

Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano: The Integration of Mexican Immigrants During the
Chicano Movement

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When Manuel Gamio asked Elías Sepulveda, a first generation Mexican American, how he felt about Mexican and Chicano integration in a 1972 interview, Sepulveda admitted, “we are all Mexicans anyway because the *gueros*,” the white people, treat “all of us alike. They say that we are all Mexicans, and we are that by blood.”¹ Chicanos and Mexicans hold an undeniable connection through heritage and experience. However, during the Chicano Movement, from the early 1960s through the 1970s, activist leaders fought to minimize discrimination specifically for Mexican American *citizens*. Leaders did not always accept the similarities that existed between Chicanos (Mexican American citizens) and Mexican *immigrants* as resulting in a shared identity. In fact, particularly in the movement’s early years, organizations even sought to exclude immigrants from their struggle. In this paper I seek to understand what factors influenced how Chicano organizations (political and economic) viewed Mexican immigrants from 1960 to 1979.

Both the historical literature and primary sources show that Chicano activists largely treated Mexican immigrants with overt hostility or ambivalence, especially prior to the 1970s. My research shows two factors that impacted these attitudes most. The first rested in specific sectorial or organizational goals. For instance, many labor groups have historically feared that increased immigration resulted in greater competition in the labor market and therefore lowered wages for all workers. The second factor rested in how United States immigration policy heavily influenced organizational views. The policies I highlight include the Bracero Program, in existence from 1942 to 1964; the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965; and the proposed 1977 immigration plan under the Carter Administration. Each policy sought to control the influx of immigrants into the United States. Policy that increased Mexican immigration led Chicanos to

¹ Manuel Gamio, *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographic Documents*, (New York: Dove Publications Inc.), 269.

view immigrants more negatively while policy that attempted to restrict immigration led to more positive perceptions.

My main argument centers around the idea that immigration policy heavily influenced the relationship between Chicanos and Mexican immigrants throughout the Chicano Movement. Rather than Chicanos immediately uniting with immigrants against discriminatory policy—as I initially expected—Chicanos actively excluded or disregarded immigrants during their struggle, particularly in the 1960s. Only during the second half of the 1970s did a more collaborative relationship form due to changing immigration policy.

United States immigration policy significantly changed from the 1940s through the 1970s in response to changes in economic stability within the U.S. With initial influxes of undocumented immigrants coming to the United States under the 1942-1964 Bracero Program, Chicano activists reacted negatively to the potential competition. As the Bracero Program ended and legal immigration policy became fixed in 1965, Chicano activists no longer showed the same degree of hostility towards Mexicans. However, they still failed to appropriately address how Mexican immigrants also suffered under the same racially discriminatory system in the United States. When new immigration policy, proposed in 1977 by the Carter Administration, attempted to severely limit immigration and immigrant rights, Chicano activists began to readdress their relationship with Mexicans. Chicanos integrated Mexicans within their activism on an unprecedented and wide-spread scale; even staunch, anti-immigrant organizers welcomed immigrants into the Chicano community. The changes in U.S. immigration policy directly align with changes in attitudes towards Mexican immigrants as seen in the primary resources utilized.

For this research, I relied on a rich and varied collection of primary sources, including Chicano newspapers, speeches from Chicano leaders, immigration policy reports, and different documents or essays from activists. These detail how leaders and groups prioritized different issues during the movement's peak. With the context of the landmark immigration policies mentioned above, I demonstrate how these heavily influenced the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans.

In researching this topic, I sought to understand how two groups with such a close connection in culture, heritage, and racial experiences in the U.S. acted so separately during pivotal civil rights efforts. Throughout my research I address the paradox in how Chicanos initially refused to embrace Mexican immigrants in their activism, even as they simultaneously demanded greater respect for their culture and race. Thus, this research reveals how marginalized communities occasionally use other groups facing even greater marginalization as a leverage point for achieving their social, political, and economic goals. My findings indicate that a gradual shift occurred in the relationship between Chicanos and Mexican immigrants that resulted in both groups uniting against the racialized discrimination they faced under the United States. This thesis designates changing immigration policy as the main factor for why this transformation occurred; as policy grew stricter towards the undocumented Mexicans, and therefore the Chicanos that resembled them, Mexican Americans moved from an antagonistic stance regarding immigrants to a supportive one in the later Chicano Movement.

Historical Context and Literature Review

The Chicano Movement occurred in response to the racism and discrimination Mexican Americans experienced in the United States. Mexican American activists united under the

Chicano identity to address these experiences from the 1950s through the 1970s. It largely encompassed the American Southwest, due to the large Mexican American population living on land lost during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). For this project, I focus on the height of Chicano activity from 1960 to 1979 with necessary context from immigration policy that began in the 1940s.

Organizations sought different goals within the Chicano Movement. These varied in purpose from labor rights to educational opportunities, land recovery, political enfranchisement, and social equality. Leaders included César Chávez, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez, José Angel Gutiérrez, Reies López Tijerina, and Bert Corona. Each organization’s focus influenced the collective effort towards improved Chicano rights in the United States. While Mexican immigrants experienced similar racialized prejudice alongside additional pressure from their citizenship status, activism favored Mexican Americans over Mexican immigrants.

Historiography on the relationship between Mexican immigrants and Chicano organizers strongly reflects labor organizations’ ambivalence or hostility towards immigrants. Scholars highlight the anti-immigrant attitude in César Chávez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) most when discussing immigrant interactions within the Chicano Movement. According to David Gutiérrez, the UFW “lobbied for strict control” over Mexican immigration from its very origin.² Frank Bardacke provides a timeline for changes in the UFW’s attitude against immigrants: from 1962 to 1975, the UFW held a strict and active anti-immigrant policy; from 1975 to 1993, the UFW continued to work against immigrants, though not to the same degree; finally, after

² David Gutiérrez, “*Sin Fronteras?: Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and the Emergence of the Contemporary Mexican Immigration Debate, 1968-1978*,” in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David Gutiérrez, pp. 175-209, (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 2.

Chávez's death in 1993, the UFW switched to a pro-immigrant policy.³ This shift highlights how central Chávez was to the UFW's anti-immigrant stance. Bardacke also details the extreme lengths taken by UFW members, including the 1974 "Campaign Against Illegals;" UFW members established a "Wet Line" to "[hunt] down illegals" like a pseudo-border patrol.⁴ F. Arturo Rosales acknowledges that Chávez's followers promoted violence against undocumented workers, though he adds that Chávez himself maintained a nonviolent position.⁵ Chávez and the UFW—both extremely central to Chicano activism and hostile to undocumented Mexicans—dominate discussions about immigrants within the Chicano Movement.

Bert Corona with El Centro de Acción Social Autónoma (Center for Autonomous Social Action; CASA) is another central figure within this historiography. Scholars view Corona, Herman Baca, and CASA members as supportive towards the immigrant plight while the bulk of the Chicano Movement was not. Felipe Hinojosa, Maggie Elmore, and Sergio González agree with their fellow scholars on how Corona was the most important figure in promoting immigrant rights during the Chicano Movement through CASA.⁶ Mario T. García displays the long history CASA held in supporting immigrant rights, stating they first addressed the "relationship between immigration, Chicano ethnicity, and the status of Mexican Americans" before any other Chicano organizations.⁷ Guadalupe San Miguel expands upon Corona and CASA by listing Hermandad Mexicana Nacional (also founded by Corona) and the Committee on Chicano Rights (CCR) as

³ Frank Bardacke, "The UFW and the Undocumented," *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 83, (2013), pp. 162-169, retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43302716>, 163.

⁴ Bardacke, "The UFW and the Undocumented," 166.

⁵ F. Arturo Rosales, *CHICANO!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996), 145.

⁶ Felipe Hinojosa, Maggie Elmore, and Sergio González, *Faith and Power: Latino Religious Politics Since 1945*, (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 240.

⁷ Mario T. García, "La Frontera: The Border as Symbol and Reality in Mexican-American Thought," in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David Gutiérrez, pp. 89-117, (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 187.

other pro-immigrant organizations in *el movimiento*.⁸ These few organizations and figures stand out in historiography as advocates for immigrant rights, highlighting how the majority of the movement followed Chávez's example of opposing immigrants.

Outside the UFW and CASA, historians agree that most organizations viewed immigrants, especially those in the Bracero Program, as detrimental to Chicano well-being. Jimmy Patiño states that while the entire Chicano Movement vehemently rejected "white supremacy" by promoting the "Mexican culture," it turned away from immigrant issues, particularly "in its early years."⁹ García writes how, even before the Chicano Movement, Mexican American organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) sought to minimize perceived threats from Mexican foreigners.¹⁰ Even after the Bracero Program ended in 1964, attitudes towards immigrants remained ambivalent at best. Gutiérrez describes how perspectives ranged from "strong affinities with Mexicans" to rivaling the undocumented for jobs and housing.¹¹ Rosales explains this paradoxical attitude in that Chicano activists viewed recent immigrants "as a separate ethnic group" from Chicanos.¹² Rather than aligning on the similar issues they faced, Mexicans and Mexican Americans diverged based on citizenship status. Ultimately, according to Gutiérrez, Chicano activists prioritized the "needs and interests of American citizens of Mexica descent" over the undocumented Mexicans.¹³ While the dislike

⁸ Guadalupe San Miguel, *In the Midst of Radicalism: Mexican American Moderates during the Chicano Movement 1960-1978*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2022), 58.

⁹ Jimmy Patiño, "We Gotta Get on This Immigration Issue," introduction to *Raza Sí, Migra No: Chicano Movement Struggles for Immigrant Rights in San Diego*, pp. 1-17 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 6.

¹⁰ García, "La Frontera," 67, 97.

¹¹ David Gutiérrez, introduction to *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David Gutiérrez, pp. xi-xxvii, (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), xxii.

¹² Rosales, *CHICANO!*, 223.

¹³ Gutiérrez, introduction to *Between Two Worlds*, xxiii.

shown towards immigrants appears most in scholarship, historians also acknowledged the later transformation to a more positive relationship between Chicanos and immigrants.

As the years passed, attitudes towards immigrants gradually changed. Even Chávez felt compelled to shift his anti-immigrant stance as a result of outside pressure. For example, Hinojosa, Elmore, and González point to contentions between Chávez's spiritualistic leadership and the Catholic Church's immigrant aid efforts as responsible for his reduction in anti-immigration tactics.¹⁴ Gutiérrez makes a similar conclusion in stating that Chávez was forced to switch stances by 1975 due to public outcry from the larger Chicano Movement.¹⁵ Overall, most organizations gradually adjusted their treatment towards immigrants to include their needs in the Chicano Movement. Gutiérrez explains how as Chicanos "reconceptualiz[ed] their ethnic identity," immigration increased, forcing Chicanos to question their relationship with the undocumented.¹⁶ Few historians discuss why this shift occurred outside Gutierrez. He points to the Carter Administration's immigration plans as the catalyst for change; Chicano activists previously "demanded many of the same reforms" against immigration that they later "rejected" under the Carter Administration's plan.¹⁷ While historians amply documented this change in attitude, few have ventured to explain *why* it took until the 1970s for Chicano activists and leaders to recognize and advocate for immigrant rights. One of the key goals in my research is to address the reasoning behind this late change.

Historians have discussed how different groups viewed immigrants throughout the Chicano Movement, particularly those focused on labor issues. These organizations especially

¹⁴ Hinojosa, Elmore, and González, *Faith and Power*, 239.

¹⁵ Gutiérrez, "Sin Frontera," 196.

¹⁶ Gutiérrez, introduction to *Between Two Worlds*, xxiv.

¹⁷ Gutiérrez, 176.

showed hostility towards immigrants. With that said, Chicano organizations acted interdependently, so labor issues influenced the goals and attitudes in other organizations, including political ones. I seek to demonstrate how both labor and political organizations interacted with immigrants during the Chicano Movement. I also plan to highlight how immigration policy, which appears in historiography only briefly, impacted the attitudes and activities towards the undocumented. Immigration policy heavily influenced all sectors of Chicano activism. Attitudes towards immigrants changed alongside major immigration legislation, including the Bracero Program (from 1942 to 1964), the Immigration Act of 1965, and the proposed 1977 Carter Plan. These policies, in their attempts at increasing or decreasing immigration, each led to different perspectives about undocumented Mexicans.

The Bracero Program

The Bracero Program—which brought undocumented laborers to the United States for farmwork from 1942 to 1964 as a counter to American labor shortages during World War I—profoundly impacted how Chicanos viewed Mexican immigrants, particularly through the movement’s early years. Mexican Americans, especially those focused on labor rights, reacted with disdain towards this policy; since all groups worked closely together, political groups showed similar aversions to Mexican immigrants. Even after the Bracero Program, harsh attitudes continued to follow immigrants based on this policy.

Labor groups outwardly displayed their frustration towards the Bracero Program and the undocumented Mexicans it brought. Established organizations like the American G. I. Forum, which focused on Mexican American veterans and civil rights, discussed the negative impact immigrants created for Mexican American farmworkers. It noted through the 1951 Report of the

President's Commission on Migratory Labor that migrant farm workers, which Mexican Americans comprised "over 80 per cent" of, suffered from the "wetback invasion"—*wetback* being a derogatory term to describe undocumented Mexicans.¹⁸ The G.I. Forum blamed the "*bracero* contract" (and therefore, the *braceros* brought in) for this suffering because it set a minimum wage that farm owners made the "prevailing wage," leading to pay reductions.¹⁹ As the program continued beyond World War II's end, civil rights organizations concerned with Mexican American rights continued to resist the incoming immigrants. This deprecatory attitude towards immigrants spread through major Mexican American organizations such as the G.I. Forum and the United Farm Workers (UFW).

César Chávez, the most prominent figure in Chicano labor groups and leader of the UFW, was also one of the most overt anti-immigrant activists in the Chicano Movement. When first organizing, Chávez stated that the "group of workers. . .recently arrived from Mexico" were not welcome within the UFW because they failed to understand "American-style unionism;" he claimed that Mexicans "assum[ed]" the United States prohibited farmworkers from "cross[ing] a picket line."²⁰ This attitude directly impacted immigrant integration in unions and the larger movement. Exclusion from the union also meant exclusion from employment opportunities. The union contract that resulted from the Delano-Sacramento Boycott's success specified "union membership" as a "condition of employment."²¹ Without union membership, which the UFW barred Mexican immigrants from, employment opportunities shrunk—ironically, Chávez and the

¹⁸ The American G. I. Forum, "The American G.I. Forum and the Texas State Federation of Labor Condemn Undocumented Mexican Immigration" (1953), in *Major Problems in Mexican American History*, ed. Zargosa Vargas, pp. 348-351, (Riverside: California Baptist University, 1999), 351.

¹⁹ American G.I. Forum, "American G.I. Forum Labor Condemn Undocumented Mexican Immigration," 349.

²⁰ César Chávez in an interview for *Farm Labor* (1964), in *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. F. Arturo Rosales, pp. 276-281, (Texas: Arte Público Press, 2000), 279.

²¹ "The Contract Signed by Schenley" (1966) in *Testimonio: A History of Mexican American Civil Rights*, ed. Rosales, pp. 285-292, 287.

UFW felt that immigrants, under governmental exoneration, threatened their own economic stability. In a 1970 interview, he recalled with annoyance officials' unwillingness to enforce border control; he claimed they acted on assumptions that "it is not really illegal" for undocumented workers to come to the United States, "provided they are working."²² Chávez implied that the government, in allowing these undocumented workers entrance via the Bracero Program, minimized available employment for Mexican American citizens. Therefore, Chávez and the UFW viewed the program and the immigrants it ushered in as threats to Mexican American prosperity. Labor organizations and leaders instantly became hostile towards Mexican immigrants under the Bracero Program; this attitude spread amongst all Chicano organizations frustrated with the Bracero Program.

Since Chicano organizations worked interdependently throughout the movement, political organizations replicated the negative and ambivalent attitudes labor groups promoted against the Bracero Program. These attitudes manifested in two major ways: dislike for how the program treated all Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and a distrust towards the arriving immigrants. José Angel Gutiérrez, a land reclamation activist, likened the Bracero Program to slavery since it involved "trading. . . humans from Mexico" for significantly cheap farm labor.²³ This reflects an understanding that the Bracero Program harmed immigrants just as it did Chicanos. Yet, other political interest groups like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) concentrated on the program's impact on Mexican Americans via increased immigration. It highlighted how, even after the Bracero Program formally ended, the continued influx of immigrants from the constant "push" by growers to "bring cheap labor" created competition and poverty for Mexican

²² César Chávez, "César Chávez Speaks with Bob Flitch About La Causa" (1970), in *Major Problems in Mexican American History*, ed. Vargas, pp. 276-281, 387.

²³ José Angel Gutiérrez, "A Chicano Defined" (1970), in *Ripples of Hope: Great American Civil Rights Speeches*, ed. Josh Gottheimer, pp. 392-399, (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003), 359.

Americans.²⁴ These two beliefs about the Bracero Program itself created a complicated view towards immigrants. Chicano activists simultaneously understood that the program created difficulties for both immigrants and citizens while also viewing the undocumented as a threat.

The initial dislike towards the Bracero Program led political activists to ignore undocumented issues. While labor organizations viewed immigrants as a direct threat to labor goals, political organizations mostly disregarded Mexican immigrants. Even when the immigration policy changed in 1965, the Bracero Program's first impression upon Chicano activists created long-lasting rifts between Chicanos and the undocumented. Ultimately, Mexican immigrants felt actively excluded or inadvertently ignored from activism during the early Chicano Movement years. Views towards Mexican immigrants changed only slightly—even after major policy change—because the Bracero Program so strongly influenced how Chicanos viewed themselves and the immigrants around them.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act

The landmark Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 helped end the Bracero Program and fundamentally changed national quotas in place since the 1920s. National immigration quotas that originated under the Immigration Act of 1924 severely limited immigration outside Western Europe; however, the 1965 Act allowed a maximum of 120,000 entries from the Western hemisphere.²⁵ It prioritized relatives and children of citizens or permanent residents, professionals with specialized skills, and refugees in a seven-category system.²⁶ While this new

²⁴ Mexican American Political Association, "The Voice" (1966), in *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. Rosales, pp. 293-294, 293.

²⁵ Richard Schroeder, "Illegal Immigration," in CQ Researcher, (Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press, 1976), retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4135/cqresrre1976121000>, 3.

²⁶ Schroeder, "Illegal Immigration," 3.

legislation allowed for greater legal immigration, tension between Mexican immigrants and Chicano activists remained following the disdain that originated under the Bracero Program. Beyond these lingering feelings of disapproval, the lack of policy change for over ten years minimized Chicano concern towards immigrants. Ultimately, from 1965 to the early 1970s, activists disregarded the undocumented amongst them to focus on Chicano issues; Chicanos addressed immigrant rights only after time passed and immigration legislation increased.

Labor organizers remained hostile towards immigrants, though to a lesser degree, under the new 1965 legislation. During this period of the Chicano Movement, the UFW solidified itself as the chief labor organization. Their activities heavily influenced how other Chicanos viewed Mexicans under context of the new immigration policy. A newspaper ran under César Chávez, *El Sol*, described the generations of Chicano farm workers that faced the threat of “‘Green Card’ holders [Mexican immigrants]” coming, with governmental permission, to work in the United States at “whatever hourly scale the grower wants to pay.”²⁷ Only two years after the Bracero Program’s end, economic competition between immigrants and citizens remained a significant issue. *El Sol* claimed that growers took advantage of immigrants’ severe economic situations by “paying them” significantly “less;” the Mexican American farmworkers therefore endured the same wage cuts or total loss in employment.²⁸ Since immigration still occurred at high rates, Chávez and the UFW continued to blame Mexican immigrants for economic instability in Chicano communities. Rather than address how both groups suffered major wage disparities, the UFW sought to minimize immigrants’ presence altogether.

²⁷ “Excerpt from *El Sol*” (1966), in *Testimonio: A History of Mexican American Civil Rights*, ed. Rosales, pp. 298-299, 298.

²⁸ “Excerpt from *El Sol*,” 298.

The UFW continued showing outward disapproval towards immigrants and supported active anti-immigrant action throughout the 1960s. The newspaper *Carta Editorial* detailed how labor organizations like the UFW worked with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). This manifested through the UFW's pressure on the government to "deny Green Card" holders from working in farms or factories, dealing very real consequences for Mexican immigrants, particularly through increased "mass deportations."²⁹ While the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act solidified the end of the Bracero Program, immigration—both legal and illegal—continued into the United States. Thus, labor organizers expelled immigrants from their community as they simultaneously used the Mexican heritage as a call to action for Chicanos. In the 1969 Proclamation of the Grape Workers Boycott, activists stated: "we have been farmworkers for hundreds of years. . . our ancestors were among those who founded this land. . . but we are still pilgrims."³⁰ Chicano activists acknowledged the displacement the Mexican people experienced in the United States yet failed to address how they continued to exclude immigrants from the Chicano Movement. This contradiction in ideology, resulting in labor organizations fighting immigrants' residence in the U.S., replicated amongst political organizations as well.

Political organizations, connected to labor organizations in their activism, also continued to show immigrants hostility or ambivalence under the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act; disregard to immigrants became more commonplace over time. Land recovery efforts, central to political activism, demonstrate the contradictory attitude in rejecting Mexican immigrants while utilizing the Mexican culture to end racial discrimination. Reies López Tijerina, leader of the

²⁹ "Carta Editorial," *Carta Editorial* 6, no. 10, (Los Angeles, California), Nov. 1, 1969, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28034755>, 2.

³⁰ Grape Workers, "Grape Workers Issue the Boycott Day Proclamation" (1969), in *Major Problems in Mexican American History*, pp. 412-413, 413.

Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Land Grant Alliance), highlights the land reclamation movement's hypocrisy in claims to the Mexican land and culture, but not its inhabitants. In a 1967 speech, he stated that efforts to reclaim land lost to the United States from the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo sought to increase "cultural, political, and education rights" specifically for "Hispanic Americans."³¹ Hispanic Americans, not Mexicans, benefitted from these efforts despite the shared suffering from the treaty's displacement. Both communities suffered under the United States, yet Chicanos continued to focus only on bettering life for Mexican Americans.

Other Chicano groups that focused on fighting against Chicano discrimination also embodied this inconsistent attitude. Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, leader of the Crusade for Justice, described the need for Chicanos to "consider [themselves] as a nation. . . of *Aztlan*" by "identify[ing] with [their] past" culturally and politically to achieve justice.³² The idea of *Aztlan*, a separate nation rooted in Chicano experiences, became popular to distinguish the transnational culture Chicanos shared. Gonzalez used it to inspire Chicanos to feel pride in their heritage as a means to create social justice; however, he never acknowledged the direct link that Mexican immigrants offered to the Mexican land and culture. While neither Gonzalez nor the aforementioned Tijerina advocated for anti-immigrant ideas like increased deportations, they promoted a distinct separation between Chicanos and Mexican immigrants. They spoke only a few years after the Bracero Program's end and the installment of the 1965 legislation, demonstrating how initial disapproval of immigrants remained prominent. The 1965 Act only eased tensions rather than completely remove them; even as time passed, Chicanos still showed hesitancy towards aligning themselves with immigrants.

³¹ Reies López Tijerina, "The Land Grant Question" (1967), in *Great American Civil Rights Speeches*, pp. 306-314, 306.

³² Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, "Chicano Nationalism: Fighting for La Raza" (1969), in *Great American Civil Rights Speeches*, pp. 335-339, 337.

Chicanos began to address their own refusal at accepting immigrants in *el movimiento* under the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. José Angel Gutiérrez, leader of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), called attention to the contradictory attitude Chicanos displayed regarding their immigrant counterparts. He explained that while both Chicanos and immigrants experienced life under “occupied Mexico” in the American Southwest—where they were “denied adequate housing. . . fair wages” and “the right of due process”—Chicanos still felt isolated as a “bastard community. . . not Mexicans from Mexico” and “not Americans in terms of treatment.”³³ Chicanos simultaneously felt separated from the Mexican culture and persecuted in the United States due to their Mexican heritage and the presence of their immigrant counterparts. Some Chicano activists averted immigrants in response to this persecution, including Tijerina. He questioned “why should we [Chicanos] pay the crimes of Spain” when “we are true Americans. . . not descendants of immigrants. . . not descendants of wetbacks.”³⁴ He made a very clear distinction between Chicanos and immigrants when advocating for better treatment towards Mexican Americans. The division between Chicanos and Mexicans that exacerbated under the Bracero Program continued under the 1965 Immigration Act, particularly in the form of ignorance; Chicanos simply focused on their own needs rather than uniting with immigrants against their shared prejudice.

The disconnect Chicanos felt from Mexican immigrants reflected both a discrepancy in ideology—Chicanos seeking respect for their heritage while neglecting the people directly from Mexico—and a breakdown in identity. Gutiérrez discussed this identity crisis common amongst Chicanos. When asked in Spanish ““What are you?”” Chicanos responded with “mexicano, Chicano or *la raza*,” when asked the same question in English, they responded with ““I’m

³³ Gutiérrez, “A Chicano Defined,” 356.

³⁴ Tijerina, “The Land Grant Question,” 314.

Spanish American. I'm Latin American. I'm American with Spanish Surname. I'm Mexican American."³⁵ Chicanos recognized their ethnic connections to Mexico as seen in the first set of responses. Yet Gutiérrez demonstrated in the second set how Chicanos made a clear distinction between them and Mexicans to counter anti-Mexican prejudice faced in the United States. Chicanos stopped supporting anti-immigrant activities yet kept immigrants at a distance to ensure their own gain in political and social rights; major political parties incorporated this attitude into their enterprises as well.

The formal political parties that originated under the Chicano Movement fully realized themselves in the early 1970s; under the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, these parties demonstrated that, while they showed no hatred to immigrants, they prioritized only Chicano needs. After the 1965 Act, no policy occurred at a national level demanding attention, making it difficult for Chicanos to recognize immigrant issues. The La Raza Unida Party (LRUP), the main political party representing Chicanos, released its party platform in 1972. It only mentioned immigrants by name once when referencing its support of unionization and ending the "exploitation of illegal aliens"; the rest of the platform identified only Chicano issues such as education, housing, and "Chicano self-determination."³⁶ Chicanos failed to appropriately address immigrant issues in their activism; while they stopped engaging in anti-immigrant activities, groups merely ignored their undocumented counterparts. However, a more significant change in perspective materialized only a few years later.

A new perspective began to grow right before and very early into the 1970s that moved away from the hostility and disregard previously exhibited. Rodolfo Gonzalez, who in the 1960s

³⁵ Gutiérrez, 358.

³⁶ La Raza Unida Party, "La Raza Unida Party Announces Its Priorities" (1972), in *Major Problems in Mexican American History*, pp. 417, 417.

ignored immigrant issues, called for an end in 1972 to the anti-immigrant attitudes amongst Chicanos. He indicated Chicanos “[were] caught up in a system of competitiveness that [pit] one against the other. . . Braceros against Domestics,” he demanded that Chicanos “cleanse” themselves of the “inferiority. . . peon. . . and immigrant complex” to build a long-lasting movement and community.³⁷ Gonzalez stated that “we are not and never have been immigrants” to emphasize how Mexicans and Mexican Americans both experienced displacement and prejudice from the United States on land they previously owned.³⁸ This understanding that the United States treated Mexicans and Mexican Americans as outsiders brought the two communities closer. After nearly a decade had passed from the last major immigration legislation, Chicanos finally began to recognize their shared suffering with Mexican immigrants; as debates on immigration rose in the 1970s, this realization turned into direct activism.

It would take years until national immigration policy rose in discussions; however local legislation combined with the newly accepted association between Chicanos and immigrants led to pro-immigrant activism in the 1970s. At the 1972 First National Chicano Political Caucus, the LRUP called for a “drastic overhaul of U.S. immigration policies that affect[ed] Mexicans and Latin Americans” alike.³⁹ Chicano organizations, in recognition of their shared suffering with their undocumented counterparts, actively advocated for immigrant rights in an unprecedented manner. The United Mexican American Students (UMAS) at the University of Colorado criticized a Colorado Congressman’s support of a “Rodino Bill” that required Mexican Americans to carry “identification card[s].”⁴⁰ They acknowledged that this bill showed racial

³⁷ Rodolfo Corky Gonzalez, “Dirrección Positiva,” in *Gallo, El 4*, no. 3, (Denver, Colorado), Apr. 1, 1972, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28455998>, 5.

³⁸ Gonzalez, “Dirrección Positiva,” 5.

³⁹ “El Gallo,” *Gallo, El 4*, no. 3, 11.

⁴⁰ “El Diario de La Gente,” *Diario de La Gente, El 2*, no. 6, (Boulder, Colorado), Sept. 14, 1974, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28455684>, 9.

bias against any person of Mexican descent, both citizen and non-citizen. In response to legislation such as this, the Colorado LRUP declared at a national conference that it “align[ed] itself with the struggles of all peoples,” including immigrants, and sought to demonstrate this solidarity through coalitions.⁴¹ Immigrants and Mexican Americans both experienced similar adversity within the United States, yet only during the 1970s did Chicanos finally acknowledge and integrate immigrants within their activism. Resentment towards immigrants right after the passage of the 1965 Act transformed into indifference, and then finally an active inclusion of Mexicans in the early 1970s.

Following the end of the Bracero Program, political and labor organizations both replicated the same hostile attitudes towards immigrants that they embodied before 1964. However, as time passed after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act—when active immigrant policy debate significantly shrunk—organizations grew more ambivalent towards the immigrants around them. Labor organizations remained hesitant to immigrant integration, but political groups slowly began to advocate for immigrant rights alongside Chicano ones. After over a decade from the paramount 1965 Act’s passage, new proposals in national immigration policy reinforced this newfound immigrant inclusion in the Chicano Movement.

The Proposed Carter Immigration Plan

The Carter Administration implemented the final immigration policy that impacted how Chicano activists treated Mexican immigrants. During Jimmy Carter’s presidency, he announced a new immigration policy in 1977 that sought to adjust quotas and residency statuses set by the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Richard Schroeder, who conducted research on the policy

⁴¹ The Colorado Chapter of el Partido de La Raza Unida, “El Diario de La Gente,” 4.

in 1976, attested to how it sought to preserve the overall quota for the Western Hemisphere at 120,000 migrants; it also stipulated a 20,000 limit of migrant entries for each country, a severe reduction to the 40,000 Mexican migrants previously coming to the U.S.⁴² Schroeder added that the Carter Plan sought to “impose” extreme “restrictions. . . on legal immigration” not seen in the U.S since the 1920s.⁴³ This created immediate resentment amongst all Chicano organizations (labor and political) that served to unite the movement in groundbreaking ways against anti-immigrant legislation.

The United States government, at the local and national level, exhibited heightened animosity towards Mexican immigration in the 1970s. The impact of this legislation for both Chicanos and Mexicans, alongside an increased appreciation for the shared suffering between both communities, led to a combined response from political and labor organizations. The Committee on Chicano Rights (CCR), historically one of the most pro-immigrant organizations, provided a comprehensive overview of the Carter Plan, the most notorious immigration proposal at the time. The Carter Plan provided “permanent” and “temporary” resident statuses, strictly enforced immigration laws against undocumented immigrants, and created employee sanctions for hiring “undocumented aliens” previously permissible under the Bracero Program.⁴⁴ This plan reacted to laws like the 1952 Texas Proviso that made employers exempt from criminal punishment for harboring “illegal aliens,” demonstrating its desire to severely minimize undocumented immigrants in the U.S.⁴⁵ The Carter Administration also planned to increase border control resources (i.e., adding 2,000 border patrolmen) to further control immigration.⁴⁶

⁴² Schroeder, 3.

⁴³ Schroeder, 3.

⁴⁴ “CCR Newsletter,” *CCR Newsletter* 1, no. 1, (National City, California), Jan. 1, 1977, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28034761>, 3.

⁴⁵ Schroeder, 6.

⁴⁶ “CCR Newsletter,” *CCR Newsletter* 1, 3.

Ultimately, the Carter Plan extended and perpetuated a hostile environment to undocumented Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Political and labor groups worked congruently in response to this shared impact, creating a united force against anti-immigrant legislation unique from the previous two immigration policies.

For a majority of the Chicano Movement (from 1965 to 1975), no new immigration policy occurred that demanded attention; however, during the late 1970s, increased violence towards immigrants alongside Carter's proposal ignited action from all Chicanos. The CCR reacted quickly to the Carter Plan; Herman Baca, the CCR's leader, called the Carter Plan "inhumane, unrealistic, unworkable, and unenforceable," completely "reject[ing] and denounce[ing]" it.⁴⁷ The CCR declared that "the cruelest and most contradictory part" came from the "'temporary resident alien' status" that accepted Mexicans as laborers, but barred their access to social services, voting rights, family reunification, or protection from deportation.⁴⁸ The ultimate goal, according to the CCR, was to create a "captive labor force" for the American government.⁴⁹ The CCR presented how increased immigrant hostility and the Carter Plan's economic, social, and political impacts required a collaborative response from all sectors of the Chicano movement. The CCR, revealed the larger shift from Chicano activists towards integrating Mexican immigrants. This change took place at a national level, too, since groups like "the mid-West Commission for the Defense of Undocumented Workers" combined forces with activists near the U.S-Mexico border against policies like the Carter Plan.⁵⁰ The first step in creating such coalitions amongst all Chicano organizations, whether politically or economically

⁴⁷ "CCR Newsletter," 4, 5.

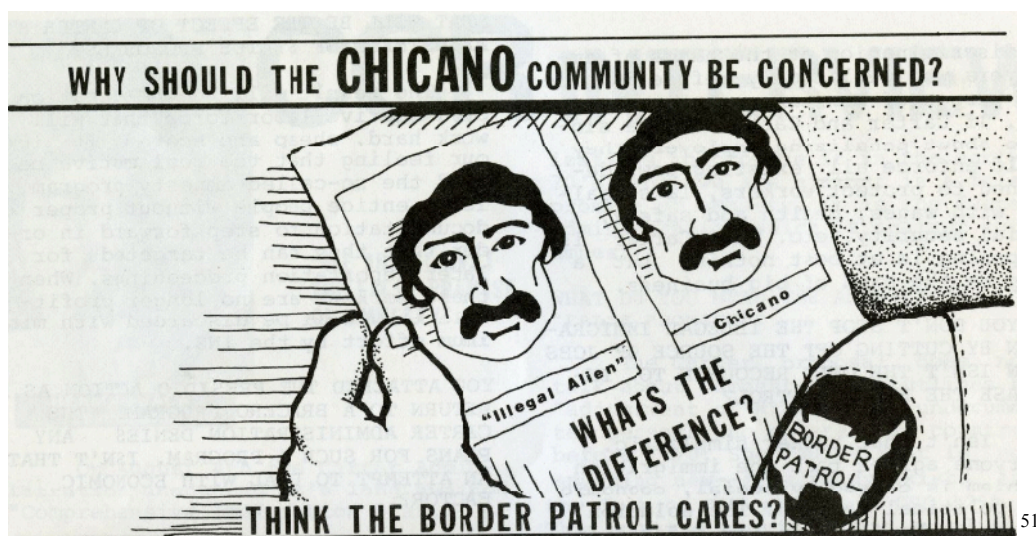
⁴⁸ "CCR Newsletter," 5.

⁴⁹ "CCR Newsletter," 5.

⁵⁰ "Nuestra Lucha (OH)," *Nuestra Lucha (OH)* 2, no. 2, (Toledo, Ohio), Feb. 1, 1978, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28456705>, 7.

focused, came from reexamining the interconnectedness between Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

A major factor driving Chicano unity behind the immigrant cause stemmed from the movement's reevaluation of the Chicano-Mexican relationship under the United States. Before Chicanos could correct their previous distance from the immigrant community, they needed to acknowledge their shared experiences under the United States. The CCR represents in this cartoon the switch in ideology that occurred across all organizations. Having recognized how closely the United States viewed them and immigrants despite differences in citizenship status, Chicanos reconsidered their support for immigrant issues.



This realization strongly influenced all forms of Chicano activism. Chicanos accepted their undeniable ties to Mexicans and centered on immigrant activism within all sectors of the movement. Chicano organizations, whether labor or political, agreed that the Carter Administration's policies presented a threat to both Mexican and Mexican American livelihoods.

⁵¹ CCR, "Why Should the Chicano Community Be Concerned?," illustration, *CCR Newsletter* 1, 6.

The student newspaper *El Diario De La Gente* attests to an immediate impact from the Carter Plan; the proposed employee sanctions against businesses hiring undocumented workers threatened any “individual who look[ed] Hispanic.”⁵² This racialized bias that became prevalent in the late 1970s—even before the Carter Plan’s approval—directly impaired Chicano and Mexican lives. While immigrants always experienced similar forms of suffering under the United States, the recognition of it by Chicanos only occurred on a wide-spread scale during the late 1970s when aggression against Mexican immigrants publicly increased.

Chicano organizations, in an ideological adjustment, acknowledged how the United States orchestrated hardship for Chicanos and Mexicans in extremely similar fashions. Previously, Chicanos, especially those from labor-oriented groups, blamed Mexican immigrants for helping to create harmful experiences for Mexican Americans through their presence in the United States. However, later in the 1970s, Chicano activists confronted the U.S. government for its similar tendency to blame immigrants for economic and political struggles. *Voz Fronteriza*, a University of California San Diego newspaper, criticized how the United States targeted “undocumented workers as a threat to a faltering economy,” projecting them as “stealing jobs and abusing social services.”⁵³ *La Guardia*, another student activist paper reiterated the idea that the U.S.—and the Chicano Movement to a large degree—“place[d] blame for the” American economic “system’s failure. . . on its victims” (the undocumented) based on fears of increased immigration exacerbating the unemployment problem in the U.S.⁵⁴ With the influx in anti-immigrant discussions in the U.S., Chicanos sought to end the government’s decade-long

⁵² “El Diario de La Gente,” *Diario de La Gente*, *El* 6, no. 2, (Boulder, Colorado), Mar. 13, 1979, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28455701>, 4.

⁵³ “Voz Fronteriza,” *Voz Fronteriza* 3, no. 8, (La Jolla, California), Jun. 1, 1978, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28456732>, 5.

⁵⁴ “La Guardia,” *Guardia*, *La* 7, no. 8, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Feb. 1, 1977, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28456413>, 12.

trend—that they actively participated in for a majority of *el movimiento*—of blaming migrants for issues with employment and political stability. Chicano organizations and supporters expanded upon this alteration by actively demanding a change in the American foreign policy approach.

While their attitudes toward recent immigrants changed significantly during the late 1970s, Chicano frustration with the Carter Plan also stemmed from the community's longer history of resenting immigration policies that affected its economic interests. For instance, the newspaper *El Gallo*, ran under the Crusade for Justice, called the Carter Plan a “return to a Bracero type program” with its “substandard wages and housing.”⁵⁵ *El Gallo* indicated that the U.S. only sought to maintain the “‘status quo’ for those in agribusiness” that “profit[ed] from the immigration situation.”⁵⁶ However, enduring anger at the Bracero Program and its revival through the Carter Plan focused on the harm it created for undocumented Mexicans rather than its allowance for increased immigration. While the Bracero Program still stirred negative feelings amongst Chicano activists, this disdain transferred in the late 1970s from immigrants to the U.S. government. *Voz* wrote about how groups also rejected the Carter Plan because it prolonged an “‘open-door’ policy of U.S. investment” in Latin America where “U.S. monopolies” profited “at the expense of Mexico’s working people.”⁵⁷ Chicano activists understood that immigration policy under the Carter Administration offered little support for Mexican American employment—it only accomplished keeping major agribusiness stocked with a cheap and vulnerable working force. Witnessing the recreation of past immigration policies

⁵⁵ “El Gallo,” *Gallo*, *El* 9, no. 5, (Denver, Colorado), Aug. 1, 1977, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28456029>, 7.

⁵⁶ “El Gallo,” *Gallo*, *El* 9, 7.

⁵⁷ “Voz Fronteriza,” *Voz Fronteriza* 3, 5.

that harmed both the undocumented and Mexican Americans, Chicano activists demanded that the U.S. reframe how it interpreted and presented the immigration issue.

Political and labor groups alike asked the United States to replace a hostile perspective vis-a-vis immigration with a solution-oriented one, just as Chicanos had. *Voz* suggested that rather than continue to blame the undocumented for economic instability, the U.S. must address the *cause* for increased immigration: the “present economic crisis in Mexico.”⁵⁸ Chicano organizations, especially on the labor front, significantly changed their approach and the approach they expected from the U.S. government (one that embraces and advocates for Mexican immigrants rather than diminishing their existence). Chicanos condemned how the Carter Administration played a major role in “heighten[ing] anti-immigrant hysteria” instead of aiding Mexico’s “industrial and agricultural production.”⁵⁹ Chicanos believed that this aid, in stabilizing the Mexican economy, provided a more rational solution to immigration issues, going against their previous efforts to remove immigrant presence. Increased hysteria about the undocumented manifested in more extreme legislation at all levels of government that only provoked Chicano activists to focus on immigrant rights more.

Anti-immigrant legislation passed in the 1970s, even before the announcement of the Carter Plan, created a turbulent environment for Mexican and Mexican Americans, sparking reaction from Chicanos. Individuals and organizations both responded at an unparalleled level to immigrant needs during this era. For instance, a restaurant owner, Mario Cantu, faced charges of harboring illegal aliens after refusing INS entry into his restaurant, inciting calls for a “People

⁵⁸ *Voz Fronteriza*.” 5.

⁵⁹ “La Guardia,” *Guardia*, La 7, 12.

Rally” against the injustices “Mexicanos and Chicanos” faced.⁶⁰ This individual moment that *El Servidor* wrote about in 1976 brought support from major Chicano leaders—with long histories in outright hostility or ambivalence regarding immigrants—like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez and César Chávez.⁶¹ Chávez in particular provides evidence of the major change that Chicano organizations, especially labor-oriented ones, exhibited in response to increased pressure on immigrants during the 1970s. Individuals and formal organizations from every corner of the Chicano movement embraced immigrant rights issues as governmental authorities continued to foster anguish amongst immigrant communities.

During this period Chicano leaders evinced a newfound awareness of the economic and labor interests of immigrant communities. Immigrant hardship existed in tangent with Chicano suffering, but earlier Chicano organizers never showed any support for the undocumented, let alone on the scale they did during the 1970s. *Voz* wrote about the Texas Farm Worker Union’s call for help from “all mass organizations” in response to a pregnant woman’s death under the INS; they demanded “that all deportations of undocumented workers” and the “attacks and harassment against Mexican workers cease.”⁶² This again demonstrates the most drastic transformation from labor groups that previously only focused on the Mexican American farmworker (at the expense of the immigrant) to actively including immigrant issues in their advocacy. Even just ten years earlier, labor groups supported deportations to minimize economic competition for Chicanos. Under the Carter Administration, however, Chicanos felt that this harsh anti-immigrant policy in the Carter Plan failed to “represent the interest of the working

⁶⁰ “El Servidor,” *Servidor*, *El* 1, no. 3, (Seguin, Texas), Aug. 1, 1976, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28044681>, 1.

⁶¹ “El Servidor,” *Servidor*, *El* 1, 1.

⁶² “Voz Fronteriza,” 4.

class.”⁶³ Instead, Chicanos witnessed the undocumented workers’ “constant fear of [the] INS” with no real “right to unionize or strike,” making them, and not just the Chicano fieldworker, the “most exploited sector of the working class.”⁶⁴ Economic threats remained central in activists’ focus, but the Carter Administration’s overall impact on Chicano and Mexican well-being through stricter policy continued to bring the two communities closer together.

Federal policies that threatened the amity between the U.S. and all ethnic Mexicans helped push Chicanos and Mexicans together in shared suffering. For example, one feature from the Carter Plan that drew opposition came from requiring proof of identity cards to gain employment and evade deportation; this, according to activists, severely challenged the rights of the undocumented *and* “the average U.S. citizen.”⁶⁵ The Chicano Movement recognized and refuted this biased questioning of all ethnic Mexicans’ citizenship status and therefore, their acceptance into America. Legislation even sought to bar Mexicans from entering the United States, prompting some of the most vocal cries against the racial discrimination from the entire Chicano Movement.

The proposal to build a wall between Mexico and the United States brought immediate and collective condemnation from Chicanos. It prompted criticisms for its continued ignorance of the “real problem. . .forcing immigrants to migrate” into the U.S.: “unemployment.”⁶⁶ The student paper *El Tiempo Chicano* pointed out that the border wall’s purpose to “stop the flow of so-called ‘illegal aliens’ . . .disregard[ed]” the Chicano community’s sentiments.⁶⁷ The community,

⁶³ Voz Fronteriza,” 13.

⁶⁴ Voz Fronteriza,” 5.

⁶⁵ “El Renacimiento,” *Renacimiento, El* 8, no. 118, (Lansing, Michigan), Apr. 25, 1977, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28456198>, 5.

⁶⁶ “El Diario de La Gente,” *Diario de La Gente, El* 6, 4.

⁶⁷ “El Tiempo Chicano,” *Tiempo Chicano, El*, no. 4, (National City, California), May 1, 1978, retrieved from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28045733>, 5.

including established groups like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) acknowledged that these attempts only served to “dehumanize the undocumented worker” and increase hostility towards “Mexico and Mexican-Americans.”⁶⁸ This border wall presented a danger to all Chicanos and Mexicans that demanded a reaction from the movement. For instance, *El Tiempo* called for a “National Protest” in 1979 against the “Carter Curtain” and the “violation of human and constitutional rights by the Border Patrol.”⁶⁹ Increased and legalized animosity shown towards Mexicans and Chicanos, especially at the border zone, led Chicanos to shift their ideological understanding of immigrants and to actively engage in pro-immigrant work during the late 1970s.

During the late 1970s, Chicano organizations acknowledged immigrant issues and actively incorporated them into their political agendas. *La Guardia* wrote about how Chicanos advocated for “Assembly Bill 404,” also known as “The Migrant Labor Bill,” up for passage in 1977; it provided employee protections and significantly cut undocumented unemployment.⁷⁰ The legislation offered a “major victory for field workers” since without it, workers faced job and food insecurity.⁷¹ Labor and political activism actually centered around immigrant needs, like employee protections, in comparison to the original rejections the undocumented faced. Activists even succeeded in getting the bill passed in a midwestern state like Wisconsin that rested outside the larger Chicano Movement in the American southwest.⁷² Additional protections from the Chicano Movement came from their efforts to help immigrants facing border violence. *El Tiempo* dedicated an entire page in their newspaper entitled “The CCV in 1978: Border Violence

⁶⁸ “El Tiempo Chicano,” *Tiempo Chicano*, *El*, 5.

⁶⁹ “El Tiempo Chicano,” 1.

⁷⁰ “La Guardia,” 3.

⁷¹ “La Guardia,” 3.

⁷² “La Guardia,” 16.

Explodes” to bring attention to the extreme violence immigrants faced daily at the border.⁷³ This inspired other Chicanos, like those who wrote *Nuestra Lucha*, to provide legal advice to all “Latino farmworkers” that frequently faced the INS.⁷⁴ Support for immigrants focused intensely on fieldworker rights and the immediate danger undocumented Mexicans faced under policy like the Carter Plan, yet it grew to also interweave immigrant rights within other aspects of the Chicano Movement.

Immigrant aid manifested within the movement through social service organizations that traditionally focused on only Chicano liberation and advancement. One avenue that stands out is the educational sector that Chicanos held in high importance throughout the entire movement. *Nuestra Lucha* discussed how MALDEF “fil[ed] a brief” to ban a Texas “annual tuition requirement” that barred undocumented children from a “free public education;” this followed the guidelines of a 1975 state amendment that “only U.S. citizens and legally resident aliens [were] eligible.”⁷⁵ Chicano organizations recognized how the United States wanted to bring in immigrants as a labor force, but actively kept them from participating in American society by any means possible. Laws such as these also negatively impacted Mexican American students who, because of their close ethnic backgrounds and the racial bias of the United States, came under scrutiny as illegal residents. While these facts remained true during the Bracero Program and under the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, Chicano activists only advocated for Chicano *and* immigrant social rights under the hostilities of the Carter Administration. Social activism extended beyond what Chicanos believed to be the minimum rights Mexican immigrants deserved; they moved into creating more avenues for upward social mobility.

⁷³ “El Tiempo Chicano,” 4.

⁷⁴ *Nuestra Lucha* (OH),” *Nuestra Lucha* (OH) 2, 10.

⁷⁵ “*Nuestra Lucha* (OH),” 3.

Having previously only highlighted the need for increased Chicano education in post-secondary schools, the movement broadened its focus to also encompass higher education for immigrants in this period. *El Diario De La Gente* included an advertisement for “The Migrant Action Program,” an “Educational Opportunity Program at the University of Colorado. . . seeking students with a migrant background. . . interested in attaining a college education.”⁷⁶ Mexican American groups took a serious interest in the advancement of Mexican immigrants during this era, offering significant support in accessing college. These smaller acts represent the biggest change for Chicanos regarding how they viewed immigrants. Chicanos always dealt with immigrants, whether positively or negatively, in the labor and political realm. Yet interactions with Chicanos in more social areas like education were extremely rare; the extreme change in ideology during the 1970s made a once dismissed community a focal point for the Chicano Movement.

The Carter Administration created an environment of extreme hostility for both Mexicans and Mexican Americans that fostered a closer relationship between the two communities. Increasingly strict immigration legislation, such as the proposed Carter Immigration Plan, finally demonstrated to Chicanos that they shared an undeniable connection to Mexicans, particularly in how the United States treated them. All organizations, from the most hostile labor groups to the most dismissive political ones, completely transformed their activism to both acknowledge and advocate for immigrant rights. These organizations made immigrant issues, especially regarding their employment and treatment by government officials, a major aspect of their activism. The Chicano Movement in the late 1970s witnessed a major transformation in how Mexican Americans positively understood and actively supported the Mexican immigrant.

⁷⁶ “El Diario De La Gente,” 8.

Conclusion

Mexicans and Mexican Americans alike experienced almost identical discrimination under the United States from the earliest interactions—today these two groups even unite under this continued shared experience. While some activists understood that Mexican immigrants and citizens alike struggled under the same circumstances, the majority of Chicano organizations and leaders viewed immigrants as a separate entity entirely. Mexican Americans of the 1960s and 1970s sought to defeat racialized discrimination through the Chicano Movement; at the same time, Chicanos either ignored or viewed Mexican immigrants (with the same surnames, appearances, and experiences) with antipathy. However, this thesis demonstrates how the relationship between both communities transformed over time into the unified one seen today.

More than anything, changing immigration policies at the federal level determined how Chicano organizations perceived the plight of recent Mexican immigrants. This applied to both labor and political organizations. Under the Bracero Program, from 1942 to 1964, early Chicano activists showed extreme hostility or outright disregard towards immigrants because they believed that undocumented workers took away job opportunities or lowered wages for Mexican Americans. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act eased tensions between both communities only slightly with no new national immigration policy occurring for over ten years to warrant attention. While Chicanos did not feel the same animosity towards immigrants as they did under the Bracero Program, they still failed to appropriately address immigrant rights within *el movimiento*. During this high point for the Chicano Movement where Chicanos sought to reaffirm their culture, land claims, and legal rights, activists excluded Mexican immigrants.

Despite experiencing the numerous similarities living in an inequitable country, the immigration policy dissuaded activists from including immigrant issues for a majority of the movement.

When immigration policy resurfaced as a dominant topic in U.S. politics during the 1970s, Chicano activism—specifically, the way it perceived and treated the Mexican immigrant community—shifted substantially. While immigrants and Mexican Americans always experienced similar racialized prejudice under the United States, only the revitalized anti-immigrant legislation made Chicanos reconsider their previous judgements of the undocumented. During this era, especially with the proposed Carter Immigration Plan, Chicanos became the active supporters for immigrant rights currently seen amongst contemporary Mexican American activists. Chicanos and Mexicans in the modern era work closely together against racial discrimination, though this relationship came after over a decade of enmity between the two. Having previously barred Mexican immigrants from accessing their movement, Chicano leaders—motivated by the need to respond to these policies—accepted and utilized their connection with immigrants to fight racialized prejudice for both groups.

When I began this project, I initially struggled to comprehend how two ostensibly identical groups—only different in citizenship status—stayed detached for so long. Moreover, I was surprised to find that, as the relevant historiography demonstrated, the Chicano Movement long refused to fight against the discrimination Mexican immigrants faced. The basic objective in Chicano activism, which demanded respect for their culture while refusing to integrate the immigrants that shared said culture with them, is a main facet of this research. This work demonstrates how two communities suffering under the same entity can segregate themselves. When attempting to eradicate discrimination for Mexican Americans, Chicanos initially

advanced their needs at the expense of Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, this research highlights how a social movement's resources and energy can be misallocated when directed against potential allies rather than the main discriminatory force. When united, communities create powerful movements for change, as seen with the Mexican and Mexican American success at promoting bilingual and bicultural programs, better working conditions for migrants, and increased opportunity for social mobility that both groups benefit from. Ultimately, this research serves as evidence that remaining divided only serves the interests of an oppressor; uniting together in activism offers the greatest avenue for true change.

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