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# The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968–1971

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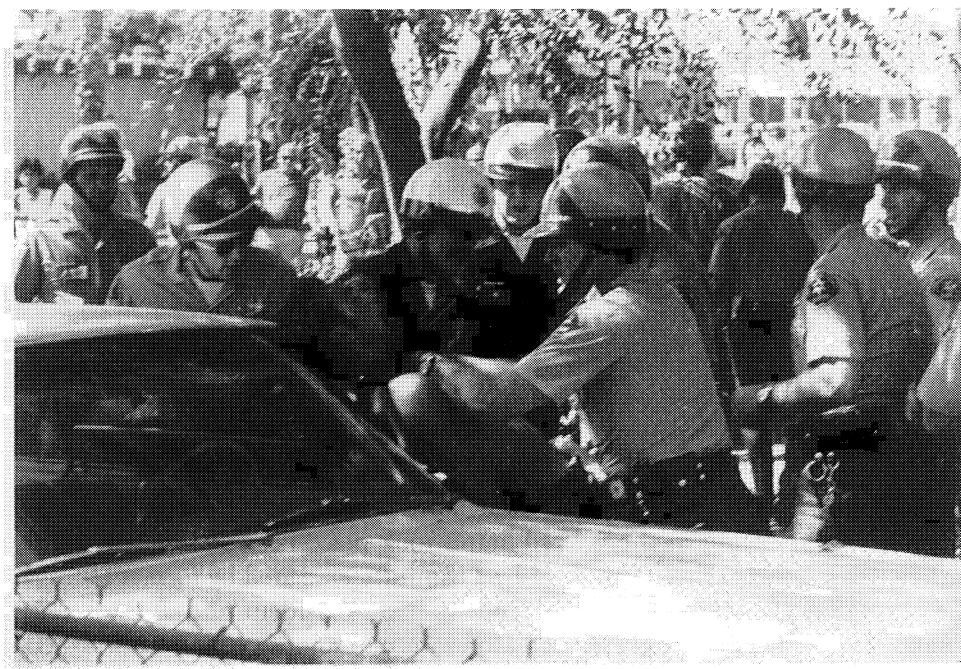
On August 29, 1970, the largest protest demonstration ever mounted by people of Mexican descent living in the United States took place in the Mexican-American barrio of East Los Angeles. Organized by a committee headed by former University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), student body president and antiwar activist Rosalío Muñoz, the National Chicano Moratorium demonstration was designed to protest the disproportionately high numbers of Mexican-American casualties in the Vietnam War. Between twenty and thirty thousand people marched down Whittier Boulevard, the focus of the main shopping area in East Los Angeles, and congregated on a baseball field at Laguna Park. The day was warm and sunny, and whole families, from grandparents to young children, sat on the grass with plans to picnic, hear the speeches, and enjoy the accompanying music.<sup>1</sup>

A block away, however, deputies from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, responding to a minor disturbance, declared the demonstration an unlawful assembly and ordered the park vacated. Before the mass of people had a chance to

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<sup>1</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 30, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1970; *ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; Raúl Ruiz interview by Edward J. Escobar, Jan. 8, 1988 (in Edward Escobar's possession); Diego Vigil interview by Escobar, Jan. 6, 1988, *ibid.*; Celia Luna (Rodríguez) interview by Escobar, Jan. 18, 1988, *ibid.*; Rosalío Muñoz interview by Escobar, Jan. 15, 1988, *ibid.* Muñoz had been active in the UCLA antiwar movement and had refused induction into the armed services. See Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York, 1988), 345–50; Armando Morales, *Ando Sangrado (I Am Bleeding): A Study of Mexican American–Police Conflict* (La Puente, 1972), 91–107; Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Community under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945–1975* (Los Angeles, 1984), 203–6. I will generally use term *Chicano* to identify individuals committed to militant political action, in other words, people in the Chicano movement. The term *Mexican American* will generally signify people of Mexican descent who were not part of the movement.



Officer choking a Chicano during the riot that followed the August 29, 1970, moratorium demonstration. Courtesy Raúl Ruiz.

leave the park and, indeed, well before most people knew that police had ordered them to disperse, sheriff's deputies charged the crowd, shooting tear gas and beating fleeing demonstrators with nightsticks. Many people panicked as they were crushed against the fences and buses that surrounded the park. A large contingent, however, turned against the line of deputies and fought pitched battles with them. As the angry crowd fled the park, many people swept onto Whittier Boulevard where they attacked passing patrol cars, broke windows, and set fire to several retail stores and police cars. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that by the end of the day police had arrested over one hundred people, forty people were injured, and three lay dead or dying. One of the dead was journalist Rubén Salazar, a columnist for the *Times* and news director for Los Angeles's most popular Spanish-language television station, KMEX.<sup>2</sup>

Los Angeles County deputy sheriff Sgt. Thomas Wilson killed Salazar by shooting a tear gas projectile into the Silver Dollar Cafe, where Salazar sat drinking a beer. The 10-by-1½-inch projectile passed through a doorway covered only by a cloth cur-

<sup>2</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 30, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1970; *ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; Ruiz interview; Vigil interview; Luna interview; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 345–50; Morales, *Ando Sangrado*, 91–107; Acuña, *Community under Siege*, 203–6.

tain and went completely through Salazar's head. Salazar had arrived at the bar about a mile east of Laguna Park only minutes before, after covering the demonstration and the ensuing riot. Representatives of the Sheriff's Department claimed they had received a tip that a man with a gun had entered the Silver Dollar and that Wilson had shot the tear gas to flush out the armed man. The killing of Salazar, the Sheriff's Department maintained, was a tragic mistake. Many Mexican Americans, however, concluded that police had murdered Salazar because he was an articulate spokesman for the concerns of Los Angeles Mexican Americans and had given airtime on KMEX to militant critics of the police. Salazar became a martyr in the eyes of many Mexican Americans; activists would use the events of August 29 to politicize and organize the Los Angeles Mexican-American community.<sup>3</sup>

The events of August 29, 1970—the Chicano Moratorium riot and the killing of Rubén Salazar—symbolized the rise of militant Mexican-American protest, official repression of that protest, and the Mexican-American response to police actions. For the previous three years, militant Mexican-American activists, who called themselves Chicanos, had waged a campaign to end discrimination against people of Mexican descent living in the United States. Nationally, this campaign comprised several smaller struggles, addressing issues such as farm workers' rights, land tenure, educational reform, political representation, the war in Vietnam, and "police brutality." Together, these various efforts became known as the Chicano movement.

Simultaneously, local law enforcement agencies, in particular the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), conducted their own campaign to destroy the Chicano movement in southern California. This campaign consisted of several elements. First, police used their legal monopoly of the use of coercive force to harass, to intimidate, and, if possible, to arrest and prosecute individual Chicano activists and to suppress Chicano protest demonstrations with violence. Second, the LAPD infiltrated Chicano organizations, such as the Brown Berets and the National Chicano Moratorium Committee (NCMC), to gain information about their activities and to disrupt and destroy those organizations from within. Finally, the LAPD engaged in traditional red-baiting, labeling Chicano organizations and individual activists subversives and dupes of the Communist party in order to discredit them with the public and, in particular, the Mexican-American community.

The LAPD's efforts, however, had mixed results. In a dialectical relationship, while the Los Angeles Police Department's tactics partially achieved the goal of undermining the Chicano movement, the police and their tactics became issues around which Chicano activists organized the community and increased the grassroots participation in movement activity. Moreover, as the police became more repressive, some Chicanos turned to organized violence to demonstrate their alienation from American society. Thus, police violence, rather than subduing Chicano movement activism, propelled that activism to a new level—a level that created a

<sup>3</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 30, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1970, sec. 1, pp. 2, 16; *ibid.*, Sept. 5, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; Muñoz interview.

greater police problem than had originally existed. Most important, the conflict between the LAPD and the Chicano movement helped politicize Mexican Americans by making clearer their subordination, giving them an increased sense of ethnic identity, and arousing a greater determination to act collectively to overcome that subordination. These new attitudes led Chicanos to act with more determination and self-consciousness in voting, in litigating, and in developing new institutions that ultimately curtailed the power of the police to suppress legitimate protest.

The rise of the Chicano movement, the efforts of the LAPD to destroy the movement, and the Mexican-American community's response to those efforts all mirrored and were a part of a larger dynamic in American society in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the Chicano movement developed in response to a historically unique set of grievances and generated distinctive solutions to those grievances, it emerged within and benefited from the broader currents of social protest that existed in the sixties. The black civil rights movement of the fifties and early sixties set the stage by focusing public attention on the issue of racial discrimination and legitimizing public protest as a way to combat discrimination. Native Americans, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans all took advantage of the favorable environment and developed broad-based social movements that demanded an end to racial discrimination. Women and gays, noting that they too had suffered from discrimination, also began agitating for equality. Movements launched by white college students and opponents of the Vietnam War also benefited from the general acceptance of protest.<sup>4</sup>

As each of the diverse protest movements developed new radical ideas and forms of protest, other movements borrowed them, selecting and redefining ideas and forms to fit their own experiences. The Black Power movement that evolved out of the urban rebellions of the mid-sixties, for example, developed the concept of nationalism, which used racial identity as a source of pride and a vehicle for political mobilization. Chicanos took this concept and reinterpreted it to create the concept of cultural nationalism, which became the ideological underpinning for the Chicano movement. Black nationalists also provided the militant rhetoric and confrontational tactics that practically all the other protest movements emulated. Moreover, the various movements influenced and supported each other, with the

<sup>4</sup> David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, 1986); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York, 1989); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston, 1988); Felix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame, 1987); Acuña, *Occupied America*, 307-62; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque, 1990); Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York, 1989); Gerald Paul Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement: A Study of the Political Ideology of Activists in the Chicano Movement* (San Francisco, 1975); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students Por la Raza: The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California, 1967-1977* (Santa Barbara, 1978); Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York, 1984), 479-528; Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1979); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, 1983); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York, 1987).

Chicano and black movements virulently opposing the Vietnam War, the student movement supporting Chicanos' and blacks' demands for university ethnic studies programs, and all the movements feeling the effects of women's demands for equality. Thus, the Chicano movement emerged in the midst of demands for dramatic social and cultural changes—demands that eventually transformed much of American political culture but that also produced a hostile and often fierce reaction.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, political repression epitomized the late sixties as much as did political protest. Law enforcement agencies, from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to municipal police departments, attempted to limit, undermine, and even destroy the various protest movements. The methods that they used to achieve these goals paralleled those used by the LAPD against the Chicano movement: red-baiting, harassment and arrest of activists, infiltration and disruption of movement organizations, and violence. The FBI, for example, used "intelligence" gathered from wiretaps on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s phones and places of residence to try to link him to Communists. The FBI and local police agencies also sent informants, who often acted as *agents provocateurs*, into antiwar organizations to disrupt the organizations and undermine their efforts. Finally, when all else failed, police agencies resorted to naked violence to destroy militant protest, as illustrated in the Chicago police riot during the 1968 Democratic convention or the 1969 police assassination of Chicago Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.<sup>6</sup>

Mexican Americans' dialectical response to police repression also fit the pattern set in other movements: that is, police repression ultimately transformed movements and politicized whole populations. As a result of police attacks on civil rights and antiwar demonstrations and chronic police brutality against minority groups, police misconduct became a major issue among militant groups during the sixties and early seventies. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense developed precisely to protect the African-American community from police abuse, and the violent repression of the Panthers led to the formation of the Congressional Black Caucus in the United States House of Representatives. Moreover, police violence sometimes transformed whole movements. For example, the Oakland, California, Police Department's brutal attack on demonstrators at an antidraft demonstration on October 17, 1967, changed the antiwar movement's tactics from nonviolent civil disobedience to militant, confrontational direct action and converted its goals from simply ending the war to fomenting "The Revolution." Similarly, on June 27, 1969,

<sup>5</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 215–28, 265–86; Gitlin, *Sixties*, 242–60, 285–304, 362–76. See also D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 197–239. For black nationalism, see Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles, 1982), 247–50; Abdul Alkalimat and Associates, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A Peoples College Primer* (Chicago, 1973), 291–315.

<sup>6</sup> Gary T. Marx, "Thoughts on a Neglected Category of Social Movement Participant: The Agent Provocateur and the Informant," *American Journal of Sociology*, 80 (Sept. 1974), 402–42; David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 1981); Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters": *The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960–1972* (New York, 1989), 125–55, 261–353; Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 37–99; Gitlin, *Sixties*, 244, 314, 317–40, 350–51, 378. See also Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley, 1990); and Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System* (New York, 1981).

homosexuals in New York City responded to yet another police raid on a gay bar with several nights of rioting. The Stonewall riot (named after the bar the police raided) turned what had been an accommodationist, almost apologetic homophile movement into the aggressive and highly effective gay power movement that has revolutionized laws regarding sexual preferences.<sup>7</sup>

The Chicano movement's conflict with the LAPD, therefore, took place during a transformative period in the history of the United States. Militant social movements rose, and law enforcement agencies attempted to subvert and destroy those movements, often succeeding. More important, in this period those constituencies of movements who saw themselves as oppressed minority groups responded with a new consciousness and a determination to make more aggressive use of traditional political methods to redress their grievances.

The historical literature has not fully analyzed the relationship between the protest movements of the sixties and law enforcement. Much of the literature on law enforcement's campaign against militant dissent consists of a depressingly long list of official malfeasances, ranging from surveillance of peaceful organizations to political assassination. Even when the literature becomes more analytical, it focuses on intrainstitutional issues such as motivations in the law enforcement agencies and pays scant attention to either the short-term or the long-term impact of the repression on individual organizations or broadly based social movements. Even those studies that trace the history of specific movements do more to document the efforts at subversion than to explain their effects on the movement.<sup>8</sup>

This essay expands the historical analysis of militant protest and official repression in the sixties by focusing on a long-neglected group, Mexican Americans, and by examining the effects of the conflict both on the Chicano movement and, more broadly, on the Mexican-American community. Specifically, this paper argues that while police were using violence and intimidation against the movement, Chicanos were using the issues of political harassment and police brutality to increase participation in their movement. Police repression not only invigorated the Chicano movement but also helped politicize and empower the Mexican-American community.

In the 1960s Mexican Americans were the nation's second largest and its fastest-growing minority group. Concentrated in the Southwest and Midwest, they constituted a national population of about 5.6 million in the late 1960s. California had the largest concentrations of Mexican Americans of any state in the nation, and Los Angeles of any city. According to official census statistics (which vastly undercounted people of Mexican descent), California had a Mexican-American population of 1.5

<sup>7</sup> Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*; Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York, 1990); Gitlin, *Sixties*, 249–56, 285; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 231–39.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*; Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*; Donner, *Age of Surveillance*; O'Reilly, "Racial Matters"; Garrow, *FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.*; Carson, *In Struggle*; and Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*.

million, which had tripled in size since 1940. The Los Angeles metropolitan area showed even greater increases; the "Spanish surname" population in the county jumped from 576,000 (9.54 percent of the total) in 1960 to 1,289,000 (17.24 percent) in 1970 and that in the city from 260,000 (10.5 percent) in 1960 to 545,000 (19.4 percent) in 1970. The largest concentration lived in a section called East Los Angeles, which straddled the border between the city and unincorporated Los Angeles County.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, Mexican Americans have suffered from racial discrimination. Although Mexican Americans have been part of the country since the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the modern barrios that dot cities throughout the Southwest and Midwest emerged from the great migration that brought as many as 1.5 million Mexicans to the United States between 1900 and 1930. These immigrants were restricted to the lowest-paying, most menial jobs and endured discrimination, including segregation in education, housing, and public accommodations. The immigrants joined labor unions and formed voluntary organizations, such as mutual aid societies and cultural maintenance associations, which often doubled as ad hoc civil rights organizations. They and their children also formed overtly political organizations to secure Mexican Americans' civil rights. The most important of these was the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), founded in 1927.<sup>10</sup>

During the Great Depression, Mexican workers became scapegoats for the massive unemployment, and federal and local governments worked with patriotic organizations such as the American Legion to send more than four hundred thousand people back to Mexico. During World War II and the immediate postwar years, employment opportunities for Mexican Americans broadened, but discrimination also continued, and racial stereotypes, especially those regarding the alleged inherent criminality of Mexican-American youth, deepened. Specifically, the wartime hysteria in Los Angeles over a fictional wave of Mexican-American juvenile delinquency resulted in the Zoot Suit riots of June 1943 and popularized among the general public and, more important, within police circles the idea that Mexican Americans were criminally inclined. The police policies and practices that developed from this belief led to a state of almost chronic hostility between police and the Mexican-American community.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzmán, *The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority* (New York, 1970), 106; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 284, 311–14, 317–20; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 24–27; Antonio Ríos-Bustamante and Pedro Castillo, *An Illustrated History of Mexican Los Angeles, 1781–1985* (Los Angeles, 1986), 173, 176–79.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900–1940* (Westport, 1976), ix, 227–57, 265–67; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 141–97; Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin, 1983); Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* (New Haven, 1989), 15–22.

<sup>11</sup> Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow*, 227–57; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 198–306; Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929–1936* (Tucson, 1982); Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929–1939* (Tucson, 1974); Edward J. Escobar, *Race and Law Enforcement: Relations between Chicanos and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (forthcoming, University of California Press).

By the 1960s, therefore, Mexican Americans found themselves in a situation similar to that of blacks in the United States. In California, for example, blacks had a higher unemployment rate, lower income, and faced greater housing discrimination than Mexican Americans. Mexican Americans, on the other hand, had lower levels of educational attainment and experienced more rigid occupational stratification and more dilapidated housing. In addition, Mexican Americans had even less political representation than African Americans. For instance, after 1963 there were no Mexican Americans on the Los Angeles City Council, while blacks, with a smaller population, held three council seats. Both groups suffered from police misconduct.<sup>12</sup>

The Mexican-American community, in particular, the generation that came of age in the 1940s and 1950s, fought for equality through existing organizations such as LULAC and by forming new ones such as the G.I. Forum, and the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA). The leadership of this generation was composed primarily of upwardly mobile, middle-class professionals who bridled at the obstacles laid in their path by official bigotry. While certainly not a monolithic group, they generally worked together to end discriminatory practices in three distinct ways: by engaging in liberal politics in order to end the most offensive forms of anti-Mexican discrimination; by declaring Mexican Americans part of the white race and therefore worthy of equality; and by adopting a pluralistic vision of American society in which they could maintain aspects of their Mexican culture but still be integrated into the mainstream of American life. This generation thus saw Mexican-American progress in terms of partial and gradual acculturation, integration, and individual mobility.<sup>13</sup>

This outlook affected the positions the generation of the 1940s and 1950s took on specific issues. Mexican-American leaders and organizations, for example, supported restriction of Mexican immigration into the United States because they believed continued immigration weakened their socioeconomic position, reinforced negative stereotypes, and slowed acculturation and integration. Because Mexican Americans believed they should be considered white, they rejected any classification system that equated them with blacks. By the mid-sixties Mexican Americans had defined themselves out of the civil rights agenda and found they were ignored by, or even excluded from, many of the War on Poverty programs intended to ameliorate the effects of racial discrimination.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán, *Mexican-American People*, 142–289. Edward R. Roybal held a seat on the City Council from 1949 to 1962. In 1962 he was elected to Congress, and liberals on the council gerrymandered his old district and two others to create three safe seats for African Americans. In the process the Mexican-American vote was diluted; only as a result of a lawsuit was a district created where in 1986 Mexican Americans again gained representation on the Los Angeles City Council. See Acuña, *Community under Siege*, 103, 111–14; and Fernando J. Guerra, "Ethnic Officeholders in Los Angeles County," *Sociology and Social Research*, 71 (Jan. 1987), 89–94.

<sup>13</sup> Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans*, 15–22; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 19–44; Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 31–99; Mario Barrera, *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, 1988), 21–31.

<sup>14</sup> David G. Gutiérrez, "Sin Fronteras?: Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Mexican Immigration Debate, 1968–1978," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 10 (Sept. 1991), 7–10; García, *Mex-*

The Chicano movement of the late sixties challenged many of the previous generation's assumptions and tactics. It consisted primarily of young people of high school and college age who had grown frustrated with the sluggish pace of traditional reform politics. Like the militants of the Black Power movement that they emulated, Chicanos (a previously pejorative term adopted by young Mexican Americans to establish and define their own identity) found American culture inherently racist and corrupt. They developed the nationalist concept of *chicanismo* to signal that they rejected assimilation. They declared that as a result of their Mexican ancestry and their experiences in the Southwest, they had an identity and heritage that they intended to keep intact. Moreover, Chicanos declared themselves a nonwhite minority in solidarity with other oppressed racial groups throughout the world. Like members of other nonwhite racial groups, they saw themselves as victims of white racism and argued Chicanos could achieve equality only through collective social and economic empowerment. Finally, unlike the previous generation of Mexican-American activists who eschewed the direct action, civil disobedience tactics of the black civil rights movement, many Chicanos believed that solely through militant, confrontational means could they force white institutions to redress their grievances.<sup>15</sup>

Neither the Chicano movement nor the Mexican-American community was monolithic. The movement consisted mainly of local groups that loosely adhered to the concept of *chicanismo* and addressed issues ranging from health care problems to the war in Vietnam. While the organization best known nationally was César Chávez's United Farm Workers union, the Los Angeles movement took on a special importance because of the size of that city's Mexican-American population, the level of activity there, and the national publicity that activity received. Outside the movement, but within the Mexican-American community, stood three important groups: a bloc that thoroughly disapproved of the movement, its nationalist ideology, and its militant, confrontational style; many middle-class or upwardly mobile Mexican Americans who may have approved of the movement's goals and appreciated the cultural pride that it espoused but disagreed with its militant tactics and advocated more traditional methods for gaining equality; and finally, the overwhelming majority of Mexican Americans who struggled for day-to-day survival and who therefore had little time or energy for political activity. Thus, although Chicano movement activists attempted to represent the entire community, they constituted only a small percentage of the Mexican-American population.<sup>16</sup>

*ican Americans*, 15–22; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 19–44; Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 31–99; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 309–11, 330–32; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., "Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910–1981 (Austin, 1987), 164–69.

<sup>15</sup> Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 47–64, 75–91; Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 101–5, 118–24, 141–46; Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students Por la Raza*, 11–35; Barerra, *Beyond Aztlán*, 33–44; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 52–67, 80–84, 89–90, 104–19; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 307–11, 317–20, 324–27, 332–42, 354–56; Gutiérrez, "Sin Fronteras?" 11–16.

<sup>16</sup> Acuña, *Occupied America*, 307–11, 317–20, 324–27, 332–42, 354–56; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 49–52, 55–61, 121–22; Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics*, 102–9, 141–53, 174–77; Gómez-Quiñones, *Mexican Students Por la Raza*, 3–7, 28–30, 42–47; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 57–64; Gutiérrez, "Sin Fronteras?" 14–16.

Movement organizations communicated their message to the larger Mexican-American community through the Chicano media. In Los Angeles, newspapers such as *Inside Eastside*, the *Chicano Student Movement*, *La Causa*, and, most consistently, *La Raza* provided information and an analysis of it that Mexican Americans found nowhere else. By fostering the concept of *chicanismo* and by being openly and even stridently critical of American institutions, these newspapers created a Chicano counterideology. That ideology celebrated Chicanos' culture and identity; declared them an oppressed minority; identified as their oppressors institutions such as the educational system, the Catholic church, the business community, and, in particular, the police; and demanded an end to racial discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

In Los Angeles the movement was centered in the huge Mexican-American barrios of East Los Angeles and addressed issues that most concerned the population there. Thus, in the early days of the movement, the most important organizations were the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC), which focused on reforming the public schools, and the Chicano college and university student groups first called the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and later the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, or MEChA, which sought to improve Mexican-American access to higher education. The Brown Berets, a community-based militant youth group similar to the Black Panthers, also concentrated on issues of education, health care, and police brutality. Later the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, which organized large protest demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, and La Raza Unida party, which attempted to form a third political party to address Chicano concerns, also became prominent.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, then, the Chicano movement had four general goals: to maintain pride in Mexican Americans' cultural identity; to foster a political understanding that Mexican Americans were an oppressed and exploited minority group; to use the ethnic pride and the sense of exploitation to forge a political movement through which Chicanos would empower themselves; and, finally, to force white society to end the discriminatory practices that restricted Chicanos' lives. Although Chicanos often used provocative rhetoric and engaged in confrontational politics, the basic goal of the Chicano movement—gaining equality for Chicanos *within* American society—was essentially reformist, not revolutionary.

Despite the Chicano movement's reformist agenda, Los Angeles police officials used their intelligence capabilities, along with their monopoly on the legal use of violence, to subvert and destroy the movement. The LAPD's motives for its repressive activities are difficult to determine. I found no document in the LAPD files equivalent to J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO directives to his agents explicitly or-

<sup>17</sup> Although Anglo-owned community newspapers like the *Eastside Sun* and the *Belvedere Citizen* consistently published news of interest to Mexican Americans, the Chicano press differed in giving an ideological bent to its reporting. Acuña, *Community under Siege*; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 74–75.

<sup>18</sup> Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 64–69, 78–91; Gómez-Quinones, *Chicano Politics*, 118–28, 138–40; Gómez-Quinones, *Mexican Students Por la Raza*, 18–35; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 68–101; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 334–38, 342–52.

dering the FBI to disrupt and discredit the Black Power movement. The LAPD defined intelligence broadly as gathering “information about organizations and persons whose plans or activities may influence the police posture or performance,” and police officials explained their intelligence operations as intended only to protect the public from riots and terrorism.<sup>19</sup>

The LAPD’s activities against the Chicano movement, however, went far beyond mere intelligence gathering, as police agents engaged in criminal activity themselves in order to disrupt and destroy the movement. A partial explanation may lie with the nature of the intelligence function. Police infiltrators have the luxury of acting very militant and even engaging in illegal activity because they know they will be protected from prosecution. Basing their actions on this assumption and hoping to please their superiors, agents often concoct phony information, provoke a group to commit crimes, or commit crimes themselves in order to disrupt an organization or provide testimony in court. In their attempts to destroy the Chicano movement, police agents did all these things.<sup>20</sup>

But counterintelligence work provides extra advantages to police. According to sociologist Gary Marx, “the use of agents can be seen as one device whereby police may take action consistent with their own sense of justice and morality, independent of the substantive or procedural requirements of the law.” Because intelligence operations are by their nature secret, “considerable damage may be done to an unpopular yet legal group without necessarily evoking legal sanctions.” The provocative and illegal activities of the infiltrators and the LAPD’s use of intelligence information to red-bait the Chicano movement demonstrate the accuracy of Marx’s insights. Moreover, occasional unguarded remarks by LAPD officials reveal that catching criminals was not necessarily the department’s first priority. The future police chief Edward M. Davis, for example, at a staff meeting in 1969, recommended using intelligence work to conduct “psychological warfare” against the LAPD’s critics. Since the LAPD’s intelligence efforts did not result in a single successful prosecution of a major Chicano movement figure, the primary intent of the repression was probably silencing the department’s enemies.<sup>21</sup>

Undermining social protest movements also coincided with the LAPD’s conservative ideology. That ideology, which had been developing since the late nineteenth century, became institutionalized during the administration of Police Chief William H. Parker, who headed the department from 1950 to 1966. As an architect of

<sup>19</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent in Charge (SAC), San Francisco, n.d., box 35, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers (Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles, Calif.); Hoover to SAC, Albany, March 4, 1968, *ibid.*; Hoover to SAC, San Francisco, Sept. 30, 1968, *ibid.*; Hoover to SAC, Baltimore, Nov. 25, *ibid.*; Los Angeles Police Department, Public Disorder Intelligence Division, “LAPD Public Disorder Intelligence Accomplishments,” typescript, 1977, box 92854, Chief of Police General Files (Los Angeles City Records Center, Los Angeles, Calif.). Ironically, since much of the “public disorder” was racially related, the Public Disorder Intelligence Division recruited officers along ethnic lines and therefore claimed that it helped the department’s affirmative action program.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, “Thoughts on a Neglected Category of Social Movement Participant,” 419–24.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 436; Los Angeles Police Department, Staff Meeting Minutes, Jan. 20, 1969, box 38166, Chief of Police General Files. Edward A. Davis was a deputy chief when he made the remark.

the police professionalism movement, Parker transformed the LAPD into the model for professional big city police and gained the reputation as the nation's second best known cop — second only to J. Edgar Hoover. Police autonomy stood at the heart of police professionalism, and Parker saw gaining independence from political control as his greatest achievement. Beginning in Parker's administration, not even the civilian Police Commission, which the city charter charged with administering the department, dared interfere with the internal management of the LAPD. Parker used that independence to build a police department that reflected his own views of strict authoritarianism and strident anticommunism. He saw it as the LAPD's role to protect the hardworking middle class from those who would steal their just rewards. Thus he viewed with great alarm the social movements that engulfed the United States during the sixties. Finally, Parker believed that police constituted the "thin blue line" that stood between civilized society and chaos, arguing that "the very existence of the Nation hinged on its ability to support its law enforcement agencies." For Parker, then, and for the police administrators across the country who admired him, critics of the police were, by their very nature, disloyal and un-American; and during the sixties, in police circles the adjective *antipolice* became a noun and synonymous with subversion.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the police's ideological bias against social protest, their experience with the Black Power movement predisposed them to hostility toward the Chicano movement. Taking at face value the violent rhetoric of the Black Panthers and other black militants and fearing that organized agitators fomented the race riots of the 1960s, law enforcement officials decided to stop the violence by disrupting and destroying the militant organizations. FBI director Hoover labeled the Panthers "the greatest threat to the internal security of the Country" and launched the famous COINTELPRO against that organization. This operation sought to destroy militant groups such as the Panthers by whatever means necessary, from the use of *agents provocateurs* to political assassination. Local police departments worked hand in hand with the FBI, and at a meeting convened by the National Commission on Civil Disorders in November 1967, police chiefs from across the nation developed a plan to establish their own intelligence capability to stop the growth of militant organizations. At that meeting Police Chief Thomas Reddin of Los Angeles articulated his department's—and the general enforcement—analysis of the Black Power movement. "The present Negro movement," Reddin declared, "is just as subversive as the past Communist movement or just as dangerous as the organized crime movement."

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Gerald Woods, "The Progressives and the Police: Urban Reform and the Professionalization of the Los Angeles Police" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1973), 417–511. On the inherent conservatism of the police profession, see Jerome H. Skolnick, *Justice without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society* (New York, 1975), 42–70; Richard Quinney, *Criminology* (Boston, 1979), 265–302; Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis, *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Analysis of the U.S. Police* (San Francisco, 1982), 5–18; and Sidney L. Harring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865–1915* (New Brunswick, 1983), 3–21. For example, the LAPD chief charged that by supporting the black civil rights movement, the federal government supported anarchy. See Marion Forum, "Anarchy Imminent: Local Police Hobbled in Efforts to Stem Crime" (interview with Los Angeles Police Chief William H. Parker), May 30, 1965, box 35318, Chief of Police General Files.