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**FROM WEST SAN ANTONIO TO EAST L.A.:
CHICANO COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COMPARED**

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From West San Antonio to East L.A.: Chicano Community Leadership Compared¹

Rarely did community organizational leadership arise spontaneously in both San Antonio's West Side and East Los Angeles; rather it originated in one area first and then spread, usually in a modified form, to the other. This paper examines patterns of activism in these two barrios, while exploring some of the connections between the Chicano Movement of the late sixties and early seventies with earlier and subsequent periods. Significantly, the emergence of numerous and diverse coalitions in the post-World War II period brought into play the evolving question of Chicano identity, which surfaced as voluntary associations increasingly came into contact with governmental institutions, and as local groups challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party. San Antonio, importantly, has long had a higher proportion of Mexican Americans in its total population (now roughly one-half as against thirty percent in Los Angeles County, which comprises the largest Mexican American metropolis in the nation), as well as a greater percentage of native-born Chicanos.²

The large migrant populations which resided in the colonias of turn of the century San Antonio and Los Angeles faced a daily struggle which often precluded their participation in organizations. The mutualistas which arose in the late nineteenth century and persisted until the Great Depression provided not only emergency medical and burial benefits to their members, but community solidarity. The Mexican Consul in San Antonio during the 1920s partially bridged the gap between the mutualistas and the homeland through its comisiones honoríficas, which, after 1921, assisted with legal problems and complaints against employers. The Consul remained decidedly non-partisan in electoral

matters and refrained from involvement with broader goals of community development within the larger urban context. In Los Angeles, the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas, established in 1926, united the numerous mutualistas in that city. The Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana, founded in 1931 by Jose Solorzano, an employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad, performed important charitable work in the depression years, establishing among other projects a free medical clinic in the barrio. In cooperation with the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate, the Comité also assisted in the voluntary repatriation of Mexican nationals in the early 1930s, and remained active in the barrio through the 1960s, when it took on a quasi-governmental function in the "War on Poverty."³

Emerging middle-class groups in San Antonio sent delegates to help form the League of United Latin American Citizens in Corpus Christi in 1929 from the merger of three Texas mutual benefit associations. LULAC, which required all its members to be either native-born Americans or naturalized citizens, concentrated on civil rights issues, including the improvement of Mexican American educational programs and institutions through the provision of scholarships and by initiating legal challenges. Firmly believing in the advantages of learning and speaking English "for the enjoyment of our rights and privileges," and, significantly, making it the official language for its meetings, LULAC vigorously fought the practice of segregating the Spanish-speaking in southwestern schools. The World War II years saw a lull in the organization's activities on San Antonio's West Side, while the federal Fair Employment Practices Commission in the early 1940s took an interest in combating discriminatory hiring and promotion practices at Kelly Air Base, which abutted the outskirts of the barrio and increasingly employed many of its residents.⁴

Wartime community mobilization by the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles remains overshadowed by the hysteria involving the Sleepy Lagoon Murder Trial and the "Zoot Suit Riots." Several community organizations, however, including the Coordinating Council for Mexican American Youth, the Mexican Welfare Committee, Cultura Panamericana, and the American-Mexican Victory Youth Club, joined coalitions with Anglo liberals sympathetic with the Sleepy Lagoon defendants in their appeals process. Moreover, lawyer and businessman Manuel Ruiz championed the public image of the Mexican American, which had been distorted by local newspaper descriptions portraying pachucos and zoot-suiters as Mexican hoodlums terrorizing the City of the Angels in their gangs. As Secretary of the Citizens' Committee for Latin American Youth, Ruiz exhibited strong leadership, writing pointed letters to local agencies, public officials, and newspapers counteracting the effects of widespread xenophobia, discrimination, and misinformation.⁵

San Antonio, meanwhile, had seen scattered instances of Mexican Americans clashing with Anglos on the near West Side, however it escaped prolonged and bitter confrontations. Community leadership there focused (largely by default) on the Spanish-language press. La Prensa—a newspaper published by Ignacio Lozano, a "rico" exile fleeing the disruptions of the Mexican Revolution—steered a path between Mexican nationalism and the growing consciousness of the second generation. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the immigrants gradually and reluctantly came to the realization that their existence in the barrio, with all its dire consequences, grew increasingly permanent with each passing year. The four-square-mile area remained, during the 1940s, rife with overcrowding, disease, and despair. The following decade saw movement from the original nucleus of settlement by some middle-class

Mexican Americans, who partook of the benefits of decreased housing discrimination and shared, to some extent, in the post-World War II economic development of the city(which owed largely to the influx of servicemen and federal dollars to the area's military bases).⁶

No Mexicans held elected or appointed political office in either "capital city" in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In San Antonio in 1948, for the first time, Chicanos and blacks(who although representing less than ten per cent of the city's population and confined mostly to the East Side, during the depression era enjoyed considerable patronage under their "boss," Charles Bellinger) formed a coalition allowing Gus Garcia, a member of LULAC and a World War II veteran, to win election to the school board, along with a black candidate. However, later that same year several Chicanos lost bids for state and county offices on the Democratic line as the local "ring" pitted the two minority groups against one another. In 1953, however, Henry Gonzales, son of La Prensa's managing editor, ran a successful independent campaign for the city council, becoming the first Mexican American to hold that position since the days of the Texas Republic. Throughout the fifties, as a councilman and later in the Texas Senate, Gonzales remained the lone voice for the isolated and virtually ignored West Side. During the 1960 presidential campaign, he, along with other prominent Téjanos, worked through the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations(PASO) and the state-wide "Viva Kennedy" Clubs to help deliver the Mexican American vote and shore up that key state for the Democrats. In 1961 Gonzales entered Congress, where he has maintained a record as a staunch liberal.⁷

In Los Angeles, similarly, not until after World War II did barrio groups turn to electoral politics. The Community Service Organization(CSO),

established by Mexican American veterans (including Anthony Rios, who later served as state-wide executive director) with the financial support of Chicago's Industrial Areas Foundation, emerged out of Civic Unity Leagues organized by Fred Ross, a Methodist ex-school teacher, and Ignacio López, editor of the newspaper, El Espectador. The burgeoning Mexican population of East Los Angeles became a target area for the IAF, which worked with small groups of Mexican Americans experienced in voluntary community work. CSO had as one of its first projects the election of Edward Roybal to the Los Angeles City Council, a position he had narrowly lost in his first attempt in 1947. It began by increasing voting registration from 4,000 to 32,000 in Boyle Heights alone, while widely distributing bilingual instructions on aspects of civic action, such as advising property owners on obtaining essential city and county services. In 1949 Roybal won, as did Ernesto Padilla, a CSO-supported candidate for council nearby in the City of San Fernando. The chapters in Los Angeles soon decided, however, that given their limited resources priorities should lie in attacking the social problems of the barrio. Thus they abandoned the idea of electoral activism as a part of their community service and ceased working exhaustively for specific candidates, although teams of volunteers continued to launch periodic voter registration drives.⁸

By 1950 CSO's three branches in East Los Angeles--Boyle Heights, Belvedere, and Lincoln Heights--developed a strong voice, calling attention to miles of unpaved slum streets, lobbying for the improvement of traffic lights and signals, and fighting for the construction of recreational facilities. According to the Los Angeles Daily News, CSO was "one of the nation's finest demonstrations of grassroots democracy in action."⁹ By 1952, with some 3,000 members in Los Angeles County, it had become the largest Mexican American

Organization in California. Throughout the decade, branches emerged in the southern and central reaches of the state, addressing everything from neighborhood issues to civil rights (the Los Angeles chapter boldly opposed the McCarran-Walter legislation, which, among other things, facilitated deportation of naturalized citizens). Mexican American veterans of World War II and the Korean War, significantly, continued to be outspoken champions of equality as a result of their exposure to the world outside the barrio, while new faces emerged from all walks of life.¹⁰ During the peak years of CSO activity in Los Angeles during the mid-1950s, Cesar Chavez worked on the small, full-time staff, which according to Ross, dedicated itself to seeing that "new life is continually pumped in from the bottom."¹¹

In 1960, soon after the Industrial Areas Foundation withdrew financial support in favor of a rural migrant worker program, Herman Gallegos hopefully noted that "for many years we were dependent on the IAF for organizational help. Today we have found full-time organizers of our own, and only require the Foundation's help on a part-time basis, through its educational and leadership training programs."¹² CSO had also relied on the dwindling contributions of wealthy Anglo liberals and subsidies from several branches of organized labor. However, without outside support it collapsed and remained inactive for several years until federal funds transformed its voluntary service chapters into a program of consumer education for low-income Mexican-American families in East Los Angeles, giving it a new lease on life in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, a burgeoning ethnic consciousness among raza (Chicano) youth developed, changing the composition and tactics of barrio leadership.¹³

Renewed ethnic consciousness led some community leaders to challenge the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (and later that of the Democratic Party),

which had long enjoyed enormous deference and uncritical support among Mexican Americans in southwestern cities. San Antonio and Los Angeles, significantly, each had strong prelates who presided during years of considerable metropolitan growth, from the 1940s to the late 1960s. San Antonio's Archbishop Robert Lucey, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking (formed in 1945), evidenced a strong concern for the Mexican American migrant workers in Texas, opposing the extension of the Bracero Program for Mexican nationals and greeting marchers who passed through San Antonio on their way to Austin in the summer of 1966. However, he showed little concern for the problems facing urban residents. Large-scale social action focusing on the West Side itself began only after one of Lucey's subordinates, Father John Yanta, independently applied for federal funding in 1964. His San Antonio Neighborhood Youth Organization (SANYO), with multi-service centers, soon became the biggest and most active anti-poverty agency in the Southwest.¹⁴

Los Angeles Cardinal James Francis McIntyre, Lucey's counterpart, also sought to minimize the need for social change. He tightly controlled his subordinates, becoming a bulwark of Catholic conservatism in the mold of New York's Francis Cardinal Spellman, while stubbornly protesting the enlightened reforms of Vatican II. In 1963 McIntyre suppressed a challenge by one Anglo clergyman for action by the Archdiocese in fighting racism, poverty, and segregation in the barrio. McIntyre's policy of large-scale parochial school construction, begun in the late 1940s, aimed, above all, at keeping Mexican Americans loyal and observant. Although the Archdiocese built hundreds of schools throughout its domain between 1948 and 1963, by the 1967-1968 academic year only 15% of the eligible population in East Los Angeles attended elementary Catholic Schools, with 23% enrolled in grades seven to twelve.

Many Catholic residents began questioning the Church's commitment to education, citing high tuition costs and insufficient financial assistance provided to needy Chicano families. Meanwhile, waves of activism swept the East Side, including the high school "blowouts" of 1968, with their attendant sit-ins and arrests, and the anti-Vietnam War "Chicano Moratoria" of 1969-1970, culminating in the unprovoked and disturbing killing of journalist Rubén Salazar. Simultaneously, on the national stage Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee pressured the church hierarchy to back publicly the grape boycott.¹⁵

During the first week of November, 1969, Chicano activists, angered with Cardinal McIntyre's neglect of the overwhelmingly Catholic residents of the barrio, formed a coalition with law students. Mechistas(activists in the Chicano student organization with branches at universities and colleges), and Raúl Ruiz, editor of La Raza—a radical community newspaper. This new organization, Católicos por la Raza(CPLR-Catholics for Our Race), also included disenchanted clergymen and lay people who had previously left the church as a result of McIntyre's inaction. CPLR called for the Archdiocese to investigate the problems facing East Los Angeles residents, to support leadership training classes in Catholic parishes throughout the barrio, and to make church facilities available for community meetings. Cardinal McIntyre, for his part, refused to compromise. The newly constructed and costly St. Basil's Church on Wilshire Boulevard, which many claimed served merely as a "monument" to the Cardinal, became a focal point in the developing struggle, which La Raza's editorial staff fueled with pointed articles.¹⁶ In early December, 1969, CPLR held a press conference attacking the Archdiocese and announced its commitment to the "return of the Catholic Church to the oppressed Chicano community."¹⁷

The conflict culminated on Christmas Eve, 1969. During a peaceful midnight mass outside the steps of the church conducted by CPLR members, a violent confrontation erupted as County Sheriff's Deputies moonlighting as church ushers arrested several Chicanos who had tried to attend the scheduled services within (including Ruiz and lawyer Oscar Zeta Acosta), all of whom the Cardinal promptly labeled "rabble." This widely publicized episode caused defections from the church by some of the previously faithful and dismayed many of those who remained. McIntyre soon stepped down, replaced by the Vatican in a timely fashion with the more liberal Bishop Timothy Manning, who developed a somewhat cordial relationship with CPLR. In early February, 1972, Manning named Juan Arzube, an Ecuadorian priest, as Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, authorizing him to investigate the needs and problems of residents of East Los Angeles and to identify courses of action for dealing with them. The following year Arzube publicly aligned himself with Cesar Chavez, and in 1975 he visited San Antonio, where an important new federation of predominantly Chicano, parish-based units called Communities Organized for Public Service, or COPS, had begun to attract attention.¹⁸

The San Antonio Archdiocese in the early 1970s looked to reduce its debt, stop the re-zoning of some residential areas for light industry, and fortify the older parishes which had lost much of their financial base to "white flight" after several decades of suburban expansion. Thus it readily supported COPS, which mobilized in 1974 around the issue of providing storm drains on the West Side, where, after flash floods, residual pools of water remained for days deep enough for neighborhood children to swim in them. Some prominent community leaders had previously received valuable experience agitating for the improvement of barrio through "Citizens' Participation" committees of the Model

Cities Program, which began in San Antonio in 1966, setting the precedent of involving local residents in decisions affecting their communities. This federally-funded project began an arduous process of solving the runoff problem by constructing a three-mile long, concrete-lined pilot channel for Alazan-Apache Creek, which COPS finally saw through to completion in 1975.¹⁹

Ernesto Cortes, Jr., a native of San Antonio, played a significant role in organizing COPS, styling its appeal to self-interest rather than to ideology. He adopted former Chicago CIO organizer Saul Alinsky's "confrontation" approach, fashioning it to his hometown situation in 1973 and keeping the organization focused on the immediate problems of struggling homeowners as he accumulated a strong record of tactical victories concerning neighborhood problems. COPS consistently opposed unregulated North Side suburban development, and at one point it joined forces with environmental groups to vote down the construction of a proposed shopping center that would have threatened the city's underground water supply. While it extracted commitments from candidates for specific programs, it only occasionally offered endorsements, and never sought to run its own members for public office.²⁰

Arzube, while witnessing a COPS meeting with more than a thousand Mexican-Americans lobbying a group of city councilmen, became impressed with their determination and moderate, non-threatening(at least to the church) pragmatism, and returned home seeking to establish a similar organization in East Los Angeles. Bishop Manning approved the proposal and local support soon materialized. The Industrial Areas Foundation agreed to assist the clergymen, who soon obtained funding from the church's Campaign for Human Development for a two-year pilot project. The United Neighborhoods Organization, UNO for short, thus began its formal operations in October, 1976, with Cortes(hired

from San Antonio) as chief organizer. He wisely used Los Angeles parish priests to help break down the uneasiness present among barrio residents to activism of any kind; his broad-based efforts also attracted some former members of CPLR back into fold.²¹

Keeping to local issues common to the sprawling barrios of East Los Angeles, UNO set up "action committees," one of which, headed by Father Luis Olivares of Nuestra Señora de Soledad Parish, successfully lobbied the State Insurance Commissioner and the Los Angeles City Council for the elimination of an automobile insurance surcharge imposed on barrio residents regardless of their accident claim rates. Subsequently, costs in East Los Angeles dropped by as much as 38%. UNO has also worked to improve police-community relations, fought for traffic and safety controls, and challenged red-lining by bankers of East Los Angeles residents seeking home improvement loans. By 1981, UNO's membership consisted of some 93,000 families based in thirty-two different church organizations, twenty-two of them Catholic. Like COPS, UNO appealed to grassroots activists with allegiance to the communities where they lived.²²

Both have acted as consumer pressure groups, calling attention publicly to poor conditions in the barrio. COPS, however, has also tried to influence the allocation of federal funds in favor of West Side neighborhoods, while UNO has avoided almost entirely the political arena (dismissing Latino voter registration as irrelevant, or at least impracticable, given their local orientation). Ernesto Cortes, architect of both organizations, envisions creating a network of dozens of similar community groups "for the next century" throughout the Southwest, which would focus on attaining reachable goals, not on reforming existing institutions. In the early 1980s he trained several IAF organizers to work with Mexican Americans and other minorities in Fort Worth,

El Paso, Austin and the Rio Grande Valley and also founded the South-Central Organizing Committee in Los Angeles, with a mixed black and Latino membership.²³ His theory of community activism involves increasing the traditional accountability of public officials:

We like to think we are engaged in politics in the highest sense. . . . That means beyond electoral politics. We are trying to have a say in the everyday process of decision-making. That way organizations like COPS can be the conscience of politicians.²⁴

Such an approach, although aimed at reversing the deterioration of public services in the barrios, goes against the trajectory of Chicano politics in the post-World War II period, which has consistently sought electoral power. As early as 1960, for instance, some "militant" CSO members joined the Mexican American Political Association in a "non-partisan" effort to support favored candidates and policies. MAPA, which relied for financial support on its own predominantly middle-class membership, urged Mexican Americans to form citizen clubs within both major parties. In 1961 it entered the fray of local politics by supporting the East Los Angeles Incorporation Movement. Bert Corona, a former MAPA organizer with roots in the labor movement, claimed that incorporation(which had failed overwhelmingly in attempts in the 1920s and 1930s, when the area's residents were largely first- and second-generation European immigrants) could reinforce the ethnic identity of the barrio resident as well as improve governmental services. Although the measure lost narrowly, MAPA's support of local autonomy surfaced as a political issue again during the next decade. Moreover, unlike PASO, its Texas counterpart, MAPA during the 1960s stressed the importance of recognizing the unique historical circumstances of the Mexican American in the United States as a tool for his mobilization, a theme elaborated upon to a much greater extent and pushed in

several new directions by activists in the Chicano Movement.²⁵

In 1967, several Chicano students from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, among them Jose Angel Gutiérrez, formed the Mexican American Youth Organization(MAYO), which led a series of student strikes and campus walkouts, encouraging service to the barrio. Gutiérrez, a native of Crystal City, Texas, where Anglo minorities had long controlled the overwhelmingly Mexican American population of agricultural workers, later helped initiate La Raza Unida Party. In 1970 LRUP, seeking political control there, ran a slate of candidates which forged school board and city council majorities while electing a new mayor. Its strategy, although successful in Crystal City, could not, however, be applied to San Antonio's heterogeneous Chicano community, which included a growing middle class with less of a history of blatant repression and single-minded political exclusion. Moreover, the outlook of the new generation of activists threatened the "assimilationist" approach first cultivated by LULAC, creating cleavages that doomed third party movements there from the outset.²⁶

Unlike San Antonio, which had a near Mexican American majority by 1970, Chicanos in Los Angeles comprised only about fifteen percent of the city's population, including a much larger undocumented and non-voting contingent concentrated in the lower age brackets, as well as a larger share of recent arrivals. These demographic trends exaggerated the historic powerlessness of the barrio, presenting formidable problems of community organization and education. One approach taken by Raúl Ruiz, who, after his involvement with Católicos por la Raza, served as organizer of the LRUP's City Terrace branch in East Los Angeles, opted for electoral campaigns. Ruiz twice ran unsuccessfully for state assembly as a third party candidate, in 1971 and 1972(in the latter year with the support of Bishop Arzube, Cesar Chavez, and the United Teachers of Los

Angeles), as well as for council in 1974. His strength among previously Democratic voters on one occasion allowed the Republican candidate to win narrowly, surprising many observers who had always assumed a solid Chicano bloc vote.²⁷

However, Ruiz came to realize that his challenges made little impact on long-held patterns among the masses of voters, noting in 1973,

The people might be wrong in their assessment of the Democratic Party but they nevertheless believe in it and support it with their votes. Our people had formed traditional voting patterns as strong as their religious patterns. One could say that a Mexican is born a Catholic and Democratic, neither of those institutions really serves him but he strongly defends and supports them. 8

The last significant LRUP challenge in California came in November, 1974, with a renewed attempt to incorporate East Los Angeles, which, had it succeeded, would also have involved capturing a city council majority at the same election. The decisive defeat of the measure, however, dashed hopes of controlling the government of a newly created, predominantly Chicano city of 100,000 and thereby improving local conditions. Thereafter, LRUP's inability to achieve state-wide ballot status, coupled with a decline in student support, resulted in the demise of this third party movement.²⁹

In San Antonio in 1972, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (founded in 1967 with substantial funding from the Ford Foundation) and other groups successfully challenged the multi-member state representative district for the county, permitting the election of several new Mexican American representatives to the state legislature from single-member districts. This key success helped spur the formation of the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project in 1974, which subsequently reached out to barrios nationwide in an effort to expand the Chicano electorate and to increase

representation. The protection of native Spanish-speaking peoples as language minorities in the 1975 Voting Rights Act, moreover, constituted a landmark in the struggle against restrictive election laws of all kinds and encouraged MALDEF to challenge the at-large council districting of the city of San Antonio. In 1976, in response to its lawsuit, federal monitors intervened, declaring that the Chicano community's voting strength had been illegally diluted. The implementation of a new, district system for the election of the council promised a stronger voice for the city's minorities as well as more serious debates on issues.³⁰

The following year voters elected five Mexican Americans and one black to the council and, subsequently, Chicano candidates have formed successful coalitions to ensure their elections, including the county judge and sheriff (in 1978 and 1980, respectively). In 1981, Henry Cisneros, a three-term councilman and urban management professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio, attracted the support of some North Side interests to expand his strong base on the West Side. He garnered 62% of the vote to become the first Mexican American of a major U.S. city in recent times, a widely recognized achievement. However, despite the appearance of unifying leadership, the structural benefits of the district system to democratic elections, and the massive voter registration drives of the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project and COPS, Chicano registration in San Antonio stood at only about 40% of those eligible in 1980 (compared to 56% among Anglos). Moreover, the Latino share of all of San Antonio's registered voters rose only five percentage points, from 37% in 1971 to about 42% in 1981, while turnout levels changed little over the decade.³¹

Nonetheless, increased minority access clearly represented an improvement

over the monolithic Good Government League—a reform movement directed by a businessmen's machine which ran San Antonio from the mid-1950s until the mid-1970s. Until factionalism between downtown interests and North Side developers caused its dissolution, the GGL's hand-picked council members controlled local government, to the detriment of the West Side. More recently, the Los Angeles city government, like that of the GGL in San Antonio, has remained beholden to growth-oriented city "boosters" who have done little to improve public services to inner-city residents. East Los Angeles has historically been overpowered concerning such issues as city planning and urban renewal, the introduction of industry into residential areas, and the construction of freeways in manners that dissect and further isolate Latino populations. Chicano under-representation in Los Angeles has resulted in the loss of state and federal funds for health, education, housing, and transportation. Middle-class Chicanos, meanwhile, made a definitive break with the barrio, causing their voice to become diluted and diffused towards suburban "quality of life" issues.³²

Whereas in San Antonio federal intervention restructured the political system, in Los Angeles district elections already existed. Nonetheless, lower voter participation and inadequate representation in the Democratic-controlled state legislature caused the most populous ethnic group on the West Coast to remain largely outside the decision-making process. During the reapportionment process following each U.S. decennial census, the Democratic Party's leadership in Sacramento has, in recent decades, conducted extreme gerrymandering. Rather than allowing barrio boundaries some territorial integrity, it has systematically spread minority populations among several districts in order to maximize support for its candidates vis-a-vis the

Republicans. Such practices in the early 1960s, under Governor Edmund G. Brown, resulted in no assembly district having more than 30% Mexican American registered voters. Chicanos constituted numerical minorities in each of the city's fifteen council districts and East Los Angeles, with close to 800,000 Chicanos in 1967(including both incorporated and unincorporated regions), had been splintered into nine assembly, seven senate, and six congressional districts. A 1971 court ruling (Calderón v. Los Angeles) that city reapportionment must be made strictly on the basis of population, not on the number of registered voters, increased the potential for representation in barrio communities where large numbers of undocumented immigrants lived, yet structural barriers retarded electoral participation and fostered further hopelessness.³³

In 1972 an activist coalition, including the group Chicanos for Fair Representation, MALDEF, and other citizens' organizations, achieved almost no success in lobbying the Democratic-controlled state legislature. However, political infighting between legislators and Governor Ronald Reagan(neither of whom supported the creation of a "Chicano seat") resulted in a stalemate, ultimately forcing the intervention of the California Supreme Court. Its 1973 Special Master's Plan for assembly, senate, and congressional districts proved more favorable to Los Angeles Latinos than proposals put forward by the Democratic legislature, but accounted for little genuine progress in Chicano representation during the course of that decade. However, community-based activists, scholars, lawyers and other professionals in Los Angeles in February, 1981, revived and strengthened the lobby for the next reapportionment battle. Californios for Fair Representation(CFR), drawing on the resources of the Rose Institute of State and Local Government(of Claremont Men's College)

conducted re-mapping plans, offered testimony before legislative and advisory committees, and drew needed media attention to their cause, thereby increasing the level of influence of the state's four and one-half million Latinos (overwhelmingly Chicanos, despite a growing Central American influx).³⁴

In 1980, Speaker Willie Brown rewarded Los Angeles Assemblyman Richard Alatorre, one of few Mexican Americans in the legislature at the time, for his support with the chairmanship of the Reapportionment and Elections Committee, placing him instantly as an "insider" in power politics, second only to Representative Edward Roybal, a national figure since his election to Congress in 1962. During legislative reapportionment Alatorre negotiated gains for Chicano communities in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and other counties. However, he could not surmount the barriers of incumbency to create new districts within Los Angeles, primarily because the population of the central city had steadily decreased in relation to outlying areas. Nonetheless, his voice, along with the sustained CFR outcry, may well have prevented the state legislature from further fragmenting minority populations, and, moreover, clearly alerted many observers to the mechanisms which reinforced Chicano political under-representation. The 1982 Los Angeles city reapportionment conflict involved two locally-based organizations, Project Participar and MALDEF (the latter also has offices nationwide) which, having gained state-wide experience the previous year, precipitated a federal suit against the city in 1985 for voting rights violations (indeed, until that year no Chicano had filled the position on the Los Angeles City Council which Roybal had vacated over two decades earlier). The lawsuit forced the Council to redraw its district lines, enabling Gloria Molina to win election as only the third Hispanic member in modern history (Alatorre himself won a seat in 1984, but not in a district

specially created in response to discrimination). Similarly, the Republican-dominated County Board of Supervisors, which has not had a Mexican American members since the 1870s, recently became the target of a federal suit aimed at promoting equitable representation for the 1990 election.³⁵

The cases of San Antonio and Los Angeles reveal diverse types of community leadership, which arose, in part, from the need to circumvent the traditional paternalism of the dominant religious hierarchy and to challenge historic patterns of political exclusion. The future of grassroots organizations like COPS and UNO remains cloudy and dubious, owing to their essentially conservative postures tied in with the Catholic Church. Even if the "latinization" of American Catholicism proceeds steadily (with the naming of more Chicano bishops in the Southwest), the purse-strings will remain in the hands of distant councils. Looking at developments in the electoral sphere, the evanescent La Raza Unida Party of Los Angeles forced the Democrats to pay greater attention to the "Hispanic vote" (this occurred to a greater extent in Texas, where the LRUP ran candidates state-wide in the early 1970s), contributing to the re-focusing of liberal activism. LULAC, for example, amended its constitution in the late 1970s to permit local chapters to endorse candidates and mobilize voters, and embraced the cause of the civil rights of undocumented workers (a group which it had long treated somewhat antagonistically). Court decisions have helped curtail the most egregious instances of political bias in San Antonio, and to a lesser extent in Los Angeles. The persistent battles over fair representation reveal that numerical strength needs to be bolstered by vocal, broad-based community support.³⁶

Struggles by Latinos throughout the nation have varied according to local

conditions. In New York City, for example, Puerto Ricans have initiated successful legal challenges through coalitions with blacks, yet they have failed to agree on candidates for city-wide office, despite their combined potential at the polls. In Chicago, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos forged a "united Latino challenge" through the joint efforts of MALDEF and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, facilitating the election of Latino aldermen. However, Latino support of black candidates vanished after the reelection of Harold Washington two years ago, ending the short-lived "Rainbow Coalition" in that city. Politics in Philadelphia, Boston and other "Snowbelt" cities, which tend to have more blacks than Latinos, remain volatile as well. Miami's huge Cuban population, which previously surpassed other ethnic groups economically, increasingly dominates the ranks of local political leadership. Southwestern barrios, where Chicanos dominate, may emerge as new anchors of Democratic political strength. Regardless of the specific direction of future trends, the development of coordinated political coalitions offers the greatest hope of focusing community activism, perhaps in unexpected and novel directions.³⁷

NOTES

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²For an extensive treatment of San Antonio as an historic Chicano city, see David A. Badillo, "From South of the Border: Latino Experiences in Urban America," (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1988).

³Rodolfo F. Acuna, A Community Under Siege; A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River 1945-1975 (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, Monograph No. 1, 1984), 10-11. See also Francisco E. Balderrama, In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982) and Julie L. Pycior, "La Raza Organizes: Mexican American Life in San Antonio, 1915-1930 As Reflected in Mutualista Activities," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1979).

⁴Badillo, 148, 261-263.

⁵Mauricio Mazon, The Zoot-Suit Riots; The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 23-24, 27. See also Manuel Ruiz Papers, Stanford University Library, Special Collections, Boxes 2-4.

⁶See Richard A. Garcia, "The Making of the Mexican-American Mind, San Antonio, Texas, 1929-1941: A Social and Intellectual History of an Ethnic Community," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1980); Richard A. Garcia, "Class, Consciousness and Ideology—The Mexican Community of San Antonio, Texas: 1930-1940," Aztlan 9 (1978); and Ozzie G. Simmons, Anglo-Americans and Mexican Americans in South Texas; A Study in Dominant-Subordinate Group Relations (New York: Arno Press, 1974).

⁷Badillo, 262-263.

⁸Ralph C. Guzman, "The Political Socialization of the Mexican American People," (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1970), 246-247; Richard Santillan, La Raza Unida (Los Angeles: Tlaquilo Publications, 1973), 8; Bishops' Committee for the Spanish-Speaking, Newsletter, 29 (August 1954), 3, in Ernesto Galarza Papers, Stanford University Library, Special Collections, Box 13-4. Unlike Los Angeles, CSO voter registration efforts in the Central Valley persisted throughout the 1950s, a period which witnessed the election of the first Mexican Americans to the school board and city council in Fresno County.

⁹Quoted in CSO pamphlet, "Here is Your Community Service Organization" (Los Angeles: Community Service Organization, 1951), 5, in Galarza Papers, Box 13-7.

¹⁰Acuna, 38.

¹¹Quoted in Rt. Rev. Msgr. John O'Grady, "New Life Comes From the Bottom," Catholic Charities Review (December 1955), 5.

¹²Quoted in Fred Ross, "Mexican-Americans on the March," Catholic Charities Review (June 1960), 23.

¹³Guzman, 254; Paul M. Sheldon, "Community Participation and the Emerging Middle Class," in La Raza; Forgotten Americans, ed. Julian Samora (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 141.

¹⁴Due to a variety of historical circumstances, Chicanos of the Southwest have had little representation in the councils of the American Catholic Church. As late as 1973, only two Chicanos had been appointed parish priests in San Antonio, although by the end of the decade, largely due to the encouragement of Mexican American Bishop Patrick Flores, who backed COPS and recognized the needs of barrio residents, local "social action" increased. However, the national hierarchy remains largely unresponsive, especially when compared with its intervention in the urban adjustment of European immigrants in the Northeast and Midwest. See Jan Jarboe, "Building a Movement," Civil Rights Digest (Spring 1977); Rick Casey, "Bishops Back Barrio Power," National Catholic Reporter, December 3, 1976; and Saul E. Bronder, Social Justice and Church Authority: The Public Life of Archbishop Robert E. Lucey (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

¹⁵Isidro Ortiz, "Chicano Urban Politics and the Politics of Reform in the Seventies," Western Political Quarterly 37 (December 1984), 565-566; Lawrence J. Mosqueda, Chicanos, Catholicism and Political Ideology (Lanham, Md. : University Press of America, 1986), 65-67.

¹⁶Mosqueda, 103-106; Francisco M. Andrade, "The History of 'La Raza' Newspaper, and its Role in the Chicano Community From 1967 to 1977," (Master's thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 1979), 50, 53.

¹⁷Quoted in Ortiz, 568.

¹⁸Ibid. ; Mosqueda, 106-108.

¹⁹Peter Skeery, "Neighborhood COPS: The Resurrection of Saul Alinsky," New Republic (February 6, 1984), 113; Badillo, 65, 265-267; Joseph D. Sekul, "Communities Organized for Public Service: Citizen Power and Public Policy in San Antonio," in The Politics of San Antonio: Community, Progress, and Power, eds. David R. Johnson, John A. Booth, and Richard J. Harris (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 232; Charles F. Levine, "Understanding Alinsky: Conservative Wine in Radical Bottles," in Varieties of Political Conservatism, ed. Matthew Molden, Jr. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974), 121, 122, 124. See also Frances J. Woods, The Model Cities Program in Perspective: The San Antonio, Texas, Experience (Washington, D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1982).

²⁰John H. Culver and John C. Syer, Power and Politics in California (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1980), 293; Ortiz, 570.

²¹Culver and Syer, 293.

²²"Boyle Heights: Problem, Price, and Promise," July 31, 1982, in Los Angeles Times, ed., Southern California's Latino Community (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times, 1983), 46-48.

²³"2 Latino Activists Travel Separate Paths" July 29, 1983, in Los Angeles Times, ed., 42.

²⁴Ibid., 43.

²⁵Guzman, 257, 259, 265; Acuna, 262. See also Reynaldo F. Macias, Guillermo V. Flores, Donaldo Figueroa, and Luis Aragón, A Study of Unincorporated East Los Angeles (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Center, Monograph No. 3, 1973). Although appearing hopelessly conservative compared to Chicano activists, MAPA Secretary Manuel Ruiz in the late 1960s argued, "in matters of coalition, if the same be indispensable and of advantage to us as American citizens, that we retain our identity as MEXICAN-AMERICANS, and insist upon the same in all pending resolutions and transactions relating to our identity." He also conceded the heterogeneity of Mexican Americans ("such as any of the American citizens of French, Italian, Germanic or other racial strain") and further noted, "A Mexican-American is usually identifiable by his bi-cultural background, which is Hispanic, in centra-distinction to 'English' which is why Mexican-Americans often times refer to the English speaking culturally oriented majority of our citizenry as 'Anglos.'" Letter from Manuel Ruiz to MAPISTA [n.d.], Manuel Ruiz Papers, Stanford University Library, Special Collections, Box 20-9, 2.

²⁶Carlos Muñoz, Jr., and Mario Barrera, "La Raza Unida Party and the Chicano Student Movement in California," Social Science Journal 19 (April 1982), 101-103; Santillan, La Raza Unida, 3. See also John S. Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974).

²⁷Munoz and Barrera, 102-104.

²⁸Quoted in Muñoz and Barrera, 104.

²⁹Ibid., 102-104.

³⁰John A. Booth, "Political Change in San Antonio, 1970-1982: Toward Decay or Democracy," in The Politics of San Antonio; Community, Progress, and Power, eds. David R. Johnson, John A. Booth, and Richard J. Harris (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 197.

³¹Booth, 197, 199.

³²George E. Mowry, The California Progressives (Chicago: Quadrangle

Books, 1951), 39, 48, 52; Los Angeles Times, ed., 43. See also David R. Johnson, "San Antonio: The Vicissitudes of Boosterism," in Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II, eds. Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

³³Richard Santillan, "Third Party Politics: Old Story New Faces," in Chicano Politics; Readings, ed. F. Chris Garcia (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1973), 150; Richard Santillan, California Reapportionment and the Chicano Community; An Historical Overview 1960-1980 (Claremont, Ca.: Claremont Men's College, Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1981), 1, 4. See also Richard Santillan, ed., The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, Vol. 2 (Claremont, Ca.: Claremont Men's College, Rose Institute of State and Local Government, 1984).

³⁴Santillan, "Third Party Politics," 32; James A. Regalado, "Latino Representation in Los Angeles," in Latino Empowerment: Progress, Problems, and Prospects, eds. Roberto E. Villareal, Norma G. Hernández, and Howard D. Neighbor (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 92-94, 96; Richard Santillan, "The Chicano Community and the Redistricting of the Los Angeles City Council, 1971-1973," Chicano Law Review 6 (1983), 127, 138-140; Bruce E. Cain, The Reapportionment Puzzle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36-37, 92.

³⁵Culver, 260; Santillan, California Reapportionment, 32; Regalado, 94, 99; Charles S. Navarro, "California Redistricting and Representation: Los Angeles County's Chicano Community," (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1982), 131, 170-172; "U.S. Sues to Get New Supervisor Districts Drawn," Los Angeles Times, September 9, 1988, Part I, 28.

³⁶Ortiz, 571; Mosqueda, 146, 155, 158, 175, 183, 189-191, 197; Richard A. Garcia, "The Chicano Movement and the Mexican American Community, 1972-1978: An Interpretive Essay," Socialist Review 8 (July-Oct. 1978), 123, 130. See also David G. Gutiérrez, "CASA in the Chicano Movement: Ideology and Organizational Politics in the Chicano Community, 1968-1978," Stanford Center for Chicano Research, Working Paper Series, No. 5 (August 1984).

³⁷Juan Cartagena, "The Role of the Puerto Rican Community in the Reapportioning of Legislative Bodies in the 1980s," in The Hispanic Community and Redistricting, 175, 177, 178, 181, 185; Rufus P. Browning, Dale R. Marshall, and David H. Tabb, Protest is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 134, 204, 237. See also F. Chris Garcia, ed., Latinos and the Political System (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).