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

Edward J. Escobar

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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 Sangrando (I Am Bleeding): A Study of Mexican American–Police Conflict* (La Puente, 1972), 91–107; Rodolfo E. 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 Sangrando*, 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); Félix M. Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame, 1987); Acuña, *Occupied America*, 307-62; Juan Gómez-Quinones, *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-Quinones, *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-Quirón, *Chicano Politics*, 31–99; Mario Barrera, *Beyond Aztlan: 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>

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ican Americans, 15-22; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 19-44; Gómez-Quirón, *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-Quirón, *Chicano Politics*, 101-5, 118-24, 141-46; Gómez-Quirón, *Mexican Students Por la Raza*, 11-35; Baretta, *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-Quirón, *Chicano Politics*, 102-9, 141-53, 174-77; Gómez-Quirón, *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-Quirón, *Chicano Politics*, 118–28, 138–40; Gómez-Quirón, *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. Harting, *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 Manion 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.

Furthermore, since he regarded all protest demonstrations as potential sources of riots, Reddin concluded police should always be ready to employ massive force against demonstrators. He proclaimed that in preventing urban riots police should engage in "overkill—kill the butterfly with a sledge hammer." Reddin's sledgehammer and Davis's psychological warfare became the LAPD's favorite tools against Chicano activists.<sup>23</sup>

From the moment Chicanos began protesting against police misconduct, law enforcement agencies responded by using their monopoly of the use of force to harass and intimidate Chicano activists and organizations. In December 1967 a group called Young Chicanos for Community Action (YCCA) picketed the East Los Angeles sheriff's substation to protest cases of police brutality. *La Raza* reported that in retaliation sheriff's deputies began stopping and searching people who entered the YCCA meeting place at the Piranya Coffee House in East Los Angeles and arresting underage coffeehouse patrons for curfew violations. *La Raza* pointed out that the curfew arrests were illegal since those arrested were inside a building, not loitering on the streets as the ordinance specified. Partly in response to the police harassment, the YCCA the next month changed its name to the Brown Berets and adopted a much more militant posture.<sup>24</sup>

The events that spurred local police to even more repressive measures were the March 1968 student walkouts, when over ten thousand East Los Angeles Chicano high school students walked out of their classes to protest the inferior education they received. Organized by UMAS members, Brown Berets, and other activists, the students demanded the same facilities, textbooks, and supplies as students in predominantly white schools; curriculum changes to include Chicano history and culture; more Mexican-American teachers, counselors, and administrators; and amnesty for students and teachers who participated in the walkouts.<sup>25</sup>

Initially, school and police officials seemed confused by the walkouts. At Lincoln High School, where the protests began on March 1, administrators allowed the students to leave the school grounds and police escorted them to a nearby park where they held rallies. When the walkouts started spreading to other predominantly Mexican-American schools, officials from the Los Angeles City School District and the LAPD took a harder line. At Roosevelt High School on March 5, administrators locked the gates that surrounded the school to prevent striking students from leaving, and LAPD squad cars massed around the campus to intimidate the strikers.

<sup>23</sup> For J. Edgar Hoover's statement, see O'Reilly, "Racial Matters," 290. U.S. Commission on Civil Disorders, typescript, Nov. 2, 1967, box 38, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers. On COINTELPRO, see Donner, *Age of Surveillance*, 126–230.

<sup>24</sup> *La Raza*, Dec. 25, 1967, Jan. 15, 1968; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 73.

<sup>25</sup> *Chicano Student News*, March 15, 1968. (Movement newspapers, such as *Chicano Student News*, *La Raza*, and others, were small publications, rarely exceeding sixteen pages. Those I have used for this article can be found at the Chicano Studies Library, University of California, Los Angeles.) Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 171–74; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 356; Gómez-Quirón, *Chicago Politics*, 101–53; Gómez-Quirón, *Mexican Students For la Raza*, 26–35; Rosen, *Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement*, 68–101, 139–40.

The students, however, climbed over the fences, and the police presence provoked minor violence (some students threw bottles at passing police cars). The police retaliated by attacking the demonstrators, peaceful or not, and arresting anyone who came to their aid. A newspaper that developed from the walkouts, *Chicano Student News*, described in detail how two Chicano teenagers were "jumped by four full grown armed policemen, beaten to the ground and held with a club to the neck." The LAPD attempted to justify its actions and discredit the student protests by claiming that Communists had participated in and influenced the walkouts.<sup>26</sup>

The walkouts dramatically altered the relationship between Chicanos and the LAPD. Police harassment and brutality were chronic problems for Los Angeles Mexican Americans, but both Chicano activists and police officials agreed that the level of violence in contacts between Chicanos and officers rose after the spring of 1968. Chicanos charged that the increase resulted from police attempts to intimidate movement activists; police officials believed the movement caused Chicanos to be more combative toward police officers. Whatever the cause, after March 1968 Chicano movement newspapers and community organizations paid increased attention to charges of police harassment and brutality.<sup>27</sup>

The Chicano press gave particular attention to two cases of police brutality. One was the beating by the LAPD of Jesús Domínguez, a member of the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee, a group organized by parents to support their children during the walkouts. According to *La Raza*, "at least 15 policemen jumped at him, hitting him with clubs and fists and kicking him while he was already handcuffed and on the pavement." Domínguez's injuries were so serious that he underwent brain surgery. In the other case, publicized by *Inside Eastside*, LAPD officers beat thirteen-year-old Salvador Barba, breaking two vertebrae and causing head injuries that required forty stitches.<sup>28</sup>

Los Angeles Chicanos argued that the beatings were politically motivated and invoked them to organize the community. In a story on the Domínguez case, *Inside Eastside* declared that police were waging a "cold war in East L.A." and that everyone "must consider himself a soldier of the community, a soldier of democracy." Led by Barba's mother, Chicano groups picketed the LAPD's East Los Angeles Hollenbeck Division headquarters for several weeks. According to the newspaper *Chicano Student Movement*, "The primary purpose of the picket is to increase the awareness of the Community to the vicious and systematic harassment of the people simply because they are Chicanos, and to show the people how the Community can fight back." Apparently the effort had some success, for the same newspaper reported that

<sup>26</sup> *Inside Eastside*, March 29, 1968; *La Raza*, March 31, 1968; Ruiz interview; Commander Clifford J. Shannon, Press Release, April 30, 1968, box 38166, Chief of Police General Files.

<sup>27</sup> United States Commission on Civil Rights, California Advisory Committee, *Police-Community Relations in East Los Angeles, California: A Report of the California State Advisory to the United States Commission on Civil Rights* ([Los Angeles], 1970), 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> Luna interview; *La Raza*, Oct. 15, 1968, Nov.-Dec. 1969; *Inside Eastside*, Nov. 18, 1968; *Chicano Student Movement*, Nov. 1968; *La Raza*, June 1969. See also U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest* (Washington, 1970), 4-5.

besides pickets from the usual movement organizations, "every day new faces appear; mothers carrying their babies, fathers, teachers, ministers, children." Moreover, Chicanos created organizations to assist the victims of official misconduct. To provide legal assistance for the Domínguez family, the EICC developed a subcommittee that held rallies, hired lawyers, and organized fund-raising dances, which became large community events. Eventually, that subcommittee, led by Celia Luna (then known as Celia Rodríguez), institutionalized itself as the Barrio Defense Committee (BDC) and gave similar assistance to other victims of police abuse.<sup>29</sup>

An even more effective rallying point for Chicano organizers was the prosecution of individuals involved in Chicano protest activity. *Inside Eastside* reported that in the month after the March 1968 student protests, police arrested sixty-five Brown Berets "on trumped-up charges, anything to get them off the street." More important, at the end of May 1968, District Attorney Evelle Younger gained indictments against thirteen of the walkout organizers. Chicanos reacted with outrage. Although authorities developed no evidence that anyone did anything more serious than disturb the peace, the grand jury indicted the thirteen for conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor; such conspiracy was a felony and carried with it a long prison term. Declaring that Chief Reddin and District Attorney Younger had thrown "down the gauntlet at the Chicano Community," Chicanos instituted a 200-person picket around LAPD headquarters the day after the arrests. On the following day, 2,000 people demonstrated at the same location, the largest Mexican-American demonstration in the city's history. *La Raza* newspaper proclaimed that with the massive demonstration, "THE CHICANO COMMUNITY PICKED UP THE GAUNTLET AND SHOVED IT DOWN REDDIN'S THROAT AS THEY RALLIED IN PROTEST OF THE CARNALES [the brothers'] POLITICAL IMPRISONMENT." The official response to the walkouts, instead of inhibiting Chicano protest, had provoked increased activity and had raised the issue of police repression of Chicano political activism.<sup>30</sup>

Police officials, however, also responded to the walkouts in more subtle, less public ways by establishing an intelligence network within the Chicano community. At its least significant level, the network gathered information on Chicano movement activity from public sources. More destructive was the planting of police officers or civilian agents within Chicano organizations. The LAPD intelligence reports show the department had detailed information on the financial status of Chicano organizations; the employment status, arrest records, and political affiliations of individual activists; and the decisions made at meetings and plans for upcoming demonstrations. In addition, both the presence of informers and the belief in their presence sowed debilitating distrust within movement organizations. Finally, the infiltrators often did not confine their activities to information gathering,

<sup>29</sup> *Inside Eastside*, Nov. 18, Dec. 23, 1968; *Chicano Student Movement*, Nov. 1968; *La Raza*, Dec. 1969; Luna interview.

<sup>30</sup> *Inside Eastside*, April 26, 1968; *La Raza*, June 7, 1968. See also *Chicano Student News*, June 12, 1968; and *Inside Eastside*, June 10, 1968.



whether accurate or not. In their roles as infiltrators, both civilian agents and police officers sworn to enforce the law allowed, instigated, and engaged in illegal activity.<sup>31</sup>

During the two years after the walkouts, the Brown Berets were a favorite target of LAPD agents. In a celebrated case, LAPD Officer Fernando Sumaya, who had infiltrated the organization, testified before a grand jury that Brown Berets had started fires at the Biltmore Hotel during a May 1969 speech by Gov. Ronald Reagan. In the subsequent trials, Sumaya claimed that Berets Carlos Montes and Ralph Ramírez set the blazes, but the defendants gave vivid testimony that Sumaya himself started the fires in order to entrap them. The juries apparently found the Berets' testimony convincing, for they acquitted the defendants on all charges.<sup>32</sup>

Chicano activists used the disclosure of such incidents to gain adherents to their cause. In the Sumaya case, in addition to the usual charges that those arrested were political prisoners, Chicanos accused Sumaya of infiltrating the Brown Berets "to plan and provoke criminal incidents." The July 10, 1969, issue of the Brown Beret newspaper *La Causa* attacked Sumaya most bitterly, calling him a traitor and a whore and charging that "the syphilis infested mind of this perro . . . WOULD SELL HIS MOTHER FOR ANY PRICE, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PROVIDES!" *La Causa* also accused Sumaya of being "a seducer of innocent young girls," and it warned women that "this poor excuse for a man will use you for his personal pleasures and it's 'all in the line of duty.'" <sup>33</sup>

LAPD officials worried that the charges of police brutality and political repression publicized by the Chicano press were having an impact on the Mexican-American community. Informants reported that Mexican Americans were "starting to heed the articles as truth." Referring to *La Causa's* attack on Sumaya, an internal LAPD document expressed fear that this "type of garbage . . . may well contribute to the rise in assaults on police officials." Publications such as *La Raza* and *La Causa*, the LAPD intelligence summary concluded, "do nothing but preach and foment hate of minorities toward whites and in particular, law enforcement. It would be beneficial if some of these publications could be forced to stop publication or at least, control the biased and unfounded reports they print."<sup>34</sup>

While the LAPD never managed to censor any Chicano newspapers, it used much of the information it gathered to discredit Chicano individuals and organizations whom the department viewed as antipolice by branding them Communists or terrorists. On January 20, 1970, for example, the LAPD sought to cut funding sources for various social agencies by sending Sgt. Robert Thoms of the LAPD Intelligence Division to testify before the United States Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

<sup>31</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, "Intelligence Summary," Jan. 1, 1969–Dec. 7, 1969, box 74284, Chief of Police General Files; Luna interview.

<sup>32</sup> Carlos Montes interview by Escobar, Jan. 9, 1989 (in Escobar's possession); *California v. Carlos Montes*, No. A 244906 and No. A 408717, California Superior Court Department No. 132, Reporters' Transcript of Proceedings, Feb. 9 to April 26, 1979, 653–82; *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 10, Aug. 20, Aug. 21, Aug. 24, 1971, May 18, 1972.

<sup>33</sup> *La Causa*, July 10, 1969.

<sup>34</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, "Intelligence Summary," July 30, 1969, box 74284, Chief of Police General Files.

Thoms told the committee that LAPD records showed that the federal government, private foundations, and church groups funded forty-nine "organizations with violent or subversive connections in the Los Angeles area." Included were nine Chicano organizations. Two examples illustrate how the LAPD determined that those organizations were dangerous. Thoms conceded the East Los Angeles Community Union was not a violent or revolutionary organization. He nevertheless put it on his subversive list as "an example of the umbrella organization we deal with which will contain some good intentioned organizations to give it an air of respectability." Similarly, Thoms characterized the Educational Opportunities Program at California State University, Los Angeles, as subversive because among the many students it served, the LAPD had deemed forty-three to belong to radical organizations. The testimony had the desired effect, for in the following month the Episcopal church stopped funding one organization cited by Thoms, the El Barrio Communications Project, which supported movement newspapers including *La Raza*. Despite the loss of revenue, *La Raza* continued to publish.<sup>35</sup>

In the last days of 1969 and the first eight months of 1970, tension and violence between Chicanos and local police increased. On Christmas Eve 1969, officers beat members of *Católicos Por la Raza* for demonstrating in front of Saint Basil Church to protest the Catholic church's neglect of the Mexican-American community. In February the National Chicano Moratorium Committee held a march in a driving rain to protest the Vietnam War. The next month saw a dramatic heightening of conflict and controversy. Early in March Chicano students at Roosevelt High School again walked out of school to protest educational policies. This time the LAPD responded with immediate and intimidating violence. Television cameras showed police beating protestors with nightsticks and dragging young Mexican-American girls across the high school campus by their hair. Such spectacles frightened and angered the Mexican-American community. KMEX, the Spanish-language television station, interviewed one mother who said that she had kept her boy home from school because she feared the police would kill him. In the aftermath of the demonstrations, the Barrio Defense Committee attracted more than a thousand people to a meeting to plan ways of counteracting the police actions. The LAPD reacted hostilely to the negative publicity. For example, an article in the *Los Angeles Times* by Rubén Salazar that criticized LAPD Chief Edward Davis's cavalier attitude toward Chicano concerns about the events at Roosevelt infuriated the chief and his associates. Davis's personal assistant, Lt. Bob Walter, promised that his boss would tear "the hide right off [Salazar's] back," and the department opened an intelligence file on the journalist.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, *Extent of Subversion in the "New Left"* (Testimony of Robert J. Thoms), 91 Cong., 1 sess., Jan. 20, 1970, 1-53; *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1970.

<sup>36</sup> According to Celia Luna, average attendance at the business meetings of the Barrio Defense Committee ranged from forty to fifty. Luna interview. *Católicos Por la Raza* (newspaper), Jan. 1970; Muñoz interview; *Los Angeles Times*, n.d., box 49, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers; *ibid.*, March 11, 1970; Theodora Jacobs to Edward

The publication in March 1970 of the United States Civil Rights Commission report *Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest* reinforced many of the charges Chicanos had been making about the Los Angeles police. Nationally, the report found "evidence of widespread . . . police misconduct against Mexican Americans" and specifically cited police for using "excessive . . . violence against Mexican Americans" and for interfering with legitimate Chicano political activity. By including and documenting the Domínguez and Barba cases as examples of LAPD misconduct, the report encouraged Chicanos to increase their criticism of the department. Salazar, for example, wrote that the report gave credibility to Brown Beret prime minister David Sánchez's statement that "to Anglos justice means *just us*."<sup>37</sup>

The tensions and violence between Chicanos and police continued throughout the spring and summer of 1970. On May 5, in what university officials would later characterize as a police riot, officers of the LAPD's Metropolitan Division rampaged through the UCLA campus in response to an antiwar rally that had turned violent. Although the antiwar demonstration had taken place in another part of campus, police entered Campbell Hall, which housed minority academic, student support, and student organization offices, and beat Chicano faculty, staff, and students. UCLA Chicanos saw the attack as a deliberate attempt to intimidate and stifle the Chicano movement on campus.<sup>38</sup>

During July the violence turned deadly. On the seventeenth, while searching for a murder suspect, LAPD Sgt. Frank Gaines without warning kicked in the door of an apartment in a skid row hotel where five undocumented Mexican workers lived. Within seconds of entering the apartment, Gaines shot through a closed door at the end of a hallway, killing Guillermo Sánchez. Other police officers stationed outside the building shot and killed Guillermo's cousin, Beltrán Sánchez, as the second young man climbed out of a window. The Barrio Defense Committee condemned the killings and staged a mock funeral procession from the skid row hotel to police headquarters at Parker Center. The killings received wide coverage in the Chicano and mainstream press and made police brutality an issue to be addressed at the upcoming National Chicano Moratorium demonstration.<sup>39</sup>

That August 29 demonstration turned violent and tragic. The demonstration became a riot when the owner of a liquor store a block away from the rally in Laguna Park called the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to complain that teenagers

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M. Davis, March 10, 1970, box 66024, Chief of Police General Files; Mrs. C. López to Ernest E. Debs, March 16, 1970, *ibid.*; LAPD, transcript of KMEX newscast, March 11, 1970, box 38156, *ibid.*; Luna interview; *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1970; Bob Walter to Davis, March 13, 1970; box 38156, Chief of Police General Files; Davis to Nick Williams, March 13, 1970, *ibid.*; LAPD, press release, March 13, 1970, *ibid.*; anon., March 18, 1970, *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest*, 2-26; *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1970.

<sup>38</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1970, p. 1; Chancellor's Commission on the Events of May 5, "Violence at UCLA," Jan. 1971, box 48, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers; Vigil interview.

<sup>39</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1970; Los Angeles Police Department, Robbery-Homicide Division Report of Officer-Involved Shooting, July 28, 1970, box 38162, Chief of Police General Files; Luna interview, Muñoz interview. The murder suspect had never been anywhere near the apartment, and he was quickly cleared of all charges.

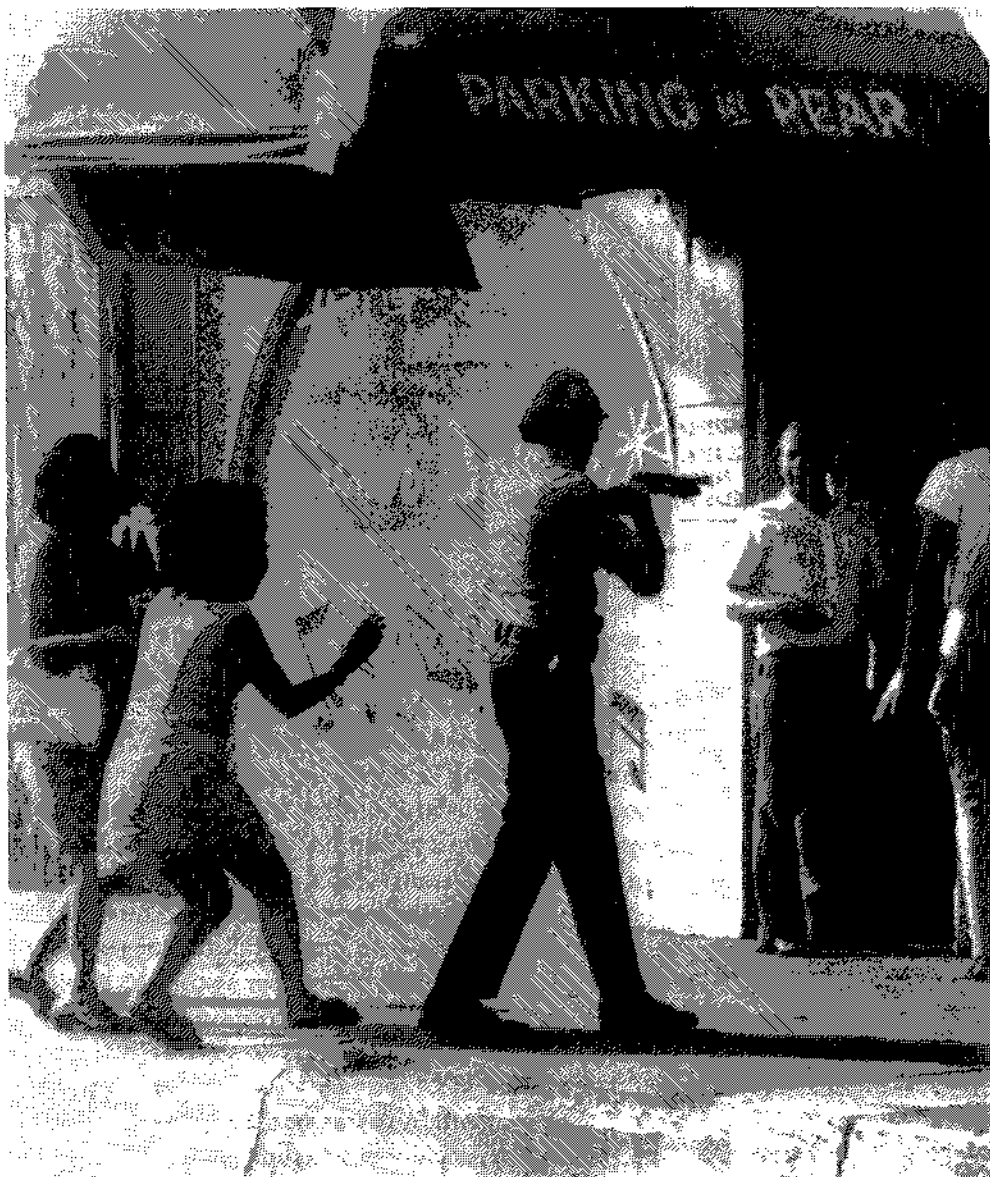
had stolen cold drinks. Sheriff's deputies responded in squad cars with their sirens and lights blazing. The young people who allegedly stole the drinks threw rocks and bottles at the deputies and then ran off toward the park and the demonstration. The deputies followed and were met with more rocks and bottles from the perimeter of the park. Monitors attempted to quell the disturbance and pleaded with the youngsters to cease the violence and with the deputies to leave the scene. The Sheriff's Department instead declared the demonstration an unlawful assembly and attempted to disperse the crowd with tear gas and nightsticks. The ensuing violence lasted for several hours and resulted in three deaths, including that of Rubén Salazar.<sup>40</sup>

If the moratorium riot shocked the city, the killing of Salazar outraged Chicanos. Many Chicanos believed that police had murdered Salazar because he was an articulate spokesman for Los Angeles Mexican Americans. After ten years of working as a foreign correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, Salazar returned to Los Angeles in 1969 and began writing news stories and a weekly column on issues related to Mexican Americans. In April 1970 he became news director for Los Angeles's most popular Spanish-language television station, KMEX. For the *Times*, Salazar wrote articles aimed primarily at white readers explaining and often supporting the Chicano movement. Occasionally, he wrote articles critical of the police and sufficiently angered the LAPD that the department opened an intelligence file on him. At the time of Salazar's death, this file included a sampling of his articles and a judgment from the LAPD's "reliable confidential informant" with the *Times* organization that Salazar "is a slanted, left-wing oriented, reporter."<sup>41</sup>

Police seemed especially concerned with Salazar's role as news director at KMEX. Salazar gave airtime to people and organizations the LAPD considered subversive and even solicited stories from them. In addition, KMEX news reports consistently sympathized with community groups in their conflicts with police. In the weeks before his death, for example, Salazar repeatedly gave representatives of the Brown Berets, the Barrio Defense Committee, and *La Raza* newspaper airtime to publicize and interpret the LAPD killing of the Sánchez cousins. According to the historian Rodolfo Acuña, the LAPD responded by sending officers to visit Salazar. These officers "ordered him to tone down his television coverage" because "he was inciting the people" and because "the Chicano community was not ready for this kind of analysis." According to Acuña, the officers concluded by telling Salazar "they would get him if he continued his coverage." Not only did Salazar refuse to heed this warning, but just before his death he made plans to write a series of articles for the *Times* entitled "What Progress in Thirty Years of Police-Community Relations?" Guillermo Restrepo, Salazar's cameraman, recalled that on the day of his death

<sup>40</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 Sangrando*, 91-107.

<sup>41</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 1, 1970; *ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1970, sec. 1, p. 3; Luna interview; memorandum, March 18, 1970, box 38156, Chief of Police General Files.



Officer pointing a weapon into the Silver Dollar Café moments before Deputy Thomas Wilson shot and killed Rubén Salazar. *Courtesy Raúl Ruiz.*

Salazar acted as if someone was following him and told Restrepo he was "scared." Restrepo observed that since Salazar had served in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico City amid much greater violence, he doubted Salazar feared the relatively minor violence of the moratorium riot.<sup>42</sup>

Mexican Americans of various political persuasions refused to believe that Salazar's death at the hands of Deputy Wilson was an accident, as Los Angeles County Sheriff Peter Pitchess claimed. The Chicano attorney Oscar Acosta called Salazar's death a "political murder, plain and simple," and the traditionally moderate League of United Latin American Citizens accused the Sheriff's Department of "wanton murder." Protestors from the NCMC demonstrated in front of the East Los Angeles Sheriff's Substation, chanting, "Who killed Salazar? Wilson! Who gave the orders? Pitchess!"<sup>43</sup>

The investigation that officials conducted left the circumstances of Salazar's death unclear. Representatives of the Sheriff's Department gave contradictory accounts of how Salazar died and of how the department's officers acted following the incident. At first, deputies reported that Salazar died of gunshot wounds and that officers entered the bar immediately after the shooting. Later, in what became the Sheriff's Department's official version, deputies claimed that the tear gas projectile killed Salazar and that they did not discover the body until several hours later.<sup>44</sup>

Various sources, however, immediately called the Sheriff's Department's story into question. The *Times* disclosed that the tear gas projectile that killed Salazar should never have been used the way Deputy Wilson used it. The projectile was designed to capture "barricaded criminals" and could pierce the stucco wall of a house at less than one hundred feet. (Wilson shot Salazar through an open door from about fifteen feet.) Photos taken by Chicano activist and journalist Raúl Ruiz and eyewitness accounts show that, rather than trying to evacuate the building (the alleged reason for using tear gas), deputies forced people back into the Silver Dollar Cafe at gunpoint moments before the shooting. Witnesses at the official inquest also testified that Sergeant Wilson stood at the doorway holding a "miniature cannon" and opened the curtains to look inside the bar, thus seeing exactly where Salazar sat seconds before he fired the fatal shot. Finally, no one inside the bar had heard a warning before deputies fired the tear gas.<sup>45</sup>

The dramatic high point of the investigation came during the coroner's inquest, which local television stations broadcast live. Chicano observers charged that inquest judge Norman Pittluck conducted a cover-up. They accused him of allowing improper testimony that supported the Sheriff's Department's version of the event but

<sup>42</sup> Luna interview; Ruiz interview; Muñoz interview; Acuña, *Occupied America*, 346; Manuel Ruiz, Jr., to Herman Sillas, Nov. 11, 1970, addendum 3, Manuel Ruiz, Jr., Papers (Special Collections, Stanford University Library, Stanford, Calif.); *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 22, 1970, sec. 1, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 4, 1970, sec. 1, pp. 2, 16; Muñoz interview.

<sup>44</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 30, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 1, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 19, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 20, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 21, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 22, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 23, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 24, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1970, sec. 2, p. 10; *ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1.

impeaching the credibility of Chicano witnesses, such as Raúl Ruiz, whose testimony not only contradicted the official version but also supported the contention that Wilson had shot Salazar intentionally. Pittluck even instructed the seven-member inquest jury to find that Salazar had died "by accident"—a verdict that would almost certainly prevent any criminal prosecution. Despite Pittluck's instruction, four of the seven jurors believed that the criminal investigation should proceed and found Salazar had died "at the hands of another." After the verdict was delivered, the three other jurors stated they too would have voted with the majority but felt compelled to comply with Pittluck's instructions.<sup>46</sup>

As many Chicanos had anticipated, District Attorney Evelle Younger refused to file any criminal charges. He stated that since three jurors on the inquest jury had voted for a "by accident" verdict, he doubted he could convince twelve jurors in a criminal trial that any crime had been committed. The *Times* pointed out that all the inquest jurors would have voted for the stronger verdict but that three felt compelled to follow Pittluck's erroneous instructions. When the United States Justice Department refused to enter the case, the criminal investigation into the killing ended.<sup>47</sup>

The killing of Rubén Salazar had profound consequences. First, as a writer for the *Times*, Salazar had been perhaps the most articulate spokesperson for Chicano concerns to the Anglo community. Second, and more important, as news director for KMEX, the main Spanish-language television station in Los Angeles, Salazar had provided airtime to Chicano community activists. By giving militants access to the airwaves, he furnished many Mexican Americans the type of information and an analysis of that information that could lead to their politicization or even radicalization. With Salazar dead, this alternative news source ceased to exist. The owners of KMEX, bowing to pressure from police and government officials, now refused Chicano activists access to the airwaves. For Chicanos, Salazar became a hero—a martyr who died for the cause of Chicano liberation and a symbol for those who fought ongoing repression.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the public outcry over the killing of Rubén Salazar, official harassment, intimidation, and violence against Chicanos increased after the August 29 moratorium demonstration and riot. The LAPD raised the level of its rhetoric. Even though he was out of the country at the time of the riot, Chief Davis issued a statement

<sup>46</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 9, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1970, sec. 1, p. 3; *ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1970, sec. 1, p. 3; *ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1970, sec. 1, p. 3; *ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1970; *ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1. The legislator who wrote the statute setting out the possible inquest verdicts stated that Pittluck erred in his definition of "by accident." *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 15, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1. Three years later Los Angeles County awarded the Salazar family a \$700,000 out-of-court settlement for a \$1.5 million negligence suit. See *ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1973, sec. 1, p. 1. On a similar incident, the FBI-assisted assassination of Chicago Black Panther leader Fred Hampton by the Chicago Police Department, see O'Reilly, "Racial Matters," 310–16; and Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 64–77.

<sup>48</sup> Ruiz interview; Luna interview. For the ongoing importance of Rubén Salazar as a symbol for Chicanos, see Los Angeles Theatre Center, *An Anthology for the Play August 29* (Los Angeles, 1990) (available at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, Los Angeles, Calif.).

that the August 29 violence resulted from a decision by the Communist party to concentrate its efforts on the Mexican-American community. Davis claimed that "swimming pool Communists" exploited Chicanos as "prison fodder" in their attempts to overthrow the government of the United States. In the months that followed, Davis incessantly charged that the Brown Berets were "self-avowed Marxists" and that they engaged in "revolution on the installment plan."<sup>49</sup>

In addition, police increased the use of infiltrators and *agents provocateurs*. Frank Martínez, for example, infiltrated both the NCMC and the Brown Berets after August 29. He exhorted others to commit acts of violence and committed illegal acts himself. On November 4, 1970, Martínez brandished a weapon in front of the NCMC headquarters in full view of several LAPD squad cars. The police used his act as an excuse to storm the building, beat and arrest several occupants, and confiscate NCMC documents. Martínez later revealed that agents of the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, working in collaboration with the LAPD, had ordered him "to cause confusion, . . . to provoke incidents" in order "to eliminate" the Brown Berets and the NCMC.<sup>50</sup>

The LAPD also initiated heavy surveillance of the NCMC headquarters, stationing as many as fifteen squad cars within a half block of the building. The Hollenbeck Division commander threatened to arrest anyone leaving the NCMC office, and on several occasions officers did so. The LAPD also raided the NCMC office twice. On November 13, 1970, six officers burst into NCMC headquarters and confronted the occupants. According to witnesses, "when asked for a search warrant, they [the officers] simply pulled their service revolvers and the leader said 'This is all the search warrant we need.'" On November 27, thirty LAPD officers again raided the headquarters; three injuries and six arrests resulted.<sup>51</sup>

In response, Chicano groups organized or took part in several demonstrations in the six months after August 29. On September 16 a contingent from the NCMC participated in the annual Mexican Independence Day parade. On January 9, 1971, Chicanos demonstrated in front of the LAPD's Hollenbeck Division station in East Los Angeles and then marched on Parker Center, LAPD headquarters, to protest police attacks on the NCMC. Finally, on January 31, Chicanos again demonstrated in East Los Angeles to condemn police practices against Chicano activists. Each of

<sup>49</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, clipping, n.d., box 38158, Chief of Police General Files; Robert Kaiser, "Partial Transcript of Tape Recording of Interview of Chief Edward M. Davis," Jan. 20, 1971. Supplement, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers; statement by E. M. Davis in U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security, "Assaults on Law Enforcement Officers," Oct. 9, 1970, box 38162, Chief of Police General Files.

<sup>50</sup> National Chicano Moratorium Committee, Press Release, Nov. 17, 1970, box 20, Bert Corona Papers (Special Collections, Stanford University Library); Muñoz interview; Citizens' Research and Investigation Committee and Louis Tackwood, *The Glass House Tapes: The Story of an Agent-Provocateur and the New Police Intelligence Complex* (New York, 1973), 137-39. The November 4, 1970, incident led to the January 9, 1971, demonstration in front of Parker Center, which also ended in violence.

<sup>51</sup> National Chicano Moratorium Committee, Barrio Defense Committee, and Congress of Mexican American Unity, Press Release, Nov. 17, 1970, box 22, Corona Papers; Congress of Mexican American Unity, Press Release, Nov. 21, 1970, *ibid.*; National Chicano Moratorium Committee, Press Release, Nov. 28, 1971, *ibid.*; Officer C. J. Brown, report, Nov. 17, 1970, box 38162, Chief of Police General Files. See also *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 1, Oct. 27, 1970.



these demonstrations ended in violence. The greatest violence occurred at the end of the January 31 demonstration when sheriff's deputies shot into a crowd of rock-throwing Chicanos, killing one and wounding thirty-five.<sup>52</sup>

The LAPD used intelligence from informers to try to prove that Chicanos had planned the violence. An agent, for example, reported that the Brown Berets had stockpiled weapons for the January 9 demonstration and that David Sánchez, prime minister of the Berets, boasted that the demonstration would end in a "bloodbath." Subsequent reports proved this information false and showed that the Berets wanted to keep the demonstration peaceful. Nevertheless, Chief Davis repeated the bloodbath story to the press to discredit the Berets.<sup>53</sup>

Davis's strategy ultimately succeeded, as the violence undermined support for future public protests in the white establishment and among some important elements within the movement itself and ultimately destroyed important movement organizations. The *Times*, for example, became decidedly hostile toward Chicano demonstrations after the January 9, 1971, protest in which Chicanos rioted outside the *Times* building. In the wake of the January 31, 1971, rally that again ended in street violence and death, Esteban Torres and Ed Aguirre, of the important Council on Mexican American Unity, declared that no more large-scale public demonstrations should take place. Rosalío Muñoz, the chair of the NCMC, bowed to this pressure. Having decided to hold no more public protests, the NCMC lost its reason for existence and subsequently withered away.<sup>54</sup>

The tensions created by the presence of police informers also took its toll on Chicano organizations. Celia Luna states that the organization she headed, the Barrio Defense Committee, eventually dissolved because the possible presence of informers not only made members suspect one another but also discouraged potential complainants from filing charges for fear of police reprisals. In 1972, thwarted by police harassment and racked with internal dissension, the Brown Berets officially disbanded.<sup>55</sup>

With legitimate forms of protest closed and with their organizations collapsing, some Chicanos turned to random violence to vent their frustrations. During 1971

<sup>52</sup> Morales, *Ando Sangrando*, 107–20; Acuña, *Community under Siege*, 213–14; *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 17, 1970, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Jan. 10, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1971, sec. 2; *ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 4, 1971, sec. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, "Intelligence Summary," Jan. 1, 1969–Dec. 7, 1969, box 74284, Chief of Police General Files; Los Angeles Police Department, Intelligence Report, Dec. 18, 1970, box 43986, *ibid.*; Los Angeles Police Department, "Unconfirmed N.C.M.C. Demonstration Activity Scheduled for Saturday, January 9, 1971," n.d., *ibid.*; Kaiser, "Partial Transcript of Tape Recording of Interview of Chief Edward M. Davis."

<sup>54</sup> Morales, *Ando Sangrando*, 107–20; *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 10, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1971, sec. 2; *ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1; *ibid.*, Feb. 4, 1971, sec. 1, p. 1. Muñoz interview. Many Chicanos believe police controlled the provocateurs who initiated the violence in order to discredit the movement. Vigil interview; Muñoz interview; Luna interview. As early as 1971, Chief Davis proclaimed that he had run the Brown Berets out of the city. Laughing, he bragged to a reporter that he had an "orbiting satellite" from which the LAPD had gained information that led to the arrests of several Brown Berets. "We knocked them off right and left," Davis gloated, "and they never did figure . . . how it was happening." Kaiser, "Partial Transcript of Tape Recording of Interview of Chief Edward M. Davis."

<sup>55</sup> Luna interview; David Sánchez, *Expedition through Aztlán* (La Puente, 1978); Gómez-Quirón, *Chicano Politics*, 120.



Chicanos marching toward Parker Center (Los Angeles Police Department headquarters) during the January 9, 1971, demonstration against LAPD repression. *Courtesy Raúl Ruiz.*



January 31, 1971, Chicano moratorium demonstration against police violence at Hazard Park in East Los Angeles. *Courtesy Raúl Ruiz.*

a wave of bombings rocked Los Angeles; a group calling itself the Chicano Liberation Front (CLF) claimed responsibility for the attacks. The bombings began on January 29, 1971, when "a sophisticated and highly explosive device" exploded in the men's washroom in the federal building in downtown Los Angeles, killing an innocent bystander. Two months later another bomb of similar construction (dynamite with an electronic detonator) exploded in Los Angeles City Hall. This time no one was hurt. Over the next several months, the LAPD received hundreds of bomb threats (many against LAPD installations) and investigated scores of actual bombings. Except at the federal building, no one was injured.<sup>56</sup>

In a "Declaration" distributed in August 1971, the CLF justified its actions as a response to police repression. It argued that Chicanos had attempted to bring about change through peaceful means but had been met only with rejection from politicians and violence from the police. "We have been shot in the streets, shafted in the courts, drafted into the army, taken advantage of by corrupt politicians, and ignored by the Government," the CLF charged. "Now we scream YA BASTA!" Adopting "the liberating force of revolution," the CLF declared itself to be "in a state of war with the Fascist system that dares to control our lives" and promised to continue the attacks. The CLF thus embodied all the radical and violent traits the LAPD had attributed to the rest of the Chicano movement.<sup>57</sup>

The LAPD spent much time attempting to apprehend CLF members. Although these efforts proved nearly fruitless, toward the end of 1971, the bombings came to an end. Sporadic fire bombings continued into November, but after August no more dynamite bombs exploded in the city. Since no one has ever come forward to explain the bombings, we do not know why they ended. In a classic example of bureaucratic politics, however, the LAPD's Criminal Conspiracy Section claimed victory, asserting that "the surveillance activities of this group has contributed significantly to the decrease in bombing activities in this area."<sup>58</sup>

While police inspired the urban terrorism of the CLF, police repression also helped politicize the larger Mexican-American community. Studies conducted in the early 1970s, soon after the conflict between Chicanos and the LAPD peaked, suggest that the movement and the hostile police response to movement activity heightened Los Angeles Mexican Americans' sense that they were an oppressed and exploited people, especially in their relations with the police. This increased sense of exploitation, in turn, led to a greater feeling of ethnic solidarity within the Mexican-American community and a greater inclination to engage in collective ethnic poli-

<sup>56</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, Criminal Conspiracy Section, Weekly Activities Report, Feb. 4, April 8, June 11, 1971, box 43988, Chief of Police General Files.

<sup>57</sup> Chicano Liberation Front, "Declaration from the Chicano Liberation Front," n.d., box 9884, Mayor Sam Yorty Papers (Los Angeles City Records Center).

<sup>58</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, Criminal Conspiracy Section, Weekly Activities Report, June 18, July 16, Sept. 24, 1971, box 43988, Chief of Police General Files.

**Table 1**  
**Percentages of Mexican Americans Believing that Police Engaged in**  
**Specific Abuses, East Los Angeles, 1972**  
**(By Sex, Age, and Self-Ascribed Ethnic Identity)**

	<i>Insulting Language</i>	<i>Rousting and Frisking</i>	<i>Stopping and Searching Cars</i>	<i>Searching Homes</i>	<i>Unnecessary Force in Arrests</i>	<i>Unnecessary Force in Custody</i>	<i>Unnecessary Force in Riots</i>
Sex							
Male	88.6	97.0	94.3	67.9	75.8	90.6	78.8
Female	68.0	78.8	83.9	61.0	75.4	75.9	79.6
Age							
14-19	70.0	91.7	100.0	60.0	90.9	80.0	91.7
20-29	75.0	87.0	96.0	65.0	76.0	84.0	68.2
30-39	83.8	89.7	81.3	64.0	80.0	83.3	86.7
40-49	66.7	69.2	75.0	60.0	53.8	72.7	69.2
50-74	85.7	87.5	90.9	75.0	72.7	80.0	80.0
Self-ascribed ethnic identity							
Mexican	79.2	77.3	77.8	64.7	77.8	77.8	75.0
Mexican-American	71.8	84.6	89.2	43.3	59.5	70.6	69.4
Chicano	89.5	94.7	95.2	88.2	100.0	100.0	95.2
Latin	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	66.7	100.0	100.0
American	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	65.0	73.0	80.0	44.0	68.0	70.0	69.0
N = 100							

SOURCE: Armando Morales, "A Study of Mexican American Perceptions of Law Enforcement Policies and Practices in East Los Angeles" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1972), 184-248, 322-32.

NOTE: Except in the "Total" category, figures do not include respondents who did not answer or answered, "I don't know."

tics. Most Los Angeles Mexican Americans believed they suffered from police abuse. Armando Morales, in his 1972 study of Mexican-American attitudes regarding police practices in East Los Angeles, found that a large majority of survey respondents believed that in their interactions with Chicanos, police used insulting language, unnecessarily searched cars and individuals, and used unnecessary force in arrests, during custody, and during riots. (See table 1.) Morales's study also shows that this belief cut across age, class, and gender lines and was shared even by those who refused to accept the political designation of "Chicano."<sup>59</sup>

Morales's findings were confirmed by the political scientists Biliana C. S. Ambrecht and Harry P. Pachón in a study that compared Mexican-American attitudes

<sup>59</sup> Armando Morales, "A Study of Mexican American Perceptions of Law Enforcement Policies and Practices in East Los Angeles" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1972), 188-248. Morales's study shows similar levels of agreement by occupation, years in East Los Angeles, educational level, and marital status.



Raúl Ruiz laying the Mexican flag on the body of a Chicano demonstrator killed by sheriff's deputies after the January 31, 1971, moratorium demonstration. *Courtesy Raúl Ruiz.*

in 1965 and 1972. This study found that most Mexican Americans in Los Angeles "consistently reported negative views of police treatment of Mexican Americans," and that a higher percentage believed they were victims of discrimination in 1972 than in 1965. The authors surmised that as a result of the movement's emphasis on racial oppression, Mexican Americans had come to see themselves "as a subordinate exploited group in American society, thus sharing many of the problems faced by Black Americans." No doubt the LAPD's efforts to suppress legitimate Chicano dissent added to that sense of exploitation and subordination.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Biliana C. S. Ambrecht and Harry P. Pachón, "Ethnic Political Mobilization in a Mexican American Community: An Exploratory Study of East Los Angeles, 1965-1972," *Western Political Quarterly*, 27 (Sept. 1974), 509, 509n50, 513-14, 514n63. Ambrecht and Pachón found that Mexican Americans, nevertheless, did not favor establishing formal alliances with blacks.

Ambrecht and Pachón's research also showed that many Mexican Americans supported the goals and activities of the Chicano movement organizations. A large majority regarded the NCMC demonstrations and, by extension, the police-Chicano conflict that followed "as a 'general expression of frustration of the Mexican people' and as a strategy to 'obtain denied opportunities and equal rights.'" Despite the massive violence and great trauma that resulted from these demonstrations, 44 percent judged the protests to have been for "the good of the community." The Mexican-American community sympathized with and supported Chicano activists in their conflict with police.<sup>61</sup>

The overall sense of exploitation and the sympathy and support of the Chicano movement stimulated what Ambrecht and Pachón call an "ethnic political mobilization." That is, Mexican Americans became more inclined to base their political choices primarily on their ethnicity and to engage in political activity in support of their ethnic interests. Overwhelming majorities believed that gaining government jobs for Chicanos (98 percent) and electing Chicanos to political office (90 percent) would help solve community problems. In addition, significant minorities supported much more radical strategies: 39 percent favored joining street demonstrations and 22 percent were willing to riot if necessary. The conflict between Chicanos and the LAPD thus helped Mexican Americans develop a new political consciousness—a consciousness that included a greater sense of ethnic solidarity, an acknowledgment of their subordinated status in American society, and a greater determination to act politically, and perhaps even violently, to end that subordination. While most people of Mexican descent still refused to call themselves Chicanos, many had come to adopt many of the principles intrinsic in the concept of *chicanismo*.<sup>62</sup>

Mexican Americans' new political consciousness had a slow but ultimately significant impact on electoral politics. During the seventies and eighties, voters elected a growing number of Los Angeles-area Mexican Americans to public office, including many who had been active in the movement. The political scientist Fernando Guerra has charted the number of Mexican Americans in "significant elective positions" in Los Angeles County; it grew from 2 in 1967 to 7 in 1974 to 11 in 1986. This new consciousness also had a more immediate bearing on the 1973 Los Angeles mayoral election, which pitted, for the second time, the conservative incumbent Sam Yorty against the liberal black city councilman Thomas Bradley. In 1961, when Yorty first won election as mayor, he had enjoyed the support of Mexican Americans and even blacks, in part because he had promised to take control of the LAPD and end police brutality. While Yorty reversed course immediately after the election and became a strong supporter of the LAPD, he maintained his popularity among Mexican Americans by appointing Mexican Americans to a few highly visible positions in city government and by making other symbolic gestures—speaking Spanish, con-

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 515–16.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 505, 507–8, 515–16.

sistently attending such Mexican patriotic celebrations as Cinco de Mayo, and making Mexico City a "sister city" of Los Angeles. Bradley, a former police lieutenant, understood well the LAPD's chronic abuses of power and gained the reputation as the department's most vigorous critic on the City Council. He also often supported Chicano activists. After the killing of Rubén Salazar, for example, Bradley was among the first to call for a park to be named in the slain newsman's honor. In contrast, Yorty accused Bradley of grandstanding and steadfastly supported the LAPD in its attacks against Chicano militants.<sup>63</sup>

The first mayoral contest between the two men took place in 1969, before much of the conflict between Chicanos and the LAPD. Yorty received 56 percent of the Mexican-American vote and won the election. By 1973, however, the politicized Mexican-American community had come to appreciate Bradley's criticism of the LAPD. Mexican Americans by a small majority (51 percent) joined African Americans (who gave Bradley overwhelming support) and a substantial minority of whites (46 percent) to make him the first African-American mayor of Los Angeles. The new mayor set out to regain control of the LAPD by appointing a strong Police Commission, which began to hear citizens' complaints of police misconduct. After Chief Davis retired in 1976, the commission established policies regarding the use of force and the discharge of weapons that earlier Police Commissions would never have accepted. While the intransigence of Police Chief Daryl Gates in the wake of the videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King by LAPD officers in March 1991 demonstrated that only massive city charter reform could make the LAPD accountable to elected officials, during the early 1980s it seemed that a modicum of civilian control had returned to the LAPD.<sup>64</sup>

Chicanos have found the courts a more effective vehicle than the ballot for ending police abuse. In 1978 the Coalition Against Police Abuse and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a suit that sought to prohibit the LAPD from investigating peaceful political groups. There were 141 plaintiffs, including many Chicano individuals and organizations. Pretrial discovery revealed that LAPD officers had infiltrated several Chicano groups, including the Chicano student organization at California State University, Northridge, and had enrolled in Chicano studies courses there to monitor faculty members' lectures. The court ordered the LAPD to cease all investigations of private groups or individuals "without reasonable and articu-

<sup>63</sup> Guerra, "Ethnic Officeholders in Los Angeles County," 90–94. (Guerra defines as significant elective positions all federal, state, county, and Los Angeles city legislative offices, all countywide and Los Angeles citywide elected offices, and positions on the Los Angeles School Board and Community College Board.) Charles G. Mayo, "The 1961 Mayorality Election in Los Angeles: The Political Party in a Nonpartisan Election," *Western Political Quarterly*, 17 (June 1964), 326; John C. Bollens and Grant B. Geyer, *Yorty: Politics of a Constant Candidate* (Pacific Palisades, 1973), 132, 169; *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 9, 1970. For an example of Sam Yorty's courting of the Mexican-American community, see *ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1970, sec. 1, p. 26. For an example of Thomas Bradley's criticism of the LAPD, see Bradley to the Police Commission, June 10, 1965, box 35328, Chief of Police General Files.

<sup>64</sup> Bollens and Geyer, *Yorty*, 163–73; Harlen Hahn, David Klingman, and Harry Pachón, "Cleavages, Coalitions, and the Black Candidate: The Los Angeles Mayorality Elections of 1969 and 1973," *Western Political Quarterly*, 29 (Dec. 1976), 514. On the LAPD in the 1980s and early 1990s, see Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department, *Report of the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department* (Los Angeles, 1991); and Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York, 1992), 267–316.

lated suspicion" of wrongdoing and mandated the creation of an audit committee to monitor all LAPD intelligence-gathering activities. Finally, because pretrial discovery disclosed a wide variety of abuses by the LAPD's Public Disorder and Intelligence Division, the department agreed to dismantle that division and to replace it with an antiterrorist squad whose activities would be monitored by the city attorney's office.<sup>65</sup>

Chicanos also began developing their own organizations to protect their rights. Out of the protest of the sixties emerged the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), whose primary function is to defend Mexican Americans' civil rights in the courts. MALDEF's top priorities have from the beginning included defending Chicano's rights of public protest and protecting Chicanos from police abuse. With national offices in Washington, D.C., MALDEF monitors civil rights violations against Mexican Americans nationwide. Since the 1970s, MALDEF lawyers have joined in numerous cases against police who tried to suppress Chicano protest or mistreated Chicanos. Police officials across the nation have thus come to understand that if they trample on the rights of Mexican-American political activists, they will have to contend with a vigilant and politically aware community as well as a highly competent and committed legal organization.<sup>66</sup>

In a broader context, much of recent Mexican-American history seems to validate Ambrecht and Pachón's study: The political consciousness the two political scientists identified significantly changed the way Mexican Americans viewed themselves and related to the larger society. Because they came to see themselves as an exploited minority group, Mexican Americans no longer opposed being categorized with African Americans for the purpose of protecting their rights. In a series of school desegregation cases between 1970 and 1973, MALDEF successfully argued that Mexican Americans should no longer be considered white and should instead be designated an "identifiable minority group" with "unalterable congenital traits, political impotence, and the attachment of a stigma of inferiority." That designation extended to Mexican Americans the same legal protection as blacks and enabled them to take advantage of special programs, notably affirmative action, that sought to redress the effects of racial discrimination. Similarly, because they placed a greater value on their Mexican heritage, many Mexican Americans rejected assimilation and instead demanded educational programs at the elementary, secondary, and college levels that reinforced Mexican culture. Finally, because of their heightened sense of ethnic solidarity, Mexican Americans reversed the previous generation's position on

<sup>65</sup> Acuña, *Occupied America*, 400–401; José Angel Gutiérrez, "Chicanos and Mexicans under Surveillance: 1940–1980," *Renato Rosaldo Lecture Series Monograph*, 2 (Spring 1986), 30–58; Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*, 271–89.

<sup>66</sup> National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and Education Fund, "A Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund: A Proposal," Aug. 7, 1967, 8–11, box 14, Ernesto Galarza Papers (Special Collections, Stanford University Library); Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, "The Year 1970: A Year of Expansion and Growth," Annual Report to the Board of Directors, *ibid.*; Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, "A Review of the Year's Pending Litigation," *ibid.*; Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, *Case Summaries*, 1978, box 39, Urban Policy Research Institute Papers. The fund's primary concern, however, has been educational reform; see San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed," 169–75.



Mexican immigration and instead fought for immigrants' rights and against immigration restriction.<sup>67</sup>

The story of the Chicano movement's struggle with the LAPD thus illuminates a critical period in American history and brings a new understanding of present-day social and political relations. The efforts and sacrifices of Chicano activists helped redefine our concept of what constitutes an exploited minority group and, along with the efforts of sixties black, Native American, Asian-American, women, and gay activists, helped give rise to the interest group politics that is so much a part of our political landscape today. For the Mexican-American community, the consequences of the struggle between Chicanos and the LAPD were even more profound. The LAPD may have succeeded in diminishing Chicano militant activity, but in gaining this victory, the department revealed to Mexican Americans their subordinated status in American society. More dramatic and convincing than the rhetoric of any sixties activist, the LAPD's repressive tactics (reinforcing the critique of police general at the time) helped convince even conservative Mexican Americans that they, like African Americans, were an oppressed racial minority and that if they wanted a measure of equality, they must act collectively to attain their rights. Thus, while the LAPD may have curbed militant Chicano activism, the response to the department's tactics gave rise to a new consciousness that has the potential to empower the Chicano community.

<sup>67</sup> San Miguel, *"Let All of Them Take Heed,"* 177-81; Gutiérrez, *"Sin Fronteras?"* 5-37.