

Introduction

“Viva la Raza! Chicano Power!”

I first heard these stirring words when I arrived in San Jose, California, in the fall of 1969. I had come from El Paso, Texas, to begin teaching as an instructor of history at San Jose State College (later San Jose State University). The rallying cry was my introduction to the Chicano movement. It had barely surfaced in El Paso, so what I encountered in San Jose was mind-boggling. I had heard about the movement, of course, and, in preparing a class on Chicano history, I had read up on it, discovering some of the emerging journals, such as *El Grito*, and movement newspapers in California. But none of this research prepared me for what I would personally experience.

I met militant Chicano students, Chicano studies faculty, and members of the Black Berets, the likes of whom I had never before encountered.¹ At first, I felt distant from them, and even a bit scared. But as I got to know some of these activists better, I came to identify with them and with the issues they were passionate about. I participated in marches and rallies against injustice to Chicanos in the schools and the community and especially against police abuse. (I had never seen such huge and intimidating cops—all white—as I did in San Jose!) It did not take me long to identify as Chicano and to align myself with the movement.

Of course, I knew the term *Chicano*. I had first encountered it in my all-boys Catholic high school in El Paso in the early 1960s. Mexican American kids from the hard-core barrio of south El Paso used it to assert pride. I lived, literally, on the other side of the tracks, in an ethnically mixed lower-middle-class neighborhood, and did not use the term myself but admired the students who did. Now, in the late 1960s, the term was connected to the Chicano movement and used politically by a

new generation to express the militant demands for civil rights, ethnic pride, and community empowerment.

Indeed, this is my generation—the Chicano generation. I too came of age in the 1960s and became politically conscious, first as a liberal Democrat and then as a participant in the Chicano movement. As a graduate student interested in Chicano history and as a professor of Chicano studies, I supported a variety of movement actions both on campuses and in the community. Through this oral history of Chicano movement activists, I have learned even more about my generational history.

It was the movement that provided the opportunity for me to advance my education, eventually obtaining a PhD in history and joining a university faculty. I owe much to the movement, and, as a professor of Chicano studies and a student of Chicano history, I aim to pass on to others the legacy of this struggle for social justice and ethnic respect. The cry “Chicano Power!” still resonates within me and is very much a part of who I have become.

I began this collaborative oral history, or *testimonio*, and the interviews with three key participants in the movement in Los Angeles in the early 1990s: Raul Ruiz, Gloria Arellanes, and Rosalio Muñoz. The text was more than twenty years in preparation. For this delay, I apologize to Raul, Gloria, and Rosalio.

This study is a collective *testimonio* of three major activists in the Chicano movement in Los Angeles during its heyday in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The years from 1965 to 1975 are especially critical in the struggle for civil rights, renewed identity, and empowerment by a new generation of Mexican Americans who revived the older barrio term *Chicano* as a symbol of new ethnic awareness and political power. The term *testimonio*, or testimony, comes out of a rich Latin American tradition of producing oral histories, or oral memoirs, through the collaboration of political activists or revolutionaries with progressive scholars or journalists.² The result is an oral testimony of the life, struggles, and experiences of activists who might not have written their own stories. While they focus on one life, *testimonios* are also collective in nature because they address collective struggles. Ruiz, Arellanes, and Muñoz are leaders, but they are group-centered leaders.

But more than just narrating life stories, *testimonios* are intended to educate others and inspire them to continue the struggles of the storytellers. *Testimonios* possess praxes: for readers to read, reflect, and act. That is what makes them a powerful teaching vehicle.

The Chicano Generation is in the *testimonio* tradition. It differs by concentrating not just on one subject but on three. This gives it a collective character, or what Jeremy Popkin calls a “coordinated autobiography.”³ I chose to focus on the Chicano movement in Los Angeles because the city represented the political capital of the movement. Every major political manifestation of the movement occurred in the City of Angels, including efforts in support of César Chávez and the farmworkers’ struggle; the student movement highlighted by the 1968 East Los Angeles

school “blowouts,” or walkouts; the Chicano antiwar movement, including the historic National Chicano Antiwar Moratorium of August 29, 1970; the organization of La Raza Unida Party, an independent Chicano political party; the Chicana feminist movement; the organizing of undocumented workers; and the Chicano Renaissance, the flourishing of movement-inspired literary and artistic production. The life stories of Ruiz, Arellanes, and Muñoz touch on many of these manifestations. While each testimonio is presented here as a separate section, they speak to one another, since these activists participated in many of the same events.

I worked with my protagonists for a long time, interviewing them and recording their stories. Altogether, I conducted almost one hundred hours of taped interviews. I have many fond memories of driving to the Los Angeles area from my home in Santa Barbara to interview first Ruiz and Muñoz and later Arellanes. These were wonderful times. I learned about their lives and political engagements. Each of the three narratives is a life story, including family history, childhood, young adulthood, early school experiences, college years, and, of course, the individual’s role in the movement. I also include material on postmovement years to the present. Each narrative is told in the subject’s voice, based on taped interviews, which I edited for chronology and clarity.

The Chicano movement was a defining moment in the lives of Raul Ruiz, Gloria Arellanes, and Rosalio Muñoz. They were part of the Chicano generation that constituted the driving force of the movement—young Mexican Americans, mostly U.S.-born, who came of age during the 1960s and early 1970s and who were transformed politically from Mexican Americans into Chicanos. They discovered, or rediscovered, the term *Chicano*, used by hard-core barrio youth to characterize their ethnic identity, and they redefined it, retaining its countercultural connotations but infusing the term with a political consciousness. To be a Chicano in the movement was no longer just to be a *vato loco*, or street dude (a descendant of the pachucos and zoot-suiters of the 1940s and 1950s), but instead an activist in the movement. This was the new Chicano generation—La Raza Nueva.

The Chicano movement was the largest and most widespread civil rights and empowerment struggle by Mexican Americans in U.S. history. It combined the more traditional civil rights issues of the earlier Mexican American generation (1930–60)—which pioneered struggles to desegregate the so-called Mexican schools in the Southwest, where the majority of Mexican Americans resided—with efforts to break down discriminatory barriers in jobs, housing, the legal system, and political representation and to eliminate cultural stereotyping.⁴ Although the Chicano movement was not aware of (or did not acknowledge) this precedent, in many ways it built on the earlier civil rights movement. Of course, the movement also has to be seen in the context of “the sixties,” the period that, despite its name, actually spilled over into the 1970s. The black civil rights movement, Black Power, the New Frontier of President John F. Kennedy, the Great Society of President Lyndon B.

Johnson, the white student movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the women's movement, along with the youth counterculture and the general rebelliousness of that era—all affected the Chicano movement in one way or another. The movement found particular inspiration in Black Power, with its assertive identity centered on ethnic pride and self-discovery. Chicano Power, like Black Power, called for a new Chicano identity and change based on the rediscovery of Chicano culture.

Chicanismo, or cultural nationalism, stressed several themes. Central to chicanismo was the claim that Chicanos were an indigenous people because of their Mexican Indian and mestizo (Indian and Spanish) heritage. They were not immigrants but natives of the Southwest and of the Americas.

As indigenous people, Chicanos possessed a historical homeland: Aztlán. In their historical excavation Chicanos rediscovered this northern birthplace of the Aztecs before the migration south and the establishment of the Aztec Empire in the Valley of Mexico (later Mexico City). Chicanos asserted the controversial position that Aztlán had existed in what became the southwestern region of the United States, the area taken by the United States from Mexico in the 1840s. The exact location of Aztlán has always been disputed by scholars, but all acknowledge that it was north of the Valley of Mexico. Chicanos conveniently placed it where they lived.

But if Chicanos lived in their native homeland, they also lived in a lost homeland. This theme of a lost homeland led to the concept of internal colonialism, which held that, because of the U.S. annexation of northern Mexico, Chicanos were similar to third world subjects, with the difference that Chicanos were colonized within the United States.⁵

Chicanismo further advanced the notion that Chicanos represented La Raza Nueva, or the new generation of Chicanos, who would struggle against colonial oppression. In this struggle they would be fortified and inspired by their new awareness of, indeed, conversion to, an empowered identity based on rediscovering their indigenous and mestizo roots. Indeed, some exhibited the same missionary zeal as born-again converts.

The heart of chicanismo was *la familia*, or the Chicano family, the gatekeeper of Chicano heritage and culture. But the movement redefined *la familia* as the community—all Chicanos were linked in a collective cultural family. In this new and extended culture, *carnalismo*, or brotherhood, would further cement the movement. *Carnalismo* extended familial protection and proposed a new humanism, suggesting that Chicano culture possessed more humanistic and less materialistic values than Anglo culture.

If *la familia* was the repository of these values, so too were the barrios, the core Chicano neighborhoods throughout the Southwest and elsewhere. The movement upheld barrio culture as the essence of what it meant to be Chicano. Barrio culture protected and nourished Chicano culture.

In rediscovering Chicano culture, the movement also found a revolutionary heritage, appropriating certain revolutionary aspects of Mexican history, such as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the figures of Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and La Adelita. Seeing themselves as revolutionaries, Chicano activists found historical antecedents and support in Mexico's most important revolution.

Finally, chicanismo adopted the concept of self-determination from other social protest movements, most notably the Black Power movement and third world anticolonial struggles. Although the meaning of self-determination always remained somewhat undefined, it rejected assimilation and embraced community empowerment. The Chicano community needed to control its own resources and destiny.

Many of these themes of chicanismo are controversial and can be challenged historically and culturally. Indeed, they would even be tested in the course of the movement. Nevertheless, chicanismo provided an essentialist ideological foundation and inspiration for the developing Chicano movement. A social protest and political movement had to be built on opposition to the dominant liberal capitalist ideology. The concept of Chicano culture and identity represented an oppositional ideology that unified the movement.

Although informed by chicanismo, the Chicano movement was not monolithic. It manifested itself in different ways and in different locations. Still, certain movement struggles can be singled out. First and foremost was the struggle by César Chávez and the farmworkers. Although Chávez and his co-leader, Dolores Huerta, were not of the new Chicano generation, they and their movement had a major influence on the politicization of younger Chicano activists, not only in California but elsewhere. The courage of the farmworkers—the lowliest of all laborers—to challenge the economic and political domination of agribusiness was impressive. Beginning with the 1965 grape strike in the San Joaquin Valley and lasting five long years, what became the United Farm Workers (UFW) finally pressured the growers to recognize the fledgling union and to sign contracts improving economic conditions. Chávez, Huerta, and the farmworkers served as a beacon to younger Chicanos in the cities. Besides being impressed by the struggle of the predominantly Mexican and Mexican American farmworkers, the emerging Chicano generation was struck by Chávez's use of Mexican cultural and ethnic symbolism: the modified eagle on the union's banner, taken from the flag of Mexico; the use of terms such as *huelga* (strike) and *La Causa* (The Cause); the issuance of El Plan de Delano from the tradition of revolutionaries in Mexican history to first proclaim their plans or goals; the use of the figure of Emiliano Zapata, the agrarian leader in the Mexican Revolution of 1910; and, of course, the devotion of Chávez, Huerta, and the farmworkers to La Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. This was an early version of chicanismo, and it appealed to younger Chicanos. It sent the signal to them that it was okay to be Mexican and to be proud of one's heritage.⁶

Drawn to the farmworkers' struggle, many new Chicano activists, especially in California, received their political baptism by supporting the 1965–70 strike. In California many Chicanos, particularly students, made their version of a political pilgrimage to Delano to offer their assistance. There they met their Moses, in the form of César Chávez, who encouraged them to return to their home communities and assist the grape boycott. As a result, Chicano students and other activists led the mass picketing of supermarkets to convince consumers not to buy nonunion grapes. There is no question but that the farmworkers' struggle was a major catalyst in the Chicano movement. In turn, Chávez, Huerta, and other UFW leaders supported the urban struggles of the Chicano generation. In my opinion, César Chávez was the godfather of the Chicano movement.

Less well known, Reies López Tijerina of New Mexico was another role model for the Chicano generation. In the early 1960s Tijerina, a native-born Texan, or *tejano*, organized a land-grant movement in northern New Mexico. He called it La Alianza Federal de Mercedes. It focused on the loss of lands by Hispanos—the Spanish-Mexican people of New Mexico—to Anglos, or whites, after the United States conquered the area and the rest of northern Mexico in the U.S.-Mexico War (1846–48). Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war, stipulated or at least recommended that the Hispano land grants be honored, land-hungry Anglo ranchers, along with the National Forest Service, usurped many of these lands. What remained were small plots worked by poor Hispanos. After researching the land-grant question in both Mexican and Spanish archives and studying the treaty, Tijerina promised to recover the grants that had been given to Hispano families as far back as the Spanish colonial settlements (1598–1821).⁷

Tijerina's fiery oratory, reflecting his background as an itinerant Pentecostal preacher, aided his campaign. An accomplished speaker in Spanish, Tijerina succeeded in organizing hundreds into a movement. To bring media attention to the issues, he staged public protests, such as the 1966 takeover of a portion of the Kit Carson National Forest, which he proclaimed a Hispano reservation. One year later Tijerina raised the ante by supporting a courthouse raid in the small town of Tierra Amarilla to carry out a citizen's arrest of the local district attorney, Alfonso Sánchez. Tijerina claimed that Sánchez and his deputies had been illegally harassing members of his group. The raid failed to detain the district attorney, who was not in the courthouse. Shots were fired and two officials wounded. The governor of New Mexico responded by calling out the National Guard in a manhunt for Tijerina. Resembling a Western drama, the courthouse raid and the search for Tijerina received national media attention, as NBC news, for example, called the land-grant leader "The Most Hated Man in New Mexico."

This search reminded Chicanos of the hunt for Pancho Villa by the U.S. military after Villa's famous 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Although Villa escaped into the mountains of Chihuahua,

Tijerina was not able to elude his captors. Arrested and indicted, he served almost three years for both the courthouse raid and federal trespassing.

Tijerina's exploits and his militant rhetoric, along with the land-grant issue, soon caught the attention of young Chicano activists. Although many supported the nonviolent tactics of César Chávez, Chicanos were also impressed by Tijerina's confrontational and even violent style, reminiscent of the Black Panther Party and other Black Power advocates, who, like Tijerina, called for the community to defend itself with arms, especially against the police. If Chávez resembled Gandhi, Tijerina resembled Pancho Villa.

Tijerina's focus on land issues served as a lesson in Chicano history for emerging activists, teaching them that prior to the U.S. annexation of the Southwest, including California, people of Spanish and Mexican descent had a land base in the region that belonged first to Spain and later to Mexico (1821–48). Because Chicanos identified as indigenous, they felt they had a claim equal to that of the Native Americans who had controlled most of the territory. "This is our land," one Chicano leader later proclaimed. This claim to a native land in turn stimulated the concept of a historical homeland for Chicanos—the Southwest, but more. Led by the poet Alurista, Chicanos discovered Aztlán, which became the Chicano historical homeland, as proclaimed by Alurista in his "Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" at the 1969 National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver.⁸

If Aztlán was the historical homeland, it was also the lost homeland taken by the Yankees in 1848. This recognition focused the attention of Chicano activists and intellectuals on the historical importance of the U.S.-Mexico War and its consequences. Not only did Mexico lose close to half of its national territory (Aztlán) in this conflict, but also the history of Chicanos, or Mexican Americans, in the United States began with conquest. The initial Mexican American generation was a conquered generation. For Chicano movement activists this meant that Chicanos were a colonized people, which partly explained their marginalization in mainstream U.S. society and led to the movement's adoption of the concept of internal colonialism to explain the second-class status of Mexican Americans. Chicanos resembled those in the colonized third world, the only difference was that they were inside "the belly of the beast," as José Martí put it.⁹

Thus, while Tijerina's land-grant movement did not generate all these ideological implications, its emphasis on the lost Hispano lands resonated with and helped justify the developing myths and theories embraced by the movement.

Although the farmworker and land-grant movements could be considered precursors to the Chicano movement, they are in fact integral to it. Both Chávez and Tijerina became icons for the movement, and Chicano activists participated in both struggles. At the same time, the Chicano generation independently organized its own urban manifestations. Students, for example, reacting to a long history of educational segregation and discrimination in Los Angeles, walked out of their

public schools in 1968, led by a dynamic and committed Mexican American teacher, Sal Castro. This series of protests became known as the “blowouts,” or walkouts, as thousands of Chicano students left their schools in the first week of March. They demanded changes to make the schools more academically sound and to give the Mexican American community more control. As Carlos Muñoz Jr. correctly notes, the blowouts commenced the urban Chicano movement in Los Angeles and in California.¹⁰

The blowouts also helped coalesce the growing number of Chicano college students, some of whom helped Castro organize the walkouts, into their own campus-based organizations. In California, even before 1968, Chicano students had formed various groups, such as the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC). Influenced by the 1969 Plan de Santa Barbara conference held at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which called for a unification of Chicano student groups under a common name, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) was born on most campuses.¹¹ Similar organizations also sprang up throughout the Southwest, taking on different names, such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in Texas.¹² These groups not only recruited more Chicano students to their campuses but also established Chicano studies programs to address the history, culture, and politics of Mexican Americans, which was then omitted in high school and college curricula. In many cases, this effort led to direct confrontations with university administrations, including mass protests and sit-ins. Chicano university students also participated in a variety of off-campus activities, such as support for the farmworkers, the blowouts, La Raza Unida chapters, and myriad other movement issues.¹³

Not all activists were students. Other political manifestations in Los Angeles included the birth of militant groups, such as the Brown Berets, who patterned themselves after the Black Panther Party with their military-style uniforms and command structure and their focus on community programs and protection against police abuse. The Berets were not committed to nonviolence in their tactics; at least rhetorically, they accepted Malcolm X’s mantra about achieving their goals “by any means necessary.” They illustrate that the movement was composed not just of high school and college students but also of community-based activists whose political work was in the barrios rather than on campuses.¹⁴

In Los Angeles and throughout the Southwest, community-oriented newspapers sprang up to form a communications network for the movement. They included publications such as *La Raza* in Los Angeles, edited by Raul Ruiz. Reflecting Benedict Anderson’s concept of an “imagined community,” this Chicano media network, along with movement conferences, helped create an imagined Chicano movement. Chicanos in different locations came to know that they were not alone but rather part of a larger struggle.¹⁵

Chicano activists in Los Angeles and elsewhere challenged the system as never before. They understood that it did not work for them or for other minorities. The American Dream excluded them. They also believed that the system would never change without confrontation. While activists used terms such as *revolución*, they did not necessarily mean armed revolution. Indeed, the term was used in an ambiguous way. *Revolución* could encompass anything from militant actions, such as those employed by Tijerina or the Brown Berets, to the blowouts demanding more practical educational reforms. What *revolución* meant—or at least what was accepted in common—was that nothing would change unless Chicanos mobilized for that change in their own organizations and employed “direct action,” such as the walkouts. This attitude distinguished the Chicano movement from moderate Mexican American civil rights groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the GI Forum, which believed that change could be achieved incrementally through established political and legal channels. The Chicano generation rejected this approach and believed that only confrontation in the streets would force change. Not all Chicano activists rejected the use of established institutions, but they understood that these institutions—the schools, the political parties, the legal system, among others—did not serve their interests and that countervailing community and people power had to confront the establishment.

With this oppositional spirit and politics, the Chicano movement clashed with many authorities—and not always the most obvious ones. In Los Angeles, for example, a number of Chicanos organized *Católicos por la Raza* to confront the Catholic Church, represented by Cardinal Frances McIntyre, to demand that the Church offer a larger share of its financial resources to poor Chicano communities, such as East Los Angeles. The confrontational politics of the *Católicos* included a disturbance at the cardinal’s 1969 Christmas midnight Mass.¹⁶

Eight months later, also in Los Angeles, the most significant manifestation of the Chicano movement occurred. This was the National Chicano Antiwar Moratorium, led by Rosalio Muñoz, which highlighted how the Vietnam War negatively affected the Chicano community. Chicanos were disproportionately being drafted into the military to fight the war because their high schools were not encouraging them to seek higher education or preparing them for college, where they could get deferments from the draft. Funds used to pay for the war also meant money not used for antipoverty and job-retraining programs in the Chicano community. Recognizing that the war did not serve the interests of Chicanos, activists organized what came to be a regional movement. Never before in America’s history had Chicanos so massively protested a war. Held on August 29, 1970, in East Los Angeles, the antiwar moratorium was the largest antiwar protest by any minority group at that time, with some twenty thousand protesters, mostly Chicanos, marching against the war. But the largest political protest of the movement and its biggest success also proved to be its most frustrating defeat. Determined not to allow

Chicanos to control the streets of East Los Angeles, county sheriffs, backed up by the Los Angeles Police Department, moved into the concluding rally and attacked the assembled participants. A police-inspired riot spread in the area, with many people arrested or wounded; three participants were tragically killed, among them Ruben Salazar, the leading Chicano journalist of his time. Salazar became an instant movement martyr.¹⁷

Other key manifestations of the movement, in Los Angeles and elsewhere, included the building of an independent Chicano political party, La Raza Unida Party (RUP), to oppose the traditional two-party system as unrepresentative of the Chicano community. RUP saw itself as more effectively representing Chicano issues and advancing Chicano empowerment than the established political parties would.¹⁸ The growing controversy and alarm expressed by some in the non-Chicano community concerning “illegal aliens” also became an issue for Chicano activists, who formed an alliance with older community leaders, such as Bert Corona in Los Angeles, to defend and organize undocumented immigrants.¹⁹ Chicano generation activists took up many other localized issues throughout the Southwest. No period in Chicano history had seen such intense, militant, and widespread protests by people of Mexican descent.

The Chicano movement proved the inspiration for a “new Chicano” and a “new Chicana” and for a new Chicano politics. In turn, writers, poets, theatrical groups, artists, and muralists were influenced by the movement’s aura. The so-called Chicano Renaissance represented a flowering of Chicano literature, art, music, and scholarly production. Besides expressing a new Chicano aesthetic influenced by pre-Columbian, Mexican, and Chicano traditions, this artistic movement used art as a political weapon in service of the movement. The Chicano Renaissance helped inspire a new Chicano critical consciousness.²⁰

The activism of the Chicano generation involved both men and women. However, as in other social movements of the period, women often found themselves struggling to assert their leadership. Despite the unfortunate presence of sexism in the Chicano movement, however, Chicanas exercised agency and emerged as leaders. Many Chicanas in both campus and community groups assumed key roles; hopefully, more localized studies of the Chicano movement will elaborate this part of the story. Chicanas became active because they shared many of the same grievances as the men concerning the racism and exploitation that Mexican Americans confronted. They embraced chicanismo and a new Chicano consciousness that recognized the historical and cultural contributions by Mexicans both in Mexico and in the United States. Chicanas first became involved in the movement as cultural nationalists, but, encountering sexist practices, some evolved as feminists. They organized Chicana feminist groups, such as *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, which convened conferences and published newspapers and other materials reflecting Chicana feminist perspectives. While the white feminist movement of the 1960s influ-

enced Chicana feminists, it did not absorb them. Chicana feminists sought to change gender relations within the movement rather than apart from it. They recognized that, unlike white women, especially the middle-class white women who led the second wave of feminism, Chicanas were triply oppressed because they confronted not only gender discrimination but also racial discrimination and, as mostly daughters of working-class Mexican Americans, class prejudice as well. While combating sexism by Chicano men, Chicanas focused not on men as their oppressors but on the American capitalist system that created the racial, class, and gender divisions facilitating oppression. Consequently, Chicanas, even against opposition, emerged as key players in the movement.²¹

The protagonists of this collective testimonio all played important roles in the Chicano movement in Los Angeles. Many other activists, of course, also participated. So how did I choose these three? I knew of them or had previous connections with them, although I was not personally acquainted with them during the movement years. Of the three, I have known Raul Ruiz the longest. In the 1980s, when I was chair of the Department of Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I invited Ruiz to speak at our Chicano commencement. I knew of his work during the movement, especially his role with *La Raza* magazine. He is also a colleague in Chicano studies, having taught at California State University, Northridge, for many years. As for Gloria Arellanes, I knew less about her than about the other two, but I soon came to recognize her historical importance as the only female minister of the militant Brown Berets. I knew of Rosalio Muñoz's activism with the Chicano antiwar movement. Although I may have met him earlier, we were formally introduced in 1995, when we participated in a local Los Angeles TV program on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Ruben Salazar and the moratorium of August 29, 1970. I had just published my edited volume on Salazar.²²

I do not believe I could have chosen three better representatives of the Chicano generation in Los Angeles. Ruiz was involved in almost all the major manifestations. Arellanes was an outstanding example of strong Chicanas in the movement. And Muñoz was, without question, the key public figure, as well as organizer and leader, of the Chicano antiwar movement, although many others contributed to this historic effort.

Readers will discover their full stories in the text, but let me introduce each subject. As a student at California State University, Los Angeles, Ruiz first became involved when he joined the staff of *La Raza*, an early and important movement newspaper. He left that publication to work on other community newspapers, such as *Inside Eastside* and *Chicano Student Movement*. While working with these papers, Ruiz helped organize high school students for the 1968 blowouts. He served as a communication channel to the students about the problems in the schools and the need for drastic action. Ruiz himself was arrested but released

without charges during the demonstrations. He also played a key role in the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC), which took up student demands and opened up discussions with the school board. In protest of the school administration's denying Sal Castro his teaching position at Lincoln High School in the fall of 1968, Ruiz helped organize a sit-in at the Board of Education offices that led to Castro's reinstatement. As a key movement journalist, Ruiz eventually became the editor of *La Raza* magazine, the most influential movement publication in Los Angeles and Southern California. Ruiz also emerged as one of the leaders of *Católicos por la Raza*. In the early 1970s he helped organize a chapter of La Raza Unida Party and became the best-known RUP candidate, running twice for the California state legislature. These are just the highlights of Ruiz's activism.

Gloria Arellanes first became involved in the movement when she joined the Brown Berets in 1967. In high school in El Monte, east of Los Angeles, she had become active among Mexican American students in combating racism in her school. Arellanes also had the distinction of representing her school in 1963 at the very first Spanish-Speaking Youth Leadership Conference, which later became the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference (CYLC), headed by Sal Castro. The Berets were a paramilitary outfit with a military-style hierarchical leadership headed by a prime minister and other ministers. The Berets focused on challenging police abuse and encouraging Chicano community empowerment through their programs. Possessing strong leadership skills plus a charismatic personality, Arellanes rose to become the sole female Beret minister. She also became the titular leader of the other female Berets. As a minister, her major contributions included editing *La Causa*, the Beret newspaper. But her greatest achievement was organizing and directing El Barrio Free Clinic, which provided health care to the Chicano community. Her leadership in these efforts, and more, marked her as a leading Chicana feminist of the movement.

One of the few Mexican Americans at the University of California, Los Angeles, Rosalio Muñoz first became involved in student politics on that campus. This involvement led to his being elected student-body president for the 1968–69 academic year, the first Mexican American elected to this high position at UCLA. He became involved with other Chicano students as they organized in UMAS and later MEChA. After he graduated in the spring of 1969, he had to deal with his military draft status. By now an opponent of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Muñoz decided to reject his draft notice in the fall of that year. With the help of others, he organized a public show of opposition to his induction and to the draft. He opposed the racism of the draft, which targeted minorities, including Chicanos, and he equated it with genocide. On September 16, 1969—the actual date of his induction and coinciding with Mexican Independence Day—Muñoz rejected his draft notice in a public rally outside the Los Angeles induction center, the first in a series of steps that led Muñoz to organize a Chicano antidraft movement, which

soon evolved into a Chicano antiwar movement. Muñoz and others initially staged two successful small- to moderate-size demonstrations at the end of 1969 and the beginning of 1970. With this momentum, he helped put together the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, which organized the massive Chicano antiwar moratorium in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970. Muñoz would go on to participate in several other movement manifestations.

Although I have presented each testimonio separately, as an individual life story, together they compose a collective memoir, or autobiography, with certain common themes. All three activists reveal that their families or friends encouraged them to be proud of their ethnic roots and culture or to stand up for their rights. While insecurity about ethnicity and identity undoubtedly played a role in their coming-of-age years, parental socialization, or the influence of friends, as in Arellanes's case, countered this insecurity and made them receptive to the Chicano movement. Their family backgrounds and early schooling predisposed them to become activists.

Likewise, all three share a particular oppositional consciousness. Each is a strong person who stood up, and still stands up, against injustice and for the community. They are principled people. There is no hypocrisy or disingenuousness about them. They are what you see. They wear their colors on their sleeves. They are, as the saying goes, natural-born leaders. Such traits explain not only their community action but also their leadership roles.

In addition, all attended college. They were more highly educated than the large majority of Mexican Americans of their generation. Ruiz and Muñoz both graduated from college, with Ruiz later receiving a PhD in education from Harvard and becoming a university professor; Arellanes briefly attended college although she never completed her degree. As a result of their advanced education and real-life experiences, all three were exposed to ideas that further laid the foundation for their activism. Ruiz majored in history, with an emphasis on Latin American history, taught by radical professors at California State University, Los Angeles. Arellanes through her high school struggles against racism gave her exposure to civil rights issues. At UCLA Muñoz majored in history, with a focus on Western Europe, and took classes with progressive American historians. Muñoz also was exposed to movement views through Chicano studies. It has been claimed that the educated classes usually lead revolutions and social movements; this seems to be the case for the subjects of this study. More local studies of the movement need to be done to determine if it is true for other movement protests and locations.

Even though all attended college, for the most part they were not in the student wing of the movement. Many young Chicano activists went to college and, while supportive of community issues, focused on bringing about campus-based changes, such as Chicano student recruitment, student support services, Chicano studies, the creation of farmworker support groups on campus, and other activities, including

cultural ones. By contrast, Ruiz, Arellanes, and Muñoz, although concerned about Chicano issues on campus, emerged as mainly community-based activists. As such, they are part of the nonstudent community wing of the movement. It is hard to make too sharp a distinction, because there was in fact a great deal of fluidity between student and community politics. Nevertheless, some movement activists spent more of their time on campus; others, in the community, especially after they graduated. Ruiz became active in almost every major phase of the movement in Los Angeles. Arellanes worked with the Brown Berets and in the Chicano antiwar movement. Muñoz organized the Chicano antiwar movement out of the community. Although some scholars conflate the Chicano generation with students, this generation was in fact more heterogeneous, as my project reveals.²³

At times—and perhaps unavoidably so—the paths of the three activists crossed. They came to know one another, especially in the antiwar movement. Muñoz worked on the 1971 Ruiz-RUP campaign. Ruiz and Arellanes supported and participated in the Muñoz-led antiwar effort. Muñoz and Ruiz worked for undocumented immigrant rights. And Ruiz and Muñoz, at different times, ran for political office: Ruiz for the state legislature and Muñoz for county supervisor and other offices.

Let me also address issues of gender and memory in these three testimonios. It is interesting that while Ruiz and Muñoz, the two men in the study, acknowledge the involvement and even the leadership of Chicanas in the movement, they downplay or ignore the threats and potential violence aimed at some Chicanas for their strong roles. In her testimony Gloria Arellanes notes that this unseemly aspect of the movement, at least in her case, created the possibility of gender violence, including rape. Memory and gender experiences diverge in these narratives.

If they shared a common political struggle and the general tenets of chicanismo, these three activists were not one-dimensional. Like many other activists, as Jorge Mariscal has shown, they exhibited various influences and ideological leanings.²⁴ In *La Raza* magazine, Ruiz introduced readers to Latin American revolutionary movements such as those in Cuba, Mexico, and Central America. He published stories on the Black Power movement; the Puerto Rican movement, especially the actions of the militant Young Lords; and Native American struggles. Through her participation in the Poor People's Campaign in 1968, Arellanes developed contacts with poor whites and other Latinos. And in building the antiwar effort, Muñoz formed alliances with the white antiwar movement, especially in leftist organizations; later, as a community organizer, he favored coalitions with other ethnic groups. While all three were first and foremost Chicanos, they also understood the importance of other progressive movements. All possessed a third world outlook, and Muñoz gravitated toward Marxism. Arellanes admired Che Guevara and movements for liberation. Ruiz never joined a left political group and often expressed suspicion of the intentions of leftist groups, but he did not oppose socialist beliefs.

Despite these multiple political and ideological influences, what especially impresses me about the three subjects—*los tres*—is their pragmatism. None of them were ideologues. Yes, they espoused chicanismo and gave verbal credence to concepts such as Aztlán and internal colonialism, but in their day-to-day direct confrontation with the system, they displayed what might be called militant or radical pragmatism. They were militant in their use of confrontational tactics, such as mass protests and other forms of direct action, and they distrusted an American capitalist and racial system that hypocritically promised the American Dream while denying this dream to blacks and Chicanos. They were militant, but they were not blinded by their militancy. Like César Chávez, they worked within the system but not with it. They displayed pragmatic strategies and organizational goals. They did not organize to achieve rhetorical goals, such as reclaiming Aztlán, but fought for specific issues affecting the Chicano community and used militant tactics to achieve their aims.

Ruiz, for example, supported the school changes advocated by Sal Castro and the blowout students; he struggled to reform the Catholic Church through *Católicos por la Raza*; he ran for political office on a third-party ticket to represent the Chicano community more effectively; and he worked on a number of other issues, such as the campaign to incorporate East Los Angeles. As a Brown Beret, Arellanes attempted to address police-abuse issues and, most important, bring about health reforms in the barrios through her leadership in the free clinic. Muñoz focused on ending the war in Vietnam because Chicanos were unnecessarily dying in an unjust war and because federal funds that might better serve the Chicano community were being siphoned off to pay for the war. He also protested against police violence and organized around a variety of basic community issues.

All the struggles and issues engaged by these three activists used pragmatic strategies and had pragmatic goals, although articulated in militant, even radical, language—to be sure, language often tempered to reach people in the barrios. I suggest that they were Chicano radicals, American radicals, in the best sense of the term *radical*. Like Bert Corona and Upton Sinclair, these Chicano activists fought to change the system but recognized that the struggle would be long and had to be built on a series of successful changes and reforms. These efforts, in turn, would empower the Chicano community. They understood that freedom and liberation can be achieved only through action.

What all this means to me is that Jorge Mariscal's correct observation that the Chicano movement displayed multiple ideological tendencies must add radical pragmatism and even radical liberalism to the list.²⁵ Chicano activists such as these three did not see themselves as liberals and indeed denounced liberalism, even that of Mexican Americans. Yet in their own struggles, they aimed to achieve liberal reforms. They understood that, even though the movement might loosely use the term *revolución*, revolutionary conditions did not exist in the Chicano

communities, much less in the country as a whole. Older radicals such as Bert Corona, Luisa Moreno, Emma Tenayuca, Josefina Fierro, and Ernesto Galarza, and others of the pre-Chicano movement years also understood this and worked to achieve practical changes. Ruiz, Arellanes, and Muñoz came to agree on this. Underneath the veneer of chicanismo was in fact a pragmatic liberalism that Chicano activists interpreted in more militant and radical ways. But this liberalism was focused not just on individual rights but on collective rights, as well as group self-respect. In the case of Muñoz, who later embraced Marxist beliefs and joined the Communist Party, these leftist connections were not irreconcilable with his pragmatic politics. The Communist Party had been active with Los Angeles Chicanos since the 1930s but had pursued a reformist and United Front approach to change in the United States, forging coalitions with democratic liberal groups and individuals and downplaying revolutionary goals. Although Muñoz sharpened his own class consciousness and radical critique of American society through Marxism, he still pursued liberal reforms as a party member.

Finally, what Ruiz, Arellanes, and Muñoz have in common is that despite their ups and downs in the movement and the toll on their personal and family lives, they never turned their backs on the movement and on their commitment to social justice, progressive change, and the empowerment of the Chicano community (Chicano Power!). They remained committed activists long after the heyday of the movement. Besides continuing to teach Chicano studies, Ruiz has remained politically engaged, opposing the U.S. role in the Central American wars in the 1980s and, more recently, protesting the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. In the postmovement years Arellanes has expanded her community involvement to include working with California Indians, her ethnic legacy from her mother's family, and encouraging young Native Americans to be proud of their heritage. Muñoz remained in the Communist Party and has continued organizing on a range of community issues, including the outsourcing of industrial jobs from the Los Angeles area and racist anti-immigration measures such as Proposition 187. He too has protested the U.S. role in Iraq.

These were not just temporary movement activists. They remain involved and, in their continuing roles as activists, see the legacy of the movement. For them, the Chicano movement and Chicano Power still live because they have seen the changes that the movement and postmovement struggles have achieved in creating more and better educational and economic, political, and cultural opportunities for Chicanos and Latinos. They recognize that these are liberal reforms, but they also know that a wider spectrum of the Chicano and Latino population has been empowered because of these reforms. They still struggle for a new and better American society—perhaps even a revolutionary one—and they know that many changes are still needed. Even in their sixties and seventies, they are still fighting the good fight.

It is the struggle to achieve a more complete democracy that the Chicano movement and the other protest movements of that era have in common. While they may not have succeeded in all their goals and they made many mistakes, at their core all were responding to the unfulfilled promise of American democracy to their communities. We can no longer ignore or marginalize the history of Chicanos and other Latinos in this country; we must integrate the Chicano movement, as exemplified by these testimonios, with the civil rights history of this period and of other protest movements. The Chicano movement and the many others in the 1960s and 1970s remind us that the struggle continues. I am proud to present and preserve the stories of Raul Ruiz, Gloria Arellanes, and Rosalio Muñoz. This narrative is also a demonstration of Chicano Power.