), William G. Milliken Papers, Bentley Historical Library.

⁵⁵ "Latinos Angry At Educational System," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 29, 1975.

⁵⁶ Graff, Henry F., *The Free and the Brave: The Story of the American People* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), 382.

Perhaps, as a 1968 high school history textbook claimed, Mexicans applauded General Winifred's Scott's invasion of Mexico City in 1847 and fondly reminisced about the welcome their ancestors had given the Spanish conquistadores of 1520. *The Free and the Brave*, from which this passage is taken, was one of the most popular history texts in Michigan schools in 1970. In that year the Michigan Department of Education convened a panel of historians to evaluate this textbook and 11 others for racial bias.⁵⁷ Although the largely negative reviews referenced almost exclusively the African American experience, not only historians questioned the effects of white supremacist American nationalism on schooling received by students of color. White supremacist nationalism combined with other forms of discriminatory treatment, the exclusion of migrant children, punishment for speaking Spanish, and erroneous assignment to special education courses, to alienate Chicano students, parents and communities. Chicano movement participants objected to the inferior education they were receiving, as had previous generations of Mexican parents. Yet, they also more directly addressed their alienation and questioned their place within the United States as a nation. Increasingly, they noted that the schooling they received was based upon a discourse of Americanization that assumed only a subordinate place for Mexicans. Much like the perpetual subjects who welcomed the American invasion of Mexico City, Chicanos in Michigan schools learned there was indeed a place for them within the American national project, as a conquered people.

Chicano advocates in Michigan confronted not only contemporary adversaries but also the negative ways in which schooling in the United States had historically contributed to their racialization. Although substantial numbers of Mexican immigrants may not have arrived in Michigan until the 1920s, the schooling of Mexican children and knowledge about Mexicans

⁵⁷ *A Second Report on The Treatment of Minorities in American History Textbooks* (Lansing, MI: Michigan State Department of Education, 1971), 11, 24.

predates the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Victoria-Maria MacDonald has observed that the literature in both education and history dealt with Spanish colonial and Mexican educational institutions largely through omission. She attributes the neglect to larger historical forces, such as U.S. imperial aspirations and the Black Legend. Early educational historians often treated the education of Mexican students as a civilizing blessing bestowed upon them by Anglo institutions and culture. Following a traditional colonial narrative, educational historian commonly assumed that schooling for Mexicans in the Southwest was nonexistent prior to U.S. conquest. Strictly nationalistic, scholars through the 1920s largely ignored the education of Mexicans and they portrayed education as a civilizing force whose mission was to “create homogeneity” from inferior immigrant stock.⁵⁹ Their view of education as a “civilizing” force for Mexicans endured more than a century after military conquest.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s schools for ethnic Mexican children was less strictly segregated than in the decades to come. Indeed some early scholars of Mexican immigration expected that public education would play a crucial role in fostering assimilation. In 1906 Victor S. Clark remarked upon the great attention paid to public schools by Mexicans and asserted that partially through this involvement Mexicans would come to “understand our institutions and adopt our habits of thought and action in public affairs.”⁶⁰ Clark’s optimism

⁵⁸ Vargas, *Proletarians of the North*, 33; Victoria Maria MacDonald, “Hispanic, Latino, Chicano or ‘Other?’: Deconstructing the Relationship Between Historians and Hispanic-American Educational History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (Autumn 2001): 365.

⁵⁹ MacDonald, “Hispanic, Latino, Chicano or ‘Other?’: Deconstructing the Relationship Between Historians and Hispanic-American Educational History,” 386.

⁶⁰ Victor S. Clark, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Bureau of Labor Bulletin No. 78 (Washington, DC: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1908), 508–522.

regarding the assimilability of Mexican youth contrasted with the reality of increasing segregation as the school-age population increased. Although segregation existed in some parts of Texas as early as the 1880s, the systematic segregation of Mexican children in the Southwest did not fully develop until the 1920s, just as Mexicans first arrived in Michigan in substantial numbers.⁶¹ Educators' policy of intense segregation of Mexican children in the Southwest between 1920 and 1965, was a critical aspect of racializing Mexicans to subordinate them, and it occurred in many Michigan schools.

While many studies in education history examine schooling, access and segregation of Mexican students in the Southwest in the twentieth century, few have addressed Mexican students in Michigan schools. A 1944 study by sociologist Norman Humphrey noted that Mexican children were commonly absent from Detroit Public Schools due to their parents' resistance to a public, versus Catholic, education and to rejection of Americanization.⁶² Such resistance in the Southwest has been reinterpreted as compromised access.⁶³ Addressing segregation, Humphrey mentioned that some public establishments set aside specific days of the week for Mexicans, but his observations on schools were sparse. The few full-length studies of Mexicans in the Midwest make limited mention of Detroit and its educational system. They note Americanization efforts and related repression of Spanish language were present, as in the

⁶¹ Guadalupe San Miguel, "The Schooling of Mexicanos in the Southwest, 1848-1891," in *The Elusive Quest for Equality: 150 Years of Chicano/Chicana Education*, ed. José F. Moreno (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 1999), 36; Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990), 21.

⁶² Norman D. Humphrey, "The Education and Language of Detroit Mexicans," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 17 (1944): 536-540.

⁶³ Guadalupe San Miguel, "The Status of Historical Research on Chicano Education," *Review of Educational Research* 57 (1987): 468.

Southwest; but explore the topic primarily as a policy of employers such as Henry Ford and of the Catholic Church prior to 1933.⁶⁴ Juan R. Garcia has noted the involvement of Mexican community organizations in holding the “lessons in language and history” that Humphrey dismissed.⁶⁵

As the Mexican-origin population increased in the late 1920s and 1930s throughout the nation scholars and policy makers discovered the “Mexican Problem” and educators found a “solution”. In his history of inequality in California schools Charles Wollenberg analyzed reports and articles written by educators during this period and concluded that white parents induced school boards to segregate Mexican children.⁶⁶ Yet, as Wollenberg is careful to note, segregation was not a product merely of pressure from an uniformed public but also of professional educators’ policy that judged Mexican children more successful in segregated schools due to their “*special abilities*.”⁶⁷ Martha Menchaca and Richard R. Valencia assert that one way in which this was expressed in education during the 1920s was the increasing use of intelligence tests, language and cultural determinist theories to rationalize educators’ disparate

⁶⁴ Dionicio Valdés, *El Pueblo Mexicano En Detroit Y Michigan: A Social History* (Detroit: College of Education, Wayne State University, 1982), 71; Vargas, *Proletarians of the North*, 70–71.

⁶⁵ García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932*, 174.

⁶⁶ Charles Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 111–113.

⁶⁷ Wollenberg, 113. Emphasis mine.

treatment of Mexican children.⁶⁸ The mistaken assignment of Spanish speaking students to classes for the mentally retarded during the 1960s and 1970s was a legacy from this period.

By 1934, nearly thirty years after Clark had proposed the idea, academics such as Emory S. Bogardus still envisioned education as a path for the assimilation of Mexicans, particularly those whose families were long time residents of the U.S. Although Bogardus seemed to recognize that educators' efforts in preceding generations had not adequately assimilated "Spanish-Americans" he was confident that the "public schools are doing important acculturation work" that would soon yield the desired result.⁶⁹ Some did not have the same confidence in public schools; educators such as Annie Reynolds and Herschel T. Manuel doubted the wisdom of segregating Mexican children and the relevance of intelligence testing.⁷⁰ Yet perhaps no educator's criticism of the inferior schooling received was as well known as George I. Sanchez.⁷¹

Sanchez was a pioneer amongst those who tried to mold public education to meet the needs of its Mexican pupils. He began his best-known research on the conditions of the Spanish speaking in New Mexico in the late 1930s, which culminated in the publication of *Forgotten*

⁶⁸ Martha Menchaca and Richard R. Valencia, "Anglo-Saxon Ideologies in the 1920s-1930s: Their Impact on the Segregation of Mexican Students in California," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 21 (September 1990): 227.

⁶⁹ Emory S. Bogardus, *The Mexican in the United States* (1934; Repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970), 10.

⁷⁰ Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed*, 119–120; Judith R. Raftery, "Missing the Mark: Intelligence Testing in Los Angeles Public Schools, 1922-1932," *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 81.

⁷¹ Matthew D. Davis, *Exposing a Culture of Neglect: Herschel T. Manuel and Mexican American Schooling* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Pub, 2005), 89; Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed*, 119.

People in 1940.⁷² Earlier, when working for the New Mexico Department of Sanchez reviewed the results of seventeen studies of IQ differences in Spanish speaking children conducted between 1923 and 1931. Eight of these studies attributed the lower scores to “heredity” or racial reasoning such as the proportion of “Indian” blood to test scores.⁷³ Sanchez assailed this testing as inadequate, a poor measure of ability given the presence of “a combination of practically all of the factors which among other groups have been shown to impair the value of test results.”⁷⁴

As educators, scholars and other observers turned their attention to the schooling of Mexican children in the U.S. early twentieth century segregation increased and a professional dialogue began which justified the separation of Mexican students due to their “special abilities.” Concurrently a discourse on public education’s role in Americanizing Mexicans was just beginning its dubious career. Early Latino professionals, particularly George I. Sanchez, were equally suspicious about the efficacy of the methods being utilized to educate Spanish-speaking children and tools used to evaluate their abilities. These educators have been criticized for adopting culturally deterministic policies, including intelligence testing, vocational education, Americanization programs, language ability and migrant schools in order to justify the segregation of Mexican children in the Southwest.⁷⁵

⁷² Mario T García, “Forward,” in *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (1940; repr., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁷³ George I. Sanchez, “Group Differences and Spanish-Speaking Children--A Critical Review,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 16 (October 1932): 552.

⁷⁴ Sanchez, 556.

⁷⁵ Menchaca and Valencia, 227.

Despite the negative attitudes of many school administrators Chicanos continued to pursue equal education in the 1950s. Contemporary commentators cited *Mendez v. Westminster*, which, like *Brown v. Board of Education*, successfully challenged segregated schools as inherently unequal, as a sign of the increasing demands of Mexican parents. Journalist Carey McWilliams, known for his pioneering defense of Mexican youth, asserted that although segregation was still the norm, “great changes . . . have taken place in the last few years, not in the status of the Spanish speaking, but in people’s thinking about “the Mexican problem.”⁷⁶ Meanwhile, sociologists J. Milton Yinger and George E. Simpson predicted that the recent legal cases, in addition to reflecting a growing belief in the inefficacy of segregated education for English language learners would, albeit gradually, result in integration.⁷⁷ These legal victories aside, San Miguel has noted they did not translate directly into desegregation as schools implemented increased “extra legal” measures to maintain and expand segregation through the late 1960s.⁷⁸

While court victories emboldened Mexican parents, in particular through middle class organizations, used a variety of public pressure tactics and especially legal strategies to push for desegregation.⁷⁹ But they faced administrators who built upon their culturally deterministic

⁷⁶ Carey McWilliams, “America’s Disadvantaged Minorities: Mexican-Americans,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 20 (Summer 1951): 309.

⁷⁷ J. Milton Yinger and George E. Simpson, “The Integration of Americans of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Oriental Descent,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 304 (March 1956): 125–131.

⁷⁸ Guadalupe San Miguel, “The Struggle Against Separate and Unequal Schools: Middle Class Mexican Americans and the Desegregation Campaign in Texas,” *History of Education Quarterly* 23 (Autumn 1983): 355.

policies to maintain segregated facilities through a variety of informal practices. By the late 1960s their pressure increased and they were realizing some genuine change, including the appearance of bilingual education. In concert with a developing Chicano identity, Chicano education advocates in Michigan began to object to what they saw as a program for subordination and sought their own solutions.

The number of Chicanos who managed to enroll in Michigan colleges and universities increased dramatically during the 1970s. Those most able to adapt and survive, they often reflected on their early school experiences and identified how their schooling conveyed a second class status. Members of the student group, Chicanos at Michigan, criticized their K-12 schooling experience in “Historical Background of Chicanos in Michigan”:

Not only do they have to spend one or two years learning the language, but they tend also to look at it as the only acceptable, and “American” form of speaking. Somehow it has been forgotten that one-third of the United States once belonged to Mexico. But there is more damage done than this. The child soon also begins to feel that there is something ‘foreign’ and different about their parents and their background, and because of the demeaning attitude the white power structure has toward Chicanos, become ashamed of their own culture. Nothing he learns in school or anything he reads in his books has anything at all in common with this home and his background. He learns to be bilingual, he learns to be bicultural, he knows how to speak English but his language is Spanish. He knows how to be Anglo but he is Mexican.⁸⁰

In this passage the Chicano student activists at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, led by their President Linda Guzman, clearly identify the alienation they experienced. They object to the Anglocentric view of the American national project when they remind readers of the lands

⁷⁹ Guadalupe San Miguel, *“Let All of Them Take Heed”: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

⁸⁰ Linda Guzman with Chicanos at Michigan to James O’Neill, May 2, 1972, 1, Provost and Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs Papers, Bentley Historical Library.

formerly a part of Mexico now included in the territory of the United States. Yet, their rhetorical focus is not on the academic effects of the schooling they received, but on the consequences for the individual's sense of self, shifting from the plural "they" to the masculine singular, "he." The authors assert that as individuals Chicanos learned in school that they did not belong because they were 'foreign' and that the nature of their non-belonging was inferior, a cause for shame. Finally they assert that this experience instructs students how to perform in Anglo society, 'how to be Anglo', yet, no matter the learning that takes place, the Mexican is forever excluded, because on an essential level "he is Mexican." In this way the authors both name their fundamental alienation from the American national project and reject the position they have been assigned within it. Rejecting the supposedly "shameful" nature of their culture the authors instead directly claim not their identity, but emphatically state their nature as Mexicans. In this way the authors place their being as individuals who are a part of a cohesive, separate group, outside the reach of any colonial project.

Chicano Movement Interprets Schooling

In response to alienating schooling Michigan Chicano Movement activists sought an education that emphasized their existence as a coherent group with its own history, mythology and national vision. They believed that public schooling transmitted an American nationalism that denigrated them, and sought to directly address this colonial vision through an alternate one of their own. As with previous generations, Chicano activists and community members focused on education as an issue partially because they saw it as a path to community uplift. Yet, they also recognized they could not rely on schooling premised upon exclusion to be effective in developing Chicano students' academic or human potential. Thus, Chicano commitment to advancement through education and pursuit of an anti-colonial vision were mutually reinforcing.

Chicanos' developing anti-colonial vision was evident in their contributions to bilingual/bicultural education curriculum. In 1972 four Chicano students from Eastern Michigan University, Michael Falcon, Nancy Falcon, Jose Flores and Corky Rodriguez collaborated with a University of Michigan doctoral student Bettie Maggie to modify a sensitization exercise they had witnessed in migrant education classes and read about being used by the Peace Corps. In this exercise, designed to portray the treatment received by Spanish speaking students in American schools, Chicano presenters are introduced to the class and proceed to run the class in Spanish in order to demonstrate the experience of being immersed in a foreign language to the other students. The exercise demonstrates how Chicano students experienced English speaking classrooms, the class does not merely take place in Spanish, English is forbidden. Students are not just encouraged to speak in Spanish; they are punished for speaking English, verbally ridiculed and shamed into wearing 'dunce' caps labeled "*tonto*."(idiot)⁸¹ In this way the exercise provides insight into how negatively Chicanos coming of age in the 1970s evaluated being punished for speaking Spanish.

Beyond their condemnation for speaking Spanish, the exercise also demonstrated the link Chicanos felt between schooling and American nationalism. In the middle of the exercise students were asked in Spanish to repeat not the United States Pledge of Allegiance, but a "Pledge to Aztlán" written by Michael Falcon and Jose Flores:

We are children of the sun, we are children of the race. Our race is brave and noble. We are citizens of Aztlán. We would die for Aztlán. We come from a noble heritage. Viva la Raza, Viva Aztlán.⁸²

⁸¹ Bettie Magee, Others, "A Description of Simulation Technique to Develop Teacher and Counselor Empathy with the Spanish Speaking Student," 1972, 4.

⁸² Ibid.

During the exercise the “Pledge to Aztlán” was a placeholder for the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, reflective of how the United States Pledge of Allegiance was perceived by Chicano students and offering Aztlán as a competing national construct. The “Pledge to Aztlán” reflects a view of the nation, be it the U.S. or Aztlán, as a distinctly racialized entity, demanding loyalty, and one intimately tied to racial survival. The “Pledge to Aztlán” assumes a coherent group who are the descendants, or “children” of a great people with a “noble heritage.” In this way Falcon and Flores asserted that the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance similarly spoke to a distinct group with a common heritage whose well-being was inexorably tied to the survival of the United States. The English-speaking students who participated in the exercise were compelled to follow rules they could not understand, punished for violating those rules, shamed for speaking their native language, and then forced to pledge loyalty to the group that created these alienating conditions because they were superior by virtue of their descent. Taken together with the rest of the exercise, meant to communicate the alienation Chicano students experienced in the English Speaking classroom, the text of Falcon and Flores’ “Pledge to Aztlán” describes how their experience in American schools alienated them from an American National Project that intrinsically excluded them.

In this way the “Pledge to Aztlán” used in the exercise speaks to Chicanos’ perspectives on American nationalism and Aztlán. Yet, it also reveals much about Chicanos’ vision of Aztlán from afar in Michigan. For Flores, Falcon and the other Chicanos who participated in this exercise, Aztlán was a competing national construct to the United States, but rooted in their experiences within the U.S. It is significant that when choosing a parallel to the United States’ Pledge of Allegiance the group did not choose to translate the Pledge of Allegiance into Spanish, which would have been endorsing an alternate American nationalism less directly linked to white

supremacy. Nor did they choose to use the closest Mexican national equivalent to the United States Pledge of Allegiance, the “*Juramento a la Bandera*,” or to substitute the more well-known Mexican national anthem the “*Himno Nacional Mexicano*.” In this way Flores and Falcon indicated that their vision of Chicano identity and nationalism stood apart from both the Mexican and American national construct, their homeland was neither the United States nor Mexico, but Aztlán.

The Aztlán they envisioned was also tied to descent, indigenous origins, and a spirit of resistance. The “Pledge to Aztlán” repeatedly declares their existence as a coherent group defined by honorable common ancestors. Rather than reinforcing a nation-state, as in the Pledge of Allegiance’s focus on “the flag of the United States of America. . . the republic . . . one nation . . . indivisible” the “Pledge to Aztlán” emphasizes the existence of Chicanos as a separate group of “la Raza.” This emphasis on a coherent group is also linked to a shared indigenous heritage in the phrase, “the children of the sun.” This phrase calls upon Daniel Valdez’ Chicano Movement song, “Brown-eyed Children of the Sun,” the work of Chicano poet Alurista, evoking both a Chicano history of agricultural labor, the sun of the Aztec Calendar Stone and Mexica mythology surrounding the passing of the *Quinto Sol*. The “Pledge to Aztlán” seeks to racialize Chicanos as a separate group linked by ancestry and class. In addition, the authors instructed students to recite the “Pledge to Aztlán” with the same hand over heart motion of the Pledge of Allegiance, but to end with two fist pumps for “Viva la Raza” and “Viva Aztlán.” In this way the authors connected the “Pledge to Aztlán” with actions taken as a part of the Chicano Movement. The two are linked by an obligation to defend Aztlán, to the death, and the physical ritual meant to accompany the pledge conveyed a sense of active resistance.

Chicano educators also made links between their schooling in the United States and the alienating effects of an exclusionary American nationalism in new educational materials. Such materials often critiqued the absence of Chicanos from United States history courses and the prevalence of an ideology of Anglo superiority while they presented alternate national visions. Adelfa Arredondo's 1976 booklet "The Miseducation of Chicano Students: Recommendations for Confronting It" was designed for use in teacher education workshops. First published by the Michigan Department of Education, where Arredondo was employed, the booklet includes a self-assessment, discussion of common misconceptions and solutions as well as a selected bibliography.⁸³ Arredondo emphasizes the internal diversity amongst Chicanos, opposes assimilation as a route to success in the U.S. and offers practical suggestions about resources. She also portrays a number of standard historical narratives presented as a part of an exclusionary American nationalism in her list of forty items entitled "Miseducation of Chicanos."

1. Telling a Chicano child that Columbus discovered America.
2. Teaching that George Washington is the father of the U.S.
3. Teaching that the English settlers were the "founders" of America.⁸⁴

In these first three items Arredondo directly confronts imperial historical narratives that portray the Americas as uninhabited prior to European colonization, as well as those that place the roots of the American national project exclusively in its Anglo heritage. Furthermore, she characterizes this sort of nationalism as responsible for the "miseducation" of Chicano students.

⁸³ Division of Minority Affairs, *A Selected Annotated Bibliography of Material Relating to Racism, Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans and Multi-Ethnicity*, vol. 4 (East Lansing, MI: Michigan Education Association, 1975).

⁸⁴ Adelfa Arredondo, *The Miseducation of Chicano Students: Recommendations for Confronting It* (Utah Education Association Minority Affairs Committee, 1976).

Her list also addresses more predictable points such as “13. Not teaching the Chicanos about their culture, heritage and language.” and “16. Teaching Chicanos that they must conform to white society’s ways.” But Arredondo chooses first to address ideas considered “common sense,” Columbus’ discovery of America, the importance of Washington and the founding of the United States.⁸⁵ In this way she places the poor educational attainment of Chicano students not only at the exclusion of information about Chicanos, of their “culture, heritage and language,” but in the entire ideological project of an Anglocentric imperialist America.



FIGURE 1: ADVERTISEMENT FOR ADULT ENGLISH CLASSES

Source: *El Renacimiento*, August 29, 1975.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 3.

The discursive relationship between education and national identity permeated Chicano movement activities in Michigan. Consider the above advertisement printed in Michigan's Chicano Movement newspaper *El Renacimiento* in 1975. The English language classes it promoted would have been uncontroversial at any time during the twentieth century. Yet, Chicano Movement activists in Michigan learned in their school experiences the strong link between state-sponsored education and the propagation of a national imaginary. The language and imagery used to promote the classes relied upon feelings of connection to Chicanos as a group united by pre-Columbian roots in order to motivate participation. In this advertisement Chicano Movement discourse reframed education as an as important step in "the awakening of the race," being quite literally roused by the *Mexica* warrior and his *concha*. Those who wanted to learn English were not encouraged to do so for personal advancement, or to become proud Americans. Instead they were called to "wake-up" to rise up as a group, as *la Raza*. In this way the intended audience for an activity previously conceived of as primarily a path to assimilation were told that learning English and being educated could be the key to the success of the Chicano Movement.

Desegregation and Bilingual Education

Do not group, categorize or lump us with anyone—we are a distinct people, with a real and unplastic culture . . . Call it anything you like, our children have been segregated for generations. Not only from Whites and Blacks, but from achievement, from success and from the academic system.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development, "Presentation By LA SED and Latino Community To DPS Central School Board on Proposed Desegregation Plan," March 25, 1975, 1, Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development Records, Bentley Historical Library.

Though people of Mexican descent had lived in Detroit since the 1910s, Chicano students in this urban area were subject to the same discourse of foreignness that excluded migrant children from rural schools. The discourse of Mexicans born in the United States as foreigners was pervasive, influencing even sympathetic portrayals of their educational challenges. In a 1969 *Detroit News* article journalist John Peterson entitled his report on the efforts of Detroit Latino advocates seeking bilingual education “a tragic lesson” but when describing the origins of Detroit’s “Latin-American” population in migrant farm work, he asserted, “Most of the newcomers are refugees from the grinding misery of the southwestern barrios.”⁸⁷ When applied to Latino families in Detroit, distancing language such as “refugees” played into the narrative that “Texas Mexican” families whose labor contributions had been critical to Michigan agriculture for decades were nonetheless outsiders in Michigan. One would scarcely know these “refugees” were fellow Americans. In their struggle for community advancement Chicano and Latino activists in Detroit challenged racial order that subordinated them through erasure. Just as Chicano students were excluded from rural schools through being defined as “migrants,” urban Chicanos were excluded from educational advancement by a legal system that erased them from Detroit’s racial reality. The struggle for bilingual/bicultural education in Detroit was more than a battle for better schooling, but also one to establish themselves as a “distinct people” whose fundamental reality could not be denied.

Throughout the early 1970s two disparate initiatives to improve the public schools in Detroit followed largely separate orbits toward their ultimate chaotic intersection. After 1976 desegregation proceeded largely unmodified, but the other initiative, bilingual education, proved to have far less gravity and its trajectory was significantly changed. In seeking improved

⁸⁷ Peterson, “A Tragic Lesson: Language Barrier Cripples Mexican-American Pupils.”

education for Chicano children advocates in Southwest Detroit had been pursuing bilingual education since 1969. They largely rejected the idea that the purpose of bilingual education was to ease the assimilation of the community's children into a white, English-speaking American culture, but instead saw bilingual education as a means to cultural cohesion and the reinforcement of a separate, Spanish-speaking, non-white identity. Ironically, the desegregation court also favored bilingual education, but did so because it portrayed Detroit Chicanos as a non-Black group that would be adequately served simply by learning English. In this way the implementation of desegregation in Detroit was premised upon the exclusion of Chicanos from its racial order.

Conflicting views as to the purpose of bilingual education and its reconcilability with desegregation occurred not only in Detroit, but across the nation and in education literature. Prominent contemporary advocates of desegregation, such as Gary Orfield, predicted a dystopian future, a nation defeated by racial division if desegregation did not proceed.⁸⁸ Yet Orfield's work also demonstrates that they were no formulaic alliances; at times he characterized bilingual education itself as a threat that "may encourage or deepen linguistic-cultural cleavages. Linguistic politics in countries with deep ethnic divisions have proved to be volatile, emotional and persistent."⁸⁹ Those charged with implementing Detroit's limited desegregation plan expressed similar hostilities and doubts about the nature of bilingual education.

The literature on the schooling of Chicanos in the U.S. provides little guidance on interpreting this scenario because, like much of Chicano Studies, it is rigidly focused on the

⁸⁸ Gary Orfield, *Must We Buz?: Segregated Schools and National Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1978), 455.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 227.

Southwest and tends to naturalize that region's environment as *the* Chicano context. The segregation of Chicano students, Americanization through education, creating a pliable labor force, community desegregation efforts, and the institutionalization, however brief, of bilingual education have been primary concerns of scholars focused on such schooling. Scholars have argued training for low wage labor positions and Americanization were aspects of a colonial racial order. Outside the Southwest, some of these concerns, like the strict segregation of urban Chicano students from whites, were much less salient, while others, such as a binary Black-White racial order that erased Chicanos, were much more so. Few contemporary scholars of Chicano schooling address the interaction of Black and Chicano efforts to improve their schools; those who do primarily portray the Black Civil Rights struggle as a significant, but distant milieu instead of a daily circumstance.

Although different, the circumstances faced by Chicano education advocates in Detroit did not have a mediating affect on their critique. As in many other locales advocates tended to see bilingual education as an avenue to the development of a more distinct ethnic identity. Detroiters concerned with the education of Chicano youth rejected their exclusion. Instead, critics of the education of the community's children asserted that the inadequate education being received by Chicano students destined them for state spaces of more absolute social control such as the child welfare system, and ultimately, prison. In this narrative, the choice between a theoretical American assimilation and a radical, separate liberation for Chicano, or Black, students is laid barren by the omnipresence of Detroit's rapid deindustrialization, globalization and political marginality.

The process of desegregation was contested within the Chicano community. Although the ultimate decision of Detroit's long-running desegregation case included some "educational

components” designed to foster student achievement the primary issue throughout the process was the segregation of Black children. The idea that desegregation could be causally linked to increasing the achievement of Black children was broadly assumed in proposed desegregation plans, testimony and public observations of the time.⁹⁰ Whether that occurred is not the subject at hand, but rather the conditions faced by Chicano students during this volatile period. At barrio schools such as Western High School, Earhart Middle School, Webster and Preston Elementary Schools, the involvement of parents, community organizations and allies indicated that the community was far from satisfied with student performance in their schools.

Beginning with Stanley A. West and June Macklin’s edited collection published in 1979 scholars noted the differential educational attainment of Chicano students in 1970, “in the city of Detroit the median level of educational attainment for those twenty-five or older was 11.0 for males . . . in the barrio . . . median attainments were 6.6 years for males . . .”⁹¹ A 1973 study conducted at elementary schools in Region II, which included Western High School, compared the achievement of Black and Chicano students and found that the parents of Chicano students had much less schooling than their Black peers.⁹² Another reason for Chicano parents’ dissatisfaction was the achievement of their students, an advocate’s analysis of elementary school test scores in 1969 found that no school that had a majority of Black or Hispanic students

⁹⁰ Eleanor Paperno Wolf, *Trial and Error: The Detroit School Segregation Case* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), 13.

⁹¹ John R. Weeks and Joseph Spielberg Benitez, “The Cultural Demography of Midwestern Chicano Communities,” in *The Chicano Experience*, ed. Stanley A. West and June Macklin (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 243.

⁹² James Edward Harris, “The Relationship of the Mobility of Black and Chicano Students to Achievement in Reading and Arithmetic in Selected Detroit Elementary Schools.” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1973), 47–57.

had scored above grade level on recent exams.⁹³ A study conducted by the Detroit Public Schools in 1970 found that sixth grade students in the Western High School Constellation had a mean score of 4.7, less than the city wide mean of 5.0 and more than one grade below level overall. Specific scores for Webster Elementary were similar to other Latino students including Western High School Constellation's schools. Their mean score being 4.8, again slightly below the city mean of 5.0. Of the twenty-one high school constellations in Detroit in 1969 this study showed that thirteen had higher mean scores than Western, again demonstrating that barrio schools were far from a haven of high-achieving students prior the desegregation process.⁹⁴ Chicanos were students at some of Detroit's whitest schools prior to the desegregation order, yet it is likely that they did not achieve at levels higher than strictly segregated Black students.

One reason parents were dissatisfied was that throughout the formal proceedings of the desegregation case, from April 1970 when the School Board first issued a desegregation plan, until busing ultimately began in January 1976, the courts rarely deemed Chicanos a group with their own interests in Detroit schools.⁹⁵ Detroit's desegregation case traveled a circuitous route to eventual decision during which time at least eleven diverse, detailed desegregation plans totaling thousands of pages were formally considered by courts passing from Michigan's United States District Court to the Supreme Court.⁹⁶ Early desegregation plans rarely mentioned

⁹³ Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81*, 2nd ed (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 335.

⁹⁴ Department of Research and Development, Office of Improvement of Instruction, *Achievement Test Scores of Pupils in the Detroit Public Schools* (Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, 1970), 13, 29.

⁹⁵ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 357.

students other than Blacks and whites. For example, the 1972 “Metropolitan One Way Student Movement and Reassignment Plan” asserted that in the previous year the Western High School constellation was 45.5 percent Black. As with other reports it declared in the first few pages that all calculations will exclude students not designated as white or Black.⁹⁷ In the same year the “Neighborhood School Based Metropolitan Plan” and the “Metropolitan School District Reorganization Plan” omitted any mention of non-white or Black students and presented all statistics regarding future racial composition as equaling 100 percent.⁹⁸ The “Metropolitan Magnet Plan” included a similar racial order and asserted that Western High School was not included because it was already integrated.⁹⁹ The “Detroit Metropolitan Racial Proportion Criteria Plan” departed from the others in using the categories of “Minority” and “Majority” in its pupil assignment schema. It defined “Majority” as “Black, Brown, Red and Yellow” and “Minority” as “White” but it confused the issue further by including Latino students in the “Other Minority” category in its tables regarding specific school composition.¹⁰⁰ Only one of

⁹⁶ George Cushingberry, *Plaintiff's Desegregation Plan for the Assignment of Pupils, 1975-1976* (Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, 1975), 1A; Michigan State Board of Education, *Six Plans to Achieve Racial Desegregation in Public Schools of the Detroit Metropolitan Area* (Lansing: State of Michigan, 1972), 1; Wolf, *Trial and Error*, 303, 313–314.

⁹⁷ Michigan State Board of Education, *Metropolitan One-Way Student Movement and Reassignment Plan as Submitted to Federal Court Judge Stephen J. Roth* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), 5–6.

⁹⁸ Michigan State Board of Education, *The Neighborhood School Based Metropolitan Plan* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), 13, Exhibit C; Michigan State Board of Education, *Metropolitan School District Reorganization Plan* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), Preface–3, 11, 17, Exhibit C.

⁹⁹ Michigan State Board of Education, *Metropolitan Magnet Plan as Submitted to the Federal Court Judge Stephen J. Roth* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), 5–12.

these six plans addresses educational concerns specific to Latino students in any way. The “Equality Of Education Opportunity And Quality Integrated Education Metropolitan Plan” briefly touched upon the need for bilingual education and referred to the Detroit School Boards’ creation of an extant “La Raza Advisory Council, for Mexican Americans” to meet this goal.¹⁰¹

Later in 1972 a panel representing the State Department of Education evaluated the plan and attention to Latinos increased marginally as the panel asserted that “No cluster should be selected which contains a significantly large group of American Indians, Latinos or Orientals.” However it also recommended that transfers should be limited to a “permissible range of . . . 15 to 35 percent black” in the receiving school. Thus if a Chicano student applied to transfer to a school with a higher Chicano population but a significantly lower Black population this transfer was denied. This plan also called for a staff affirmative action program for the school districts that included “Black, American Indian, Latino, (and) Oriental” staff as minorities.¹⁰²

After the Supreme Court ruled against any metropolitan remedy the newly appointed Judge, Robert DeMascio, ordered both the Detroit School Board and the NAACP, as the suit’s plaintiffs, to propose their final desegregation plans in April of 1975.¹⁰³ Both plans include

¹⁰⁰ Michigan State Board of Education, *Detroit Metropolitan Racial Proportion Criteria Plan as Submitted to Federal Court Judge Stephen J. Roth* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), unnumbered appendices Note the tables in this document are unclear. . Note the tables in this document are unclear.

¹⁰¹ Michigan State Board of Education, *Equality Of Education Opportunity And Quality Integrated Education Metropolitan Plan as Submitted to Federal Court Judge Stephen J. Roth* (Lansing, MI: The Board, 1972), Appendix E, 2.

¹⁰² Michigan State Board of Education, *The Panel’s Response To The Court’s Ruling On Desegregation Area And Order For Development Of Plan Of Desegregation* (Lansing, MI: Department of Education, 1972), 6, 16, 33.

recognition of the interests of “Spanish speaking” or “Spanish surname” pupils in remaining together in order to preserve bilingual education. Both also implemented a nearly universal change in their use of binary racial categories in the reporting of racial ethnic data for individual schools and regions. For the first time both reports detailed the presence not only of “Spanish surnamed” but, at least in the School Board’s plan, Asian American and American Indian students as well. The School Board’s plan also included a detailed proposal for the implementation of bilingual education with a budget totaling 4.8 million dollars.¹⁰⁴ An investigation by officers of the court found that the school board’s desegregation plan prioritized the preservation of some bilingual education programs rather than their plan’s stated goal of having no school with fewer than 40 percent black students.¹⁰⁵ The plaintiff’s plan did not include such provisions directed at an issue of great interest to the Chicano community, but this omission is in large part attributable to their plan’s strict focus on numerically desegregating Black schools. Only the board’s plan addressed educational components, such as bilingual or vocational education, designed to foster greater student success. These components were later incorporated into the final desegregation plan as ordered by Judge DeMascio.

The ultimate plan was developed in negotiations between the court and parties to the suit in the latter half of 1975. It is at this time that the actions of Latino parents in the interests of their community and their children enter the court record. Partially as a result, a large number of

¹⁰³ Elwood Hain, “School Desegregation in Detroit: Domestic Tranquility and Judicial Futility,” *Wayne Law Review* 23 (1976): 122–123.

¹⁰⁴ Office of Desegregation, *Desegregation Plan, 1975-76* (Detroit: Detroit Board of Education, 1975), 36.

¹⁰⁵ Ronald Bradley, et al., v. William G. Milliken, et al., 402 F. Supp. 1096, 1116 (E.D. Mich. 1975).

Black students were bused to Webster and Preston elementary schools, the only two schools in Detroit to have a majority Latino population. Prior to desegregation both schools had a proportion of white students close to the 26 percent of white students in the Detroit Public Schools overall, with Preston at 19 percent and Webster at 34 percent.¹⁰⁶ Although many elementary schools in Detroit had fewer or no white students, neither school was a local outpost of white exclusivity; of the ten elementary schools in close proximity to Preston and Webster, those within the Region II, Western High School constellation, four had significantly higher concentrations of white students, ranging from 56 percent to 76 percent white. It is not clear at this time if these four schools, Amos, Maybury, McKinstry and Neinas received as significant proportions of Black students as Preston and Webster did. Nevertheless as busing began in 1976 Judge DeMascio's ruling that as a "language minority" Latinos had no place in a case regarding segregation by race and that the Detroit School Board "adequately represented" the interests of Latino students effectively curtailed Latino parents from legal remedies.¹⁰⁷

Although other studies of Chicano education in the 1970s have found Black desegregation was a competing narrative for educational improvement, within the schools Chicanos attended in Detroit the activities of Black students, parents, teachers and administrators added immediacy not present in other cases. In the district overall from 1963 on Black students outnumbered white students, from 1975 on Black professional employees outnumbered whites.¹⁰⁸ In the school system's Region II, which more than encompassed the historical center

¹⁰⁶ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, appendix, table 5; Office of Desegregation, *Desegregation Plan, 1975-76*, appendix C, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Hain, "School Desegregation in Detroit: Domestic Tranquility and Judicial Futility," 138; Mayo L. Coiner, "Civil Rights," *Detroit College of Law Review II* (1981): 385-386.

of the Mexican community in Southwest Detroit, it was reported that 65 percent of students were Black, 25 percent Latino and 15 percent white in 1976.¹⁰⁹ That year the Michigan Chronicle, a long-running Black newspaper, reported favorably on the “ethnic potpourri” at Western High School, represented as 25 percent Latino population, 48 percent Black and remainder a mixture of European and Middle Eastern descent.¹¹⁰ In comparison just prior to desegregation in 1974 Western was 22 percent Latino, 36 percent Black and 41 percent white.¹¹¹ Thus the most profound change as a result of desegregation at the most important high school in Detroit for Latinos was a decrease, by 14 percent, of the proportion of white students in their school and an increase, by 12 percent of the proportion of Black students.

At the elementary level the situation was somewhat similar although the predominant change was a greater increase in the proportion of Black students. In a sample of three schools Latinos were concentrated in done for a preliminary desegregation study, it was reported that in 1971 Webster Elementary was 12 percent Black, Earhart Middle School was 9 percent Black and Western High School was 37 percent Black.¹¹² The proportion of Latino students in these schools was not reported, but it is notable that each fell far below the district wide percentage of

¹⁰⁸ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, appendix, tables 5–6.

¹⁰⁹ “Ousted School Board Prexy Girds for Renewed Battle,” *Detroit Michigan Chronicle*, April 24, 1976.

¹¹⁰ “Ethnic Potpourri as Western High Is Aptly Named,” *Detroit Michigan Chronicle*, April 24, 1976.

¹¹¹ Office of Desegregation, *Desegregation Plan, 1975-76*, appendix C, 8.

¹¹² Detroit Public Schools, *Selected School Data-Compiled January 1971* (Detroit: The Office, 1972), 14–19.

Black students for that year, 65 percent.¹¹³ In 1974 the same three schools had 47 percent, 35 percent and 22 percent populations of “Spanish Surname” students.¹¹⁴ After the ruling Elwood Hain surveyed the results of desegregation at Webster and Preston and concluded that in 1975 Webster was 56 percent Latino and 14.1 percent Black, while after segregation it was 37 percent Black. Preston went from 61 percent Latino, 25 percent Black to 54 percent Black. Due to the transfer out of Latino students and the transferring in of Black students Latinos saw their concentration in, and claim to, each school diminished.

By 1975 when the final desegregation plan was created two Supreme Court cases with implications for the racial composition of schools had been decided. However only one, *Bradley v. Milliken*, which ruled that Detroit’s desegregation plan could only involve schools within its district’s boundaries, has been routinely included in studies of the struggle for equal education. The other, *Lau v. Nichols*, held that it was unconstitutional to withhold instruction in their native languages from children who did not speak English. This decision has been seen as energizing to bilingual education advocates throughout the nation. It certainly did not go unnoticed by some Detroiters, like the members of the Task Force on Bilingual/Bicultural Education, who had been meeting to discuss the problems of Spanish-speaking dropouts since 1971.¹¹⁵ On the eve of desegregation there were two bilingual education programs in Detroit schools, one each at

¹¹³ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, appendix, table 5.

¹¹⁴ Department of Education, “Grant Application,” 1974, 19, Record Group 80-21, Lot 73, Series 1, Lansing, State Archives of Michigan.

¹¹⁵ Task Force on Bilingual-Bicultural Education, “Minutes,” 1971, Detroit Commission on Human Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Part 3 Series V, Box 62, Folder 2, Walter P. Reuther Library.

Webster and Preston Elementary School, both were funded through federal government grants.¹¹⁶

The sentiments of Detroit Chicanos towards bilingual education before desegregation mirrored those of Chicanos nationwide in one key aspect, the desire to use bilingual education to build and maintain a distinct identity. Just after the implementation of the city's first bilingual program at Webster in 1970 a study conducted within Webster's attendance area interviewed forty households and ten "community leaders" about issues facing the Latino community. Parents commented they wanted more Spanish language courses and more material on Mexican culture while the community leaders asserted that the purpose of bilingual education was to instill a pride in bilingualism amongst students. The community leaders also expressed concern that very few of the newly hired staff for the bilingual program were Mexican American and that the communities' children should be taught by other Mexican Americans rather than Spanish-speaking Anglos or Cubans.¹¹⁷ A study conducted in 1972 by the Latin American Secretariat found that a majority of parents wanted the schools to teach Spanish so that students would "retain their Latino culture and group identity."¹¹⁸ The authors of this study noted that this was a "startling" finding because in previous years the concern had been that a limited proficiency in English was leading to children being classified as "retarded" and contributing to the high drop out rate. The authors also asserted that the lack of English speaking ability amongst Detroit's

¹¹⁶ Department of Education, "Grant Application."

¹¹⁷ Sharon Popp, "Exploratory Study of the Mexican-American Community in Detroit, Michigan" (MSW Thesis, Wayne State University, 1970), 43.

¹¹⁸ Charles N Lebeaux, Salas, Gumecindo, *Latino Life and Social Needs: A Detroit Survey for the Latin American Secretariat of the Archdiocese of Detroit*. (Detroit: New Detroit, Inc., 1973), 30.

Latinos had been overstated and that in their survey of around 170 households only 17 percent were monolingual in Spanish.¹¹⁹

In 1974 the Detroit School District collected public comment on its bilingual programs to include in a grant application aimed at expanding its program to three additional schools. Not all of the public comments were supportive of teaching Spanish in the schools. Yet those of Margarita Valdez, a local bilingual education advocate portray the hope of many that bilingual education would allow Mexican students the chance to use “their language as an *asset* . . . their *culture* as a means of building confidence and pride in their greatness.”¹²⁰ Adelfa Loera, a paraprofessional working in Webster’s bilingual program, commented similarly in the program’s newsletter, “*Creo que una de las cosas importantes que resulta en el programa es que los niños se sienten orgullosos. Orgullosos . . . de su herencia cultural.*” (I believe that one of the important things resulting from the program is that the children feel proud. Proud . . . of their cultural heritage.)¹²¹ Valdez and Loera were participants in an ongoing campaign by community advocates to increase the scope of bilingual education and claim it as their own.

Self-determination and governance of bilingual/bicultural programs by representatives of those being served continued to be an issue throughout the 1970s. Ignacio Gonzalez was president of an organization that often addressed the schooling of Latinos in Detroit at this time, the Committee of Concerned Spanish Speaking Americans (CCSSA). Ignacio Gonzalez raised

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁰ “Comments on the Title VII ESEA Detroit Bilingual Advisory Council Grant Application,” February 22, 1974, Department of Education Papers, Record Group 80-21, Lot 73, Series 1, Lansing, State Archives of Michigan.

¹²¹ “Nuestra Gente Habla” (Vocero Bilingüe, April 1974), 6, Latino Collections, Michigan State University Special Collections.

this issue of self-determination in reference to the bilingual education program at Webster in 1972, “It is our unanimous opinion that a program created for the Chicano community should be directed, guided and evaluated by the Chicano community.”¹²² In the same year the editor of *Nosotros*, Roberto Veliz, objected to the recent lay-off notices received by Latino teachers in Detroit, “*Como esperamos que un maestro de los suburbios entienda las necesidades y cultura nuestra? Sabemos positivamente que los alumnos Latinos que abandonan la escuela secundaria—80% para ser mas exactos—lo hacen debido principalmente a esta razón.*” (How can we expect a teacher from the suburbs to understand our needs and culture? We know positively that the Latino students who leave high school-80% to be exact-do so primarily for this reason.)¹²³ As a result of concerns over governance of bilingual/bicultural programs parents at Webster Elementary formed a separate parents organization, *El Club de Padres y Educadores de Webster*.¹²⁴ In late 1974 a group protested outside the Region II School Board offices to demand Webster Elementary fill its vacant principal position with a “bilingual bicultural” person as a part of their ongoing campaign against low numbers of Latino staff in the schools.¹²⁵

¹²² Ignacio Gonzalez, “Cartas,” *Nosotros: La Voz de La Comunidad Hispanoamericana de Detroit*, June 1, 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 6, *Nosotros* (Newsletter), 1972, Walter P. Reuther Library; Rose Marie Lewis, “The Latin American in the Public Schools,” *Nosotros: La Voz de La Comunidad Hispanoamericana de Detroit*, March 3, 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 6, *Nosotros* (Newsletter), 1972, Walter P. Reuther Library.

¹²³ Roberto Veliz, “Editorial,” *Nosotros: La Voz de La Comunidad Hispanoamericana de Detroit*, June 1, 1972, 2, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 6, *Nosotros* (Newsletter), 1972, Walter P. Reuther Library.

¹²⁴ “Separate Parent’s Club at Webster,” *Nosotros: La Voz de La Comunidad Hispanoamericana de Detroit*, June 30, 1972, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 3, Folder 6, *Nosotros* (Newsletter), 1972, Walter P. Reuther Library.

Just prior to desegregation and despite Judge DeMascio's ruling it is apparent that some Chicano community members and parents did not agree that the board "adequately represented" their interests. As the case was being decided a group of Latino activists, in conjunction with two lawyers from Michigan Legal Services, issued a blistering report on the status of schools in Detroit's barrios. They produced a bilingual booklet that called upon Detroit's Latinos to unite and organize for their children. In *Ya es la hora, Latino, Now is the Time* they detailed a variety of offenses that the school district and its personnel had committed against the Latino community. This work emphasized the idea that the school district and its staff were prejudiced and ignorant of the needs of the Latino community. The centerpiece of the group's case was a memo issued by the school administrator's union in October of 1974. Ostensibly issued to help identify Latino staff for promotion, the letter's tone makes evident administrators' skepticism about the term "Latino" and its validity as a category needed for "racial and ethnic balance" amongst staff.¹²⁶ In this way Chicano activists' desires to administer programs such as bilingual/bicultural education were frustrated by willful ignorance as to their identity as a racial group.

Community activists identified the lack of recognition of their racial identity as a barrier to their children's achievement. La Sed protested the exclusion of Latinos from the desegregation plan, "We cannot and will not accept any plan which does not consider the Latino as a distinct and separate group."¹²⁷ Other parties worked with LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), from 1976 until 1980 on legal attempts to intervene in the case.

¹²⁵ "Pickets Call for Latino Principal," *Detroit Free Press*, October 17, 1974.

¹²⁶ John C. Duffy and Gabe Kaimowitz, *Ya Es La Hora Latino-Now Is the Time* (Detroit: Michigan Legal Services, 1975), 11.

¹²⁷ Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development, "Presentation By LA SED and Latino Community To DPS Central School Board on Proposed Desegregation Plan."

LULAC's efforts to be included in the case were ultimately rejected by Judge DeMascio, who held that, "This case began as and remains a racial desegregation case, and for school assignment purposes Spanish-surnamed students cannot be treated differently than other white students."¹²⁸ In this way being defined as "other white students" constrained the ability of Chicanos to preserve and expand their programs.

The preservation of bilingual/bicultural education was a primary reason why Chicano and Latino activists opposed being treated as whites for the purposes of desegregation. La Sed was concerned that "bilingual education services and curricula are to be divided, dispersed and destroyed" as a result of desegregation.¹²⁹ Felix Valbuena, director of the school district's bilingual program expressed a similar concern in his testimony in the fall of 1976, "we needed to gather the students in to make the program more manageable."¹³⁰ Furthermore, advocates of bilingual education had reason to worry that their programs would not be expanded into new schools to which Chicano students were transferred, despite being legally mandated to offer bilingual education. After passing a state bilingual education act in October of 1974, neither the legislature, the State department of education, nor local districts allocated funds for the newly required bilingual education programs.¹³¹ Thus as of September 1, 1975, when the law took

¹²⁸ Ronald Bradley et al., v. William G. Milliken, et al, 460 F. Supp. 299 299, 312 (ED Mich. 1978).

¹²⁹ Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development, "Presentation By LA SED and Latino Community To DPS Central School Board on Proposed Desegregation Plan."

¹³⁰ Bill Drummond, "Desegregation, Bilingual Education Collide in Detroit," *Midland (TX) Reporter-Telegram*, November 30, 1977.

¹³¹ "Chronicle of Race, Sex & Schools," *Integrated Education* 14, no. 1 (February 1976): 48.

affect, Chicanos protested that no local bilingual programs had been initiated as a result of the law and that all the ongoing programs were federally funded.¹³²

Conclusion

The resolution of Detroit's desegregation case for Chicanos was that what separated them from their white peers was a basic matter of language learning. Nevertheless, in their efforts to build bilingual education, Chicanos in Detroit rejected the idea that their children were interchangeable with white students. For them supporting bilingual education meant hiring more Mexican-American staff, incorporation of Mexican history and culture in the schools, maintenance of Spanish language ability and, most commonly, reinforcement of one's difference from both whites and blacks. In their pursuit of bilingual education that reinforced cultural differences, not aided incorporation, Chicanos in Detroit mirrored a phenomena found in community support of bilingual education throughout the Southwest.

It is through this similarity that Detroit Chicanos' efforts can be seen as a part of the Chicano Movement. Yet the social, economic and racial geography of Michigan and Detroit presented a different milieu to Chicano school activists than much of the Southwest. Whether they were migrants, immigrants or the children and grandchildren of both, many Michigan Chicanos possessed knowledge and experience of discrimination in the Southwest, especially Texas. However, their experiences being excluded from and discriminated against in Michigan schools reinforced their alienation in distinct ways that can inform our understanding of the Chicano Movement and expand the geography of Chicano Studies. In rural Michigan, Chicanos outside the fields were outsiders because they were "migrants," once in schools they felt a greater isolation because they spoke Spanish and the curriculum presented a vision of American

¹³² "No Programs Spark Protest," *Adrian (MI) Daily Telegram*, October 8, 1975.

that colonized them, and in Michigan's largest school district their attempts to claim a space as Chicanos were, quite literally, judged to have "no place." During the 1960s and 1970s Chicanos in Michigan schools faced erasure and alienation wherever they turned.

From these experiences in Michigan Chicanos were supposed to learn lessons of assimilation through submission, of allegiance as "whites, Spanish-surnamed." Many learned these lessons and rejected them. Their distance from the lands formerly a part of Mexico, a frequent Chicano Movement talking point, did not blunt their critique. Instead their alienation created a dissonance with the image of the United States as the "land of opportunity" from within America's industrial heartland. In the Southwest Chicanos were often told that their inequality and poverty were a result of incomplete assimilation and the unfinished incorporation of former Mexican territories. This colonizer's narrative of underdevelopment was more difficult to sustain in the Midwest. Chicanos in the Midwest, like those whose "Pledge to Aztlán" portrayed an America steeped in a history of white supremacy, were better placed to evaluate the ability of the American national project to accommodate them as equals. In the Midwest Chicanos judged the United States on its own terms and found it wanting.

In 1970s Detroit, Chicanos operated in an environment where whiteness was becoming the racially marked category.¹³³ The struggle for bilingual education in Detroit could be seen as an attempt, like many others throughout the Southwest U.S., to reinforce cultural nationalism. For some this was the case. Yet Michigan Chicano education advocates went beyond this critique to present schooling as mere training for incarceration. Chicano students, with the support of many parents, walked out of Lansing's Pattengill Junior High beginning March 9, 1970 for 15 days in direct response to a teacher hitting their peer Eddie Magaña. The short-lived

¹³³ John Hartigan, *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Chicano Movement newspaper, *Sol de Aztlán*, defended the walkout asserting, “The schools do not teach the students, they just police them.”¹³⁴ Similarly the Detroit booklet, *Ya Es la Hora Latino*, made an even more provocative comparison throughout its text between the fate of young Latinos in the state’s child welfare, juvenile justice, or prison systems and those in school. Beginning with its dedication to Juan Herrera, a Chicano from Detroit imprisoned and killed in Marquette Branch Prison, the authors argued that Detroit was using its schools to reproduce a non-employable surplus labor force destined for prison. In this way advocates saw schooling as a form of social control and harnessed regional narratives of Detroit as an increasingly abject “reservation” for those whose aspirations could not be met in a post-industrial America.¹³⁵ In this instance regional narratives about the marginalization of Black Detroit and Midwest rust-belt politics aided in the development of an anti-colonial discourse amongst Chicanos.

As the 1970s wore on the industrial rust-belt, Michigan and Detroit in particular were often portrayed as the worn-out, washed-up remnants of a bygone era. Yet Detroit’s situation was in large part created by the very economic and political processes so closely associated with the late twentieth century: neoliberalism, decline in the structures of social support and solidarity, deindustrialization, outsourcing and globalization.¹³⁶ Just as Detroit, in all its decay

¹³⁴ “For Chicano Principal Administrative Treadmill Grinds Slowly,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 15, 1971; “Zapata School,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlán*, March 1970.

¹³⁵ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

¹³⁶ On neoliberalism, uneven development and social solidarity, David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006); On the decline of social supports, solidarity through unions and the role of a conservative political vision in Detroit, Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

and persistence, was in fact an integral part of the United States, migrant workers were indispensable in Michigan, and Chicanos were a part of Detroit's racial order. In arguing for both their difference and presence, Chicanos in Michigan's rural and urban spaces contested the American vision that, as *La Sed* asserted, had "segregated" them from academic success and discursively excluded them from belonging on their own terms. Instead, they increasingly pursued a national vision of their own.

CHAPTER THREE: “THE HISTORICAL RHYTHM”

“you were here in the historical rhythm,
no solamente (not only) in a Ford Motor Personnel decision”¹

Historical narrative and cultural production comprised two intertwined strategies for liberation within the Chicano Movement. Debates over “our history” and “*nuestra cultura*” (our culture) differently defined were ubiquitous during the Chicano Movement as various parties used history and culture to defend, denigrate or differentiate between themselves and their opponents. Far from the disputed territory of the Southwest, Michigan Chicanos, and their Latino allies, redefined their history as one of resistance to conquest. Michigan Chicano Movement texts, from the newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, to visual art like David Torrez’ *El Despertar de la Raza* and the poetry of *Voces del Norte* concern themselves not only with contemporaneous issues, such as bilingual education and farmworker rights, but also with reinterpreting Chicano history and culture. Yet in Michigan, as elsewhere, Chicano history and culture faltered when it addressed gender. Chicano histories often omitted women and treated men as the normative Chicano subject. Chicanas who sought to incorporate women wrestled with two contested images of their past, one the long-suffering, subservient *Mexicana*, and another, *La Adelita*, the fighter who defends herself and her community.² While the image of

¹ CHISPA-Chicano Students for Progressive Action, Student Media Appropriations Board, “Voces Del Norte, II” (Michigan State University, 1979), George Vargas Papers, 1978-2003, Box 3, Bentley Historical Library.

² Although this debate occurred in many different venues, an especially poignant and important example is the “split” over the issue at the 1971 Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza in Houston. Francisca Flores, “Conference of Mexican Women in Houston--Un Remolino[a Whirlwind],” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York: Routledge, 1997), 159; Mirta Vidal, *Chicanas Speak Out: Women New Voice of La Raza* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 64; Teresa Palomo Acosta, “Conferencia de Mujeres Por La Raza,” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 28, 2010,

the subservient Chicana contradicted their anti-colonial impulses, Chicanos and Chicanas struggled to gender their history. In their efforts to formulate a racialized, gendered anti-colonial history Chicanos and Chicanas embodied the work of other better known anti-colonial theorists, both practical and academic.

Through these efforts Chicanos and Chicanas rejected incomplete assimilation as the explanation for their oppression. By focusing on the United States as conqueror and indigenous resistance Chicano Movement participants engaged in anti-colonial thought and contemplated revolution. Chicanos and their Latino allies not only rejected the alienation that had been their experience in school, but also sought a Michigan Chicano history and culture that was itself an act of self-determination. They did so from within the heart of America, and the dissonance between American ideals and their experiences of exclusion allowed them to see the United States, Michigan and Aztlán as political constructs.

Anti-Colonial History and Literature

In her analysis of anti-colonial writers, Mary Louise Pratt argues they have been compelled to address the history of European civilization and reveal its constructed nature. Specifically, Pratt develops a typology of “correctives” used to combat a critical component of colonial discourse, “diffusionism”. For Pratt, diffusionism is the assumption, often unacknowledged, that European thought was born both independent and universal; naturally

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pwcpz>; Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 4th ed (New York: Longman, 2000), 398; Alfredo Mirandé, *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 237; Sonia A. Lopez, “The Role of the Chicana Within the Student Movement,” in *Essays on La Mujer*, ed. Rosaura Sanchez and Rosa Martinez Cruz (Los Angeles: University of California, 1977), 25; Maylei Blackwell, “Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Chicana Feminisms and Print Culture in the Chicano Movement, 1968-1973,” in *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gabriela F. Arredondo et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 75; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.

spreading throughout the world due to its innate superiority. In her examination of anti-colonial theorists Pratt identifies four tactics used in anti-colonial literature to combat diffusionism: interruption, digestion, substitution and reversal.³ Classic anti-colonial writers, such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Albert Memmi mastered these “counter-narratives” which were also employed, albeit less uniformly, by Michigan Chicano Movement participants.⁴

Amongst the anti-colonial theorists she examines Pratt first identifies interruption as a tactic used to assert that colonized people had a pre-colonial history that was “interrupted” by colonization. Literature that used “interruption” asserted that colonialism itself created savage underdevelopment. The first step in the technique of interruption is evident in Césaire, Memmi and Fanon’s work as they decry the colonizer’s history for constructing the colonized as a people without one. Fanon addressed history as the narrative structure of European colonization in *Wretched of the Earth*. It is from this history that the colonized learn of their natural savagery and unchanging lack of civilization.⁵ It is the colonizer’s history that convinces the colonized that their independence would lead inevitably to ruin, to a “fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality.”⁶ Thus the colonizer’s history fosters the belief that the colonizers did not interrupt anything because colonialism and progress are inseparable. Memmi was also quite specific in his use of the strategy of interruption when he asked his readers to question their

³ Mary Louise Pratt, “The Anticolonial Past,” *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2004): 443–456.

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Orion Press, 1965).

⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 161.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

“diffusionist” assumptions, “Why must we suppose that the colonized would have remained frozen in the state in which the colonizer found him? We could just as well put forward the opposite view. If colonization had not taken place, there would have been more schools and more hospitals.”⁷ Chicano literature also used “interruption” as a counter-narrative by emphasizing indigeneity.

While the technique of interruption focuses on the colonized, Pratt’s second technique, digestion, instead turns to the civilization of the colonizer and characterizes it as a product of their consumption of the accumulated knowledge of non-European peoples. Michigan Chicano literature employed digestion when it asserted American settlers had appropriated indigenous identities to reinforce their illegitimate claims to the land. Returning to the colonized Pratt’s third tactic is substitution, or the assertion that colonial society did not simply replace previous ways of living but instead built upon pre-colonial structures and coexisted with cultural persistence amongst the colonized. Fanon asserted that the native intellectual contests the colonizer’s history by “rehabilitating” a “national culture” that existed prior to colonization.⁸ It is the power of the colonizer’s history that calls Fanon to define the work of the native intellectual in creating a national culture as “not a luxury, but a necessity.” He does so despite his misgivings about the native intellectuals’ overreliance on the liberatory power of counter-narrative.⁹ Chicano literature contested colonial substitution by arguing Chicano history and culture emerged from an indigenous past whose conquest remained incomplete.

⁷ Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 113.

⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 209–210.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 211–223.

Lastly, Pratt's technique of reversal focuses on contradictory effect of the colonizer's stated values and the inequality inherent in establishing and maintaining the colonial order. Pratt names liberalism as the most common example of reversal. She asserts liberalism emphasized an individual liberty that impoverished subsistence farmers in the name of economic freedom. Chicanos who emphasized the ongoing suffering and pain of being conquered employed reversal to condemn the United States. They argued that the United States was a corrupt conquering power, who like the Spanish in Mexico, had only degraded Chicanos despite promises of American prosperity. Each of the strategies Pratt identifies is at work in the writing of anti-colonialists in the Chicano Movement.

La Raza and Anti-Colonial Thought in Michigan

Idali Feliciano: It's like in war, whoever wins gets to tell the story.

Nora Salas: Did we lose a war?

Idali Feliciano: Well, I use that figuratively speaking, we're not the historians, we weren't writing the history, in a sense, yeah, I think we did, I think we did.¹⁰

Most people involved in producing Chicano and Latino history and cultural narratives during the 1960s and 1970s would not have considered their politics to be "anti-colonial." Like Idali Feliciano, they more often saw their struggle primarily as one of "access" to education and employment for Spanish-Speaking people. As a young Puerto Rican woman who settled with her family in Pontiac, Michigan at the age of 7, Feliciano traveled in the same circles as the Chicanos and Latinos working on *El Renacimiento* and operating Quinto Sol. Later, after graduating from Olivet College, she advocated for bilingual education and parental involvement while working for the Michigan Department of Education. This challenging work confronted a state establishment that had little record of including *la raza*. The effort was fundamentally liberal, a call for state government and business leaders to incorporate Latinos into their

¹⁰ Idali Feliciano, Interview by author, March 26, 2012.

structures without really changing the structures themselves. Although concerned about the direction of the nation, Feliciano continues to believe that “working within the system” is the way to make progress.

Nevertheless, like so many of her Chicano Movement contemporaries, her thoughts are haunted by conquest. Jesse Gonzales, one of the most prolific artists and writers involved in the movement, struck a similar note in a separate interview,

Jesse Gonzales: That we were inferior. That the things that happened to us in terms of the wars and the conquest, the pillaging, the stealing, the murders and all of **that we deserved it**. . . . because we were Mexicanos, we were different, we had darker colored skin. We were Roman Catholic. And they were Anglos. The spoils belong to the victors. . . .

Nora Salas: Who’s the victors?

Jesse Gonzales: Whites . . . ¹¹

The persistent sense that Chicanos and other Spanish-speaking people had lost a war, that they were somehow on the losing side of history, led to the production of historical narratives and cultural production that contested liberal democracy. Some, like Ricardo Parra, one of the organizers of the Midwest Council on La Raza, concluded that Chicanos’ sense of being conquered demonstrated that racial inequality in the U.S. was a result of American imperialism. To this end Parra wrote, “At the root of American prejudice is not essentially skin color, but the belief that America has conquered those who are Spanish, Mexican, Indian and Negro. The sin of having lost the war is a confession of inferiority.”¹² Those, like Parra, who developed the sense of being conquered into a full-blown anti-colonial critique of the United States were fewer in

¹¹ Jesse Gonzales, Interview by author, April 18, 2012.(emphasis mine)

¹² Ricardo Parra, “Other Factors Regarding the Spanish Speaking in the Midwest,” January 1973, Box 1, Folder 32 Juana and Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

number, but they shared a feeling of being amongst the vanquished with the larger group. They incorporated the experience of being amongst the vanquished into a rewritten American history and culture wherein American prosperity grew from the subjugation of indigenous people. Michigan Chicanos researched, wrote and promoted new versions of their history and culture that employed Pratt's technique of reversal; manifest destiny, democracy and progress became exploitation, fraud, and suffering. In the process they also became more aware that the United States was not a natural phenomenon, a *fait accompli*, but a political construct.

Chicano poets used reversal to portray westward expansion and manifest destiny as destructive American conquest. The poets Esiquiel Guzmán and Adrian Lopez addressed the dual nature of conquest, both the material loss and the psychic suffering. Guzman's 1970 poem entitled, "No Amo a Mi Patria" was published in 1970 edition of the short-running Chicano newspaper, *Sol de Aztlán*.¹³ "No Amo a Mi Patria" was placed amongst poems by Texas Chicano poet Abelardo, and was likely influenced by Mexican poet Jose Emilio Pacheco, whose poem "Alta Traición", also begins with the line, "No amo a mi patria!" (I don't love my country!)¹⁴ Guzman's speaker condemns the United States as a conquering power when he asserts, "Soy Estado-unidense no por accidente, sino por usurpación." (I am from the United States not by accident, but by usurpation.) Guzman then compares the material loss his parents' land and the uncontainable march of American 'progress' with the theft and destruction of the human spirit

¹³ Guzman, "No Amo a Mi Patria," *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlán*, April 1970, Latino Collections, Michigan State University Special Collections; Esiquiel Guzman, "No Amo a Mi Patria," April 1970, Gilberto T. and Minerva T. Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections.

¹⁴ José Emilio Pacheco, *Selected Poems of José E. Pacheco* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1987), 46.

No amo a mi patria!
Pero no porque robo las tierras de mis padres
sino porque les robo el espíritu.

I don't love my country!
But not because it stole my parents' lands
But because it stole their spirit.

Although both are condemned, ultimately Guzman concludes that it was the spiritual death that compelled him to turn his back on the United States. A similar note was struck by student poet Adrian Lopez whose poem "We Are Everywhere" begins, "Yo soy Chicano.(I am Chicano) I want to be recognized. I want justice. I want my land."¹⁵ In this poem, published in a collection called *Nosotros* by Western Michigan University (WMU) students in 1974, Lopez demands both 'justice' and the return of lost territory, but begins with a call for recognition. In this way Chicanos emphasized the causal link between their sense of inferiority and American imperialism.

Similarly other poets and writers identified the mental suffering that resulted from the great dissonance between the political ideals the United States promoted and the Chicano experience. Miguel Valdivielso was a frequent contributor of political essays to *El Renacimiento*. In his essay entitled, "Patria," he called attention to the "psychological tyranny" that Chicanos experienced in the United States because their experience contrasted so greatly with the democratic values espoused by many Americans,

And so the Mexican people, who have already suffered the arbitrariness of the Spanish for many years, the neglect of the Mexican government, again were subjected to ***a new type of tyranny, a type above all psychological***. They were told that they belong to the greatest nation in the world, that their government is

¹⁵ Jesse Gonzales, ed., *Nosotros* (Kalamazoo, MI: Minority Student Services, Western Michigan University, 1974).

the result of the will of the people, for the people, of the people, and by the people, and other niceties of political philosophy, but the reality was the same.¹⁶

Like Guzman's poem and Valdivielso's editorial in *El Renacimiento*, Manuel Chiunti also identified the mental suffering which resulted from the gap between expectations of the United States and reality in his poem, "*Lamento: Tributo al Trabajador Agrícola Mexico-Americano*" (Lamentation: Tribute to the Mexican American Agricultural Worker). Placed under a headline, "Bienvenida a Michigan al Hombre de la Labor," (Michigan's Welcome to the Working Man) which emphasized the bitter irony of providing labor that was both needed and unwanted, Chiunti's poem also underscored the suffering felt, in this case by Chicano farmworkers, who were "orphaned from caring and piety" but were familiar with the idea of "equality."

huérfana de cariño y piedad
Sueños de redención mi angustia crea
Gritos de rebelión mi sangre emite,
Ha perdido la fe mas no el orgullo
He perdido igualdad mas no la idea.

orphan of caring and piety
my anguish creates dreams of redemption
my blood emits cries of rebellion
has lost faith, but not pride
has lost equality, but not the idea.¹⁷

¹⁶ Miguel Valdivielso, "Patria?," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, February 1971 "y así el pueblo mexicano que ya por muchos años había sufrido las arbitrariedades de los españoles, o el olvido del Gobierno Mexicano, de nuevo se vio sometido a un nuevo tipo de tiranía, de tipo sobre todo psicológico. Se le dijo que pertenecía a la nación más grande del mundo, que su gobierno era resultado de la voluntad popular, por el pueblo, del pueblo, y para el pueblo, y otras lindezas de filosofía política, pero la realidad era la mismo" (emphasis mine).

¹⁷ Manuel Chiunti, "Lamento Tributo Al Trabajaor Agrícola Mexico-Americano," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 15, 1971.

Guzman, Lopez, Valdivielso and Chiunti used reversal to assert Chicanos' pain and poverty was a result not of their natural inferiority as descendants of the conquered, but of the corruption and malignancy inherent in American history and politics.

During the Chicano Movement in Michigan feelings of pain, erasure and inferiority were reinterpreted as being a result not of incomplete assimilation into American liberal democracy, but instead as the fruit of conquest and ongoing colonialism. The persistent sense that *la raza* suffered because it had "lost a war" led to an analytical shift that drew important parallels between the Spanish conquest, the American invasion of Mexico in 1848 and the contemporary situation Chicanos faced. Originally written in Spanish, Salvador Herrera's book *Tiempos Opuestos/Times in Contrast* promoted anti-colonial history and thought even as it critiqued Chicano nationalism. Published in Lansing by *El Renacimiento* and translated into English by Idali Feliciano, Herrera presented Chicano History and conquest as inseparable, "Thus it was by conquest that the historical process of the Chicano begins." He followed a theme of conquest throughout the book. Herrera argued Chicanos were incorporated into the United States as a result of "one of the most barbaric unjust wars" and thus "solemnly began the history of the Mexicans who were sold."¹⁸ WMU student poet Ricardo Graciano also demonstrated this process when he brought the pain of Spanish conquest up to his time period in his poem, "Aztlán."

Aztlán te quiero
Como Cuauhtémoc,
pero Querido Cuauhtémoc
No mires por mientras,
a tu gente
porque las heridas de tus quemadas vuelven,
no Cuauhtémoc, no mires mas

¹⁸ Salvador Herrera, *Tiempos Opuestos = Times in Contrast* (Lansing, MI: El Renacimiento, 1975).

Aztlán I love you
like Cuauhtémoc loved you
but beloved Cuauhtémoc
Do not look at your people
for a while
because your burnt wounds will return,
no Cuauhtémoc, look no more¹⁹

In these stanzas Graciano aligns himself with Cuauhtémoc as the last Mexica leader of Mexico, and claims Chicanos as descendants of Cuauhtémoc's legacy, as "his people." He then warns Cuauhtémoc not to observe Chicanos' situation because it will only remind him of how he was tortured by the conquistador Hernan Cortes during the destruction of Tenochtitlán. Chicano writers and artists, like Graciano, linked the poor conditions of contemporary Chicanos in the United States with the deprivations of the Spanish conquest. In doing so they reversed historical aspects of American Exceptionalism that argued that the colonies of the English and their descendants were profoundly different and civilized compared to the areas colonized by the Spanish. Chicanos further developed their anti-colonial thinking in their emphasis on indigeneity.

¹⁹ Gonzales, *Nosotros*.



FIGURE 2: "EL DESPERTAR DE MI RAZA"

Source: David Torrez, Pamphlet, Mesoamerica Cultural Exhibit, 1971.

"Te llamen 'militante' y lo eres, como un Tolteca es,"²⁰

Indigenous Mexican themes permeated Michigan's Chicano Movement, from the wall murals at Quinto Sol in Lansing, the intentional promotion of an indigenous identity engaged in

²⁰ "They call you a militant and you are, like a Toltec is."

by activists and artists like Roy Fuentes and David Torrez, to the small woodcut stamps of Mexica glyphs which decorated the most humble of hand-written flyers. David Torrez' pencil drawing and its accompanying poem, both entitled "El Despertar de la Raza" embody many aspects of Michigan Chicanos who proclaimed an anti-colonial indigeneity.²¹ One of a number of creative works labeled "El Despertar de la Raza" in Michigan publications, Torrez' poem appeared in the December, 1971 issue of *El Renacimiento*.²² In Torrez' narrative *la raza* was a sleeping giant, literally rooted in the earth who through self-determination emerged as his true self, a Chicano. The pencil drawing evokes an awakening colossus. The giant is flanked by two indigenous men; one a warrior who carries the traditional Mexica weapon, a *maquahuitl* and the other who is bent and broken beneath a yoke. The giant, or *la raza*, is shown rising up from his knees, face raised toward the sun even as his yoke is broken and weakened by vines. The shape of the giant awakening against the negative space of the sky evokes a mountain arising tectonically from the earth. In Torrez' interpretation the giant is the 'militant' Chicano who "refuses to be silent, who prevails and resists." This giant can be confident that if he is in fact a radical, it is only because he harkens to his indigenous ancestors, who not only *were* 'militant' but *are*, "como un tolteca es."²³ In this way Torrez asserted that Chicano identity, militancy and the continued existence of indigenous Mexicans were inexorably linked. Torrez' use of indigeneity, like that of other Chicano writers and artists, employed multiple strategies Pratt identified in anti-colonial literature.

²¹ David Torrez, "Mesoamerica Cultural Exhibit," 1971, Gilberto T. and Minerva T. Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections.

²² David Torrez, "El Despertar de La Raza," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, December 1971.

²³ Torrez, "Mesoamerica Cultural Exhibit."

Torrez began advocating for Mexicans as a young man and member of the American G.I. Forum in 1962, he became one of the most prolific promoters of Chicanos' indigenous roots in Michigan, particularly through the framework of Anahuac. Between 1971 and 1973 Torrez displayed his cultural exhibits, "Mesoamerican Cultural Exhibit" and "Cuxan San" at numerous Chicano Movement events, universities, public libraries and schools in Michigan, Illinois and Iowa.²⁴ Born in Saginaw in 1937, Torrez was a Chicano artist, poet and activist who created murals, graphics and other art in order to promote his concept of Chicano identity, especially in the Saginaw Valley.²⁵ For Chicanos in Michigan a focus on the indigenous in their history and cultural production was a way of rejecting both the Spanish conquest and ongoing subjugation in American society. Chicanos across the country were engaged in a redefinition of their cultural and political identity and the search for their historic roots was a reflexive part of this process. Following Pratt's typology of anti-colonial literature Chicanos' emphasis on indigeneity as a theme embodied the techniques of interruption, digestion and substitution. Chicanos interrupted the narrative of colonial underdevelopment by characterizing indigenous Mexicans as possessors of civilization and history whose development was disrupted by European colonization. Their emphasis on Chicano indigeneity addressed digestion by arguing that white Americans had unjustly usurped a rhetoric of indigeneity to support their own claims to the land. Lastly they

²⁴ "Entrevista Con David Torrez," *ABRAZO*, Fall 1976, 27–29; La Raza Unida, "Press Release," 1971, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 1 Folder 32 La Raza Unida, Walter Reuther Archive; La Raza Unida, "El Despertar de Mi Raza," August 7, 1971, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection Accession 221 Box 1 Folder 32 La Raza Unida, Walter Reuther Archive.

²⁵ Julian Nava, "Convención Estatal de La Raza Unida," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 15, 1971; David Torrez, "Resume," 1973, Gilberto T. and Minerva T. Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections.

used substitution to show that indigeneity persisted and was not entirely eradicated by European or American colonization.

Chicanos writers and artists statements on indigeneity utilized interruption by portraying indigenous people as possessors of a glorious civilization disturbed, but not destroyed, by European barbarism. Writers like Gilberto Ibarra, the anonymous authors of *Sol de Aztlan* and others, routinely described pre-Colombian civilizations as ‘magnificent,’ “great” and invariably, “beautiful.”²⁶ Writing in *El Renacimiento* Ibarra published a series of articles detailing his trip to pre-Colombian sites in Mexico during the spring and summer of 1972. More than a chronicle of Ibarra’s travels in Mexico, in his articles Ibarra always directly told the reader that contemporary Chicanos should visit and learn about these civilizations because they could teach us about our glorious past and the possibilities of cultural persistence. Persistence was a particular issue because Ibarra, and other writers, discussed not only ruins of past civilizations, but also contemporary Indian communities in Mexico. After his visit to Huichol communities the previous year Ibarra wrote,

What can we conclude from these observations of the Huichol world? . . . Can we conserve Mexicano or Mexican-American culture outside of North American culture? Can we be perseverant enough to continue practicing the rules of life that our parents gave us for 400 years? . . . The answer is yes, a thousand times yes. Long live the people!²⁷

²⁶ “No Mañana for Today’s Chicanos,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, April 1970; Gilberto Ibarra, “Tula, La Capital Tolteca,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, April 15, 1972; Gilberto Ibarra, “Tulum, Ciudad Amurallada,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 31, 1972; Gilberto Ibarra, “Chichen-Itza, Gran Ciudad Maya Tolteca,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 30, 1972.

²⁷ Gilberto Ibarra, “El Huichol Resiste 400 Anos de Influencia Europea,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, November 30, 1971 “Que podremos concluir de estas observaciones del mundo Huichol? . . . Podemos nosotros conservar lo mexicano o mexicano-americano dentro de al cultura norteamericana? . . . Seriamos lo suficiente perseverantes para continuar practicando por

In this way Ibarra told his readers that Chicanos, like their Huichol kin, could preserve their identity from hostile invaders and that there remained much to preserve. Ibarra specifically described the identity Chicanos should be preserving as pre-Columbian, “something Mexican from before the Spanish conquest.”²⁸

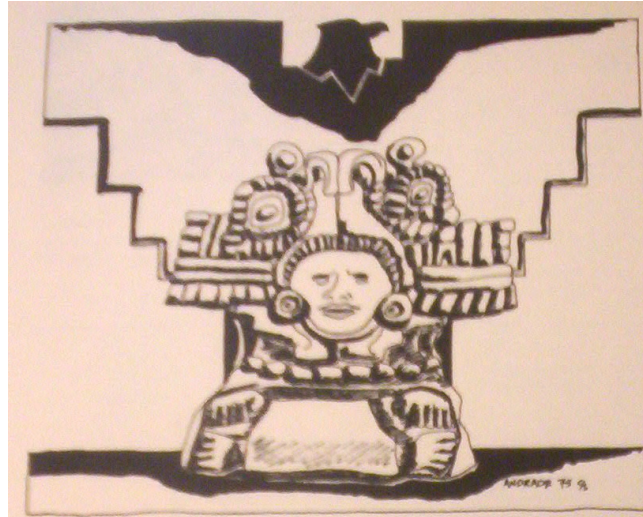


FIGURE 3: "ITZAPAPALOTL"

Source: Bruno Andrade, Raza Art & Media Collective Journal, 1976

Like Ibarra, artist Bruno Andrade sought to merge indigenous Mexican culture with contemporary Chicano activism with his graphic illustrating the 1976 issue of the Ann Arbor based Raza Art and Media Journal. In the image shown below, created while Andrade was a student at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (U of M-Ann Arbor), the United Farm Workers Aztec eagle, perhaps the most recognized symbol of Chicano pride, metamorphisizes, from “Itzpapalotl, the Zapotec butterfly god.” In his caption Andrade describes this as a “rebirth” and

400 años aquellas reglas de la vida que nos dieron nuestros padres? . . La respuesta es si, y mil veces si. Que viva la raza!.”

²⁸ Ibid.

a form of “Chicanismo.”²⁹ In this way Andrade, like Ibarra, asserted that Chicanos were indigenous people whose literal and metaphorical roots could be found in the admirable civilizations of their native ancestors.

Chicano activists furthered their narrative of interruption by contrasting native civilizations with the ‘savagery’ of Europeans. This was the comparison made by Roy O. Fuentes when he wrote, “Who was calling who a savage and uncivilized? In the year 1000 man in Europe ate like a poor poll when compared with the Maya.”³⁰ Fuentes was the first to develop this line of thought in *El Renacimiento*, where he often used the pseudonym, Ah Xul Cuahtli.³¹ Fuentes compared the diet, and other aspects of indigenous and European culture, in order to argue against those he saw as ‘invaders’ who justified the conquest on the basis that it was the indigenous who were savage. The authors of *Sol de Aztlan* extended this comparison to the contemporary United States in their editorial, “No Mañana for Today’s Chicanos.” In this editorial, part history, part book review, part political declaration, the author began with the indigenous roots of Chicanos amongst the “Aztecs, Toltecs and Mayans” and argued that their civilization was a rich one whose descendants are Mexicans and Chicanos. The author decried the Mexican American War and then placed the United States in the same rhetorical category as the Spanish conquistadores who were “only a blood soaked prelude to the U.S. savagery against

²⁹ Bruno Andrade, “Itzpapalotl” (Raza Art & Media Collective, 1975), George Vargas Papers, 1978-2003, Box 3, Papers, Pubs., & non-conference Lectures--Raza Art & Media Collective Journal, Jan. 1976-June 1977, Bentley Historical Library.

³⁰ Roy O. Fuentes, “Justice and the Chicano Movement,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 31, 1972.

³¹ “Reportaje de Actualidad,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 1970.

the Mexicans.”³² According to the authors American savagery continued with the deportations of “Operation Wetback” and the “virtual enslavement” of migrant farmworkers. Fuentes was direct about the effects of colonization concluding in 1970 “The European invasion interrupted the psychological, physical and social development of la raza.”³³ For the writers of *Sol de Aztlan* and Fuentes both the United States and the Spanish empire interrupted the civilization of indigenous Mexicans, beginning a process of colonization that continued in the 1970s.

Chicanos placed another layer of anti-colonial thought in their history when they used their connection to indigeneity to constitute themselves as native inhabitants of the United States and classify whites as newcomers who did not belong. In this way Chicanos rejected whiteness and asserted that white American claims to the founding fathers’ legacy had digested native people’s rhetorical and epistemic indigeneity and used this knowledge to displace and repress them. These claims were particularly poignant in Michigan against the migrant/domestic binary that portrayed Chicanos as outsiders, migrants; Texas Mexicans or Mexicans who did not belong. Chicanos were directly linked to their indigenous ancestors in the pages of *El Renacimiento* where their writing was flanked by drawings of Huastec statues. *El Renacimiento* declared, “La Raza’s origins are as old as man himself on this continent . . . Quetzalcoatl’s very name seems to be a symbol of La Raza’s condition and possibilities.”³⁴ Fuentes also emphasized the longevity of Chicano roots in the Americas while implying that colonialism was the real issue facing Chicanos.

³² “No Mañana for Today’s Chicanos.”

³³ Ah Xul Cuahtli, “La Raza Americana Y El Chicano,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 1970.

³⁴ “History of La Raza,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 15, 1972.

Once we get through the decoys of civil rights, equal education, employment, housing, etc. . we arrive at the real nitty gritty, the real roots of the matter. The Chicano is not a foreigner, as we are led to believe, he is made of American soil, he is a native son of America; his roots are deep. For evidence, he is at least related to the Maya who until 1697 were a cultural entity for 3700 years.³⁵

Here Fuentes displays the links Chicano anti-colonial thinkers made between their material conditions and the importance of reinterpreting their history. Without anti-colonial thinking Fuentes argues Chicanos will be distracted by “decoys” that distract from the “roots” of the problems that are disguised by a false history that characterizes Chicanos as “foreign.” Fuentes furthered this logic when he argued in another article that “the real wetback are the Europeans. Since the European historians chose to exclude our race from the history of this land we must now do our own research.”³⁶ Poet Jose Mirelez, writing in the MEChA Newsletter at the U of M-Ann Arbor in 1974 made a similar point when he wrote,

Ellos dicen they're Americans, but not are we,
Pero no miran the only real American . . . me.
No se fijan that their forefathers came across the great sea,
Pero my forefathers ya estaban aqui

They say they're Americans, but not are we,
But they don't see the only real American . . . me
They don't notice that their forefathers came across the great sea,
But my forefathers were already here³⁷

³⁵ Roy O. Fuentes, “Justice and the Chicano Movement,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, April 15, 1972.

³⁶ Roy O. Fuentes, “Justice and the Chicano Movement,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 15, 1972.

³⁷ Jose Mirelez, “Soy American” (University of Michigan MECHA Newsletter, March 13, 1974), Box 3, The Jose F. Trevino Chicano/Latino Activism Collections: Juana & Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

In this poem, “Soy American,” Mirelez also employs the idea of indigenous descent to claim his own sense of belonging in the Americas and place whites as the immigrants. In this way emphasis on indigeneity not only portrayed Anglos as the usurpers, but defined the United States as an upstart political project which seized claims to nativity to build the nation.

Chicanos’ use of indigenous themes incorporated Pratt’s use of substitution by negating the universality of European thought and culture through indigenous connections to the land. Chicano writers, poets and artists made frequent allusions to the connections between Chicanos and “*la tierra*”(the land). Many of these allusions called upon a common history of farm work. Such was the nature of Adolfo Mata’s poetic description of his father as a “Hijo de la tierra, hombre valeroso, humilde y de justicia.”(Son of the earth, a gallant, humble man of justice)³⁸ Other allusions built upon the idea of a noble, but humble people to use the earth to convey a sense of spiritual belonging, naturalness and righteousness. Fuentes asserted that like the Maya who cultivated the land communally, Chicanos “are the land, we protest being trampled on.”³⁹ In this way Fuentes aligned the resistance to conquest of the Maya with the activities of the Chicano Movement while simultaneously claiming Chicanos were a fundamental and ever present part of the environment. In characterizing Chicanos as akin to “the land” Fuentes naturalized Chicano resistance and portrayed Anglos as those who “trample” others. Writing in his pamphlet, “The Birth of the Chicano,” Lansing resident Jessie B. Guzman struck a similar tone when he asserted, “We are Aztlán, we gather our strength from the mother earth and to it we

³⁸ Chicano Students for Progressive Action (CHISPA), “Voces Del Norte,” 1978, Michigan State University Special Collections.

³⁹ Fuentes, “Justice and the Chicano Movement,” May 31, 1972.

return.”⁴⁰ Placed within the context of a larger discussion of Chicanos’ indigenous ancestors in the Americas, by asserting Chicanos “return” to the earth he rejects the idea that they are interlopers in the United States instead positing that Chicanos’ origins lie in the “earth” a construct not subject to the United States as a nation-state.

Chicano artists also reflected this theme, and literally portrayed Chicanos as being born of the earth. Torrez’ drawing “*El Despertar de la Raza*” reflects this theme, with the Chicano awakening like a mountain newly thrust up from the bedrock. The cover drawing for Guzman’s pamphlet, “Birth of a Chicano,” shows a Chicano literally gestating in the earth like a sapling about to emerge. In this way the earth is portrayed as the Chicanos’ mother, and the Chicano as a natural product of the earth. This drawing by Adrian based artist Martin Moreno is further developed, and rooted in an indigenous symbology, when a fully developed corn stalk is shown growing on the inside title page. Other writers also proclaimed that a vital connection to the earth was part of Chicano culture, declaring “We have deep roots in the land, which once was ours. Our people say, “The land is our mother.” Because we have not forgotten. . .”⁴¹ Chicanos used links between indigeneity and the land to claim universality for themselves and reject the colonial equivalency between progress and western civilization.

Mi Nación Is Aztlan: History as Self-Determination

WHO AM I? WHAT AM I?
TO WHAT NATION DO I BELONG?
MI NACION IS AZTLAN—
I AM A CHICANO
Y ‘VIVA LA REVOLUCION’ ES MI CANCION.

⁴⁰ Jessie B. Guzman, *The Birth of the Chicano* (Charlotte, MI: Mestizo Consultants, 1980).

⁴¹ “I’m Proud to Be Brown,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 30, 1972.

WHO AM I? WHAT AM I?
TO WHAT NATION DO I BELONG?
AZTLAN IS MY NATION—
I AM A CHICANO
AND ‘LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION’ IS MY SONG.⁴²

As demonstrated by Diana Ybarra’s poem, “Message from Aztlan,” Chicanos had persistent doubts about their identity in the United States. As in Ybarra’s poem, these doubts themselves constituted a rupture in American hegemony that could result in allegiance to Aztlán. Regardless of the resolution of their individual doubts Chicano history and art was anti-colonial practice because it reflected self-determination and recognition of the United States as a flawed and illegitimate political construct. The content of their history and artistic production demonstrated Michigan Chicanos’ vision of indigenous resistance, yet it is their focus on producing Chicano history, creating Chicano art and reevaluating Chicano identity that reveals the depth of their anti-colonial critique. This focus on identity building has been dismissed as a benign form of cultural nationalism, as nothing more than ethnic cheerleading. Such dismissals fail to contextualize Chicanos’ anti-colonialism within their vision of the United States as a nation and conqueror. Furthermore, they ignore the worldview of Chicanos in Michigan who believed producing alternate Chicano history, art and identity was a critical part of combatting their ongoing colonization. Assertions that Chicano history and art was merely an adjustment, an attempt to have a voice within the American system rely upon a belief in the United States as a liberal democracy, a belief that many of those producing Chicano popular history and culture did not share. Unlike those in the Southwest United States, Michigan Chicanos could not rely on the rhetorical crutch of conquered lands close at hand, nor the evidence of a Mexican past that

⁴² Diana Ybarra, “Message from Aztlan,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, April 1971.

surrounded everyone, to explain their belief in Aztlán. Instead those who searched for and promoted a Michigan Chicano history turned their ideological gaze upon the United States itself. Their popular history and culture concluded Chicanos were not only sometimes residents of conquered land, but a conquered people.

In order to understand the significance of the history produced by Chicano activists in Michigan it is necessary to consider their production of new historical narratives as one of many strategies they employed in service of *la causa*. *El Renacimiento*, the longest-running and most widely distributed Chicano newspaper in Michigan included material on the history of *la raza* in almost every issue published from its founding through 1977, almost 200 articles in total. Through articles, editorial, poetry and art *El Renacimiento* asserted that Chicano history played an important role in the struggle, as much as the neighboring articles on contemporary issues like farmworker's rights, police brutality or bilingual education. From the rambling prose of Manuel Chiunti and Miguel Valdivielso, to the plodding Mexicanist historical summaries of Jose R. Lozano and the travelogues of Gilberto Ibarra, from the textbook style entries of Manuel Alfaro to the numerous entries whose authorship is not stated, much of the history produced was simultaneously encyclopedic and ideological.⁴³ Yet the significance of these types of articles lies as much in their placement within the pages of *El Renacimiento* as in the content of the articles themselves. In a newspaper founded to serve the "Spanish-Speaking" community in

⁴³ Some examples include: Manuel Chiunti, "Tormented Country," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 31, 1971; Manuel Chiunti, "Tata Cardenas," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, October 15, 1971; Jose R. Lozano, "Mexico Pasajes Historicos," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, October 15, 1971; Jose R. Lozano, "Y Los Espanoles Destruyeron La Rica Civilizacion," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, February 15, 1972; Jose R. Lozano, "La Conquista de Mexico," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, April 30, 1972; Jose Lozano, "La Historia de Mexico," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, November 3, 1972; Manuel Alfaro, "The Aztecs," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, February 29, 1972; "El Reinado Tolteca," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, November 15, 1971; "5 de Mayo, Batalla de Puebla," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, April 30, 1972.

Michigan why devote so much space to explanations of Mexico's past, primarily its pre-Colombian past and the moment of conquest? This question is answered in part by Herrera in *Tiempos Opuestos* when he addresses why there is little information regarding Mexicans in standard U.S. histories, "The obvious reason for omission is a result of the colonial condition in which the Chicano has lived. The ideology of the conqueror is to negate the conquered their history and their culture."⁴⁴ Herrera and other Chicano Movement activists saw their history and cultural production as a form of alternate ideology, not simply for building self-esteem in order to succeed within American society.

Those who dismiss Chicano popular history and art as insignificant because it has not yet resulted in an independent nation-state rely on a version of history that is overly negative towards the influence of internal mindsets on people's actions. In addition they replicate the very colonial logic that Chicanos contested, the often unstated belief that equates victory with truth and righteousness. Chicanos present in Michigan, like elementary school principal, Rodrigo Santa-Ana disagreed with this view when he stated, "The greatest force of the movement is its ideology—Chicanismo."⁴⁵ In part these histories served to promote a legacy of indigenous resistance, as discussed above, but their existence itself was an ideological act that also constituted an intense focus on self-definition and self-determination. The emphasis on Chicano history was a recognition that the problems facing Mexicans in Michigan were more than just "issues" that could be resolved by government programming and new regulations. Chicanos sought their own history because they doubted the ability of American history to accommodate them, in searching for their own history some found Aztlán.

⁴⁴ Herrera, *Tiempos Opuestos = Times in Contrast*, 19.

⁴⁵ Rodrigo Santa Ana, "Ya Mero," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 31, 1972.

Michigan Chicano histories were influenced by Mexican and Texan origin stories, but giving these stories distinct meanings in their local context was a part of Chicano self-determination. Mexican nationalist ideas such as an official *mestizaje*, the glories of pre-Columbian civilization, the Mexican Revolution as a fight for land and liberty, and the lionization of leaders such as Benito Juarez and Father Miguel Hidalgo were also present in the histories of *El Renacimiento*. Jose Lozano's official *mestizaje* could easily have been found in mid-century Mexican publications, "*Pero la amalgama de dos razas y dos culturas tan diferentes, ofrecía, de la conquista en adelante caracteres diversos de sus orígenes europeo e indigena. 'ASI NACIO EL MEXICANO.', nueva formula humana.*"(But the amalgam of two races and two very different cultures, offered, from the conquest on different characters than their European and indigenous origins, Thus was born the Mexican, a new type of human)⁴⁶ Nevertheless this expression of mestizo solidarity, created to blunt persistent ethnic divisions within Mexican society for the benefit of a primarily light-skinned Spanish elite, was put to different uses in the United States. Lozano's *mestizaje*, published in Michigan in 1972, provoked thoughts not of an eventual ascendant mestizo synthesis in Mexico, but on the ongoing conquest of *la raza* by American society. When constructing parallels between the Mexican mestizo mythology and American current events Chicanos characterized *mestizaje* between Anglos and *la raza* as something that had not happened yet, and which may never occur. The purpose of mythologizing the origins of the Mexican nation state within Mexico is the reinforcement of Mexican nationalism, but the result of discussing how Mexico was created from within the United States is to situate the United States as only one construction amongst many.

⁴⁶ Lozano, "*Y Los Espanoles Destruyeron La Rica Civilizacion.*"

Official *mestizaje* was not the only Mexican racial ideal that Chicanos confronted in Michigan. The Mexica revivalism promoted by the Movimiento Confederado Restaurador de la Cultura de Anahuac(MCRCA), could also be found in in the pages of *El Renacimiento* and in the public art works of David Torrez.⁴⁷ Within Mexico the “Anahuac Restoration Movement” was one of a number of Mexicanist groups which believed it was possible to bring a new age to Mexico through the restoration of pre-Columbian culture. Its major period of action was the 1950s and 1960s; by the time Anahuac was portrayed as a utopia in *El Renacimiento* the Mexican group was no longer operating.⁴⁸ Within Mexico those who sought to ‘restore’ the culture of Anahuac operated as an alternative to official *mestizaje* and were involved in founding a political party to contest the PRI in 1965. In Michigan those promoting the ideals of Anahuac confronted not the official *mestizaje* of Mexico, but the melting pot of the United States. Taking the mexicanist idea of Anahuac and applying it in Michigan Fuentes expressed the same doubts about where his loyalty should be as poet Diana Ybarra. He considered the contributions that an indigenous Mexican identity could make to the United States, but unlike his counterparts in Mexico who sought to remake the Mexican nation in their image, he concluded,

If these excerpts seem dislocated and somewhat irrelevant to our present predicament, it is because we have not been ourselves for many generations now, in fact, many of us are two cultures removed from our true nature. It is within our power of self-determination to recreate, resurrect and resume our natural

⁴⁷ Roy O. Fuentes, “Justice and the Chicano Movement,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 15, 1972.

⁴⁸ Lina Odena Guemes, *Movimiento Confederado Restaurador de La Cultura de Anahuac (Cuadernos de La Casa Chata)*, 1a ed (SEP Cultura, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1984); Francisco de la Peña, “Milenarismo, Nativismo Y Neotradicionalismo En El México Actual,” *Ciencias Sociales Y Religión* 3, no. 3 (2001): 95–113.

development toward our destiny: thereby building a healthy vital nation of la
49
raza.

Writing this in English in Michigan Fuentes recognized that his community was distant from Anahuac, divided from indigenous Mexican culture by both the Mexican and U.S. national projects. Despite this distance he concluded that *la raza* was capable of building its own nation if only they would embrace their existential nature as indigenous people. Torrez made a similar point in a 1972 editorial when he argued the U.S. history found in “textbooks” was a distorted fabrication. Torres also translated his comments directly from a MCRCA publication. Yet like Fuentes, Torrez refocused the MCRCA critique of Mexican nation state to the United States. For example, Torrez quoted the MCRCA writing, “You pride yourself on being the mother country. No nation can claim to have given us life. Our nation was created by the energy and power of her children.”⁵⁰ Torrez then redirected this critique at the United States asserting that the false history based upon “discovering America” and being “the mother country” constituted a “fraudulent seed has produced a ‘select’ portion of our American society marked with an overwhelming ‘superiority complex.’ This portion of our society, unfortunately is in the majority; and for the most part is white-racist oriented.”⁵¹ In this way the transfer of Mexicanist thinking led Michigan Chicanos to question the legitimacy of the United States, not because it conflicted with the Mexican national project, but because its subjugation of Chicanos’ indigeneity was based in colonial white supremacy.

⁴⁹ Cuahitli, “La Raza Americana Y El Chicano.”

⁵⁰ David Torrez, “Anahuac Heritage Cited,” October 9, 1972, Gilberto T. and Minerva T. Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Celebrations of traditional Mexican nationalist holidays, heroes and revolutionary themes, like the *16 de Septiembre* held both their patriotic Mexican nationalist meaning, and ones more specific to the situation in Michigan. When Chilean-American editor Edmundo Georgi described the significance of celebrating and remembering this holiday in Lansing he told his readers

This celebration shows the Anglo-Saxon community that neither soil nor borders exist because la raza is one, sturdy, enduring and brave in whatever position they are found they bring so much value to a society where they feel oppressed. And speaking of soil, we can say much: this brown race possessed a large part of this territory for thousands of years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. This brown race says 'the earth is our mother' and feels its roots in this country are profound.⁵²

In this way Georgi adapted Mexican Independence Day to stand not for the freedom of Mexican *criollos* from the Spanish, but to declare the illegitimacy of the United States' territory in relationship to the indigenous Chicano struggle against oppression. Herein Georgi asserts that celebrating Mexican Independence Day in Michigan showed the "Anglo-Saxon community" that Chicanos, Mexicans and other Latinos were united in their struggle against oppressive invaders. Similar expressions of remembrance and loyalty to the vision of the Mexican Revolution, especially in the figure of Emiliano Zapata, were common amongst the historical narratives of Chicanos in Michigan. Just as with the Mexican mestizo myth, the idea of Zapata as a leader of an agrarian revolution took on specific significance for *la raza* in Michigan. *Sol de Aztlan* ran a full page poster style drawing portraying indigenous Mexicans struggling with the Spaniards.

⁵² Edmundo Georgi, "Septiembre El Mes de La Fiesta," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 31, 1972. "Esta fiesta demuestra a la comunidad anglosajona que no existe suelo ni fronteras porque la 'raza es una', solida, sufrida y valiente que en cualquier posición que se encuentre tiene tantos valores que entregar a la sociedad en donde se siente oprimida. Y hablando de suelo, podemos decir mucho: esta 'raza café' poseía gran parte de este territorio por miles de anos antes que los 'Pilgrims' desembarcaran en Plymouth Rock. Esta 'raza café' dice que 'la tierra es nuestra madre' y siente que las raíces en este país son profundas."

The caption included a classic Zapata quote, “La tierra es de todos como el aire, el agua y la luz y el calor de sol. Y tienen derecho a ella los que la trabajan con sus propios manos.”(The land is everyone’s, like the air, the water the light and the heat of the sun. Those who work the land with

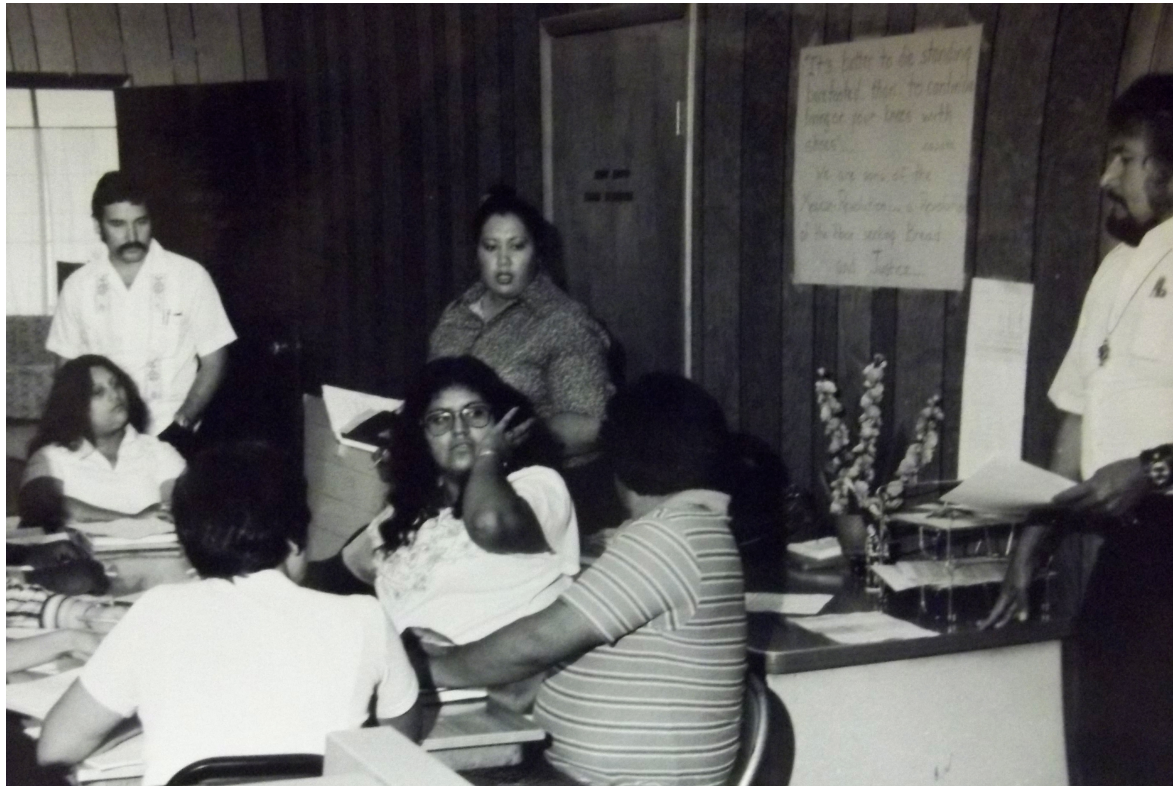


FIGURE 4: OCEANA COUNTY MIGRANT SERVICES OFFICE

The hand written wall poster states, "Its better to die standing barefooted than to continue on your knees with shoes'-Zapata We are the sons of the Mexican revolution, a revolution of the poor seeking bread and justice." Source: Martinez Papers, MSU Special Collections.

their own hands have a right to it.)⁵³ A similar allusion to Zapata’s struggle was posted on the wall of the Migrant Services office in Oceana County.⁵⁴ In remembering Zapata’s land-based struggle for justice and the rights of those who worked the fields Chicanos in Michigan could not

⁵³ unknown, “Tierra Y Libertad,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, March 1971.

⁵⁴ “Photo Ottawa County Migrant Services Office,” n.d., Gilberto T. and Minerva T. Martinez Papers, Michigan State University Special Collections; Victoria Aranguré, Personal Communication with Author, January 2015.

help but remember that the majority of those who worked the land in Michigan were Chicanos. In this way their remembering of nationalist Mexican icons served not to reinforce the Mexican nation state, but instead to raise questions about the legitimacy of the United States.

In addition to the icons and ideals of different strains of Mexican nationalism Chicanos also confronted narratives of Texas independence. Anglo Texans' creation of a slave-holding republic was one variant of American historical narrative that was also under reinterpretation by Michigan Chicanos. Many Chicanos living in Michigan during the 1970s were born in Texas or traveled through Texas upon entering the United States. Chicanos rejected the heroic history of Texas independence and used their view of Texas history to condemn United States "savagery" as a whole. Writing anonymously in *Sol de Aztlan* one condemned the Texas Rangers and their involvement in the history of south Texas,

Ruled despotically by the Texas Ranger mentality, this valley has a history of savagery. The murders of Mexicans may exceed the lynching of blacks in the South . . . the Rangers executed several hundred Mexicans in the early Twenties . . . There is a brutal saying that 'every Texas Ranger has some Mexican blood . . . on his boots.'⁵⁵

In this way the writers of *Sol de Aztlan* raised the specter of Texan abuses to reverse the story of Texan independence, associate Texas brutality with other forms of abuse integral to the American national project (lynching of blacks), and disassociate themselves from the idea of Texas. Santa-Ana mocked the Texas' origin story to a similar end when he wrote in *El Renacimiento*, "If the Alamo had a back door there wouldn't have been any heroes" implying that the defenders of the Alamo were cowards.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "No Mañana for Today's Chicanos."

⁵⁶ Rodrigo Santa Ana, "Ya Mero," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 30, 1971.

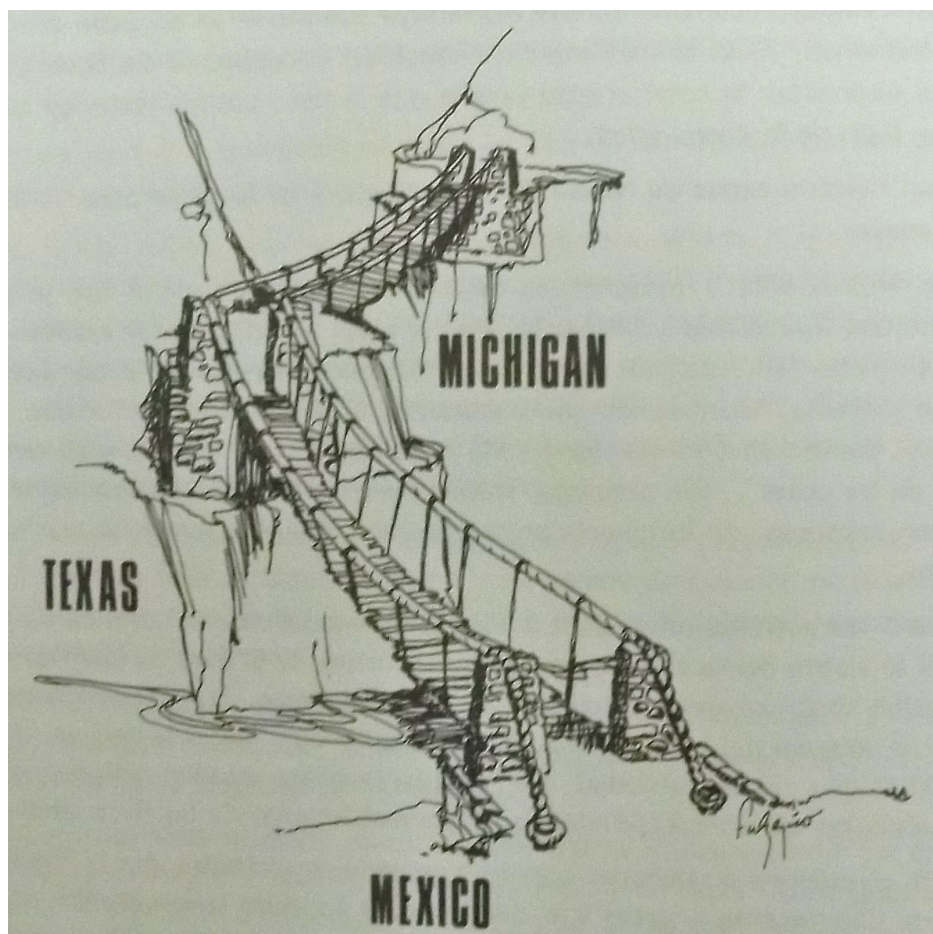


FIGURE 5: "CUXAN SAN"

Source: David Torrez (1971), Gonzales Papers, MSU Special Collections

Although references to the brutality of Texas' racial order could be found in Michigan Chicano media, discussions of Texas history were relatively infrequent. For many Chicanos in Michigan Texas constituted a source of cultural and historical context, but one which was temporary in nature. This is perhaps best shown by Torrez' illustration of the path of Chicanos who arrived in Michigan, entitled "Cuxan San." In the text accompanying this illustration, which was also the title of a journal and museum exhibit, Torrez describes "Cuxan San" as a "Mayan for living rope or suspended bridge." For Torrez Cuxan San was "symbolic" of Chicanos' lifespan as a people, traveling on an indigenous bridge from the "eternal past" to "infinity." The illustration shows

Mexico, Texas and Michigan as lands where the bridge was anchored, and Texas as a waypoint only, but the bridge itself, the “living rope,” is the path upon which Chicanos travel and the place where they lived. In this way Torrez portrayed Mexico, Texas and Michigan as touch points for the Chicano story that always supersedes those geographical places. Torrez prized Chicano self-determination from within their own “reality” on “Cuxan San” above all other narratives.⁵⁷ The self-referent nature of Torrez’ Cuxan San embodies the way in which the practice of Chicano history in the movement in Michigan was itself an act of self-determination.

La Adelita y el Rebozo

“There is nothing passive about the Chicano women. History will point out that . . . We had *las Adelitas* . . . who toted guns and went to war, right by their men”⁵⁸

Speaking in a 1973 interview Jane Gonzalez, the most well known woman in Michigan’s Chicano Movement, rejected the idea that there was anything submissive about Chicanas or their history. In this instance Gonzalez promoted the ideal of the Mexican revolutionary couple as a politicized model for Chicanas in struggle. Chicanos and Chicanas seeking to write an anti-colonial history confronted not only colonial myths explaining the territorial consolidation of Mexico, Texas and the United States, but also their gendered aspects. In formulating their own histories Chicanas across the country grappled with the historical image of the Mexican woman as long-suffering, subservient or “passive.” Chicana interpretations of Mexican history took a variety of forms. Historian Lorena Oropeza has argued that the women who left the Los Angeles Brown Berets just prior to the 1970 Chicano Moratorium on the Vietnam War repurposed the

⁵⁷ David Torrez, “Cuxan San,” n.d., Box 2, The Jose F. Trevino Chicano/Latino Activism Collections: Juana & Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

⁵⁸ Jane Gonzalez, interview by Alan Clive, November 21, 1973, 2, Bentley Historical Library.

stereotypical image of Mexican Women for resistance. In *Raza Si! Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* Oropeza describes how the image presented by *La Adelitas* as they participated in the Chicano Moratorium March both called upon the servile *Mexicana* and banished her simultaneously,

“That day, they marched in black and carried crosses . . . Yet even as they invoked the familiar image of the silent, suffering and pious Mexican woman, their group’s name and the bullet laced belt . . . paid tribute to the women fighters of the Mexican Revolution. That second image best represented their independence.”⁵⁹

Other contemporaries like the pioneer of Chicana History Martha Cotera, rejected colonial history and its image of the subservient Mexican woman entirely. Cotera used substitution when she argued that feminism was nothing new to Mexican and Chicana women but the natural evolution of pre-existing feminist practice.⁶⁰ In her first book *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the United States* Cotera called upon Chicanas to discard the images that have “paralyzed” her, be they the product of “Anglo conquest” or “our men.”⁶¹ Instead Cotera believed Chicanas should rely upon anti-colonial histories such as hers to demonstrate that there was nothing traditional about the long-suffering, disempowered Chicana. Writing in the Chicano Movement newspaper *El Grito del Norte* Enriqueta Vasquez also pursued a gendered strategy of reversal by inverting the colonial characterization of the colonized as savage and the colonial order as civilization. Vasquez instead asserted “It seems

⁵⁹ Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Si!, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 150.

⁶⁰ Cotera, Martha, “Mexicano Feminism,” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York: Routledge, 1997), 88.

⁶¹ Martha P Cotera, *Diosa Y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U. S* (Austin, TX: Information Systems Development, 1976), 197–201.

that among the so-called *savage* people of this continent, women held a degree of political influence never equaled in any *civilized* nation . . . Male domination over the woman is a thing of Spain and Europe.”⁶² Harnessing the full power of gender and history as legitimating narratives many Chicanas embraced *La Adelita* as the “genuine” model for Chicanas, the embodiment of a belief that activism was a natural extension of traditional roles. Nevertheless responses to colonial history were uneven and changeable as the Chicano Movement evolved.

The images of the subordinated Chicana and *La Adelita* appeared far from the area generally considered the center of the Chicano Movement; the Southwestern United States. In Michigan journalist Rosa Morales struggled with these representations of Chicanas’ gendered past. Writing in Michigan’s primary Chicano Movement newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, Morales and others committed to *La Causa* confronted the image of the servile Chicana and sought to define *La Adelita* as something decidedly different. In her late 1973 columns, Morales’ made a more sustained effort than others in Michigan to create a gendered, popular Chicana history that would liberate *la raza*. Yet in responding to images that constricted Chicanas’ involvement Morales tended to repeat many of their most destructive aspects. Even as they searched for new models of Chicana involvement the effect of colonial narratives persisted.

In a series of articles Morales proposed to discuss three factors key to Chicanas involvement in the movement: the influence of “women’s lib,” the oppressive nature of Mexican culture, and the resistance of men who believe Chicana activism puts “*La Familia*” at risk. Of these three, Morales ultimately focused most on the history that Chicanas carry as a barrier, what

⁶² Italics in original, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez, “Despierten Hermanas! The Women of La Raza--Part II,” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York: Routledge, 1997), 110.

she described as a “Centuries-Old ‘Rebozo’ of submissiveness, ignorance and fear.”⁶³ Although Morales’ intent was clearly to encourage further conversation and to motivate her “sisters” toward self-determination, fundamentally for Morales Mexican history and culture were a burden, not strengths to be utilized in service of *La Causa*.

Morales’ columns located Chicanas’ contemporary oppression not only in Chicano culture, but also in their history of conquest. Indeed, after an exploratory inaugural column Morales devoted the remainder of her six missives to locating the historical origins of sexism in Mexican society. She began her history with indigenous women whose status as “slaves” in pre-Columbian society was only renamed, but not altered by the conquest. As she asserted Mexican women were, “bred for centuries . . . long accustomed to a life of passively obeying . . . it made no difference if she was the slave of the cacique one day and the ‘Domestic Servant’ of a Spanish soldier the next.”⁶⁴ As with Morales’ remaining columns the most notable feature of the lives of women of Mexican descent is the ahistoricity of their oppression. For Morales the conquest was a historical event, but one through which the oppression of women continued unaffected.

Morales also portrayed the oppression of Mexican women within their culture as primarily undisturbed by another key event she mentioned, the Mexican American War. In her final column Morales maintained the analysis of much of the Chicano Movement that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was a broken one which only served to incorporate Mexican-Americans as a second class made “foreign in their own land.” Yet for Morales this was not the primary offense the Treaty visited upon Chicanas’ literal and figurative ancestors. Instead Morales lay

⁶³ Rosa Morales, “The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today I,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 27, 1973.

⁶⁴ Rosa Morales, “The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today II,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 9, 1973.

the lack of “acculturation” in the Chicano community at the feet of the Treaty’s disparate effects and asserted that this helped to preserve a patriarchal Mexican culture in the United States. Essentially Morales believed the segregation of the Mexican community preserved “machismo . . . regardless of location and income . . . at the one-to-one level” withholding from Mexicanas and Chicanas the freedoms of American society.⁶⁵ When Morales asserted that Chicano/Mexicano history and culture was the only origin of Chicanas’ subjugation she demonstrated that she knew colonial narratives all too well.

The power of colonial history is evident in Morales’ columns, all the more so because her intent was clearly to encourage conversation and motivate her “sisters” towards self-determination. In her exploration of the Mexican/Chicano past Morales replicated the colonizer’s view that Chicanos, and particularly Chicanas, are a people without history who exist in a savage immutable state. The primary aspect of their unchanging experiences that Morales focused on was Chicanas’ oppression and lack of resistance to it. As Morales’ chronicled the history of women in Mexico from *La India* “accustomed to a life of passively obeying” who continues in her state of submission unaffected by the conquest, to colonial women who suffered under “concubinage” with Spanish men, her tone made it clear that the oppression of women was another form of savagery. Morales’ discussion of one possible solution to the this problem, further incorporation into the culture of the United States, made it evident that it was the incomplete colonization of Mexican people that allowed the barbaric unchanging sexism of Mexican culture to continue. Morales’ struggle with the colonizer’s history also highlights why so many anti-colonial theorists have identified the colonizer’s history as a barrier to progress.

⁶⁵ Rosa Morales, “The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today V,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, November 20, 1973.

She is clearly haunted by what Fanon identifies as the conviction amongst the colonized that independence would end in “barbarism.”

Morales also replicated another key aspect of colonial history, what Linda Tuhiwai Smith has called a “modernist project,” that is a narrow view of legitimate historical subjects as only those with the power to act.⁶⁶ It is this conception of historical subjects which caused Morales to maintain in her final column the uninterrupted invisibility and submission of Mexican women from the 1800s to her present day. When considering the lack of involvement of women in society Morales revealed her perception that history is composed of individuals who make themselves known by changing their societies. For Morales, both in the past and during the Chicano Movement, only exceptional women, those who “managed to break loose of stifling chains” could surmount the barrier Mexican culture represents and be seen in history.⁶⁷ In this way Morales’ thought was constrained by the same self-serving colonial tautology that Smith critiques. In Morales’ colonized history only those who are capable of change can act to end the colonial order. Simultaneously she portrayed Chicanas’ oppression as unchanging, rendering them incapable of transformative emancipation. Morales’ intent was to write Chicanas into history, but her struggle with the colonial demonstrated the difficulty of her task.

Despite the conflicted entrance of Chicanas into the movement, the Michigan newspaper *El Renacimiento* increasingly contributed to the view that activist Chicanas were a crucial part of the community. *El Renacimiento* had published on Chicanas’ involvement in movement activities both locally and nationally. However, following Morales’ columns the tone of the

⁶⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 30–32.

⁶⁷ Morales, “The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today V.”

coverage focused more on the activism of local Chicanas. Coverage that highlighted women's homemaking skills, mini-skirted enticements to subscribe and mute photographs of beauty contest winners disappeared altogether.⁶⁸ The emphasis on *La Adelita* in *El Renacimiento* became even more evident the following year with extensive coverage of the newly formed Mujeres Unidas de Michigan (MUM) a civil rights and empowerment organization for Chicanas and Latinas.⁶⁹ While *El Renacimiento's* early coverage certainly was uneven regarding *La Adelita* as an anti-colonial role model for Chicanas, its later coverage belied the image of the subordinated, silent Mexican woman.

The Historical Rhythm

In *Voces del Norte II*, a compilation of student poetry, essays, literature and art Jesse Gonzales developed the concept of a Michigan Chicano history. In his poem, "Michicano/Betabelero." Gonzales transposed elements of contemporary Chicano Movement groups, local issues and personal history with the results of his personal search for Chicano origins in Michigan. Gonzales went beyond the documentary to question what constituted a "Mexican presence" in Michigan. In "Michicano/Betabelero" Gonzales cast doubt upon the idea

⁶⁸ Edmundo Georgi, "Latino Women Backbone of La Causa!," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, March 19, 1974; Miguel Pendas, "Chicana Feminism: A Minority Within a Minority," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 19, 1974.

⁶⁹ 1975 and 1976 are the height of *El Renacimiento's* coverage encouraging Chicanas to be active in the Chicano Movement, a few examples include: Adelfa Arredondo, "Thoughts on Institutional Machismo," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 13, 1975; "Primera Conferencia de Mujeres En Michigan," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 27, 1975; Edmundo Georgi, "Latino Women's Conference: A Giant Step," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, March 24, 1975; "Latino Women Unite," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 28, 1975.

that Mexican origins in Michigan should be placed in the first arrival of Mexican workers in Henry Ford's factories during the 1910s.⁷⁰

Everyone believes 1918
 Pero who can credit your nacimiento---
You were here
 In the historical rhythm
No solamente a Ford Motor personnel decision

Everyone believed 1918
 But who can credit your birth---
You were here
 in the historical rhythm
Not only a Ford Motor personnel decision

Gonzales contrasted the bureaucratic decisions of Ford's "personnel" recruiters, which brought Mexican labor to Detroit in 1918, with "the historical rhythm" a fluid process whose meaning could not be understood through any specific date of arrival. For Gonzales knowing the origins or "*nacimiento*" of Chicanos in Michigan was important, but the key to understanding what it meant to be Chicano was in understanding how meaning was ascribed to "Mexican" even before the first Mexicans arrived in the state. This was the "historical rhythm." In these stanzas, and other works published after more than a decade of Chicano activity in Michigan, Gonzales emphasized the influence of America's legacy of conquest on the racialization of Mexicans in Michigan. His popular histories, particularly the *Calendario Hispano*, operated on two levels, one that promoted ethnic pride and belonging, and another that was deeply anti-colonial. His body of work demonstrates how ethnic pride and the act of producing a Chicano popular history and culture in Michigan both promoted self-determination and a critique of United States' imperialism.

⁷⁰ CHISPA-Chicano Students for Progressive Action, Student Media Appropriations Board, "Voces Del Norte, II."

Although promoting Chicano history and culture were everyday activities for those in the movement in Michigan, no one did as much to investigate and popularize a Michigan Chicano history as Jesse Gonzales. Other Chicanos who trained as historians in Michigan during the 1970s, most prominently Dionicio Valdés and Zaragoza Vargas, were participants in the movement and went on to publish path breaking historical works. Gonzales' efforts are notable because while he expended considerable effort in conducting academic research into the early image of Mexicans in Michigan, his products remained in the realm of popular history, and were in some ways more widely disseminated. Gonzales was born and raised in Albion, a small city, where he graduated from High School in 1966.⁷¹ Gonzales came from a large family who endured deep poverty and worked on local farms as a teenager. He cites being raised by a single-father as one of the most formative parts of his youth, and believes his family was treated as outsiders because their family structure was out of the ordinary. He attended WMU before graduating from Michigan State University (MSU) in 1971 with a Bachelor's Degree in History.⁷² Gonzales became involved in Chicano Movement activities as an undergraduate and continued his involvement while pursuing a Master's Degree at the U of M-Ann Arbor. There he was one of the co-founders of the Raza Arts and Media Collective, active from 1974-1979.⁷³ Though rarely seeking public recognition, Gonzales played a role in many Chicano publications,

⁷¹ Jesse Gonzales, "Resume," 1977, Box 1, Juana and Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

⁷² Gonzales, Interview by author.

⁷³ Olga U. Herrera, "Raza Art & Media Collective: A Latino Art Group in the Midwestern United States," *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers* 1 (September 2007): 31–37.

newsletters and events during the 1970s, especially those related to art, poetry, literature and culture.

It was during the mid-1970s that Gonzales began his research on Mexican history in Michigan. Gonzales had already established a great interest in Chicano Movement activities and in promoting Chicano self-expression through his involvement in the Raza Art and Media Collective. By the end of the 1970s he had been instrumental in the publication of student poetry collections at WMU and MSU, coordination of the MEChA newsletter at the U of M-Ann Arbor and authorship of numerous news articles in MSU's student paper, *The State News*, WMU's student newspaper, the *Western Herald* and *El Renacimiento*.⁷⁴ His poem, "Michicano/Betabelero" expressed pride in being Chicano and in the activities of the Chicano Movement,

Canta y baila la polka
 'de San Antonio a Michigan'
It's in your veins
 Raza del norte . . .
Blissfield
 The Guadalupe Clinic
Albion, Saginaw, Detroit, Lansing
 y que mas carnal—
It is unfolding

Sing and dance the polka
 'from San Antonio to Michigan'
It's in your veins
 People of the north . . .
Blissfield
 The Guadalupe Clinic
Albion, Saginaw, Detroit, Lansing
 And so much more brother---
It is unfolding

⁷⁴ Gonzales, *Nosotros*; Gonzales, "Resume"; Chicano Students for Progressive Action (CHISPA), "Voces Del Norte"; CHISPA-Chicano Students for Progressive Action, Student Media Appropriations Board, "Voces Del Norte, II."

In these stanzas Gonzales grounded the nature of the Michigan Chicano, the “Raza del Norte,” in their lived experiences throughout the state. He furthered this view in other lines that mention common Michigan crops harvested by migrant farm workers, local Mexican-American and Chicano organizations and the chart-topping Saginaw based Chicano band, Question Mark and the Mysterians. In ending the poem Gonzales confirmed the importance of Chicanos writing their own history in Michigan, after listing academics and newspapers that published articles about Mexicans in Michigan during the first half of the twentieth century Gonzales concludes,

Ahora
Escribas de tu mismo
BETABELERO/MICHICANO

Now
You write your own
BEET WORKER/MICHICANO

In these lines Gonzales emphasizes both the importance of Chicanos being the creators of their own history, as well as the existence of a distinct Michigan Chicano identity. The term, Michicano, circulated casually as a humorous play on Michigan and the demonym for people from the Mexican state of Michoacán from the 1970s through the present day. Gonzales’ poem contextualizes the ways in which Michicano, exists as a geographically specific Chicano identifier that lays claim to an area and its history, much like the terms Tejano, Hispano, and Califas. These concluding lines can be read as a subjunctive command, “escribas,” but also as prediction.⁷⁵ As a whole the poem itself casts doubts upon the idea of linear history; switching non-chronologically between events of 1918, 1836, 1520, 1968. In this way the poem implies that if Chicanos write their own history in Michigan, then Michicanos *will* exist, a people, like Tejanos, Hispanos and Chicanos who refer to California as Califas, who can claim local space as

⁷⁵ “Escribas” is a correct 2nd person subjunctive form. The subjunctive implies uncertainty.

their own by virtue of an ethnic specific history. As with other producers of Chicano popular history and culture in Michigan during the 1970s, Gonzales' enacted his self-determination and was perhaps more aware than many others that a people not only write their collective history, writing their collective history itself makes a people.

Gonzales' *Calendario Hispano de 1981* is a culmination of much of his historical research from the late 1970s, and much of it is similar to the poem, Michicano/Betabelero in its focus on ethnic pride, contemporary events and promoting a Michicano identity. Published in 1981 with funds from the Michigan Department of Education-Migrant Education Unit and the Montcalm Intermediate School District that Gonzales solicited independently. More than 1000 copies of the calendar were distributed to Michigan schools, organizations and individuals. Gonzales' stated intent was certainly to educate and promote self-esteem amongst Chicano students, writing in a 1980 proposal Gonzales asserted the calendar would provide, "a more definitive historical tool . . . to study Michigan Raza history" and that "Students will be able to identify with local people and with local events which played an important part in their lives." To this end the events Gonzales collected for the calendar, more than 500 in total, include many references to Chicano organizations and events during the 1960 and 1970s. In this way Gonzales gave his readers, Chicanos, the impression that their history was one of self-directed activity and self-improvement, that they carried with them a legacy of organizing.

Like the poem, "Michicano/Betabelero," the Calendar went beyond the promotion of ethnic pride to promote the idea that Michigan Chicano history was also the story of the United States and Michigan's involvement in conquering former Mexican lands. Unlike analogous projects in the Southwest, Gonzales' calendar could not rely on early dates of the establishment of Spanish missions, or the deeds of Juan Seguin to establish a legacy of a Chicano presence

prior to 1917. Instead the collected notations feature the prospecting of Michigan '49ers in former Mexican lands in California, the involvement of Michigan newspapers in advocating the annexation of Texas in 1836, the role of Michigan troops in the 1848 war with Mexico and the Spanish-American war. In Gonzales' most expansive list of events for the calendar, there are 43 different items regarding the involvement of Michigan residents in American wars of conquest against Latin American countries. The only time period about which there are more references is the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁶ In explaining the presence of these instances of Michigan involvement in conquest in Latin America Gonzales wrote in a 1980 press release, "This calendar will deal not only with the physical presence of Hispanics but also with those events and personages which formed public opinion long before agricultural laborers migrated to the state."⁷⁷ When asked, in 2012, to reflect on the inclusion of these early dates, prior to 1900 in the calendar, Gonzales said,

It's not just that we came here physically saw in the 1920s thereabouts, or in the late teens, physically. People in Michigan had a perception of us already, and the perception had to do with the events that were happening in the United States and in Mexico. So they knew. They knew us already.⁷⁸

In this way Gonzales' asserts that Mexican people arriving in Michigan throughout the 20th century, whether they came directly from Mexico, or other parts of the United States, were subjugated due to beliefs shaped by wars of conquest. Mexicans arriving in Michigan in the

⁷⁶ Jesse Gonzales, "El Calendario Hispano de Michigan Proposal," 1980, George Vargas Papers, 1978-2003, Box 2, Folder Research & Professional Activities-Latino Culture & Resources-MI Hispanic Calendar, 1980, Bentley Historical Library.

⁷⁷ Jesse Gonzales, June 10, 1980, George Vargas Papers, 1978-2003, Box 2, Folder Research & Professional Activities-Latino Culture & Resources-MI Hispanic Calendar, 1980, Bentley Historical Library.

⁷⁸ Gonzales, Interview by author.

1920s were no longer in conquered lands, but their association with a conquered people preceded their arrival. Being faced with the physical absence of Mexicans in Michigan prior to 1917 and the need to complete a Michigan Chicano history led Gonzales to solidify many of the tendrils of anti-colonial thought which circulated in Michigan throughout the 1970s. In this way Gonzales went beyond declarations that the Southwest was ‘stolen land’ to argue that the United States was an imperialist country.

Due to the relative ubiquity of these events and the calendar format Chicano Movement activities, are often followed or preceded directly by references to American wars of conquest. In this way Gonzales ironically subverts the calendar, perhaps the epitome of chronological order. Though filled with quotidian dates, facts and figures, the link between events that happened on for example, May 3, 1847 and May 4, 1972 is placed in the foreground. *El Calendario Hispano* acts as a device for disrupting the linear flow of history. It contests the whiggish views of history embodied in American Exceptionalism by referencing wars of conquest as undesirable acts that are not in the past, but happening on regular basis. In this way Gonzales centers the Michicano experience, and asserts that their sense of American imperialism as a daily circumstance is a valid way of viewing history.

Conclusion

As in historical narratives about Mexico and Texas, Michigan Chicano history and art disavowed the continuing conquest of Chicano people under a national vision that categorized them as foreigners not yet assimilated to their supposedly rightful, subordinate position. In the Southwest United States the evidence of a Spanish-speaking past was ubiquitous, in the names of places, the architecture, food and culture. This was not the case in Michigan. Thus in Michigan, and other parts of the United States not formerly part of Mexico, Chicanos were led to more directly confront the nature of the United States. This is especially obvious when considering

not only the superficial content of Chicano histories of indigenous resistance, but upon evaluating the operation of Chicano history and culture as an ideology within Michigan.

In their efforts to formulate a racialized, gendered and anti-colonial history, Chicanas embodied the work of other more recognized anti-colonial theorists, both practical and academic. The significance of Chicanas' attempts to forge a gendered, anti-colonial history embodied in *La Adelita* lies in their context within the Chicano Movement as a whole. Chicanas seeking leadership roles in the movement and a focus on internal sexism often faced significant, even menacing, resistance from some men and women. Those who have examined the risks for women in anti-colonial struggles, particularly struggles whose predominant rhetoric charged women with preserving a "pure" race and culture on behalf of the nation, have often been concerned about limits placed on women's roles.⁷⁹ Others have reminded anti-colonialists that as valuable as anti-colonial efforts to follow "tradition" may be they will not lead to liberation if based upon exploitive power relations.⁸⁰ Phenomena such as these have been routinely cited in indictments of nationalism and colonial analyses, characterizing both as useless, and at worst, reactionary tactics predestined to confine women and others to static and unhealthy identities.

A more nuanced and compelling interpretation is of competing nationalisms, of tactical identities and differing anti-colonial visions. Sociologist Benita Roth has asserted that Chicanas struggled with Chicanos because they wanted to be in the movement on their own terms, but this

⁷⁹ Lina Sunseri, "Moving Beyond the Feminism Versus Nationalism Dichotomy: An Anti-Colonial Feminist Perspective on Aboriginal Liberation Struggles," *Canadian Woman Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 147.

⁸⁰ Joyce A. Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 27.

is also true of “loyalist” women and their Chicano supporters.⁸¹ The conflict over the role of Chicanas in the movement, and in our history, is itself one manifestation of ambiguity about anti-colonial organizing and the lingering effects of internalized colonialism. Further complicating any analysis of Chicanas’ propagation of either *La Adelita* or the submissive Chicana is the possibility that both groups were deploying these images as “tactical identities” or using “differential consciousness” to make progress over the uneven terrain of the Chicano Movement.⁸² In any case, Chicanas who sought to popularize *La Adelita* as the true past of Chicanas affected not only the status of women within Chicano communities, but of the community as a whole.

Yet, they also replicated a fundamental contradiction between their ability to construct *La Adelita* and to give this image force through its links to “traditional” Mexican culture. Herein lies perhaps the greatest danger that Chicana propagators of *La Adelita* faced, the tendency of *La Adelita* as a nationalist image to become reified and resistant to further elaboration. This threat is mirrored by that facing scholars of the Chicano Movement, who in seeking to bring Chicanos and Chicanas into history, risk essentializing categories which were and are in flux. The intersecting disciplines of women’s and gender history have also been critiqued for a focus on making visible those labeled “different” to the detriment of providing an “itinerary of their creation” that reveals the constructed nature of their difference.⁸³ In seeking to center Chicanas

⁸¹ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 127–175.

⁸² Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 60.

there is a need not only to locate their struggles but also show Chicanas' efforts to establish their own meanings. Neglecting this process only imperils our ability to expose the full scope of Chicanas' abilities and power.

The urgency of this risk is amplified for those called to Chicana/o History by difference, by struggle and the imperative of justice. As Maylei Blackwell has observed in her work on Chicana Print Culture, "Historiography is a political practice, and social movement narratives function as a major site of identity production, often used to legitimate or police the boundaries of what is politically possible in our current context."⁸⁴ This battle is especially salient for those of us who continue to harbor a desire for Aztlán, a furtive fealty to that named but elusive place, what Rafael Perez-Torres has called "that space of liberation so fondly yearned for."⁸⁵ As scholars of Chicana/o History we contribute to a process of gendering that also racializes as we wield both the power of these images, *Aztlán*, *la Adelita*, *el Movimiento*, and the ability to construct them. Remembering that these images passed through hands before our own will help us to construct a more detailed, and useful, history of the Chicano Movement. In their efforts to liberate Chicanos and Chicanas, popularizers of Chicano indigeneity as a historical model for contemporary involvement in *La Causa* strove to formulate a new national consciousness of their

⁸³ Scott, "The Evidence of Experience"; Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12.

⁸⁴ Blackwell, "Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Chicana Feminisms and Print Culture in the Chicano Movement, 1968-1973," 81.

⁸⁵ Rafael Perez-Torres, "Refiguring Aztlán," in *The Chicano Studies Reader: An Anthology of Aztlán, 1971-2001*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2001), 235.

own liking. With this impulse they joined the multitude of anti-colonial activists, revolutionaries and academics who have linked history and anti-colonial struggle

CHAPTER FOUR: PRIVATE SPHERES AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

Chicanas participated in Michigan Chicano Movement activities despite their too frequent absence from the written anti-colonial history and material culture the movement produced. Chicanas and Chicanos both experienced the same circumstances that provoked the Chicano movement, though they did so in gendered ways. Within the movement Chicanas and Chicanos contested patriarchal practices, such as women being routinely assigned to “supportive” roles. The role of women in the Chicano Movement was highly contested. These debates intersected with divergent political goals within the Chicano Movement itself, the ongoing development of the Women’s Liberation Movement, and the nature of political subjectivity in the United States. While Chicanas drew some inspiration from the Women’s Liberation Movement, at times becoming active participants in it, they ultimately rejected it as overly individualistic and focused on upward mobility.

Chicanas shared their critique of what Ruth Milkman has called a “corporate feminist orientation” that emphasized individual achievement over collective advancement with other lower-class women. Chicanas’ class experience was also distinctive because it intersected profoundly with a colonial labor system in Michigan fields.¹ Chicanas’ rejection of feminist individualism emerged not only from their class, but also from the materially rooted transposition of family labor, the colonial labor system and Chicano identity. This colonial labor system marked Chicanas’ engagement with feminism because it characterized Chicano families as dependent and needy, constrained Chicano families in a private sphere not of their own making, ultimately gendering the migrant family female. Members of migrant worker families,

¹ Ruth Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women’s Labor History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 308.

whether they were women, men or children, had little access to the type of private sphere that defined domestic misery for many second wave feminists. In addition the unique relationship between family labor and Chicanas in the movement heightened their sense of a racially defined collectivity as a viable alternative to individual achievement, be it feminist or not. Chicanas' experiences in a colonial labor system built upon Chicano families as the unit of production was an important basis for their critique of feminism. Thus, women active in the movement tended to place the advancement of "*la familia de la raza*" as their preeminent goal.

Individualism, Upward Mobility and the Family

Speaking in 1975 Margarita Valdez sought to differentiate her activity, and that of other women like her, from the "women's lib" movement. Valdez was a bilingual education activist from Detroit who was active in the Latina women's organization, Mujeres Unidas de Michigan (MUM). Speaking about the purpose of MUM Valdez emphasized this point when she said Mujeres Unidas,

wasn't a part of the women's lib movement. It was a movement to help our . . . women to help themselves, their husbands, their families, to work side by side and to help each other because we know that our men, . . are oppressed by the system and we are trying to help one another to overcome that oppression.²

In this interview Valdez goes on to emphasize her belief that white women are not as concerned with the poverty *la raza* faces because they've "already made it." In her remarks Valdez expressed a common view amongst Chicanas that they were committed to the collective advancement of their families, while the women's liberation movement was not. Another Michigan Chicana and MUM member, Delia Villegas Vorhauer, similarly rejected the women's liberation movement and counterposed it with the family saying, ". . this is not an organization

² Julio Guerrero, "Many Are the Valiant," *Ondas En Espanol?* (East Lansing, Mich.: WKAR, March 1975), Michigan State University Special Collections.

that parallels the Anglo women's liberation movement . . . It is being done in the overall context of the development of the Spanish speaking community and with a commitment to the traditional family values of the Latin culture."³ Valdez and Villegas Vorhauer, like other Chicanas across the country, repeatedly expressed their belief that women's liberation was at odds with the Chicano Movement and especially the family. This conflict was found not only between Chicanas and the primarily white women found in Women's Liberation organizations, but was a part of a larger struggle within Second Wave Feminist ideology and its relationship to racial and class difference. Michigan Chicanas criticized Second Wave Feminism because they saw it as individualistic and career-focused.

Although women like Valdez and Villegas Vorhauer were quite critical of feminism, even referring to it in the derisive slang of their time, as "women's lib," their views contributed to the development of Second Wave feminist thought. If feminists are defined as people who oppose patriarchy, it becomes evident that for all their objections, many of the Chicanas actively distancing themselves from 'women's lib' were also feminists. Recent scholarship has established that defining women who eschewed the label "feminist" out of the history of the Second Wave Women's Liberation Movement inaccurately limits what was an ideologically diverse women's movement.⁴ As Becky Thompson points out, what Chela Sandoval has called "hegemonic feminism" which emphasized individual "rights" over community "justice" was only one strain of feminism, one aspect of a vibrant debate amongst feminists over their goals. In addition both Vicki Ruiz and Benita Roth have argued Chicana feminism itself was one of the

³ Yolanda Trujillo, "Latina Unit Organizes," *Lansing (MI) State Journal*, October 2, 1975.

⁴ Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 337.

multiple strains of feminist thought that emerged during the second wave.⁵ For Roth the existence of racially specific feminisms is not a ‘natural’ phenomenon but a product of structural factors within second wave feminism and the history of racial inequality. Rather than signifying Chicanas did not belong, the debate between Chicanas nationally about the role of the individual and the family seated them firmly within the spectrum of feminist thought.

During the late 1960s and 1970s Chicanas’ critique of the individualism of “feminists” sprung from a complex blend of material circumstances, cultural adaptation and purposeful ideological interventions. The confluence of class and race in separating white women from women of color during the women’s liberation movement is well documented.⁶ Similarly situated white women who were working class and organized on the basis of their work were also alienated from “feminism” by its “individualistic orientation” and their perception that the women’s liberation movement was comprised of highly educated, “professional” women. Milkman herself asserts that this was more than a limited perception of women’s liberation amongst working class women, but also a real reflection of the rise of the “corporate feminist” view amongst feminists. Milkman attributes part of the rise in “corporate feminism” to her view that many feminists could “reasonably aspire-once sex discrimination is no longer a barrier-to professional occupations comparable to those held by men of their class.”⁷ In this way Chicanas’ critique of feminism had much in common with other working class women. Like other lower-class women, Chicana migrant agricultural workers already performed work

⁵ Vicki Ruíz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*.

⁶ Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 43.

⁷ Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest*, 302–308.

comparable to their Chicano co-workers. Thus equal employment opportunity with men may not have improved the material conditions of many working class women and was less attractive as an option for empowerment.

Access to Schooling

“you don’t have water to even drink, much less wash your hands. I thought, ‘how can we possibly be considered humans when they treat us like dogs?’”⁸

Like many Chicano movement participants in Michigan, Maria Enriquez immediately reflected on her experiences in the fields, when asked what motivated her involvement. She condemned the poor treatment she had received as a seasonal agricultural worker, and the exploitation of migrant workers during the 1960s and 1970s. Her characterization of the dehumanizing treatment she endured echoed that of other former migrant farm workers. Pedro Lugo, testified similarly before the Michigan Civil Rights Commission hearings in 1969. There he asserted the growers at an Edmore farm “tried to treat us like pigs.”⁹ Like other former farmworkers Enriquez condemned those who treated her as inhuman. Yet her experience as a teenage girl in the fields was a uniquely female one. It was also far-removed from the concerns of many in the women’s liberation movement; there was no confining suburban malaise in the fields. Chicana experiences with hard work and family survival predisposed them to skepticism regarding the probability and desirability of individual upward mobility through schooling and work.

Upward mobility is a pervasive American narrative of success and escape from poverty that is premised upon working hard and success in school. Chicanas had ample reason to doubt

⁸ Maria Enriquez, Interview by author, March 12, 2012.

⁹ “Migrants Tell Grim Stories at Farm Worker Hearings.”

that their community would be able to access this path to prosperity because, as a group, their years of formal schooling were much less than the white population. It is difficult to quantify the full extent of the low schooling levels amongst the Chicano population in Michigan in the 1960s and 1970s because records of “Spanish-surname” or “Spanish-speaking” students were largely not collected prior to the mid-1970s. The La Raza Advisory Committee reported to the Michigan State Board of Education in 1974 that it was not possible to ascertain the official drop-out rate for Chicano students in Michigan because of a lack of record-keeping. Instead they consulted “education and social service agencies” in five Michigan cities and reported an average drop-out rate of 69 percent.¹⁰ In 1969 Chicano critics alleged the drop-out rate for Spanish-speakers in Detroit was 90 percent. Officials denied this but were unable to specify a more accurate dropout rate for a group that they had never enumerated.¹¹

Chicanas had much more in common with Chicano men in terms of their schooling than they had with white women. Economist Richard Santos used 1970 census data for the Midwest to demonstrate this inequality. Although there were numerous deficiencies with the identification of Latinos in the 1970 census, the nature of the sample most likely overstates the formal schooling of those it labeled “Mexican American.”¹² Nevertheless, the census showed

¹⁰ Falcon, La Raza Advisory Committee, *Quality Educational Services to Michigan's Spanish Speaking Community*.

¹¹ Peterson, “A Tragic Lesson: Language Barrier Cripples Mexican-American Pupils.”

¹² Richard Santos, “An Analysis of Earnings Among Persons of Spanish Origin in the Midwest” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1977), 59. The 1970 census data on “Mexican-Americans” skews towards long-settled families because the sampling method, mailed surveys, presupposes written literacy in English and a street address. In addition, the data was collected in April of 1970, prior to the arrival of a majority of migrant workers in the Midwest. The

that Mexican American women had a mean highest grade completed of 8.8, while for white women it was 11.7. Mexican American men mirrored this inequality, completing an average grade of 8.6 to white men's 11.9. As shown in Table 1, Mexican American women had a reason to be concerned with the educational achievement of women in their community, but not in the same way as white women. In 1970 nearly 70 percent of Mexican American women in the Midwest had not graduated from high school, almost the reverse proportions were found among white women. Thus the majority of white women were in a much better position to take advantage of equal employment opportunities for "career women." For the 40 percent of Midwestern Mexican American women who had never attended high school the types of "careers" available were much less aspirational. By 1980 Latinas nationwide still had lower educational attainment than other women, completing 10.2 years of schooling compared to 11.9 for African-American women and 12.5 for white women.¹³ Furthermore, Santos found that in the Midwest, between 1970 and 1980 the average years of schooling for all Hispanics remained the same while whites gained an additional year.¹⁴ Choldin and Trout also surveyed settled Mexican-American families about their schooling. They concluded in their 1969 study of 696 Mexican-American households, "The Mexican-American young people in Michigan are not

settled nature of the this sample is further emphasized because 79% reported that they had resided in the Midwest 5 years previous to the survey.

¹³ Elvira Valenzuela Crocker, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Washington, DC. Project on Equal Education Rights, *The Report Card on Educating Hispanic Women* (S.l.: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1982), <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED263263>.

¹⁴ Richard Santos, *Hispanic Workers in the Midwest a Decade of Economic Contrast, 1970-1980* (East Lansing, MI: Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1989).

being educated to rise above the manual occupations of their parents.”¹⁵ Chicanas’ compromised access to educational attainment lessened their possibilities for upward mobility through a career.

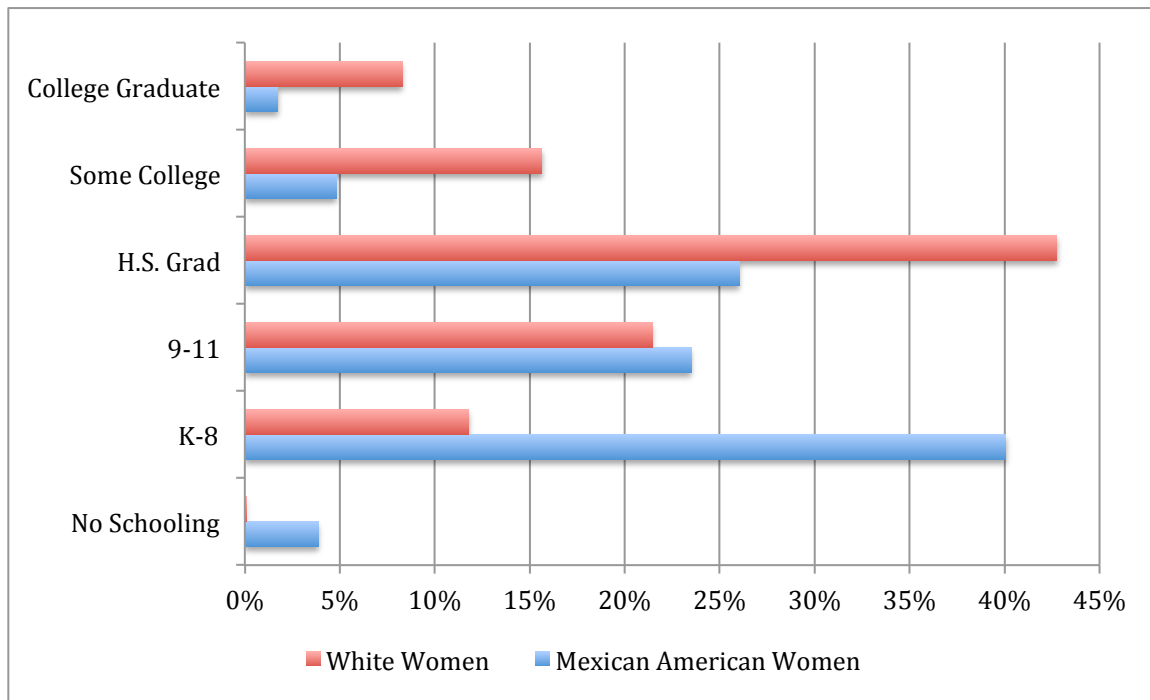


FIGURE 6: SCHOOLING FOR WHITE AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE MIDWEST, 1970

Corporate feminists based their vision on a background of formal schooling that many Chicanas simply did not possess. In addition to compromised access to schooling, prior experience in grueling agricultural work as children and teenagers formed many Chicanas’ first impressions of work. White women sustained a long-term trend of increasing participation in the waged work force throughout the Chicano Movement period. In 1970 all women had a 43 percent labor force participation rate.¹⁶ Finding a comparable figure for Chicanas in Michigan is

¹⁵ Choldin and Trout, *Mexican Americans in Transition; Migration and Employment in Michigan Cities*, 50.

difficult for the same reasons that enumerating the overall Chicano population and the proportion with experience in the fields is so challenging. Considering all these factors it is probable that between 60 percent and 75 percent of all Chicanos present in Michigan in the summer of 1970 had some experience in farm work. Specifying the number of women who were in this group is complicated by a lack of data on the sex and age of migrant farm workers in the period between 1965 and 1975. Women likely counted for less than half of all Chicanos with migrant farm work experience simply because single men were more likely to be in the migrant work force than single women. However the significance of single male workers decreased dramatically just prior to the start of the Chicano Movement. Dionicio Valdés asserts in *Al Norte* that in 1964 60 percent of migrants entering the state for farm work were in ‘family groups’. This proportion increased after the Bracero Program ended and “Tejanos” became up to 90 percent of the migrant labor force in the Midwest as a whole.¹⁷ Thus, an under-recognized effect of the end of the Bracero Program was to increase the proportion of women and children in the fields in Michigan. During this time period, when both the Chicano Movement and Women’s Liberationists were most active, the occupation of farm worker was more “open” to women than ever.

It is difficult to compare the labor force participation rates of white women and Chicanas in Michigan precisely because working in the fields was so prevalent and poorly documented. In fact, Chicanas may have been more likely than Chicanos to have *recent* farmworker experience amongst settled families. Choldin and Trout found that 32 percent of the settled husbands said

¹⁶ Government Printing Office, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: Marital Status of Women in the Civilian Labor Force* (Washington D.C., 2003).

¹⁷ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 168.

their wives and children had performed agricultural work after they themselves obtained a permanent year round job, usually in industrial occupations. In comparison, only two-tenths of one percent of all women living in Michigan cities in 1960 worked in agriculture.¹⁸ In his foundational study of agricultural workers in the Midwest Valdés cites a number of studies from throughout the region reporting that between 64 to 89 percent of *Mexicanas* did not perform paid work outside the home. Choldin and Trout, whose 1967 study used a time-intensive sampling method and who relied on Mexican women resident in Michigan to conduct the interviews, found a much lower figure for married women. They asserted that only 27 percent of husbands said their wives had never worked.¹⁹ In addition, Valdés asserts many studies most likely underreport the participation of Mexican women in paid labor outside the home from the 1950s through the 1970s due to conceptions of “employment” that excluded women’s labor in the fields and domestic labor in the homes of others from official data. Employer records, like those of the Farm Placement Service, primarily counted men as workers, excluding both women and children under age 16.²⁰ Chicanas worked more commonly in these areas partially due to being excluded from the type of work that white women often performed at the time, including the service sector.²¹

¹⁸ Choldin and Trout, *Mexican Americans in Transition; Migration and Employment in Michigan Cities*, 250–251.

¹⁹ Ibid., 248–251.

²⁰ Valdés, *Al Norte*, 139.

²¹ Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*, 145–149.

In addition, Chicanas who held other jobs as adults had often performed agricultural labor as children and teenagers but did not consider themselves to be “farmworkers” or a part of the “migrant stream” because they had settled out, or did not travel every year as children. For example, Yolanda Ortega, who worked as journalist for the Chicano Movement newspaper *El Renacimiento* and was a member of *La Raza Unida* in Holland, did not identify as a former farmworker when initially questioned. During her first involvement with the movement she worked as a secretary at Hope College. She shared employment in the clerical sector with many other women, especially white women. Nonetheless, she had spent a summer staying in a migrant camp and picking cherries, strawberries, blueberries and tomatoes with her Aunt at the age of 15.²² As our interview continued Ortega revealed she had gone, at an even younger age, with her brother and other neighborhood children to pick cotton because growers drove vans through the East side of Austin looking for workers. Still later, Ortega discussed being expected to watch her infant brother in the car as her parents and grandfather picked crops in Michigan. At the age of 5 Ortega was too young to work in the fields, but not too young to contribute reproductive labor to the family economy by taking care of her brother so the rest of her family could work. Like many women active in social movements during the 1960s and 1970s Ortega was chosen as the Secretary for her organization because she could type and knew shorthand, yet her work experience went far beyond her secretarial position at Hope College. Her familiarity with the experiences of migrant workers was much more than most white women at the time, and is exactly the type of experience that is simply not conveyed by available data.

Labor force studies produced by the state government from this period do little to represent Chicanas’, like Yolanda Ortega’s *first* work experiences because they include, but do

²² Yolanda Ortega, Interview by Author, April 3, 2012.

not separately enumerate, children. The reports of the state funded Rural Manpower Center, housed at Michigan State University, sought to count migrant workers. The Rural Manpower Center was created partially due to pressure for reform for migrants, yet the authors never noted the presence of women and children in the fields. These annual reports include only one reference to children other than “local high schoolers” obviously meant to be white teenagers who resided in rural areas year round. While the authors discuss the growth of workers arriving from out of state following the end of the Bracero Program, one would never know from these reports that these workers were primarily Mexican American family units. In contrast the recruitment of “local high schoolers” is lauded and promoted as a potential solution to farm labor shortages.²³ Unlike growers and their organizations, the state did not explicitly promote the use of Chicano children, ages 5 to 18, as potential laborers. Yet such children, boys and girls, comprised a far greater proportion of the farm labor workforce than “local high schoolers.” The Rural Manpower Center was a state-funded service to growers that helped growers manage farm workers while simultaneously serving the ideological function of obscuring the contributions of Chicanas and their children.

Chicanas’ migrant farm labor experiences, often officially obscured, contradicted the idea of work as empowerment. For many this type of work was synonymous with stigmatization. When speaking about her experience in the fields, Maria Enriquez focused on discrimination

²³ Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1964; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1965; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1966; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1967; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report*, 1968; Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1969); Michigan Employment Security Commission, *Farm Labor and Rural Manpower Report* (Detroit, MI: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Central Office Manpower Division, 1970).

against her and her family in public accommodations as they travelled to harvest asparagus, hoe beets and pick cherries saying, “Those are living experiences you never forget.”²⁴ Writing in her memoir of a similar experience in the fields of Minnesota, Elva Treviño Hart describes the shame she felt because her family was going north to work and how she tried to hide her summer plans from her schoolmates.²⁵ Within the Chicano Movement migrant workers were primarily treated as a group worthy of sympathy and solidarity yet the discourse around farm workers as the “poorest of the poor,” also indicated the extent to which simply being a migrant farm worker designated one as a person of lower status. In this way the prevalence of Chicanas’ migrant farm work experience is obscured not by a state-sponsored colonial narrative but also by Chicanas’ reluctance to identify as members of a denigrated group.

Gendered and Colonized Labor

Specifying the proportion of Chicanas living in Michigan during the 1970s who had worked as migrant farm workers is made more difficult by the operation of colonial labor system which benefitted from hiding the presence of family groups. Within the colonial labor system the contributions of Chicanas and their children were doubly excluded because they acted as both productive and reproductive labor. As discussed in Chapter One, the promulgation of a domestic/migrant colonial binary and its links to American nationalism defined migrant workers out of the American public sphere irrespective of their *de jure* citizenship. Following the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 the migrant labor force was in flux. Increasingly Chicano family groups predominated in the fields, narrowing the gap between the production and reproduction of

²⁴ Enriquez, Interview by author.

²⁵ Elva Treviño Hart, *Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1999).

the work force that had especially obscured Chicanas' labor. Yet maintaining the work force in this way preserved the presence of Chicano farm workers while weakening the social relations and economic logic that held the colonial labor system together. Using the family as the unit of production has been a common response of employers faced with a reduction in migrant labor, it helps to compensate for the increased reproductive costs of domestic labor by lowering the cost per worker.²⁶ Replacing single male workers with families brought its own problems for growers. Bringing Chicano farmworkers' children into the local public sphere furthered ruptures in an already stressed system that were not so easily contained. Attempts to do so revealed the gendered nature of the colonial situation in which migrants were seen as dependent, needy and thus female, private, and deserving of conquest. Chicanas participated in and witnessed the struggle of migrant families to create their own private sphere and break into the public sphere, providing a key model for the politicized *familia de la raza*.

Growers tried to suppress the disruption caused by the joining of productive and reproductive labor by denying and obscuring the presence of women and children. Children worked in the fields and contributed to agricultural production, produced a portion of the family's wages that were spent on reproducing the family unit, and often cared for those who were younger, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the family. Adults, both Chicanos and Chicanas, also watched over their children in the fields, but these burdens fell disproportionately on girls and women. Many of the strategies used to deny the labor contributions of women and children both concealed their productive labor inputs and kept them out of the public sphere of social services. Merely by establishing a piece rate low enough to require all members of the

²⁶ Michael Burawoy, "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 5 (March 1, 1976): 1066.

family to work for survival growers ensured most migrant children would not be in state-sponsored school or day care. This helped to reduce the reproductive costs born by local and state government and kept these children isolated from the public sphere of social services.

The productive labor of women and children was also hidden by the practice of pooling the amount picked by the entire family and distributing the resultant wages to the father or other male head of the family.²⁷ This practice continued into the late 1970s. Just as keeping children working in the fields both harnessed their labor and kept them out of the public sphere, the practice of pooling earnings further concealed the reproductive costs of the family because when children's earnings were included with adults their food stamp eligibility was lower.²⁸ Thus if children's earnings had been more transparent and paid separately the cost of reproducing the work force to the state would have increased.

Growers also sought to hide the contributions of women and children in order to minimize the tensions involved in recruiting American citizens of Mexican descent to replace Mexican citizens who worked under an international agreement. The coalescing of productive and reproductive labor facilitated demands for full citizenship rights because it breached a colonial veil that defined migrants as "foreign." Recognizing migrant "foreignness" as a construct, not a natural result of Chicanos' migratory nature, broke down the justifications of the migratory labor system and reminded many of the *de jure* rights Chicanos had as citizens of the

²⁷ Myrtle R Reul, *Sociocultural Patterns Among Michigan Migrant Farm Workers* (East Lansing, MI: Rural Manpower Center, Michigan State University, 1967), 27; W. K. Barger and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers* (University of Texas Press, 1994); Michigan Civil Rights Department, "Report and Recommendations: A Field Study of Migrant Workers in Michigan," 1969.

²⁸ Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project, "Farmer Must Pay Minimum Wage," *Under the Burning Sun*, May 1976.

same nation-state. By employing children in the fields, but not counting them as such, growers and local communities hoped to maintain the economic and social benefits of migrant labor systems without an external labor pool.

In contrast those organizing for farmworker's civil rights, greater legal protections and social services often called attention to the presence of women and children in the fields. In his defense of a 1967 Migrant march from Saginaw to Lansing, Rev. Father Robert Keller spoke of migrant workers as "mothers fathers, boys and girls, children and the elderly . . . They are our brothers and sisters."²⁹ Demands presented at the march similarly included both men and women when they decried the fate of migrant worker children, "The children of migrant workers must sacrifice the privilege of an adequate education in order to accompany their families to Michigan to help harvest our crops."³⁰ When migrant advocates called attention to the presence of the family in the fields they combatted the discourse that labeled migrants as foreigners whose suffering family lived in a distant, impoverished land.

Reformers, including labor friendly religious groups, unions, Democrats and Chicanos, contributed to state efforts to lessen the use of family labor and especially to bring children out of the paid work force. By recognizing children as in need of care and education these reformers rejected the idea that externalizing the reproductive costs of the migrant labor force was possible when the laborers themselves were citizens accompanied by their families. Though the child care offered represented a reduced expenditure on reproducing this labor force when compared with the ideal of a family wage, it nevertheless represented a greater expenditure than watching

²⁹ "Migrant Friends to Stage March" (Detroit Free Press, 1967), George Romney Papers, Box 326 Spanish American Migrant March, Bentley Historical Library.

³⁰ Alfaro, Concerned Citizens for Migrant Workers, "Declaration of Grievances."

young children in the fields. In their 1965 Report on Migrant Labor the Michigan House and Senate Labor Committee lauded the existence of day care programs for migrant workers because, “What to do with the young children while migrant mothers work long hours in the fields has always been a problem.”³¹ In the summer of 1965 the state of Michigan sponsored 15 migrant day care centers serving 6,800 children in addition to the around 50 centers operated by Michigan Migrant Opportunity. In 1966 the legislature of Michigan approved \$75,000 for day care for migrant children.³² Reformers continued to press for day care for young children to be included in state reforms affecting migrant workers in 1967.³³

These programs demonstrate some of the cleavages within the state over the maintenance of the colonial labor system through increased family labor. They also serve as further evidence that migrant women working in the fields was both a norm and normative, the concern amongst reformers about working and unattended children only existed because their mothers could not possibly afford to be homemakers, nor were they expected not to work. Contrary to the image of mothers being out of the workforce during the 1960s, observers expected migrant mothers to work. Furthermore, unlike almost any other class of workers in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s migrant farm workers were often assumed to be family units, even when official reports obscured the role of women and children in productive labor. Historians have established the Bracero Program created downward pressure on farm worker wages and that braceros were

³¹ Members of the House and Senate Labor Committees Studying Migrant Labor Conditions, “A Preliminary Report on Migrant Labor Conditions in Michigan.”

³² George W Romney, “To Tomas Chavez, Jr. President LAUPA,” June 17, 1966, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

³³ John J. Castillo, “To Honorable George Romney,” March 14, 1967, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

used as strike breakers.³⁴ Much has been made of the rise of farm worker labor unions and other reforms following the end of the Bracero Program. The increasing proportion of citizens in the fields was certainly a factor in the farm worker organizing, not just in the well-known United Farm Workers, but also in Midwest organizations like the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and Obreros Unidos. Yet this is only a part of the post-Bracero Program transition in Michigan, which was not just one of citizenship, but also of gender and family. The presence of increased numbers of women and children in the fields provided daily evidence that less and less of the productive labor of the family was taking place in a lower cost area.

Even as day care programs were expanded, the tension between labor needs, citizenship rights and maintaining a colonial labor system was evident in the typical ages to be found in child care and migrant school programs. Day care providers did not offer programs for children over 11 or 12 because their parents supervised them as they worked together. Reformers planned on the absence of these children from their day care and summer school programs. The summer school programs for migrant children established by the state of Michigan in 1968 did not serve anyone older than 13.³⁵ Some children worked at even earlier ages, James Warren, speaking about his work with VISTA in the Benton Harbor area reported, “Some of these kids start picking at five.”³⁶ Children harvested as much as 30 percent of the crop, according to critics of

³⁴ Matthew Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 15.

³⁵ Donald R. Beaton, “To Mr. Roy O. Fuentes,” August 9, 1968, George Romney Papers, Box 325 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

restrictions on child labor, and this included many young girls who went on to be in the Chicano Movement. Young children, both girls and boys, were still found in the fields in the late 1960s and 1970s, reinforcing contemporaneous Chicanas' early experiences of farm work.³⁷ In expressing his hope in 1967 that his children would go to college, prominent Michigan activist Ruben Alfaro said, "The kids of migrant laborers go into the fields as young as 5 or 6 . . . I don't want that for them."³⁸ While Chicanos and Chicanas spent much of their activist energy on trying to get children out of working population because it was exploitative and diminished their future potential, this diverged from women's liberationists who were trying to get women into a work world they hoped would lead to individual power and a better life.

" . . . Some area will have to care for the migrants . . . "

Grower attempts to maintain a colonized labor supply through obscuring the productive and reproductive labor of women and children were insufficient. In order to combat the increasing emergence of migrant families in the public sphere growers and their allies sought to maintain their supply of colonized labor by gendering the migrant family female. Growers promoted a discourse that placed migrant families within the private sphere by designating them as dependent, needy, and thus justifiably colonized. The image of Mexicans as needy and dependent has a long history in the Midwest, going back to allegations that Mexicans were likely to become "public charges" and thus should be deported during the Great Depression.³⁹ Put to

³⁶ Rita McGann, "Oakwood Student Gives Year to Vista," *Review and Herald: Official Organ of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church* 143, no. 42 (September 8, 1966): 16–17.

³⁷ Lena Holstad to Representative Michael Dively, July 30, 1970, Michael A. Dively Papers, MS 73-31, Lot 2, Box F, Archives of Michigan.

³⁸ Voges, "City Barber Lobbies For Migrants."

sympathetic uses by some, it was also symptomatic of the colonial discourse used to assign meaning to Chicanos' difference. Growers and their allies sought to recast migrants' poverty and the services that Chicanos demanded to ameliorate that poverty as evidence of migrants' "needy" dependence. Even as Chicanos combatted the designation of migrants as foreign and demanded public services growers characterized their neediness itself as evidence that migrants belonged only when contained within the migrant labor system. In this way growers attempted to bridge the transition between what Fraser and Gordon have identified as "an older sense of dependency as a relation of subjection imposed by an imperial power . . . to a newer sense of dependency as . . . character trait of the people so subjected."⁴⁰ No longer able to access braceros, growers sought to characterize migrants' need for public services as evidence of their "intrinsic, essential dependency." This quality was used to justify their continued subjugation in a colonial labor system.

A 1969 dispute over United Migrants for Opportunity use of federal funds to "resettle" migrants in the Benton Harbor area typifies the characterization of migrants as dependent even by those who defended migrants' rights to live in the area. Roger Smith, director of the Tri-Cap council who spoke out in defense of migrants' right to live year-round in the area said, "some area will have to care for the migrants."⁴¹ Likewise fellow migrant defender David Moore of the Migrant Ministry argued that Benton Harbor should share in "the burden for assistance."⁴²

³⁹ Norman D. Humphrey, "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," *Social Service Review* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 1941): 497–513.

⁴⁰ Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency," 317.

⁴¹ "Protest Settlement of Migrants Here, 'Area Has Enough Problems.'"

⁴² Ibid.

Those who opposed the ‘resettlement’ efforts also saw migrants as needy, perhaps best encapsulated in the Herald-Palladium’s choice of headline, “Protest Settlement of Migrants Here, Area Has Enough Problems.” Those who opposed the efforts of United Migrants for Opportunity to aid migrants in finding non-agricultural employment and permanent housing saw migrants only as “more needy residents” who would be a ‘problem’ for already stressed schools, affordable housing and social services. Both those who supported migrants’ access to the local public sphere and those who opposed it saw migrants primarily as a “needy” group with nothing to contribute to the area.

Discourse about migrants’ use of social services, such as the 1969 opposition to resettlement in Benton Harbor, did not use the term “dependent” but relied upon preexisting beliefs in migrants’ foreign neediness to write the meanings associated with “dependent” onto “migrant” itself. As analyzed by Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon in “A Genealogy of Dependency” the term, ‘dependency’ became a pejorative “keyword” of the “welfare-state” during the 1980s. Fraser and Gordon discuss the evolution of the word ‘dependency’ beginning with the 16th century. They emphasize that the 1960s and 1970s were a pivot point when a racialized narrative about adults, in the form of the malignant Black “matriarchal family” was developed. Fraser and Gordon assert that “dependency” gains much of its meaning from this legacy which stigmatized those in need of help in the form of welfare, while leaving the beneficiaries of other government programs unblemished.⁴³ Similarly growers promoted a discourse about migrants’ poverty that treated it as a problem created by attempts to ameliorate migrants’ poverty through the government programs. Unable to deny migrants’ poverty, growers called upon earlier paternalistic discourses of dependence where the neediness of women and

⁴³ Fraser and Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency,” 312.

children confined within the household was natural and good.⁴⁴ Growers' paternalism characterized working in the private sphere of their farms as the appropriate way for migrants' to make a living. In this way growers responses to migrants' 'neediness' gendered migrants as female. As Joan Wallach Scott noted in *Gender and the Politics of History*, the domination of one group by another in a colonial relationship is often rendered legitimate by recourse to descriptions of the colonizer as ruling male and the colonized as submissive female.⁴⁵ In this way the feminized dependence of migrant families as a whole helped to justify their continued inclusion in the colonial labor system.

Growers and their allies asserted that attempts to bring migrant workers into the public sphere through minimum wage laws, housing regulations and limits on child labor would only increase migrants' poverty. Walter Spruit, an Old Mission cherry grower reflected this position when he asserted that a proposed 1965 minimum wage law would "chase the Mexican American pickers out of here" resulting in unemployment rather than higher wages.⁴⁶ When the need for seasonal workers declined in 1971 and food stamp applications increased, journalist Hugh Morgan reported from the *Detroit Free Press* that some were citing "pressures from state and federal laws on providing for farm workers" for the decline.⁴⁷ In 1974 a change in the Fair Labor Standards Act made it illegal to employ children under twelve unless their parents owned

⁴⁴ Ibid., 320.

⁴⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Rev. ed., Gender and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 317.

⁴⁶ "Minimum Wage Proposal Opposed in T.C. Hearing."

⁴⁷ Hugh Morgan, "Migrant Farm Workers Face Welfare, Not Jobs," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, March 8, 1971.

the farm. Growers vigorously opposed this law, Watervliet's Alton Wendzel referred to labor department checks for underage workers as "worse than gestapo tactics."⁴⁸ Taking a similar position to Spruit, Mrs. Laura Heuser, a leader of Women for the Survival of Michigan Agriculture (WSAM), asserted that the law created an "economic hardship" for migrant workers.⁴⁹ A 1974 News-Palladium headline made the same point quite simply, "Migrant Family Can't Make Living Under New Law."⁵⁰ In these representative instances growers and their allies asserted that attempts to give migrant workers access to the same protections as industrial workers, such as a minimum wage, housing and child labor laws, was creating poverty and reliance on social services.⁵¹

Rhetorical attempts to render migrant families' neediness as appropriate within the colonial labor system were most evident in the intertwined debates over child labor and food stamps. Debates over the expansion of child labor legislation reflect the ways migrants' need was characterized as laudable and proper within the context of the colonial labor system but abject and improper if they emerged into the local public sphere. Writing to her local newspaper in 1966 Mrs. Robert Neuman, who identified herself as a former farm wife, recognized that migrant families were extremely needy. She asserted that restricting child labor would mean "disaster" for migrant families who "depend upon the little money their children bring home to

⁴⁸ Brandon Brown, "Feds Raid Berry Patches Hunting Under-Age Pickers," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, June 14, 1974.

⁴⁹ "Area Farmers Welcome Price Bargaining Tool."

⁵⁰ Nick Smith, "Migrant Family Can't Make Living Under New Law," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, March 18, 1974.

⁵¹ Special to The New York Times, "Laws to Aid Migrants Appear to Cut Jobs," *New York Times* (New York, N.Y., United States, August 27, 1972).

help make ends meet.”⁵² Yet Neuman identified the “disaster” not as the low wages that compelled child labor, but that migrant families denied the “privilege” of having the children work in the fields would “be forced to turn to welfare and A.D.C. aid.” Heuser sounded a similar moral preference for child labor at a meeting about the restrictions on child labor in 1974 when she asserted, “what we are fighting here is the philosophy that work is bad for you.”⁵³ Like others who defended child labor as an appropriate alternative to using public benefits Neumann emphasized work by children as morally preferable to ‘welfare.’ If children needed to work on farms so their family could make enough money to feed themselves this was acceptable, but if migrants received food stamps so their children would not have to work it was not. If migrants’ neediness was contained within the colonial labor system it was appropriate, even worthy of a paternalistic sympathy, but if migrants made demands on the state for the public benefits due all citizens it was neither.

Equally important to understanding the place deemed proper for migrant workers was the attitude of grower allies, like the News-Palladium, towards the use of public benefits by non-migrant workers. To this end the newspaper portrayed positively the plight of *other* food stamp seekers forced to wait in line because of the ‘crush’ of migrant applicants. The reportedly successful efforts of a “Hartford woman” to collect 1000 petition signatures from “housewives, farmers and factory workers” protesting the use of food stamps by migrants and the “large number” of other complaints received by U.S. Representative for the area Edward Hutchinson demonstrate that the problem was not only the use of public benefits, but also the use of those

⁵² Mrs. Robert Neuman, “Little Enough Left.”

⁵³ Nick Smith, “Child Labor Suit Proposed,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, May 31, 1974.

benefits by migrants. After all, the anonymous petition circulator was only aware of the problem because she had attempted to help several “senior citizens” who “couldn’t get through for all the migrants already in line”⁵⁴ Thus the problem was not the use of public benefits, but their use by the ‘crush’ of apparently undeserving ‘migrants.’

Defending child labor as morally preferable to welfare for migrant families served additional rhetorical ends. Within discussions of child labor its defenders elaborated upon the trope of the contented migrant worker family. This was a key trope in the colonial discourse that defined migrant workers as rightfully dependent on growers. In his 1974 editorial Benton Harbor newspaper editor W.J. Banyon proposed that farmers should “strike” the government, “do-gooders and labor bosses,” by declining to sell their produce to those who opposed child labor. Having tried the “southern white” and the “negro” these workers were, for Banyon, fortunately replaced

. . . in more recent times by the Mexican. Another advantage brought by the migrant was his family. The youngsters turned to the job alongside their parents. This provides a disciplined teamwork impossible to obtain from other labor . . . It is a way of life which the migrant finds rewarding . . .⁵⁵

This image of the contented migrant family served two distinct and critical rhetorical purposes. On the surface it simply justified the labor of children. By placing labor within the family Banyon placed the burden for choosing to compel the labor of children not on growers who paid low wages, but on migrant parents. In this view children worked not because Michigan agriculture was predicated upon the systematic use of low cost colonized labor, but because migrant parents chose the migrant ‘lifestyle’ for their families.

⁵⁴ Sandra Engle, “Food Stamp Crush Over--But Sour Taste Lingers On,” *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 22, 1970.

⁵⁵ “Maybe Our Farmers Should Strike the Government.”

Secondly, this image reinforced the paternalistic nature of the colonial labor system by associating the labor of the entire family with the good and natural dependence of children. Banyon supposed parents compelled a type of “disciplined teamwork” that could not be replicated. As Banyon told it the output of Chicano families was unparalleled because parents had a hold over their children’s labor that growers could only fantasize about. And fantasize they did. For Banyon, both parents and children, subsumed once again into the colonized category of “migrant” were satisfied with the “rewarding” nature of their work. This benevolent yet disciplined parental control was what made their work superior, what made it “impossible” to replicate with other groups. Banyon’s logic about the exceptional nature of family labor recalled grower defenses of the irreplaceability of braceros a decade earlier. The fantasy of the contented migrant family not only justified low-cost labor, but allowed growers to imagine that they had the type of natural and extreme control over their own workforce as they assumed parents had over their dependent children.

However the contented migrant family also differed from the ideal of a traditional family that naturalizes the dependence of women and children on a provider/father because the migrant father was not the sole provider. In fact, the need for family labor itself indicated that the labor of the father on his own was insufficient. Thus, the fantasy of the contented migrant working family defined Chicanos in the fields as naturally controlled by their family but intrinsically dependent on the grower who controlled their housing, their wages, and their access to food through his approval of public benefit forms. Just as a child is legitimately dependent on its parents for sustenance, the fantasy of the happy migrant family rendered migrants’ need as legitimate when it was contained in the fields. Yet the happy migrant family was not only dependent, but also highly productive, more productive than any other group of workers,

according to Banyon. In this way the trope of the contented migrant family mirrored the image of the industrious, yet submissive housewife, the farmer's helpmeet. Both dependent and productive, the fantasy of the contented migrant family gendered migrants as a group as female and justified their place in the colonial labor system.

Growers' promotion of the trope of the contented migrant family was mutually reinforcing with rural white reformers' emphasis on the problems of migrant children because both associated migrant workers with needy dependence. For both groups the plight/productivity of migrant children was more prominent than discussions of wages, working conditions, housing or pesticide use. In this way the discourse of helping migrants during this period was shaped by colonial thinking. Reformers less often characterized migrants as children; instead the image of migrant workers' problems was dominated by the plight of the suffering migrant child. Efforts to help migrant children often combined sympathy with profound condescension, paternalism and occasional condemnation of Chicano parents. Much like earlier generations who led Americanization programs those running migrant education programs often portrayed their pupils as uncivilized and underdeveloped. In this vein staff at the migrant preschool in Eau Claire expressed much concern about the verbal abilities of the children, though they never acknowledged a potential language barrier. "Many had trouble communicating and would gesture instead of speaking . . . the parents were too busy to talk to the children, hence the speech problem evolved. Some children did not know the names of everyday items. . . ."⁵⁶ Toni Pfauth, a volunteer at the center added, "It is important for these children to see that there are adults who care," Thus the migrant center workers linked the alleged speech problem to parental inattentiveness and lack of concern for their own children, instead of a language barrier or the

⁵⁶ Sue Carson, "For Them, Education Can Be a Dish, Mop . . . Or Smile," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, May 18, 1966.

normal reticence of 3 to 5 year olds to speak in an unfamiliar environment. In this way reformers participated in the discourse of migrants' needy dependence, not only by focusing on children, but also by characterizing those children as underdeveloped and uncivilized beings who, like stereotypical natives pointing and grunting in western films could only "gesture," not speak.

Staff at the Eau Clair preschool and others further characterized migrant children as underdeveloped and uncivilized when they focused on their eating habits and personal hygiene. Pfauth again marveled that due to the school's efforts, "The children have learned how to use eating utensils and some have even taught their mothers how to set a table correctly." As a volunteer Pfauth's stated goal was to help migrants, and now due to her efforts migrant mothers could add correct fork placement to their internal list of tasks to be completed after a day in the fields. Pfauth further asserted that one of the migrant preschool's accomplishments was ameliorating the odor of their small charges, "The staff has also taught the children how to wash and the odor of dirty bodies doesn't linger the way it did at first."⁵⁷ Pfauth was not the only Michigan migrant school volunteer concerned about migrant children's cleanliness. Staff of the Mason County Migrant Day Care Center began each day by bathing and shampooing the children and instructing them in proper hygiene.⁵⁸ Mrs. Edward O'Keefe reported in her presentations about the Berrien County Migrant Hospitality Center that teaching children "the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jeanne Wood, "Former School Building Used for Migrant Day Care Center," *Ludington (MI) Daily News*, July 23, 1966.

habit of cleanliness” was one of the most important lessons at the school.⁵⁹ For her 1967 report on migrants’ conditions and lifestyle social work professor Myrtle R. Reul traveled with migrant workers across the Midwest. She described how a migrant day care center she visited, “. . . had a regular morning schedule of giving the children a bath, checking their heads for lice and changing them into ‘play clothes.’ After which they laundered the dresses and shirts migrant mothers had washed and ironed the night before.”⁶⁰ To her credit Reul recognized the staff of the school she visited were alienating the people they were supposed to be helping when she asked, “How do you think you would feel if you were this parent and your child came home and told you he had a bath after you had given him a bath before he left in the morning?” In addition to their focus on migrant children’s underdeveloped speech, migrant school reformers defined migrants as in need of care and civilization when they focused on bathing and cleanliness.

Some of those concerned with the living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers, like Reul, were critical of paternalistic efforts to “help” migrant workers. Another reason to doubt the conclusions of the Eau Claire workers about their charges was that in the midst of complaining that they had “never seen an indoor bathroom,” nor used paints or dishes, and in one instance were infrequently hugged, they also asserted the children had never “tasted fruit.” It is rather unlikely that children of seasonal agricultural workers, whose parents routinely harvested fruit, had never had the opportunity to eat fruit. The presence of an overly credulous staff is more likely. Unfortunately they were probably correct that migrants’ had less experience with indoor plumbing, as a series of 1969 Civil Rights Commission hearings showed that 92 percent

⁵⁹ “Migrant Hospitality Center Program Seen by Stella Nova,” *Coloma (MI) Courier*, April 24, 1969.

⁶⁰ Reul, *Sociocultural Patterns Among Michigan Migrant Farm Workers*.

of migrant housing lacked running water.⁶¹ Instead of helping migrants to demand better housing through public regulation, these rural Anglo reformers focused on giving children self-congratulatory lessons about proper hygiene. In this way they reinforced the discourse of needy, dependent migrants whose problems could be best addressed within the private sphere of the home.

Private Sphere, Private Property

Importantly these were not migrants' private homes, but those of growers. Even as discursive efforts to render migrants needy, dependent and female placed migrants' problems within the private sphere they also transgressed some of those boundaries considered most 'private'; migrants' control over parenting and domestic functions such as eating, clothing and bathing. Growers and their allies who supported child labor as an alternative to public benefits inserted themselves into migrants' work decisions and child-rearing practices simultaneously. Teachers and reformers, like those at the Eau Claire migrant school, crossed into migrant families' eating, clothing and bathing habits when they instructed the families' most vulnerable members; children. Migrants' ability to maintain the type of private sphere of the nuclear family idealized by their contemporaries was circumscribed by growers' who suppressed migrants' within the private world of *their* fields and *their* camps.

There were also material limits to migrant families' maintenance of a private sphere that were supported by the colonial labor system. Growers vigorously contested attempts to bring migrants into the public sphere of social services and asserted that their private property rights should supersede the rights of migrants. In the best known case, that of Decatur grower Joseph Hassle, migrants' rights to have visitors and the access of public agencies to migrant camps were

⁶¹ Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights*, 302.

compromised.⁶² These limits on the public's access to migrants in their housing also constituted a constraint on migrants' ability to maintain a private sphere within their own homes. In Hassle's camps numerous visitors were turned away, including two student employees of United Migrants for Opportunity, Donald Folgueras and Violadelle Valdez. Folgueras and Valdez were attempting to visit George and Alicia Gutierrez July 23, 1969 because the Gutierrez children were ill. Hassle assaulted Folgueras and held him at gunpoint for around two hours, terrorizing Folgueras, Valdez, the Gutierrez family and several other camp residents. In the process Hassle prevented the Gutierrez family from seeking help for their sick children and discussing their children's health with Valdez within whatever privacy they could find in migrant housing. Local law enforcement aided Hassle in his attempts to keep the Gutierrez family captive within his private sphere when they arrived on the scene and arrested both Folgueras and Valdez for trespassing. Ultimately Hassle lost in court and was ordered to pay \$4500 in damages in 1971.

Certainly Folgueras, Valdez and the Gutierrez family were vindicated when the Hassle case set a new legal precedent for migrants' rights to visitors. Yet the nature of the case itself indicates the extent to which the colonial labor system limited migrants' ability to maintain a private sphere. All of the other refused visitors cited in *Folgueras v. Hassle* were seeking to communicate with migrant workers regarding matters normally considered private including health care, schooling for ones' children, and religious services. The case against Hassle cited only five other specific visitors who were refused entry, yet these were only the instances that entered the record. Hassle's impact was greater than just these six incidents; he was the largest grower in Van Buren county, he had been a grower since at least 1961 and owned 15 different

⁶² Donald Folgueras et al., Plaintiffs, v. Joseph W. Hassle et al., 381 F. Supp. 615 (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division 1971); "Labor Camp Prosecutions Are Mounting," *Benton Harbor (MI) News-Palladium*, July 10, 1971.

migrant camps housing over 1000 workers.⁶³ Perhaps, as some observers of the case said at the time, Hassle was an exception to the rule of benevolent growers. Media reports about Michigan migrant workers' living conditions, like the investigative pieces done by Christian Science Monitor reporter Dorothea Kahn Jaffe in 1961, often acknowledged there were some problems with the treatment of migrant workers, but maintained that the vast majority of growers "are sincerely trying to upgrade their migrant labor situation." In fact Jaffe's 1961 report, entered into the congressional record by Senator Phillip A. Hart, asserted that Hassle's farm was one of the good ones. It was, to Jaffe, a shining example of "hopeful" "improvement" for the migrant situation.⁶⁴ If, even eight years before, Hassle's was deemed one of the "good" growers to be lauded in reports of proactive measures to improve migrants' lives, one wonders what sorts of abuses were extreme enough to warrant even the rare condemnations that existed. Hassle defended his right keep migrant workers in a private sphere he controlled asserting, "If there are any rights of private property left, we do not believe they can use our property to organize for Caesar Chavez"(sic).⁶⁵ On Hassle's farm, and many others like it, growers, local law enforcement and the media helped to limit farmworkers access to a private sphere by refusing migrants' right to visitors and denying there was a problem.

While growers fought migrants' right to have visitors in the Hassle case they also placed limits on migrants' access to a private sphere by contesting legal reforms that brought migrant

⁶³ Charbonneau, "To: Bill Gomez, Mike Uriegas, Fidel Garcia, Fr. Joe Melton"; "Suit Seeks Federal Court Order to Restrain Keeler Area Fruit Grower."

⁶⁴ Phillip A. Hart, "Migrant Workers in Michigan," Congressional Record 107, (September 27, 1961).

⁶⁵ "Suit Seeks Federal Court Order to Restrain Keeler Area Fruit Grower."

housing under state regulation. As discussed in Chapter One growers, like Old Mission's O.M. Thompson, tried to evade new licensing requirements for migrant housing through direct legal challenges, repeated extension of his temporary license, circumventing the law, ignoring the law and finally through mechanization. State and federal migrant camp licensing requirements addressed conditions such as access to toilets, showers, ventilation as well as occupancy standards. In order to lessen chronic overcrowding in migrant housing Michigan's 1965 Agricultural Labor Camp Licensing law required fifty square feet of space for each adult, 60 square feet if the room combined cooking, eating and sleeping areas. Enforcement of the camp licensing law was sporadic at best, and complaints about overcrowding in migrant housing were ubiquitous in any discussion of the migrant situation. In Thompson's orchard the migrant housing was a cattle barn during the winter; wooden troughs and cattle feces remained on the walls when Ricardo Lopez complained about the conditions in 1971. In addition to the unfit conditions Lopez asserted that his family was squeezed into a 10 x 12 foot space in the building. The overcrowding had existed in previous years, Lopez and his family had been working in Tompkins' orchards for the previous 11 seasons, at times crowded in with 100 other migrants in spaces determined sufficient for 55. Overcrowding was not the only limitation on privacy at Tompkins' orchard, there were also no bathing facilities, not even communal showers. Tompkins responded to criticism of the housing he offered by asserting it was "better than tents" and that workers could bathe in the Grand Traverse Bay, more than one half mile away.⁶⁶

When State Senator Robert Richardson toured area labor camps in Saginaw in August of 1969 he asserted that one housing unit he saw on Herbert C. Turner's farm was a former chicken

⁶⁶ Donald Janson, "Migrant Workers: Worst-Housed Group in the Nation: Migrant Workers: The Worst-Housed Group in the Nation," *New York Times* (New York, N.Y., United States, November 27, 1971).

coop that housed fifteen people and “appeared to be badly overcrowded.”⁶⁷ Richardson’s report was marked “Confidential” and had been directly forwarded to Governor George Romney because Turner served on the governor’s Agricultural Labor Commission at the time. The public investigation by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in the same year described the effects of overcrowding on the domestic life of migrant workers,

The lack of comfort and privacy are well demonstrated in the case of two unrelated women and their children who occupied the same one room unit. The two women had to use the same cooking facility which meant that they had to alternate cooking schedules while the one woman was cooking the other had a sheet hanging from the upper bunk to keep the light out of the eyes of her sleeping children.⁶⁸

The unrelated women in this example conformed to the image of the private sphere by engaging in cooking and childcare. Yet the space in which they performed these tasks was far from private. When growers like O.M. Thompson, Herbert Turner and others broke the law by ignoring licensing requirements they limited migrants’ access to privacy. At times migrant families simply did not have the physical space in their homes to maintain the privacy of the nuclear family. Overcrowding helped growers keep labor costs down, but in turn it constituted a material limitation on migrant families’ private sphere.

In addition to limiting migrants’ ability to maintain their own private sphere colonial practice also circumscribed migrants physical access to the public, social life of local towns. Isolation was a counterpart to the overcrowding that defined the physical spaces inhabited by migrants. By definition most farms were in rural areas, often far from the small towns and cities

⁶⁷ Robert Richardson, “Notes Taken by Senator Robert Richardson During Migrant Camp Tour of Saginaw County on August 21, 1969,” August 28, 1969, George Romney Papers, Box 425 Migrants, Bentley Historical Library.

⁶⁸ Michigan Civil Rights Commission, “Field Impressions of the Migrant Project Staff.”

of the agricultural landscape. Migrants' isolation though was more than simply a natural consequence of living in a rural area. As discussed in chapter one migrants were kept apart from the social life of many small towns and cities by the poor treatment and stigma created by local residents. Vic Bonilla Jr. warned Charles Green, an investigative reporter embedded with farmworkers on Seth Tompkins cherry orchard in Old Mission, about the poor treatment he had come to expect in Traverse City. Before they headed into town on a Saturday evening in late August, 1963, Bonilla told Green, "Some places don't serve the Mexican people. . . They don't like us, we stay away."⁶⁹ Even on this rare excursion into public migrant workers' movement was limited by segregation and prejudice.

Migrants' poverty and the desire of growers to control their workers and keep them within the private sphere of their farms also contributed to migrants' isolation. In Van Buren County Hassle's camp procedures demonstrate these restrictions. Workers were transported to Hassle's Krohn Camp by the foreman and most depended on his good will to leave the camp, otherwise they were limited to places they could get to on foot in the limited hours when they were not working.⁷⁰ In the case of Hassle's farms one reason why so many visitors attempted to enter the camps was because workers had little opportunity to leave for meetings elsewhere. In these ways the private/public divide in the world of migrant families was compromised by colonial practice.

⁶⁹ "A Migrant's Lot: Travel and Toil: Annual Farm Tour Brings in \$1,000 in Earnings Some Find Work A Melon Bribe Not Always Welcome," *New York Times*, September 1, 1963.

⁷⁰ Donald Folgueras et al., Plaintiffs, v. Joseph W. Hassle et al., 381 F. Supp. 615 (U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division 1971).

Conclusion

Migrant workers in Michigan were subject to a gendered, colonial bind. Migrants had little private sphere of their own, but were confined within the private sphere of the grower. This was the less obvious aspect of their isolation on farms that many contemporaries lamented. The image of farm workers isolated on farms symbolized migrants' inability to access the public sphere but also obscured the constraints on their own private world. Like others gendered female, migrants operated in a private, isolated world, but like so many colonized people they had very little control over its contours. Thus much of Chicano Movement efforts to end migrants' suffering were analogous to the efforts of early second wave feminists to bring women into the public sphere and make conditions in the home, or in this case the homes of growers, a political issue. Yet migrant workers were also subject to colonial practice that limited and delegitimized migrants' own private sphere.

Growers, reformers and Chicano activists responded to the discourse of needy migrants contained within the private sphere of growers' farms in different ways. Growers sought to maintain their colonial labor system by portraying it as the only legitimate 'solution' to migrants' dependence. Reformers were often motivated by genuine sympathy, at times even outrage, over migrants' conditions and believed migrants' needs should be met by public services. White rural reformers in particular believed that Michigan agriculture's use of seasonal labor was coming to an inevitable end. They promoted the belief that migrants' neediness must be solved because migrants' were somehow a remnant of the past, a people left behind by the progress of markets and mechanization in the field. In this way reformers reflected growers' colonial thinking. While growers saw migrants' neediness as evidence that they belonged in the colonial labor system, reformers saw migrants' neediness as the natural consequence of progress. These beliefs were also supported discursively by the specialized vocabulary used when speaking of migrants

that emphasized their work as natural and antiquated. Migrants did not commute on highways to work, they followed the migrant 'stream', migrants did not live in neighborhoods, but in 'camps', their domiciles were not houses, but 'cabins,' they did not seek state aid, they 'flooded' the welfare office and they did not choose to relocate for work, they 'settled-out.' These keywords of migrancy associated migrants with elements of America's 'natural' past. The discourse around migrants likened them to spawning fish that followed a "migrant stream", who resided in a benighted frontier of 'camps' and 'cabins' before finally 'settling-out,' with no more conscious motivation than silt depositing in a floodplain. In this way many reformers participated in a discourse that naturalized migrants' disadvantage within a narrative of racial progress and inadvertently contributed to growers' colonial labor system.

Chicanas, like Rosalie Gutilla, who worked at the *Centro Infantil* migrant child care center in Keeler also believed that migrant children suffered, but they emphasized the strength of migrant families. Gutilla explained, "Que a pesar de su pobreza, hay un sentimiento muy grande de amor entre los padres para el cuidado de sus hijos; existe amor y union familiar que es un ejemplo para muchos." (Despite their poverty, there is a great feeling of love between the parents and care for their children; there exists here a love and family unity that is an example for many.)⁷¹ Chicano activists likewise believed that public services were needed, but they diverged from reformers in the evaluation of why migrants were needy. As discussed in Chapter One, migrants' neediness caused Chicano activists to question American Exceptionalism and to characterize the United States as an imperialist nation.⁷² Chicanas often opposed patriarchy and wanted a better life, but many Chicanas first work experiences were distinguished by their work

⁷¹ "Triste Realidad de La Vida Del Campesino En Michigan."

⁷² "The Misery in Which the Chicano Migrant Lives."

as a family in a colonial labor system that gendered their families female. This differed greatly from the sex-segregated clerical and service work many white women were limited to in the late 1960s and 1970s. Due to sexism white women comprised 89 percent of secretaries, 83 percent of receptionists and 79 percent of bank tellers in the late 1970s.⁷³ The prevalence of sex-segregated employment amongst white women has been seen as creating a female collectivity that could be harnessed for group action.⁷⁴ Chicanas also shared in a comparable, but parallel phenomenon whereby working in the fields, not as individual women, but with children and adult men as family units reinforced a ethnic collectivity based on a discourse of the family which came to be known as *la familia de la raza*.

La familia de la raza was that collectivity, a bivalent construction that defined the family as a political actor and the nation, *la raza*, as being comprised of families. Subsequent studies have often incorrectly characterized *la familia de la raza* as an inherently patriarchal ideal that consigned women to portray a silently suffering mother domestically confined in an overly stereotyped Mexican family. As will be discussed in the following chapter, such criticisms ignore the profound differences between white women and Chicanas' access to both the public and private spheres. Like many other critics of Chicano anti-colonialism and nationalist strategies, those who associated *la familia de la raza* with the patriarchy of "traditional" Mexican families often confused the symptoms of colonialism with the rhetoric of Chicano anti-colonial organizers who named these symptoms and sought to reclaim them. To the contrary, Chicanas

⁷³ Denise A. Segura, "Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Women at Work: The Impact of Class, Race, and Gender on Occupational Mobility," *Gender and Society* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1989): 38.

⁷⁴ Louise A. Tilly, "Paths of Proletarianization: Organization of Production, Sexual Division of Labor and Women's Collective Action," *Signs* 7, no. 2 (1981).

who proclaimed their allegiance to *la familia de la raza* often recognized sexism and rejected constraining gender roles, but they refused to let the menace of patriarchy compromise their commitment to an alternate political vision.

CHAPTER FIVE: LA FAMILIA DE LA RAZA Y MUM

“The angry white feminist says the way to equality it to change the nuclear family, but we can’t eliminate the family, it would be eliminating the oldest means of cultural survival.”¹

The role of Chicanas in the movement was, and continues to be, a disputed one.

Chicanas strenuously disapproved of what they derided as “women’s lib.” These Chicanas believed “women’s lib” implied a misguided criticism of the family. Chicanas who participated in the movement, such as sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn, defended the family as a source of strength. In turn *la familia de la raza*, codified in academic terms by Baca Zinn as “political familism” has been misunderstood as embracing patriarchy. Instead Chicanas rejected white ‘corporatist feminism’ because its individualism relied on American Exceptionalism and it promoted a colonial narrative of underdevelopment about Chicanas. Yet, the assertion that Chicano anti-colonialism, especially *la familia de la raza*, was patriarchal remains widespread in analyses of the period. This assertion is ubiquitous in any discussion of feminism and the role of women in the Chicano movement. Scholars have criticized the Chicano Movement for disempowering women and in particular characterized anti-colonial ideas like *la familia de la raza*, as regressive attempts to confine Chicanas in a domestic role. Their analysis is premised upon a schema of private and public spheres that is representative of neither Michigan Chicanos’ lived reality nor their collective movement vision. Migrant families labored as the unit of production under a colonial labor system that disrupted the traditional private/public divide and gendered them female. Chicanas participated in and witnessed the emergence of migrant families into the public sphere, providing a model for the politicized *familia de la raza*.

¹ Leslie Johnson Clevert, “Panel Discusses Women’s Rights,” *Milwaukee (WI) Journal*, December 15, 1975.

Sexism, restrictive gender roles, even misogyny were present in the Chicano Movement, but they did not define it. To the contrary, Michigan Chicanas who proclaimed their allegiance to *la familia de la raza* often recognized sexism and rejected constraining gender roles, but they refused to allow the menace of patriarchy compromise their commitment to an alternate political vision. Those who have seen this as a contradiction analyze *la familia de la raza* along only one axis, its relationship to patriarchy, and ignore both its profound rejection of the individual and its idealistic, future orientation. I argue that much of the debate over the role of anti-colonialism and feminism in the Chicano Movement oversimplifies an ongoing conversation about individualism versus collectivity and the nature of the American national project. *La familia de la raza* was an anti-colonial political ideal that privileged the family as the legitimate political unit and centered Chicanos in *their* own worldview. Rather than signaling submission to patriarchal Chicano nationalists, Chicana emphasis on collective advancement demonstrated how the gendering of Chicanas as conquered women was also the racialization of Chicanos as a subject people. Furthermore, *la familia de la raza* was Chicano anti-colonial political theory and practice, a form of cultural evolution, a living construct whose meaning has been distorted in the reification of a dynamic historical narrative into a “common sense” about the Chicano Movement’s flaws.

“Loyalists” and “Feminists”

At the 1969 Denver Youth Conference a Chicana caucus representative announced, “It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated.”² This statement is often used to sum up the relationship between the Chicano Movement and the women within. Yet, the discourse about women’s roles and tensions between the family and the

² Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez, “The Women of La Raza,” in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York: Routledge, 1997), 29.

individual neither began nor ended at the 1969 Denver Youth Conference where this rather inauspicious pronouncement was made.³ Benita Roth has pointed out that the conflict over the roles of Chicanas in the movement grew not out of an urge to separate, but over a desire to participate in the Chicano Movement on their own terms.⁴ Chicanas' experiences with the Women's Liberation Movement were also difficult because of its racist stereotypes and colonial narratives about Chicanas that belied notions of sisterhood and solidarity.⁵ Wherever Chicanas decided to be involved they were limited by expectations about their relative loyalties as women and Chicanas.

Chicana activists struggled with each other over the gendered narratives that surrounded their activities. In the Southwest Chicanas labeled "loyalists" and "traditional, male-identified" were accused of defending Chicano culture and history in willful ignorance of its patriarchal aspects. Professed feminists were alleged to be "*agringadas*" (Americanized) and "Women's Libbers" who wanted to sacrifice the family, both literally as the nuclear family, and figuratively as the *Familia de La Raza*, for their own advancement. Although this debate occurred in many venues, an especially poignant, and increasingly well-documented, example is the 'split' at the 1971 La Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza in Houston.⁶ At this event, which was attended by

³ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 102.

⁴ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129-175.

⁵ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 110.

⁶ Although this debate occurred in many different venues, an especially poignant example is the 'split' at the 1971 *La Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza* in Houston. See Francisca Flores, "Conference of Mexican Women in Houston—Un Remolino [A Whirlwind],"

at least at least 20 women from Michigan, one group left the conference and reconvened in a local park after accusing those who remained of inappropriately prioritizing sexism over what they saw as more pressing problems, such as the war in Vietnam. Both groups were subject to, and actors in, the linking of political decisions regarding what constituted the ‘true’ role of women in Mexican history, culture and families to Chicanas’ decisions about their personal involvement.

Just as the ideology of Chicano Movement participants varied, diverse opinions about the role of women in the movement were commonplace from its inception and crosscut by other differences. In her examination of the ‘split’ at the 1971 Chicana conference Blackwell found that there was no “easy schema” linked to ideology or region that could distinguish the Chicanas who walked out from those who remained.⁷ In his recent history of the Chicano Movement in San Antonio, Texas, David Montejano also reviews the split at the 1971 conference, concluding that despite their differences both groups of women pressured for a “significant change in gender

in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York: Routledge, 1997), 159; Mirta Vidal, *Chicanas Speak Out: Women: New Voice of La Raza* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 64; *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “Conferencia De Mujeres Por La Raza” <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/pwcpz.html> (accessed April 26, 2009); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), 398; Alfredo Mirande and Evangelina Enriquez, *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 237; Sonia A. Lopez, “The Role of the Chicana within the Student Movement,” In *Essays on la Mujer*, ed. Rosaura Sanchez and Rosa Martinez Cruz (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, University of California, 1977), 25; Maylei Blackwell, “Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Chicana Feminisms and Print Culture in the Chicano Movement, 1968-1973,” In *Chicana Feminisms*, ed. Gabriela F. Arredondo et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 75; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 108.

⁷ Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Gender and Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 179–182.

relations.”⁸ Roth’s assertion that conflict over Chicanas’ involvement sprung from their desire to be in the movement, but on their own terms, is echoed in both Blackwell and Montejano’s conclusions.

Blackwell and Montejano’s more nuanced view of the development of Chicana feminist’ consciousness stems from the longstanding struggle in academic literature to settle what Espinoza has called the “cultural nationalism versus feminism” debate.⁹ As Blackwell has noted critiques of sexism in the movement were present from its beginnings—they are not the product of historiographical or political shifts in the 1980s and afterwards. Many early histories of the Chicano Movement incorrectly omitted Chicana feminism, included it as an afterthought to the movement or as a contributor to its demise.¹⁰ In response to these exclusionary histories of the movement other Chicana feminist scholars developed critiques that counterposed Chicano nationalism and Chicana feminism as if the two were mutually exclusive.¹¹ In rightly

⁸ David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 166.

⁹ Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte*, ed. Dionne Espinoza and Lorena Oropeza (Houston, Tex: Arte Público Press, 2006), 226.

¹⁰ Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso, 1989); Ignacio M García, “Juncture in the Road: Chicano Studies Since ‘El Plan de Santa Barbara,’” in *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic and Political Change*, ed. David R. Maciel and Ortiz, Isidro D. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996).

¹¹ Angie Chabram-Dernersesian, “I Throw Punches for My Race, but I Don’t Want to Be a Man: Writing Us-Chica-nos(Girl, Us)/Chicanas--Into the Movement Script,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992); Denise A. Segura and Beatriz M. Pesquera, “Beyond Indifference and Antipathy: The Chicana Movement and Chicana Feminist Discourse,” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 19, no. 2 (1992): 73–74; Alma M García, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3; Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 102.

condemning the exclusion of Chicanas from the earliest histories of the movement these critics often overgeneralized and condemned all those who espoused Chicano nationalism as inherently patriarchal. Garcia asserts, in her key collection of primary sources documenting the emergence of Chicana feminism, that ‘loyalist’ women who held nationalist beliefs defined women’s liberation as outside of *la causa*.¹² In this way vital Chicana feminist correctives reproduced the binarism deployed by some during the movement instead of analyzing it.

In more recent works Blackwell, Mariscal, Oropeza, Dionne Espinoza and Virginia Espino have complicated the counterposition of Chicana Feminism and Chicano Nationalism. Blackwell argues that the interaction between Chicana Feminism and cultural nationalism was complex, marked by both a rhetorical equivalency whereby “nationalism” was used to signify “sexist” while attempts to “retrofit” nationalism were also ongoing.¹³ Mariscal and Oropeza emphasize that the Chicano Movement cannot be reduced to the politics of cultural nationalism, nor defined by its deficiencies, real or imagined. To this end Mariscal asserts the “common sense’ about the Movement, especially in elite academic circles, tells us that the Movimiento=’nationalism’ and ‘nationalism’= sexism and homophobia.”¹⁴ In this way Mariscal does not deny “sexist practices were present through all organizations” but instead argues that a rather badly defined nationalism has been used to condemn an ideologically complex social movement. Others, like Rodriguez maintain that Chicano nationalism should be differentiated from “state-marshaled nationalisms.” To this end Rodriguez criticizes the “now-common move

¹² García, *Chicana Feminist Thought*.

¹³ Blackwell, *Chicana Power!*, 92–102.

¹⁴ Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun*, 42.

in Chicano/a and other ethnic studies scholarship to heavy-handedly render cultural nationalism the enemy that inherently generates sexism and homophobia. . . .¹⁵ Lastly Espinoza and Espino have argued Chicanas sought to mold nationalism and ideas about the family to their own ends, in their analyses, respectively, of the Brown Berets and sterilization abuse of Chicanas in Los Angeles.¹⁶

Recent scholarship has begun to historicize the development of feminism within the Chicano Movement and reinvigorated studies of how women were both empowered and oppressed by their experiences within it. Recent scholars in what Blackwell has termed the “New Chicana Historiography” have offered more nuanced views of that most maligned of Chicano nationalist ideals, *la familia de la raza*. Instead of entirely condemning the idea of *la familia de la raza* they warn that it has “patriarchal underpinnings” which “authorized gender inequality.”¹⁷ Blackwell ultimately portrays the movement away from nationalism as progressive, but also allows that “Political familism both reinforced and disrupted the patriarchal arrangement of *la familia*, but as a political imaginary *la familia* was not fully reimagined in the Chicano movement, nor was its patriarchal anchoring dislodged.”¹⁸ Here Blackwell reflects a recent flexibility in the “cultural nationalism versus feminism debate” as well as its limits. While

¹⁵ Richard T. Rodriguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁶ Virginia Rose Espino, “Women Sterilized as They Give Birth: Population Control, Eugenics and Social Protest in the Twentieth-Century United States” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2007), 276–278; Dionne Espinoza, “‘Revolutionary Sisters’: Women’s Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967-1970,” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 42.

¹⁷ Longeaux y Vásquez, *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement*, 206–211.

¹⁸ Blackwell, *Chicana Power!*, 83.

she acknowledges that political familism, an academic codification of *la familia de la raza* theorized by Baca Zinn in 1975, “disrupted” patriarchy in the family, this potential is immediately delimited by the ubiquitous caveat that patriarchy persisted.¹⁹ While important, this recent Chicana/o Studies flexibility in evaluations of Chicano Movement nationalism is limited both in scope and presence. It has relatively few adherents and its ability to understand the full meaning of Chicano nationalism for Chicanas is circumscribed by those who equate the promotion of patriarchy with its continued presence. Thus the view that Chicano Nationalism, and especially its ideas about the family, was synonymous with virulent sexism and a patriarchal vision of society that continues to be, as Mariscal has labeled it, “common sense” about the Chicano Movement.²⁰

Nowhere does this “common sense” equivalency between Chicano nationalism and patriarchy prevail more than in analyses of the Chicano Movement’s use of *la familia de la raza*. Allegations that *la familia de la raza* was innately patriarchal spring from faulty definitions that are particularly ill-suited to Chicanos in Michigan during the time period. Three false equivalences structure the academic consensus about political familism: between “the family” and domestic, private and confined spaces; between idealistic constructed visions of the family and the flawed reality of all families; and most critically between structuring a nation around the unequal dependence of women and children on a family patriarch and new interdependent family forms rooted in Chicano praxis. These three flawed equivalencies hinder a fuller understanding of how Chicanas shaped Chicano political thought through ideas about the family.

¹⁹ Maxine Baca Zinn, “Political Familism: Toward Sex Role Equality in Chicano Families,” *Aztlán* 6, no. 1 (1975): 13–26.

²⁰ Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun*, 42.

Recent works on gender in Chicana/o Cultural Studies demonstrate how this “common sense” continues to influence our understanding of Chicanos in the United States. Many of these representative works, like Rosa Linda Fregoso’s *Mexicana Encounters* or Alicia Schmidt Camacho’s *Migrant Imaginaries* do not center on gender in the Chicano Movement period. Instead they deal in cultural analysis of transnational subjecthood over the course of the twentieth century, in Fregoso’s case representations of Chicanas in film, while Schmidt Camacho’s focus is on texts produced by Mexicans in the United States since 1910. Yet it is their very emphasis on present day Chicano cultural politics that demonstrates the reflexivity of belief in Chicano nationalism’s patriarchal malignancy and the consequences of this assumption for creating knowledge about Chicanos and Chicanas today. While Fregoso notes that political familism also involved a “breakdown” of the division between private and public spheres she critiques *la familia de la raza* as being based in the use of the private sphere as a source of Chicana power because “the private sphere was itself implicated in Western patriarchy.”²¹ Taking up the definition of the “public sphere” proposed by Nancy Fraser, Fregoso clarifies in her later analysis of the film *Mi Vida Loca*, that the private, domestic sphere is confining because it prevents Chicanas from participating in “discursive relations” and “common affairs.”²² In *Migrant Imaginaries* Schmidt Camacho asserts similarly that as an idea *la familia de la raza* possessed a “coercive force” that allowed Chicanas to participate only “through their domestic labors.”²³

²¹ Rosa Linda Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 76.

²² *Ibid.*, 93.

In these ways scholars continue to reinforce the “common sense” about *la familia de la raza*; that it was designed to keep Chicanas confined in the home and out of political conversations about the nature of Chicano political subjectivity. As a diverse social movement there were certainly specific Chicano Movement actors, spaces, and texts that upheld the confinement of Chicanas in what Schmidt Camacho has termed, “the ideology of separate spheres.”²⁴ Yet this analysis also presumes too much about the nature of the private, domestic sphere as understood and experienced by Chicanas in the period. Like many second wave feminists, especially those inspired by Betty Friedan’s classic *The Feminine Mystique*, critics of *la familia de la raza* understand the home during this period as a too-comfortable place of ever-present, looming confinement with one’s intimates. For them the home was a private place that effaced women’s identities, desires and well being for the good of fathers and future fathers. As discussed in the previous chapter Chicanas and Chicanos in Michigan were heavily influenced by their experience in a colonial migrant labor force which included all of the confinement, but very little of the material comfort, privacy, intimacy or patriarchal benefits for either Chicanos or Chicanas.

The false equivalency between the idealistic, interdependent unit promoted as *la familia de la raza* and the unequal, dependent, flawed reality of Chicano families is another key element of the “common sense” about patriarchy in the Chicano Movement. Both types of families were a presence in the lived experience of Chicanos in the movement, but they were not synonymous. Yet critics of Chicano nationalism have treated promotion of *la familia de la raza*, an idealized

²³ Alicia Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 169.

²⁴ Ibid., 172.

cultural construct from its inception, as tacit approval of all the flaws of Chicano families past and present. Fregoso writes to this end, “The ideology of *la familia* fails to acknowledge the complexity of sentiments and relationships within actual familias . . . many of us . . . have had to confront our experiences in oppressive biological familias: instances in which women and children were victims of incest, child abuse, rape, spousal battery, and beatings.”²⁵ In this way Fregoso raises real and significant violations of familial trust and human rights within extant families as evidence of patriarchy’s inherent links to a malignant *familia de la raza*.

Schmidt Camacho makes a similar point in her criticism of the writing of Chicano Movement activist Enriqueta Longeaux y Vasquez. Vasquez, as she prefers to be known today, was co-editor of the important Chicano Movement newspaper, *Grito del Norte*, and a key proponent amongst Chicanas of *la familia de la raza*. In her critique of Vasquez’s writing Schmidt Camacho repeatedly portrays her as a victim of “self-censorship” whose experiences in public housing should have made her more skeptical of the home as “the inviolate space of ethnic renewal.”²⁶ While certainly an accurate condemnation of many families both in the 1970s and today, this “common sense” about “real problems” within families only functions as a critique of political familism if we accept that *la familia de la raza* was an attempt to preserve families as they were. While many Chicano Movement activists declared just this intention, the need to guard the “traditional Mexican family” as a haven from the Anglo world, the vigor of their defense betrays the very constructed nature of *la familia de la raza*. The Chicano Movement’s veneration of “traditional culture” was as much strategy as it was epistemological declaration. As a socio-political construct, an idealistic vision, *la familia de la raza* was

²⁵ Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters*, 72–73.

²⁶ Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, 171.

sometimes used to promote the types of violations that scholars like Fregoso highlight and to romanticize the poverty that Schmidt Camacho notes. Yet the very nature of *la familia de la raza* as an idealistic construct belies their ability to fix its meaning in relationship to any actual family.

Lastly the “common sense” equivalence between political familism and patriarchy in analyses of the movement rests upon an overly deterministic view of family collectivity as synonymous with inequality, dependence and captivity. For Fregoso *la familia de la raza* is inherently unequal for women because familial allegiances derive their power from controlling women’s sexuality. Fregoso asserts,

family ideology as the basis for the nation depended on the exercise of gender power. As the guiding principle of ‘family loyalty’ as expressed through ‘carnalismo’ . . . makes evident, women’s relation to the Chicano nation was represented in unequal terms . . . as Sonia Saldivar Hull reminds us, ‘The code of family loyalty begins with the assumption that men can claim possession of female sexuality.’²⁷

Calling upon analysis of Chicano literature by Saldivar Hull, in this passage Fregoso rejects *la familia de la raza* because she believes the feeling of “brotherhood” that binds the family together powers its collectivity from the suppression of women.

Ultimately Schmidt Camacho finds collectivity even more problematic than Fregoso. She condemns Vasquez’ allegiance to the family and her view that “the family must come up together” because she cannot reconcile Vasquez’s insistence on the interdependence of men and women with liberation for Chicanas. Where Vasquez says,

The family must come up together . . . We must look at each other as one large family. We must look at all of the children as belonging to all of us. We must strive for the fulfillment of all as equals with the full capability and right to develop as humans. When the man can look upon “his” woman as HUMAN and with the love of BROTHERHOOD and EQUALITY, then and only then, can he

²⁷ Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters*, 74.

feel the true meaning of liberation and equality.²⁸

Instead of seeing *la familia de la raza* as the deeply collectivist project Vasquez promotes here, Schmidt Camacho concludes that Vasquez is the victim of a kind of Chicana Loyalist false consciousness. To this end she asserts, “Longeaux y Vasquez’s final objective is less the emancipation of Chicanas in struggle than the reiteration of their dependence on men. The essay ends painfully with Chicanas awaiting the recognition of their human status . . . The tortured grammar of her elocutions conveys the strong suggestion of male coercion . . .”²⁹ Rather than interpreting Vasquez’ statement that a man cannot “feel the true meaning of liberation and equality” unless women are also liberated as an admonishment that calls upon Chicanos to recognize the interconnectedness of their status, Schmidt Camacho asserts it leaves Chicanas waiting for men to liberate them. In this way Schmidt Camacho demonstrates how objections to dependency and inequality in *la familia de la raza* are not only about a simple lack of liberation, but also about differing views as to what constitutes liberation. For Schmidt Camacho any Chicana liberation that was linked to the fate of men is invalid because collectivist ideas like *la familia de la raza*, “foreclose the capacity of Chicanas to voice their interests with any autonomy.”³⁰

Yet what Vazquez, and other Chicana political familists, asserted was not that Chicanas and Chicanos could not “voice” their interests with “autonomy” but that the mere ability to speak or act autonomously would not result in liberation as long as others in the family remained bound. For Fregoso the collectivity of *la familia de la raza* was suspect because its unity was

²⁸ Longeaux y Vásquez, *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement*, 121.

²⁹ Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, 173.

³⁰ Ibid., 169. Emphasis mine.

sustained by inequality, while for Schmidt Camacho all collectivity is dependency by another name. These related views are overdetermined because they reify *la familia de la raza* rather than seeing it as a living construct wherein concepts like brotherhood can be reinterpreted by Chicanas such as Vasquez, and because they judge Chicano Movement political theory from within very body of political thought that it strives to critique. From a perspective of liberalism, the political model with which we are most familiar, *la familia de la raza* denies liberation because only individual liberation is possible. As the most radical element of Chicano anti-colonial political philosophy *la familia de la raza* challenged the hegemonic assumption that the individual was the only legitimate political subject.

“It’s not just your family”

You can imagine being 13, 14 your period starts, you’re in the middle of the field, you’re bleeding, you don’t have water to even drink, much less wash your hands. I thought, ‘how can we possibly be considered humans when they treat us like dogs?’ . . . and then you are picking with a bunch of different people, it’s not just your family . . . it might be some boy that you developed a crush on and there you are with your pants all sticking to your legs because you were on your period. It was just humiliation.³¹

Decades have passed, but Maria Enriquez has vivid recollections of poor conditions in the fields. Perhaps even more memorable than performing hard work without accessible drinking water as a child, is the way these conditions transgressed her sense that menarche ought to be a private experience. Enriquez states not only that she was oppressed, exploited or mistreated, but specifically that it was humiliation. The nature of her humiliation embodies the colonial transgression of migrants’ private sphere. The colonial labor system removed her ability to keep a private matter within the family. Enriquez objects here not to the constraints of the family bond, but to her lack of access to the type of boundary between public and private that is

³¹ Enriquez, Interview by author.

essential for the human experience. As previously discussed the dehumanization of the migrant family was both a salient lived experience and a key cultural referent for Chicano Movement politics in Michigan. The colonial labor system in the fields dehumanized the family as the unit of production while characterizing the Chicano migrant family as a private subordinate part of the male growers' family, dependent upon him and gendered female. Many growers positioned Chicano men, women and children rhetorically and materially as subordinate members of their private world, thus both limiting Chicano access to the public sphere and circumscribing their own private space.

Chicanas who promoted *la familia de la raza* did so not only out of a desire to make exploitation of their families a public concern, but also to claim a bounded private sphere of their own making. As such *la familia de la raza* relied upon a dynamic racialized and gendered view of the private/public divide. Chicana and Chicano willingness to challenge white middle-class conceptions of public/private was buttressed by the deprivations of the colonial labor system. In comprising migrants' access to a private sphere, the colonial labor system had already created fissures in traditional ideas about the public/private as well as demonstrated to Chicanas and Chicanos the pain of being contained in a private sphere controlled by others. Those who characterize *la familia de la raza* as merely a strategy for containing women lack an awareness of the demand for an intimate space implied in the anti-colonial nation-as-family. Chicanas and Chicanos promoted *la familia de la raza* in order to enlarge and protect an intimate, familial, private sphere of their own.

Artistic representations of the *la familia* are one place in which to locate both more traditional conceptions of the patriarchal family and aspirational ideas about the intimate, decolonized family. Fregoso notes the importance of images in promoting Chicano Movement

politics and asserts that gender hierarchies in the family were most obvious in the “symbolic iconography” of the movement. Richard T. Rodriguez’ *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*, is the first major work to focus on the cultural history of the Chicano family. He also emphasizes the significance of “family portraits” in structuring Chicano Movement discourse and criticizes patriarchy within the movement especially its heteronormative view of the family. Yet Rodriguez is ultimately more convinced than Fregoso or Schmidt Camacho that the family retains value as an organizing strategy. In his review of seven graphic representations of the family from Chicano Movement publications Rodriguez begins with Joaquin Chiñas’ “La Familia.” Rodriguez finds that this charcoal and pencil drawing of a father, mother and child, was used to symbolize the family in a number of Chicano Movement publications, most importantly Jose Armas’ booklet *La Familia de la Raza*. He asserts that “La Familia” functions as “an ethnic-specific rendition of the Holy Family upon which Christian and Catholic heteropatriarchal values rest.”³² In this conclusion Rodriguez builds upon sociologist Tomás Almaguer’s earlier assertion that this image, also circulated as a poster during the movement, “symbolized the patriarchal, male-centered privileging of the heterosexual, nuclear family.” Fregoso, drawing from the work of historian Lorena Oropeza, comes to a similar conclusion. For her within this artwork “the Chicana mother is enshrined in motherhood and domesticity; her subordination is understood as a ‘divine’ fact.”³³ The scholarly consensus is that “La Familia” draws upon Catholic iconography to portray the patriarchal family critics of *la familia de la raza* deride.

³² Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 33.

³³ Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters*, 74.

Looking more closely at Chiñas' "La Familia" within its historical Michigan context we find other more liberatory meanings. There "La Familia" can be read as an anti-colonial challenge to the migrant/domestic binary which rendered the migrant family servile through a lack of access to an autonomous private, domestic sphere. This same image appeared in Michigan Chicano movement publications, most notably as a full-page 'poster' in the July 1970 edition of *Sol de Aztlán*.³⁴ The difference between colonial and anti-colonial models of the family is especially evident when "La Familia" is compared with another image of the family widely circulated in Michigan Chicano Movement publications at the time, Fritz Eichenberg's "Farmworkers Holy Family." Eichenberg's "Farmworkers Holy Family" was published in *The Catholic Worker* in 1954, but it first appeared in a Michigan Chicano Movement context in *El Renacimiento* June 15, 1971.³⁵ Taken as a whole, art, as with other texts, presented *la familia de la raza* as neither essentially liberatory or oppressive, but conveyed multiple meanings simultaneously.

Chiñas' "La Familia" and Eichenberg's "Farmworker Holy Family" contain many superficial similarities, but the range of meanings they conveyed within Michigan Chicano Movement texts were quite different. Both works present a tripartite family, a father/husband, a mother/wife and a child. In both the mother/wife covers her head with a rebozo, the child is held close to her chest, and the father/husband is positioned above them. Both call upon Christian iconography, Eichenberg's use of Jesus on the cross quite transparently and for Fregoso Chiñas

³⁴ Joaquin Chiñas, "La Familia," *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlán*, July 1970. *Sol de Aztlán* was a newspaper that emerged in response to a Chicano walkout from Lansing's Pattengill Junior High.

³⁵ Fritz Eichenberg, "Farmworkers Holy Family," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 15, 1971; Robert Ellsberg, ed., *Works Of Mercy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

work mimics “portraits of Saint Joseph, the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus” while Rodriguez simply labels it a “rendition of the Holy Family.” Despite these similarities Eichenberg’s work lends itself more directly to the critique of a Christian patriarchal family leveled at Chiñas’ “La Familia.” While Chiñas’ portrait could also be used in this way, its signature feature is not patriarchy, Christianity or the confinement of separate spheres. Instead the portrait is defined by its intimacy.

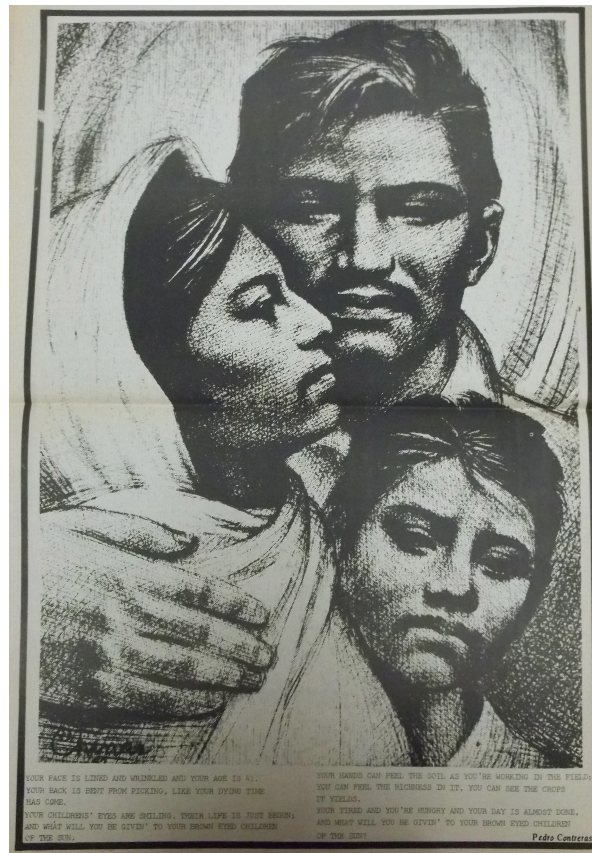


FIGURE 7: "LA FAMILIA"

Source: *Sol de Aztlan*, July 1970, Original Joaquin Chiñas (1962)

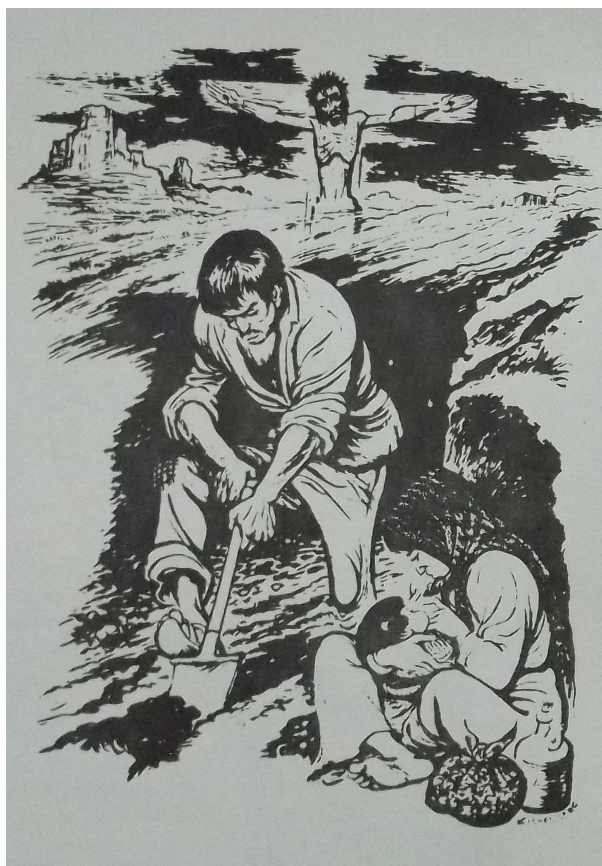


FIGURE 8: "FARMWORKER HOLY FAMILY"

Source: *El Renacimiento* (June 15, 1971) Original: Fritz Eichenberg, *The Catholic Worker* (1954)

The intimacy of Chiñas' portrayal is especially evident when compared with Eichenberg's, which mirrors Chicano vs. reformer conceptions of the migrant/domestic binary at work in the fields. Eichenberg's text, like the discourse of growers and some reformers, presents the migrant worker as a male whose foreignness is reinforced, if not defined, by his wife and child's distance from the field. In "Farmworker Holy Family" the father/husband actively works, pushing a short-handled spade into the dirt, framed by his own black background, while the mother/wife sits next to a jug of water and food bindle caring for the child, huddled in her own frame which recalls a cave. Eichenberg's father/husband is presented in his own productive

world, separate from the reproductive world of the mother/wife and child. In this way they embody the most separate configuration of public/private spheres, that of the migrant worker whose distance from the family's reproduction defines the entire family as foreigners. This image also protects growers from charges of exploiting women and children in the fields. In contrast Chiñas portrait is marked by both a physical and representational closeness, the three figures could hardly be closer to each other in order to mimic the same pose in the physical world. All three share the same arching, circular background that evokes the sun. The closeness of Chiñas family is also indicated by the absence of the external world, the family fills, and in fact overflows the work's boundaries. In contrast Eichenberg's family is in a world defined by productive, religious, and regional, if not racial markers. Eichenberg's family is literally watched over by Christ on the cross, who promises not autonomous liberation, but freedom in the hereafter. The butte in the background marks them as being from the Southwestern United States, if not Mexico. In Chiñas' portrait the family is its own world, while in Eichenberg's the public world divides the family.

Another aspect of intimacy promoted in Chiñas portrait is in the figures' gaze. Rodriguez argues that only the father/husband looks directly at the viewer, while he argues that the mother/wife "looks to the right, dutifully facing her husband and son."³⁶ Oropeza argues similarly that the father/husband "faces forward" while the wife/mother is "sheltered not just in a shawl but in the man's embrace . . . she faces inward, toward the man."³⁷ Rodriguez even

³⁶ Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 33.

³⁷ Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters*, 74.

compares the father/husband's gaze to the public sphere demands made by "Uncle Sam" in the World War I recruitment poster, arguing that the father/husband is declaring "I want you for *La familia de la raza*." Although it is a fruitful comparison, there is a critical difference between James Montgomery Flagg's "I Want You For the U.S. Army" and Chiñas' "La Familia." In



FIGURE 9: "I WANT YOU FOR THE U.S. ARMY"

Source: Library of Congress, James Montgomery Flagg (1917)

Flagg's portrait Uncle Sam certainly faces the viewer, his eyes look at us directly, his pointing hand emphasizes his engagement. Uncle Sam is unequivocally gazing at the viewers. In Chiñas' both the father and child face forward, but their eyes are hooded, dark, and shadowed, mere sockets, neither eyeballs nor pupils are visible. The viewer of Uncle Sam is able to lock gazes with this embodiment of American nationalism, we see America and he sees us, we know America and he knows us. In contrast the viewer of "La Familia" looks at the father/husband and child, registers "eyes" but sees nothing, While Rodriguez argues that the "husband and father fixes his gaze on the viewer" the gaze of the husband/father is unfixable and illusory because the

uniform darkness of his eyes obscures our vision. The viewer looks directly upon the husband/father and the child but is not permitted to know them. Like so many others who have “worn the mask” the husband/father appears to look directly at his viewers, but we do not truly see him, nor does he see us. Instead he is only known through touch by the wife/mother and the child in the intimate sphere of the portrait.

Furthermore the wife/mother’s sideward gaze also hides knowledge of her from the viewer, while simultaneously conveying her closeness with her family and hope for the future. Her face is shown in straight profile, she stands in front of her husband/father, but the angle of her firm chin belies the notion that she “faces inward” or that she is “dutifully facing her husband and son.” Instead she holds her head high and calmly gazes over the child’s head, rightward, which is often seen as indicative of a future gaze in art.³⁸ Certainly the mother/wife is “sheltered in a *rebozo*,” yet this too signifies not submission to patriarchy, but the desire for a private sphere wherein her body is not always subject to the deprivations of migrant life. The intimacy and privacy the mother/wife possesses in the portrait is a product of her family’s physical proximity and the inability of the viewer to know and come between them.

The specific context of Chiñas’ work in *Sol de Aztlan* furthers emphasizes the limited private sphere accessible to migrants. Rodriguez notes that portrait was reprinted in a number of Chicano Movement newspapers and journals and often entitled either “La Familia” or “La Raza.” In the University of Colorado Chicano student newspaper *Somos Aztlan* the portrait appeared above the phrase, “La Causa Needs You!” For Rodriguez these contexts indicate that the tropes of *la familia*, *la raza* and *la causa* were often interchangeable within movement

³⁸ Rodriguez himself identifies a rightward gaze as towards the future in his analysis of another Chicano family portrait.

politics.³⁹ In its Michigan context the portrait was untitled but placed above lyrics excerpted from the Chicano Movement farm worker ballad, “Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun.” The issue itself, as with many Michigan Chicano Movement texts, included multiple articles about the plight of migrant workers. The tragic death of nine year old Rosalva Valdez who drowned in a drainage ditch near a Keeler migrant camp was the front page feature. Valdez had to use the drainage ditch to bathe because the camp’s showers were broken. *Sol de Aztlan* reported that Rosalva was survived by her parents, Benigno and Concepcion Valdez and two sisters whose “suffering” was due to the “irresponsibility and callousness of the growers.”⁴⁰ Deprived of access to private facilities for bathing, an act that for the family’s white contemporaries generally demanded privacy, the Valdez family paid a heavy price for their subordinate position. Unlike Eichenberg’s Farmworker Holy Family, Chiñas’ work does not directly indicate the family members’ occupations. Instead it is the context of the image in *Sol de Aztlan* that emphasizes this use of Chinas’ work was meant to symbolize not any *familia*, nor simply *la raza*, but substantially the migrant family.

While this and other articles in *Sol de Aztlan* place the blame for “the miseries and unbearable conditions” squarely on growers, the lyrics to Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun emphasize that a challenge to this system must be mounted from within the intimate sphere of the family. The repeated use of the possessive ‘your’ and phrasing such as “You can feel the richness in it, you see the crops it yields.” creates an epistemological reality that privileges the personal lived experience of migrant workers as knowledge.

Your face is lined and wrinkled and **your** age is 41. **Your** back is bent from

³⁹ Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 35.

⁴⁰ “Migrant Girl Drowns in Drainage Ditch,” *Lansing (MI) Sol de Aztlan*, July 1970.

picking, like **your** dying time has come. **Your** children's eyes are smiling, their life is just begun; and what will **you** be givin' to **your** brown eyed children of the sun. **Your** hands can feel the soil as **you're** working in the fields. **You** can feel the richness in it, **you** see the crops it yields. **Your** tired and **you're** hungry and **your** day is almost done, and what will **you** be givin' to **your** brown eyed children of the sun?⁴¹

The image combined with the lyrics does, much like the comparison made to Uncle Sam, call upon the viewer to act in defense of the nation, but it represents this nation not as an organizational entity such as the U.S. Army, but instead as an intimate family. "Brown Eyed Children of the Sun" was best known in its use by the United Farm Workers and later recorded by Daniel Valdez in 1974. Its origins are in a poem by Pedro Contreras, first published in a 1968 edition of *La Raza*.⁴² The *Sol de Aztlan* excerpt omits both links to specific events in the California farmworker struggle and the critical lines "Your wife and seven children they're working every one . . . You're a proud man, You're a free man . . ." This editing of the lyrics destabilizes the father's sole responsibility for the family present in both the original poem and the popularized song. Instead, positioned beneath the portrait where the child stands ensconced between both mother and father, the lyrics ask both what they will do on a personal level to protect their child and provide for him a future as rich as the crops they cultivate together. In these ways the context of the portrait places blame on growers, but also asserts that a rich future for *la raza*'s children comes through a redirection of the father and mother's labors to political struggle. In this context Chiñas' "La Familia" argues that centering the migrant family's lived experience as a family and insulating it from external discursive assaults is critical to *la causa*.

⁴¹ Chiñas, "La Familia." Emphasis mine.

⁴² This analysis based upon the version printed in "the New University" University of California Irvine student newspaper, May 15, 1969.

Critics of *la familia de la raza*, such as Rodriguez and Fregoso, do not consider the desire for intimacy I posit here, instead they interpret the closeness in the portrait as symbolic of Chicanas' confinement in the patriarchal family. To this end Rodriguez asserts the mother/wife "absorbs" her strength from a "patriarchal embrace" that limits her liberation.⁴³ Fregoso, through Oropeza, claims the mother/wife is "sheltered not just in the shawl but in in the man's embrace" and drawing from Deniz Kandiyoti she asserts that Chicano emphasis on *la familia* as a "site of resistance" denied that the boundedness of the private sphere' was itself dependent on the patriarchal repression for its existence.⁴⁴ Both interpretations lend the father/husband's embrace the weight of structural gender inequality, but in its context in *Sol de Aztlan* this interpretation slips on the flaw of Chicano migrant worker's colonized position. The "shelter," patriarchal or otherwise, of the father/husband's embrace, possesses little boundary-making power. Rodriguez asserts that the father/husband's disproportional hand is symbolic of the "strength necessary to hold a family together."⁴⁵ Yet this enveloping hand, like the position of the child between both mother and father, is aspiration, not reality. The father/husband cannot actually keep the operation of the family within the private sphere, just as he and the mother/wife cannot actually guard the child safely between them. This intimacy, be it confinement or security, is ephemeral because the image portrays the migrant family's last moment before entering the fields. Far from an image of the patriarch's confining grip, this is their final

⁴³ Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 34.

⁴⁴ Fregoso, *meXicana Encounters*, 76.

⁴⁵ Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 33.

embrace, the fleeting, precious, unstable moment of familial intimacy before they enter the grower's private sphere that so effaces their own.

The quest for intimacy inherent in *la familia de la raza* was related, as Fregoso asserts, to “the unfiltered operations of patriarchy”, but not of a putative Chicano patriarch. Instead I argue it was a response to the abject colonialism of the grower/patriarch. The aspiration for intimacy in the portrait, combined with the call to action of the excerpted lyrics, calls upon migrant families, and by extension Chicano families, to bring the treasured intimacy of the portrait to life in the broader world. Political familism did seek to fix the moment, to reinforce the solidity of *la familia* akin to the same static nature of Chiñas physical drawing. Yet the risk of replicating the patriarchal power that Fregoso, Rodriguez and the academic “common sense” about Chicano nationalism have seen in the portrait is rendered infinitesimal because the father simply does not possess the power symbolized in his outsize hand. Instead he witnesses his “wife and seven children working every one.” Rather than a symbol of his power, it is a projection of his inadequacy, just as the physical closeness of the father/husband, mother/wife and child is a projection of extent to which their family is riddled with the public incursions of the grower into their work as a family, into the housing, the migratory pattern of their lives. Critics like Fregoso, Camacho-Schmidt, Oropeza, Almaguer and Rodriguez correctly identify the ubiquity of Chicano Movement representations of the strength of the family, but they seem not to consider that the very ubiquity of these claims only emphasizes the constructed nature of Chicano Movement *familia* rhetoric. Perhaps the father/husband of Chiñas' work possesses a patriarchal desire, perhaps he would like to make his embrace as overpowering as his outsize hand. Certainly some Chicano Movement participants did. Still others, including the most prominent of Michigan

Chicano Movement women's groups, Mujeres Unidas de Michigan (MUM), called upon *la raza* to instead walk, hand in hand, together to the future.

A Tu Lado, Siempre a Tu Lado

the situation will not get any better until Chicano males can readily accept Chicanas as individuals who are competent in any situation, not just in the kitchen . . . Chicano males need to realize that a Chicana can be a strength—a tremendous resource—to the endeavors of the Chicano movement. Only when the Chicano male rids himself of the superiority-macho complex, only when he accepts the Chicana as an equal, only then will the Chicano community become a *whole* working together on common goals.⁴⁶

As a member of MUM Adelfa Arredondo worked with a group of Chicanas and Latinas in Michigan dedicated to more opportunities for women, their families and communities. MUM was the first women's organization within the Michigan Chicano Movement and one of its most persistent voices for collectivity amongst *la raza*. The members of MUM, as well as other Chicanas and Chicanos, promoted political familism as a path to liberation and distanced themselves from 'feminism.' Their critique of feminism as overly individualistic was not an acceptance of inequality or constraining gender roles. As demonstrated by the passage above, Chicanas like Arredondo rejected inequality and placed the burden for change on Chicanos themselves. In the remainder of her editorial, "Thoughts on Institutional Machismo" Arredondo argued against the "Super-Chicano-Macho ego" and its deleterious effects on Chicanas but she also admonished Chicanos for limiting the potential of the entire community. In this way Arredondo and others argued that treating Chicanas as subordinate only contributed to the oppression of *la raza*.

For Arredondo and other Chicanas who promoted political familism the collective nature of liberation was self-evident. In contrast academics like Camacho-Schmidt, who content that *la*

⁴⁶ Arredondo, "Thoughts on Institutional Machismo."

familia de la raza promoted patriarchy, would see the interdependence in Arredondo's editorial as dependence, just as she sees similar comments by Enriqueta Vasquez. After all, for Arredondo Chicano and Chicana progress was contingent upon "Chicano males" changing their attitudes and throwing off the "superiority-macho complex." For those who see the individual as the only legitimate political subject the problem Arredondo faces was not only Chicanos who enforced limited gender roles, who strove to keep women in the 'kitchen'; but also the very ability of recalcitrant Chicanos to derail others' progress by opposing Chicanas' involvement. Chicanas like Arredondo confronted this problem by criticizing both inequality and individualism, promoting collective liberation, and demanding that Chicanos struggle at their side. In these ways *la familia de la raza* functioned not only as a barrier to Chicana advancement marshaled by sexist male leaders, but also as a Chicana feminist strategy and ideal which promoted the family as a legitimate political subject.

Condemning gender inequality while promoting collective liberation was a relatively common strategy within the Chicano Movement in Michigan. The poem, "Espera, Chicano, Voltea!" by Rosa Sanchez exemplifies how the tone of this two-pronged feminist strategy elucidated the difference between demanding equality combined with collectivity versus submitting to inequality for the sake of unity. In "Espera, Chicano! Voltea!" Sanchez' directed her comments at a Chicano whose involvement with "gringas" she derided. The interesting reversal of sexual loyalty aside, Sanchez based her derision on her view of Anglo society as nothing but a show that Chicanos 'dance' in, but do not control,

no. It's a big put on-It's a world
where others pull strings
and dummies dance
Mírame chicano—what's wrong with you,

hombre? Together you and I will make
our mundo. Juntos. Siempre.⁴⁷

(no. It's a big put on-It's a world
where others pull strings
and dummies dance
Look at me chicano—what's wrong with you,
man? Together you and I will make
our world. Together. Forever.)

For Sanchez the union of Chicana and Chicano offers the possibility to make a different world, “our mundo,” that can only exist if they act in concert, “juntos.” Yet Sanchez’ tone, her accusatory question, “what’s wrong with you, hombre?” make evident that her belief in a collective fate was not synonymous with submission. In another poem MSU student Maria Graciela Alfaro emphasized how Chicanas promoted a collective vision while condemning inequality. Writing in the publication, *Voces de Norte*, Alfaro directed Chicanos,

Don't undermine the contributions I try to make
para el mejoramiento de nuestra raza.

Let's not play the Anglo game of drawing arbitrary
lines against each other.
don't shut me out.⁴⁸

(Don't undermine the contributions I try to make

⁴⁷ Rosa Sanchez, “Espera, Chicano! Voltea!,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 15, 1972.

⁴⁸ Chicano Students for Progressive Action (CHISPA), “Voces Del Norte.”

for the improvement of our people.

Let's not play the Anglo game of drawing arbitrary
lines against each other.

don't shut me out)
In this way Chicanas who advocated collectivity associated sexual inequality not with the unity of Chicano families, but with the divisions they believed a disingenuous Anglo world created.

Men also called attention to the need to eliminate gender inequality within the Chicano community and the collective responsibility for doing so. In his recurring column, "Ondas, demas?" on Chicano media, radio producer Julio Guerrero criticized popular music for relying on some of the "peores tradiciones" in its lyrics about women. He further lamented the lack of women performers as inequality and considered it the collective responsibility of the Chicano community to combat oppression,

que pocas son las canciones cantadas por mujeres, it's a shame, . . . es por eso que tenemos tantas canciones tan tontas como: "La Suegra", "La Gorda," "Mujer de Cabaret," "La Martina" y DEMAS . . . all of them talk against las chicanas. Seguro, nosotros nos quejamos de la opresión del 'Gaba' pero nunca nos fijamos como nosotros NO le damos quebrada a nuestras mujeres . . . (how few are the songs sung by women, it's a shame . . . that's why we have so many dumb songs like: "La Suegra", "La Gorda," "Mujer de Cabaret," "La Martina" and all the rest . . . all of them talk against Chicanas. Sure, we complain about whitey oppressing us, but we never look at how we don't give a our women a break . . .)⁴⁹

In this and other columns Guerrero warned his readers that songs which equated masculinity with violence, celebrated infidelity and violence against women were "a whole of trash" just as bad as music that "encourages nuestros chavalos (our boys) to enlist and go to Viet-Nam." By calling upon his peers in Chicano Radio to take on the "huge responsibility of stimulating nuestra raza (our people)" Guerrero made eradicating sexism and inequality a critical part of the Chicano struggle, as important as opposing the draft. Furthermore Guerrero emphasized that the

⁴⁹ Julio Guerrero, "Ondas . . . Demas," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, July 31, 1972.

responsibility for circulating, and therefore stopping, anti-Chicana sentiment lay with the group as a whole. He emphasized this collective burden when he asserted, “Imponemos nosotros mismos todas esas malas imagines.” (We impose all these negative images on ourselves.)⁵⁰

El Renacimiento also published editorials directed at Chicano men who did not recognize that Chicano liberation and equality for Chicanas went hand in hand. In “Latino Women--- Backbone of La Causa!” editor Edmundo Georgi, celebrated the Chicana garment workers who struck the Farah Manufacturing Company in Texas. He reminded Chicanos, “women can easily be seen as the backbone of the Cause, in spite of some male chauvinists’ objections. Males could never struggle by themselves; they need the blessings of the their women!”⁵¹ Here Georgi recognized the existence of sexism and placed the burden for advancing the cause on both men and women. In addition he reversed the collective imperative Chicanas like Arredondo expressed, here Georgi argued that men’s ability to ‘struggle’ also depended on women’s participation. A second male editor of *El Renacimiento*, Jesse Guzman similarly recognized inequality and the responsibility of men and women to struggle together,

Chicanos and Latinos must put our traditional perspective on the role of la mujer aside and start treating her as a *soldadera* (soldier) by our sides. We as *hombres y machos* (men and machos) must begin to treat our women as equals and share with them our frustrations, our defeats and our victories, not only in so many words but by allowing them to struggle with us, and likewise we with them. Chicanas have taken the frontlines in many occasions and have triumphed . . .⁵²

⁵⁰ Julio Guerrero, “Ondas . . . Demas,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 15, 1972.

⁵¹ Georgi, “Latino Women Backbone of La Causa!”

⁵² Jessie Guzman, “En El Movimiento,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 16, 1976.

While critics of *la familia de la raza* may see Guzman's attempt to recuperate the "hombres y machos" as doomed, the mutual nature of his vision is evident. His call for Chicanos to share "our frustrations, our defeats and our victories" in collective struggle with Chicanas also demonstrates the way in which the vision of an interdependent raza rested upon the intimacy of la familia. The vociferous condemnation of sexism in these Chicano and Chicana expressions demonstrates that promoting collectivity did not necessarily come at women's expense.

El Renacimiento's promotion of MUM's first conference directly confronted sexism and restrictive gender roles while managing collective values. The one-day event, "Mujeres: Caminos Para el Progreso," took place on the campus of Lansing Community College on March 1, 1975.⁵³ While the immediate origin of this conference was a women's workshop at the Raza State Conference in December of 1974, many of the women had prior Chicano Movement experience and had attended previous women's workshops within the movement.⁵⁴ Nor, as discussed above, was this the first time *El Renacimiento* had addressed sexism in Chicano culture or the role of women in the movement. In its previous five years of publication *El Renacimiento* covered previous women's workshops, criticized sexism and restrictive gender roles, reprinted articles advocating "*liberación chicana*," (Chicana liberation) editorialized about collective responsibility and condemned misogyny in popular Chicano music.⁵⁵ Prior to

⁵³ "Caminos Para El Progreso," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, February 24, 1975.

⁵⁴ "Activa Participacion Feminina En La Conferencia," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 31, 1972.

⁵⁵ Guerrero, "Ondas . . . Demas," September 15, 1972; Guerrero, "Ondas . . . Demas," July 31, 1972; Georgi, "Latino Women Backbone of La Causa!"; Sanchez, "Espera, Chicano! Voltea!"; "Liberacion Feminina Se Extiende," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 15, 1972; Jennie V. Chavez, "Viva La Causa: Liberacion Chicana," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May

MUM's founding both its members and *El Renacimiento* had experience with Chicanas playing a public role in the Chicano Movement. Nevertheless, the incorporation of Mujeres Unidas de Michigan as a women's organization into *El Renacimiento* as a Chicano Movement institution demonstrated the way in which rejecting gender inequality in the movement was an ongoing process.

Despite its record of including Chicanas in the political discourse of the movement, *El Renacimiento*'s first acknowledgment of MUM was rather inauspicious. In its January 13, 1975 issue a letter from Jane Gonzalez, a seasoned Mexican/Chicano community activist, strongly criticized the paper for not covering the mujeres workshop where MUM came about. Gonzalez told readers "The Editor prefers to ignore our meetings, but I would like to inform him, as well as other men (machos included), that the hand that rocks the cradle can shake the universe!"⁵⁶ With this statement readers would have seen an unapologetic critique of a consciously Chicano entity. The editor, Georgi, defended himself, saying in part, "me extraña que una mujer dirigente como tu se preocupe de una critica del sexism . . . Por lo demás, he dado mi apoyo total desde

15, 1972; "Raza Women to Hold Midwest Conference June 17th," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 31, 1972; Jennie V. Chavez, "The Role of the Modern Chicana," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 15, 1972; "150 Attended Chicano Youth Conference," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 30, 1972; "Conferencia de Chicanas Toma Importantes Resoluciones," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 30, 1972; Julio Guerrero, "Ondas . . . Demas," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, May 28, 1973; Pendas, "Chicana Feminism: A Minority Within a Minority"; "Centro Latino Se Organiza En Muskegon," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, March 19, 1974; Morales, "The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today I"; Morales, "The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today II"; Rosa Morales, "The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today IV," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, October 5, 1973; Morales, "The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today V"; Rosa Morales, "The Chicana Women Yesterday and Today, III," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, September 1973.

⁵⁶ Jane Gonzalez, "Mas Cartas . . . More Letters Editor:," *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 13, 1975.

hace tiempo al Comité Organizador de la Conferencia de Mujeres.”⁵⁷ (It surprises me that a woman leader like you is bothered by sexist criticism . . . Besides, I have long given my full support to the Women’s Conference Organizing Committee.) While Georgi’s denial and belittling of Gonzalez’ allegations of sexism seems to bode ill for the future of Chicana feminism within the newspaper, the outcome was a positive one for the development of Chicana feminism in Michigan. For the remainder of the decade MUM received routine and positive coverage in *El Renacimiento*, and perhaps most importantly for organization building, near exhaustive reporting in the issues prior to their first conference. As adversarial as Gonzalez and Georgi’s exchange was, it also demonstrates that promoting political familism as an ideology did not prevent MUM members from successfully challenging exclusion by their male counterparts when necessary. Instead of being rooted in sustaining unity through inequality, MUM’s political familism argued that unity could only be successful if based on sexual equality.

Chicanas also expressed their desire to combine gender equality with a collective vision when they asserted ‘feminists’ were too individualistic. Reflecting on this difference MUM co-founder Idali Feliciano explained,

When we envisioned Mujeres Unidas, we knew quite clearly that we didn’t want just rights for ourselves. That wasn’t going to work, that was never our intent or our philosophy, we rise and our family rises . . . we didn’t want to just be women liberated. We wanted *familias* liberated. And I think that was the big difference.⁵⁸

As an organization MUM’s relationship with the Women’s Liberation Movement was contentious for a number of reasons, but their belief that feminists were overly individualistic

⁵⁷ Edmundo Georgi, “Mas Cartas . . . More Letters, Response to Jane Gonzalez,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, January 13, 1975.

⁵⁸ Idali Feliciano, Interview by author, Adrian, MI., March 26, 2012.

was key. As discussed in chapter four, their leadership regularly criticized the Women's Liberation Movement as based in the needs of middle class white women, rejected the idea of work as empowerment, all while referring to Women's Liberation as "women's lib," a derisive label. Other Michigan Chicanas in the movement similarly combined gender equality and collective values. Citlali Vigil, originally of Lansing, came of age in Chicano Movement organizations. She first worked at a summer school for migrants in Keeler as a teenager, founded a MAYO chapter at East Lansing High School, contributed to the local Chicano Movement paper, *Sol de Aztlán* and struggled with Brown Berets in Michigan and California as a young woman. Speaking about the role of women in the Chicano Movement Vigil rejected patriarchal practices within families, such as valuing the education of sons over daughters. Yet she also saw feminism as conflicting with the goals of the movement, "I embraced feminism, with respect to having equality, I did not embrace those components of feminism that I felt undermined the family."⁵⁹ When discussing the challenges facing Chicano students Vigil saw the same link between feminism and an individualistic view of liberation that members of MUM criticized,

. . . when you assimilate and even adopt some the different things that the dominant society espouses, (like) leaving your family, (people say) that's why you're not doing well in school because you're thinking about your grandmothers, your aunts . . . it wasn't just in the feminist movement it was also just going to school . . . Whereas your white students they could care less . . . So it wasn't just a feminist group that espoused that ideology, almost the whole track of education to a certain extent, but I think the feminist individualism, that was the part I was saying I didn't like.

For Vigil 'feminism' risked the family because it was linked to a pervasive ethic of individual achievement that structured not just feminism, but dominant American ideals of progress and freedom. In this way her comments embody the complex interaction of feminism, the individual

⁵⁹ Citlali Vigil, Interview by Author, April 25, 2012.

political subject of American liberalism and Chicano Movement thought. They demonstrate the way in which Chicanas who explicitly rejected feminism and practiced political familism were not interchangeable with Chicanos who espoused ‘family unity’ in order to protect their patriarchal privileges.

Though this model has been maligned as foreclosing Chicanas’ independence, MUM members like Delia Villegas Vorhauer managed to promote the family while balancing both collectivity and self-determination. Villegas Vorhauer was one of the first speakers at MUM’s convening conference. Before 250 Chicanas and Latinas Villegas Vorhauer declared,

for too long we have believed we were ‘*nomas amas de casa*’ or ‘just mothers’ or admit with embarrassment that we never finished school—or we did, but well. . . we aren’t married. The time has come to stop apologizing for ourselves—to stop defining ourselves in terms of other people . . . Wherever we fit on the scales of the outside world, we will remember the importance of being uniquely ourselves, bearers of two cultures, keepers of our traditions. We have kept our culture in spite of generations of attempts to assimilate us . . . Our strength has been the survival of our people.⁶⁰

Villegas Vorhauer touched upon careers, marriage, motherhood and educational attainment, common themes for both Chicanas and white feminists. Her explanation of how Chicanas’ and Latinas ought to evaluate these ‘achievements’ diverged from the one proposed by corporatist feminists. Within Villegas Vorhauer’s narrative negative judgments about being housewives, marriage, motherhood and schooling are products of the “outside world” that sought to a “assimilate” Chicanos. She counterposed these negative evaluations with the positive ‘strength’ of Chicanas who, she believed, made possible the preservation of a group identity for Mexicans in the United States. She compared the ‘achievements’ of a career and schooling with cultural preservation and group integrity and emphasized collective self-evaluation, instead of individual

⁶⁰ Delia Villegas Vorhauer, “El Nuevo Dia” (Personal Papers of Idali Feliciano, March 1, 1975).

achievement. Villegas Vorhauer focused on self-actualization throughout the speech, as in the excerpted passage above, “The time has come to stop apologizing for ourselves.” Her focus on lived experience as reality mirrored the epistemology of “Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun” and belied the assumption that Villegas Vorhauer emphasizes Chicanas’ power to preserve Chicano identity because she labors under some sort of involuntary maternalist obligation. *La familia de la raza* was an anti-colonial political ideal that privileged the family as the legitimate political unit and centered Chicanos and Chicanas in their own worldview.

Villegas Vorhauer further emphasized this point when she directly addressed those who asked if the purpose of MUM was to become “women’s libber’s”,

A estas preguntas, y a todas las otras que no nos han preguntando, tenemos nomas una respuesta. Esta conferencia, este primer paso, es para nosotros (To all these questions and all the rest that have not been asked, we have just one answer. This conference, this first step, is for us) . . . This conference is not to take a position about our men—for they are not the reason we are here . . . This conference is not to turn ourselves into different persons—we must remember we have survived centuries of domination by believing in ourselves and our culture.⁶¹

Members of MUM and other Latina activists routinely combined an emphasis on family, collective struggle and a rejection of patriarchy. Just as many white feminists’ view of women’s liberation was entangled in a liberal vision of individual freedom, Chicanas and Chicanos were both subject to and actors in constructing the family as a legitimate political subject. In contrast the ‘common sense’ about Chicano nationalism has seen Chicanas who espoused political familism, not as interveners in Chicano discourse, but as victims of it. Camacho Schmidt encapsulates this view,

forced to conduct their activities in deference to the presumed primacy of male leadership . . . Chicana newsletters from the movement proffered familiar assurances, from the ‘importance of family unit’ to ‘the strength of men and

⁶¹ Ibid.

women working together.⁶²

Drawing her phrasing from Vicki Ruiz' Chicana history touchstone *From Out of the Shadows* Camacho Schmidt reduces the entirety of Chicana political familism to a coerced "mantra of justification and affirmation" of patriarchal norms." This "common sense" about coercion as the only explanation for Chicana/Chicano collectivity ignores that the self-actualized independent individual is itself a political construct, an artifact of liberalism, not an abstract good. The Chicanas and Latinas discussed here did not explicitly label emphasis on the family as a form of Chicano political philosophy or speak in the jargon of political science. Yet their conclusions are similar to those few who did. Some, like Roy Fuentes, writing as Ah Xul Cuahtli, epitomized this rare discursive mode in 1970 when he wrote, "contrary to the Western principle of individualism. The familia is the model for state organization."⁶³ Despite the rarity of statements whose form is easily recognized as political philosophy, the content of Chicanas' texts about *la familia de la raza* addressed the same topics; how Chicano society ought to be organized, strategies for pursuing liberation and its essential nature. It is true that many of the declarations of women like Villegas Vorhauer who espoused "a commitment to the traditional family values of the Latin culture" would have been utterly familiar to Chicanos who mobilized family loyalty in service of patriarchy.⁶⁴ Yet the meaning of this highly malleable phrase, "traditional family values," lies also in the context of Villegas Vorhauer's demands for collective self-determination and MUM's insistence on more flexible gender roles and opportunities for women. Viewing these women as coerced because they rejected individualism in the language

⁶² Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, 173.

⁶³ Cuahtli, "La Raza Americana Y El Chicano."

⁶⁴ Trujillo, "Latina Unit Organizes."

of ‘culture’ renders them more completely victims of the will of others than any of their contemporaries were ever able to do.

“Con Mis Ojos al Horizonte Iluminoso”

MUM member and Detroit MUM leader Margarita Valdez embodied the hopeful future vision of many who promoted *la familia de la raza*. Singing and playing her guitar Valdez entertained and inspired the attendees of MUM’s founding conference with her song, Dia del Progreso. She sang,

Pisando fuertemente al camino de la vida

Ayudando a mi hombre y mi familia

Con mis ojos al horizonte luminoso

Del Camino al Progreso⁶⁵

(Strongly treading down the road of life

Helping my man and my family

With my eyes on the bright horizon

Of the road to progress)

Valdez emphasized to the women present that they were engaged in a journey toward a brilliant future, “al horizonte luminoso” and that they would take their men and family, “Ayudando a mi hombre y mi familia” along. Idealism was prevalent in the Chicano Movement, which often spoke of the glorious future that awaited the children of *la raza*. It has been widely recognized that Aztlán, the putative past and future homeland of Chicanos, is as much nationalist construct as ‘true’ ancestral homeland of the Mexica prior to their pilgrimage to Tenochtitlán. *La familia de la raza* is no different, just as glorious paeans to Chicano history often mobilized cultural

⁶⁵ Margarita Valdez, “Dia Del Progreso” (Personal Papers of Idali Feliciano, March 1, 1975).

heroes without reference to their faults; “the family” in political familism was an idealized construct. Likewise, some Chicano Movement participants believed in Aztlán as ‘historical truth’ and some believed that the purpose of political familism was to preserve Chicano families exactly as they were. Yet promoting an idealized construct can serve purposes other than reinscribing the traumatic evasion of abuse in families, just as singing El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez does more than encourage horse rustling. Chicanas who used political familism, like Valdez, were aware of the flawed reality of Chicano families. Rather than symbolizing their ultimate surrender to entrenched patriarchy, they embraced *la familia de la raza* because they believed they were powerful enough to change their families and their world.

Too many scholars have mistaken explicit Chicano and Chicana reverence for the past and *la familia* as proof of their status as ‘true believers’ instead of interveners into Chicanos’ discursive subjectivity. In his booklet, *Tiempos Opuestos/Times in Contrast* Salvador Herrera glorified anti-colonial history, but he did not let his veneration of Chicanos’ past prevent him from acknowledging that Chicano culture was a purposeful and ongoing production. He lauded the efforts of Chicano theatre in promoting “new values such as *In lak’ech* (you are my other self) and social justice” and combined references to the pre-Columbian past with visions of better future, “Perhaps we may teach the plumed serpent to fly.”⁶⁶ Writing in *El Renacimiento* Jesse Guzman also demonstrated the constructed nature of a future-oriented Chicano identity, “Chicanismo es el despertar de una raza, con la vista clavada en el futuro de sus hijos . . . que soy Mexicano por herencia, Americano por nacimiento, y Chicano por Renacimiento.”⁶⁷ (Chicanismo is the awakening of the people, with their view fixed on their children’s future . . .

⁶⁶ Herrera, *Tiempos Opuestos = Times in Contrast*, 54.

⁶⁷ Jesse Guzman, “Chicanismo,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, August 15, 1972.

that we are Mexican by heritage, American by birth and Chicano by rebirth) Here Guzman paid homage to Chicanos' Mexican past, but also characterizes Chicano identity as a 'rebirth' which unlike one's Mexican heritage and physical birth in the United States involves choosing spiritual dedication to the cause. In this way Chicano nationalist thought involved not only a glorification of the past regardless of the abuses within it, but also the construction of a future that harnessed the past to a new vision which need not include those abuses.

Similarly Chicanas' idealistic pursuit of *la familia de la raza* was an expression of their discursive power when combined with self-aware cultural construction. Speakers at "Chicano Awareness Week" at the University of Michigan echoed this point when Rosella Gonzales and Delia Leggett addressed Chicana Liberation. Gonzalez and Leggett asserted, "A fully liberated Chicana is one of the pillars of the movimiento (movement) . . . It is "cultural evolution not cultural disruption."⁶⁸ Reflecting on Chicanos who asserted that women's leadership was not a part of Chicano history Vigil said,

I think my response usually was when they said well our history doesn't have that, was there's a lot wrong with our history, the machismo, there's nothing good about beating your wife, there's nothing good about having your girls do all the work and the boys being waited on . . . we need to change some of that so we are developing leaders both in our men and our women . . . tradition wasn't a reason for it to continue.⁶⁹

Although Vigil espoused political familism and described the Chicano family as "our solid rock" she also saw tradition and history as containing negative elements, such as "machismo" that were better left behind. Far from proof of coercion, Chicanas routinely promoted *la familia de la raza*

⁶⁸ Jesse Gonzales, "Chicano Awareness Week: A Personal Perspective," *MECHA Newsletter*, March 27, 1974, The Jose F. Trevino Chicano/Latino Activism Collections: Juana & Gesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Michigan State University Special Collections.

⁶⁹ Vigil, Interview by Author.

precisely because they believed they could mold it to their own ends, that it could be, as Gonzalez and Leggett asserted, “cultural evolution.”

This future orientation and desire to preserve the family while remaking it into something more liberatory was also a central part of MUM’s vision. After their October 1975 conference in Detroit MUM members summarized their resolutions, including, “Retain the values of the family unit by a consideration or an analysis of those we wish to keep and those we want to discard.” There attendees also showed their willingness to confront and discard negative family experiences when they resolved to organize counseling for those who had “such ‘traumatic experiences’ as rape, divorce, etc. .” Rather than proof of their domination by Chicanos, of the “mantra” Schmidt Camacho referred to, Chicana affirmations of working side-by-side with Chicanos were statements of their belief in their own ability to successfully challenge negative cultural attitudes, history and sexism. Reporting on an women’s leadership workshop organized by MUM in June of 1976 Yolanda Alvarado, also a MUM member wrote, “The Latinas at the workshop agreed that Latino men have always dominated, both at home and in the community. But MUM’s philosophy does not include opposing hombres. Instead, the women want to be equal working partners with Latino men against discrimination . . .”⁷⁰ MUM members combined a similar awareness of sexism within the community and a commitment to changing it when they described the topic of a 1975 workshop as, “hombres liberados pero siempre machos, como influenciar al hombre para que sea reconocido el valor del trabajo entre ambos.”⁷¹ (liberated, but still macho men, how to influence men to recognize the value of working together) These MUM

⁷⁰ Yolanda Alvarado, “Mujeres Seeking Effective Leaders,” *Lansing (MI) El Renacimiento*, June 21, 1976.

⁷¹ “Primera Conferencia de Mujeres En Michigan.”

statements demonstrate the members' awareness of sexism, their commitment to collective vision and their belief in a better model for the future.

Conclusion

Historical debates about anti-colonialism, Chicano nationalism and Chicana feminism were rarely only about the subjugation or liberation of women. Then, as now, political beliefs about the role of women were inseparable from a multitude of other positions on class struggle, assimilation and authority. During the movement these positions were combined in myriad and contradictory ways. I argue that *la familia de la raza* was primarily an expression of both gender ideals and collective subjectivity. It cannot be reduced to one or the other. Much of the literature argues that *la familia de la raza* was an instrument of patriarchal, male Chicano movement thought. In contrast I have argued that this "common sense" about *la familia de la raza* is plagued by three false equivalencies. The first equates the private sphere with oppression when the lack of access to a private, intimate space was equally repressive for colonized families. The next equivalency is overly credulous about Chicano Movement rhetoric regarding the preservation of the "traditional" Mexican family. Tragically some Chicanos were unscrupulous, predatory and abusive men who used their constructed vision of "the traditional family" to harm precisely the women and children the movement was meant to liberate. Yet other Chicanas (and Chicanos) promoted *la familia de la raza* as a form of "cultural evolution" whose norms and values they controlled. Lastly critics of *la familia de la raza* equate liberation with utter autonomy. Where I find interdependency and supportive bonds, they find dependency and coercion. As shown in my reinterpretation of Chinas' La Familia Chicanas now, and then, have the ability to imbue *la familia de la raza* with their own meaning. In order to deepen our understanding of how *la familia de la raza* was used during the Chicano Movement we must

cease using debates over the role of women as a way to avoid discussing the flaws of the United States and the individual political subject.

CONCLUSION: EXTRAVAGANT NOTIONS OF FREEDOM

My aim has been to establish the local origins of Michigan Chicano Movement anti-colonialism. The Chicano Movement in Michigan was, quite literally, homegrown, invented, like the Thar asparagus snapper or the Harvey blueberry harvester, by the exigencies of the fields and the inspiration of its creators. This is not to say that the Chicanos in Michigan were not influenced by events, people and ideology of the movement in the Southwest, they certainly were. Yet Chicanos in Michigan were not expatriates from Aztlán, they were not foreigners inspired to contribute to struggle in an area far from their homeland. They were not the Magón Brothers in Leavenworth, José Martí in New York City or even The Idár family in Laredo. People like Ruben Alfaro, Jane Gonzalez and Maria Enriquez were in the nation, if not the state, of their birth. Others, like Roy Fuentes, Jesse Gonzales and Citlali Vigil were born and raised in Michigan. They often seized upon the politics and culture of the Chicano Movement from the Southwest, but they did so because of the intense resonance of those ideas in their lived experience under the domestic/migrant binary in Michigan.

Recognizing this part of the history of the Chicano Movement re-centers the movement critique of inherent colonialism in the United States as a national project. Not all Chicanos in the movement were fervent Chicano nationalists intent on creating a new nation called Aztlán. Many still wanted to reform the United States, to rehabilitate it and make it live up to the ideals that previous generations of Mexican American activists cherished. Yet fears that this was not possible, that there had never been, nor would there ever be, a shining city on the hill for Chicanos fueled doubts about the viability of a Chicano future in the U.S. These doubts sprung not from idealistic rhetoric, nor from compelling and charismatic performances by movement ideologues, but from experiences of inequality and oppression in Michigan and from ideological

conflict between Chicano liberation and American imperialism. Far from the disputed territories of the Southwest Chicanos judged the United States on its own merits and found it wanting. These doubts comprise the medium in which Chicano anti-colonial thought in Michigan took root.

In contrast, many historians of the Chicano Movement define it primarily as reform oriented. They assert Chicanos used *Aztlán* and revolutionary language as a matter of colorful rhetoric and radical style popular amongst many groups during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They argue that the moderate public goals of many Chicano “revolutionaries” demonstrate that their anti-colonialism was a façade or that focusing on activists’ most radical expressions is an oversimplification. For these scholars Chicano Movement anti-colonialism in both the Southwest and the Midwest is easily dismissed. I contend that it is just as likely that Chicanos’ moderate public goals only partially concealed their complex doubts and radical dreams. Similarly, many Chicana feminist scholars have dismissed Chicano Movement anti-colonialism as nothing more than a dangerous rhetoric deployed by patriarchal Chicanos to subjugate Chicanas. In their view Chicanas who defended *la familia de la raza* also hid the true nature of their dissent under an anti-colonial pretense, but in this case one coerced by exploitive Chicanos. Instead, I argue both Chicanas and Chicanos were powerful enough to use *la familia de la raza* to re-envision the nature of the family, interdependence and liberation.

In this way scholarly dismissals of Chicano Movement anti-colonialism take many forms whose ubiquity itself is suspect. In the Midwest it has been seen as an imported ideology without local relevance, in both the Midwest and Southwest it has been minimized as nothing more than a façade for liberal reform or pernicious sexism. These characterizations spring not only from a misguided belief in Midwest Chicanos as the “last of the immigrants,” but also from

political reluctance to see the struggles of Chicanos in the Southwest as part and parcel of the United States. Many authors rely upon the ideological crutch of the Southwest as conquered territory to explain both Chicano subjugation and reaction against it in that area. This is a flawed argument in so much as it ignores that the *colonias* and *barrios* of the 1960s Southwest existed within the American nation-state. They were as much a part of America as the share-cropping fields of Mississippi and the fire-bombing in Selma. Viewing the fields of Michigan as an extension of the colonized lands of the Southwest, as a *frontera* de Aztlán, means coming to terms with the unwelcome conclusion that those conquered lands were no mere exception, but characteristic of American empire.

Chicano anti-colonial ideals, like *la familia de la raza* and *Aztlán*, were created to destroy colonialism. As ideals they held wide appeal because Chicanos and Chicanas' sense of being a conquered people was widespread during the movement period. This sense of conquest explains the popularity of slogans like, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us" even thousands of miles away. Chicano claims to indigeneity during the movement also remind us that, as Shelley Streeby confirmed in *American Sensations*, "the year 1848 must also be placed within a longer history of U.S. Empire-building at the expense of North American Indians."¹ In this vein research about a much earlier period of conflict over the conquest of the East Coast can also inform our interpretation of Chicano Movement anti-colonialism. Historian James H. Merrell explained the multiple layers of interpretation that frustrate our present day attempts to understand what Haudenosaunee people meant by abstract concepts like "freedom" in the 16th century. Merrell uses the words of Northern New York Indian Agent William Johnson as one example. Johnson wrote,

¹ Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 8.

Savages . . . have the most extravagant notions of Freedom, property, and independence . . . they endeavor to maintain their own importance by the most forcible expressions . . . Their words, for fear of offence, have been often Glossed over before they were committed to Writing.²

Johnson asserted in the mid 16th century that the indigenous people he met with in treaty councils true ideas about freedom could not possibly be communicated to the English colonists, lest they take offense. With his editing Johnson concealed the great difference between what the indigenous people he negotiated with meant by freedom and what colonists would like to, indeed could be forced to hear. Merrell includes Johnson's evaluation of indigenous peoples' concept of freedom because he aims to emphasize both the difficulty of the negotiations and the constructed nature of the records treaty councils produced. Yet the implications of Johnson's "Glossed over" transcription point beyond the unreliability of records to the constructed and racialized nature of liberation. It was not merely the "extravagant" ideas that indigenous people had about freedom, but also that their capacity to give "offence" can only be measured in their historically specific, racially-marked context. Ideas about indigenous liberation in early New England, the Chicano Movement and elsewhere were not only about the content of the ideas, but also about *who* was allowed to possess them. Recognizing our ancestors' "most extravagant notions of freedom" and permitting them to imagine liberation remains more worthwhile than forging colonial compromises.

² James Hart Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 254.

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