



Chicano student walkout, September 16, 1969, at Kansas City's West High School. This photo appeared in the activist newspaper Vortex.



La Voz de la Gente

Chicano Activist Publications in the Kansas City Area, 1968–1989

by Leonard David Ortiz

Many Chicano student walkouts occurred during the social unrest of the late 1960s in cities such as Los Angeles, San Jose, San Antonio, and Denver. On September 16, 1969, a walkout by Chicano youth took place at West High School in Kansas City, Missouri's, West Side. Despite their small numbers, Chicanos and those who identified themselves as Mexican Americans in the Kansas City area were politically active in their communities. Little would be known about the walkout and other Hispanic protests were it not for the local neighborhood and Latino newspapers and newsletters that circulated in Kansas and Missouri during this period.¹ The students at West High were supported by the Brown Berets (a Chicano youth activist group agitating for civil rights in the Mexican American community), and they made the following demands: the designation of September 16, Mexican Independence Day, as a national holiday in the United States; the creation of solidarity and unity for all Chicanos; and the implementation of Mexican American culture-oriented curriculum changes and bilingual classes.

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1. Throughout this article the terms Chicano, Mexican American, Latino, and Hispanic are used interchangeably as all these terms appear in the newsletters and newspapers discussed.

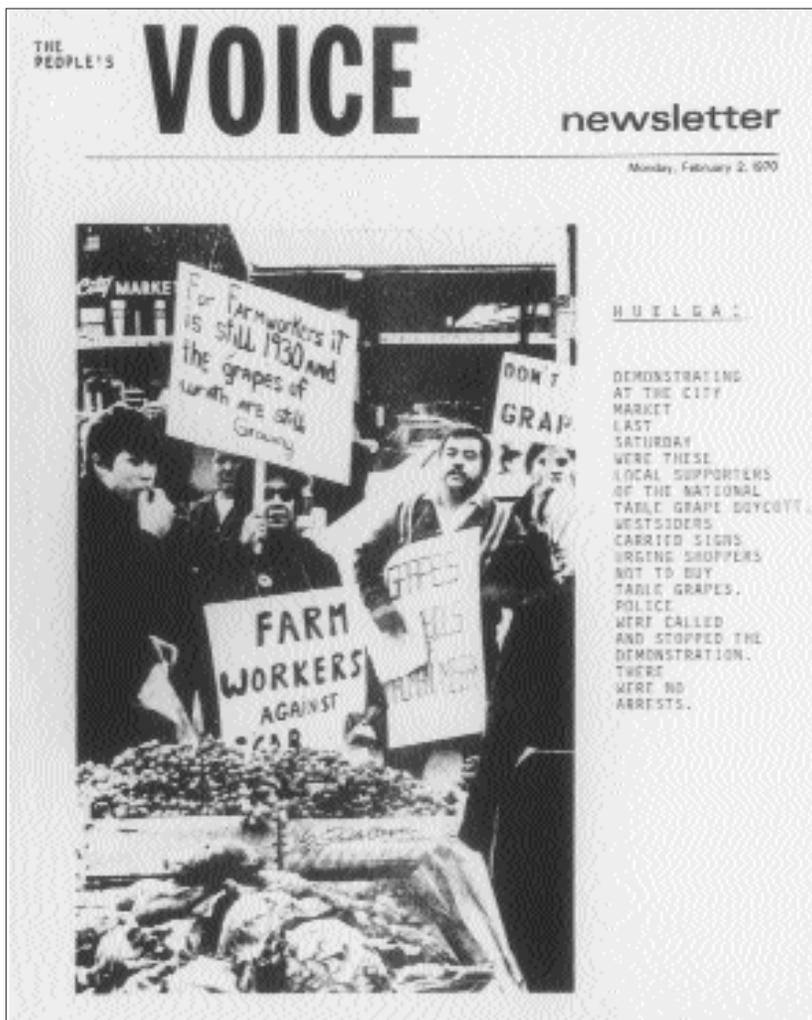
The students left the campus and marched to the Chicano Cultural Center at 2139 Summit. According to *Vortex*, an activist newspaper published in Lawrence, Kansas, they listened to Mariachi music and held a dance that, as one witness reported, was more than a dance. Chicano activists at the walkout talked to the students about what it is like to be brown: "You're old enough. Life is not all dances and drink-

the whole thing, was splendid. I was impressed. The courses do need changing."²

Like Hispanics in other areas of the United States, those in Kansas City struggled to end discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and strive for self-determination. Hispanics who settled in Kansas and Missouri sought better lives for their families. They left their native Mexico because of poor wages and lack of available jobs. During the 1920s Mexicans took jobs in the railroad and agricultural industries doing work that most Euro-Americans found unacceptable due to deplorable conditions. As Paul Gonzalez, vice principal of West High School in Kansas City, stated, we were

a source of cheap labor, and we performed tasks that no one else would accept. . . . We lived in box cars, dilapidated hovels, and these became our total environment, our habitat. As if being socially ostracized were not enough, we were frequently cheated out of our wages. We were dispossessed of our belongings. We were humiliated and impoverished. We built the great railroads with sweat, suffering and tears.³

Although early Mexican communities often were mobile, residents brought with them their language, history, religion, and culture.⁴ It was important for the Mexican neighborhoods to establish permanent communities where businesses could accommodate the needs of Latinos. As historian Valerie Mendoza wrote, "It was important for Mexicans to be able to walk into a store and speak their own language."⁵ Thus, Mexican-owned businesses were crucial to the development of Mexican communities.



The People's Voice, the newsletter of Kansas City's West Side, supported Chicano activism as a means to draw attention to the needs of the Hispanic community.

ing. You know what I'm saying. You're brown, be proud." Later in the afternoon the principal of West High, Arnold Davenport, commented, "I think these students are admirable. The way they handled this,

2. "A Chicano Walkout," *Vortex* 1 (September 23–October 6, 1969): 3.
 3. Paul Gonzalez, "The Midwest Mexican Experience," *Entrelineas* 5 (Spring–Summer 1976): 3.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Valerie Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1997), 13.

Hispanic communities experienced significant population increases during the two decades, 1968–1989, covered in this article. Mexican Americans represented about 60 percent of the population in the Argentine, Rosedale, and Armourdale areas within Kansas City. The Kansas City school district contained 1,301 Spanish surnamed students, or 4.5 percent of the total school population.⁶ In 1980 the U.S. Bureau of the Census reported 63,339 persons of Hispanic origin residing in Kansas, a 17 percent increase over the 54,125 people of Hispanic origin reported in the 1970 census. Throughout Kansas the Hispanic population varied across counties ranging from 11,256 in Sedgwick County to 3 in Jewell County.⁷ As these communities grew they struggled to maintain their culture while accepting various institutions from within the dominant Euro-American society. Shared experiences of heritage, culture, and self-determination were inculcated into the collective experience of Latinos who lived within the greater context of non-Hispanics.

The Chicano movement in Kansas and Missouri sought change in myriad ways utilizing various resources and methods. A crucial source for understanding these struggles are the region's Mexican American daily and weekly newsletters and newspapers. Beginning in the early twentieth century Mexican communities have published their own newsletters and newspapers that focused on national as well as local sociopolitical, economic, and educational issues.

Many of the activist newspapers consulted for this study date from the late 1960s through the 1980s. These Chicano publications range from simple newsletters printed by neighborhood organizations to more sophisticated periodicals published by Penn Valley Community College, Kansas City, Missouri; the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth; and the Kansas Advisory Committee on Hispanic Affairs, Topeka.

6. "Survey Update," *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* 1 (September 1978).

7. U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *General Population Characteristics, Kansas, 1980* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981).

The selected publications highlight the various challenges and goals facing the Latino community. Of these issues, five subjects of paramount importance to the Latinos in the Kansas City area surfaced: education, community, revolution, pride, and culture. This article examines how local Hispanic newspapers and newsletters addressed these issues and discusses their propinquity with the Chicano movement at the national level.

Chicano activist newsletters and newspapers were a vibrant part of the Mexican American movement in the Kansas City area. The *People's Voice*, the newsletter of Kansas City's West Side, called to attention the September 1969 student walkout. In addition to alerting the community to the educational needs of Mexican Americans, the newsletter celebrated the walkout as a "day of identity and solidarity with LA CAUSA, the Mexican–American struggle for cultural identity."⁸ While much research has focused on communities with large Mexican American populations particularly in the West and Southwest, Chicano activism in the Kansas City area has received little attention.

In "Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest: Expanding the Discourse," Erasmo Gamboa argued that scholars need to re-examine the Chicano experience and bring the historiography into a general discourse. His argument is based on the study of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest in which he concluded that the Chicano voice was largely unheard within the historic community.⁹ In addition, the study of Mexican Americans in the Midwest has been neglected, but a few of the scholarly works on Hispanics in the Midwest deserve mention here. Dennis Nodín Valdes's research of upper Midwest Hispanic field workers' struggle against exploitative employers is an excellent study of labor history among Latinos in the sugar beet industry.¹⁰ Likewise, Walter K. Barger and Ernesto M.

8. "Chicano Walk-Out the Sixteenth of September," *People's Voice* 2, no. 9 (1969): 1.

9. Erasmo Gamboa, "Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest: Expanding the Discourse," *Americas Review* 23 (Fall–Winter 1995): 15, 22.

10. Dennis Nodín Valdes, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917–1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

Reza's labor study of Baldemar Velasquez and his Farm Labor Organizing Committee's struggle to empower farm workers primarily in Ohio and Michigan examines the new relationships that were forged between midwestern farm workers and growers struggling with farm labor reform.¹¹

In industrial areas, Zaragosa Vargas's *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917–1933* looks at demographic shifts among Mexicans into the Midwest that caused American society to rethink power structures and socioeconomic and political relationships between Mexicans and the society into which they emigrated.¹² Donald Stull and Lourdes Gouveia look at the social and economic impact of the booming meat processing industry on Latinos in Garden City, Kansas, and Lexington, Nebraska. Stull and Gouveia's study concludes that new jobs created greater levels of poverty for immigrants, native minorities, and women in these communities.¹³

A number of works have looked at how Mexican immigration into the Midwest contributed to the cultural and socioeconomic development of this region. In-

cluded are Michael M. Smith's *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* and James B. Lane and Edward J. Escobar's anthology *Forging a Community: The Latino Experience in Northwest Indiana*. Two excellent dissertations that examine the evolution of Mexican American communities in Kansas are Judith Fincher Laird's "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican–American Community, 1905–1940" and Valerie Mendoza's "The

A PUBLICATION OF THE SPANISH SPEAKING OFFICE OF KANSAS CITY, KANSAS
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¿DÓNDE ESTÁ
MI RAZA?

Volume 1, No. 6 March 1977

<p>IMMIGRATION</p> <p>(This is the third in a series of articles exploring some major national issues and concerns of the Chicano community.)</p> <p>FACTS: Since 1964, the number of deportable aliens has increased by about 20% per year.</p>	<p>III. IMMIGRACION</p> <p>(Está en la tres en una serie de artículos explorando algunos de los mayores intereses y temas de la comunidad Chicana.)</p> <p>HECHOS: Desde 1964, el número de personas extranjeras ilegales ha aumentado 20 por ciento por año aproximadamente.</p>
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This publication of the Spanish Speaking Office of Kansas City strongly voiced the needs of the Chicano community, particularly education and cultural identity.

Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890–1930." These studies offer new insights into the process of social and cultural change that occurred because of Mexican immigration into these areas.¹⁴ Both authors argue that despite hostile working conditions in the railroad industry, Mexicans were able to manipulate the assimilation process

14. See Michael M. Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); James B. Lane and Edward J. Escobar, eds., *Forging a Community: The Latino Experience in Northwest Indiana, 1919–1975* (Chicago: Cattails Press, 1987); Judith Laird, "Argentine, Kan-

11. W.K. Barger and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

12. Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917–1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

13. Donald Stull and Lourdes Gouveia, "Dances With Cows: Beef-packing's Impact on Garden City, Kansas, and Lexington, Nebraska," in *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small Town America*, ed. Donald D. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 102.

of the dominant culture to meet their needs. Despite regional differences, Chicano history of the Midwest contributes greatly to the awareness of the Hispanic experience in the Southwest and far West. Chicano history must be broadened regionally and culturally so that a deeper and greater appreciation of Mexican American history can be achieved.¹⁵

Although many of the newsletters examined in this article were published in the Kansas City area, they discuss social issues and cultural events of interest to Hispanics all across the state of Kansas. The majority of these publications is bilingual. Poems and corridos (songs) were published both in English and Spanish. The strength and influence of these publications eventually saw the State of Kansas publishing its own Mexican American periodicals whose primary focus was on the issues concerning Hispanic people.¹⁶ Despite the relatively small numbers of Chicanos in the Kansas City area, the people of the ethnic communities celebrated their culture and heritage and faced many of the same socioeconomic ills as Hispanics across the United States. This literature was associated with a new national consciousness of political, social, and cultural identity linked to the Chicano movement. Mexican American writers in the 1960s and early 1970s argued that social interaction relied on those who voiced their needs publicly. For the Chicano community culture, pride, hegemony, and sharing in the full life in America depended on a voice and a force that commanded attention and action.

The theoretical and methodological approaches Chicano activists used to empower their communities often were inspired by corridos and poetry published in the local newspapers. The poems of such activists

sas: The Evolution of a Mexican–American Community, 1905–1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975); Mendoza, “The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890–1930.”

15. The Chicano communities in the Kansas City area include on the Missouri side: West Westport, Northeast, Lillis, De la Salle; and on the Kansas side: Argentine, Rosedale, Wyandotte, Ward, and reports from Chicano enclaves throughout the state of Kansas.

16. For example, see *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes*, published by the Kansas State Advisory Committee on Mexican American Affairs, Topeka. In subsequent years *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* was renamed *La Voz Del Llano* and *El Corrido*.

as Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, Lalo Delgado, Raul Salinas, and Reies López Tijerina acted as powerful catalysts for identity and strength during the Chicano movement. These artists acted as beacons for many local poets in the Kansas City area, many of whom go unnamed in the newsletters and newspapers.

Mexican corridos and poems inspired by pride, struggle, and conflict with Euro-American culture circulated in the United States as early as the middle nineteenth century. While the writers remain unknown, the corridos “Kiansis I” and “Kiansis II” have been sung by Mexican families since the 1860s. These corridos are historically significant as they are examples of Mexican or Mexican American literary expression that sought hegemony and self-determination among Hispanics in Kansas. These early corridos told of intercultural conflict between Mexican vaqueros and Anglo cowboys along the Kansas trails leading to Abilene, Dodge City, Ellsworth, and Wichita.¹⁷ Despite the violence and oppression that Mexican cowboys endured, these songs tell of the vaquero’s great self-respect and dignity. Like Chicanos during the Chicano movement, vaqueros were a proud people who often protested oppression and injustice through music and literature.

KIANSIS II

Quando salimos pa’ Kiansis

When we left for Kansas

con una grande corrida,

on a big cattle drive,

gritaba mi caporal:

my caporal shouted:

—Les encargo a mi querida.—

“Take good care of my beloved.”

Contesto otro caporal:

Another caporal replied:

—No tengas cuidado, es sola;

“Have no fear, she has no other loves;

que la mujer que es honrada

for if a woman is virtuous

aunque viva entre la bola.

it doesn’t matter if she lives among men.”

17. Américo Paredes, *A Texas–Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 55.

Quinientos novillos eran,
Five hundred steers there were,
 todos grandes y livianos
all big and quick
 y entre treinta americanos
and thirty American cowboys
 no los podían embalar.
could not keep them bunched together.
 Llegan cinco mexicanos,
Then five Mexicans arrive,
 todos bien enchivarrados,
all of them wearing good chaps,
 y en menos de un cuarto de hora
and in less than a quarter-hour
 los tenían encerrados.
they had the steers penned up.

esos cinco mexicanos
Those five Mexicans
 al momento los echarón,
penned up those steers in a moment,
 y los treinta americanos
and the thirty Americans
 se quedaron azorados . . .¹⁸
were left staring in amazement.

One hundred years after the “Kiansis” corridos were sung in cantinas and on ranches and cattle trails, Chicanos experienced a collective consciousness determined to stop the oppression and indignity suffered by Hispanics in America. Rodolfo Gonzales’s epic poem “Yo Soy Joaquin” (“I Am Joaquin”) quickly became a standard reference among Chicanos and the Chicano movement. Rudolfo Acuña called this poem the most inspiring piece of literature written in the 1960s.¹⁹ Its impact on Chicano activism was significant. “I Am Joaquin” was the first major literary work of the Chicano movement and is considered by Latino scholars as the literary embodiment of the Chicano experience. “I Am Joaquin” was an accurate reading of the Mexican American spirit at the movement’s onset as it is based on complex historical, geographical, political, and cultural processes and transformations. As John Mendoza, a Chicano

18. Ibid., 26.
 19. Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press), 241.

activist in Kansas during the 1960s, said, “I really believe that ‘Yo Soy Joaquin’ was the rallying point that got the Chicano Movement off the ground here in Kansas.”²⁰ Between 1967 and 1972 Rodolfo Gonzales’s Crusade for Justice, an urban Chicano organization in Denver that sought to end discrimination against Latinos, distributed more than one hundred thousand copies of the poem. It also was reprinted in Hispanic newspapers such as *Aztlán* and *Venceremos* in the Kansas City area:

. . . Yo soy Joaquin,
 . . . I am Joaquin,
 perdido en un mundo de confusión
lost in a world of confusion,
 enganchado en el remolino de una
caught up in a whirl of a
 sociedad gringa,
gringo society,
 confundido por las reglas,
confused by the rules,
 despreciado por las actitudes,
scorned by attitudes,
 sofocado por manipulaciones,
suppressed by the manipulation,
 y destrozado por la sociedad moderna.
and destroyed by the modern society.
 Mis padres
My fathers
 perdieron la batalla económica
have lost the economic battle
 y conquistarán
and won
 la lucha de supervivencia cultural . . .
*the struggle for cultural survival . . .*²¹

It was apparent throughout the Chicano activists’ publications that the Euro-American control of Hispanics through the educational system that resulted in inadequate education for Chicanos was at the forefront of these papers. Over a twenty-year period these publications informed their communities of the challenges and obstacles that the Chicano community faced in education. Latinos who

20. John Mendoza, interview by author, May 2, 1998.
 21. Rodolfo Gonzales, *I Am Joaquin/Yo Soy Joaquin* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 6–7.

agitated for educational reform often expressed their views through poetry.

[UNTITLED]

But Madre,
They don't like me.
"Go to school."
But they say we
all smoke pot.
"Go to school."
They say we are different.
"Go to school."
Learn to be an American.²²

[UNTITLED]

I'm sitting in my history class,
The instructor commences rapping,
I'm in my US history class
And I'm on the verge of napping.

The Mayflower landed on Plymouth Rock.
Tell me more, tell me more!
Thirteen colonies were settled
I've heard it all before.

What did he say?
Dare I ask him to reiterate?
Oh why bother.
It sounded like he said,
George Washington's my father.

I'm reluctant to believe it,
I suddenly raise my mano.
If George Washington's my father,
Why wasn't he Chicano?²³

In the *People's Voice*, Charles O. Lona, chairman of La Raza Education Committee, responded to critics of the 1969 Chicano walkout who charged that it was just an excuse for students to miss school. Such criticism, he said, missed the point altogether. Lona explained that throughout the history of the United States all minority groups had to assert their identities. The walkout was how the Chicanos in the Kan-

22. R. Navarro, [untitled poem], *People's Voice* 2 (March 1969): 2.
23. [Tino Villanueva, untitled poem], *Adelante: Young People For Community Action* 3 (April 1969).

sas City area produced a common bond with the Chicanos in San Antonio, Los Angeles, and Denver. As Lona stated, "This is more than missing a day of school. It is a way of saying, 'I am Chicano, and my place in this country is just as important as yours.'"²⁴

The *People's Voice* mobilized community action by informing the neighborhood of the activities of Chicanos and other people of color. Educational planners



Herencia Fiestas Horizontes was published in Topeka by the Kansas State Advisory Committee on Mexican American Affairs and was the voice for the Argentine, Rosedale, and Armourdale neighborhoods of Kansas City.

from the West Side worked with teachers and university students to determine the community's educational needs. Classes in Mexican history and culture, unavailable in most public schools, were offered at

24. "Chicano Walk-Out the Sixteenth of September."

the Guadalupe Center at Penn Valley Community College. In addition, residents of the West Side could take reading improvement courses in the evening at the local high school.²⁵

Other publications in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, provided information about the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) courses that were offered beginning in the late 1960s. Readers of *El Centro*, printed by Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Center in Kansas City, Missouri, were informed of the ESL courses and General Education Degree (GED) classes offered at the Westside Outreach Center.²⁶ In Topeka, Kansas, scholarships were made available for Chicanos to participate in workshops to train ESL teachers.²⁷ *El Corrido*, published in Topeka by the Kansas Advisory Committee on Hispanic Affairs, announced that the Garden City Community College Adult Learning Center was awarded a grant to help train teachers who provide language instruction to people with limited English speaking ability.²⁸

Other Chicano publications also announced programs to encourage and help Chicano students enter college. *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?*, a publication of the Spanish Speaking Office of Kansas City, Kansas, reported that the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was implementing a program helping Chicano students make choices about careers and college. LULAC's goal in Kansas was to cooperate not only with high school counselors but also admissions and financial aid officers of colleges and universities to assist students with grants, scholarships, and loans. The Kansas City-area LULAC also helped students register for college entrance examination tests and explore undergraduate, graduate, and career-education programs.²⁹

25. "Progress Being Made," *People's Voice* 2 (March 1969): 1; "Mexican-American History to be Taught at Guadalupe Center," *ibid.* 2 (October 1969): 1; "Reading Improvement," *ibid.* 3 (May 1970): 4.

26. "Did You Know . . . ?" *El Centro* 4 (March 1977): 1.

27. "ESL Workshop," *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* (August 1978): 7.

28. "Grant for Training Teachers of English as a Second Language in Adult Education," *El Corrido* 1, no. 2 (1989): 3.

29. "Assistance for Minority Students," *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* 1, no. 17 (1978): 3.

Herencia Fiestas Horizontes was published by the Kansas State Advisory Committee on Mexican American Affairs and was a voice for the Argentine, Rosedale, and Armourdale neighborhoods of Kansas City. The newsletter reported that the La Raza Law Student Association of Washburn University in Topeka had met with the Latin American Law Student Association of the University of Kansas to recruit more Hispanics into the legal profession.³⁰ *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* reported in 1978 that only eight Hispanics had graduated from the University of Kansas School of Law since its establishment in 1878. Washburn University's law school, which had existed since 1903, accepted fourteen Latinos between 1971 and 1977.³¹ The implications were trenchant. *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* argued that Latinos in general had been severely excluded or denied access by these universities to the legal profession. Like other Chicano publications, *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* focused on the quality of education Latino children received. The newsletter argued that courses such as Chicano history and culture were an integral part of their children's education and that schools needed to meet the special needs of Mexican American students.

Entre líneas, a Hispanic periodical that began at Penn Valley Community College in 1971, was more academic in its focus. Educational issues and dilemmas that Chicanos experienced at the community and national levels were addressed by various Latino leaders. For example, Paul Gonzalez of West High School argued in *Entre líneas* that the education of the Chicano was not guaranteed under the Welfare Clause of the United States Constitution. Chicanos, he stated, "were categorized as incompetent to learn" because they did not speak English well or were bilingual, yet "we are prohibited from speaking our native language." Gonzalez also charged that ultimately Chicano students were "segregated into classrooms where the three R's were basic."³² Gonzalez concluded that since Latinos spoke the first European lan-

30. "La Raza Law Student Association—Washburn & KU," *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* (November–December 1978): 10.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Gonzalez, "The Midwest Mexican Experience," 3.

guage in this nation they should not be viewed as intruders.

Other Hispanic leaders voiced similar concerns in *Entrelíneas*. Senator Joseph M. Montoya of New Mexico attacked the resistance to bilingual education in the Midwest. While commending educators in the Kansas City area for their interest in bilingual education, Montoya was critical of those Americans who

we have applied words like “handicapped” or “disadvantaged” to six year old children who speak the WRONG language when they come to school—and any language which is not English has been considered to be wrong if you are only six or seven.³³

Educational reform in the Kansas City area remained a constant challenge. Latino leader James Apodaca stated in *La Voz Del Llano*, published in Topeka by the Kansas Advisory Committee on Hispanic Affairs, that educational achievements and correcting the inequities in the system depended on Hispanic youth utilizing a united and politically sophisticated approach to addressing the pressing problems in the community. He noted further that political access and maintenance of Hispanic culture is based on the community working in concert with one another.³⁴



Paul Gonzalez of West High School appears on the cover of *Entrelíneas*. Both Gonzalez and this publication express crucial concerns about Chicano education.

were unwilling to accept bilingual education as a learning tool. “Here in America,” he wrote,

we have been a bit hypocritical about languages. We admire ADULTS who “speak French” or “talk Spanish just like a native!” or can read or write in a “foreign” language. At the same time however,

The power of words as a means of celebrating the Chicano community and preserving cultural identity was, and remains, a stimulating mechanism for revitalizing ethnic and class consciousness. The neighborhood as discussed in poems and corridos also provided a comprehensive source for community action in these newspapers. Works such as Raul Salinas’s monumental poem “A Trip Through the Mind Jail” and Albert Mares’s “Dream of Endless Things” agitate for restoring the vitality of the Hispanic neighborhood experience. Salinas’s poem was published throughout the United States including, in 1970, *Aztlán*, the Chicano newspaper of U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth.³⁵

DREAM OF ENDLESS THINGS

My dearest darling:
I dreamed of you again last night
The dreams of you were not in vain,
you crept quietly through these prison walls

33. Joseph M. Montoya, “Sharing Responsibility for Progress in Bilingual Education,” *Entrelíneas* 4 (Spring–Summer 1975): 3.

34. “Message From the Director,” *La Voz Del Llano* 1 (May–June 1982): 3.

35. See Raul Salinas, “A Trip Through the Mind Jail—for Eldridge,” *Aztlán* 1 (May 5, 1970): 3.

to place your lips upon my head.
 Awakening, I find your love remains;
 no prison walls or bars, you see,
 can keep your love away from me.
 I dreamed a dream of endless things;
 Mountains I love, where the nightingale sings
 and the places where I used to roam:
 But I always think of you and home.³⁶

A TRIP THROUGH THE MIND JAIL
for Eldridge

Neighborhood of my youth
 Neighborhood of endless hills
 Neighborhood of dilapidated community hall
 Neighborhood of Sunday night *jamaicas*
 Neighborhood of forays down Buena Vista—
 Neighborhood that never saw a school-bus
 Neighborhood of Zaragoza Park
 Neighborhood of Spanish Town Cafe
 Neighborhood of groups and clusters
 Neighborhood of could-be artists.
 Neighborhood where purple clouds of *Yesca*
 Neighborhood of Reyes' Bar
 Neighborhood of my childhood
 Neighborhood of my adolescence
 i respect your having been:
 my *Loma* of Austin
 my Rose Hill of Los Angeles
 my West Side of *San Anto*
 my *Quinto* of Houston
 my Jackson of *San Jo*
 my *Segundo* of El Paso
 my *Bareles* of Alburque
 my Westside of Denver
 Flats, *Los Marcos*, *Maravilla*, *Calle Guadalupe*,
Magnolia, *Buena Vista*, *Mateo*, *La Seis*, *Chiquis*,
El Sur and all Chicano neighborhoods that
 now exist and once existed;
 somewhere . . . someone remembers . . .³⁷

36. Albert Mares, "Dream of Endless Things," *ibid.*, 5.

37. This abbreviated version of Salinas's poem is in *Entrelíneas 4* (Spring–Summer 1975): cover. For the poem in its entirety, see Salinas, "A Trip Through the Mind Jail—for Eldridge," *ibid.*, 8–9. For literary interpretations and analyses of Salinas's epic poem, see Wolfgang Binder, ed., *Contemporary Chicano Poetry: An Anthology* (Erlangen: Palm and Enke, 1986), 139–44; Cordelia Candalera, *Chicano Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 109–14; Jose E. Limón, *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems: History and Influence in Mexican American Social Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 91–92; Bruce Novoa, *Chicano Poetry: A Response to Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 34–47.

Latino communities sought to address and restore their neighborhoods' needs. Neighborhood action groups in Kansas City such as Numero Uno and the Mexican American Neighborhood Council became involved in the Model Cities Program. Through funding from private foundations and the community, these groups started job training and job placement programs and distributed food to the community.³⁸ The West Side Tenant Council worked with the local school district to alleviate problems such as scheduling and racial integration caused by school busing.³⁹ Services were provided by community action groups that helped Chicano residents with income tax preparation as well as organizing groups to exchange ideas about the cultural awareness of the school system.⁴⁰

Herencia Fiestas Horizontes reported to its readers the many neighborhood events of Chicano communities throughout Kansas. Recreational activities such as Mexican American basketball tournaments in Topeka, Mexican American bowling tournaments, and Mexican motion pictures shown at the Fox Theater in Emporia, Kansas, were a few of these events.⁴¹ Other Chicano newspapers, such as *Trescolores*, published by Chicano Media Services in Kansas City, Missouri, reported that other bowling leagues and softball leagues, for example the Mexican American Softball Association, were formed in the Argentine district of Kansas City's West Side.⁴² *El Centro* announced the Day Camp Program at Guadalupe Parish Center in Kansas City, a summer series for Chicano children that included field trips, swimming, team sports, and arts and crafts.⁴³ Activities in other Kansas Chicano communities, such as Garden City, involved issues that sought to assist lower socioeconomic citizens in areas of education and the economy. Local leaders from western Kansas, Tony

38. "Community Action," *People's Voice* 2 (May 1969): 3; see also "Our Job Placement Services," *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* 1, no. 17 (1978): 2.

39. Barb Winfrey, "West Bluff's Stuff," *People's Voice* 2 (May 1969): 1.

40. "Do You Know?" *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* 1 (April 1977): 4.

41. "Announcements," *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* (February–March 1979): 12.

42. "MASA Begins" and "Bowling," *Trescolores* 1 (April 27, 1977): 10.

43. "GPC Plans Day Camp," *El Centro* 4 (March 1977): 1.



LA VOZ * DEL LLANO

August / September

1980

Vol. 1 No. 2

KANSAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEXICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

In 1979–1980 Herencia Fiestas Horizontes newsletter became La Voz Del Llano, published by the State of Kansas in Topeka.

Alvarez and Jose Olivas, believed that political workshops would bring Hispanics in Kansas together to discuss common goals and ideas and form an active and united group to bring significant changes in all areas of Chicano life.⁴⁴

During the late 1960s through the 1970s no topic dominated Chicano literary discourse in these publications more than the call for activism and change. The writers argued that the Euro-American power structure caused the material and spiritual problems of Mexican Americans by stealing their lands and denying their history, culture, and language, which effectively kept Chicanos in a subservient position. Contributions to Chicano activist publications created a broad and revolutionary rhetorical vision encompassing the Mexican American's past, present, and future. Within this concept the poems and corridos focused on the socioeconomic and political discrimination that Chicanos experienced during this period.

Soldados, Soldados
Soldiers, Soldiers

Tenemos que mantener la batalla
We have to maintain the battle

44. "Mexican American Ministeries Center," *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* (February–March 1979):12.

no dejes nuestras armas
do not leave our weapons
tenemos que pelear día con día
we have to fight day after day

Soldados, Soldados
Soldiers, Soldiers

no olvides, no olvides
Do not forget, do not forget us
a nosotras las soldaderas
Women soldiers

Que los mantendremos en fuerza
That we will keep you strong
Y nuestras vidas les ofrecemos
And our lives we offer you
Con Vosotros Lucharemos esta
With you we will fight this
batalla inaguantable
battle that can not be withstood

Les ofrecemos lo más venerable
We offer you the most venerable object
que conserva una mujer:
that a woman preserves:

Un corazón
A heart
invencible que les vigila sin vencer
invincible that watches over you without stopping

Soldados, soldados
Soldiers, Soldiers

Nuestras armas, levantará
Our weapons, you will lift up
 Y si esta batalla no termina,
And if this battle does not end,
 Con ustedes moriremos.
With you we will die.
 No tememos a la muerte.
*We do not fear death.*⁴⁵

Announcements about planning Brown Beret organizations in the Kansas City area were common. The Brown Berets organized local residents in demonstrations that were sympathetic to Chicano protests throughout the United States.⁴⁶ In 1969 the Brown Berets of Kansas City, Missouri, met with Ramon Pasillas of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee to discuss the grape boycott against growers who exploited farm workers. *Adelante: Young People for Community Action* published in Kansas City, Missouri, reported in 1969 that the Brown Berets agreed to support the United Farm Workers and organized residents to picket Safeway stores and distribute petitions to customers urging them not to shop at Safeway. Other Chicano publications announced that additional activists' groups, including the Friends of the Farmworkers in Kansas City, had organized similar, peaceful demonstrations against Safeway stores. In February 1970 the Westsiders, as they were called, demonstrated at Kansas City's City Market. While these Hispanic protesters carried signs and peacefully urged shoppers to support the national table grape boycott, police were called to stop the demonstration.⁴⁷ *Venceremos*, printed by the Aztlán Center in Kansas City, Missouri, also urged citizens to boycott lettuce and Coors beer because of the repressive working conditions Chicanos experienced in these industries. A 1971 issue of *Venceremos*, addressing racism and discrimination against Hispanics, denounced the racist advertising

45. Teresa Orozco, "Soldados, Soldados" (paper presented at La Raza Unida: Wichita State University Conference and Workshop, Wichita, Kans., June 20–21, 1970); see also Reies Lopez Tijerina (El Tigre), "There is a Revolution," *Venceremos* 1 (February 1971): 4.

46. "Brown Berets," *People's Voice* 2 (May 1969): 3.

47. "Demonstration May 10," *ibid.*; "Huelga," *ibid.* (February 2, 1970): 1.

campaign of the Anglo fast-food chain Taco Tico, and it organized assistance at the Aztlán Center for citizens who felt "discriminated against in housing, employment, and public accommodations."⁴⁸

¿Dónde Está Mi Raza? took on the national media in 1977, claiming that "the media interprets reality for this nation. It sets norms, defines issues, creates stereotypes, builds leaders, sets priorities and educates or misinforms the general public." *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* also charged the media with conveying the message that "there are no problems" for Chicanos since Chicanos are virtually excluded in the media:

The media . . . constantly portrays Mexicans and Chicanos in negative stereotypes. Whether it is Mexican "bandidos," ignorant Mexican maids, lovable but incompetent sidekicks, crafty thieves, fat priests, or an occasional aristocratic and autocratic "patron", the images are all caricatures of people who intrinsically lack something—only half human, objects which simply decorate a greater Anglo-Saxon saga in the realization of manifest destiny. . . .

The images hurt. But it is much more than pride that is at stake. The distortions create the attitudes that are the basis for discrimination. It conditions the supervisor to pass over a Chicano in favor of an Anglo, because the supervisor learned to expect neither too much initiative nor too much resentment from his Chicano employee.⁴⁹

The message was clear: if Chicanos had no problems, no solutions were needed. But as the *Venceremos* editors noted six years earlier, *La Raza*, a movement among Mexican Americans "for the control of their destiny," was stirring from California to Florida. Latinos were demanding their rights, with education and politics as primary issues. *Venceremos* and other Chicano publications became another voice of *La Raza*.⁵⁰

As these publications reported, elements of Euro-American society that manifested itself through insti-

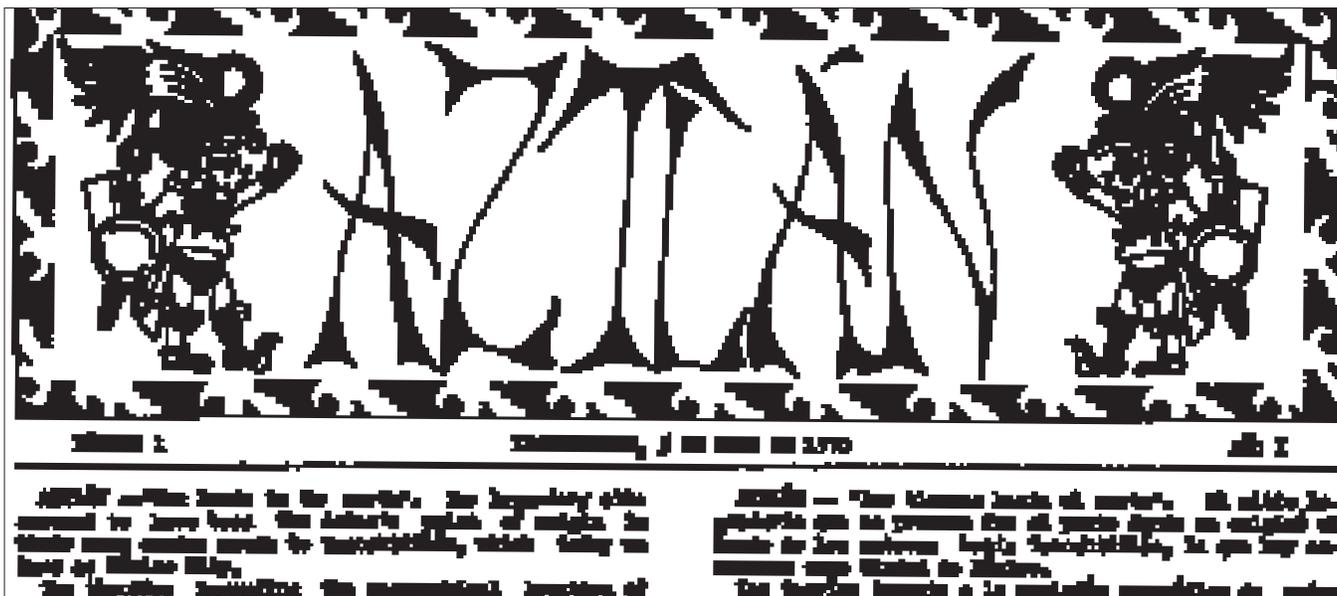
48. "Boycott Lettuce and Coors Beer!" *Venceremos* 1 (February 1971): 2; see also "G.I. Forum Charges Coors Industry Discriminates," *Adelante: Young People for Community Action* 3 (April 1969): 1; "The Brown Berets Are Here . . ." *ibid.*; *Venceremos* 1 (February 1971): 2.

49. "The Media," *¿Dónde Está Mi Raza?* 1 (April 1977): 3.

50. "Editorial," *Venceremos* 1 (January 1971): 5.

tutionalized racism in housing, employment, and education often resulted in Chicanos lacking a positive self-identity. Because of the oppression inflicted by the dominant cultural society, Chicanos encountered discrimination at school and on the job. They also experienced a loss of political power, property, and culture. Hispanic newspapers and newsletters announced upcoming cultural events in which Chi-

For not only did we endure, we prevailed.
 With less than the Mexican Revolution, won with
 sticks and stones.
 The magic word of the mestizo which we have kept
 always in our bronze souls.
 El spirito indomable de La Raza de Bronze.
 Mestizos we are, Rebirth, 1970.⁵¹



A Chicano newspaper of the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Aztlán printed poems that expressed the pride and self-determination among Hispanics.

canos participated, and they published a plethora of poems and corridos that celebrated Chicanismo.

REBIRTH 1970

Trial and error, truth and lies.
 We walked ahead, proud people.
 A noble past, we dragged our chains no more.
 We looked up at our father, the sun.
 Our mother, the land.
 Our brothers, the sky, the water, and the wind.
 The night will cover us, the stars will light our way.
 Rebirth 1970, the Chicanos united after the gringo
 aftermath.
 We forget the pain and misery
 We forget the bitterness and hate in our hearts.

[UNTITLED]

Our skins are different colors
 Our foods are not the same
 You even hate to talk to me
 'Cause you can't pronounce my name

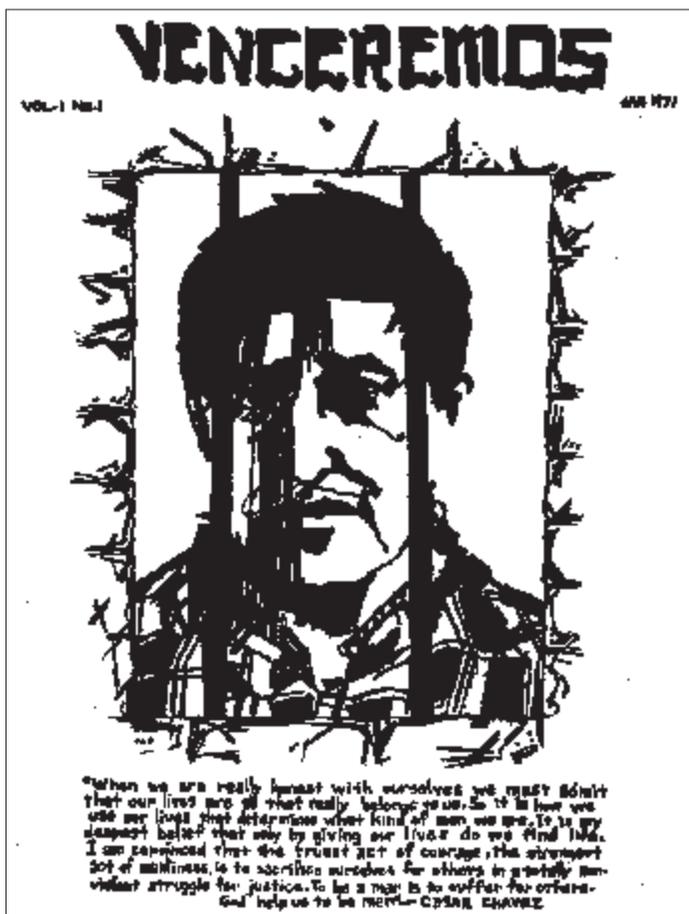
Our dances are also different
 Of course that's plain to see
 But when I dance it my way
 Why should you make fun of me.

You show discrimination
 Prejudice and bigotry
 And then you turn around and say
 That you know what's best for me.

51. "Rebirth 1970," *ibid.* 7.

I live a life so different
 From the one you claim to see
 My life is filled with happiness
 And a love that's always free.

My pride is very great
 And very hard to please
 You see I'd rather die on my feet
 Than to ever live on my knees.⁵²



Venceremos, published by the Aztlán Center, urged its readers to support the lettuce and Coors beer boycotts.

In addition to poems such as these, performances of theater troupes, dramatists, and musical groups that raised the consciousness of their audiences to the Chicano experience were featured in the newsletters

52. [Untitled poem], *Adelante!* 3 (November 10, 1974): 8. *Adelante!* is a separate publication from Kansas City's *Adelante: Young People for Community Action* and is published in Topeka by El Centro de Servicios Para Mexicanos.

and newspapers. Musical groups ranging from the nationally known El Chicano, who first played Kansas City in 1971, to upcoming local groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s such as Los Chicanos, Brown Express, and the Chicano 8 voiced Chicano awareness. These bands, while inspired by El Chicano, also were well versed in the traditional corridos.⁵³ Many cultural activities and gatherings took place at the Aztlán Center in Kansas City. Viva La Raza posters, Raza Unida buttons, and Mestizo head medallions were made and sold at the center along with books on Latin America and the Chicano movement. Volunteers also held classes at the Aztlán Center to teach young Chicanos "la musica de la Raza."⁵⁴

History and culture were important features of Chicano publications. *Entrelíneas* reprinted an article from *Américas* that examined the rise of the Mexican agrarian reformer and revolutionary Emiliano Zapata from a young village farmer to a national hero. The same issue also featured an article by Gabriela Mistral entitled "Silhouette of the Mexican Indian Woman." The description of the Indian woman is poetic and celebrates her beauty: "And this woman, whom the poets have never sung, with her Asiatic silhouette, must be like Ruth the Moabitess who labored so well and whose cheek, bent over the sheaves, was bronzed by the sun of a thousand afternoons."⁵⁵ Aspiring poets also wrote about Emiliano Zapata and the Chicano community experience:

ZAPATA

Dejan de robar al muerto:
 Stop stealing from a dead man:
 Cuando vivió, la palabra "ley"
 When he lived, the word "law"

53. *Trescolores* 1 (April 27, 1977): 4; Irene H. Ruiz, "The Brown Sound," *Entrelíneas* 1 (June–September 1971): 6; "A New Chicano Sound" and "Los Chicanos," *Venceremos* 1 (February 1971): 2.

54. "Aztlán Center," *Venceremos* 1 (January 1971): 7; "Viva La Musica de Aztlán!" *ibid.* 2 (February 1971): 2.

55. Lola E. Boyd, "Zapata," *Entrelíneas* 1 (October–December 1971): 10–14; Gabriela Mistral, "Silhouette of the Mexican Indian Woman," *ibid.*, 17.

fue violada por unos pocos
was stolen by a few
que segarón a los aldeanos
who bulldozed villagers
de sus tierras
off their lands
hasta que ni siquiera los muertos
until even the dead
tenían dónde ir.
had no place to go.

Dejan de robar este muerto:
Stop stealing from this man:
medio siglo después de su dolor final,
a half century after his final pain,
gentle lista menciona sus ideales
smart people lip his ideals
entre bocados
between mouthfuls
violan sus palabras.
rape his words.
Es “bandido” el que devuelve
Is a “bandit” he who restores
los dueños legítimos a sus terrenos?
rightful owners to their lands?
Eso fue Emiliano Zapata; hoy es
That was Emiliano Zapata; today he is
fertilizante para los campos de su gente
fertilizer for the fields of his people
y sus nuevos opresores.
*and their newest oppressors.*⁵⁶

GONE

No longer do I listen for footsteps
Bringing you home to me—
I hear nothing, nothing at all
Just icicle silences endlessly.

No matter how long I wait:
I can never cross eternity,
And that is where you are waiting,
Where you must be waiting for me.⁵⁷

HOLD!

Hold! Do not explore further.
Dream, but don't probe

56. Mark Cramer, “Zapata,” *ibid.* 1 (June–September 1971): 12.
57. Billie R. Thomas, “Gone,” *People's Voice* 1 (August 1968): 2.

Know the situation before you venture
Hold. Wisdom does come
Hold.
Look.
Bide the most abundant of your
treasures.
Then seek the solution
with your ears open,
eyes aware—
looking.
Solutions come
with wisdom.
Hold! Mexican
Know yourself
first.
Try to understand
Don't disperse yourself.
Hold!⁵⁸

Mexican culture also was evident in less formal settings. The G.I. Forum founded in 1948 by Hector Garcia to end discrimination against Hispanic veterans in education, jobs, voting, and housing, sponsored fiesta committees from Garden City to Topeka. Along with the Chicano Students United Organization, these committees helped plan the Cinco De Mayo and Mexican Independence Day fiestas. Bean feeds and taco sales also sponsored by the G.I. Forum raised money for other Mexican cultural events. In 1978 an Awareness Day on Mexican American Culture was held in Great Bend, Kansas, and LULAC sponsored Valentine's Day dances in Topeka. Also, seminars and workshops on dance, costuming, and other related traditions of the folkloric arts of Mexico and the Mexican American Southwest were held in Manhattan and Topeka.⁵⁹

The Hispanic publications in the Kansas City area were successful in articulating the Chicano movement to the people in the local community and across Kansas. Many Mexican Americans for the first time felt the possibilities inherent in a

58. Joseph Montez, “Hold!” *Entrelíneas* 1 (April–May, 1971): 14.

59. For Hector Garcia and G.I. Forum, see *Herencia Fiestas Horizontes* (June 1979): 2. For an example of the various conferences and events held in honor of Mexican American culture and heritage, see *ibid.* (February 1978): 1.

genuine Chicano ethos. Poetry and corridos were applied to the racial and cultural reality within the dominant society. These publications were a means for Chicanos to understand who they were, and for non-Chicanos they provided insight into Hispanic culture and thought. The Mexican American community lived in a world where the written and spoken word on behalf of a just cause was expressed with

great eloquence. Chicano rhetoric also discussed how this race could transform the established social order. They were part of this rhetorical world responding to the diction of their local and national leaders. Without the capacity to asseverate their tenets that contributed to prosperity as orators and writers, Hispanics could never have emerged as leaders in their movement. The publications provided for the community the possibilities of political, cultural, and rhetorical success, and the power to create change. Chicanos acquired an image and signification that expressed their pride in being brown.

Although the publications in the Kansas City area discussed material, educational, and political gains, these limited achievements did not subsequently change the lives of most Chicanos. Most of these newsletters and newspapers are no longer published. Current statistics indicate that Hispanics continue to fall behind Euro-Americans in education, health, and employment. A more considerable shift occurred in the identity of Chicanos. Their self-image contained increased pride in their history, culture, and heritage. According to these publications, the problems of being Chicano were not inherent—they resulted from Euro-Americans' discrimination based on color and race. The new Chicano embraced unity in the community and the entire ethnic group. Summing up Mexican American activism in Kansas, John Mendoza concluded that "we were militant, we were conservative, and we were mediators. We paid our dues but our strength came from the written word."⁶⁰ The Chicano rhetoric of these publications was the central tool for political organization and social change. Thus, these publications, with its corridos, poems, and other oral traditions, were and are for Chicanos instruments of purpose and justice.

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What Is La Raza Unida?

MEMBERSHIP - La Raza Unida is a member of a new family of folk. It is a general social movement of Mexican-Americans, especially throughout the Southwest, responding to a new identity of man. It is a social movement that, with respect, defines the political and social reality of the people of the country. It is a social movement that, with respect, defines the political and social reality of the people of the country. It is a social movement that, with respect, defines the political and social reality of the people of the country.

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Venceremos and other Chicano publications became a voice of La Raza, a movement among Mexican Americans "for the control of their destiny."

60. Mendoza interview.