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Los Angeles

An Unlikely Host

The Church of the Epiphany and the Chicana/o Movement

In Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

David Jesus Flores

2022

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2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Unlikely Host:

The Church of the Epiphany and the Chicana/o Movement

in Los Angeles

by

David Jesus Flores

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Charlene Villaseñor-Black, Co-Chair

Professor Robert C. Romero, Co -Chair

Chicanx studies has long overlooked a spiritually centered social movement history. Scholarship on the Chicana/o movement has been predominately studied through a secular lens, all but ignoring the communities longstanding religious values. Yet, unbeknownst to most, religion played a critical role in the late 1960s Mexican American civil rights movement. Using rich oral histories and archival data, this research documents the radical theological praxis and faith politics of the Episcopalian Church of the Epiphany during the late 1960s Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. This little Episcopalian church in the Lincoln Heights barrio of East Los Angeles became the center of political activity during the Chicana/o movement; it was an organizing hub for Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers, it was where the famous Chicana/o high school Blowouts were planned, where the Brown Berets were

founded, and where *La Raza* newspaper, one of the principal underground newspapers of Chicana/o history was found and printed, and the church also played an important role in the Chicana/o Moratorium against the war in Vietnam. All of these organizations have been documented as instrumental to the success of the social-political goals of the Chicana/o movement, yet, because of Chicanx Studies' reluctance to accept the contributions of religion to its history, very little is said about the role of the Church of the Epiphany. Using Mario García's faith politics, Robert Chao Romero's Brown Church, and Gaye Theresa Johnson's spatial entitlement theoretical concepts, I argue that the Church of the Epiphany was one the most, if not the most, important organizations during the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

The dissertation of David Jesus Flores is approved.

Gaye Theresa Marie Johnson

Mario García

Charlene Villaseñor Black, Committee Co-Chair

Robert C. Romero, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

For
My *familia* – past, present, and future.

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Lastly, I want to thank the Chicana/o activists that shared their stories with me. This is your history, and I am honored to have been invited into your homes to document the critical role of the Church of the Epiphany to the Chicana/o Movement. A special shoutout goes to Lydia López. You have giving so much of your time and warmth to me. You are a history book of the role of the church in social movements. Thank you for all the connections you have made for me, but I am most grateful for our friendship.

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Chapter I
Introduction

Early in this research, when requesting an interview from Joe Razo, longtime co-editor of *La Raza* newspaper, which is largely credited for documenting the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, I let him know that I would like to talk to him about the role of religion during the Chicana/o movement.[1] Graciously, Razo obliged, and went so far as to go through his thousands of photographs to compile the images of clergy, religious sisters, and/or religious symbolism. To his own surprise, Razo stated, "They were there right from the very beginning."[2]

However, unlike the Black civil rights movement that has largely documented its religious leitmotif, Chicana/o studies has long overlooked a spiritually centered social movement history. This omission is surprising considering the vast majority of U.S. Chicana/os and Latina/os identify with some kind of religious or spiritual identity.[3] Although the Chicana/o movement has been explored from multiple angles, it has predominantly been studied through a secular lens, leaving the role of religion largely missing or unevenly accounted for, prompting Chicano historian Mario García to state, "Today, almost forty years [now fifty] after the founding of the first Chicano studies programs, it is still difficult to find many courses that specifically focus on Chicano religion."[4] Although García made that statement a decade ago, it still rings largely true. However, if Chicana/o studies, as a field of research, broadened its scope to include the religious or spiritual character of Chicana/os, the evidence largely suggests that the

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[1] For a definition and description of what is a Chicana/o, see Ruben Salazar, "Who is a Chicano? And What is it The Chicanos Want?" *Los Angeles Times,* February 6, 1970.

[2] Joe Razo, interview by author, August 20, 2020.

[3] "Religious Landscape Study," PEW Research Center.

[4] Gastón Espinosa and Mario García, *Mexican American Religions* (Duke University Press. 2009), 14.

faith community did indeed support *El Movimiento* much more than has been previously documented, in line with Joe Razo's realization. Lara Medina stated, contrary to popular and scholarly belief, "Chicana/o and Latina/o religious leaders, sisters, priests, and laity fought valiantly in the struggle for civil rights and self-determination."[5] Thus, agents of change, alternative narratives of resistance, and stories of struggle have yet to be documented.

This doctoral dissertation is both a challenge to and an intervention in the dearth of scholarly attention that Chicana/o studies, religious studies, American studies, and history have given to the religious and spiritual experiences of Chicana/os, particularly in their movements for social change. It returns to the Mexican American civil rights movement of the late 1960s to explore its intersection with religion. Unbeknownst to most, religion played a foundational role in the successes and victories of the Chicana/o movement. This research examines the role and support of one Episcopal church in East Los Angeles, the Church of the Epiphany, to the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles during the late 1960s. It highlights the unwavering support that the Church of the Epiphany provided to Chicana/os during its largest movement for social change, underscoring the importance of religion to Chicana/o history.

The Church of the Epiphany is an Episcopal Church in the Lincoln Heights barrio of East Los Angeles. During the 1960s, the church became a critical basecamp for many of the principal organizations in the Los Angeles Chicana/o movement, including organizers of the high school walkouts, the Young Citizens for Community Action, the Brown Berets, *Católicos por la Raza, La Raza* newspaper, and the United Farm Workers. These organizations have been documented as instrumental to the Chicana/o movement's social, political, and educational goals. Yet, there is

---

[5] Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas* (Temple University Press, 2004), 6.

no comprehensive study that examines the relationship between these bedrock organizations and the Church of the Epiphany.

The history of the Church of the Epiphany and the Chicana/o movement provides a unique and overlooked narrative of Chicana/o social movement history that has long been kept in the shadows. Although Chicana/o and social movement historians have documented the political, educational, and social gains that resulted from the Chicana/o movement, very few have examined the role of religion. Exploring the Church of the Epiphany uncovers a critical and radical socio-political and religious relationship with the Mexican American community. Unearthing these historical narratives provide a potential to bridge the secular and non-secular divides in Chicana/o studies. They show that self-determination and liberation are not just socio-political goals that exist in the secular arena, but can be considered as a highly spiritual praxis.

Approach

Rather than view religion as a principal pillar of colonization, or as an ideological force of patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia, this research takes an alternative approach. I follow Chicana Feminists Irene Lara and Elisa Facio, whose critical lens on Chicana/o spirituality is built "on the supposition that spirituality often plays a decolonizing role in creating meaning, inspiring action, and supporting healing and justice in our communities."[6] I examine the ways devotion functions as a form of resistance, or what Lindsay Perez-Huber has termed religious capital, a source of empowerment and resilience for Latina/os.[7] Understood in this way, I use

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[6] Elisa Facio and Irene Lara, eds. *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives* (University of Arizona Press, 2014). 3.

[7] Lindsay Perez-Huber, "Challenging Racist Nativist Framing," *Harvard Educational Review* 79 no. 4 (2009).

theoretical frameworks, described later in this section, that uncover the positive contributions religion has played in and for communities of color. Indeed, by taking a road less traveled, I do not intend to dismiss the legacy of religion in laying the groundwork for colonization and global imperialism. However, I also recognize that religious texts have been written and interpreted by those in power to justify their thirst for more power.

In the arena of religion and spirituality, theological texts have historically been framed to support colonial projects. In the case of Christianity, suggests J. Kameron Carter, the historical Jesus was stripped of his Jewish and Middle Eastern roots and developed a racialized theological imagination to become a vehicle for the facilitation of Western conquest.[8] Carter argues that Christianity has inaccurately become the white man's religion and the banner under which to "save the souls" of the rest of the world. Robert Chao Romero also states that Europeans had an implicit belief that Christianity was fundamentally theirs; it was "their property, and to be Christian was to be white. They alone held the institutional and theological keys to the Kingdom of God."[9] Thus, the problem of race and racism, of whiteness, of colonialism, is also a core theological concern that must be confronted, critiqued, and not ignored by scholars of religion or ethnic studies. It is with this in mind that I approach Chicana/o religion and spirituality.

This research is situated between the years of 1961-1970, highlighting the critical moments of the Mexican American civil rights movement in Los Angeles. It begins in 1961 with the launch of the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA), a ministerial experiment by the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles that created a union of East Los Angeles churches. PELA included churches from the greater East Los Angeles area, including the Church of the Epiphany in

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[8] J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[9] Ibid., 58.

Lincoln Heights, the Church of the Redeemer in Boyle Heights, and the Church of St. Bartholomew in El Sereno. Additionally, this research highlights the work and spiritual mentorship of Father John B. Luce, called to lead PELA by Bishop Francis E. Bloy. Father Luce's presence had an incredible impact on the church and the Mexican American community in the late 1960s.

The Episcopalian experiment preceded the Chicana/o movement of the later 1960s and, as this research will argue, Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany inspired and trained young Chicana/os to organize for their own self-determination. It started with the church's relationship and involvement with Cesar Chavez[10], Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers, which is "often acknowledged as a visible sign of rising proactive Mexican-American public sentiment. This could be considered the beginning of notable political ferment."[11] Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany exposed youth to the farm workers' struggle, to the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado, to the land grant struggles in New Mexico, and engaged them civically with local politics, namely, involving them in the election of the first Mexican American on the Los Angeles School Board of Education, Dr. Julian Nava. Because of the socio-political engagement and training that Chicana/o youth received at the Church of the Epiphany, many went on to organize the high school walkouts of March 1968, when thousands of high school students from several East Los Angeles High Schools walked out of their schools to protest a lack of quality culturally relevant education and their racist treatment in schools. The high school Blowouts were just the beginning of urban Chicana/o resistance. The student

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[10] I do not use an accent on Cesar Chavez's name because he never used accents when signing his own name. See Luis León, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez: Crossing Religious Borders* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 35.

[11] Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene M. Vasquez, "Chicano Movement," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (2005), 305.

movement ignited an educational reform that is the foundation of Chicana/os studies today.[12] Again, although this moment has been researched extensively, its intersection with the role of religion and/or spirituality has not. Very little is known of the relationship that the Church of the Epiphany had with these student organizers. Many of the early planning meetings for the walkouts were held in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany, including those of the Brown Berets, *Católicos por la Raza*, and *La Raza* newspaper. These important relationships are what will be explored in this research.

The end point to this research is 1970, the year of the Chicano Moratorium against the War in Vietnam. Between the years of 1968 and 1970, there was an unprecedented political explosion from Mexican Americans. It was, what Mario García calls, a Chicano intifada, where a new Mexican American identity emerged, Chicanismo.[13] I end this research with the Chicano Moratorium because it is often cited as the beginning of the end of the Chicana/o movement, or at least the end of the mass civil disobedience during what became known as the Chicana/o movement period.[14] Upon successful organizing of the high school Blowouts, the release of the East LA 13, the reinstatement of Sal Castro, and the Chicana/o Moratorium, the state and police repression and infiltration of Chicana/o organizations and leaders proved effective. After the Chicana/o Moratorium, mass demonstrations greatly declined.

Within these historical markers, I intend to provide a comprehensive historical examination of how the Church of the Epiphany shaped the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles. I will explore the long overlooked religious and spiritual influence, impact, and

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[12] Rudy Acuña, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies* (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press: 2011).
[13] Mario García, "Religion and the Chicano Movement," in *Mexican American Religions,* ed. Gastón Espinosa and Mario García (Durham: Duke University Press: 2008).

[14] Rudy Acuña, *Occupied America. 1972.*

intersections of these important moments of Chicana/o history. The central focus here is to understand the role of religion in the Chicana/o movement through an analysis of the Church of the Epiphany. My principal research question is, what role did the Church of the Epiphany play during the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles? I argue that the Church of the Epiphany was one of the most, if not the most, important organization to the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles. By examining the support and role of the Church of the Epiphany to the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, I further argue that the role of religion plays a critical part in Chicana/o liberation and self-determination as expressed through the largest Mexican American social movement in United States history.

Sources and Methodology

Methodologically, this dissertation utilizes interdisciplinary qualitative methods to better understand the connections between religion and the Chicana/o civil rights movement. This research principally relies on oral interviews, oral histories, and archival data. The archival material of the Church of the Epiphany is housed in the Chicana/o Studies Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as well as the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. In addition to the oral interviews conducted by the author, oral histories from the UCLA Library Center Oral History were utilized, as well as original recordings from Rocio Zamora, a former University of Southern California graduate student who had conducted interviews with some members of the Church of the Epiphany for her thesis, some of them now deceased.

The Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA contains the Church of the Epiphany Chicano Civil Rights Archive, 1960-1994. The Episcopal Church functioned as a base for much of the Chicana/o movement activity, including for Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United

Farm Workers. The five series contain clippings, arts documentation, photographic material, correspondence, and printed material concerning the Chicana/o movement. Although the collection is diverse and expansive in chronological range, there are several series that are specific to this dissertation's timeline. One important document in the archives is the proposal for the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA), which outlined the direction, goals, and intentions of Bishop Bloy's theological experiment. This experiment was in response to the lack of attention that the Church of the Epiphany was showing to its predominantly Mexican American neighborhood. The Episcopalian Bishop thus initiated a union of parishes to serve the greater East Los Angeles barrios, which became known as the Parish of East Los Angeles.

Series four is also particularly important as it contains newspaper clippings from the *Episcopal Review*, an official publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. This newspaper correspondence assists us to understand the ways the Episcopal church, especially one that found itself in the center of the Chicana/o movement, understood its role in the community. The correspondence suggests that the Church was deeply committed to supporting its Mexican American community, whether through financial means, the use of space, progressive priests, and/or an appreciation of the unique ways that Chicana/os express their faith. The photo below (Figure1.1) shows the Church's 80th anniversary in Lincoln Heights, where the services were celebrated with mariachi music, Mexican food, and a piñata for kids.

FEB 1966

THE DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES MDCCCXCVI

THE EPISCOPAL
REVIEW
Official Publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

Pre-Convention Issue

ENJOYING THE MUSIC of the Los Angeles Camperos mariachis are the Rev. John B. Luce (left), rector of the Parish of East Los Angeles and the Rt. Rev. Robert C. Rusack, Suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles, at fiesta following services that marked the 80th anniversary of Epiphany Church, Lincoln Heights. The fiesta following the Jan. 6 (Epiphany) service also included Mexican style food and a pinata for children.

Figure 1.1. Newspaper clipping of the Episcopal Review, 1966. Father Luce (left) singing with Camperos Mariachi at 80th Anniversary of the Church of Epiphany. Church of the Epiphany Records, Courtesy of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

This is significant because as this research will uncover, in 1966, when this photo was taken, the Catholic church did not allow priests to speak in Spanish; oftentimes Mexican services were segregated, or in the basement; and there was a strong unwillingness to support the social causes of the Mexican American community. However, these archives show how the Episcopal church not only supported their communities in the 1960s with mariachi music, but also through material means as well. Another clipping in this collection shows that the church was financially supporting social causes nationally, including "People Against Racism," granting them $7,000;

the “Organization for Citizens Representation” ($5,000); and the “Afro-Mexican Coalition” in Los Angeles ($10,000). Therefore, the Church of the Epiphany collections will be invaluable in showing how the church played a pivotal role in national social movements. And because the Church of the Epiphany was so central to the foundations of the Brown Berets, *La Raza* newspaper, the high school Blowouts, and many other critical moments of the Chicana/o movement, this archive provides substantial qualitative data in understanding an institutional religious organization that was totally behind the movement for Chicana/o self-determination.

While the archival data speaks to the nuts and bolts of movement building, the oral histories will literally speak to what lies behind the data. Twenty-one oral interviews were utilized from those involved in the Chicana/o movement and with intimate knowledge or relationships with the Church of the Epiphany. The author conducted 13 interviews, six interviews were conducted by Rocio Zamora, and two oral histories were done by Virginia Espino for the UCLA Chicana/o Studies Research Center.

Oral Interviews Conducted by the Author	
1. Paula Crisostomo	A principal leader in the high school Blowouts, Crisostomo had a close relationship with the Church of the Epiphany while holding meetings for the high school Blowouts there.
2. Lydia López	A close friend of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany, and a member of *Catolicos por la Raza*; she was also as an organizer for the Chicana/o movement.
3. Joe Razo	Co-editor of *La Raza* magazine, Razo became the editor in 1968 when the newspaper was being printed in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany. Razo was a key figure in several important events during the Chicana/o movement.

4. Moctesuma Esparza	An early member of the Church of the Epiphany and close friend of Father Luce, he was a part of the Young Citizens for Community Action. He also trained with Father John Luce at the Social Action Training Institute.
5. Victoria Castro	A principal organizer of the high school Blowouts, she was also the founding president of the Young Citizens for Community Action.
6. Luis Garza	Principal photographer for *La Raza* newspaper.
7. Rosalio Muñoz	Principal organizer for the August 29, 1970 Chicana/o Moratorium.
8. Fran Gómez	Early member of the Church of the Epiphany, whose family was very close to Father Luce.
9. Armando Vazquez	Participant in the high School Blowouts, he was a student at Cal State University, Long Beach and a member of *Católicos por la Raza*.
10. William Wauters	Former priest at the Church of the Epiphany and good friend of Father Luce
11. Carlos Montes	Early participant in activities at the Church of the Epiphany and one of founding members of the Brown Berets
12. Ricardo Reyes	One of the first Chicanos hired at the Church of the Epiphany, he was an artist and was commissioned to change the stationary materials at the church. Reyes also started art classes at the church.
13. Richard Martinez	Was a founding member of *Católicos por la Raza.*

Oral Interviews Conducted by Rocio Zamora	
14. Father Luce	Director of the Church of the Epiphany from 1965-1973.
15. Father Wood	Parish priest at the Church of the Epiphany from 1966-1982.
16. Sal Castro	High school teacher at Lincoln High School, he was also a principal organizer of the High School walkouts.

17. Chris Hartmire	Executive Director of the Farm Worker Ministry and friend of Father Luce.
18. Nancy Von Lauderbach	Member of the Church of the Epiphany during the Chicana/o Movement.
19. Rudy Tovar	Member of the Church of the Epiphany and the Chicana/o Movement, specifically the Chicana/o Moratorium.

Oral Histories from UCLA Center for Oral History	
20. David Sánchez	Early member of the Church of the Epiphany hired by Father Luce, member of the Young Citizens for Community Action, and founder of the Brown Berets.
21. Raul Ruiz	Co-Editor of *La Raza* newspaper.

I use oral histories as, what Maylei Blackwell calls, a historiographic intervention, listening to the ways memory functions as an archive.[15] Why have the histories of religion and spirituality been absent or ignored in the canon of Chicana/o studies? What is gained or lost from our lack of attention to the piety of our communities? Furthermore, oral histories literally say what the archives cannot. They represent what Diana Taylor calls "a form of knowing as well as a system of storing and transmitting knowledge."[16] Because the Chicana/o movement has been largely documented as secular, the oral histories are a methodological tool to challenge that long assumed narrative. Chicana/o history has not meaningfully explored the religious or spiritual

[15] Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2011).

[16] Diane Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), xvii.

nature of Chicanismo, therefore, these oral histories and interviews will be extremely useful in developing a deeper and more holistic understanding of the Chicana/o movement.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation uses theoretical frameworks that correspond to the notion that religion and spirituality are, and have always been, vitally important to the worldview, cosmic view, and *el cotidiano* (the day to day) of Chicana/os.[17] I will be using Robert Chao Romero's theoretical framework of the Brown Church, Mario García's faith politics theoretical framework, and Gaye Theresa Johnson's theory of spatial entitlement to guide this research. Chao Romero's Brown Church theoretical framework is useful in conceptualizing the social justice nature of Chicana/o religious history. He states that throughout history, the Brown Church has served as a 500-year-old social justice religious tradition in Latin American and the United States. It has challenged the social and racial injustices that have historically marginalized communities of color, including "such great evils as the Spanish Conquest and Spanish colonialism, the '*sistema de castas*,' Manifest Destiny and U.S. settler colonialism in the Southwest, Latin American dictatorships, U.S. imperialism in Central America, the oppression of farm workers, and the current exploitation and marginalization of undocumented immigrants."[18] Furthermore, Chao Romero conceptualizes Brown as not simply a signifier for Latina/os as racially brown, but as a metaphor for the racial liminality experienced by Latina/os and Chicana/os. He argues that Chicana/os and Latina/os often exist outside the Black and white binaries of U.S. history; we are Brown, he states, "in terms of our racial and social positioning in the United States… Brown also

[17] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1996).

[18] Robert Chao Romero, *The Brown Church* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 11.

symbolizes the racial liminality experienced by Latina/os as betwixt and between that of "white" and "black."[19] Indeed, history has recognized a Black and white narrative that often overlooks the Brown. This research then, is a Brown history. It builds upon Chao Romero's work, suggesting that social justice is the bedrock of many church communities, and that faith lies as the foundation of many Latina/o social movements.

This research also builds on the work of Mario García's faith politics theoretical framework. Similar to Brown Church, García states that faith politics is a common theme in Chicana/o and Latina/o history, referring to the application to and intersection of religious faith with social movements. García states, "Many local community struggles have been headed not only by clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, but by devout laypeople who are inspired by their faith to seek social justice."[20] As a grassroots movement, this research shows the faith politics of religious leaders like Father Luce and Virginia Ram, who were inspired by their faith to seek social justice. While not overstating the influence of faith on the Chicana/o movement, the application of faith politics shows how much religion has indeed played a role in Chicana/o self-determination at the local level. García states that in many cases "Faith and politics, or faith politics, have been two sides of the same coin."[21] This research is a clear illustration of this often-overlooked intersection.

Lastly, this research borrows Gaye Theresa Johnson's theoretical concept of spatial entitlement to explore the importance of the Church of the Epiphany to the Chicana/o movement.

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[19] Ibid., 14.

[20] Mario García, *Father Luis Olivares* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 9.

[21] Ibid.

Spatial entitlement is a useful concept for recognizing the dynamic, creative, and radical ways that Chicana/os re-purposed the basement of Church of the Epiphany to meet its needs for self-determination. Johnson suggests that spatial entitlement is "everyday reclamations of space, assertions of social citizenship and infrapolitical struggles [that] have created the conditions for future successes in organized collective movements."[22] In her book, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity,* Johnsons asserts that "struggles for social justice in Los Angeles involved changing the meaning of existing spaces and creating new ones."[23] Where churches are often reserved exclusively for spiritual purposes, Chicana/os in this research utilized the church in dramatically worldly fashion, to organize the largest high school walkout in United States history, to print a countercultural newspaper, and to strategize the release of their political prisoners. The offering of space from the Church of the Epiphany illustrates the potential of religious institutions as critical sites of community building. This dissertation seeks to understand how Chicana/o activists utilized this notion of spatial entitlement to bring the church to stand in solidarity with their movements for social change.

Literature Review

This dissertation fills a void in the canon of Chicana/o studies literature, which has historically overlooked the religiosity and spirituality of Chicana/os. It is without question that Mexican Americans are a highly religious people. If we look to Mexico, it has the 3rd largest Catholic population in the world, 95.1% identifying as Christian. Although Mexican religiosity is

[22] Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), x.

[23] Ibid., xii.

often attributed to colonialism, consider that even before the Spanish conquest of Mexico, "there was nothing that existed that did not have the heavy imprint of religion on it."[24] That pre-Columbian spiritual practices have survived 500 years of settler colonialism speaks volumes about the resilience and significance of religion and spirituality to the native peoples of this land.

Today, in the United States, a considerable majority of Latina/os have some type of religious affiliation, with the vast majority identifying as Christian.[25] According to the Pew Research Center, 55% of Latina/os are Catholics, overshadowing the next closest religious group, which are Protestants at 22%.[26] The unaffiliated make up the next largest group at 18%, however, only 2% of that group identify as atheist. This indicates that a vast majority of the unaffiliated do not lack a spiritual identity, but rather a religious one. Thus, the liminality of their spiritual experiences is an important point of study for future research. Furthermore, those that have a religious affiliation are also not so easily identifiable, escaping neat forms of classification. As cultural studies scholar David Aponte suggests, "Latina/o religious practices display an eclectic spirituality that draws on many sources without any internal sense of conflict. There is an overriding realization that Latina/os, whether they be Catholic, Baptist, Muslim, Buddhist, Pentecostal, new Age, or even atheist, are the cultural heirs of and continue to be influenced by Iberian Catholicism as mediated and developed in the many Indigenous and African-diaspora multicultural context of Latin America."[27] This is further evidence of the need

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[24] James Diego Vigil, *From Indians to Chicanos* (Waveland Press, 2011), 38.

[25] PEW Research Center.

[26] "The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States". Pew Research Center, accessed May, 13, 2017. https://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states.

[27] David Edwin Aponte, *Santo!,* (New York: Orbis, 2012), 11-12.

to seriously explore and understand the unique experiences of Chicana/o and Latina/o religion and spirituality.

However, one could spend a lifetime investigating the academic literature of Chicana/os and sorely miss this essential marker of identity. To illustrate, Reynaldo F. Macias, a critical architect of Chicana/o studies, describes the discipline as an "understanding of the varied experiences, cultural production and social locations of the Mexican origin populations in the United States and Américas."[28] Macias also included a conceptual map of the field, naming nine broad dominant areas of research and over 50 sub-areas, but nowhere is religion and/or spirituality named as an area of study. This is a common perception in the Chicana/o studies scholarship. As we have crossed the 50-year anniversary of Chicana/o studies, there are still very few courses at any institution dedicated to the study of Chicana/o religion and spirituality. Anthony Stevens-Arroyo and Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens write, "Although we admire the many university-based Latino and Latina scholars engaged in Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American Studies who have greatly enriched the knowledge of Latino experiences, we note with disappointment that most of them have afforded only limited and superficial importance to religion."[29]

Furthermore, where the field of religious studies may seem like an appropriate place to find research on Chicana/o and Latina/o religiosity, it too, overlooks its Spanish-speaking population. This omission lacks objectivity when considering that Spanish-speaking Catholics have been in the United States for twice as long as the nation has existed.[30] Moises Sandoval

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[28] Reynaldo F. Macías, "El Grito en Aztlán: Voice and Presence in Chicana/o Studies," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 18, no. 2 (2005): 170.

[29] Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens & Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo. *Recognizing the Latino Resurgence in U.S. Religion*.(New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

states, "Whenever Hispanics are mentioned in those histories, their religious expressions are often demeaned; whenever there is controversy, their point of view is left out. Parish histories, even in places where Hispanics are now the majority, seldom mention them. It is as if they did not exist."[31] American historians of religion have privileged a Euro-American and Anglo Protestant past; following their migration patterns, documenting their conquests, and privileging their history over those of the native peoples of North America.

This literature review centers the spiritual *mestizaje* and liminality that is Chicana/o and Latina/o religiosity. Borrowing Theresa Delgadillo's critical eye to a *mestizaje,* she states, "In our lexicon *mestizaje* has shifted from a term that erases indigenous ancestry to one that claims it, from one that only signals racial mixture to one that celebrates cultural hybridity, from one that bespeaks narrow nationalism to one … that dismantles that striving."[32] With that said, this literature review is both a challenge to and an intervention in the lack of scholarly attention that Chicana/o studies has given to the religious and spiritual experiences of the population it studies. Showing promise, the last few decades have seen an increased interest in Chicana/o and Latina/o spirituality. Although the field is still relatively new, distinct areas of research have shaped its formation. I begin by reviewing the Chicana/o scholarship that contains a religious studies framework. I separate them by themes, first by historical re-writings, traditional religious studies, and Chicana/o Feminist studies. The second section explores another pillar in the Chicana/o

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[30] Timothy Matovina,, and Gerald E. Poyo, eds. *¡ Presente!: US Latino Catholics from Colonial Origins to the Present*. (New York: Orbis, 2015).

[31] Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), xiii.

[32] Theresa Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 11.

religious studies literature, Latina/o theology, separated into Latin American Liberation theology, U.S.-based Latina/o theology, and Latina Feminist theology.

Religion & Chicana/o Studies

A religious studies approach explores the meanings, purpose, and function of spirituality and religiosity in the social, cultural, and political arenas of life. Its methodology is interdisciplinary, pluralistic, non-sectarian, and a non-value laden approach to the study of religion. As William Paden suggests, religious studies seeks to "create a language that explains what is otherwise expressed only by the language of religious insiders."[33] Similarly, Chicano scholar David Carrasco states that the history of religion as a discipline "examines the many experiences of human encounters with God and attempts to understand the distinctiveness of those experiences and the common underlying patterns."[34] As discussed earlier, a platform did not exist for Chicana/o scholars to explore the spiritual or religious dimensions of Chicana/o identity. Because the Chicana/o movement adopted Marxist principles, religion was considered, quite narrowly, simply a barrier to class struggle and liberation. Thus, the Chicana/o movement developed a hostility towards religion and overlooked any role it had in *el movimiento*. Only recently have Chicana/o scholars begun excavating historical narratives of the role of religion in the Chicana/o movement. This section underscores the work historians and Chicana/o studies scholars have deployed in order to (re)write religion and spirituality into history.

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[33] Mario T. García, *Católicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 38.

[34] David Carrasco, "A Perspective for a Study of Religious Dimensions in Chicano Experience," in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, ed. Chon A. Noriega et al. (Los Angeles: Regents of the University of California, 1982), 279.

Historic re-writing

The narrative of national icon Cesar Chavez provides a prime example of the way scholars have ignored the religious identities of the Chicana/o community. Although it is now well known that Chavez was a highly spiritual individual, in the first twelve biographies written about him, "not a single chapter solely examines the impact of his faith on his political, civic, or social action."[35] Not until 2003, when Frederick John Dalton published *The Moral Vision of Cesar Chavez,* was there any real attention given to the organizer's spiritual identity.[36] In 2014, Luis León delivered a powerful alter-narrative to the secular history of Chavez. In *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez*, León argues that Chavez's genius was bridging the sacred and mundane in a broad and non-dogmatic manner. Chavez was influenced by many traditions, "foremost among them the spirit of Mexican Catholic sacrifice, Gandhian nonviolent activism, a Franciscan vow of poverty, and a Baptist optimism like that of Martin Luther King in the service of social justice."[37] León suggests that Chavez transmuted the United Farm Workers into a quasi-religious movement, with symbols, rituals, and a spiritual *mestizaje*. Although León highlights Chavez, the following literature review shows how much more religion was involved in the Chicana/o movement than previously imagined.

Lara Medina[38] and Richard Martinez[39] provide two important oral histories that contribute to the role of institutional religion in the Chicana/o movement. In the late 1960s the

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[35] Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda. *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

[36] Frederick John Dalton. *The Moral Vision of Cesar Chavez* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003).

[37] Luis D León, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez: Crossing Religious Borders* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

[38] Medina, *Las Hermanas*.

Catholic Church, like other U.S institutions, maintained longstanding racist practices against Chicana/os and Mexicana/os. There was segregated seating, lack of respect for the Spanish language, poor representation of indigenous Chicana/o leadership, and not one Chicana/o bishop in the whole United States. Medina states that it was the "first time that Chicana and Latina religious leaders collectively challenged public and private institutions to address ethnic, gender, and class discrimination."[40] Martinez and Medina show that Chicano priests and religious women did indeed challenge "oppressive cultural practices that defined this relationship, and the ideology that supported it."[41] Martinez documented the first national organization of Chicano priests (PADRES) while Medina explored the first national religious-political organization of Chicana and Latina Roman Catholics in the U.S. (Las Hermanas). Both organizations were largely influenced by Latin American liberation theology, discussed in the following section.

Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda's anthology, *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, [42] was the first to create a critical discourse on the intersection of religion and politics in the U.S. It contested, challenged, and revised secular narratives of Latino civil and political struggles by "exploring the various ways religious ideology, institutions, leaders, and symbols have shaped the lives of prominent Latino leaders and movements."[43] Exploring movements of the last 150 years, they argue that Latino religious ideology has not only played a critical role in the Latino social political sphere, but often served

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[39] Richard Edward Martínez, *PADRES: The National Chicano Priest Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

[40] Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 4.

[41] Martinez, *PADRES*, 1.

[42] Gastón Espinosa et al., *Latino Religions and Civic Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

[43] Ibid., 5.

as the ideological glue. For example, Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena's book, *Aztlán and Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Creation of Place,* argues, "religious culture, language, and practice were central to the invention of traditions that helped various groups attempt to remedy the social and political traumas of the war with Mexico."[44] The same way the United States used Protestant myths and religious rhetoric to develop a colonialist nationalist project (Manifest Destiny), Chicanos deployed religious iconography, such as La Virgen de Guadalupe and pre-Columbian deities, to lay claim to land that supported their own Chicana/o nationalist project (Aztlán).

In 2008, Mario García, a leading historian in Chicana/o Catholic history, published an anthology of his own case studies, *Católicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History*.[45] He argues that "one cannot fully understand Chicanos, or any other ethnic group for that matter, without taking into consideration the significant role played by religion in shaping community."[46] García bridges Chicana/o and religious history by referring to a famous Chicana/o art exhibit entitled *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation*, arguing that if Chicano art is an example of cultural resistance and affirmation, so too, is Chicano Catholicism.

Exploring religion in Chicana/o movements demonstrates the contextual dominance of Mexican Catholicism. One exception is Felipe Hinojosa's book, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture.*[47] Hinojosa explores the intersection of civil rights, faith, and evangelical culture among Chicana/o, Puerto Rican, and Black Mennonites, arguing that the 1960s civil rights movements "played a central role in helping shape and define ethnic and

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[44] Roberto Ramon Lint Sagarena, *Aztlán and Arcadia* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 7.

[45] Mario T. García, *Católicos*.

[46] Ibid., 26.

[47] Felipe Hinojosa, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).

religious identity for Latinos in the Mennonite Church."[48] Like liberation theology, which infected the world with a liberatory reading of theology, the civil rights movement also inspired a faith-informed activism for Latino evangelicals. Hinojosa argues, "interethnic politics can expand the boundaries of evangelicalism and Latino civil rights history and reveal new areas of study."[49] Indeed, Chicana/os have privileged the Catholic social justice narrative. Hinojosa highlights the limits of such a focus by exploring Latina/o and Black Mennonites. In doing so, he proposes a broader religion and Latina/o civil rights discourse.

Traditional Religious Studies

Pulling the focus away from scholarship that has centered social action, scholars have also approached Chicana/o and Latina/o religiosity through a more traditional religious studies and sociological approach. Although Catholicism remains dominant, the religious studies approach broadens to include additional other spiritual and or religious practices. Through interdisciplinary methods, these religious studies frameworks attempt to name, identify, and distinguish what makes Chicana/o and Latina/o religiosity unique. For example, in 2004, León explored the ways religious belief and practices are defined along the U.S-Mexican border. He used archival and bibliographic research, and cultural products, such as literature and film, to see how "a society reveals itself to itself."[50] Whereas Clifford Geertz asserts religion is a cultural system, León argues that culture is also a religious system, the two often dancing with each other; sometimes one leads, and at other times, the other does. Explaining religious poetics, León

[48] Ibid., 3.

[49] Ibid., 13.

[50] Luis. D. León, *La Llorona's children: Religion, Life, and Death in the US–Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

shows how Mexicans go north with their religious practices and traditions and return influenced by Chicana/o traditions. León shows how religion and culture are two sides of the same coin.

Similarly, García and Espinosa co-edited a foundational anthology in 2008, *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture,* exploring the critical intersections of religion and literature, art, politics, and pop culture.[51] They take up topics such as Anzaldúa as a modern shaman, Pentecostal healing along the borderlands, and Selena as the Mexican American Madonna. García and Espinosa argue, "it is precisely the Mexican American blending, reexamination, and rearticulating of Mexican and American traditions, customs, practices, symbols, and beliefs that we call Chicana/o Religious expressions or Chicana/o religions."[52] The anthology is the first of its kind to show the unique ways Mexican American religiosity evolves and adapts over time. It explores Mexican-American religiosity as not only overtly political but infused in all sectors of life, even if unintended or unrecognized.

Edwin David Aponte, a cultural historian of religion, takes on the arduous task of finding a common thread among pan-Latina/o religious practices. Aponte even includes a broader and more pluralistic framework, with a chapter on Latinx Muslims, Buddhists, and alternative Christians. Aponte admits his research found that Latina/o religiosity defied any neat categorization. However, what he found was, without any internal sense of conflict, Latina/os of all faith backgrounds, including non-Christian or atheists, continue to be influenced by the Iberian Catholicism developed through the Indigenous and African diasporic contexts of Latin America. What might be initially labeled as Roman Catholic, states Aponte, "appears in various Protestant contexts and vice versa."[53] He argues that the gulf that religions have created to

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[51] Espinosa and García. *Mexican American Religions.*

[52] Ibid., 4.

separate and distinguish their respective groups from one another have little to do with theology. Using Spanglish as a conceptual metaphor, Aponte suggests that everyday practices of Latina/os cross and blend theological and socially constructed *fronteras* every day.

Robert R. Treviño's 2006 book, *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican-American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston,*[54] is a good example of Aponte's Spanglish spirituality. Through a culturally resistant theoretical framework, Treviño examined *altarcitos*, *quinceañeras*, and other traditions that are both religious and social to argue that Mexican "ethno-Catholicism" selectively participates in the institutional Church, simultaneously holding it at arm's length. Through "ethno Catholicism," Mexican Americans are involved in the Church but on their own terms. Keeping alive popular traditions frowned upon by the Church allowed Mexican Catholics to assert their personal worth, confront inequality, and maintain viable families and communities.[55] Treviño shows the benefits of a place-based social history by providing a rich narrative of Chicana/o Catholics in Houston. Although narrow in scope, it carried broad theoretical implications.

Maria del Socorro Castañeda-Liles also utilized a narrow lens to develop a broad theoretical framework.[56] She deployed a qualitative ethnography of three generations of Mexican and Mexican American women in the U.S., interviewing over 100 Mexican origin women. Castañeda-Liles found that "instead of blindly accepting androcentric Catholic teachings or rejecting Catholicism, first generation Mexican women of all ages develop a protean Catholic

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[53] Edwin David Aponte, *Santo!*, 11.

[54] Roberto R. Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[55] Ibid., 11.

[56] Maria del Socorro-Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady of Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, *2018).*

devotion, which allows them to transgress limiting notions of what a good Catholic woman should be while retaining the aspects of Catholicism they find life-giving."[57] Like Aponte and Treviño suggested, without any internal conflict, the Mexican women in Castañeda-Liles's study do this while still preserving a Catholic identity. She proposes a "Mexican Catholic imagination" framework to understand *lo cotidiano* of Mexican women. It supports what Michelle Gonzales argues, that "Spirituality is not something that is understood as isolated from the rest of our lives; it saturates our lives."[58] One of Castañeda-Liles's research participants suggested that Mexican spirituality is like a cup of *café con leche*, meaning that the secular and sacred cannot be separated.

Alternative Faiths

More recently, scholars have given attention to the growing religious and spiritual practices outside of dominant and mainline expressions of Catholicism and Protestantism. Aponte argues that if we only focus on the "usual suspects" of conventional expressions of Roman Catholicism and mainline Protestant denominations, then religious interest "based on membership, has indeed crashed at the end of the twentieth century."[59] But if we expand our lens, we see a rise in attendance at Islamic mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, Pentecostal churches, and the increasing sale of religious publications. This section includes scholarship that examines "alternative" religious practices, highlighting the interplay between religion and

[57] Ibid., *22-23.*

[58] Michelle Gonzalez-Maldonado, *Embracing Latina Spirituality* (Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009), 5.

[59] Aponte, *Santo*!, 6.

identity. Specifically as these alternative faith practices stand outside dominant U.S. religious traditions.

In 2003, Arlene M. Sánchez-Walsh published *Latino Pentecostal Identity*.[60] A principal theological difference that distinguishes Pentecostals from Catholics and traditional evangelicals is the relationship with the Holy Spirit. This cannot be understated. Traditional religious practice requires authorities as mediators between heaven and earth, and almost always men. Sanchez-Walsh demonstrates that for Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit bypasses religious credentials, democratizing the faith. As a result, men and women, people of color, and Latina/os, worship, preach, and lead church together. Focused on identity, Sanchez-Walsh explores the ambiguity of Latino Pentecost identity. Because Pentecost life is driven by faith, Latinos are encouraged to let go of identities that deter them from their religious one. Interviews confirmed that ethnic identities are indeed subsumed by religious ones. However, Sanchez-Walsh argues, in reality, Latino Pentecostals do perform their ethno-cultural identities by founding churches that cater to other Latina/os; they speak Spanish, and also provide Latina/o histories of their faith. Although ethnicity may not be the central marker of their identity, neither do they truly forego it altogether. On the contrary, ethnic identities become important vehicles to propagate their faith.

Taking a different approach to identity, Hjamil A. Martinez-Vazquez[61] is the first to look at the identity construction of Latina/o Muslims. Martinez-Vazquez uses a postcolonial critique to explore the process of conversion for the 50-70,000 Latina/o Muslims in the U.S. He found that Latina/o Muslims enter into another liminal state through their religious conversion,

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[60] Arlene M Sánchez-Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[61] Hjamil A. Martínez-Vázquez, *Made in the Margins: Latina/o Constructions of US Religious History* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010).

considered less Latina/o because they are Muslims, and not "good" Muslims by the larger U.S Muslim community. However, Martinez-Vazquez also found that Latina/o converts believe they are "reclaiming their lost Muslim and African heritage – which they view more positively than the legacy of Catholicism."[62] Thus, Latina/o Muslims link themselves to a transformative history outside the colonial paradigm. In this way, argues Martinez-Vazquez, Latina/o Muslims construct their own identity rather than allowing someone else to construct it. Latina/o Muslims show how a religious identity can offer a foundation for a transformative experience. Although the research only included 20 participants, it provided a rich understanding of the identity construction for Latina/o Muslims that deserves inclusion into the imaginary of Latina/o religious history. A few other memoirs and cultural autobiographies fill the lacunae of Chicana/o religiosity outside of the dominant Catholic or Protestant paradigm, most notably, memoirs by Ignacio M. García's[63] *Chicano while Mormon* and Ilan Stavans's[64] *Return to Centro Historico: A Mexican Jew looks for His Roots*. Even less scholarship considers Latina/os participating in Eastern spiritual practices, another potential for future research.

This section has intended to show that religion and spirituality have been intrinsically connected to social justice and to social justice movements. As more research uncovers the intersections of religion and spirituality to the civil rights movement, I suspect that we will find more of the "glue" that has bound together liberation movements. Furthermore, this research speaks to the way Chicana/o and Latina/ o spirituality is like *café con leche*, mixed, blended, and

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[62] Ibid., 4.

[63] Ignacio M. García, *Chicano While Mormon: Activism, War, and Keeping the Faith* (Madison: Roman and Littlefield, 2015).

[64] Ilan Stavans, *Return to Centro Histórico: A Mexican Jew Looks for His Roots* (Rutgers University Press, 2011).

hybrid in a way where that resists easy separation. It is present in *lo cotidiano*, in the everyday experiences, whether recognized or not, of Chicana/os and Latina/os.

Chicana Feminist Spirituality

A final theme for this section explores the radical vision of a Chicana feminist spiritual framework. A Chicana feminist spirituality framework recognizes the need to speak from the lived experience and perspective of Chicana and Latina women. Where Isasi-Diaz explained a *mujerista* theology "is not a theology for Latinas, but a theology from the perspective of Latinas," a Chicana feminist spirituality is, in a sense, the same, albeit outside and alongside theological boundaries.[65] Chicana feminist spirituality critically engages the spirit, but not in a theological manner. It is a praxis of spirituality, but not a Christian praxis. Chicana feminist spirituality recognizes the dominance of Christianity in Chicana and Latina life, but does not center it. Rather, it respects the plurality and spiritual *mestizaje* of religious expressions, from Indigenous to Catholic to those who have no religious identification. Of upmost importance, a Chicana feminist spirituality centers liberation and recognizes that spirituality is a non-negotiable element of liberation. Leela Fernandes states, "if movements for social justice are to be fully transformative, they must be based on an understanding of the connections between the spiritual and material realms."[66] In many ways, Chicana feminist spirituality bridges the secular and non-secular research of Chicana/o religiosity and spirituality without any sense of conflict. It provides a language, context, vision, and more importantly, a call to action.

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[65] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista theology,* 1996.

[66] Leela Fernandez, *Transforming Feminist Practice* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2003), 12.

Gloria Anzaldua's canonical book, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* is rarely mentioned as a spiritual text. However, her theoretical frameworks lay the groundwork for a Chicana feminist spiritual methodology and epistemology. Theorizing the U.S. and Mexico border as not only a physical, but psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderland, Anzaldúa provided the language to describe the liminal state of straddling the sacred and material realities of liberation. Anzaldúa empowers Chicanas by suggesting that those daring to blur the imposed borderlands of sex, gender, nation, or spirituality, are able to cultivate a *mestiza* consciousness, develop "a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity… She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode."[67] Written in 1987, Anzaldúan frameworks have been used in virtually all disciplines. Because the intersections of gender, sexuality, and spirituality have always been important markers of identity for Anzaldúa, her theories have naturally lent themselves to Chicana feminists' epistemology. However, Anzaldúan scholar Ana Louise Keating argues that we have only highlighted a small fraction of Anzaldúa's theoretical contributions: "if we stop with *Borderlands*, we waste a large portion of her life."[68] Largely ignored by scholars, much of Anzaldúa's later work refined, challenged, and even contradicted the very theoretical frameworks that *Borderlands* and the field of Chicana/o studies rests on. In her later work, Anzaldúa critically engaged the spirit as a way to diminish the divisions that colonialism so well defined. She articulated a different kind of mestiza consciousness, a different kind of activism, and a different kind of *conocimiento*.

[67] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 101.

[68] AnaLouise Keating, "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for Social Change." *Human architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-knowledge* 4, no. 3 (2006), 7.

In her posthumous 2015 book, *Luz en el Oscuro/Light in the Dark*,[69] Anzaldúa radically questions social identities. She calls for a loosening of attachments to gender, racial, sexual, religious, and oppositional identities, arguing that we must move past that which has outlived its usefulness. She states, "twenty-one years ago we struggled with the recognition of difference within the context of commonality. Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference."[70] An overemphasis on socially imposed identities, Anzaldúa argues, has created *entreguerras* between two opposing sides, men and women, queer and straight, Chicana and Indigena, etc. Instead, she theorizes a new tribalism, a radical interconnectedness that creates "new stories of identity and culture, to envision diverse futures. It's about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even reality itself."[71] Anzaldúa calls for a new *conocimiento*, a spiritual *mestizaje*, in order for us to cross the next bridge into something else. In order to do so, she states, "you have to give up partial organizations of self, erroneous bits of knowledge, outmoded beliefs of who you are, your comfortable identities (your story of self, tu autohistoria). You'll have to leave parts of yourself behind."[72] Anzaldua called this work spiritual activism, a highly political endeavor, an inward reflection, with an external praxis. It is the only way to get rid of the slash between Nos/Otros, she argues.

Leela Fernandes applies Anzaldúan post-Borderlands theoretical frameworks in *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-violence, Social Justice and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism* to also propose nothing short of a spiritual revolution. Fernandes

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[69] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015).

[70] Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating. *This Bridge we Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformations* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 2.

[71] Anzaldúa. *Light in the Dark,* 85.

[72] Ibid., 137

explores “the possibilities of spiritualized social transformation of this world, one that seeks to challenge all forms of injustice, hierarchy and abuse from the most intimate daily practices in our lives to the larger structures of race, gender, class, sexuality and nation.”[73] She challenges traditional and secular social justice movements, including feminism, to provide the necessary tools to interrogate the violent structures of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism, and then argues that they are inescapable. By separating the spirit from the material world, Fernandes suggests that we have foreclosed the imagination to the idea of a spiritualized movement of social justice. The divine has been colonized, she states, and we must decolonize it in order to uncover the mystical teachings that “point to a sacred, radical vision of social justice which is fundamentally opposed to any hierarchical, patriarchal or violent representations of religious teachings.”[74] Such utopias, Fernandes argues, are not otherworldly, but could be put to practice, here and now. Like Anzaldúa, Fernandes proposes a process of dis-identification, “a letting go of all forms and elements of what we perceive as constituting our identity while being fully engaged in confronting the very real inequalities and exclusions which existing constructions of identity do produce.”[75] Disidentification, argues Fernandes, is a spiritual endeavor, for it asks us to transcend the imagined and socially constructed forms of ourselves as well as the divisions and differences that have been created. Rather than an essentialized, individualistic position, disidentification develops a radical interconnectedness and interdependence with others, “neither separate nor autonomous.” The radical connection with others can motivate and sustain long term social action without repeating the same structures of power we are against.

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[73] Leela Fernandez, Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-Violence, 11.

[74] Ibid., 15.

[75] Ibid., 31.

Theresa Delgadillo[76] considers how Chicana narratives have enacted Anzaldua's concept of the spirit. Delgadillo applies and refines Anzaldúa's concept of spiritual *mestizaje*, suggesting that it is the "transformative renewal of one's relationship to the sacred through a radical and sustained multimodal and self-reflexive critique of oppression in all its manifestations and a creative and engaged participation in shaping life that honors the sacred."[77] In her book, Delgadillo explores eight Chicana texts and films that explicitly center spirituality. She identified the imaginative ways that Chicanas apply and enact a theory of spiritual *mestizaje* through the forms invented, the arts employed, and what those interpretations may suggest outside of the text. She found evidence of the "spiritual inventiveness" that has sustained Chicana and Latina spiritual practice for generations. Furthermore, the Chicana narratives spoke to what Anzaldúa suggests about an ethos of spiritual *mestizaje* and Fernandes's dis-identification. Rather than making race, gender, or nationality, as the focal point, the Chicana narratives center spirituality. In this way, they suggest that new possibilities of connection, alliances, and commonality are created.

Another text looking at the spiritual *mestizaje* of Chicanas is Elisa Facio and Irene Lara's groundbreaking co-edited anthology, *Fleshing the Spirit*.[78] The anthology is in many ways defining the spirit of the field, and includes essays from Buddhist practitioners, Queeranderismo, Healing, and Indigenous practices, among others. Facio and Lara engaged the living theories, knowledge, and *conocimiento* of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women from their own social location. The anthology follows *autohistoria-teoría* methods, engaging the authors into a

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[76] Theresa Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative*. (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011).

[77] Ibid., 1.

[78] Facio and Lara, eds. *Fleshing the Spirit.*

spiritual activist theoretical framework. The collection of writings acknowledges that "making sense of one's spirituality entails navigating the tension between personal and familial or community well-being and critically understanding the power relations at play in defining spirituality."[79] It also challenges any idea that spirituality is apolitical. On the contrary, spiritual activism is about the ways the spirit moves Chicanas into, what Norma Cantú calls, right action.

A Chicana feminist spiritual framework crosses the *fronteras* of theology and activism. Through Anzaldúan theoretical frameworks of spiritual activism, race, nationality, gender, or religion are less important than the goal of liberation. A world free from sexism, racism, and patriarchy is, indeed, a spiritual endeavor that must be fought for in the material realm. However, a Chicana feminist spiritual framework challenges traditional oppositional frameworks that have historically focused on divisions rather than on social transformation. A slightly different approach to feminism, it seeks to radically find commonalities rather than differences, building bridges, not walls.

Latin American Liberation Theology

The use of scripture as a principle methodological tool is what makes theological scholarship considerably different than the religious studies approach just mentioned. In its most fundamental definition, theology is the study of the divine. Michael E. Lee describes its etymology as a "word" about God: "in a basic sense, whenever human beings think about, describe, or speculate about God, they are doing theology."[80] Lee's definition can make theology intimately personal, however, it is most commonly understood as a systematic practice of

[79] Ibid., 5.

[80] Michael, E. Lee, *Revolutionary Saint: The Theological Legacy of Oscar Romero* (New York: Orbis Books, 2018), xiii.

knowledge which has developed into epistemologies that communities, societies, and laws are organized around. Further, theology is largely a Christian paradigm, though not exclusively.

Like most academic and intellectual endeavors, those in power have had the privilege of interpreting "the word of God" into a systemic and institutional theology. Many scholars of color, particularly those interested in untangling white supremacy from scripture, suggest that colonization buttressed in Christianity is not the "religion of Jesus" at all.[81] Instead, these racialized and power hungry interpretations of Christianity are no "more than the condensation of Western theological traditions which have dominated in Europe and among European-American theologians" to serve a white supremacy ideology.[82] These racist, patriarchal, and historically inaccurate interpretations of the life of Jesus are insufficient and harmful, not only for people of color, but for all those interested in following his life. Western theologies have "demonstrated their inability to eliminate the great divisions that affect today's world – especially the north-south geopolitical divisions, the sexual divisions between men and women, and numerous other racial, ethnic, and religious divisions."[83] This was the context out of which a different kind of theology was born, a liberatory theology that would serve to benefit the marginalized of the world. In 1968, in Medellin, Columbia, Latin American bishops met to discuss their role in the plight of the poor and the growing concern with military intervention in their countries. They also challenged the way theology has historically been interpreted by those in power.

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[81] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

[82] María Pilar Aquino, "Theological method in US Latino/a theology," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espin and Miguel H. Diaz(New York: Orbis Books, 1999): 6-48.

[83] Ibid., 9

The most profound and lasting development of the Medellin conference was the development of a Latin American theology of liberation. It was a radical reimagination of a theological praxis responding to the dire poverty and social injustice in Latin America. Furthermore, bishops confronted the theological implications of their colonial situation. If there was individual sin, then there was also structural sin. For the individual and society, liberation from all sin is a critical element of Christian life. The public murder of Oscar Romero, a popular Archbishop in El Salvador who was killed at the pulpit, brought the socio-political turmoil of Latin America and of liberation theology to the forefront of public and theological discourse.

Gustavo Gutiérrez published the first account of liberation theology, articulating a principal tenet of the new Latin American church, a preferential option for the poor. He states, "the poor deserve preference not because they are morally or religiously better than others, but because God is God, in whose eyes, "the last are first."[84] The momentum spread throughout Latin America where the Church began to stand alongside the poor in its movements for social justice. The Church and faith communities became hubs of political education, popular movements, and of a radically different kinds of discipleship. Religious leaders in North America, aware of the developments in Latin America, traveled south to study and learn from the model of localized ecclesial bases.

In a later publication, Gutiérrez sharpens his analysis of the Christian praxis, in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*.[85] Liberation is an all-encompassing process, he states, one that quenches all our thirst. He reiterated the importance of the intersection of spirituality and politics, suggesting, "it is a serious historical mistake to reduce what is happening among us today to a

[84] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theology* (Oklahoma: Phillips University, 1988), xxviii.

[85] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from our Own Wells* (New York: Orbis Books. 1984).

social or political problem."[86] Gutiérrez recognizes that for theology to be relevant, it must come from the poor, from those on the margins, the othered. Theology of liberation embodies "a twofold fidelity: to the God of our faith and to the peoples of Latin America… we cannot separate our discourse about God from the historical process of liberation."[87] Gutierrez argued, for political movements to sustain, they must include social action and spirituality piety.

Theologians of liberation began to develop from the theoretical and methodological writings of Gutiérrez, such as Leonardo Boff and Justo Gonzalez. Robert Chao Romero suggests that liberation theologians "draw from a corpus of more than 2,000 Bible verses which speak of God's heart for the poor, immigrants, and all who are marginalized."[88] Using the Bible as a methodological tool, liberation theologians uplifted readings of a God who removed the shackles of slavery, saints who denounced social injustice, and a Jesus who preached peace. The preferential option for the poor developed as a necessary component to Latina/o Christian practice. As Boff stated, "we can be followers of Jesus and true Christians only by making common cause with the poor and working out the gospel of liberation."[89] This model of theology quickly disseminated to other parts of the world. Historian Mary Jo Weaver reported that in the 1960s, over 20,000 American sisters trained and worked in Latin America.[90] One sister stated, "we had been in White institutions for so long that we really wanted a different exposure…

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[86] Ibid., 2.

[87] Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theology*, 5.

[88] Chao Romero, *Brown Church, 147*.

[89] Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987).

[90] Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Western theology was so limiting."[91] It was this cadre of religious sisters and priests that brought back what they learned from Latin America and translated it to the United States.

As radical and necessary as Latin American liberation theology was to the foundation of a U.S. based theology of liberation, there were also concerns. Loida Martell-Otero reminded us that "all contextual theologies are "socially circumscribed, and consequently have both creative insights and painful blind spots."[92] Maria Pilar Aquino laid out four principal critiques of Latin American liberation theology to be considered by U.S Latina/o theologians. The first is the overemphasis on class and an under emphasis on a cultural and racial analysis. Second, Aquino mentions Orlando Espin's work that highlights the ways popular religion has been downplayed as an important theological epistemology. The third critique addresses the patriarchal foundations that continue to ignore the contributions of feminist theories and theologies. Lastly, Aquino names the unfortunate sentiment that Latin American theologians feel towards U.S. based Latina/o theologians, assuming that "Latina/o theology 'sold out' to 'the system,' that it ignores what real poverty is, has reneged of its Latin American cultural identity, and 'fools around' with the extreme rationalism typical of the dominant theological academy in the United States."[93] Nonetheless, U.S Latina/o theologians were energized by what started in Latin America. Within their own social context, Chicana/os and Latina/os developed their own theologies of liberation.

Latina/o Liberation Theology

[91] Medina, *Las Hermanas,* 2008.

[92] Loida I., Zaida Maldonado Pérez Martell-Otero and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier. *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013), 3.

[93] María Pilar Aquino, "Theological Method in US Latino/a theology" (1999), 16.

Chicana/os and Latina/os took what started in Latin America and molded it to fit their situation. In 1969, recognizing the lack of support the Church was offering to United Farm Workers, Cesar Chavez penned one of the first public critiques aimed at the Catholic Church. With millions of dollars earmarked for the poor, Chavez questioned the money being spent on food baskets and not through effective means to eradicate poverty. He called on Mexican-American groups to "stop ignoring this source of power. It is not just our right to appeal to the Church to use its power effectively for the poor, it is our duty to do so. It should be as natural as appealing to government."[94] Chavez asked nothing more than the Church's presence with them, beside them, as servants, just as Christ is.

That same year, a group of Chicano priests, *Padres Asociados para Derechos Religiosos, Educativos y Sociales* (PADRES), for the first time organized on a national scale, demanding the Church be accountable to its Chicana/o population. Two years later, the first national religious - political organization of Chicana and Latina Roman Catholics in the United States formed, Las Hermanas. PADRES and Las Hermanas challenged longstanding discriminatory practices, such as segregated seating, lack of respect for the Spanish language, poor representation of indigenous Chicana/o leadership, and an unwillingness to support the United Farm Workers' struggle. The following year, as a result of the organizing efforts of PADRES and Las Hermanas, the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) was founded, becoming a hub of new Latina/o theology and preparing clergy and laity for ministry in Latina/o communities.

The preceding decades were a watershed moment for Chicana/o and Latina/o theology. Reading the word of God *en conjunto* with their community, with special attention to their needs and situation, Chicana/os developed distinct theological contributions. In 1983, the first president

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[94] Cesar Chavez, 1969. Quoted in *Chicano Liberation Theology*, edited by Mario García (Iowa: *Kendall/Hunt*), 5.

of MACC and principal organizer of PADRES Virgilio Elizondo delivered a pivotal text in Chicano theology, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican American Promise.* A theological text in every sense of the definition, Elizondo provided a cultural reading of the Bible with Chicana/os in mind against the backdrop of a Catholic institution that excluded Chicanos in its institutional rankings but were always "welcomed as lay brothers to do the laundry and cooking."[95] Elizondo argued that God, in fact, favored the marginalized peoples of the world, citing Jesus as his principal source. The Galilean principle tied the historical narrative of Jesus to present day Chicana/os. God chose for his son, Jesus, to be born a poor mestizo in the cultural borderlands of Jerusalem. For Jesus to share a social and cultural narrative with Chicana/os was to identify Jesus as one of them. Elizondo argued that God indeed has a preferential option for the poor. Furthermore, where the Church was seen as a vehicle for assimilation to conservatives and progressives alike, Elizondo upheld a pride in spiritual *mestizaje*: "We have a soul of our own. To be made to the image and likeness of God does not require the finishing touches of Anglo-American melting-pot-assimilation."[96]

Building off the cultural reading of theological texts, Justo Gonzalez transferred that framework towards the Protestant faith. In *Santa Biblia,* Gonzalez introduces a Hispanic reading of the Bible, or what he says, "reading the Bible in Spanish." Much like how Elizondo interpreted the Bible with Chicana/os in mind, Gonzalez considered the unique cultural, historical, and diversity of Latina/os in the United States. Furthermore, as Isasi-Diaz suggested of feminist theology, that it is not only for feminists, but beneficial to the whole community, so, too, is a Hispanic reading of theology. Gonzalez states that reading the Bible through Hispanic

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[95] Virgilio Elizondo P., *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), xiii.

[96] Ibid., 2.

eyes is to read through "the perspective of those who claim their Hispanic identity as part of their hermeneutical baggage, and also read the Scripture within the context of a commitment to the Latino struggle to become all that God wants us and all of the world to be—in other words, the struggle for salvation/liberation."[97] Indeed, a cultured reading of the Holy Scriptures has provided the potential to strip the traditional theological readings from those in power, and has transferred it to those on the margins.

Latina Feminist Theologies

Christianity centered on liberation became an important entry for *mujerista theology*, the intersection of Chicana/o Latina/a feminism with liberation theology. There was a clear lack of gendered critiques of an institution that did not view women as capable of holding the highest positions in the Church. With Las Hermanas paving the road and creating a space for Latina laywomen in the United States, feminist theologians, such as Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Michelle Gonzalez, Maria Pilar Aquino, Jeanette Rodriguez, Yolanda Tarango, and others, began to publish their own versions of liberation theologies that centered Chicanas and Latinas.

In 1996, Isasi-Díaz published a groundbreaking text, *Mujerista Theology*.[98] It provided epistemological and hermeneutical contributions to general theology, centering Latinas to "uncover and undo the network of privileges that keep Latina women absent or, at best, marginalized in the women's movement, in Latino communities, in the academy, in churches, and in society."[99] *Mujerista Theology* sought to bridge and radically include Latina religion and

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[97] Justo González*, Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 28-29.

[98] Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology,* 1996.

[99] Ibid., 2.

spirituality into the social, political, and ethno-cultural movements fermenting in the United States. Further, it recognized principal elements of Latina/o religiosity commonly overlooked by academics and theologians, such as *lo cotidiano*, referring to the unique, hybrid, and everyday religious expressions of Latina/os. Isasi-Diaz argues that in spite of the lack of attention that Latina/os receive from the Church, the reason Christianity is alive and flourishing among Latinas is because of *lo cotidiano* and its unique form of popular religious expressions that have adapted, modified, and remained resilient over time.

Taking a similar approach, Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Perez, and Elizabeth Conde Frazier look at the ways Latinas practice their faith from an *evangelica* perspective. The authors posit a postcolonial and feminist framework to explore the theologies inherited from their *abuelas, madres, comadres*, and *tías*, while also recognizing the need to radically discern elements that have been colonized. It is the first book to recognize the role of Latinas naming themselves *evangelicas*. Pivoting off *mujerista* theology, and appreciating the role of *lo cotidiano*, *familia*, theology *en conjunto*, and the *mestizaje* of Latina/o theological frameworks, *an evangelica* approach departs in several ways. One is the emphasis on the Holy Spirit, believing it "is the One who not only empowers women but also legitimizes their calling – an important role for those whose voices are often suppressed within patriarchal and racist social and ecclesial structures."[100] Another important distinction is the close reading of scripture, which should be read as liberating, as the bearing of witness to the saving grace of God. Although lacking proposals for social transformation, Martell-Otero et al. demonstrates that the distinct theologies from the largest group of Protestant women in the world, *evangelicas*, deserve space.

[100] Martell-Otero and Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangélicas,* 9.

Chicana/o and Latino theologies were born out of dialogues at the intersection of liberation and theology. They are radical readings of scripture that connect the life of Jesus to the marginalized of the world. In Gustavo Gutiérrez's call to drink from our own wells, Chicana/os and Latina/os created their own theologies, from their own social context. Feminist and *mujerista* theologies also expanded patriarchal readings of scripture, grounding them in the everyday lived experiences of Chicanas and Latinas. While some theological differences distinguish *mujerista* theologies from an *evangelica* perspective, the social and political projects are the same, respect for *lo cotidiano*, appreciating their *mestizaje*, and most importantly, liberation.

Indeed, these theologies are centered on a Christian paradigm, which Gutierrez calls a Christian praxis. This presents both a limitation and an opportunity for activists and scholars. To deny the importance of a Christian centered theology of liberation is to be out of touch with the reality of Chicana/os' and Latina/os' religiosity, in the United States and abroad. On the other hand, Christianity is deeply entangled with the colonial projects of modernity. Chicana/o and Latina/o liberation theologians have yet to untangle Christianity and colonialism in a way that uses the strength of "the religion of Jesus" as a theoretical framework for liberation that can be applied to non-Christians.

This literature review suggests that the time has come for Chicana/o studies to challenge its resistance to religion and spirituality and to explore the transformations that religion and spirituality have provided to Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Chicana/os, and Latina/os throughout history. To say that the study of Chicana/o religiosity is to study Christianity, oppression, or colonization is to profoundly miss the mark. On the contrary, to study Chicana/o religious and spiritual practice is to unearth an alternative lens by which to understand and appreciate the dynamic, inventive, and resilient nature that has characterized Mexicana/os and

Chicana/os for over 500 years. Furthermore, as this literature review has shown, to recognize the importance of Chicana/o religion and spirituality is to also recognize its call to action to eliminate all forms of violence. Indeed, the applications for how to get there are diverse, but they are not passive or apolitical.

It is through this lens that I approach the study of Chicana/o and Latina/o religion and spirituality. Situated in arguably the most critical moment in Mexican American history, this research intends to examine the Chicana/o movement in a way that has yet to be explored. Rather than focus on one organization, community, or sect, this project takes a broad investigation of *el movimiento* and pays special attention to the ways religion and spirituality were involved in some of the most important organizations and moments of Chicana/o history. Examining the role of the Church of the Epiphany in the Chicana/o movement provides a fresh and unexplored lens to investigate Chicana/o history.

Chapter Outlines

The Church of the Epiphany offers an alternative narrative to Chicana/o movement history. The first chapter frames the research, introducing the methodology, theoretical frameworks, and central argument. It presents religion and spirituality as an important, yet surprisingly overlooked area of Chicana/o studies research. As a result of keeping religion and spirituality in the shadows, the narrow view of religion as the "opiate of the masses" dominates, overlooking the important contributions that religion has made to Mexican American liberation and self-determination throughout history. This dissertation diverts from the scholarship by considering a critically important element of Chicana/o identity, religion. The first chapter includes a literature review that uncovers and engages in the resilient history of Chicana/o and

Latina/o religiosity. It shows that, far from being passive or apolitical, Chicana/o religion and spirituality have often served as the foundations on which Chicana/o and Latina/o social action rests.

Furthermore, this chapter introduces the methodological approach. Archival records and oral interviews serve as the principal methods of qualitative data. Theoretically, I engage in three principal frameworks that provide a lens onto how I approach this non-traditional historical project. First, I use Robert Chao Romero's conceptualization of the Brown Church to place this project alongside the historical accounts in which religion has challenged oppression, marginalization, and colonization in Latin America and the United States. Mario García's faith politics conceptualizes the ways individuals have intersected their faith and politics to work towards social change. And lastly, I borrow Gaye Theresa Johnson's spatial entitlement theory, as it is beneficial in conceptualizing how organizers of the Chicana/o movement reimagined a *spiritual* space and repurposed it for *material* gains. I apply these theoretical frameworks to argue and make the case that religion and spirituality were critically important to the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. Not only did the faith community support the Chicana/o movement in various ways, but they were also part and parcel of it.

The second chapter situates this study of Mexican American religiosity within the context of national and international uprisings in the 1960s. It shows that the Chicana/o movement did not occur in a vacuum, but within a global moment of social change. Theresa Johnson states, "over one and a half billion people in more than 100 national capitals, all colonized, became free. Suddenly, liberation was a more significant force than domination."[101] In addition to the global revolutions, and following the religious thread that runs through this research, this chapter

[101] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*, 85.

examines the reaction of the religious sector to the growing international unrest. Overlooked by social movement historians, the religious community was not exempt from having to reform outdated practices and policies that were not representing the cultural changes affecting their membership. Two monumental events occurred within the Catholic Church during the 1960s that revolutionized the way the Church engaged with the world, namely Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology. These social, political, cultural, and religious changes were all happening alongside and in tandem with the social movements occurring in the United States, including the Chicana/o Movement.

By the 1960s in the United States, the civil rights movement was in full effect, yet Mexican Americans did not participate en masse until the second half of the decade. Largely inspired by the United Farm Worker movement in California, Mexican Americans began to organize for their own civil rights and in large numbers. They began a "full fledged transformation of the way Mexican Americans thought, played politics, and promoted their culture. Chicanos embarked on a struggle to make fundamental changes, because only fundamental changes could make them active participants in their lives."[102] A new generation of youthful Mexican Americans opted for a new self-identity and self-determination. This chapter examines the social, political, and historical context of what Mario García calls a Chicana/o intifada.

Drawing from the theoretical frameworks of faith politics and spatial entitlement, chapter three examines the Church of the Epiphany in depth. It provides a brief historical account of the Episcopal church in East Los Angeles followed by a detailed description of how it inserted itself into the socio-political affairs of the Mexican American community during the 1960s. Applying

[102] Ignacio García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 7-8.

a faith politics theoretical framework is useful in understanding the religious leadership of the Episcopalian hierarchy during this time. Witnessing a church that maintained a largely white congregation of generations past while situated in a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood, Bishop Francis Bloy made a radical and consequential decision to experiment with a union of parishes to better serve the barrio. Upon the creation of the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA), Bishop Bloy called on a social justice minded priest, Father John B. Luce, to lead it. This chapter shows the religious leadership of Bishop Bloy to deploy such an experiment, but most importantly it highlights the faith politics of Father Luce.

When Father Luce arrived, he radically transformed the church to better represent its Mexican American neighborhood. Some of those changes included instituting mariachi Mass, commissioning Chicano artists to paint the religious figures to look more Brown, and painting murals and decorating the church so that it was an inviting place for those in the barrio. Long before the Chicana/o renaissance of music and art that would represent the second half of the decade, Father Luce was implementing classes on Mexican American history, dance, art, and music. To the chagrin of the predominantly white congregants, Father Luce planted a symbolic flag at the Church of the Epiphany, saying that the church belonged to the barrio and it would stand alongside Mexican Americans. With the religious backing of Bishop Bloy, Father Luce opened the door of the church to the community so that its members had a place to be themselves and to imagine a way to be more civically engaged.

The faith politics and religious leadership of the Church of the Epiphany did not only fall on Father Luce, but on two additional priests charged with managing PELA, Father Roger Wood and Father Oliver Garver Jr., and the programs director, Virginia Ram. This chapter also highlights the critical role of Virginia Ram, *la madrina* of the Church of the Epiphany. Her own

faith politics bridged the cultural and religious differences between the white priests and the predominantly Mexican laity, the Episcopalians and the Catholics, the young and the old. The role of religious women in the Chicana/o movement is another under-investigated area of Chicana/o history.

Gaye Theresa Johnson's spatial entitlement framework is useful in theorizing the use of space in this chapter. What did it mean for Chicana/os to meet in a church? In what ways did Chicana/os reclaim or transform the spiritual space of the church to meet its material needs? What significance does this have for building social, spiritual, and political relationships with faith communities? The basement of the Church of the Epiphany served as a critically important space for *el movimiento*; it was a central organizing locale for the United Farm Workers, the high school Blowouts, the Brown Berets, and *La Raza* newspaper. These organizations are documented in Chicana/o history as some of the most important groups that made up the Chicana/o movement. This chapter shows how Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany not only supported, but had a major hand in the consciousness raising and development of the Chicana/o youth that founded these critical organizations that went on to lead the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

Whereas chapter three focused on the faith politics of the Church of the Epiphany, chapter four highlights the impact on Chicana/o youth. It is situated between the dates of Father Luce's arrival in 1965 to the moments before the high school Blowouts in March of 1968. Father Luce immediately developed a trusting relationship with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta and the church became an urban hub for United Farm Worker activity, at several instances housing hundreds of farm workers at a time. Additionally, Luce's access to federal anti-poverty funds allowed him to hire and invite local youth to the church where he connected them to a

developing Mexican American movement. He organized caravans to Delano so the youth could participate, organize, and learn from farm workers. He arranged for trips to Denver, Colorado, to meet the Crusade for Justice campaigns, and to New Mexico to be inspired by the land grant struggles of *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes*. Young Mexican Americans were moved by the incredible activity happening all around them. This chapter details the process of consciousness raising that happened through the exposure to political activity that was happening at the Church of the Epiphany and facilitated by Father Luce.

When young Chicana/os returned from a Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference held at Camp Hess Kramer, they began to ask, what about Chicana/os in the cities? As such, this chapter introduces the foundations of the Young Citizens for Community Action and *La Raza* newspaper, two important organizations that would lead the largest high school walkouts in United States history and the Chicana/o political action that ensued. Again, using a faith politics theoretical framework, I examine how Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany supported these organizations to develop, grow, and lead the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. Here, it becomes clear that without the support of the Church of the Epiphany, the Chicana/o Movement would have looked entirely different.

Chapter five looks at the Chicana/o movement with fresh eyes. It shows that there is a clear link between those Chicana/o youth that had the opportunity to develop their organizational chops at the Church of the Epiphany and pivotal moments of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, including the high school Blowouts, the release of the East LA 13, the occupation of the Los Angeles School Board, and the Chicana/o Moratorium. It drives home the argument that without the Church of the Epiphany, we would not have the Chicana/o movement we know of today.

At the same time, Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany are the supporting actors in this chapter. Showing true religious leadership, when the political activity exploded, Father Luce and the church neither sought, nor were interested in, any recognition for their role in supporting, financing, or mentoring the youth that would go on to lead the Chicana/o movement in East Los Angeles. Indeed, their actual role in the movement was marginal, yet, this chapter also shows that they did not abandon the Chicana/o youth when things heated up. Anytime it was morally, spiritually, or publicly useful for any of the priests, or Virginia Ram, to step forward, they were always willing. For example, when students were occupying the Los Angeles School Board of Education for six days, the Chicana/o youth, cramped in the School Boards quarters on a Sunday and asked Father Luce to celebrate a tortilla Mass. Photos of the impromptu religious celebration provided a stunning and dramatic visual of the intersection of faith and politics. Additionally, showing unwavering solidarity with Chicana/os, Father Luce, Father Wood, and Virginia Ram's son, Richard, were arrested alongside Chicana/o organizers that brought an end to the School Board occupation. This chapter demonstrates that although their roles were marginal, the support from religious leaders was constant.

This research makes the case that the Church of the Epiphany was one of the most critical organizations during the Chicana/o movement. Without the assistance of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany, many of the central organizations of the Chicana/o movement may have never been founded, let alone lead the largest mass movement of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. Moctesuma Esparza stated, "If you mention the 50 most active Chicano organizers of the period, they were all in one way or another mentored by Father Luce."[103] The Church of the Epiphany provides further evidence of the important role of religion in not only supporting the

[103] Esparza, Moctesuma, interview by the author.

Chicana/o movement, but in helping to initiate it. Contrary to the dominant literature on Chicana/o social movements, Chicana/o religion and spirituality is not a hindrance to social action, but rather, as this research suggests, it is oftentimes the driving force of it. Just as Chao Romero theorized, in all instances of social injustice, the Brown Church has been there to challenge institutional marginalization and oppression. This research shows that behind the scenes of the Chicana/o movement was the faith politics and religious leadership of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany that provided the cornerstone of the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles.

Chapter II
Historical Context

The second half of the 20th century bore witness to an unprecedented rise in the consciousness of the global working class. Liberation became such a viral notion that in virtually every country and on every continent, the colonized pushed back against their colonizers. From small countries like Cuba, to continents like Africa, from Asian countries to European, and from suburbs to cities, there was virtually no place that the spirit of revolution did not touch. These social movements were also incredibly diverse, from Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence in India to the armed struggles led by Fidel Castro. Between 1960 and 1968, there were 32 African countries that gained independence. As historian Gaye Theresa Johnson states, "over one and a half billion people in more than 100 national capitals, all colonized, became free. Suddenly, liberation was a more significant force than domination."[104] There was no doubt that self-determination was in the air during the middle of the 20th century; it was a period of massive global reorganization and a way of being that affected all social, political, and cultural areas of life.

While social movement historians have documented the social and political drama that was most visible during these critical times, there is much less attention on the specific role religion played and/or intersected within these global reforms. For example, although the Catholic Church has a notorious reputation as an institution that does not change, it too became entangled in the political fervor. In the 1512 opening statement of the Fifth Lateran Council, the Giles of Viterbo stated, "Men must be changed by religion, not religion by men."[105] Yet, in the

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[104] Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*, 85.

[105] John O'Malley, "Developments, Reforms, and Two Great Reformations: Towards a Historical Assessment of Vatican II," *Theological Studies,* 44 (1983), 21.

early 1960s, for the first time in over 100 years, and for only the second time in its history, the entirety of the global Catholic hierarchy met to discuss the need for *aggiornamento*, meaning to update or modernize. So, in fact, as a result of the social and political pressures of the mid 20th century, religion was indeed changed by "man." As one of the largest and most powerful institutions in the world, the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council had a rippling effect that impacted other religious organizations and denominations. Protestants, also recognizing the need to update, modify, and be more responsive to their own communities, updated their own theological practices.

Religion was not exempt from the social and political restructuring that came to define the sixties. This historical context chapter provides a brief and broad account of the social, political, and religious situation during the 1960s and how it came to affect Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. The global mass movements indeed fueled the radical imaginations of people of color in the United States, evidenced by the civil rights movement and the gender, sexual, ethnic, and cultural manifestations that followed, including the Chicana/o movement. The international and national uprising of the 1960s gave birth to a new identity for the Mexican American in the United States. Mexican Americans developed a political consciousness, a more militant ethos that racialized and justified their political participation in society and called themselves Chicanos.[106] This chapter addresses the shifting theological and religious praxis that was occurring prior to, and in tandem with, the Mexican American civil rights movement of the 1960s. While there are myriad books, articles, poems, songs, and monographs dedicated to the period known as the Chicano/o movement, the role that religion and spirituality have played in the victories and successes of the Chicana/o movement has been largely overlooked.

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[106] Ignacio García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997).

I foreground this historical research of the Chicana/o movement by providing a brief overview of the long and complex history of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States. I intend to show how the rising political consciousness of the 1960s facilitated the evolution in the ways Mexican Americans viewed themselves, and in turn, responded to their historical marginalization. Further, as the religious thread that runs through this dissertation attempts to illustrate, these social and political phenomena were not void of religious influence. As such, I include the ways the church, broadly speaking, was impacted by global and local movements for liberation, specifically Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology, and its impact on the subject of this research, the Church of the Epiphany. Whereas many social, political, and religious institutions resisted the radical changes brought to the forefront in the 1960s, the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany in East Los Angeles took an alternative route. They saw the wave of changes coming and elected to respond to the social, cultural, and political expressions of the time. The political manifestations triggered a radically alternative reimagining of their understanding of the role of the church in the community, and of the community in the church.

A Revolutionary Spirit

The civil rights movement in the United States was the crashing of a large wave of smaller movements and organizations that preceded it. Before the 1960s had even begun, Rosa Parks had already refused to give up her seat on the bus, an action that would begin the yearlong Montgomery bus boycott. Non-violence, as a mass political movement strategy, was proving to be effective in gaining national support and highlighting the violence of racism. *Brown vs. Board of Education* had already legally ended segregation in schools, marking the way for the Little

Rock nine, the valiant Black students who were blocked from entering school in Little Rock, Arkansas. And the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist Minister, was quickly becoming the de-facto national leader of the African American civil rights movement.

By the time the sixties began, pieces were in place for massive protests. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee were two leading organizations that unified smaller southern organizations. African-American youth subscribed to non-violent tactics, but they were anything but passive. From the Greensboro sit-ins in North Carolina, to the incredible moment that six-year-old Ruby Bridges was escorted by the National Guard to desegregate Frantz Elementary school in New Orleans, the Freedom Rides throughout the South, and the march on Washington all proved that non-violence was radically confrontational. Blacks sought to confront power, to publicize the brutality of white supremacy, and show the determination for equal rights in the United States. There was great momentum that mirrored the global liberation movements and fanned the fire of a national movement for Blacks and people of color in the United States.

As the movement for racial equality progressed at a pace too fast for the white status quo and too slow for those demanding change, tensions escalated in the latter part of the decade. While non-violence was the strategy of choice for the Black civil rights movement, white America did not respond in kind. As stated by John B. Judas, "The second period of the Sixties began with the Watts riot and Lyndon Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965. These events signified and helped precipitate a darker, more frenzied and violent period of protest."[107] The assassination of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King on February 12, 1965 and April 4th, 1968, respectively, further aggravated the tense climate. Youth of color responded by

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[107] John B. Judis, "The Spirit of 68, " in *The New Republic* (New York: The Republic Publishing Company, 1998), 159-160.

developing more radical self-defense organizations that did not have the interest or patience of the non-violent strategies of their elders. Organizations such as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (1966), The American Indian movement (1968), The Brown Berets (1968), the Stonewall Rebellion (1969), and Third World Feminism, among others, came to represent the latter part of the decade.

The social, cultural, and political changes of the 1960s are the backdrop of this research. Each new organization and uprising provided a springboard, inspiration, and support for the next. The African-American civil rights movement and Black Power have long been argued to have been the principal catalysts for many of the movements and organizations that came later in the decade, including the Chicana/o movement. In the early part of the decade, a national movement and organization of Mexican Americans was largely lacking. One 1968 report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights stated,

> There is no Mexican American organization equivalent to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the National Urban League; no Mexican American colleges; and virtually no financial or other help from outside the community itself. It has thus been extremely difficult for the leadership to develop and pursue strategies which would force public agencies and institutions to pay greater and more intelligent attention to Mexican American needs and to make changes, where necessary, to meet them.[108]

While Mexican Americans had been politically active for decades, no unified front had been solidified. Prior to the 1960's, Mexican Americans "organized community movements throughout the region in its attempt to rectify the contradictions affecting Mexican American life."[109] Although many of the interviewees for this research named the Black Power movement as the inspiration for what would become the Chicana/o movement, they also had previous

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[108] Helen Rowan, "The Mexican American" in a Paper Prepared for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1969).

[109] Mario García, "Americans All: The Mexican American Generation and the Politics of Wartime Los Angeles, 1941-1945," in *Social Science Quarterly;* June 1984; 65, vol. 2.

Mexican American organizations, such as LULAC, CSO, the American GI Forum, that they could look to for support.[110] No doubt that the civil rights struggles in the south inspired Mexican-Americans as to what needed to be done in order to challenge their own marginalization in the Southwest. However, historian Vicki L. Ruiz also states, "there were a few connections between African-American civil rights groups, with SNCC veterans Betita Martínez and Maria Varela bringing their organization skills and experiences to the Southwest, the Chicano Movement was very much its own entity with its own genesis."[111] Mexican Americans shared second class citizenship, oppression, and marginalization, as did African-Americans and many other non-white populations in the United States; yet, each of their experience, histories, and subjectivities were unique. As such, the Chicana/o Movement manifested out of its own distinct cultural, geographical, spiritual, and political context.

A Brief History of the Southwest

Many Mexicans Americans living in the southwestern United States can trace their ancestral lineage further back than the history of the country. For many families, the border has moved more than they have. The history of the Mexican American population is critical to understanding its social and political position in the United States and what led to the Chicana/o uprising of the 1960s. Mexican Americans are a colonized people living on colonized land, not once, but twice over. Laura Gómez argues that Mexicans were first colonized by the Spanish and again by the United States. She laments American historians for having "no problem recognizing

[110] Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Mario García, *The Chicano Generation: Testitmonios of the Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

[111] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 105.

and naming the first, Spanish conquest as a colonial process; but they have chafed at labeling the American conquest a colonial project."[112] It was the United States' thirst for land and power that caused the violent seizure of more than half of Mexico's territory in 1848. The American invasion of Mexico was a conquest, and as Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena states, "wars of conquest act as quickening agents on social change. They add urgency to the redefinition of social and geographic identities as both the vanquished and the conqueror confront the task of inventing traditions that re-create order from disrupted conventions."[113] In the end, California, Texas, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado were taken from Mexico, about one million square miles.

After the American invasion of Mexico in 1848, Mexicans became foreigners on their own land for the second time. Whereas the first colonial project created the Mexican, the second colonization of the southwestern United States created what we now call Mexican Americans, and later Chicana/os. For the next 100 years, Mexicans have had to contend with a complex relationship with white Americans, Mexican immigrants, and other people of color as they have struggled to understand their role as colonial subjects living in what is now the United States.

The role of religion, post-Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, is another overlooked area of Chicana/o history. At the conclusion of the war, Chao Romero states, the "American Catholic Church conducted a spiritual conquest of the Mexican Catholic Church of the Southwest."[114] Mexicans were quickly marginalized in one of the only institutions they trusted. This led to a grandmother sharing with her child in the early 1900s, "My son, there are three things that

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[112] Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (NYU Press, 2018), xxi.

[113] Lint Sagarena, *Aztlán and Arcadia*, 14.

[114] Chao Romero, *Brown Church*, 112.

pertain to our religion: The Lord, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Church. You can trust in the first two, but not the third."[115] After the war, indigenous Mexican priests were replaced en masse by Europeans that brought with them a foreign style of European Catholicism. The last Mexican Bishop of California, Reverend Francisco Diego y Moreno, and the last priest, Father Gonzalez Rubio, were relieved and replaced by a Spaniard and a Frenchman, respectively. By 1850, "almost all of the priests and prelates within the Catholic Church of Los Angeles… were either Spanish, French, or Italian. While most spoke Spanish, they were much more identified with the Californio upper class and with American Catholics than they were with the more numerous Mexican-born and native working class."[116] The religious apartheid continued well into the middle of the twentieth century. One Chicano priest shared how a foreign-born Irish bishop "would bring a young nice Irishman from Ireland then within two or three years make him the chancellor and then groom the guy to be the bishop. And we couldn't crack that thing."[117] Whereas for European priests there existed an affirmative action up the Catholic hierarchy, for Chicanos, no such pipeline existed. As a result, Mexicanos were left to interpret and develop their own unique private and popular Catholicism, often referred to as Mexican American ethno Catholicism.[118]

The lack of respect for Mexican clergy was not only happening in California, but throughout the Southwest. In 1851 New Mexico, a newly acquired priest from France "expelled the sixteen native Mexican clergy… instituted tithing and threatened to excommunicate any

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[115] George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 154.

[116] Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 161.

[117] Martinez, *PADRES*, 89.

[118] Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio*.

pastor who did not comply."[119] Euro-Catholicism absorbed the institutional responsibilities and had little patience for the unique expressions of Mexican Catholicism. The new foreign Catholic authorities would often voice their racist opinions about working in largely Mexican communities. As one newly appointed priest suggested about his placement in south Texas, it was "the worst sentence that could have been given to me for any crime."[120] Little regard was given to the Mexican faithful, who were even forced to wait for Anglos to sit before being allowed to enter the service. This legacy of religious racism and the institutional glass ceiling for Mexican American priests, preventing them from rising in the ranks of the hierarchy, would carry over until the Chicana/o movement of the middle of the 20th century. Gilbert Cadena states that from 1848 to 1970 "Mexicans/Chicanos had virtually no voice in the national decision-making process of the Church."[121] From the time Reverend Francisco Diego y Moreno was replaced as bishop after the Mexican-American war, it was 120 years before another Mexican American would be ordained as a bishop.

The exclusion and expulsion of Mexican priests had an impact that lasted for generations. One of the major consequences was the lack of a social institution that has supported grassroots leadership development. Richard Martinez states, "organic leadership within the Church that could have organized the masses was largely absent. The implications of this can be appreciated by comparing the Mexican American situation with that of African Americans."[122] The Black church is often cited as a critical source of developing and facilitating grassroots leaders, and

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[119] Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 15.

[120] Luis León, *La Llorona's Children* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 44.

[121] Gilbert Cadena, "Chicano Clergy and the Emergence of Liberation Theology," in *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 1 (1989): 109.

[122] Martinez, *PADRES*, 11.

examples abound of those that went on to lead the masses -- none more popular than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. However, for the Mexican community, the Church as a leadership development institution has been largely absent.

However, Chicana/o resistance to American religious domination is another buried chapter in Chicana/o and Mexican American history. Throughout the southwest, Mexicans rejected the oppressive, cultural, and religious violence from the hands of the new American occupiers. One important figure is Padre Antonio José Martínez of Taos, New Mexico. After the Mexican American war, Anglo bishops removed New Mexican Catholics from the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop in Durango, Mexico, and were put under the control of the French bishop, John Baptiste Lamy of Covington, Kentucky. Bishop Lamy had no experience or familiarity with the New Mexican peoples, their culture, religious traditions, or language.[123] Chao Romero states, "in an expression of cultural manifest destiny, [Bishop Lamy] condemned New Mexican fandango dances as causes of sin and fornication. He also denounced the *santero* folk art that adorned the churches and chapels of the area, and that represented the prize cultural production of local families."[124] Furthermore, he instituted mandatory tithing that, if not complied with, would exclude families from religious sacraments, such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals. It was Padre José Martínez who stood up to these draconian policies, publishing several letters condemning the unjust actions of Bishop Lamy that, he argued, pushed New Mexican Catholics away from the Church. In response, Padre Martínez was quickly excommunicated. However, he continued serving as a rogue priest, leading Mass, administering sacraments, and performing his duty as a community priest. Padre Martínez continues to be held

[123] Chao Romero, *Brown Church*.

[124] Ibid., 114.

in high esteem by New Mexicans, representing a challenge to a foreign political and religious imposition.

Vatican II

In the middle of the century, the Catholic Church was forced to respond to the incredible inequities happening all over the world as well as with their role in supporting colonial projects. Although this research explores the impact of an Episcopal Church on the Chicana/o movement, most Mexicans and Mexican Americans are Catholic and the Church of the Epiphany supported the organizing work of Catholic civil rights figures such as Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, both of them having recognized Vatican II as a an important shift in Mexican and Catholic relations. Additionally, the first national organization of Catholic priests, Padres Asociados por Derechos Religiosos, Educativos, y Sociales (PADRES), and the first national organization of Chicana women religious, Las Hermanas, both point to Vatican II as a critical moment that opened the door for them to organize. As such, I explore changes in the Catholic Church that trickled down to the barrios in East Los Angeles, as well as exploring how these changes impacted an Episcopal Church in a largely Mexican American community.

In the middle of the 20th century, with uprisings occurring all over the world, the Catholic hierarchy desperately needed to respond to the political currents and how it was being perceived by its membership. Giuseppe Alberigo stated, there was a "growing sense of disquiet nourished by the conviction that the centuries old reciprocal support between political institutions and churches was in definitive decline. The modern version of Christendom seemed less and less a relevant and convincing model."[125] The ultraconservative character of the Church was getting

[125] Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, 2.

out of touch with the masses. Attempting to meet the moment, the new Pope, John XXIII, made a radical decision; he announced a once in a lifetime gathering of the global Catholic hierarchy in Rome for only the second time in its history. The Second Vatican Council would be the first time in almost a hundred years where such a gathering would take place. The announcement alone shocked the secular and non-secular world; no one knew what a general council meant for the future of the Catholic community and the world.

The Second Vatican council was indeed a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church. Even alternative Christian communities welcomed the news, believing a new fraternal, rather than hostile, relationship would manifest within the larger Catholic Church. Alberigo states, "The immediate general impression was that a profound change was taking place in the heart of Catholicism… what is really striking is the hope and expectation created in so many circles."[126] Once the dust settled from the announcement, "believers and non-believers, Catholics and non-Catholics – instinctively understood that the elderly pope's initiative was a highly significant act and saw in it a sign of hope, a sign of confidence in the future and in the prospects for renewal."[127] In another surprising move, Pope John XXIII envisioned the council to be truly representative of the whole global Catholic community. Prior to Vatican II, preparation of councils was reserved for an extremely limited number of bishops. Yet, the new Pope invited all bishops from around the world to participate, those from the "third world" to the most developed, to contribute to the planning process on equal footing. Even theologians who had official bans of silence on them had them lifted so they could participate. Many "Bishops were shocked by the invitation to assume an active role at the level of the universal Church."[128] These

[126] Alberigo, 4.

[127] Ibid., 8.

controversial decisions from the Pope indicated the intention to break from the traditional ways of the past and to bring the Church closer to the people. Chicano historian Felipe Hinojosa states, Vatican II "moved the Catholic Church away from its fortress-like presence to become a Church that vowed to engage the world and initiate a dialogue across faith traditions and practices."[129] Indeed, early choices about the make-up, orientation, and volume of the council made clear that this was no ordinary gathering of the hierarchy. In fact, the final documents may not have signaled such a dramatic shift if not for the careful attention to who would participate.

The key slogan that emerged from the Second Vatican Council was that of *aggiornamento*, meaning to update or modernize. Its sixteen documents articulated, albeit sometimes inconsistently, a revamped path forward for the Catholic Church, including direction for the leadership and laity, maintaining ecumenical relationships with other faith traditions, respecting the culture and language of the local community, a recommitment to the social justice traditions of the Church, amongst other changes. Virgilio Elizondo, a Chicano priest, was impressed by the concept of Vatican II because it returned to the "concept of people as Church" and that it "was so radically new because it was so traditional."[130] It was the spirit of the Second Vatican council that opened the door to invite the faith community into the struggle for social change. A principal document "declared social justice activity as a primary way of fulfilling the mission of the Church. As a synthesis of Catholic social teaching, the document declared that the Church could no longer remain indifferent to the world and its changes."[131] While there may

[128] Ibid., 12.

[129] Hinojosa, *Apostles of Change*, 10.

[130] Virgilio Elizondo, quoted in *Católicos*. García, 198.

[131] Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 20.

have been many who were unprepared to adopt the council's new direction, there were certainly those who had already been challenging the Church to better represent the needs of the people.

As such, one of the changes that had immediate impact was the inclusion and empowerment of the laity. Whereas previous councils almost exclusively addressed the clergy, Vatican II was purposeful in addressing the laity. It brought them into the day-to-day activities of the Church to assume spiritual functions not formerly assigned to them. Vatican II encouraged and permitted the laity to assume positions within the Church and claim it as their own. It was also a needed reminder to the hierarchy that the Church is made up of its people, the laity. One progressive Chicano priest that welcomed the increased inclusion of the laity stated, "We had faith in the Church, we really had faith. And strong faith in the people – that people really wanted to be a part of the Church."[132] These ecclesial reforms translated into important Chicana/o faith-based organizing that would come in the years following Vatican II. Just several years after the council, organizations like PADRES, Las Hermanas, and *Católicos por la Raza* would be founded to further push the Church to meet the needs of the community. These organizations made important claims that they were not against the dogma of the Church but were critical of the Church's absence in the everyday material needs of Mexican Americans. Vatican II opened the door for the laity to be much more involved in the Church, which then became de-facto spaces of organization and leadership development. Yolanda Tarango, an early member of Las Hermanas stated, "It was an exciting time as it was the beginning of designing what religious life was to be. We were considered the new school. We were able to appreciate what was, but grateful that we didn't have to adhere to it. There was much social and religious upheaval."[133] By stepping outside of its traditional character and engaging with the material

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[132] Martinez, *PADRES*, 52.

realities of their members, Vatican II made it much harder for the Church to remain neutral to the shifting political and social changes in society.

Yet, not everyone welcomed the changes coming from Rome. The progressive flank came into direct conflict with traditionalists; the conflict was particularly dramatic in Los Angeles. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the Los Angeles Archdiocese was headed by conservative bishop Cardinal Francis McIntyre. In 1969, just a few years after Vatican II, the largely Mexican American community charged the bishop with ignoring the material realities of the barrio. Hinojosa stated that the 83 year old Cardinal "governed the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with an iron hand, remaining unmoved by the new spirit in the Church engendered by Vatican II."[134] The final straw occurred when Our Lady Queen of Angels, an all-girls Catholic school in a predominantly Mexican American barrio, was closed by the archdiocese in the Fall of 1968 at the same time a 3-million dollar Church opened up in a wealthier part of town.[135] In response, a newly organized group of Chicana/o Catholics, *Católicos por la Raza,* held protests, marches, and eventually, occupied the bishop's televised Christmas Eve Mass at the new Church, St. Basil's. *Católicos por la Raza* argued, "Since the Church is to be servant to the poor, it is our fault if that wealth is not channeled to help the poor in our barrio."[136] *Católicos por la Raza* were one of the first Mexican American groups to cross the secular line and pressure the Church to align itself with the working-class communities in Los Angeles.

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[133] Tarango, Yolanda, in *Las Hermanas*, Lara Medina. 21.

[134] Hinojosa, *Apostles of Change,* 63.

[135] Ibid., 60.

[136] "The Church and La Raza," Special Issue of *La Raza*, September 1969. *La Raza* Newspaper, La Raza Publication Records, 1001. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as La Raza Publication Records.

The clash between the laity and leadership, pre and post Vatican II, and the new and old guard, was a common tension resulting from the Church's attempt at reform. For Cardinal McIntyre, the conflict with *Católicos por la Raza* proved consequential. After serving Los Angeles for over 20 years, he retired, perhaps with pressure from the Vatican. At his retirement press conference, the bishop stated, "the spirit of today demands a greater realization for religion in social action."[137] Indeed, Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology (discussed in next section) had a tremendous impact on Chicana/os in the United States. It largely justified the feelings of the laity of wanting to do more in their community. One Chicano priest stated, "it was the spirit of Vatican II that gave us a sense of liberation. It inspired freedom of expression. We no longer felt paralyzed with fear. With Vatican II many of us priests felt that we could take more chances and not be 'yes men.'"[138] As such, these large-scale institutional changes opened the door for a different style of engagement of the Church and the community.

Like Vatican II, during the mid-twentieth century, the Episcopal Church in the United States was also responding to the need for change. In 1965, the Bishop of Los Angeles delivered a sermon, *Call to Renewal,* at the Diocesan Convention that stated, "In Christ's name the Church must be concerned about such things as adequate housing, proper care for the aging, poverty in Appalachia, the United Nations, population explosion, alcoholism, drug addiction, racial integration and the like."[139] Later in the year, the Episcopalian hierarchy in the United States gathered at their Liturgical Conference to conceptualize their own institutional and theological reforms. Episcopalian historian William Wauters stated of the conference that they began to "let

[137] Hinojosa, *Apostles of Change.* 79.

[138] Father Ruiz, quoted in Richard Martinez, *PADRES*, P. 19.

[139] Oliver Garver, "Christians as Agents of Change," The Church of the Epiphany Records, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as Epiphany Records: 21.

new engagement with the language, culture, and art of local neighborhoods be made manifest in the liturgy and worship of the church."[140] Similar to Vatican II, Episcopalians were reflecting on their own engagement with the realities of their members. the political moment, their racial history, and how to enter into true fellowship with those struggling for social change. Bishop Bloy ended his *Call to Renewal,* by stating, "If some among you do not like this, then I must say in all Christian charity that they have not learned Christ."[141]

The winds of change in churches across the globe were indeed blowing. The Second Vatican Council had a far-reaching impact, including in Protestant churches, as seen by the Episcopalians in the United States. It finally seemed as if the local churches had the blessing of the hierarchy to be more actively engaged in the spiritual *and* worldly matters of their communities. Many faith-based movements suggest that it was the Second Vatican Council which provided the fertile ground for a radical transformation in the traditional relations between Church and community relations. Yet, there were still gaps. After Vatican II, priests in Latin America got together to discuss how to best utilize the language of the Council to meet the unique needs in Latin America.

Latin American Liberation Theology

One immediate and large-scale impact of Vatican II was the springboard it provided for Latin American Liberation Theology to develop. Vatican II was in large part a response to change in the modern world, to the industrial revolution, and to the changing culture of the world. Yet, modernity was not benefiting everyone equally. International development largely

[140] William Wauters, "The Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church and a Church Gave Birth to a New Chicano Culture," in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 82, no. 4 (December 2013): 398.

[141] Bloy, Francis, in "Christians as Agents of Change," by Oliver B. Garver, Jr. Epiphany Records: 21.

benefited the rich and more powerful countries at the expense of poorer countries. As María Pilar Aquino stated, Western theologies have "demonstrated their inability to eliminate the great divisions that affect today's world – especially the north-south geopolitical divisions, the sexual divisions between men and women, and numerous other racial, ethnic, and religious divisions."[142] As such, three short years after Vatican II, priests and bishops from Latin America gathered in Medellín, Columbia, to reflect and discuss the devastating socio-political situation in Central and South America and apply the spirit of Vatican II to their context.

The most profound and lasting development of the Medellín conference was the development of Latin American Liberation Theology. In short, it was a radical reinterpretation of the word of a God, arguing that God maintains a "preferential option for the poor," and, in effect, religious leaders should follow suit. Latin American Liberation theologians argued that, "the poor deserve preference not because they are morally or religiously better than others, but because God is God, in whose eyes, 'the last are first.'"[143] As such, the Church should physically and symbolically stand alongside the poor's struggle for liberation. Robert Chao Romero suggests, "Liberation theologians parallel the suffering of the poor of Latin America to that of the enslaved Israelites in Egypt. They feel close attachment to the book of Exodus…Just as Yawheh heard the cries of the Israelites in their slavery and oppression in Egypt, so does God hear the cries of all who are oppressed."[144] Indeed, Liberation theology was a revolutionary re-reading of theology towards a theological praxis to serve the most marginalized. Latin America was in a situation of dire poverty and growing military presence. As Vatican II directed, the

[142] María Pilar Aquino, "Theological Method in US Latino/a Theology," 9

[143] Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theology*, xxviii.

[144] Chao Romero, *Brown Church*, 146.

Church could no longer remain neutral to the social and political conditions of the world.

Bishops in Latin America confronted the theological implications of their colonial situation to challenge structural systems of oppression. One major contribution of Latin American Liberation Theology was the acknowledgement of social sin. In addition to the transformation of individual sin as a fundamental Christian practice, Latin American theologians argued that liberation from "social situations of oppression and marginalization that force many to live in conditions contrary to God's will for their life" is just as critical.[145] Recognizing institutional sin was a radical contribution to the theological praxis of Christians wanting to engage with the world. Father Elizondo stated, "That was the thing at Medellín. Sin was always seen as personal, but to see that the whole structure could be a sinful structure and that the whole structure could be productive of certain circumstances, misery, poverty, and all that. I think that's what was radical at Medellín."[146] As such, liberation from sin was a goal not only for the individual, but for society. In fact, it became defined as a critical element of Christian life. Although Vatican II recognized social activism as a way to assist poor communities, the council fell short of acknowledging social structures as a cause and target of social activism.[147]

Gustavo Gutiérrez, considered the father of Latin American Liberation Theology, a Peruvian born theologian who studied in Europe and was trained in Marxism and Freudian philosophy, and who also attended the Second Vatican Council, was the first to articulate this new theological praxis. Liberation is an all-encompassing process, Gutiérrez stated, one that quenches worldly and spiritual thirst. He reiterated the importance of the intersection of

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[145] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii.

[146] Elizondo, Virgino, in Mario García. *Católicos*. 198.

[147]Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 2014.

spirituality and politics, suggesting, "it is a serious historical mistake to reduce what is happening among us today to a social or political problem."[148] Gutiérrez recognized that for theology to be relevant, it must come from the poor, from those on the margins, the othered. Theology of liberation embodies "a twofold fidelity: to the God of our faith and to the peoples of Latin America… we cannot separate our discourse about God from the historical process of liberation."[149] Furthermore, Gutiérrez argued, for political movements to sustain, they must intersect social action and spirituality piety.

Liberation theologies spread throughout Latin America and Churches began to stand alongside the poor in their movements for social justice. Faith communities became hubs of political education, popular movements, and of radically different kinds of discipleship. Chao Romero states, "Unlike secular notions of social justice, liberation theology insists that faith in God is the starting point for both personal liberation and social action."[150] Religious leaders in North America, aware of the developments in Latin America, traveled south to study and learn from their model of localized ecclesial bases. Because of the lack of priests, particularly in the rural areas of Latin America, *communidades eclesiales de base* were established so the laity could gather for liturgical study *and* community organizing. Lara Medina states, "These small groups became the seeds of the base community movement that fostered a radical Christian faith critical of systems of oppression."[151] Using the Bible as a methodological tool, liberation theologians uplifted readings of a God who removed the shackles of slavery, saints who

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[148] Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 2.

[149] Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theology*, 5.

[150] Chao Romero, *Brown Church,* 151.

[151] Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 27.

denounced social injustice, and a Jesus who preached peace. They then applied these radical social teachings to their own social condition to make Christianity what it was intended to be, a liberatory praxis.

The preferential option for the poor developed as a necessary component of Christian practice. Drawing "from a corpus of more than 2,000 Bible verses which speak of God's heart for the poor, immigrants, and all who are marginalized,"[152] additional liberation theologians began developing from the theoretical and methodological writings of Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Justo González, and Ada María Isasi-Díaz. Boff stated, "we can be followers of Jesus and true Christians only by making common cause with the poor and working out the gospel of liberation."[153] Whereas Latin American Liberation Theology emerged as a response, critique, and challenge to push Vatican II further, US based Latina feminist theologians, such as Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Michelle A. Gonzalez, María Pilar Aquino, Jeanette Rodriguez, Yolanda Tarango, and others, began developing their own versions of liberation theologies to address the patriarchal foundations that continued to ignore the theological contributions from Latinas and within a U.S context.

Conclusion

Indeed, Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology had a far-reaching impact, influencing radical and progressive social justice interpretations of God's word around the globe and in various racial and ethnic communities, including in the United States. As the global situation was shifting during the mid-20th century, religious institutions could no longer isolate

[152] Romero, *Brown Church*, 147.

[153] Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*.

themselves from the political tide. From the highest levels of Rome, and for only the second time in its history, a general council was summoned to discuss reforms. Responding to a changing membership and a developing world, the Church made unprecedented updates to their theological praxis, most notably, the return to the social mission of the Church and a newfound commitment to social justice as an avenue to achieve that mission. John O'Malley argues that never in the "history of Catholicism have so many and such sudden changes been legislated and implemented which immediately touched the lives of the faithful."[154] Religious leaders immediately tested the limits of these reforms, namely the development of liberation theologies in Latin America that reimagined a Christianity that privileged the poor, rather than overlooked them, and viewed social sin as something to rectify as much as individual sin. The radical reimagining of a theology that gave preference to the poor challenged long standing, culturally irrelevant, and stale theologies of the west.

Due to Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology, in the late 1960s and early 70s, Chicana/os, for the first time in their history, organized collectively and nationally to respond to the issues affecting Mexican Americans in the Church. Father Rodriguez, a member of the first national organization of Chicano priests, PADRES, stated, "The thrust of Vatican II came as a surprise and a change of direction for many in the Church, but for those of us who already had a notion of where the Church should be regarding social justice and the poor, it was an affirmation of what we were already doing rather than a change in direction."[155] This was also the case for Chicana and Latina nuns around the country. Historian Mary Jo Weaver reported

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[154] John O'Malley, *Tradition and Transition: Historical Perspectives on Vatican Council II* (Ohio: Academic Renewal Press, 1989), 17.

[155] Father Rodriguez, Quoted in PADRES, Richard Martinez, 2014. 18.

that in the 1960s, over 20,000 American sisters trained and worked in Latin America.[156] One Sister stated, "we had been in White institutions for so long that we really wanted a different exposure…Western theology was so limiting."[157] In 1970, Chicana and Latina sisters convened the first national organization of Chicana and Latina women religious, Las Hermanas. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, who later articulated a Latina feminist version of Latin American Liberation Theology, stated, "Though I was not able to articulate it until years later, it was then that I began to realize that the lived experience of the poor and oppressed was to be the source of my theology… Since those days in Peru in the mid 1960s I have understood myself as a justice activist."[158] Vatican II and Latin Liberation Theology had an incredible impact on the Chicana/o and Latina/o religious community in the United States. Although it has been largely overlooked in the research on the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, there are clear threads that connect Vatican II, Latin American Liberation Theology, and the Chicana/o movement.

In the barrios of East Los Angeles, an Episcopal Church could not help but be inspired and moved by the changes from Vatican II and liberation theologies. The Episcopalian hierarchy responded to the waves of global change by reforming their own theological praxis. Father Oliver Garver Jr. stated at the Los Angeles Convocation of Episcopal Churchwomen in 1964, "It is impossible to understand the present day involvement of the Church in such movements as the Racial Revolution apart from the present day movement toward reform and renewal within the Church."[159] In East Los Angeles, the Episcopalian Church of the Epiphany was witnessing its

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[156] Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women*.

[157] Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 29.

[158] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, in Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas*. 2014. 30.

[159] Sermon given by Oliver Garver Jr. at Los Angeles Convocation of Episcopal Churchwomen, 1964, Epiphany Records.

population shift from white to Mexican and from middle to working class. Bearing witness to the assemblies of Vatican II, whisperings of theologies of liberation, and the ongoing national civil rights movements, Bishop Francis Bloy of the Los Angeles Episcopalian Archdiocese saw an opportunity to experiment with a social justice theological praxis. As a result, in the early 1960s, Bishop Bloy implemented the Parish of East Los Angeles, a radical theological experiment of the church in the community. This research argues that this experiment planted the seeds of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

Chapter III
Father Luce's Church

In mid twentieth century Los Angeles, as racial and demographic shifts were taking place locally, nationally, and globally, there were also noteworthy changes in the religious sector. Institutions of faith all over the world were challenging outdated norms and traditional readings of the Bible. New theological interpretations would revolutionize the ways religion would be practiced. In an unprecedented way, the Catholic hierarchy through the Second Vatican Council "declared social justice activity as a primary way of fulfilling the mission of the Church. As a synthesis of Catholic social teaching, the document declared that the Church could no longer remain indifferent to the world and its changes."[160] For Episcopalians, a 1965 Liturgical Conference "began to let new engagement with the language, culture, and art of local neighborhoods be made manifest in the liturgy and worship of the church."[161] In Latin America, while Gustavo Gutiérrez had not published his groundbreaking text, *A Theology of Liberation* (1971), he was reading the writing on the wall; change was brewing and necessary. Clergy in Latin America were reflecting on their responsibility to address the rampant inequalities, and Gutiérrez was witnessing the way religious leaders were forced to get closer to the community and recognize that along with individual sin, there was a social and institutional sin that needed to be confronted and corrected. Liberation theologians began articulating a reading of the Bible that offered a preferential option for the poor.

These global religious reforms spread and were absorbed by the progressive wings of religious institutions and orders across the globe. At the local level, the changes fueled motivations to become more involved in the community in new and radical ways. The history of

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[160] Medina, *Las Hermanas,* 20.

[161] Wauters, "The Borderland Cultures," 398.

the Church of the Epiphany is a prime example of this new theological praxis, where the liminality and ambiguity of the direction of a new church was capitalized on to test new ministries and push the limits of old-fashioned practices. In the early stages of a Mexican American movement, the Church of the Epiphany was uniquely positioned to support the needs and passions of the East Los Angeles community during the tumultuous period of the 1960s by broadening their theological lens, opening their doors, and allowing the church to be a base for Mexican American self-determination. This chapter examines the institutional leadership and the faith politics of a church experimenting with a new theological praxis.

Faith politics refers to movements that are inspired towards social change through their religious interpretations. Mario García states, "faith and politics, or faith politics, have been two sides of the same coin in many cases;"[162] they inspire action and religious leadership to get intimately involved with the struggles of the communities in which they reside. Faith politics movements are "not per se revolutionary movements, but they lead to the empowerment of oppressed communities and the achievement of basic human rights."[163] This chapter examines the Church of the Epiphany and its hierarchy through the lens of faith politics, examining the ways that the church transformed itself in order to inspire Chicana/o youth to take action for social change.

One of the first and most dramatic ways the Church of the Epiphany declared itself as part of the Mexican American community was the way it radically modified its physical space. Gaye Theresa Johnson's spatial entitlement theory is a useful lens to understand the significant role space played in the relationship between the Church of the Epiphany and Chicana/o

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[162] García, *Father Luis Olivares*. 9.

[163] Ibid., 10.

activists. Johnson states, "in many instances overlooked by social historians, everyday reclamations of space, assertions of social citizenship, and infrapolitical struggles have created the conditions that ultimately led to future successes for organized collective movements."[164] Although the Church of the Epiphany provided one of the most meaningful spaces of congregation that led to a mass movement, its historical significance is largely unnoticed in academic scholarship. However, Black and Brown communities, suggests Johnson, "enacted solidarities out of their shared experiences with dispersal, estrangement, and marginalization."[165] This chapter shows how the church provided critically needed space to the youth, families, and the community of *La Causa* for them to build solidarities with each other, to create democratic and egalitarian visions. According to interviewees for this research, the Church of the Epiphany was an "incubator" of activity, a "nexus," a "hub," and a "crossroads" for various Chicana/o movement activity that sparked larger and more significant organizing. This was at a time when Mexican Americans had no mass movement, nothing equivalent to the African Civil Rights movement, no Mexican American colleges, and virtually no outside help.[166] The doors that were opened at the Church of the Epiphany lent critical space for Chicana/o youth to engage in meaningful congregation, to imagine, organize, and activate each other alongside other movements for social change happening all over the world, and in their backyards.

Additionally, spatial entitlement theory also considers the meaning behind the space. In this instance, what did it mean for Chicana/os to be organizing in a church? Johnson states that "struggles for spatial entitlement flow from the recognition that a community requires more than

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[164] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity,* 51.

[165] Ibid., 52.

[166] Rowan., *The Mexican American*.

physical space to survive. Spaces have social meanings."[167] The Church of the Epiphany was a religious institution; it was as close to a Catholic Church as a Protestant Church can get. As such, the space was loaded with social and cultural meaning, to them, to their families, to their history. This proved important to the largely conservative Mexican parents that would allow their kids to attend activities at the church because it was an institution that they were largely familiar with. Johnson asserts that "Struggles for social justice in Los Angeles involved changing the meaning of existing spaces and creating new ones," producing "unique and creative forms of congregation."[168] As such, this chapter shows how the faith politics and religious leadership of the Church of the Epiphany allowed for Chicana/os to change the nature of the space of the church, its meaning, and its function, to address, not only the spiritual needs of the community, but its material needs as well.

This chapter is also illustrative of what Chao Romero calls the Brown Church, a willingness from Latinx religious institutions to recognize the need for, and to work towards, a more just society. Although religion has been a pillar of colonial powers, sanctifying, and sanctioning oppressive governments for over 500 years, Romero argues that there is also a long tradition of activism coming from the Brown Church, from ecclesial Latina/o communities that have challenged longstanding racism, discrimination, and social injustices from within and external to the church. The political activity surrounding the Church of the Epiphany falls in line with the progressive interpretations of the teaching of Jesus that is against all forms of oppression and provided meaningful change to address it. Like liberation theologians that articulated a preferential option for the poor, the Church of Epiphany indeed modified their

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[167] Theresa Johnson, *Space of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity,* 48.

[168] Ibid., xii.

religious praxis in order to support and represent the most marginalized communities in East Los Angeles during the 1960s and 70s.

This chapter examines the ways the Church of the Epiphany in the Lincoln Heights barrio of East Los Angeles understood their institutional, cultural, and religious value within the Mexican-American community. They provided meaningful space and religious leadership for Chicana/os to organize and stood alongside them in their pursuit of social change. I begin the chapter by providing a brief history of Episcopalians and then transition into the founding of the Church of the Epiphany. I fast forward to the early 1960s, when the Church of the Epiphany recognized the need for a shift in their religious praxis, including the ways they invested in personnel, space, and resources to support the Mexican barrio they were now housed in. The presiding bishop made radical changes and brought in social justice minded clergy that, I argue, kickstarted the Chicana/o movement. This chapter specifically highlights the role of Father John Luce, whose faith politics would play a monumental role in the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. Luce had a unique ability to support the diverse Chicana/o youth through his faith politics, political mentorship, and religious leadership. Father Luce's significance to the Chicana/o movement is an overlooked area in the Chicana/o movement and religious studies scholarship. While the Church of the Epiphany is mentioned throughout histories of the Chicana/o movement as simply a meeting place, a qualitative investigation of the role of the church to the Chicana/o movement is sorely missing. I argue here that without the Church of the Epiphany, there would not be the Chicana/o movement that we know of today.

The Needs and the Passions of the People

During the 16th-century Protestant reformation, Henry VIII separated the Church of England away from the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. One explanation suggests that Henry VIII founded the Church of England because the Pope refused to grant him an annulment from his marriage. In a move of desperation, Henry VIII removed the Church of England from the Roman hierarchy so that he could remarry. Yet, he was attached to the traditions and customs of Roman Catholicism, resulting in a church that was "Protestant, yet Catholic" says Episcopalian priest and historian William Wauters. He continued, "Sacramentally, we were very similar. I mean, so much so that people coming into the Episcopal Church, and you know [from] anywhere around the world, they'd say, 'is this a Catholic Church?' Because you have the Holy Communion there and you have, you know, you have confessions and prayers and things like that."[169] Today, Episcopalians practice many of the same religious rituals that Catholics do, resulting in a church that looks almost identical to the one before it. Episcopalians celebrate the Holy Communion, are baptized, confess, pray, and participate in the traditional Mass that one might hear in a Catholic Church, but are Protestant, in other words, not bound to the Pope's decrees. Lydia López, a Chicana civil rights leader who I interviewed, converted to the Episcopalian faith because of her experience at the Church of the Epiphany during the Chicana/o movement. She stated that Episcopalians "consider ourselves the bridge" between the two faiths.[170]

During the Chicana/o movement, the similarities between the Episcopalian and the Catholic Church likely activated the spiritual capital of many of the Chicana/o youth and parents who attended meetings and activities at the Church of the Epiphany. Although Mexican parents

[169] William Wauters, interview with the author, Los Angeles, December 10, 2020.

[170] Lydia López, interview with author, Los Angeles, September 20, 2020.

had concerns about the Church of the Epiphany's growing reputation as a radical space, their feelings were eased in part because it was at a church, one of the few institutions they had faith in. While Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles were "officially" Catholics, their spiritual flexibility likely assisted with their comfort of being in an Episcopalian church without any sense of conflict. Whereas the look, smell, sounds, and feel of a church that was not technically their own was familiar, it was the warmth of the priests and church community that made them feel welcomed and supported.

Like most religions, there are important internal theological differences amongst Episcopalians. One of those areas of contention is how a parish community is defined. This ministerial difference is important in understanding the unique theological praxis of the Church of the Epiphany. Some of the more conservative Episcopalian churches understand their role as strictly spiritual and focused on the membership of their own congregation. On the other hand, as Wauters explained, "In the Church of England, the Anglican way of looking at this is, your parish is a geographic place, it's not the people who come to the church. It's like for us in Epiphany, it would be like the Lincoln Heights area. That would be our parish church. And we would be responding to the needs and the passions of the people of that parish."[171] The more liberal Episcopalians considered their parish to be composed of the entire community the church resides in. This approach is similar to the liberation theologians in Latin America who believed that the faith is played out in the communities, not confined to the walls of the church and only on Sundays.

Following this progressive train of thought, the Church of the Epiphany considered its parish to be the entire barrio of Lincoln Heights and the greater East Los Angeles area, whether

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[171] Wauters, interview with the author.

they were Episcopalians or not. This theological lens was critical in determining the church's role in supporting progressive social policies throughout its history. For example, in the early 1900s, the church was a dues-paying member of the Los Angeles Labor Council.[172] Rather than only occupying the spiritual and theological arenas of religious life, the Church of the Epiphany, like the Brown Church suggests, recognizes that a true Christian aims to fulfill the spiritual, cultural, and socio-political dimensions of the communities they serve.

<u>A Brief History of the Church of the Epiphany</u>

The Church of the Epiphany's history is reflective of a church that is grounded in its community. On June 17, 1579, Sir Francis Drake, a faithful member of the Church of England, anchored his ship just north of the entrance of the Golden Gate in San Francisco. Drake and the Pelican, as his ship was called, sailed through False Bay, now named Drake Bay. According to Rev. Stephen C. Clark, a historian of the Episcopal Church in the Los Angeles area, a service given on June 24, 1579 in the Bay Area is recorded as the first Anglican [*or* Protestant] service in the New World and the first Christian service on what today is the west coast of the United States.[173] Clark stated later that week, "Sir Francis sailed away, and the next Christian words heard in California were those of the Franciscan Fathers, some two hundred years later."[174]

The first permanent Episcopalian Church was established in San Francisco in July of 1848, over two hundred and fifty years after Sir Francis Drake celebrated that first Mass, and during a critical time in the Pacific west of North America. This was just five months after the

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[172] Wauters, *Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church*, 394.

[173] Stephen C. Clark, *The Diocese of Los Angeles: A Brief History* (1945), Los Angeles, Printed by the Committee on Diocesan Anniversaries. The Church of the Epiphany Records, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as Epiphany Records.

[174] Clark, "The Diocese of Los Angeles", Epiphany Records, 9.

United States' invasion of Mexico. The area had been already scouted by Episcopalian missionaries from the east coast. In 1847, a trip west was chartered "beyond the limits of our country."[175] At the time, Alta California was in an ambiguous political position and further destabilized because of its distance from the country's capital, having been relatively neglected since Mexico's war of independence. The short-lived Bear Flag Revolt of 1846, an armed attempt to annex California to the United States, increased tensions with Mexico. Yet, in the fall of 1848, two years before California would be entered into the union, Episcopalians founded their first permanent church in California, The Holy Trinity (now Trinity Church), in San Francisco.

Episcopalian Bishop Kip first visited Los Angeles in 1855. At the time, the city had a population of 5,000 and was still predominantly Spanish speaking. Although there were significant tensions between Mexicans, Americans, Native Americans, and Blacks, the church maintained a neutral attitude, very much appreciated by whites, suggests historian Clark: "Protestants were much impressed by the dignity and solemnity of our service, as we did not preach slavery and anti-slavery, which were paramount issues of the day in Protestant churches."[176] The social and political climate, however, was anything but neutral. White supremacy was running rampant after the Mexican American War at the expense of non-whites. In Los Angeles, a homicide a day was reported and Mexican lynchings carried on well into the first decades of the twentieth century. Although a considerable number of Mexicans populated the area, the church's historical records make no mention of racial conflict. In fact, Bishop Kip recorded more significant dangers of grizzly bears and Mormons than of the violent and racist

[175] Clark, "The Diocese of Los Angeles," Epiphany Records, 9.

[176] Ibid., 9.

attitude of whites. In 1864, a priest from Indiana, Rev. Elias Birdsall, arrived in Los Angeles to begin a new mission. After debating whether to establish in El Monte or Los Angeles, Birdsall elected the City of Angels, founding St. Athanasius's Church, later changed to St. Paul's Cathedral. It was the first Episcopal church in Los Angeles, formally included into the Episcopalian union in May of 1865.

The Church of the Epiphany had its beginnings in 1886 at a time of significant growth in Los Angeles. Between 1880 and 1890, the population went from 11,000 to 60,000, yet, only one parish was serving the entire city.[177] Additionally, post Mexican American war, "Los Angeles had earned the reputation of being the toughest town in the United States."[178] Previous Protestant groups had attempted but failed to establish any permanence. However, a small group of determined faithful Episcopalians continued gathering in the private home of Mr. E. P. Carnicle. The thirteen members rented out a storefront at 518 Downey Ave. and held the first service on the Sexagesima of 1886, the second Sunday before Lent. The service was under the direction of Reverend Jeffreys, an assistant at St. Paul's, the other Los Angeles Episcopalian church in the area. Exactly one year later, Jeffreys would become the rector of the newly incorporated Church of the Epiphany. The "boundaries of the parish included all of East Los Angeles, now Lincoln Heights, and across the river, between North Broadway and Mission Road, as far as Ord and Macy Streets."[179] Lincoln Heights was only 8 years old at the time, a city filled with "fields of fruit trees, hills of vineyards and expansive sheep grazing on the surrounding slopes."[180] There

[177] Henry E. Brett., December 1935, "Historic Sketch of the Church of the Epiphany: From its Founding to the Consecration of its Church Building," Epiphany Records, 2.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Flier from Lincoln Heights Preservation Association, 1982, Epiphany Records.

was great hope and optimism about the church in this neighborhood and plans were immediately made to develop.

The construction of a permanent building was completed eight years later by ecclesiastic architect Ernest A. Coxhead. Trained in England, Coxhead acquired a strong reputation for his ecclesiastical work, also having a hand in designing Pasadena's Church of Angels in 1889, the Church of the Ascension in Sierra Madre in 1888, and the Church of the Messiah in Santa Ana in 1888.[181] The rectory was built in 1886, across the street and to the west of the church. The single building was constructed at the rear of the lot so a larger church could be constructed at a later time. Overseeing the construction was the Rev. A. G. L. Trew, D.D., acting on behalf of Bishop Kip. The original plans included just one multi-purpose chapel to be used for all parish activities: "Windsor chairs were used for seating, and, as neither gas or electricity was available, a coal burning stove furnished heat. The lighting was by small oil lamps bracketed to the walls."[182] A church bell, originally belonging to St. Athanasius, was installed by the same firm that built the Liberty Bell and was shipped to Los Angeles from the east coast, a trip that took 112 days by ship. It was said to be the first non-Roman Catholic church to have such a bell. Later in 1896, a brass altar was donated to the church by Miss Byam who presented the cross in the name of her brother, "who was lost in the mountains of British Columbia. In his last moments, when dying of hunger and exposure, and knowing that his time had come, he wrote in his diary, with his final effort, the words which are engraved on the Cross 'BUT GOD IS GOOD.'"[183] The church officially opened on July 1, of 1888.

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[181] Pamphlet by Lisa M. Snyder and Daniel P. Hoye, 1988, "Religious Architecture," published by *The Los Angeles Conservancy*, Epiphany Records.

[182] Brett, December 1935, Epiphany Records, 3.

[183] Ibid., 5. Miss Byam's first name is not given.

Throughout its early decades in Lincoln Heights, the community was very generous in donating various furnishings and decorations to the beloved chapel. The community's involvement in the church was extremely important in the coming decades because of the great financial strain the church would go through. In all likelihood, it would have faced the same fate as many of the other Protestant churches that tried to establish in Los Angeles, yet, as historian Brett suggests, "the women of the Parish were determined that it should continue to exist, and exerted every effort in their power to that end, inspiring the Parish with courage and hope."[184] It was these women that encouraged a retired Reverend Henderson Judd to offer his services to maintaining and servicing the church without a salary until the parish was in a position to provide one.

By 1900, as the congregation was growing, plans were underway for its expansion. Once the new building was set, additional gifts and donations were made to beautify the church, including the excellent piano donated by Miss Stanton of Pasadena, the large pipe organ, and many more. The building committee recognized that "it was only necessary to name a need and some individual or organization responded with loyal eagerness. So large is the list of these gifts that it cannot be incorporated in this sketch."[185] After several changes in the rector, the parish remained eager to complete its upgrades. In February of 1913, a challenge was offered by Mrs. Judd to donate the Epiphany window above the altar if there was significant progress on the new building by January of 1914.

The final Mass in the original church, now serving as the parish hall, was given on Palm Sunday of 1914. Services were conducted by Reverend Joseph H. Johnson, Bishop of the

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[184] Ibid., 4.

[185] Ibid., 7.

Diocese. The new church building, the one still currently in use, was completed in April of 1914 by architect Arthur B. Benton. Done in gothic style, he "added smooth plaster rather than shingles. The sparse interior has a nicely crafted beamed ceiling, lovely stained-glass windows, and a vintage organ with delicately hand-painted pipes,"[186] and held its first service on Easter of that year. Still having a liability of $2,000 to cover, once again the women of the Guild came through to accept the responsibility of raising the funds to cover the loan. A kitchen was added in 1922, in the name of a loyal member of Epiphany, Eliza Bainer, a woman of humble means and of strong faith who gave in labor what she did not have in money.

Much of the historical sketch was compiled by Henry E. Brett of the Church of the Epiphany in 1935. While he had access to some of the Parish's records, it was also compiled from personal memoranda and memory dating back to Easter of 1893. In Brett's final comments, he states, "of the many faithful men and women who have given of their best to sustain the life of Epiphany we cannot speak individually. By their devotion they have accomplished the things that have marked the history of this Church. Epiphany may surely feel confident that the same spirit of loyalty and faith will be shown in meeting the problems that may face it in the future."[187]

The deep history of Epiphany speaks of a church that was well grounded in its community, its members, neighborhood, and faith. It arrived immediately after the war with Mexico, yet, little of its history comes to terms with the racial tensions that ensued. Furthermore, like many religious institutions that had attempted to settle during this time, Epiphany would have perished if not for

[186] Snyder and Hoye, 1988, *Religious Architecture, The Los Angeles Conservancy*, Epiphany Records.

[187] Brett. December 1935, *Historical Sketch,* 9.

the dedication of the women that were steadfast in labor, financial support, organization, and faith. They are the principal pillars in this historical narrative.

The city of Lincoln Heights has gone through considerable racial and ethnic transitions since the founding of the church in 1886. Its racial and ethnic population has gone from Native to Mexican to "Anglo; then, Italian, then, Mexican, next more broadly Latina/o, and, today, with a growing number of Chinese-speaking neighbors."[188] During the period of the Chicana/o movement in the 1960s, a dramatic white flight occurred that shifted the character of Los Angeles generally, and East Los Angeles specifically. The largely white and wealthy neighborhood of the Church of the Epiphany in the 1940-50s was once again becoming Mexican. As these mid-20th-century shifts were taking place, the Church of the Epiphany attempted to maintain its same theological principles: "The same Lord. The same Church. An ever-changing neighborhood, presenting ever fresh and new opportunities for faithful Christian discipleship."[189]

In Brett's final comments in his historical account of Epiphany, he somewhat anticipated the challenges ahead, praying that the "same spirit of loyalty and faith will be shown in meeting the problems that may face it in the future." These words rang especially true thirty years later, during the tumultuous days of the Chicana/o movement, where the spirit of loyalty and faith would indeed be put to the test. In the beginning of the 1960s it became evident that the congregation was almost fully Anglo in the midst of an almost fully Mexican barrio. In a sermon on the 100th anniversary of the Church of the Epiphany, Father Garver remembers this history, stating, "Bishop Bloy recognized this as a terrible scandal – a denial and rejection of the clear Biblical teaching that every child of God is precious and important — is a SOMEBODY to be

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[188] Sermon by Bishop Oliver B. Garver Jr., January 4, 1987, "Church of the Epiphany, LA, 100th," Epiphany Records, 1.

[189] Ibid., 1.

loved by us all – is to be sought out and invited into the local Christian Fellowship. No one is left out. Everyone welcome."[190] In response, the bishop at the time, Francis Eric Bloy, made swift and clear moves to address this "scandal." The results were a radical reimagining of Epiphany's role in the community. The remaining chapter is a retelling of the social, cultural, and demographic changes in East Los Angeles and the religious response of one church that found itself at the center. It is the change in attitude and the warm reception that the Church of the Epiphany showed to its Mexican American community that makes this history worth telling.

The Parish of East Los Angeles

In September of 1961, responding to the lack of engagement of the Church of the Epiphany in the changing demographics of Lincoln Heights, Bishop Francis Bloy elected to experiment with a barrio team ministry. The bishop was aware of the conditions that Mexican Americans were facing in the early 1960s, before the Chicana/o movement or the United Farm Workers had begun to organize. Here, says Bloy, was an opportunity to put the idea of a social gospel into practice, citing chapter 25 of St. Matthew, "for I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me… Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren."[191] A faith politics framework suggests that faith based movements often "involve [a] 'subversive reading' of scripture with a focus on justice and peace and thus provide a claim for moral authority."[192] As such, Bloy imagined the

[190] Ibid., 2.

[191] Undated policy proposal for The Parish of East Los Angeles, Epiphany Records, 4.

[192] García, *Father Luis Olivares*, 10.

application of Matthew 25 as a barrio ministry. He incorporated a union of parishes and clergy that would work together to improve the conditions of Mexicans in East Los Angeles. The union would include the greater Los Angeles eastside -- the Church of the Epiphany, the Church of the Redeemer in Boyle Heights, and the Church of St. Bartholomew in El Sereno. Wauters suggests that the coalition of eastside parishes was modeled after New York's "East Harlem Protestant Parish, a ministry founded by the president of New York Theological Seminary and two Union Theological Seminary graduates with the purpose of helping the poor and organizing social reform from the grassroots."[193] This experiment would be called the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA) and its impact would be greater than anything Bishop Bloy, or anyone, could have imagined.

From documents obtained at the Church of the Epiphany archives at the Chicano Studies Research Center, the goals of PELA were both broad and detailed. Unsurprisingly, at the forefront of this experiment was "to draw souls to Christ."[194] PELA was intended to cast a wide net for proselytization, citing St. Mark 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. God ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, ever unto the end of the world."[195] As is the intention of most religious institutions, and a clear task of PELA, Bloy sought to baptize the community in the name of the Holy Trinity, to recognize their relationship to Jesus Christ so that every man will want to accept the family of Jesus. Bloy saw an opportunity in East Los Angeles,

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[193] William, *Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church*, 396.

[194] Undated policy proposal for Parish of East Los Angeles, Epiphany Records, 7.

[195] Ibid., 1.

witnessing tension between the Catholic Church and the Mexican American community. The PELA proposal stated, "the area expresses an air of hostility to the traditional mores of society, because the people feel unwanted by, and patronized by the recognized religious and social institutions."[196] Without a doubt, PELA was attempting to insert itself in an unstable relationship between Mexicans and Catholics and wanted to receive and baptize the lost souls.

Although evangelization was at the forefront of this experiment, Bloy recognized the Church of the Epiphany was also failing at its own mission. The church's local community was totally disengaged from its Mexican American neighbors. Aside from the obvious Sunday morning worshiping activities, all other times of the week, the church was essentially quiet. As such, the goals of PELA were to engage in the everyday life of the community in order to make the Word flesh, to be faithful custodians of the Word of God, and to make church a "living condition of the rest of the hours of the week, that the Grace of God may flow visibly in the life of the community."[197] Indeed, Episcopalian recruitment was a principal factor of PELA, yet, like the liberation theologies that would transpire later in the decade, the experiment was intended to show that God is on the side of the poor and the most marginalized. In PELA's Easter 1969 Newsletter, it stated, "The glorious Good News of Easter Day is that, by rising from the dead, Christ conquered death and each one of us is saved. The on-going work of the church is the continuing task of saving people amid the anxieties and adversities of daily living."[198] As the message states, Epiphany was clearly occupied with entangling Christ's message of saving

[196] Ibid., 3.

[197] Ibid., 4.

[198] Church of Epiphany Newsletter, Easter 1969, Epiphany Records.

people eternally with the daily lived realities of the community. Although the PELA proposal was clear about its proselytizing message, what transpired would look very different.

PELA was imagined to challenge the oppression that was so obviously present in the Mexican American barrios of East Los Angeles. As suggested by Romero in *The Brown Church*, the church recognized an injustice and put forth action towards that problem. The injustice, to Bishop Bloy, was that the Church of the Epiphany was housed in a largely Mexican barrio while still catering to the social and cultural realities of the white congregation of decades past. Bloy, as many in the Brown Church have done, and likely inspired by the religious reforms around the world, intended to put the social gospel into action in order to rectify its misdoings.

Although the rolling out of PELA was intended to be realized through the lens of Episcopalian proselytization, its official proposal included significant flexibility to realize outcomes that could change the everyday material conditions of Mexican Americans living in the barrios. The breadth of the proposal allowed for clergy to experiment with a different kind of community engagement, utilizing and maximizing their role as faith leaders to achieve their goals. It stated that the task of the clergy is to "develop relationships with the people and institutions of the community," to "seek to become known as a concerned person and citizen," and to "provide leadership wherever possible in community life"; furthermore, "they must be seen on the streets, in the shops, and in the hangouts of youth and adults."[199] The proposal was clearly encouraging the clergy to get out of the strict confines of the church and into the barrios. This was also a key component of the liberation theologies that would be articulated in the coming years. The clergy tasked with implementing the new barrio ministry were to show that the church could, and should, be the center of a life of worship. The proposal also stated that the

[199] Sermon by Garver Jr., January 4, 1987, Church of the Epiphany, LA, 100th, Epiphany Records, 5.

“Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles must be willing to give to this ministry freedom and support to close the gap between the Sunday workshop and daily life of the community,” to show that God and the church could be, and in fact was, present in their daily lives.[200]

Another critically important area of the proposal was to perform their duties without any strings attached. It encouraged the priests “to give and not count the cost, to labor and not to seek any return other than a soul won for Christ, a child of God to find dignity, a person who can discover the ability to fulfill the purpose for which God has created him.”[201] While a “soul won for Christ” seems like a condition, the proposal was clear that this was a long term experiment and could not be judged on hard numbers or how many new members would be attracted, but on the sincerity of the work of the clergy. It stated that the “Parish of East Los Angeles must create a new image of the Christian Church which will interpret the Faith in its fullness as an act of continual witness which will communicate the Word of God, not in terms of parochial reports, of parish self-support, of ‘success story’, but as an act of long term missionary outreach of the Body of Christ.”[202] This was an important factor for the clergy that would soon come and put wheels on PELA, as it allowed them the freedom to show that there was authenticity in their time and work in the community. They were not there to simply proselytize, but to act on the behalf of the material conditions and needs of the community.

One final area to highlight from the proposal was the inclusion of space. The document stated that the “parish buildings are so constructed, and decorated that they are suitable only for large gatherings of people. They are not, at the present moment, conductive for conversational

[200] Undated policy proposal for The Parish of East Los Angeles, Epiphany Records, 4

[201] Undated policy proposal for The Parish of East Los Angeles, Epiphany Records, 4.

[202] Ibid.

gatherings of people, or for small group meetings."[203] As such, it suggested internal and external changes to the architecture of the church so that it could provide a warmer and more attractive function for the ministry of the church in the community. Furthermore, the adaptation of space was for the activation of "intimate group conversations and activity," which allows for community members to engage with each other, or organize.[204] The changes proposed included room dividers to create space for small meetings, removing large and heavy pews for removable chairs to allow greater diversity in programming, and introducing recreational equipment for young people. Rethinking the space was an intentional strategy to allow the community to have a place to confront problems or meet for special interests. While it may seem insignificant, Johnson asserts about the importance and overlooked examination of space, that "[s]patial entitlement has enormous implications for the study of Black and Brown working class opposition, because it redresses inattention to the profound role that space plays in everyday life, as well as the cumulative role that everyday life plays in the development of mass movements."[205] As such, PELA included space as a critical function of their faith politics. The conclusion of the PELA proposal ended much like Brett's historical sketch, hoping that the church "will fit them for the duties of the coming days."[206]

Getting off the Ground

The Parish of East Los Angeles launched in September of 1961. The *Belvedere Citizen* reported, "September 1st, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Francis Bloy of Los Angeles Diocese, assigned the Rev. Nicholas Kouletsis to form the Northeast Inner-City Parish of Los Angeles, which

[203] Ibid., 6.
[204] Ibid., 6.
[205] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity,* xiii.
[206] Undated policy proposal for The Parish of East Los Angeles, Epiphany Records, 7.

comprised the Church of the Redeemer, 481 S. Indiana St., the Church of the Epiphany, 2808 Altura St. and Saint Bartholomew's at 4752 S. Huntington Drive, South."[207] Bishop Bloy called on a young priest, the Reverend Kouletsis, to head the new cluster parish along with a team of two additional priests, the Reverend William F. Licht and the Reverend Morris Samuel, Jr. The headquarters was housed at the Church of the Epiphany, and everyone was energetic about the church's new direction. Yet, Rev. Kouletsis was more of a traditional priest and his programmatical outcomes reflected it. He created important programs that brought various community groups closer together, such as: The churchwomen, Episcopal Young Churchmen, Boy Scouts, Choir, Altar Guild, Acolytes and the Vestry. If the first year of PELA was to get familiar with the partner parishes, the leadership, and the diverse congregations, Kouletsis largely succeeded. The priests gave Mass in each other's churches, and they would organize mini fiestas to socialize. Kouletsis stated, it was "a time of discovery of needs and attitudes of the several neighborhoods represented in the Parish. This much I can say, we have made many friends, both members of the Parish and the people living in our neighborhoods."[208] Becoming familiar with the sister parishes was the first order of PELA, and as Kouletsis noted, it went fairly smoothly. However, convincing the current laity at the Church of the Epiphany that such a relationship and direction was needed was not as easy.

Kouletsis was charged with laying the foundations of a new union of parishes and to provide a bridge for the white laity and Mexican community. He had to manage the tensions that arose from the still largely white and middle-class congregation, which was not as willing to adopt the changes. Wauters stated that "all the programs Kouletsis introduced were fine as long

[207] *Belvedere Citizen*. Dec. 21, 1961. Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Archives. Los Angeles, CA.

[208] Kouletsis, Rev. Nicholas, January 6, 1963, in "Annual Meeting: Parish of East Los Angeles," Epiphany Records, 1.

as they did not bring Mexican-Americans into the congregation."[209] Unfazed, the young priest began a bussing program so that youth and families from surrounding neighborhoods could take advantage of their services. As PELA shared programming with the other churches, mobility became an important strategy.

PELA's first few years of implementation were slow but steady. Earl Dittmar, the Senior Warden of the Church of the Epiphany, stated of Kouletsis's leadership, "In this year he has won his way into the hearts of all of us. Praise God for this blessing."[210] And Berkson L. Holt, Warden of the Church of the Redeemer stated, "with proper steps taken by Father Kouletsis, we were led into harmonious relationships, which has resulted in a spirit of efficiency among all groups and giving way to consideration and respect one to the other."[211] However, for no fault of his own, Kouletsis's tenure as rector of the Church of the Epiphany did not last. During a March 1964 conference in St. Paul's Cathedral, the *Episcopal Review* reported, "The Rev. Nicholas Kouletsis has been named Co-ordinator of Urban Work by the Rt. Rev. Francis Eric Bloy, Bishop of Los Angeles, and appointed to head a special commission to deal with the problems of ministering to our metropolitan society."[212] The National Council of the Episcopalian Church was intent on studying the challenges facing their urban religious communities, and Los Angeles was one of the seven pilot dioceses. The appointment essentially ended Kouletsis's work as the head of PELA. According to Virginia Ram, long time parishioner at the church, Kouletsis wept when he received the news of his transfer. He was the first to open the doors of the Church of the

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[209] Wauters, *Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church*, 396.

[210] Earl Dittmar, January 6, 1963, in "Annual Meeting: Parish of East Los Angeles," Epiphany Records: 4.

[211] Berkson L. Holt, January 6, 1963, in "Annual Meeting, Parish of East Los Angeles," Epiphany Records: 2.

[212] *Episcopal Review*. April 1964. Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Archives.

Epiphany and to grease the wheels of PELA. Although the project was off to a slow start, Kouletsis had put important pieces in place.

Morris Samuel Jr. took over as the PELA director in January of 1965. Samuel Jr. had already been on staff since 1963 and had strong determination to work with the inner city poor, believing, like liberation theologians at the time, that the "Christian community, in its Biblical sense, could be and would be lived in the midst of God's poor people."[213] However, his tenure was also short lived. In his 1965 exit report, Samuel Jr. acknowledged the challenges of the job, specifically the integration of politics and faith. He loved working with the people but also stated that he was not equipped at dealing "with the legislature, both city and statewide, concerning policies that would affect the inner city in housing, etc.."[214] Before leaving, Morris left several recommendations for a new team ministry that he thought would be critical to the success of PELA. One important suggestion was to bring in a community member to be staff, someone that could bring to life the mission of the social and religious goals of PELA, otherwise, says Morris, "we are indeed, 'outside' agitators."[215] He offered two names, one of which was Virginia Ram (to be discussed later).

Another critical recommendation from Morris Jr. was to be deliberate about who would be his successor. The clergyman that would come next, suggested Morris Jr., must be equipped to engage in both the politics and faith of the community. Morris Jr. lamented that he was largely unable to fulfill the spiritual requirements of a priest. As PELA was getting off the ground, it was becoming clear that the proselytizing intentions of the project were not as urgent as the material

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[213] Morris V. Samuel, Jr., June 1965?, in "PELA - In Retrospect - September 1963 to June 1965," Epiphany Records, 1.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid., 3.

realities of the community. As such, Morris Jr.'s successor needed to be prepared to attack the needs of the community with all the resources available to them. The right person was so important to the success of PELA, Morris Jr. thought, that he recommended going without a full-time clergy until there was a right fit. However, shortly after Morris Jr. 's reassignment, Father John B. Luce arrived from New Jersey. His introduction to the Church of the Epiphany, to Los Angeles, and to the Chicana/o movement cannot be overstated. All the participants interviewed for this research suggest that there could not have been a more perfect person for the job.

Father Luce, The Fire Starter

In October of 1965, Father John B. Luce was tapped to lead the next phase of the Parish of East Los Angeles. His introduction to the Church of the Epiphany made a profound impact on the social and political realities of Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles that are still felt to this day. It is unclear why exactly Father Luce was called and who exactly called him, but both Bishop Bloy and Father Kouletsis knew of his social justice ministry in New Jersey and believed he was the right person for the job. Luce was a priest and an organizer, a strategist and an intellectual, a leader and a leadership developer, a mover and shaker, but most of all, Luce considered himself an organizer. Faith based movements promote clergy as organizers, and that is the way most Chicana/os remember him. Father Luce was what everyone needed him to be, whether it was a spiritual mentor, fundraiser, shield, or a political ally.

Father Luce was brought in to improve the relationship between the Church of the Epiphany and the Mexican American neighborhood. He was tasked with improving the conditions of the barrios and given free reign by Bishop Bloy to do whatever was needed. The results of his presence in East Los Angeles are immeasurable. Although he was only in Los

Angeles for eight years, to this day, the local neighborhood still refers to the Church of Epiphany as Father Luce's church. Almost all of the participants for this research stated that we would not have the Chicana/o movement we know of today if not for the role of Father Luce. Yet, his legacy is largely unknown outside of the Chicana/o activists whom he impacted so profoundly; he is absent in the Chicana/o scholarship, absent in Chicana/o history, yet so alive in the memories of the Chicana/o activists I interviewed. Ricardo Reyes, a Chicana/o artist who worked closely with Father Luce said, the biggest tragedy of the movement "is that Father Luce is not known, because we owe him so much."[216] His presence at the Church of the Epiphany is critical in understanding how the Chicana/o movement got on its feet.

John B. Luce was born in Boston Massachusetts in October of 1930. He came from a family of wealth and possessed many of the luxuries of east coast life, including property on Martha's Vineyard. He went to Harvard and developed a close relationship with Jim Morton, from the wealthy family that created Morton Salt. While there, Paul Moore, a progressive Episcopalian priest who marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma and is also widely known as the bishop who ordained Ellen Barret, the first openly gay priest in the Episcopal tradition, encouraged Luce and Morton to become priests. Moore carried a lot of weight and he mentioned to the young Luce and Morton, "the action is in the cities… you should go to seminary and come work with me in the cities."[217] Luce and Morton put aside their pursuits of secular higher education and followed Moore, attended seminary, and became priests baptized by the fires of the civil rights movement(s). Placed in New York, Luce was active in the Departments of Urban Work and Christian Social Relations, learning how to connect people to

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[216] Ricardo Reyes, interview by the author, Los Angeles. July 9, 2021.

[217] López, interview by the author.

the church and vice versa. It was also here that he gained his Spanish language chops as a youth minister in the diverse Chapel of the Intercession in New York City. Before coming to Epiphany he served congregations in New York City, Milwaukee, Wis., and Jersey City, N.J. Many of the Chicana/os interviewed remember Luce's above average Puerto Rican Spanish accent that he acquired while on the east coast. It was these early experiences that prepared Father Luce for his time in East Los Angeles.

As an organizer does, immediately upon arriving in Los Angeles, Luce sought out information about his new placement, wanting to find out what was really happening instead of relying on what was said in the newspapers. He went to the *Los Angeles Times* headquarters downtown and right next door was a bar called the Redwood Inn, a reporter's hangout. Luce recalled, "with the clerical collar I went and I sat at the bar and they thought it was so unusual, and immediately, all the reporters came up and spilled the beans, they told me who was doing what to who and why. This was my first education about Los Angeles."[218] The plight of Mexican Americans, educational inequalities, and police brutality were an obvious point that reporters shared with Luce. Additionally, he was told that there was a deep level of apathy from Mexican-Americans, and that "you couldn't get a Mexican-American anywhere to carry a sign."[219] Luce indeed noticed the lack of cultural awareness and pride in the neighborhood. These comments were substantiated by many of the Chicana/o activists. Carlos Montes, for example, stated, "Back then, young Chicanos were trying to be white. Girls would dye their hair blond. You

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[218] A collection of oral histories about the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles by Rocio Zamora, 2007, *A Cleansing Fire: The Rise of the Chicano Movement and the Church of the Epiphany,* Epiphany Records.

[219] Andrade, Manuel, "The History of '*La Raza'* Newspaper and Magazine, and its Role in the Chicano Movement" (MA thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 1979), 27.

know, I'm white, white is right. All that kind of stuff."[220] As such, one of Father Luce's first orders of business was to change the culture of what he had most access to, the church.

Father Luce made immediate and sweeping changes to the Church of the Epiphany so that it would better reflect the culture and ethnic identity of the Mexican American neighborhood. Wauters recalls that although Kouletsis had moved the needle, when Luce arrived, "the church was still primarily Anglo, and John said we're going to change. We're going to make a big change. We're going to make this a church with the doors open to the people of this barrio. And a significant number of people left, the Anglo people, the older Anglo people left."[221] Luce made good on his promise, decorating the church with *papel picado*, culturally relevant banners, commissioned Chicana/o artists to reimagine the Episcopalian art, began celebrating Dia de los Muertos, and erected a large portrait of La Virgen de Guadalupe by the main altar, an image not normally seen in Episcopalian Churches in the early 1960s. He hired local Chicana/o artists to reimagine the religious motifs, to paint their skin from pinkish to brown, to "change images to not make them look like white people."[222] Even the stationary materials were rebranded. Ricardo Reyes remembers Luce calling him into his office, asking him to create a new stationary look: "I want to have something that's more Chicano, Mexican, can you design it? So, if you look at anything with Epiphany, I did that when I was 18 years old."[223] In a 1970 newsletter, the church explained the significance of the religious and Aztec iconography; it symbolized "the deep hope of the Mexican descent person to participate fully in the benefits of society. The Cross is there too, in the midst, showing that it is Christ who breaks

[220] Wauters, *Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church*, 399.

[221] Wauters, interview by the author.

[222] Reyes, interview by the author.

[223] Ibid.

the bonds of dependence and subservience."[224] Luce's non-apologetic integration of faith and politics (faith politics) is immediately evident, recognizing self-determination as a material and spiritual duty.

Luce trusted and had faith in the work and vision of young Chicana/o artists to best represent their culture and aesthetics. None was more telling than when he commissioned Benny Luna, a respected community artist, to paint a large mural of the biblical story of the Epiphany that would be the centerpiece of the church. Luna created a beautiful cubist portrait of the Three Kings that Luce placed directly behind the altar, in full view of the congregation. This was a radical addition to a still largely white congregation. Luce was planting a symbolic flag, created by Luna, inside the church, to declare that things had changed, that the church was now responding to the needs and passions of the Mexican American community.

Luce also changed the soundscapes of the church. One example is his institution of mariachi Mass. In fact, the Church of the Epiphany may have been one of the first churches to play mariachi music in a Christian service in the United States. The following exchange between Father Luce and Natividad Cano, the director of Mariachi Los Camperos, expresses how radical such a move was. Cano was asked by Father Luce to play mariachi during a church service. Cano replied, "You're crazy Father, pardon me, but you can't do mariachi in the church." Luce responded by telling Natividad, "We can't, but you're going to."[225] Mariachi music soon became commonplace at Church of the Epiphany activities and the guitar replaced the organ as the soundtrack of the church. Johnson's spatial entitlement theory suggests that Luce understood the "power of popular music and of popular culture to envision and create new political

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[224] Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, September 1970, Epiphany Records.

[225] *Cleansing Fire*, Epiphany Records, 18.

possibilities."[226] Using art, music, and culture, Luce was putting a calling card out to the Mexican barrio that he was on their side. He stated in an interview, "We floated, in a sense, the organizational work to build Mexican American power on a sea of culture, including music and art, and that's what produced the identification. Once they saw that it was not only alright, but a positive thing, more and more people came."[227]

The sea of culture Father Luce implemented included culturally relevant and educational programming. Parents were well aware of the unequal and culturally deficient schooling their kids were receiving. With the help of Reyes, Father Wood (discussed later), Virginia Ram and other community members started Barrio Union for Scholastic Community Act (BUSCA), a project that dealt with the cultural aspects of the largely Mexican American community. BUSCA was organized to give young Chicana/os what they were not receiving from their institutional schooling, including cultural history, ethnic pride, and appreciation of their language. BUSCA's mission was published in the December 2, 1967, issue of *La Raza* newspaper:

> Barrio parents and their children can no longer wait on unfulfilled promises of programs to satisfy their needs and aspirations. They have decided to begin the search for their OWN answer to their problems. They have joined in a Union of parents, community people and other interested people; together they are laying the foundation of a community educational effort… Self-identity and pride will be enhanced through cultural activities. Culture and history[,] music and dance, art and theater will be part of BUSCA[228]

Before the Chicana/o arts and cultural renaissance was in full swing, the Church of the Epiphany was implementing important socio-cultural programming that included art, history, language,

[226] Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*, xiii.

[227] Luce, John B. Interview with Rocio Zamora.

[228] *La Raza* Newspaper, December 2, 1967, La Raza Publication Records.

and culture. In the early 1960s, Mexican American schooling was a system that largely funneled students towards assimilation and stripped them of much of their cultural capital. Angela Valenzuela states that many young Mexican and Mexican American students "'learn' perhaps no stronger lesson in school than to devalue the Spanish language, Mexico, Mexican culture, and things Mexican."[229] Father Luce, recognizing the cultural depreciation in this Mexican neighborhood, put significant effort into instilling ethnic pride as an important component to their political, social, and self-realization. Speaking on Luce's recognition of the importance of culture to a community, Wauters states, he "was brilliant at sort of seeing that long before other people saw that and that's what made Epiphany, you know, so great."[230] Father Luce transformed the Church of the Epiphany so that it could be an institution where the barrio could authentically see themselves and be themselves.

Leadership Development.

One of the principal goals of the Parish of East Los Angeles was to seek out indigenous leadership. Luce had a unique eye for identifying youth leaders and he brought them into the church, not to pray, but to organize. Moctesuma Esparza, one of the youngest organizers to work closely with Luce, stated, "He was incredibly strategic in picking people and training them to be organizers. I don't know of his failures, I can't think of his failures, because almost everyone that I can think of, that was hanging out with him, ended up being a significant player."[231] Luce was warm, inviting, and wanted you to get involved. He also had an amazing ability to access

[229] Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 19.

[230] Wauters, interview by the author.

[231] Moctesuma Esparza, interview by the author.

funding to financially supplement youth's community involvement, for which the church was a base. Many of the interviewees for this research state that much of their time at Epiphany was because Father Luce was able to get them a job or to fund projects. For example, young Chicano artist Ricardo Reyes, who studied under Sister Corita Kent, a famous artist who would integrate her faith with social justice, recalls asking Father Luce for a job. Luce immediately hired the young artist as a secretary at the church, under one condition, that he start an after-school arts program for kids. PELA's Easter newsletter read, "Mr. Ricardo Reyes now becomes our full-time man in the office. He is taking courses in the evening in UCLA Extension (Emiliano Zapata Center), and comes to us during the day. He has begun an afternoon art class for the children of the neighborhood, which has been an initial great success."[232] As a religious institution, Luce and Epiphany had access to war on poverty funds that were coming down from the Johnson administration. As such, those monies were used to invite youth into the church and begin learning how to organize.

The mentorship of David Sánchez, the founder of the Brown Berets, is another poignant example of the kind of youth development that Father Luce was providing to Chicana/o youth. In the summer of 1966, a young Sanchez was also looking for a summer job. After several failed attempts, he heard there was an activist priest at the Church of the Epiphany. He went to the church and was immediately offered a job as a summer counselor. Luce quickly recognized the leadership of Sánchez and took him under his wing, dedicating significant amounts of time and showing him the ins and outs of organizing. Sánchez remembers meeting Luce for the first time, and through his memory, we can see the profound caring and mentorship that Luce showed him. Sánchez shared,

[232] Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, Easter 1970, Epiphany Records.

> Father Luce, Episcopal priest, said, 'Well, you want to work as a counselor?' I says, yeah. So he hired me and David [could not remember last name] to be summer counselors, plus we would go to summer camps and take care of the kids during the summertime. He also gave us a house where we could live at, part of the rectory. They had several houses, so it was almost like an internship. We also partly lived there, but also we worked with the students and the kids. But while I was there—I was only like fifteen years old—Father Luce gave me two books. One book he gave me was *Gracian's Manual*, which is the art of truth-telling. This is an old book written by Balthazar Gracián in 1600, and I really loved that book. I mean, it was a really, really great book. It's called *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*. And he gave me another book called *The True Believer* by Eric Hoffer, which talked about organizing and the power of organizations, and I read that book also.[233]

Luce genuinely cared for the positive development of youth during a tumultuous time and place. Sánchez mentions that he had already tried other spaces, yet, it was Luce that took him in. His willingness and capacity to provide housing, space, and employment to many Chicana/os served as a bridge to the church. Here was a religious figure supporting the material circumstances and social situation of a young Chicano whom he had never met, introducing him to literature of organizing and truth-telling, offering a place to live, and taking the time to mentor him.

Father Luce developed a close working relationship with Sánchez, who in turn learned a lot about organizing and how to access funds that were being dispersed through Lyndon Johnson's anti-poverty programs. Sánchez shared how Luce "would sit down and would talk to us, and talk to me about Jiu Jitsu power and community power, so I started learning about community power, political power, organizing power."[234] In Sánchez's time at the church, he helped to organize and became vice president of the Young Citizens for Community Action, which eventually became the Brown Berets, the militant arm of the Chicana/o movement (discussed more in the following chapter).

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[233] David Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino for the Center of Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles, November 26, 2012.

[234] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

Sánchez's account is not dissimilar to other Chicana/os that encountered Father Luce for the first time. It is easy to understand how those who were raised religiously conservative were drawn to Father Luce; he was a priest, recited Mass, and participated in the traditional holy activities expected of him, including weddings and baptisms. However, Luce was unlike the priests that Mexican American youth had grown up with, of which many had grown tired. Paula Crisostomo, a prominent organizer of the high school walkouts, stated, "Catholic priests were standoffish and thought they were God."[235] Victoria Castro also stated the unique connections with Father Luce at Epiphany: "I never had that relationship with a priest, I never had that relationship with a nun, where you just sit, chit chat, and have coffee, [Father Luce would come and warmly ask] 'what are you doing, what are you guys doing?' this and that, I never had that environment, and we had that."[236] These positive experiences with Father Luce at the Church of the Epiphany caused many of these young Chicana/o Catholics to question their own religious institution. *Catolicós por la Raza*, for example, was an organization created to challenge and pressure the Catholic Church to become more involved with their community. They confronted the church, stating, "We are not demanding Church money. We are demanding that the Catholic Church be Christian. For, you see, if it is Christian, it cannot in conscience retain its fabulous wealth while Chicanos have to dance, beg, plead and steal for better housing, education, legal defense and other Chicano goals which you know so well."[237] These Chicana/o youth remembered their conservative religious upbringing and juxtaposed that with what they were experiencing at the Church of the Epiphany; these were experiences that they could never have

[235] Paula Crisostomo, interview by the author, Los Angeles, August, 19, 2020.

[236] Victoria Castro, interview by author, Los Angeles, August 27, 2020.

[237] Richard Cruz, "The Church: The Model of Hypocrisy," in *Chicano Liberation Theology,* ed. by Mario García (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2009),.27.

had with the Roman Catholic Church or with their Catholic priests. On the surface, Luce was a traditional priest, but he was different, he was integrating a faith politic, from the way he practiced his faith, gave sermons, supported and mentored youth, and his general care for the community. Two diverse interviewees give a telling account of the kind of broad affection that Luce received from Chicana/o youth.

The first is Lydia López, who was by far the most religious of the group interviewed. López was raised a conservative Baptist but stepped away from the church when she got older, a common theme amongst the interviewees. However, unlike the rest of the group, she felt and communicated a spiritual void while away from her faith. In the Baptist tradition, she shared, they went to summer camp, winter camp, vigorously studied the bible, and attended church much more often than Catholics. She felt the guilt of not doing any of these for several years as she got older. At the same time, she remembered feeling uneasy about the contradictions from her conservative church: "When I was growing up, we would send money to Africa, to the missionaries, pay for them to live there, but when the first Black family moves into Whittier, our pastor goes ballistic."[238] Lydia noticed a disconnect between the religion and the daily social and political realities of her life and community. Sending money to international faith-based organizations to support the poor in Africa was seen as religiously acceptable, but supporting Black people in their backyards was not. These religious contradictions were important memories to Lydia because of their stark contrast to what she experienced at the Church of the Epiphany and the faith politics of Father Luce.

López first met Luce on a picket line, protesting the 13 Chicana/os arrested for their role in the famous high school Blowouts of East Los Angeles. She was surprised to see priests there

[238] López, interview by the author.

and was further stunned to find out that they were not there to proselytize. After speaking to them, she learned that they were there because they really cared about education. This was a profound moment for this young Chicana. Far from the religious culture she was raised with, she was witnessing the intersection of faith and politics in real time. After the protest, López was invited to a party at the Church of the Epiphany by the late Juan Gómez-Quiñones, one of the few Mexican Americans studying at UCLA. López remembers the emotionally overwhelming moment she was introduced to the church:

> I was kind of lost, my faith was somewhere, it was not being practiced, I wasn't doing anything with it, I was living for me, so when, um… I get to Epiphany, and they have the church decorated with *papel picado,* with posters that say Cristo Rey, and the church was decorated like you would decorate a doll for a party, it was beautiful, and the altar was decorated and there was a mariachi, and I went in and I sat down near the back and I said 'wow isn't this beautiful.' And so then the Mass, the ceremony starts, and what happens is that I start to cry. I just needed a place as a Christian, I needed a place as a Chicana, to call home. I was so out of it, so this place became my home for the next 50 years.

The church's warmth and cultural appreciation triggered the deep spiritual capital of López, reminding her of the importance of her religious practice when she was young (Figure 3.1). López's first encounter at the Church of the Epiphany is a prime example of how they gained the respect and solidarity from the community, by authentically representing them. While the cultural front of the church brought López in, it was the religious leadership and faith politics of Father Luce and the ethos of a church so dedicated to truly loving thy neighbor that converted her into the Episcopalian faith for over half a century. López's dedication to the Church of the Epiphany and her work to include Latina/o ministry in the larger Episcopalian church for the next 50 years is another study waiting to be written.

Figure 3.1. 1968 photo of altar at the Church of the Epiphany in Los Angeles. Church of the Epiphany Records, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

In contrast to López's experience, there were those who did not have strong religious upbringings, or their experience with religion was far from positive. Carlos Montes is one of them. Montes was an early member of the Brown Berets, the militant arm of the Chicana/o movement modeled after the Black Panthers. Of the radical Brown Berets, Montes was seen as the most radical, the "firecracker," the unpredictable one, and one who exemplified the oppositional character of the organization. Montes stated of the Brown Beret mentality at the time, "Nobody told us what to do or how to do it…We were anti-bureaucratic, I remember one of the things about the Brown Berets, anybody that had a shirt with pencils in it, we are anti, we called them 'Bureos'... We were anti-intellectual too, anybody that wore glasses or talked like a professor or teacher, we used to say, [scornfully] you're an *intellectuo*."[239] The Brown Berets

[239] Carlos Montes, interview by the author, Los Angeles, October 8, 2020.

were serious about their opposition to authority, and as Montes shared, he embodied that image. He shared a story about how the Berets rejected and ran out a Chicano professional from their organizing space because he was seen as too "*intellectuo,*" an important distinction to this poor working-class militant organization. The context of the Brown Berets' attitude towards authority is important because there was an exception to the rule, the deep respect he, and the Brown Berets, had for Father Luce.

I pressed Montes on the inconsistency of having such a strong oppositional attitude towards Chicana/o intellectuals, while at the same time supporting a white priest. He laughed loudly and stated as he looked out the window pensively, "I know, I know," as if he sensed the contradiction. By his own definition, and by that of the Brown Berets, Luce was the antithesis of who the militant Brown Berets were about; again, Luce was white, from a wealthy family, Ivy league graduate, and head of a traditionally conservative institution. However, Montes's response is telling of the kind of respect that Father Luce earned from Chicana/os.

> You're right, Father Luce though, I mean, I met him when I interviewed [again, for a job], when I got the job, he was supportive, so to me, he was an ok figure, and then later on when he supported the Piranya coffee house, he was around, he was always around supporting us, but he never, or no one ever came [and said] 'look, this is Father Luce, he's doing this', nobody ever tried to pump him up, he never tried to pump himself up. He never went out and gave a speech or he never told people what to do. I think he was kind of like a coach, supporting.[240]

As anti-establishment as Montes and the Brown Berets were, they had a lot of love and respect for Luce. They recognized his humility, support, and never felt that Luce was trying to tell them what to do. Montes remembers Luce for giving Chicana/os a space to do what they needed for their own liberation, and he "felt confident that he was there, you know. And then, so then I started going to the church basement" more often. Montes is describing the social meaning

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[240] Ibid.

behind the space that Johnson theorized in spatial entitlement. Johnson states that communities need more than space to survive; Luce cultivated an environment where Chicana/o youth and families felt respected, nurtured, and confident. These were values that were absent in all other institutions they participated in, even in religious institutions. Like Montes stated, it was the trust and solidarity that he felt with Luce that encouraged him to return to the church, and it was at the church where Montes would eventually meet David Sánchez and found the Brown Berets, who are still active to this day.

Luce's warmth and faith politics allowed for young Chicana/os, from the most militant to the more conservative, to embrace the Church of the Epiphany and its activities. Montes, while rejecting authority figures, respected and felt comfortable around Luce, who became an ally to the militant organization. Luce proved he was behind their cause when he got arrested at the Los Angeles School Board of Education sit-in for the 13 Chicana/os who were indicted for their role in the walkouts. Luce supported the self determination of Chicana/os; he did what he could to show that he was behind them and he did not insert himself, as a priest, authority figure, or even as a mentor, unless called upon. He was there when he was needed and stood by when not; for these militant Chicana/os, Luce was their guy. Montes shared one last intimate story of when he was forced to go into exile for seven years for an arson he did not commit. As Montes and his girlfriend were coming to terms with going into hiding as the only option, they decided to get married before he left. Who did they call to come over to marry them? Father Luce, who was honored to master the ceremony.

Preach the Gospel at all Times

As seen earlier in the chapter, one of the principal goals of PELA was to grow their Episcopalian flock. While Luce was indeed honored to play the religious role he embodied, he largely ignored the proselytizing aims of PELA. All the interviewees shared that Luce did not proselytize to them or encourage them to attend Mass. This went against the principle aims of the PELA strategy. However, viewed in another way, through his religious leadership and faith politics, Luce seamlessly and radically integrated the areas of the spiritual and political. Indeed, Luce had two distinct hats, a priest and an organizer. Yet, he would not take off his priest cap to shift to an organizer or vice versa. He was a priest on the picket line as much as in the church, and he was organizing when he was in the church as much as when he was on the streets. Luce played a unique role in that he embodied a religious praxis outside the confines of the church even more so than within it; the barrio was his congregation and his organizing was his sermon.

There is a popular saying by St. Francis of Assisi that is fitting of Father Luce's mentorship, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words." Without exception, all the participants shared that Father Luce did not push or even discuss religion or the Episcopalian faith, unless they inquired themselves. This is something the participants expressed that added to the respect they had for Father Luce. Victoria Castro, one of the principal figures in the Chicana/o walkouts and the first president of the Young Citizens for Community Action, said that neither Luce, nor anyone at the church, was dominant in their mentorship from a religious standpoint, and neither were they aggressive in their political mentorship. Castro affirms that at the Church of the Epiphany, she didn't "see them as overpowering or trying to politicize me, I think [it was] more by example of being involved in the community."[241] Luis Garza, photographer for *La Raza* newspaper, also shared his understanding of Luce's praxis: "He wasn't

[241] V. Castro, interview by author.

trying to convince you to come join the Episcopalian church, but you had Catholics that would come into the Episcopalian church because of the fact that they were as open as they were and as supportive as they were. If you converted it wasn't because he was telling you to convert, he was providing proof of what he was preaching."[242] Father Luce showed the Chicana/o youth what his faith meant, what it meant to love thy neighbor, to support them, and be with them, both in the church and on the picket line.

One reason Father Luce became so close to the community was because he did not drive. Community members were honored to be able to provide a ride to a priest and Luce would often use these important moments to organize. Also, because he didn't drive, Luce was always walking the streets and was highly visible. Crisostomo remembers taking the bus down North Broadway to work at the Music Center downtown: "There was a hamburger stand called Dino's, it was a place where all the kids hung out after school… I would see Father Luce there standing or sitting there with cholos, smoking, he'd buy them hamburgers and they'd talk."[243] Wauters shared a similar story about Luce walking the neighborhood: "some guy was fixing his car and John stuck his head in there and he's looking around, John didn't know anything about cars, but he just, you know, [making a motion of putting his head forward] sticking his head in."[244] According to Wauters, that man later came over to the church and mentioned it was the first time a priest had ever helped him, much less helped with the car. This was the image that people had of Father Luce -- he was a hands-on, active priest, engaged in the community, talking to the neighbors, helping with their cars, even if he couldn't drive one himself.

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[242] Luis Garza, interview by author, Los Angeles, September 11, 2020.

[243] Crisostomo, interview by the author.

[244] Wauters, interview by the author.

Crisostomo shared another memorable conversation with Luce. One day, she asked him what the difference was between Episcopalians and Catholics. Luce responded, "Catholics wait for you to come to them, we go to the people."[245] While Luce was quick to generalize all Episcopalians as having this same quality, there is no question that he was different, unique, and what the community needed at this important moment in history. Moctesuma Esparza has called him the most egalitarian person he has ever met because of the fact that "this guy was there for us, it was his actions that completely won us over, I never had any doubts about his commitment, his authenticity, and his willingness to take risks."[246] In such a short amount of time, Father Luce earned the respect and trust from the community, from Chicana/os and their families. He facilitated a space for them to communicate, build solidarity, and organize.

Virginia Ram, La Madrina

Indeed, Father Luce made an immediate impact when he arrived in 1965, yet, he could not have been as successful without the tireless work, dedication, and presence of Virginia Ram. The successful transition of PELA from Kouletsis to Luce was made possible by Ram's presence and support. Ram was born in Nogales, Mexico, and came to Los Angeles via Arizona. She had been a member of the Church of the Epiphany since the late 1940's, when the congregation was still largely white and wealthy. Coming from Arizona, Ram was no stranger to racism; she remembers getting disciplined for speaking Spanish in school, she recalled, "you had to place your nose against a blackboard, as high as possible, and stand on your toes for about a half an hour."[247] These memories were triggered when attending the Church of the Epiphany for the first

[245] Crisostomo, interview by the author.

[246] Esparza, interview by the author.

time. Her early days at the church, she stated, were full of microaggressions, admitting that she had to endure a lot of racism from a congregation unwilling to acknowledge the problems and inequalities outside their doorsteps. Yet, she endured.

The more time Ram spent at the church, the more she voiced her concerns. One Sunday, running late to Mass, she arrived to find the gates locked, impossible to enter. Upset, Ram wrote a letter to Bishop Bloy at the diocese, "Why, *Señor Obispo*, is God locked up in our church every Sunday while the Mass is being celebrated?... The people living in the Mexican barrio around the church are also the children of God."[248] According to Ram, after several attempts to reach him, the bishop finally responded, asking her to give him six months to see what he could do. According to Ram, within those six months, the bishop sent Father Kouletsis, who was followed by Father Luce.

When PELA was being formed, Ram was named by Samuel Morris Jr. as a person in the community that should be hired to reach the ambitious goals of the ministry, otherwise they would remain "outsiders." In 1965, Ram was officially brought onto the team and served the Church of the Epiphany until the day she died (Figure 3.2). When hired, she was already *la madrina* of the Church, supporting the youth and families, heading the kitchen, youth programs, and bible studies. Rosalio Muñoz, who would later be the chair of the Chicana/o Moratorium committee, remembers Ram as his Boy Scouts leader. When Luce arrived in October of 1965, Ram would be his most important partner.

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[247] Undated manuscript by Dabney H. Narváez, *A Woman's Faith*, Epiphany Records, 2.

[248] Ibid., 9.

Figure 3.2. Undated self portrait of Virginia Ram. Church of the Epiphany Records, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Ram was a bridge between the white priests and Mexican Americans, the church and the community, Episcopalians and Catholics. Because the new priests were white and Episcopalian, they needed someone that was trusted by the Mexican and largely Catholic families in the neighborhood. Ram's warmth and presence provided a sense of security to the Mexican community, who, over time, trusted the priests. As could be expected, when Father Luce first arrived, the community did not exactly confide in him. Ram was incredibly important in validating Luce because everyone already knew her as an active community member. Crisostomo shared an instance, "Even my *comadre* to this day remembers her parents were so strict that she couldn't go anywhere except to Teen Post, because it was at a church, didn't matter that it wasn't a Catholic Church, we were all Catholic, but it was still at a Church, *and*

because of Mrs. Ram."[249] The bridge that Ram served as was especially important during the high school walkouts and United Farm Worker organizing when the church was gaining a reputation as a place that houses and supports radical activity, often at odds with the conservative Mexican parents. For example, a 1967 *Lincoln Heights Bulletin-News* article details the events that transpired when the police chief Tom Reddin was invited to the Church of the Epiphany for a community accountability meeting. The "Unruly meeting ends with fire outside church," read the article.[250] As the youth became more involved and radicalized at the church, the conflict from Mexican parents was eased because of the presence of Ram, who the community knew cared for the youth.

Virginia Ram's own faith politics was exhibited in her role in the development of the Barrio Union Scholastic for Community Action (BUSCA). BUSCA was a social, political, and spiritual program that Ram helped get off the ground. Recognizing the lack of cultural and meaningful schooling that Mexican youth were receiving, including the devaluing of their language and traditions, the Church of the Epiphany began their own cultural programming. The creation of BUSCA shows that barrio parents were not passive in their children's education, but did not feel that schools respected their cultural capital. Ram stated of BUSCA,

> [it] had to do with our idea of a constant *busca* (search) for our own culture and roots. Hispanic mothers would complain to us because their children were punished by the teachers for speaking Spanish at school. These mothers would tell us that those teachers used to say that their children were stupid, that they had no capacity for learning, and they would have to attend a special school.[251]

[249] Crisostomo, interview by the author.

[250] Lincoln Heights Bulletin-News, 1967, "Unruly Meeting Ends with Fire Outside Church," Epiphany Records.

[251] Narváez, *A Woman's Faith,* Epiphany Records, 14.

The flyers soliciting community participation for BUSCA were passed out in the church and later advertised in the local underground Chicana/o newspapers. The flyers were as radical as the programs they were promoting, asking, "Why is there a 40% to 50% chance my child will not graduate from high school? Why is there a chance my child will be among the lowest in the nation in reading ability?"[252] BUSCA argued that traditional educational institutions were not functioning for Mexican Americans and that the community could no longer wait for anyone else to educate the youth, no matter how qualified; it must come from the community itself. The critique from the Episcopalian women is an important tenet of faith-based political movements, which states, "only the poor and oppressed can change conditions for themselves."[253] The educational programming of BUSCA included reading and writing, self-identity and pride, culture and history, music and dance, art and theater. These are all common cultural programs so prominent in large ethnic communities today, however, in the late 1960s, when Mexican Americans were punished for speaking Spanish, respecting the social and cultural identities of Mexican and Mexican American families was a radical idea. BUSCA was planting seeds of *conscientización*[254] in the Mexican barrio; it allowed for parents and youth to congregate at a safe space, to talk, and to organize. It allowed them a space to be critical of their children's schooling and enact positive cultural programs. Where much of Chicana/o history has highlighted the *conscientización* of Mexican-American youth, the BUSCA programming at the Church of the Epiphany provides an alternative lens to examine how families also became politicized alongside their children.

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[252] Undated Brochure for BUSCA, "BUSCA Answers!," Epiphany Records.

[253] García, *Father Luis Olivares,* 10.

[254] *Concientización* is a process of developing or raising one's consciousness or political awareness and the willingness to engage in action to change social injustice. See Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. 2006).

BUSCA was an early program that shows the radical and transformational intention of the Church of the Epiphany. Ram states that one of the most impactful components of BUSCA was the integration of politics and faith. She states that "the church reached out to meet the kids of the neighborhood. We reached out as Christians to affirm the goodness of God in creating kids who they are. They were not created Anglo. They were created Mexican and American, and we needed to address their unique needs."[255] BUSCA was born before the Chicana/o movement activity had begun to heat up. Although it is not clear exactly when it started, its first mention is in *La Raza* newspaper on December 2, 1967. The social and cultural work of BUSCA could be seen as another early spark of the consciousness raising that was happening on Los Angeles's eastside. BUSCA critiqued a school system that largely privileged the dominant white culture at the expense of Mexicans. In a December 1969 PELA newsletter, it stated, "It is now everywhere admitted by open and informed persons that the Mexican-American child is not innately a slow learner of low potential… He has often seemed to be only because the public schools have cruelly crippled him and then discarded him. Or, because the school system has classified him as a mental deficient on the basis of Anglo-style IQ tests."[256] For BUSCA, they believed a culturally relevant education mattered and implemented programming that reflected the racial and ethnic identities of the neighborhood. In fact, many of the demands of the high school Blowout were being implemented and practiced in BUSCA. Community control is one example. As part of its leadership structure, BUSCA created a board of directors where "the parents of the children participating in our programs came to make up half the members in the Board."[257]

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[255] Undated presentation by Virginia Ram, "Hispanic Presentation," Epiphany Records.

[256] Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, December 1969, Epiphany Records.

[257] Narváez, *A Woman's Faith*, Epiphany Records, 14-15.

While the early programming was held at the Church of the Epiphany, it quickly outgrew it. Arrangements were made to move the headquarters over to St. Bartholomew's in El Sereno, another one of the parishes in PELA.

Ram and Chicana/o Youth

The Chicana/o youth that became involved at the Church of the Epiphany looked highly upon the work of Virginia Ram and in interviews, reflected on the critical role she played. Before Father Luce arrived, she criticized a church that would lock its doors as the Mass was taking place. She took action by writing to the bishop and making a racial critique about the role of the church in reaching out to its Mexican American community. When Bishop Bloy imagined a new ministry at the Church of the Epiphany, he envisioned a church whose doors would be literally and ethnically open to its barrio throughout the week. Ram would play a large part of that opening. She was technically the programs director, however, she became the face of Epiphany, and of the national Hispanic Episcopal ministry for the next 30 years. Ricardo Reyes remembers her as a saint, wanting to cry when I asked him to share more about her. Moctesuma Esparza stated, "She was the workhorse that kept that place operating."[258]

Fran Gómez remembers coming to the church when she was getting a divorce from her husband. Gómez had six kids; they were poor, and in dire need of support. She remembers how much Ram helped her to get vouchers and money for food and clothing. Ram was entirely the church, says Wauters; she was not front and center with the political stuff, but without Ram, "there would not have been all that political stuff."[259] Through the lens of faith politics, social

[258] Esparza, interview by the author.

[259] Wauters, interview by the author.

movements are supported not only by sympathetic clergy, but by the laity. Ram, with her own experiences of racism in her youth and witnessing the discrimination from the wealthy congregation inspired her to appreciate the need for a social, political, and cultural shift that was taking place at her church.

Ram had her hands in all areas of the church. Driving the church's van made her well known in the barrios; she was either driving Luce around or picking up youth and families for the various programs. Ram was also an organizer. For any big event, she would gather the other women, get *masa*, make pots of beans, and host a *tamalada* on the fly. Lydia López remembers her as a "*mandona,"* fierce, motivated, and the Epiphany women loved her. Virginia, along with Nancy Von Lauderbach, were also the interior decorators of the church, largely responsible for transforming the cultural aesthetic of Epiphany into a welcoming environment for the Mexican American community. Epiphany was known to host many fiestas. For any small baptism or wedding, Luce would want to make it into a big event so they could get more people to recognize the church as a community center. As such, Ram and the other women were always busy cooking, decorating, and cleaning. Whatever needed to be done, Ram was there. Montes remembers, "When we had something to do and Father Luce was not around, or not there, talk to Virginia, you need something, talk to Virginia, get the church open… Virginia was always there in the office, helping us out, you know."[260]

Ram also has a hand in the founding of the Brown Berets. According to a 1986 interview, Ram gave Sánchez, the founder of the Brown Berets, his first beret, albeit a blue one. Ram was managing the church donations and would disperse clothes to needy families or through a rummage sale. A young Sánchez was requesting some clothes from a recent donation. Ram

[260] Montes, interview by the author.

grabbed a beret and said, “Here, I’ll give you that.”[261] Sánchez liked sporting the beret, however, the blue one did not feel right, so he went downtown to find a brown one. The brown beret would later come to signify the most militant Chicana/o organization during the movement.

Executive Committee

Virginia Ram’s tireless work at the Church of the Epiphany did not go unnoticed. She became known across Episcopalian and Roman Catholic communities in the greater Los Angeles area. In 1968, Ram and Father Luce received a letter from Tom Anthony, an officer of the National Episcopalian Church to attend a meeting in Austin, Texas where they would discuss the implementation of a Hispanic coalition. Together with a Puerto Rican group, the plan was to send a Hispanic congregation to the General Convention and motion for the creation of a National Hispanic Coalition. Initially denied the funds at the General Convention, Ram, who represented the coalition, appeared before the program and budget committee to ask for the funding needed to establish the formal commission. According to Ram, someone spoke out against the proposal. In response, she stood up and said, “That is enough,’ and immediately I began to speak on the great meaning for the Church of Hispanic ministry. After this talk, we were able to get the funds, and this marked the beginning of the National Hispanic Commission.”[262] In the face of some resistance, the national Episcopalian hierarchy would have to contend with the rising Latina/o voice and presence in the church and Virginia Ram would find herself at the center.

[261] Zamora, *Cleansing Fire*, 2007, Epiphany Records.

[262] Ram, Virginia, in Narváez, *A Woman’s Faith*, Epiphany Records, 9.

The Church of the Epiphany came to represent one of the most active Episcopal churches in the country. As such, Ram, whose role in the church was so evident, was nominated to the Executive Council of the national Episcopalian church. She served on numerous committees, including the Diocesan Urban and Special Ministries Program Group, the board of COMMIT, an ecumenically funded, urban action and training program; she represented Bishop Rusack on the LA Council of Churches, and she served on the Diocesan Department of Missions. The Rev. Canon Nicholas Kouletsis and F. Reus-Froylan, Bishop of Puerto Rico, wrote a formal nomination to the General Convention on behalf of Ram, stating, "Virginia's entire life in the Mexican community and her eleven years as Program Director in the Parish of East Los Angeles give her an intimate understanding of barrio people and the dynamics of underemployment and minimum political representation."[263] Ram, coming from a humble background, through her dedication to the Church of the Epiphany managed to reach one of the highest levels of the national Episcopalian church, continuing to represent the unique needs of Latina/os. In 1982, at the conclusion of her six-year tenure on the Executive Council, Ram stated, "The real ministry takes place at home base. That's the rock on which our Lord said He would build His church. My goal was to bring the beauty of Hispanic people to the church, and the beauty of the church to Hispanic people. I feel good that is happening."[264]

Virginia Ram was well respected because of her faith politics and religious leadership. Her strong commitment to the community, to social justice, and to her faith were nationally recognized. By overlooking the role of the Church of the Epiphany in the Chicana/o movement, we not only miss the role that religion, spirituality, or the church played in Chicana/o self-

[263] Nicholas Kouletsis and Reus-Froylan, F., recommendation of Virginia Ram for Executive Council, Epiphany Records.

[264] Virginia Ram, quoted in *Episcopal Review*, 1982, Epiphany Records.

determination, but we also omit the critical role of community members, especially of women, that are often left out of male dominated historiographies of the Chicana/o movement and of religious history. Dolores Delgado Bernal's reconceptualizes grassroots leadership during the 1960s high school Blowouts, suggesting that in identifying leaders of movements, "You cannot separate the task of organizing from leading."[265] Similarly, applying a faith politics lens to the Chicana/o movement highlights "how women offered leadership and how that leadership, while different in form and substance from traditional interpretations, was meaningful and essential."[266] Delgado Bernal suggests a paradigm shift in the way that we view and understand leadership. As such, the paradigm shift must be applied to the faith politics and leadership of Virginia Ram.

A closer examination of how the Church of the Epiphany became an important site of social justice activism during the Chicana/o movement allows us to see unsung heroes like Virginia Ram. Her impact on the Church of the Epiphany, the Episcopal Church, and the Chicana/o movement may fall well under the radar in the larger historical narrative, but all the interviewees named her as a critically important figure bridging the church and the community. The support and warmth she provided gave much credibility to the church during the tumultuous time of the early 1960s and it was felt by the Chicana/o youth, their parents, and the church community at-large. As demographic shifts were occurring in East Los Angeles and the church was undergoing its own identity crisis, Ram served as an invaluable leader to the priests and community. She continued to serve at the Church of the Epiphany until her dying days in 1988. At her funeral, the Reverend William Leeson stated of "*La Madrina,*" "Jesus Christ knocked on

[265] Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized," in *Frontiers,* 19, No. 2 (1998): 123.

[266] Ibid., 114.

the door of this parish many times, and Virginia let him in. She never had any trouble recognizing her Lord and Savior in the least of her brothers and sisters, and she worshiped him."[267] A plaque is dedicated to her life in the rear of the vestry.

Father Wood and Father Garver

Father Roger Wood and Father Oliver B. Garver round out the Church of the Epiphany's principal leadership in the late 1960s. Both Father Wood and Father Garver were brought on in 1966 to support Luce, Ram, and PELA. The additions of Wood and Garver further speak to the kind of investment that Bishop Bloy and the Episcopal church were willing to put into this largely Mexican urban area. Wood and Garver also played critical roles at the Church of the Epiphany and in the national church as well. Like Father Luce, Wood and Garver also came from wealth, graduated from well-respected universities, Stanford and the University of California, Los Angeles, respectively, and were regarded highly from their own perspective communities. Father Woods's family, for example, donated the land on which his home church in Pasadena, California sits on.[268] Nonetheless, all three priests answered the call to see what they could do about the new ministerial experiment in the East Los Angeles barrio. Led by Luce, oftentimes reluctantly, Wood and Garver were seen as strong supportive figures that implemented Luce's vision and direction.

Roger Wood was born in Pasadena, California, only several miles from Epiphany. Coming from a family of legacy, he followed along that tradition, receiving his Bachelors and Law degrees at Stanford University in 1948 and 1952. Yet, after all his successes, even at the

[267] William Leeson, July 1988, in *The Episcopal News*, Epiphany Records.

[268] Janet Kawamoto, Obituary, "The Reverend Canon Roger Wood," Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, accessed May 19, 2022, https://diocesela.org/obituaries/roger-wood/

opposition of his father, Wood decided to go to seminary and was ordained on Dec. 21, 1957. He was commissioned to serve at Epiphany in 1966, shortly after Luce arrived. Before coming back to Los Angeles, Wood was ministering in Provo, Utah, where racist sundown laws[269] were still in place and there was no meaningful Mexican American presence in the county. He watched in awe as his clergy friends were involved in social justice movements occurring in the south. Looking to get involved, Father Wood was informed by Bob Cornellius that there was a priest at the Church of the Epiphany that was looking for people. Jumping at the chance, Wood communicated back and forth with Father Luce before making the decision to move.

Father Wood shared that he didn't know what he was getting himself into. He was shocked at what Epiphany was attempting to do but recognized the necessity for it. The injustices, he stated, were just so enormous. Yet, Wood did not consider himself an innovator or motivator but was in awe of what Father Luce was able to do. Of all the political happenings, Father Wood stated, "in many ways I was on the edge of that, because John Luce was on the front of it, and someone had to mind the shop, run things: have confirmation classes, the bread and butter stuff."[270] Yet, Wood did more than stay on the sidelines. His law degree and legal services made him useful in many areas of the movement, active in the American Civil Liberties Union and with the farm workers. Eliezar Risco, founder of *La Raza* newspaper, stated, Wood "was a big help in that way because a lot of people at that time, we used lawyers like they were paper towels."[271] The legal expertise of Father Wood was an important resource for Chicana/os; he even set up a booth to report police malpractice so that Chicana/os had an avenue to document

[269] According to James Loewen, a "sundown town is any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept African Americans or other groups from living in it and was thus 'all white' on purpose." See James Loewen, *Sundown Towns* (New York: New York Press, 2018), 4.

[270] Roger Wood, interview with Rocio Zamora.

[271] Eliezer Risco, interview with Zamora. Translated by the author, 2020.

their negative experiences with law enforcement. After Father Luce's tenure at the Church of the Epiphany ended in 1973, Wood continued on as rector until his own retirement in 1982. He played a large role in the United Neighborhood Organization, an interdenominational multi-issue organization to improve the social economic issues facing East Los Angeles residents throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Father Oliver Garver was born in Hollywood, California in 1925. After graduating from Los Angeles High, he attended UCLA in 1945 and graduated from Harvard with a Masters in Business Administration in 1948. After a decade-long stint as a cost accounting manager, Garver went on to Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge Massachusetts and was ordained a priest in 1963 at St. Alban's Church in Westwood. A die-hard Bruin and sports connoisseur, "Garver particularly enjoyed his pastoral relationship as chaplain to athletic teams at his alma mater, UCLA, and at Harvard-Westlake and Campbell Hall School, where he was a fixture on the sidelines of scores of home games and their respective league, state and national championships of all sports, both men's and women's teams."[272] Yet, between the years 1966 and 1973, he was fully dedicated to the Parish of East Los Angeles. Garver managed the books of the church, the finances, and served as Father Luce's main driver.

Garver and Wood were both passionately dedicated to the poor (see figure. In 1965, Garver gave a passionate sermon at the Lent Mass for St. Alban's church, located within a wealthier suburb of Los Angeles. He stated, a Christian "must <u>indeed</u>, enlist himself, enthusiastically, in the furtherance of this movement. The Christian, in Christ's name, must join in this assault on the barriers of segregation and exclusion. In this Revolution, we must choose sides" [original emphasis].[273] Similarly, Wood, in an opinion piece in the *Episcopal News*,

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[272] *Episcopal News*, July/August 1996, Epiphany Records.

discussed a schism between two biblical pillars of the Christian faith, Saints Peter and Paul. That disagreement was whether or not Christians should be circumcised. Wood noted that they had agreed to disagree, but what they did not, could not, disagree on, was whether or not a Christian should be for the poor. Wood argued that "concern for the poor is something worth having a fight about – even to and beyond the point of schism."[274] The transformation of The Church of the Epiphany during this time indeed created rifts between the Anglo congregation and the incoming priests that challenged their Christian practice. Although the priests tried to create a harmonious diverse congregation, Wood lamented, "When push came to shove, [white parishioners] weren't so happy, they wanted to call the shots, they wanted things to be on their timetable, on their style."[275] Yet, the PELA priests pushed forward and made tremendous efforts to make the Mexican American neighborhood feel at home in the church. Father Garver, echoing Father Wood's statements, stated, "We will often find ourselves in active opposition to and agitational confrontation against persons and policies which currently feel quite comfortably at home in the Episcopal Church. If their conversion does not occur, we will lose members and support. This might well be the price of loyalty to Christ in these days, but it is a price we must risk paying."[276] Both Wood, Garver, and Luce were on the same page about what it meant to be a Christian, whether as an individual or as an institution -- commitment to the poor was a priority. In one of Father Garver's publications, *Christians as Agents of Social Change,* he wrote, "Our assignment is to serve a people on which others of Christ's followers have turned their backs; to minister to those who suffer un-befriended; to work to eradicate the cycle of poverty which

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273 Sermon by Oliver B Garver Jr., First Sunday in Lent, 1965, "The Triple Revolution," Epiphany Records.

274 *Episcopal News*, 1979, "Urban Ministry – Two Views," Epiphany Records.

275 Wood, interview with Rocio Zamora.

276 Oliver Garver Jr., 1967?, "Christians as Agents of Social Change," Epiphany Records, 23.

entraps and enslaves them."[277] These three priests were clear that poverty, inadequate housing, unequal educational policies, and racism will not go away by infusion of good will, preaching, prayers or individual effort, but through a commitment to organizing.[278] As such, the leadership of the Church of the Epiphany stood hand in hand in their efforts to implement the experiment known as PELA. Their faith politics were put into practice to support both the spiritual and material conditions of Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles.

Figure 3.3. Undated photo of Father Wood (right) and Father Oliver Garver (left) at a United Farm Worker Rally. Church of the Epiphany Records, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the stage for what would become one of the critical spaces of organizing for the largest Mexican American movement in United States history. I have

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[277] Ibid., 22.

[278] Ibid.

illustrated the material, moral, and spiritual support that Mexican Americans received from Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany. To the Chicana/os interviewed for this research, there is no surprise here; all of them spoke of the importance of the church, of Father Luce, Virginia Ram, Father Wood, and Father Garver. They all shared how the Church of the Epiphany allowed a space for them to be their authentic selves, to congregate, and to imagine a different way of engaging with the world. Yet, in the existing Chicana/o history literature, where the contributions of religion are largely absent, the importance of the Church of the Epiphany is sadly overlooked. However, as I have argued, by examining the role of religion and spirituality, the role of clergy, and the role of laity in the Chicana/o movement, we get a fuller understanding of how certain institutions defied the norm and stood alongside Mexican Americans in their struggle for self-determination.

Chicana/o history is largely a story of grassroots community building and organizing; rarely are we exposed to the institutions that supported these movements. The Church of the Epiphany, a religious institution, from the highest levels down to the workers on the ground, became stalwart allies to those that would go on to lead the Chicana/o movement in East Los Angeles. They were all in to support the Mexican American community during this period of heightened political change. This is the benefit of re-reading Chicana/o movement history through a faith politics lens, one that understands the historical and progressive moments when religious leadership radically stood alongside marginalized communities. Like Chao Romero has stated of the social justice tradition of the Brown Church, the Church of the Epiphany can be considered a prime example of how religious institutions have challenged the marginalization of communities of color throughout history.

In 1959, Bishop Bloy made a call to invest resources into transforming a church that was not changing along with the times. Following what he believed to be a true Christian praxis, Bloy made necessary changes to the religious leadership of a community. Although the Parish of East Los Angeles's intention was to gain Episcopalian members, Bloy was also willing to risk the white membership currently at the church. The bishop's commitment was not piecemeal. When he hired Luce, Ram, Wood, and Garver, Bishop Bloy gave them the ultimate flexibility, resources, and support to implement urgent changes to the culture of the church so that it could become a center of community engagement.

Father Luce understood his assignment. He capitalized on his freedom and resources, not for himself, not for the church, but for the Mexican Americans struggling for their own self-determination. There was a lot that Luce got away with. For example, he often drank beer, wine, and smoked cigarettes with many of the Chicana/o organizers. Wauters, who was the rector of Epiphany from 2003-2010 stated, "I would have been crucified if I had done that when I was a priest at Epiphany."[279] Yet, Luce had the backing of the hierarchy. When Los Angeles Police Chief Edward M. Davis called Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany "swimming pool communists" for encouraging militant organizations like the Brown Berets, Bishop Bloy issued a statement condemning the statement. And during the Episcopal Dioceses's 76th annual convention, the Bishop "went on record in support of the East Los Angeles parish."[280] The public support from the hierarchy is important here; religious leadership is not confined to the ways that Father Luce supported Chicana/os on the ground, but also the institutional church's backing that Luce received. It allowed him the freedom and flexibility to risk being an ally. Whereas religious

[279] Wauters, interview by author.

[280] Dan L. Thrapp, Times Religion Editor, "Episcopalians Rap Davis' Tactics in Criticism of Priest," Epiphany Records.

institutions are often considered conservative, and it is not my intention to argue that the Episcopal faith is not, in the case of the Church of the Epiphany during the 1960s, there is some significant divergence. This departure allows us to see how institutions *can* support grassroots organizing and movements, not only through spiritual means, but through material resources as well, including space. However, religious institutions must be willing to allow its clergy the flexibility to develop into their own religious leadership and assess community needs.

While the Parish of East Los Angeles sought to exploit the tensions between Mexicans and their Catholic faith in order to expand the Episcopalian fold, Luce largely digressed on the proselytization demands. All of the oral interviews conducted for this research spoke firmly about Luce never trying to recruit them to become Episcopalians. Esparza stated, "I was wondering for maybe the first year of knowing him how curious it was that he never asked me to go to Mass. Other people told you that, I assume?"[281] If Luce is judged by how many new members he recruited to become Episcopalian, he failed miserably. Yet, if we consider Luce's faith politics as part of his ministry, then there was never a moment that Luce was not proselytizing. As liberation theologians were beginning to articulate, the preferential option for the poor is a theological praxis. Luce understood his theology to be in communion with the poor, to support the spiritual and material conditions of those that he had affinity with. During the 1960s and early 70s, it was in East Los Angeles and with predominantly Mexicans. When he was in New York, he was largely with Puerto Ricans. By understanding the role of religion, we can investigate the alternative forms of religious praxis that religious leaders and laity subscribe to. Luce, when responding to Crisostomo's request about the difference between Catholics and Episcopalians, stating, "Catholics wait for you to come to them, we go to the people," was

[281] Esparza, interview by the author.

sharing his theological understanding, promoting Episcopalianism, and gently, un-forcefully, offering a religious alternative. The study of religion provides insight into the diversity of religious and spiritual practices and their understanding of their roles in the community. There are many ways to be religious and spiritual. We see in this chapter how Luce was showing us one of the more progressive and radical forms of proselytizing, utilizing both the material and spiritual tools available to an institutional religious figure in order to do what religions ultimately call for, to act.

As such, the influence that Luce brought was not only external, but internal as well. Interviews with the Chicana/o activists suggested that Luce also moved Father Garver, Father Wood, and Virginia Ram to the left of the political spectrum. This was surprising considering some of the progressive writings that Garver wrote before beginning at Epiphany, including demands that Christians must choose sides in the racial divide and the fight for human rights. Yet, some of the Chicana/os interviewed recognized the conservative tendencies that Wood and Garver held, possibly as a result of their racial, religious, and class backgrounds. Reyes remembers the transformation Father Wood went through because of being so close to Luce, stating, "Father Wood used to have arguments with me, with Father Luce, we used to get real angry, attacking the culture, [raising his voice] 'what do you mean? What are you talking about? No! the police aren't doing that to the Mexicans, that's not true.' Oh man, when he [Wood] died, what a different person he was … incredible."[282] Reyes was amazed at the political transformation Father Wood went through and largely as a result of his time at Epiphany. Luce's leadership was venerated inside and outside of the church. He was a model of religious leadership, of how those with institutional power can modify the culture of an institution while

[282] Reyes, interview by author.

also allowing for external leadership to emerge. The changes that the religious leadership encouraged are the topic of the next chapter.

Lastly, the PELA proposal laid out specifics for space. This detail was critical in laying the foundation for the kind of changes that the community sought. As spatial entitlement theory suggests, "in the midst of enormous changes and transformations, Black and Brown residents of Los Angeles used the physical places they inhabited and the discursive spaces they imagined to assert their common humanity and forge shared struggles grounded in mutuality and solidarity."[283] The space provided at the Church of the Epiphany was an invaluable tool for the developing Chicana/o imaginary to manifest. To be clear, neither the church, nor Father Luce, told the Chicana/os what to do or how to do it; they simply opened the doors. As Luis Garza so eloquently put it, Luce "provided a space, a physical space, it's an incubation, it was the womb, in order for that life form to take place, for it to be born, it needs to be incubated, through resources, the resources are financial, the resources are theory and strategizing, a safe place, space by which to introduce to each other, one another, those who do not have the experience, and those who do have the experience to be able to mentor."[284] As such, the space, and its meaning, provided so much of the physical and non-physical resources for an emerging Chicana/o movement to blossom.

Yet, this research also slightly diverges from Johnson's spatial entitlement theory in that it gives extra weight to the institutional responsibility for offering space. While Johnson highlights the ways that communities of color have taken up space to reclaim their humanity and forge collective identities, this research shows how an institution can also broaden its use of

[283] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*, x.

[284] Luis Garza, interview by author, September 11, 2020.

space for community self-determination. The Church of the Epiphany took a risk, and as Garver stated, Christians must be willing to take risks: "They must risk marks on the walls, cigarette ashes on the floor, and carved initials on the 'throne' of the president of the Women's Auxiliary. Episcopalians must dare to risk these feared 'atrocities.'"[285] Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany offered something so rarely given to youth, a safe space and place to explore their identities, their history, the culture, and how to make positive change in their communities. Ram stated, "In this center young people were allowed to enter and leave as they wished, and to take as much of a part in the program as they wanted to."[286] Many of the main players in the Chicana/o movement met as a result of the various activities that were created in this space. Johnson states that "spatial entitlement has enormous implications for the study of Black and Brown working class opposition, because it redresses inattention to the profound role that space plays in everyday life, as well as the cumulative role that everyday life plays in the development of mass movements."[287]

In the basement of Epiphany, the spark of the Chicana/o movement in East Los Angeles was lit. It was a principal nexus where all the elements of a Mexican American movement converged -- the old guard and youth, radical and conservative, secular and non-secular. The result was a Chicana/o intifada, the greatest Mexican American movement in United States history. While this chapter introduced Father Luce's church and showed the dramatic and radical changes that ensued, the following chapter shows how the movement benefited from this

[285] Oliver B. Garver, "Christians as Agents of Change," Epiphany Records.

[286] Narváez, *A Woman's Faith*, Epiphany Records, 14.

[287] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*, xiii.

support, highlighting the role and relationships that were established at the Church of the Epiphany.

Chapter IV
It Was All Planned There

Father John B. Luce arrived at the Church of the Epiphany on October 1st, 1965. With some of the Parish of East Los Angeles's experimental pieces already set in place by Father Nicholas Kouletsis, Father Luce hit the ground running. Within just under two and half years of his arrival, the largest student walkout in United States history occurred; one of the most important Chicana/o newspapers would be founded and printed in the basement; the United Farm Workers would send organizers to establish a strong urban presence at the church; the Young Chicana/os for Community Action would develop their organizational chops; and arguably the most militant Chicana/o organization, the Brown Berets, would be founded. Surprising most students of Chicana/o history, Moctesuma Esparza stated of the high school Blowouts, "It was all planned there [at the Church of the Epiphany]. Between the Brown Berets and *La Raza* newspaper and UMAS/Mecha, those three groups did everything."[288] This chapter examines the beginnings of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, paying particular attention to Father Luce's first two and half years, between his arrival in October of 1965 and the high school Blowouts in March of 1968. Furthermore, this chapter investigates how the Church of the Epiphany became a crossroads of political activism for Mexican Americans and the seedbed for the organizations and organizers that started the Chicana/o movement in East Los Angeles.

I foreground the chapter with the work of the United Farm Workers organization, which is often considered the beginning of mass political activity for the Chicana/o movement at large.[289] I briefly examine the religious and spiritual intersections of the farm workers' struggle

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[288] Esparza, interview by the author.

[289] Gómez-Quiñonez and Vazquez, "Chicano Movement," 305.

and how the Church of the Epiphany played an important role in linking farm workers in Delano with Chicana/os in East Los Angeles. More importantly, I examine how the relationship between Father Luce, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the farm workers radically shifted the sacred space of the church into a nexus of political activity. I show how the faith politics of the Church of the Epiphany inspired Chicana/os to organize against their own political marginalization.

The organizations that were founded during the short two and half years after Father Luce's arrival went on to organize a massive movement for Mexican American equality. After investigating the relationship between the UFW and the Church of the Epiphany, I examine the founding of *La Raza* newspaper, followed by the Young Citizens for Community Action, and conclude with the founding of the Brown Berets. As this chapter will show, the Church of the Epiphany played an incredibly active, albeit humble, role in the organizations that are remembered as the principal initiators of the Chicana/o movement. I conclude by arguing that without the direct and indirect support of the Church of the Epiphany, we would have a largely different Mexican American civil rights movement, especially in Los Angeles.

Using Mario García's theoretical concept of faith politics, I underscore the critical but understudied area of religious leadership. Whereas the Black civil rights movement has well documented the leadership and religious faith of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, only recently has Chicana/o historiography lifted up the religious narratives of its leaders, such as Chavez[290], Huerta[291], or Reies López Tijerina.[292] Yet, still under examined is the support of religious institutions and leaders that did take a stand to support Mexican American self-

[290] Luis León, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

[291] Mario García, *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

[292] Lorena Oropeza, *King of Adobe* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

determination. In this chapter, I borrow García's faith politics, which "refers to social movements that are based in the application of religious faith to the movements."[293] As seen in the last chapter, the collective leadership of Father Luce, Virginia Ram, Father Wood, and Father Garver implemented a theological praxis that was founded in their religious understanding of how they should be in the world, and in this case, how they would engage with a Mexican American community. Using a faith politics framework allows us to consider how "many local community struggles have been headed not only by clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, but by devout laypeople who are inspired by their faith to see social justice."[294] I do not intend to suggest that Father Luce headed the Chicana/o movement, rather, in this chapter I attempt to understand the impact of the faith politics of Father Luce and religious leadership of the Church of the Epiphany in facilitating the Chicana/o movement in the mid 1960s. The history of the Church of the Epiphany in the Chicana/o movement highlights the role of religious figures that exemplified a faith politic, i.e., through their application of religious faith to improve the social and political conditions of Chicana/os in East Los Angeles.

When Father Luce arrived in Los Angeles, he quickly and dramatically shifted the culture, make-up, and ethos of the Church of the Epiphany from a largely white congregation to predominantly Mexican American. His changes were well received by the local community and his presence created echoes beyond the Lincoln Heights barrio. For example, Rudy Tovar, living in the neighboring barrio of Whittier, was a congregation member who became heavily involved in the politics of the church. He stated, "all the guys were talking about him [Father Luce]," and "I came over here because the action was here and there was nothing in Whittier where I lived,

[293] García, *Father Luis Olivares,* 2018.

[294] Ibid., 9.

except for a guy here and there, an outspoken person. But I heard about Epiphany and I got involved."[295] Luce immediately caused a ruckus, so much so that people were already whispering about him. Another group who heard about Father Luce was the United Farm Workers. Before Luce arrived, in the first half of the 1960s, Father Kouletsis established a working relationship with the United Farm Worker movement (UFW), but it was Luce who solidified the connection in the second half of the decade. He offered the parish hall as an urban base for the farm workers to mobilize support in the cities and to provide critical services to UFW organizers, i.e., food, clothes, financial support, and bodies on the picket line. His relationship with the UFW indeed supported the farm worker struggle; however, I examine their relationship to understand the role of the church in exposing young Chicana/os to one of the pivotal movements for social change in United States history. The intimate relationship between Father Luce and the UFW brought the civil rights movement of the 1960s directly to the backyard of Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles, and in particular, to urban Chicana/o youth.

The United Farm Workers

In September of 1965, grape workers from the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) walked out of the fields of Delano, California, a rural agricultural town in the central valley of the state. Farm workers were protesting their inhumane and dangerous working conditions, low wages, labor theft, and the unwillingness of the growers to respect their wishes to organize a union. When growers started importing and hiring undocumented Mexican labor to stifle their efforts to organize a union, farm workers had no other option but to strike.

[295] Rudy Tovar, interview by Rocio Zamora.

Popular history remembers Chavez as calling the strike; however, it was AWOC, a predominantly Filipino organization, who were the first to walkout, leading what would become the first massive farm worker movement in the United States. Chavez, head of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), felt that they were unprepared for a strike of this magnitude. Yet, Larry Itliong, head of AWOC, and Dolores Huerta, vice president of NFWA at the time, pushed Chavez to join forces, the only way they had any chance of defeating the growers. Chavez eventually agreed, and the two organizations would come together to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFW).

Challenging the strength and economic wealth of the growers was no easy task. Yet, Chavez, Huerta, Itliong, and the farm workers were up for the struggle. The early part of the strike was especially difficult as growers flexed their muscle by hiring scabs, harassing strikers, filing legal injunctions, and using their resources to buy time. It was the farm workers' lack of material resources that most impacted them, yet, they were morally supported in their struggle. Religious figures of all faiths stood alongside the farm workers from the very beginning. Chris Hartmire, director of the California Migrant Ministry said, "As a matter of historical fact the churches were the single most important source of support in the first ninety (90) days of the Huelga."[296] However, as the strike intensified and momentum waned, Chavez adopted a boycott strategy to re-synergize the movement. On December 2, 1965, the UFW boycotted over 83 wine growers.[297] In the following year, inspired by the non-violent marches in the south, with the media coverage of the boycott growing, and the country invested in the labor dispute, Chavez

[296] Alan J. Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 76.

[297] Maceo Montoya, *Chicano Movement for Beginners* (Danbury: For Beginners, 2016), 46.

pressed the gas and the UFW led a well-publicized 150-mile pilgrimage from Delano to the state capitol in Sacramento.

The famous 1966 march to Sacramento displayed the religious and spiritual identity of the movement while grounding it in direct political action. Alan Watt states that Chavez gave the march a "triple meaning: it was a Mexican religious pilgrimage, a Lenten penitential procession, and an act of defiance, all in one."[298] The 21-day pilgrimage began on March 17, 1966, three weeks prior to Resurrection Sunday, and planned to arrive on Easter Sunday. The number of marchers grew with each agricultural city it passed. It started with "seventy women and men who planned to walk through the heart of farm country. By the time the marchers arrived in Sacramento, their numbers had burgeoned to several hundred."[299] Participation in the march to became like a Chicano baptism, a rite of passage, for all those who were able to attend and show their support for the farm worker struggle.

Overlooked by much of Chicana/o history is the intimate intersection of religion and politics that this march was grounded in. Recognizing the diversity of the farm worker populations, Chavez incorporated Catholic themes as an attempt to unify the agricultural workers and the sympathizers. Religious figures, symbols, and rituals were omnipresent, represented by the abundance of priests, mobile altars on flatbed trucks, prayer, Mass, and La Virgen de Guadalupe. The march to Sacramento was very much presented in religious and spiritual terms, in word and in deed: "Mass was given daily, and the marchers invoked the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, as their protector. At the head of the crowd, a flag bearing the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe guided the way."[300] The religious symbolism was not only a political

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[298] Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches*, 2.

[299] León, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez*, 2.

strategy, but an authentic application and recognition of Chavez, Huerta, and the Mexican and Filipino farm workers' religious identification. Huerta, vice president of the United Farm Workers, discussed the importance of La Virgen de Guadalupe as a symbol of the farm workers' movement: "She is a symbol of the impossible, of doing the impossible to win a victory, in humility, of being able to win with the faith. I mean that's the important thing that she symbolizes to the union: that with faith you can win."[301] Chavez also noted the significance of his own spiritual and worldly intersection: "I don't think I could base my will to struggle on cold economics or on some political doctrine. I don't think there would be enough to sustain me. For me, the base must be faith."[302] As such, Huerta and Chavez knew the critical importance of getting the church involved in their struggle and made great efforts to garner broad religious support. The Catholic hierarchy, however, would not come along so easily.

Although the farm workers were predominantly Catholic, so were the growers. This intra-Catholic struggle was an incredible thorn in the church's side. Whereas the farm workers movement was considered a morally righteous one, Catholic Churches in California's central valley relied heavily on the financial contributions of growers. As Marco Prouty stated, "both parties were an integral part of the Catholic flock. The farm workers filled the pews, and growers enriched the coffers."[303] The Catholic Church was hesitant to get involved, and for the first few years of the strike, they remained neutral, a fact that many Chicana/os have not forgotten to this day. Yet, one of the incredible abilities of Chavez was that he created an ecumenical movement,

[300] Montoya, *Chicano Movement*, 49.

[301] Andrés Guerrero, *A Chicano Theology,* originally published 1987. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008) 105-106.

[302] Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 27.

[303] Marco G. Prouty. *César Chávez, The Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 4.

seeking, recruiting, and accepting spiritual support from any and all religious leaders that defended and supported the farm workers' struggle. When they arrived in Sacramento at the end of the march, "the events at the state capitol included an ecumenical religious Mass. Counted among the tens of thousands in attendance were Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and humanists, as well as Christians of many varieties."[304] A unique and diverse religious and spiritual rainbow coalition was created. The march was also significant in that it marked an important entry point for issues that were specifically affecting Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States.

The 1966 march was largely successful. By the time they arrived in Sacramento, they had garnered massive media attention and public support. The march made Cesar Chavez a household name, put the farm workers movement on the national map, and placed them on par with the civil rights movements in the south. Most importantly, they won political victories. Just before the march ended, the UFW received a call from Schenley Industries that they were ready to negotiate a contract. Several other grape growers followed suit, including Gallo, Franzia Brothers, and the DiGiorgio Corporation. The march generated incredible momentum for the farm workers to continue going after those who had not signed contracts with the union. The boycott of Giumarra Vineyards Corporation, and other table grape products, would be the next campaign. This move further pushed the farm worker struggle into the daily lives of everyday people. The boycott of table grapes became a national, then international, civil rights struggle and provided actionable steps for concerned citizens to participate in. It lasted until July 29, 1970, when Dolores Huerta negotiated higher wages and benefits for the agricultural workers, ending labor history's most successful consumer boycott.

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[304] Paper by Luis León. June 18, 2012, "California: A Dreamer Walks with Cesar Chavez," in private collection of Lydia López.

While the Catholic Church, as an institution, took a bit more time to stand alongside the farm workers, the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, Bishop Francis Eric Bloy, was immediately moved by the farm worker movement. The faith politics and religious leadership of Bishop Bloy would foster a long-lasting relationship with the UFW and Episcopalians, particularly in East Los Angeles. The farm worker movement had come at the precise moment that Bishop Bloy was implementing a theological experiment with a cluster of three parishes in East Los Angeles, known as the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA). In 1961, the bishop brought in the Reverend Nicholas Kouletsis to serve at the Church of the Epiphany and as liaison to concerns regarding the farm workers. Koulestis played an active role in connecting Chavez with Bloy. During the first of Chavez's fasts, Bishop Bloy, Father Kouletsis, Luce, and Garver went to visit Chavez to provide spiritual nourishment and public support. PELA's 1968 summer newsletter stated, "Bishop Bloy, Canon Kouletisis and Fathers Luce and Garver were privileged to visit Mr. Chavez in Delano during the 19th day of his fast. This was a most moving and humbling experience for us all."[305] The addition of the farm workers struggle to the PELA's newsletters shows the intersection of faith and politics. Not only did the religious leaders want to support the farm workers, but they also wanted their congregation to support them as well. Because faith-based movements are often grounded in non-violence, Bloy, Kouletsis, Luce, and the Church of the Epiphany found an ideal religious and political movement into which to plug their community, one that would resonate with Mexicans and Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles.

The bishop became increasingly sensitive to the material and spiritual needs of the farm workers and wanted to do whatever he could to support them. After his visit with Chavez, in

[305] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, Summer 1968, Epiphany Records.

May of 1968, the bishop presented the farm workers with a portable altar that could be mounted on the flatbed of a truck so they could celebrate the Eucharist in the fields. The altar was built by craftsman Manuel Martinez, who was commissioned by Corky Gonzalez's organization in Colorado. On one side of the altar, "a crucifix bears a brown-skinned Christ; on the other, an indigenous woman holds wheat stalks and grapes that prefigure the bread and wine of Holy Communion."[306] Clergy of all kinds would often travel to Delano and say Mass to as many as two or three thousand campesinos. The convergence of the religious and spiritual components of the movement was becoming increasingly unified.

When Kouletsis and Bloy handed PELA over to Father Luce in the fall of 1965, the relationships with the farm workers had been established. In the coming years, Luce and Chavez developed a deep and personal affinity. Chris Hartmire, head of the California Migrant Ministry, a close friend of Chavez and Luce, remembers how much Chavez liked and trusted Luce. Hartmire stated, "Cesar could instinctually see, this guy is for real, there is no bullshit here, this guy is for real, he is going to be a friend and a real friend."[307] As a social justice minded clergyman, it was natural for Father Luce to involve himself in matters that concerned farm worker equality. Not only would he become intimately involved in their struggle in Delano, but he would bring along his East Los Angeles congregation as well.

The Church of the Epiphany took a decidedly forward stance on supporting the farm workers. Luce offered the church to Chavez as an important urban center for the UFW. In its summer of 1968 newsletter, PELA stated, "The Parish of East Los Angeles feels a deep kinship with Cesar Chavez and the campesinos of Delano. Our people are the urban Mexican-Americans,

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[306] "Farm Workers' Altar," Smithsonian American Art Museum, accessed June 7, 2022, https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/farm-workers-altar-33081

[307] Chris Hartmire, interview by Rocio Zamora.

suffering in the city ghetto. His people are the rural Mexican American, suffering in the countryside. LA RAZA, however, is one –'La Raza Unida.', and when one suffers, all suffer."[308] While the boycott was in full force, cities became critical areas of concentration, and the Episcopalian church was honored to be in a position to support. In December of 1966, "the parish was privileged to be host for three days to Cesar Chavez and 100 farm workers from Delano and we had the opportunity to dramatize support of their current campaign for economic and social justice amongst the poor workers in the grape fields."[309] In addition to the organization and spiritual support that the church provided farm workers, Luce also made sure to get the youth involved.

The religious leadership of Luce utilized the farm worker movement to highlight the social injustices to Mexican Americans, in the fields, and in the cities. He knew he had to link the farm workers struggle with Chicana/os in East Los Angeles. He wanted Chicana/o youth to not only engage in the movement, but to begin organizing against their own unequal treatment. The farm workers movement was largely a Mexican and Mexican American struggle, and because the Church of the Epiphany was in a community that was struggling to see themselves as agents of change, Luce capitalized on this critical link to politicize and raise the consciousness of Chicana/o youth. Although many of the youth were becoming politicized by the Black civil rights movement in the South, the farm worker movement was ethnically and geographically closer to home. As such, while Luce became a person that the farm workers could count on, the relationship was mutually beneficial because Luce also wanted Chavez and the farm workers to have a presence at the church.

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[308] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, December 1968, Epiphany Records.

[309] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, February 1967, Epiphany Records.

Supporting farm workers became one of the principal activities at the Church of the Epiphany and Father Luce actively sought ways to engage and work with them. Hartmire stated, “Chavez and the farm workers found themselves coming to Los Angeles more often, staying in places Luce had set up for them, including the church hall and Luce’s home, across the street.”[310] Whereas Virginia Ram had once complained that the Epiphany was never open, the farm workers' continued presence was evidence that the culture of the church had shifted. Father Luce was as concerned with the material conditions of the community as he was with their attendance at church on Sunday mornings. Mario García states that faith-based movements often “shift from a spiritual focus on salvation in the next world to achieving God’s kingdom on earth, based on justice.”[311] Virginia Ram was also heavily involved with supporting farm workers, facilitating parish volunteers to assist with the cooking and organizing clothes and food drives for their campaign visits. She stated that the parish “long supported this struggle led by Cesar Chavez with our prayers, our money and our bodies in picket lines and boycotts.”[312] Cesar and Helen Chavez are also remembered for doing their part in washing loads of dishes after dinner in the parish kitchen. When farm workers were at the church, it was indeed a festive atmosphere centered around organizing.

The farm worker presence at the Church of the Epiphany had an important impact on Chicana/o youth in East Los Angeles. Moctesuma Esparza was one of the youth at the church even before Luce had arrived, yet credits him for exposing Chicana/os to what was happening in Delano and other places. Esparza stated, it was Luce “who would tell us about the farm workers

[310] Hartmire, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[311] García, *Father Luis Olivares*, 9.

[312] Undated paper by Virginia Ram, “Hispanic Ministry and the Church of the Epiphany,” Epiphany Records, 37.

and how they organized, stories about Fred Ross, back of the yards, and drive us to Safeway where we would picket and do food and can campaigns to give to the farm workers."[313] Luce often invited Chavez to preach from the pulpit and to give organizing workshops whenever he was around. Victoria Castro, the first president of the Young Citizens for Community Action, that would later become the Brown Berets (discussed in the next section), recalls various workshops at Epiphany; however, most prominent was a moment she had with Chavez. Castro was the only one who could drive at the time and she remembers Chavez sharing with her that "he never owned a car and that… it forced him to always ride with somebody and to take that opportunity to organize and convince them of your cause. I always remember that. He was really saying that it's that personal one to one outreach that you have to educate that person on your cause and create that environment."[314] It was moments like this that Father Luce wanted to facilitate. He wanted to link struggles, provide mentorship, guidance, and inspiration for young Chicana/os to continue to be involved, both at the church and in their communities. It was Luce who exposed the young Chicana/os to the farm workers because he understood that this would have the most impact on their socio-political development, and he was right.

Another important collaboration between the Episcopal church and the farm workers was the 1968 Robert Kennedy presidential campaign. Chavez and Kennedy also developed a close relationship, in fact, one of the iconic images of the Chicana/o movement is a photo of Senator Kennedy breaking bread with Chavez as he is ending his 25-day fast to a crowd estimated at eight to ten thousand. Kennedy became an important ally to the farm workers, and they carried hopes of that continuing if he would become president. To that end, Chavez launched an

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[313] Esparza, interview by the author.

[314] V. Castro, interview by the author.

important get out the vote campaign for the June primaries and the Church of the Epiphany became the Los Angeles headquarters. In the spring of 1968, "nothing attracted more farm workers to Los Angeles than when Kennedy announced he was running for president."[315] Hartmire remembers being at Epiphany for "breakfast, lunch, dinner, meetings, organizational meetings, assignments, sending us out to precincts, we all worked day and night in the precincts of East L.A. for Bobby Kennedy at that time."[316] In the end, Chavez, farm workers, and their supporters made an incredible impact on the Kennedy campaign, who eventually won by a narrow margin. Tragically, after making his victory speech on June 4, 1968, Kennedy was shot and killed in the early hours of June 5th. Dolores Huerta was there representing the farm workers. A devastated Chavez was in the rectory of the Church of the Epiphany healing his bad back when he heard the news.

The incredible work that the Church of the Epiphany, the farm workers, and the community of East Los Angeles put into Robert Kennedy's primary victory showed the power of their civic engagement. The church would become the central organizing base for subsequent campaigns of other statewide Latino legislators, such as Art Torres and Richard Alatorre. In 1973, Epiphany would once again come together and help elect Tom Bradley, the first African American mayor of the city of Los Angeles. As these campaigns brought in significant traffic through the Church of the Epiphany, the youth were also involved and exposed to seasoned organizing veterans. As such, the church was facilitating a training ground for those who would eventually organize the high school Blowouts, the Chicana/o Moratorium, and publish *La Raza* newspaper.

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[315] Rocio Zamora, *A Cleansing Fire*, (Lincoln Heights, Los Angeles: Church of the Epiphany, 2007) 24.

[316] Hartmire, interview with Rocio Zamora.

The farm worker movement found a home away from home at the Church of the Epiphany. The link between Father Luce and Chavez was not only important as an urban base and megaphone for the boycott, but it was an important entry point for Chicana/o youth to be actively engaged in organizing. Juan Gómez Quiñones and Irene Vasquez Morris (2005) state, "the 1966 farm workers' March to Sacramento, California is often acknowledged as a visible sign of rising proactive Mexican-American public sentiment."[317] In the mid 1960s, the farm workers' movement became one of the most significant civil rights struggles in the United States. Father Luce was in a unique position to open the doors of the church to the farm workers and link their struggle with Chicana/o youth in East Los Angeles. For many of the youth, the farm worker movement was their introduction to organizing and activism; it was their involvement in the pickets, food drives, marches, meetings, and door knocking that inspired them to ask, what about Chicana/os in the cities? Esparza stated, "I remember that that was one of our motivators for organizing among ourselves here was the feeling that nobody paid attention to Chicana/os in the city, not even Father Luce at that point, his focus was the farm workers, so he was constantly talking to us about that and organizing us around that issue."[318] As such, engaged by the farm workers' movement and increasingly inspired by the radicalization of the civil rights movement in the south, the anti-war movements, and the Black power movements, Mexican Americans began to raise the issue about Chicana/os in the cities.

La Raza Newspaper

[317] Gómez-Quiñones and Vasquez, "Chicano Movement," 305.

[318] Esparza, interview by the author.

The farm worker movement brought the national civil rights struggle to the west coast. Protests, pickets, boycotts, and strikes were now directly in the backyards of Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles. No longer were Chicana/os simply witnessing what was happening in the struggles for racial equity in the South and in freedom movements around the world. Chicana/os were participating in much more personal and active ways. Father Luce opened the doors of his church to Chavez, Huerta, and the farm workers, and he linked them up with groups of engaged community members. The Church of the Epiphany provided a safe and active space for the community at-large to become agents in the ongoing and developing political activity. Their involvement caused them to question the discrimination that farm workers were experiencing in the fields, but also that of Chicana/os in the cities. One of the things Father Luce recognized as he was gaining his bearings in the eastside was the negative ways the media portrayed Mexican Americans. There were no communications or sources of primary information coming from the community itself to combat the negative representations. The formation of *La Raza* newspaper in 1967 was a critical turning point in the development of an urban Chicana/o consciousness, as well as to the development of the Chicana/o movement, and Chicana/o history. Unbeknownst to most, this invaluable Chicana/o photojournalistic organization began in the Church of the Epiphany and with the behind the scenes help from Father Luce.

During the 1960s, media and news coverage of Mexicans articulated many of the same biases held by society. If Mexican issues were covered at all in the English media, they were often "sensationalist reports of crimes that allegedly had been committed by Mexican Americans or Spanish-surnamed people."[319] Spanish language publications were not any better, often

[319] Raul Ruiz, "Chicanos and the Underground Press," in *La Raza,* ed. Luis Garza, Amy Scott, and Colin Gunckel (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of the American West: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2020). 52-62, 56.

translating the news from their English counterparts. One important difference was Ruben Salazar's reporting on the Mexican Americans.[320] The sixties and seventies, however, saw a rise in underground newspapers across the country addressing countercultural issues that have come to represent the period – the anti-war movement, drugs, sex, and politics from a liberal to radical spectrum not properly represented in the media.[321] In 1964, the *Los Angeles Free Press* was founded to speak directly to progressive issues in the City of Angels. Yet, Chicana/o concerns and topics continued to be overlooked. Raul Ruiz explains, "even though there were over a million Mexicans living in the immediate Los Angeles area, the *Los Angeles Free Press* published only thirteen articles in 1967 that dealt with any aspect of the Chicana/o community in the United States, and only one actually offered an analysis of local Chicana/o problems."[322] Ruiz added that the *Los Angeles Free Press* lacked diversity within its ranks, as among its 30 employees, no Chicana/os were regularly paid staff. As such, the early 1960s saw an incredible vacuum of Chicana/o voices in the media, including within leftist communications.

The latter half of 1960s was a watershed moment for Chicana/o publications. Between the years of 1968 and 1969, "the number of Chicana/o publications peaked, growing in 1969 to more than one hundred newspapers that were published primarily in California, New Mexico, and Texas."[323] However, one of the most popular and that with the longest legacy is *La Raza*. Luis Garza, one of the principal photographers for the newspaper stated, "*La Raza* is just one of many [Chicano newspapers], but we take a preeminent position because of our photography and

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[320] Ruben Salazar, *Border Correspondent: Selected Writings, 1955-1970,* ed. by Mario García (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press, 1995.

[321] Andrade, *The History of "La Raza" Newspaper and Magazine*, 1979.

[322] Ruiz, *Chicanos and the Underground Press*, 54.

[323] Ibid., 55.

because of the artwork… no one has documented the movement to the degree that *La Raza* had."[324] Photography played a major role in the publication, Garza stated; it elevated the storytelling nature of the journalistic enterprise that gave "visual proof, that gives the visual support, to the thesis. The power of photography inverts and subverts the narrative about who we are and what we are and so we counter through imagery."[325] The founding of *La Raz*a newspaper became an invaluable resource for, and during, the Chicana/o movement. It was the first time Chicana/os were in a position to tell their own stories, on their own terms, and through their own eyes.

Eliezer Risco and Ruth Robinson are considered the founders of *La Raza*, and to a lesser extent, but equally important, Father Luce. Surprisingly, none of the founders were Mexican American. Risco was Cuban and Robinson and Luce were Anglo. Yet, as Ruiz writes, "the idea for the publication of a barrio newspaper was not the result of any one individual's brainstorm. Rather, it reflected the community's need for a voice."[326] Risco and Robinson came from the farm worker movement, organizing with Chavez when they met Luce. They were sent by Chavez to work the boycotts in Los Angeles and given two tasks: one, organize blockades of the trucks bringing fruit to the central markets in downtown, and two, to go store to store and ask them not to sell Giumarra products. That is where "I met Padre John," says Risco. At 32 years old, and after two years of working with the union, receiving only 5 dollars a week of pay, Risco and Robinson decided to leave the union and join Luce at Epiphany's Social Action Training center, a joint "anti-juvenile delinquency" program created after the Watts uprising by the Department

[324] Garza, interview by the author.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ruiz, *Chicanos and the Underground Press,* 55.

of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Commission on Church and Race of the Los Angeles Council of Churches.

The Social Action Training Center headquarters was in South Los Angeles, yet they set up an East Los Angeles post at the Church of the Epiphany. The training center "employed local people, trained them in community social action techniques, and sent them out to undertake various projects in areas of urgent neighborhood concern."[327] In the February 1967 PELA newsletter, it reported on the center's positive progress, mentioning, "a good dialogue has been opened with the Negro community, and solid bridges are being built."[328] In the mind of Luce, these interracial dialogues were important to tie struggles and open lines of communication between neighborhoods. However, it was the success of the Social Action Training Center that may have also been the cause of its demise. Seven months after PELA had reported on the center's progress, "suddenly their funds were cut off. The HEW department funds ceased to flow due to growing federal timidity in the face of poor people speaking up and asking questions and demanding answers vis-à-vis schools, police, welfare, housing, political representation, etc."[329] The lack of political will to fund a program like the Social Action Training Center would encourage the church to raise the concern at the next General Convention in respect to the role of the Episcopal Church "in helping poor people in their struggle for proper economic and political power. We hope and pray that the Episcopal Church shall prove more bold and caring."[330] As such, Luce, active in the local politics, facilitating socio-political networks in East Los Angeles,

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[327] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, September 1967, Epiphany Records.

[328] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, February 1967, Epiphany Records, 4.

[329] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, September 1967, Epiphany Records, 3.

[330] Ibid., 3.

was also pushing the national Episcopalian church to get more involved in the social and material welfare of Mexican Americans.

The idea of *La Raza* newspaper came about while Risco and Robinson were working at the Church of the Epiphany through the Social Action Training Center. Risco remembers working with youth and gang members in the neighborhood: “one of the things that came out of those discussions was that there was no communication between barrios,” and “that’s where the idea came of a newspaper.”[331] Luce had already been whispering to Risco and Robinson about creating a communications arm since they both had experience working with the farm worker newspaper, *El Malcriado*. According to Risco, he largely funded the production of the first edition through his pay at the training center. However, when the Social Action Training Center funds were cut off, Risco was left without financial support. Recognizing the importance of the publication, Luce offered *La Raza* the basement of the church so that Risco, Robinson, and the small staff could continue printing the newspaper.

La Raza set out to be the voice of the community at a time of growing political consciousness in the Mexican American barrios. Connecting with its Mexican history, *La Raza*’s logo was an eagle with a serpent in its mouth, a rendition of the Mexican flag, created by Benny Luna, a beloved local artist who spent a lot of time at the church. Luna’s art would also be commissioned by Father Luce, who hung several of his paintings around the church, namely his piece behind the altar. *La Raza* published in English and Spanish to speak to a larger audience, but also to invite more of the community to participate in its publications. *La Raza* was a calling card to the Mexican American community that a large-scale movement, one that had begun in the South and migrated to the farm workers in Delano, was now in cities such as East Los

[331] Elisear Risco, interview by Rocio Zamora.

Angeles. Luce remembers sitting in the rectory of the church with "a very small group… Risco, Ruth, and others," going through the process of finding a fitting name for the publication: "we knew the title had to encapsulate the common interest of the target audience – Chicanos. We knew we had to baptize the term Chicano just as the Blacks had managed to baptize the word black…I don't remember who said it, but *La Raza* was interjected, and we had a title."[332] This conversation speaks to the kind of ally and religious leader that Luce was to the Chicana/o youth. They were able to have honest and radical conversations, even with him in the room and inside of a church, a significantly different experience than with their Catholic priests.

The layout of *La Raza* was loud and provocative. Its first headline announced in barrio calligraphy, "First Edition of *La Raza*; from the Barrio," as if it was graffiti on the walls (Figure 4.1). It immediately spoke about its intention to be a vehicle for Chicana/o organizing, pulling from the Indigenous, nationalistic, political, radical, and confrontational sentiments of the time. Its dual release dates, for example, was on the 4th and 16th of September, representing the founding of Los Angeles and Mexican Independence Day, respectively. On the front page, Richard Vargas wrote,

> Mis Amigos Chicanos, the time has come to stop apologizing for being Mexican. The time has also come when we can no longer "afford the luxury" of continuing to "roll over and play dead", both politically and <u>otherwise.</u> If we as "Americans" of Mexican descent are to get our rightful "Place in the Sun", we must, I repeat, we must unify and organize and mobilize the <u>entire</u> Mexican Community into political and militant action.[333]

The language, visual layout, and themes sought to activate a second-class Mexican American citizenry into action. The first edition also covered a community accountability meeting with the

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[332] John B. Luce, in Andrade, *History of 'La Raza' Newspaper and Magazine,* 29.

[333] Richard Vargas, September 4, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {0}, La Raza Publication Records, 1001. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as La Raza Publication Records.

police chief held at the Lincoln High School auditorium. It reported on the farm worker movement, on police malpractice and where to file a complaint, the Community Service Organization, the Welfare Rights Organization, and the opening of a new Chicana/o cultural coffee shop, La Piranya. It contained a spectrum of themes, nationalism, pride, accountability, art, and poetry from a radical Chicana/o perspective. By no means could one imagine that this paper was being published in an Episcopal church.

FIRST EDITION from the Barrio of LA RAZA

September 4, 1967 Los Angeles

AWARD WINNER JEFE PLACA

A STAR IS BORN

CHIEF REDDIN

COMING SOON - SEPTEMBER 7

LINCOLN HIGH AUDITORIUM

If you have any concern for the need of the "chicanos' to have equal treatment under the law, for the people in your community who have been harrassed or brutalized by police officers, or for your own future and that of your children, you can't afford to miss the evening show at 3501 N. Broadway on September 7 at about 7:30 p.m.

Art Snyder Productions S. A., presents Tom Reddin in his new role as chief with a full cast of supporting stars, Henry Bertch 'Highland Park Captain", Roger H. Guindon "Hollenbeck Captain", and Norman Houston "Commissioner", and others, will star in the spectacular "Your Law Enforcement Agent: Man's Best Friend."

CONTROLLED CONFERENCES

The idea of improving police-community relations by holding 'high-level" meetings and conferences is not a new one. The "morgue" of the newspapers is filled with reports of "community meetings" and "police-community relations conferences". This year, on April 22, one of these controlled confer-

(continued on page 2)

FARM WORKERS DEMAND JUSTICE

STRIKE! HUELGA!

On the morning of August 3rd, farmworkers at the Giumarra Vineyards Corporation walked out of the fields with shouts of Viva Nuestra Union! Viva la Huelga! Viva la Raza! and Viva César Chavez!, marking the beginning of the long-awaited drive to win union benefits for over 2,500 field workers.

Most of the workers at Giumarra had signed authorization cards designating the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) as their bargaining agent with the employer. At a Rally-Fiesta held on July 23rd for union members at Di Giorgio and Giumarra in Bakersfield, Giumarra workers pledged themselves not to be strikebreakers if the company did not agree to recognize the rights of the workers to a union of their choice.

WORKERS' DEMANDS

At meetings held in Delano and Bakersfield on the night of August 2nd, the workers at Giumarra wrote out their demands in keeping with the contracts the union already has at Schenley, Di Giorgio,

HUELGA GIUMARRA UFWOC

EDITORIAL

by RICHARD VARGAS

Mis Amigos Chicanos, the time has come to stop apologizing for being Mexican. The time has also come when we can no longer "afford the luxury" of continuing to "roll over and play dead", both politically and otherwise.

If we as "Americans" of Mexican descent are to get our rightful "Place in the Sun", we must, I repeat, we must unify and organize and mobilize the entire Mexican Community into political and militant action.

Now the Nava campaign was an excellent beginning, but we must have even more "Grass Roots" support and more representation at both the state and local level.

Of course those Tio Tacos in the Mexican Community who supported and "sold us out" to Reagan can get their tails behind their...and get lost.

Now the only thing that the Power Structure and Establishment understand and respects is Force and Power because, after all, this Country (especially the Westward Movement) was founded by Force and Violence and sustained by sheer power, both economic and political.

Take the Westward Movement as a prime example of Force and Violence to accomplish one's aims and ends, for in this Movement the American Indian was totally annihilated because his only means of survival-the Buffalo-was systematically destroyed!

So it ain't no big deal when Newark and Detroit were destroyed because the Power Structure and Establishment were badly shaken because Force and Violence hurt--where it hurts them the most-in the pocketbook. These oppressed people in Newark and in Detroit were only doing what has been an American Tradition.

Now what about the Mexican? Does he have it made in this Country, especially in the Southwest? Hell no! After 1846 our people were disenfranchised. Our people were victimized out of their lands. Our people were brutalized. Our people who wanted to mine had to pay a miner's tax.

These wrongs were inflicted by the use of Force, Power and Violence, even though the Treat of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed (or was supposed to guarantee) the Rights of our people.

Why even today our people

(continued on page 4)

Reproduced from University of Arizona Libraries Digital Collection

Figure 4.1. First edition of *La Raza* newspaper, September 4, 1967. La Raza Publication Records. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

The second edition of the newspaper on September 16, 1967, published only two weeks later, sought to further introduce itself to the barrio as a radical Chicana/o publication. It included

a full-page illustration of a Diego Rivera painting on the Spanish side, showing revolutionaries on horseback speaking to campesinos about land reform, reading in large letters “Día de Independencia.” The second edition continued announcing news from the barrio. For example, it discussed the educational malpractice at Euclid Elementary, stating, “some 90% of the 1100 students are Mexican American, yet, this school does not have one single Mexican-American teacher.”[334] *La Raza* also took a strong stance against the California Governor, Ronald Reagan, criticizing his anti-working class policies; it reported on a boycott in Pico Rivera, and on the land struggles in New Mexico, suggesting that *La Raza* was looking beyond its own barrio and reporting on news that impacted Chicana/os on a national level.

La Raza came out of the gates aggressively. In speaking on issues it had concerns about, they created a countercultural platform for a growing Chicana/o consciousness. As *La Raza* continued to push out publications, the editors and organizers were encouraged by the response. In its third publication, it included letters from the community, and one read, “Bravo! I am excited about your newsprint. Many of us have long awaited a voice emanating from the Eastside—by Chicanos, for Chicanos. I am confident you will be telling us what’s happening, where it’s at, and telling it the way it is. May you successfully reach the home of the Chicano and literally blow his mind.”[335] The intention of the paper was to be a community enterprise, and they largely succeeded. Risco recalls a community member bringing in a first-hand account of a situation. After listening to the concerned citizen, Risco asked them to write the article instead, “and people would do it,” he said, then “we edited a little, and that was what went in the paper.”[336]

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[334] September 16, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {1}, La Raza Publication Records.

[335] October 1, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {2}, La Raza Publication Records.

La Raza was not only a source of media for East Los Angeles residents, but it became a site of organizing and another entry point into the Chicana/o movement. In fact, *La Raza* evolved into one of the principal organizations of the Chicana/o movement. Carlos Montes, a founding member of the Brown Berets, recalled the first time he encountered *La Raza* newspaper, which was his entryway into the Chicana/o movement. Montes was hired by Father Luce as a Teen Post Director. Montes was not stationed at the church but had to occasionally consult with Luce. One day, stated Montes, "They [Father Luce and Risco] walk in with a stack of newspapers and they throw them on the ground and they 'say here pass these out.' I go, wait a minute, I gotta read it first, let me see, I can't just give it to anybody, I got to read it first, see what it says. I read the shit, I go, Fuck! this is awesome shit, you know…I gobbled it up"[337] Montes remembers that profound moment as the point he started going to the church more often, subsequently meeting David Sánchez and others from the Young Chicanos for Community Action who later become the Brown Berets.

Joe Razo, another important figure to the Chicana/o movement, also became involved through *La Raza* newspaper. Razo was 29 years old and working on youth anti-poverty programs in the Los Angeles 14th district when Art Snyder, the councilman, asked Razo to sit on a community forum on police relations. While on the panel, Razo remembers several protestors disrupting the meeting and calling attention to the police brutality facing Chicana/os in the barrios. The protestors brought along with them copies of the first edition of *La Raza* newspaper to disseminate. Razo, sympathetic to the protestors, asked for a copy. Impressed with what he was reading, he went to the Church of the Epiphany the very next day and spoke with Risco,

[336] Risco, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[337] Montes, interview by the author.

Robinson, and some of the "vatos locos" that were there. He recalls sharing with them, "I read your first edition and I agree with the many of the issues that you raised… I can sympathize, I just feel that some of the stories are 'ify', and I think I can do a better job doing research, because I am research oriented."[338] The loose organization was happy to accept Razo, who remembers Risco telling him, "if you think you can write a better story and do research, then go to it."[339] Razo immediately began doing research on educational inequalities, making trips to the School Board to look at data, counting the drop out numbers, creating graphs, and writing on the dire condition of Chicana/os in East Los Angeles schools. Razo became a central figure to *La Raza*, and when Risco and Robinson left the newspaper in the summer of 1969, he became the chief editor. He later merged *La Raza* and *Chicano Student News*, another East Los Angeles Chicana/o newspaper being published in the basement, so that they could maximize their efforts. Razo and Raul Ruiz, editor of *Chicano Student News*, became co-editors of *La Raza* throughout the defining moments of the Chicana/o movement.

The publishing of *La Raza* in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany centralized the meeting points for the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. Moctesuma Esparza remembers, once the basement of the Church of the Epiphany "became *La Raza* newspaper, then it really was a nexus."[340] The newspaper was not only the communications arm of Chicana/o activity, it became the locus of struggle. For members of *La Raza*, as much time was committed to organizing as was to publishing. Razo stated back in 1971, "this paper is not a business venture. It is an organizational tool. Our aim is not to make money, but to organize our people. We want

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[338] Razo, interview by the author.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Esparza, interview by the author.

to make them aware and sensitive to what goes on both within the community and in the establishment outside."[341] The function of *La Raza*, Ruiz stated, was to "participate in what we print, we cannot separate ourselves from the community. If we did we would be committing the same sins the establishment media does, we would become non-involved and irrelevant."[342] As the rest of this research will show, where there was Chicana/o movement activity, there was *La Raza* newspaper, and where there was *La Raza*, there was organizing for Chicana/o self-determination. Many of the principal moments of the Chicana/o movement contained the "usual suspects," says Armando Vazquez Ramos,[343] and at the center was *La Raza*, located in the basement of an Episcopalian church in East Los Angeles.

When *La Raza* newspaper outgrew the basement, Father Luce was not discouraged, but there to help. Garza stated that the Church of the Epiphany was "an incubator, and when you were growing and sophisticated enough, and had the financial resources, you moved out to a larger space, which is what we did at *La Raza*."[344] Risco, the founding editor, developed an impressive subscription list to financially keep the paper afloat. According to Luce, Risco "was getting quite a number of checks from all over the place. Even law enforcement agencies began subscribing to LA RAZA. Someone from the U.S State Department started sending checks to help finance LA RAZA."[345] Esparza remembers being Risco's "bag man," whenever it was time to print the newspaper, "he [Risco] would tell me, 'go talk to that doctor, go talk to that real estate agent, go talk to Telfino Varela, they are going to give you money and bring it to me,' and

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[341] Joe Razo, in Frank del Olmo, "Voices for the Chicano Movimiento," Quill 59, no. 10 (1971): 10.

[342] Raul Ruiz, in del Olmo, "Voices for the Chicano Movimiento," Quill 59, no. 10 (1971).

[343] Armando Vasquez-Ramos, phone interview by the author. Los Angeles. August 5, 2020.

[344] Garza, interview by the author.

[345] Andrade, *History of "La Raza" Newspaper and Magazine*. 29.

I would go collect."[346] The financial resources were used to print the newspapers, which was the most costly part of the process, printing anywhere from five to fifteen thousand copies per issue.[347] Yet, while the *La Raza* staff put in incredible work to financially sustain the newspaper, "Father Luce was in all probability the money man behind *La Raza*," suggests Razo. And when it came time to move out of the basement, into an old two-story mansion with a large basement just blocks from Lincoln High School, it was "Father Luce who hooked that up too."[348]

Father Luce and the church did not play an active role in the nuts and bolts of *La Raza*. Yet, he stood by to assist whenever he was needed. This was particularly true with the financial support he provided. For example, when Razo first started writing for the newspaper, he was disappointed in the lack of recruitment, direction, and long-term goals of the project. However, Ruth Robinson talked him into hanging in there, saying that they were working on a grant with the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), a faith-based organization based out of New York, where Father Luce was well connected. Having contributed over $250,000 to community organizing nationwide, Felipe Hinojosa suggests of the IFCO, "no religious organization was more active in funding Chicana/o movement projects."[349] Having already funded black organizations, Razo states that Father Luce "was key" to getting these funds for Chicana/os.[350]

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[346] Esparza, interview by the author..

[347] Luis Garza, "Bearing Witness to a Legacy: The Fiftieth Anniversary of *La Raza*," in La Raza (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of the American West: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2020), 5.

[348] Razo, interview by the author.

[349] Hinojosa, *Apostles of Change*, 15.

[350] Razo, interview by the author.

La Raza newspaper was one of the most profound and radical organizations that came out of the Church of the Epiphany and during Father Luce's tenure. As mentioned in the last chapter, Father Luce maintained a hands-off approach to the Chicana/o organizing happening in his basement. Luce gave them complete autonomy in the kind of communications and organization they wanted to become. He did not brag or even announce the support he provided to the organization; in fact, it is still unclear exactly how he was able to secure funding. Garza states of Luce, "he was a very skilled organizer in that he did not impose himself, he gave the support system, he created the vehicles as an incubator."[351] Even when they moved, Luce would stop by occasionally, but they never felt like he was checking on them: "everyone had confidence in Father Luce," remembers Garza.

One final point regarding *La Raza* newspaper was the labor of Ruth Robinson to establish and grow the media outlet. There was no doubting Robinson's stake in co-founding *La Raza*, along with Risco, yet her role is often overshadowed. As these interviews have brought to light the significance of Father Luce and the church to the Chicana/o movement, Robinson's contributions are also acknowledged by the Chicana/o activists interviewed here. In a 2013 oral interview for the Oral History Center of UCLA, Razo stated,

> Well, to me, the truth is that *La Raza* was really run by Ruth, and I guess we could say that both Ruth and Eleazar were the co-founders of *La Raza*, but the truth is that Ruth showed everyone how to do the layout work. She did the typing on—I believe was a Gestetner machine, almost looked like a teletype machine. Of course, I had experience from communications in the air force on all those type of machines. But Ruth was the one that took you to all the various steps, and not only that, she was the one that managed the office.[352]

[351] Garza, interview by the author.

[352] Joe Razo, interview by Virginia Espino for the Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles, March 18, 2013. https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz002hkgxn?counter=16

Razo went on to say that Robinson was the heart of *La Raza* newspaper. Garza also remembers her as the principal photographer. Lydia López recalls that Robinson "did all the work, all the typing on those machines, those were very complicated machines, it was not easy. She worked so hard."[353] The gendered division of labor was indeed present at *La Raza*, and the importance of Robinson to the development and publication of the newspaper has not received enough attention. Delgado Bernal states that "developing consciousness, whether through verbal or written communication, is less public than tasks normally associated with traditional interpretations of leadership… it is work that is done from behind the scenes, often unrecognized and unappreciated."[354] Ruth put in an incredible amount of labor into getting *La Raza* newspaper off the ground, in the development of its pioneering photojournalism, and in the training of a cadre of Chicana/os to push out an autonomous community newspaper, yet her contributions are much less recognized. Like Virginia Ram, the programs director at the Church of the Epiphany, Robinson's work was critical to the success of one of the most critical arms of the Chicana/o Movement, *La Raza* newspaper, and its subsequent role in organizing the movement at-large.

La Raza newspaper was one of the first visible manifestations of the work that the Parish of East Los Angeles was trying to accomplish. Father Luce exposed youth to organizers, leaders, and movements such as the United Farm Workers so that they could develop their own sense of identity, worth, and to imagine what kind of community, education, and political representation they wanted. *La Raza* newspaper was a materialization of the early dialogues, trainings, and exposure that Chicana/os were immersed in. It was one of the first catalysts that caught fire in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany, but it was not the only one. Its arrival would become

[353] López, interview by author.

[354] Delgado Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized," 128.

the springboard for other organizations that would come to fruition in the coming years, namely the high school Blowouts, *Catolicós por la Raza,* the Chicana/o Moratorium, and others.

Young Chicana/os for Community Action and the Brown Berets

One of the principal themes of *La Raza* newspaper was the educational inequities facing Mexican Americans in the 1960s. Chicanos averaged 8.6 years in school, while African Americans and whites averaged 10.5 and 12.1, respectively. *Los Angeles Times* journalist Ruben Salazar wrote, "to talk about barrio or ghetto kids making it to UCLA is kind of ridiculous when you realize what's happening to these kids in grammar school."[355] Dropout rates were high and graduation rates low. The dearth of material resources provided to Chicana/o youth would be matched by the lack of a culturally welcoming educational environment that made coming to school challenging. In East Los Angeles high schools, a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood, students were punished for speaking Spanish, they were academically tracked into vocational programs, and the contributions of Mexicans to United States history was seldom, if ever, considered.

The failure of the educational system to properly serve Mexican Americans has been well documented. The Americanization programs ignored the social and cultural capital of Chicana/os and other non-white students. Father Luce recognized the considerable devaluing of Mexican and Mexican American pride in the community when he arrived. He stated, "A lot of people felt, including the kids, how would I put it, that there would be negative consequences if you became too obviously Mexican, especially in the schools, where they were all Anglo teachers, and no Mexican or Mexican American principals, there was no Mexican Americans on the School

[355] Ruben Salazar, "Equal Chance to Education? Not Down in the Barrios," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1970, https://www.latimes.com/california/story/1970-06-12/column-equal-chan-to-education-not-down-in-the-barrios

Board, it was a total north American-ization, anglicization, if there was such a word, and it had been that way for years."[356] Schools, particularly in East Los Angeles, treated Mexican American students as second class citizens. David Sánchez, founder of the Brown Berets, remembers his time at Roosevelt High School:

> The schools were really like prisons during that time. They treated you like a prisoner. I remember when I was, like, in ninth grade, they would give us swats, corporal punishment for everything. They would swat you, corporal punishment, swat you for not bringing in your PTA money. They would swat you for chewing gum. They would swat you for coming in late. Sometimes they would swat you for being absent. It got ridiculous. Then one day, the teacher asked me—was going to give me a swat for talking in class, and then the teacher told me, "You want to try a little shock? We have a bar here. You put your hands on this bar and we just give you a little electrocution."[357]

The punishment of Mexican American youth, along with the curbing of their ethnic identities, and coupled with the lack of caring, had deep impacts on the psyche of Chicana/o youth. Ricardo Reyes recalls being "brainwashed by the system" and feeling like a "coconut, brown on the outside, white on the inside, not interested in my roots, did not want to know anything about Mexican stuff, did not want speak Spanish, didn't want to be called Ricardo, let people called me Richard."[358] Indeed, if students were made to not feel confident in their own skin, in their own language, history or traditions, then their lack of educational motivation or success should come as no surprise.

The cultural degradation was systemic and undeniable. This was one of the principal reasons Father Luce made immediate and dramatic changes to the church, to better represent the neighborhood and instill a sense of ethnic and cultural pride. He introduced mariachi Mass, gave sermons in Spanish, literally de-anglicized the religious figures, decorated the church with *papel*

[356] Luce, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[357] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

[358] Reyes, interview by the author.

picado, and introduced large street fiestas to show that the church valued the ethnic, historical, and cultural identity of its Mexican community. The faith politics of Father Luce centered the community he was in. He understood that if they could not see themselves as an organic part of the church, Chicana/os would not actively engage in it.

The educational crisis in East Los Angeles came to a head in 1968, when 10,000 students walked out in protest of their lack of quality education, disrespect of their culture and history, and the lack of Chicana/o teachers and administrators. It was the largest walkout in United States history. Yet, the walkouts did not happen in a vacuum, but followed a years-long process of radicalization and organizing. One of the first notable programs to address the educational inequities for Mexican American youth in Los Angeles was the Hess Kramer camp. The three-day event was sponsored by a Jewish rabbi named Alfred Wolf, through the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, and held at a Jewish youth facility, Wilshire Boulevard Temple's Camp Hess Kramer in Malibu, California. Sal Castro, one of the main organizers of the High School walkouts, stated, "one might say that the cradle of the Chicana/o Movement in L.A was to be, ironically found here in the Malibu mountains."[359]

The weekend long camp brought together about 100 Mexican American students from the greater Los Angeles area throughout the 1960s. It had a clear assimilationist tone, to encourage young Mexican Americans to be positive role models on their campuses, pursue higher education, become civically engaged, and improve their self-image so that "they may be free to develop themselves into the mainstream of Anglo American life."[360] Yet, when the

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[359] Castro, Sal, in Gustavo Arellano, "How a Jewish Youth Camp Birthed the 1968 East L.A Chicano Student Walkouts," *Tablet,* March 2, 2018, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-a-jewish-youth-camp-birthed-the-1968-east-l-a-chicano-student-walkouts.

[360] Delgado Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized," 118; Also see García, *Blowout!*

Mexican American students gathered, something unforeseeable happened; they shared common grievances, reflected on their social standing, and critiqued their second-class citizenship in their respective schools. Sal Castro volunteered at the first Mexican American Youth Leadership conference and remembers, “We started off very much trying to encourage the kids to do better in school, but all we got from the kids was anger, they were complaining, they said schools weren’t worth crap, that they were being mistreated, and channeled into industrial arts, and home [economics] and stuff like that and not very happy with the teachers, doors were locked, bathrooms were locked, horror stories, and we were not expecting that.”[361] The camp provided an opportunity for students to speak freely about the educational system's failure to encourage them into higher education, their tracking into the labor force, and to recognize that these inequalities were directed at them for being Mexican. Despite the assimilationist attempts of the conference, the camp, albeit unintentionally, politicized the youth, and each subsequent year their radicalization increased.

Victoria Castro was one of the first cohorts of students to attend the camp in 1963. She was a high achieving student at Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles, raised conservatively, and taught to not question the guidance given to her by her teachers and counselors. Castro remembers being a listener at her first conference, hearing students from all over the county articulate their experiences of marginalization. Attending the camp was her “Aha!” moment, she stated: “I developed a voice, I never questioned the school, I never would have disobeyed, or disrespected, or challenged anybody’s school decision for me. I would never tell my counselor, ‘that’s not right, you’re supposed to help me.’”[362] Castro was referring to her

[361] Sal Castro, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[362] V. Castro, interview by the author.

guidance counselor who discouraged her from applying to Mills College when she came in to ask for help. Mills is a four year all women's liberal arts college in the San Francisco Bay area. Castro's counselor mentioned that she should try to attend city college instead. Unsatisfied, Castro and another friend she met at the conference went to Los Angeles State College and applied on their own. The conference sparked the consciousness of students like Victoria Castro, raised to not speak up, encouraged to be docile, and tracked into vocational schools without understanding the inequalities those decisions entailed. Feeling inspired at her first conference, Castro returned year after year to assist as a youth counselor, leading discussions, facilitating workshops, and mentoring youth. As the conferences continued, the network of concerned Mexican American youth grew and Castro developed as a leader.

Three years later, after the 1966 conference, Victoria Castro, along with six other Mexican American youth began meeting outside of the camp. They carried over what they were learning and discussed the problems "in the community, the dropouts, and being pushed out, all the issues that became the demands of the walkout."[363] After several gatherings, they became a group called the Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA), "an East Los Angeles based youth group whose aims are to bring about political and social awareness in East Los Angeles through direct community action."[364] Victoria Castro, along with David Sánchez (vice-president), Moctesuma Esparza, Paula Crisostomo, Ralph Ramírez, Rachel Ochoa, George Licón, John Ortíz, and others, began meeting at Laguna Park. According to Crisostomo, Father Luce invited the group to meet at the Church of the Epiphany. Victoria Castro took the lead as the first president of the organization and the group immediately involved itself in educational

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[363] Esparza, interview by the author.

[364] September 16, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {1}, La Raza Publication Records.

issues. One of the first projects, stated Sánchez, was to "put together a questionnaire for students… we circulated the questionnaires at the different high schools… this questionnaire was to try to find the validity of what students were thinking and what students wanted. There was something like thirty-something questions in the questionnaire and we were able to give the results of the questionnaire to the School Board."[365] Another one of the big campaigns YCCA participated in was the Youth for Nava, where they backed and supported Dr. Julian Nava's run for Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education in 1967. Nava eventually became the first Mexican American to serve on the School Board.

David Sánchez developed into a critical figure to the development and evolution of the Young Citizens for Community Action. In the summer of 1966, Sánchez was a student at Roosevelt High School when he first walked into the Church of the Epiphany looking for a summer job. He met Father Luce, who offered him a counselor position to work with PELA's summer activities. While working at the church, Luce became a significant mentor to Sánchez and to his political development. García suggests that faith-based movements often "promote clergy as community organizers," and Luce's interactions with Sánchez show how Luce's mentorship was more political than religious in nature. Sánchez stated that Luce "would sit down and would talk to us, and talk to me about Jiu Jitsu power and community power, so I started learning about community power, political power, organizing power."[366] Sánchez became an increasingly visible member at the church. According to its February 1967 newsletter, Sánchez "was one of the most active members of the PELA summer staff."[367] The church, and Luce, were

[365] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

[366] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

[367] The Church of Epiphany Newsletter, February 1967, Epiphany Records.

proud of the work Sánchez was engaged in and updated the community on his activities in their newsletter, stating "DAVID SÁNCHEZ IS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF MAYOR'S YOUTH COMMITTEE."[368] Luce had connected Sánchez to political leaders across the city, including with the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. In fact, Sánchez became the first chairman of the Youth Advisory Council for the city of Los Angeles. Recognizing his unique involvement and leadership skills, the church stated in another newsletter, "We are predicting that the Mayor and the citizens of this city will be hearing much from David in the future."[369]

In the following summer, Luce and Sánchez were able to secure funding to bridge the Young Citizens for Community Action and the Church of the Epiphany. Using the Parish of East Los Angeles as the sponsoring entity, Sánchez and Luce received funds from the Vista Volunteers program, also known as the Domestic Peace Corps, to hire local youth. The idea for the Vista Associates was to bring in youth who were "well-familiar with the community and its problems; not be tarnished with the label of 'outsider;' and, remain in the community after the end of the program as valuable resources trained and experienced in community development techniques and motivated to help the efforts of their fellow citizens to improve their community."[370] When the financial resources came in, they were used to hire the members of YCCA. This is a critical moment in the history of YCCA, and the Chicana/o movement, because, as Victoria Castro remembers, when they became "Vista Volunteers, our meeting place was at the Church of the Epiphany, and as Vista Volunteers we met there every day, Monday through Friday."[371] YCCA joining the Church of the Epiphany on a daily basis, alongside *La Raza*

[368] Ibid., 3.

[369] Ibid.

[370] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, September 1967, Epiphany Records

newspaper, marks the moment the religious space of the church became a critical channel of a Chicana/o movement in its infancy.

If camp Hess Kramer was the cradle of the Chicana/o Movement, as Sal Castro suggested, then the Church of the Epiphany was its training grounds. It was at the Church of the Epiphany where YCCA, as Vista Volunteers, became increasingly engaged with the local politics, the community of organizers, organizations, Chicana/o professionals, and each other. Victoria Castro remembers: "the period of time that we were at the Church of the Epiphany, *La Raza* Newspaper begins, and they are downstairs…I remember us going to a lot of community meetings, parent advisory meetings, organized a lot of food drives for the farm workers, we would knock door to door… we would visit teen post and talk to them about going to college."[372] Some of the door knocking was for the farm workers but also for Dr. Julian Nava's election to the Los Angeles School Board of Education. Dr. Nava's election victory showed the growing community strength of the grassroots organizing that was beginning to express itself on the eastside. The PELA newsletter congratulated Dr. Nava and freported to the parish community that this "proved that concerned people can win election victories, even though funds at their disposal are minimal. This was a great victory for minority poor people, and especially for the Mexican American."[373] Nava's campaign allowed youth to be involved in traditional grassroots civic engagement organizing. At the same time, youth were being trained in activism through the protests and pickets of the UFW and anti-war movements. The Church of the Epiphany was providing an environment where Chicana/o youth were discovering the nuts and bolts of

[371] V. Castro, interview by the author.

[372] Ibid.

[373] The Church of Epiphany Newsletter, September 1967, Epiphany Records.

organizing. Whereas the camp Hess Kramer allowed them to discuss their inequalities, it was their time at Epiphany where Chicana/o youth were able to put those discussions into praxis, to actively engage in and challenge the inequities they were facing.

During the summer and fall of 1967, there was no shortage of activity at the Church of the Epiphany. Esparza remembers that there was constantly a gathering of one sort or another: "Luce would just say come on over, or tomorrow, or the next day, so and so was going to be here, or this weekend we are going to take a trip or we were going to visit some people and there was a car, or there was a van, and three, four, or five of us would jump in and they would take us places."[374] One of those trips, Esparza remembers, Luce rented a bus and took a delegation to meet Reis López Tijerina and La Alianza Federal de Mercedes in New Mexico, a movement trying to reclaim disputed land taken in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Carlos Montes remembers the impact La Alianza had on Chicana/o youth: "We were talking about better schools, civil rights, police abuse, better schools, and all of sudden this guy is talking about the land, taking back the land, this is our land… and that like radicalized us, politicized us, like shit! This is not about civil rights, this is about taking our land back."[375] Luce was facilitating and connecting national Chicana/o struggles, sending youth to Delano, Colorado, and New Mexico, further raising the *concientización* of YCCA members, those working with *La Raza* newspaper, and others who would come through the church. Esparza remembers Luce bringing in Manuel Martinez, an artist and organizer with Corky Gonzalez, to build the altar that was donated to the farm workers (Figure 4.2). Esparza stated, "I remember that he was there at the church crafting it from wood and then plastering and painting it, and it was a beautiful thing to see that this piece

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[374] Esparza, interview by the author.

[375] Montes, interview by the author.

of art was being created there."[376] Martinez would talk to the youth about what was happening in Denver, connecting the struggles to East Los Angeles. YCCA also attended meetings with Black organizations and leaders, such as the United Slaves (US), the Black Panthers, and Stokely Carmichael. Images of the Watts uprisings and the Black Power movements were also likely fresh in their minds. A clear sign of the increasing radicalization of YCCA during their time at Epiphany was their first name change. The group went from being the Young Citizens for Community Action, to adopting the term Chicano. They would then be known as the Young Chicanos for Community Action.

Figure 4.2. Emanuel Martinez, *Farm Workers' Altar,* 1967, acrylic on mahogany and plywood, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the International Bank of Commerce in honor of Antonio R. Sanchez, Sr., 1992.95. https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/farm-workers-altar-33081

[376] Esparza, interview by the author.

YCCA members then discussed getting their own space. They talked about finding a place where they could hang out, talk, and organize on their own when the idea of a coffee house began to float around. Coffee houses were "a thing in the 60s, there is this whole mythology of coffee houses going back centuries where people get together and talk."[377] Sánchez remembers hanging out at the Cheshire Cat, a coffee shop near the University of Southern California when he was in high school. There was also a coffee shop hangout in Watts called Watts Happening. These local hangouts inspired YCCA to want their own space. While at the Church of the Epiphany, Sánchez asked Virginia Ram, the programs director, how to write a grant. Ram assisted Sánchez to write a proposal to Jack Pratt, another connection through Father Luce, who was the head of the Southern California Council of Churches, for funds to open a coffee house. Using language likely pulled from the anti-poverty programs, the proposal stated that the philosophy of the coffee shop is to "encourage the non-involved youth to develop habits of self-direction and motivation with the eventual hope that leadership will arise from the residents of the area concerned."[378] However, the proposal did not hide its goal of empowering the Mexican American community, sharing that its purpose was to "act as the glue for an organization, an organization that will move – to restore the identity and dignity of the Mexican-American and give the Mexican-American teenager a chance to contribute constructively to his community."[379]

The YCCA coffee house, La Piranya, opened its doors at 5338 E. Olympic Blvd in the Fall of 1967. Once the funds were secured, La Piranya introduced itself in a much more radical tone. In the first edition of *La Raza* newspaper, it stated, "The Piranya wasn't brought to East

[377] Ibid.

[378] Undated proposal for La Piranya coffeehouse, Epiphany Records.

[379] Ibid.

Los Angeles by some businessman from L.A. or some anxious parents group, or Society for the Improvement of Young People. A group of teenagers from the Eastside got the idea and worked on it with David Sánchez, vice president of the Young Citizens for Community Action, YCCA, leading the group."[380] La Piranya had two grand openings because the first one failed to get the kind of attention it sought. Its second opening was more successful, having been advertised in the October 6, 1967 edition of *La Raza* newspaper.[381] The Church of the Epiphany's September newsletter also reported on La Piranya's opening and on the donations of "paint, tables, chairs, [and] coffee urns" they received from church supporters and other parishes to get it up and running.[382] The newsletter also encouraged the community to continue supporting the coffee house until it can become self-sufficient.

The opening of La Piranya was another transitional moment for YCCA. Originally, Victoria Castro mentioned that YCCA "had sort of two missions -- one was to improve the educational system and promote kids going to college, and the guys in the group were more on police brutality. That was David and them, and then I went to the other."[383] When YCCA moved from the church into La Piranya, Victoria Castro signed the lease because she was the only one old enough at the time. However, before long, Sánchez would take charge of the organization. Castro cites philosophical differences with Sánchez and that she was about to start up again at California State University, Los Angeles, as the causes of her stepping away from her position as YCCA president. Sánchez, already focused on issues of police brutality, further steered the organization in that direction, albeit not abandoning issues of educational inequalities. He

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[380] September 4, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {0}, La Raza Publication Records.

[381] October 1, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {2}, La Raza Publication Records.

[382] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, September 28, 1967, Epiphany Records.

[383] V. Castro, interview by the author.

became increasingly inspired by the Black power movements and sought to make the organization more militant.

As shared in the last chapter, the first beret that would come to signify the Brown Berets was given to Sánchez by Virginia Ram of the Church of the Epiphany. YCCA had already heard about a militant Chicana/o group in San Jose that sported green berets, just as the Black Panthers had. One day, Cruz Olmeda, a member of YCCA, brought in a box of brown berets into La Piranya and everyone was handed a hat. Consequently, Esparza states, "The Brown Berets were born out of wearing brown berets… it was organic and it was just like, 'this is a cool name'… and they all wanted to emulate the Black Panthers, so they wanted their own look."[384] With a little help from the sheriff's department that began labeling them as the brown berets, the Young Chicanos for Community Action became forever known as the Brown Berets.

With Sánchez as the new prime minister of the Brown Berets, the organization took a considerably radical turn from their early days as the Young Citizens for Community Action. Yet, their process of radicalization had already started at the Church of the Epiphany, where they shared space with *La Raza* newspaper and were exposed to other radical organizers, Chicana/o, Black, and otherwise; their radicalization was accelerated due to their racialized experiences as Chicana/o youth. One important moment that Sánchez identifies as key to his own personal radicalization was a run in with the police as the head of Mayor Yorty's Youth Advisory Council. Sánchez recalled being pulled over by a police officer who physically assaulted him. Sánchez snapped back, saying "'I'm the chairman of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council,' and he [the police officer] just laughed."[385] Sánchez shared about this run-in with the police to the

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[384] Esparza, interview by author.

[385] Sanchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

mayor, but “it seemed like they didn’t do anything about it.” It was this moment that Sánchez realized the limitations of working within the government.

The Brown Berets became the symbol of Chicana/o militancy, and their outfits matched their identity. They became known for their bush jackets, khaki attire, and military structure. Yet, originally, they only wore the beret, which they could easily put on and take off. Later, as the organization developed, their military style khaki shirts and pants were added, along with the patch on the beret, a yellow pentagon emblem designed by Johnny Parsons. According to Carlos Montes, the emblem contained a cross that “signifies the suffering of the Chicana/o people. The two rifles were that we will defend our people and then the little beret is the beret and then la causa.”[386] The Brown Berets adopted a Chicana/o cultural nationalistic character, an in-your-face oppositional attitude, and an ethos of defending the barrio by any and all means necessary. They inspired chapters of Brown Berets to organize across the southwest.[387] Yet, at the time of the founding of the Brown Berets, there were no militant Chicano organizations in Los Angeles, and Sánchez intended to fill that void.

Conclusion

In the mid 1960s, a Mexican American *conscientization* was developing quickly. Much has been said and documented about the Catholic church’s reluctance to support Chicana/o youth and the farm workers during this time, but understudied in the historiography of Chicana/o studies is the way religious institutions and leaders stood alongside Chicana/o organizers, activists, and youth to make real their socio-political goals of self-determination. This chapter

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[386] Montes, interview with the author.
[387] David Montejano, *Sancho’s Journal: Exploring the Political Edge with the Brown Berets* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

uncovered the critical role of the Church of the Epiphany and the religious leadership of its clergy and laity as they found themselves front and center of a developing Chicana/o consciousness. It is a profound intervention in the secular history of the Chicana/o movement.

This chapter details the events between Father Luce's arrival in October of 1965 through 1967, just before 10,000 students walked out of their schools to protest their unequal educational treatment. In a little over two years, Luce played a central and active role in a developing movement that would become the largest mobilization of Mexican Americans in United States history. Upon receiving the PELA baton from Father Kouletsis, Luce made immediate and meaningful relationships with Mexican Americans and Chicana/os. Luce's relationship with the farm workers swung the doors of the church wide open, creating a crossroads of political activity that would accelerate the radicalization of Chicana/o youth in the cities.

The evolution of the Young Citizens for Community Action is a prime example of the rapid radicalization of Chicana/o youth. YCCA was founded in 1966 as a non-threatening reformist educational justice organization. Father Luce invited them into the church and within a year and a half they transformed into the Brown Berets. This speaks to the incredible momentum in East Los Angeles at the time, but also to the meaningful involvement and facilitation of Father Luce, who played almost no role in the YCCA, but orchestrated and facilitated an environment where they became radicalized. Luce understood well that "only the poor and oppressed can change conditions for themselves."[388] Luce's relationship with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the farm worker movement turned the Church of the Epiphany into a training ground and solidified the parish as a meaningful ally in the struggle for Mexican American self-determination. The camp at Hess Kramer indeed played an important role in the *concientización*

[388] García, *Father Luis Olivares*, 10.

of Mexican American youth. Yet, the conference was only for three days, and once a year. The camp may have been the cradle of the Chicana/o movement, but how did students sustain their inspiration for social change? What mechanisms were in place for them to continue the momentum from the camp? How did students continue to connect with each other and the movement at-large? As this chapter has shown, it was the religious leadership of Father Luce that fanned the flames of those early sparks of political activity. It was at the church where the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles got on its feet and took those first steps. The invitation from Father Luce for members of YCCA to meet at the Church of the Epiphany is a critical and underappreciated moment in the development of Chicana/o movement history.

In 1967, when YCCA members, as Vista Volunteers, met at the Church of the Epiphany from Monday to Friday, their exposure and participation in the organizing and political activity of Chavez, Huerta, the farm workers, the campaign of Julian Nava, Corky Gonzalez, the Social Action Training Center, the Community Service Organization, the Welfare Rights Organization, La Alianza Federal de Mercedes, the Crusade for Justice, the Black Panthers, and the United Slaves, among others, radicalized them in profound fashion. The church gave them a safe space to engage in the radical activism that was going on around them. Victoria Castro stated, "truly, if I had to say there was a center of the Chicano movement, it was Father Luce's church. It was a fabulous personal wonder that this man gave us a location to blossom and develop and actually challenge your thoughts and let you organize towards them."[389] Priest and historian William Wauters also stated, "every night was a graduate course in organizing and understanding what was to be known as "La Causa."[390] Elisear Risco, founder of *La Raza* newspaper, remembers

[389] Victoria Castro, interview by Virginia Espino for the Center of Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles, March 1, 2013. https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz002hkcwp?counter=11.

[390] Wauters, "The Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church," 402.

how much of the “the development of the group of youth came from the Vista program.”[391] While YCCA members were immersed in a political environment that matched what was occurring in the African American civil rights movement and anti-war movements, these political actions had not yet caught wind in the southwestern United States. The Church of the Epiphany became the incubator of that flame and allowed for all the emerging Mexican American organizations and movements to intersect. Father Luce paved the path to the church and once Chicana/os came in, Luce became a bridge to something else.

This was also the case with *La Raza* newspaper, one of the most prolific organizations and arteries of communication for the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles and beyond. It is not a stretch to say that without the Church of the Epiphany, Chicana/o history would not have known *La Raza* newspaper and its subsequent impact on the Chicana/o movement. Father Luce recruited Risco and Robinson to come and work at the church. Several of the interviewees suggested that Luce and Risco had been discussing replicating a media communications arm similar to what they had done for the UFW. Father Luce offered the newspaper the basement of the church to set up, develop, and print the publication for free. When funds ran low, Luce and Robinson secured funds from the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization. Once they became established, *La Raza* evolved into the central meeting point of organizing activity. And when the basement of the church was not sufficient to hold *La Raza*’s level of activity, Father Luce assisted the newspaper/organization to find a new space (a bridge to something else).

La Raza newspaper became a radical voice for Chicana/os by Chicana/os. Its loud, overtly political, and countercultural content spoke to a developing Chicana/o consciousness that

[391] Risco, interview with Rocio Zamora.

became increasingly oppositional. To the surprise of many, it was founded in the basement of an Episcopal church. Looking through a lens of faith politics, the church assisted Chicana/os to "acquire basic human rights and promote an 'insurgent citizenship' in support of human rights."[392] Father Luce gave absolute autonomy to *La Raza* newspaper to say, do, and engage with the self-determination of Chicana/os in any way it saw fit. According to the editors and staff of *La Raza*, he never interfered with their organizing. Risco stated, "The church was never trying to direct the community what to do, but if the community wanted to do something, the church was there to motivate them, give them their blessing."[393] As a result, *La Raza* further stimulated and activated the *concientizacion* of Chicana/os in East Los Angeles. With the Church of the Epiphany as their base, they provided a meeting place for Chicana/os to meaningfully congregate. *La Raza* would not only develop into the voice of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, it became one of the critical organizations involved in, not only reporting on, the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

For the youth that would spark the Chicana/o movement, they found a rather remarkable figure in Father Luce and in the Church of the Epiphany. In this early stage of training, Esparza remembers that several members of YCCA were "beginning to look at Father Luce as an exceptional person… and we were always wondering, where did he come from? What's up with him?"[394] He supported so many of the youth to become agents of change in their communities, and in whatever way they understood their role to be; perhaps the most controversial as David Sánchez, hired by Father Luce as a summer counselor at the Church of the Epiphany. Father

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[392] García, *Father Luis Olivares,* 9.

[393] Risco, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[394] Esparza, interview by the author.

Luce gave him books to read on organizing, connected him to politicos, assisted him to access funds, and supported the YCCA to get their own space; and when 10,000 students walked out to protest their lack of quality education, Luce stood by to defend them. The Chicana/o movement was just about to explode, largely in part to the environment that Father Luce created at the Church of the Epiphany. Whereas this chapter detailed the sparks of an emerging movement, the next chapter shows how it caught fire, and continued showing the unwavering support of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany.

Chapter V
The Last Shall be First

"La Causa that Cesar Chavez started in Delano gained a new stronghold in East Los Angeles."[395]

"The first 15 days of March of the year 1968 will be known in the "new" history of the Southwest as the days of the BLOWOUT."[396]

"The Chicano people, through its Moratorium, is now saying that the front line for Chicano youths is not in Vietnam but is the struggle for social justice here in the United States."[397]

In the 1960s communities of color responded to their history of second-class citizenship by organizing non-violent protests, marches, civil disobedience, and strikes to demand their civil rights. The first half of the decade began with the African American civil rights movement. By 1965, Black Power was a slogan heard around the world. Yet, up until then, Mexican Americans lacked any real mass movement. However, all of that changed in the second half of the decade, starting when the United Farm Workers marched from Delano to the state capitol in 1966. The farm worker march is largely considered the beginning of the Mexican American or Chicana/o movement.[398] The labor dispute in the fields created a ripple effect that touched all sectors of American society. The effects were particularly potent for the socio-political realities facing Mexicans in the United States, especially for young urban Mexican Americans. If farm workers were able to organize to protest their unequal treatment in the fields, then Mexican Americans in the cities began to believe that they could too.

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[395] October 15, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {3}, La Raza Publication Records, 1001. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as La Raza Publication Records, 18.

[396] March 31, 1969. *La Raza* Newspaper. Volume [2], Number {5}. La Raza Publication Records: 1.

[397] Muñoz, Rosalio, in Ernesto Chávez, *Mi Raza Primero* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 65.

[398] Quiñones and Vasquez, "Chicano Movement," 305.

By the beginning of 1968, inspired by the farm workers and the civil rights movement, important Chicana/o movement organizations had been established in Los Angeles. This research thus far has shown the unique role that the Church of the Epiphany played in the development of a Chicana/o identity and the development of a mass Mexican American civil rights movement. Father Luce was a critical figure at the church during this time. He had a unique ability to bring people together, and by opening the doors of the church to the community, he accelerated a process whereby Mexican Americans could plan, critique, learn, network, and organize. Luce's relationship with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and the farm workers brought the movement into the church, and Luce also brought the church to the movement. He organized busloads of eastside residents to travel to the fields of Delano to support and become inspired by the farm workers. Additionally, Father Luce invited Chavez, Huerta, Corky Gonzalez, and other Mexican American leaders to speak from the church pulpit, integrating a faith politics so that young Mexican American youth, with very few opportunities to be proud of who they were, could become inspired by the political leaders of the day.

Reading the actions of the Church of the Epiphany through a faith politics lens highlights the effects of their religious leadership. Mario García states that faith-based movements "seek to acquire basic human rights and promote an 'insurgent citizenship' in support of human rights."[399] Father Luce and the church facilitated a space where newly established collectives found an opportunity to develop their organizing chops. The Young Chicana/os for Community Action (YCCA) were one of the early organizations founded during this time. At the same time, with Father Luce's blessing, *La Raza* newspaper launched, organizing and printing out of the basement of the church and playing a critical role in announcing and promoting the newfound

[399] García, *Father Luis Olivares*, 9.

idea of Chicanismo. The second half of the 1960s was filled with opportunities for these new Chicana/o collectives to get their feet wet in eastside politics and to build an insurgent foundational network with other Chicana/os. All of this energy exploded in March of 1968, when 10,000 students in East Los Angeles walked out of their high schools to demand a quality educational system. They were the first to bring the Chicana/o movement from the fields into the cities.

Whereas chapter four examined the Church of the Epiphany's impact on the development of Chicana/o organizations, this chapter details how those critical organizations went on to initiate the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. Inspired by the civil rights movement in the South, Black Power, Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, and with the support of the Church of the Epiphany, urban Chicana/os enlisted themselves into the struggle for civil rights. By examining the Chicana/o Movement through the lens of religious politics, the role and leadership of the Church of the Epiphany in the development of a Chicana/o identity and the movement in Los Angeles becomes abundantly apparent. The church contained the political tensions of Mexican Americans and facilitated a process where they could safely engage in the social-political activity that was affecting all people of color in the 1960s.

Yet, a principal thesis of this chapter is not so much focused on the role of the church, but on how Father Luce and the church shifted to the periphery when the action started. In other words, when the high school Blowouts, the School Board sit-ins, or the Chicana/o Moratorium were in full effect, Father Luce and the church stepped aside. They did not try to lead, they did not try to take credit; in fact, they took direction from the leaders that emerged. When they were asked to wear their collars, they did. When they were asked to defend the actions of Chicana/os, they did. When they were asked to help organize an ecumenical press conference denouncing the

repressive actions of police after the Chicano Moratorium against the war in Vietnam, they did. But they also refused to speak, leaving the space for Chicana/os to speak for themselves. The faith politics theoretical framework that this study is grounded in stresses "that only the poor and oppressed can change conditions for themselves."[400] As such, Father Luce was mindful of the self-determining nature of the developing Chicana/o identity and understood that his position as a "Yankee from Massachusetts" was to be on the sidelines, supporting wherever he could, and indeed, he did. [401]

This chapter documents the critical roles of the Young Chicana/os for Community Action, the Brown Berets, and *La Raza* newspaper, organizations with a direct connection to the Church of the Epiphany and to the pivotal moments of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. I begin with the East Los Angeles high school walkouts and then turn to the campaigns for the release of the thirteen Chicanos arrested for their role in organizing the student strike. The punitive actions taken against the organizers provided an opportunity for the church to publicly show its support of the Chicana/o students and their movement. One of the thirteen Chicanos arrested was the beloved teacher and organizer, Sal Castro. When Castro was removed from his teaching position at Lincoln High School, additional demonstrations were held for his reinstatement. Father Luce and the church, once again, stood alongside the Chicana/o community in their demands for the return of Castro. Chicana/os occupied the Los Angeles Unified School Board for six days and were eventually arrested alongside two clergymen, Father Luce and Father Wood of the Church of the Epiphany. Lastly, I examine the church's role in supporting the Chicana/o Moratorium of 1970, the largest anti-war demonstration by any ethnic group in the

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[400] García, *Father Luis Olivares*, 10.

[401] Luce, interview by Rocio Zamora.

United States at the time. This chapter adds to the evidence of the critical role of religion, and specifically that of the Church of the Epiphany, to the Chicana/o movement during the late 1960s. As many Chicana/o organizers have suggested throughout this research, without the Church of the Epiphany, the Mexican American civil rights movement in Los Angeles would have looked entirely different.

The High School Blowouts

In the middle of the 20th century, the educational situation in East Los Angeles was dire, dropout rates were high, and graduation rates low. With a largely Anglicized system of schooling that was unrelatable to the predominantly Mexican American population on Los Angeles's eastside, Mexican American students felt as if their education "defined them as intellectually inferior and placed them in segregated and inferior facilities where instructors schooled them primarily on vocational subjects."[402] Sal Castro, a teacher at Lincoln High School, said that Lincoln was an industrial arts high school, where "boys would be directed into auto shop so they could become good mechanics. The girls would get a 'secretarial science' or business education. The school possessed a lot of so-called shop classes."[403] The Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference at Camp Hess Kramer (discussed in chapter three), sponsored by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, was an important intervention that highlighted the lack of attention that Chicana/o youth received, particularly as it related to higher education. Meant to encourage Mexican American youth into considering college, the three-day conference sparked important conversations from eastside students regarding their tracking and other forms

[402] Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Texas: UNT Press, 1990), 66.

[403] Mario García, *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 112.

of discrimination against them. After the conclusion of the 1966 conference, a small group of youth began organizing, calling themselves the Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA). They continued conversations around the educational inequalities discussed at the retreat. A critical moment in the organization's early tenure was when Father Luce invited them to meet at the Church of the Epiphany, which had already begun cultivating a radical socio-political environment. While at the church, YCCA received important organizational training because Father Luce was heavily involved with, and supporting, the rising Mexican American movement, namely the United Farm Workers. While much of the early focus of the Mexican American civil rights movement was directed at supporting the farm worker movement, Chicana/os in the cities began to ask, what about us?

However, the farm worker movement provided important opportunities for Mexican Americans to create organizational infrastructure and networks. The Church of the Epiphany was one of those critical hubs of activity, both for the farm workers and for urban Mexican Americans. Colleges were another area that Chavez relied on for support. Mexican Americans on college campuses, along with leftist organizations, created boycott clubs and strike committees in order to support the farm workers. These clubs organized food and clothing drives, fundraisers, pickets, housing, and caravans to the farm workers' headquarters.[404] Additionally, these organizational networks were being developed while Chicanismo, as a countercultural identity was becoming increasingly popularized and radicalized across the southwest as "many Chicano students began to believe that they were not just supporters of the Movement but a driving force."[405] These two factors were critical in creating a Chicana/o youth eastside infrastructure

[404] Carlos Muñoz, Jr. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso), 74.

[405] Montoya, *Chicano Movement*, 106.

that was beneficial in the coming years. While there was some mass organizing in the Mexican American community at large in the early part of the1960s, the latter half of the decade saw these organizational networks blossom, especially in the areas of education.

Sal Castro, a teacher at Lincoln High School, became a central organizer of the walkouts. As one of the few Mexican American faculty, Castro was invited to participate at each of the Mexican American Youth Leadership Conferences at Camp Hess Kramer. Castro points to the 1967 Hess Kramer conference as a pivotal precursor to the high school Blowouts. The conference was in its fourth year, and each new cohort saw a rise in the *conscientización* of the Chicana/o youth. Attendees from the first several years returned as mentors and were in a better position to facilitate and channel the feelings of the high school youth. As a result, students were becoming increasingly radicalized. A KTLA news segment corroborates Castro's perceptions of an increased political fervor that year. Channel 5 produced a segment on the Hess Kramer conference in 1967 and concluded their report by saying, "The main impression we bring back is that a mood of impatience, a growing sense of urgency. The young Mexican American is tired of waiting for the Promised Land. As one of them told us: 'It must be today, not mañana.'"[406] Interestingly, 1967 was also one year after YCCA had been founded and gained some organizing experience at the Church of the Epiphany. Father Luce had taken YCCA students on the UFW's march to Sacramento and involved them in organizing pickets and food drives. It is likely that members of YCCA returned to the camp in 1967 with momentum and motivation for what they could do next.

After returning from the 1967 Hess Kramer camp, YCCA became involved in another major campaign, the election of Dr. Julian Nava to the Los Angeles Unified School Board. The

[406] *Today not Mañana,* in García, *Blowout*, 139.

February 1967 Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA) newsletter stated that the United Community Council selected "a candidate to run for the LA Board of Education. The Leadership is well aware that the Mexican community is not represented in any of our governmental offices that can speak to the real needs and issues which are so numerous and urgent in the eastern part of our city."[407] Dr. Nava was one of their own, a Mexican American born in East Los Angeles, and who had graduated from the local Roosevelt High School. He was one of the few Mexican Americans who had escaped being tracked into shop classes, graduating from Pomona College, then receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard. He was not the most radical of candidates, but that may have also been the reason he was considered electable. In 1967, School Board candidates needed to be elected by the whole county at-large, appealing to all Los Angeles residents, not just the district, as they are today. The Mexican American community was especially enthusiastic about the possibility of Dr. Nava representing them on the School Board. Mario García states, "every Mexican American organization endorsed him."[408]

The Church of the Epiphany and YCCA were already involved in the farm workers' struggle in the Central Valley; however, Dr. Nava's School Board campaign provided them an opportunity to engage in the politics of their local community. The church, its members, and YCCA became active in Dr. Nava's eventual victory as the first Mexican American on the Los Angeles Unified School Board. The Church of the Epiphany published in their newsletter that we are "privileged to have a small, but active, part in this campaign on behalf of our people."[409] Victoria Castro, president of YCCA, remembers the election of Nava as "a big victory for us,

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[407] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, February 1967, Epiphany Records, 4.

[408] García, *Blowout!*, 141.

[409] The Church of the Epiphany Newsletter, 1967, 2.

because this is before the Voting Rights Act and you had to run, and Latinos didn't win citywide. So, we handled, as youth, our campaign, we handled the Eastside. I remember doing that old campaigning in trucks with microphones, and driving up and down streets. Now I think it's hilarious. But that's how we campaigned."[410] Castro, with a self-described conservative personality, was developing her leadership capacity through her involvement with the YCCA at the Church of the Epiphany and through Dr. Nava's School Board campaign.

As such, when Victoria Castro and others from YCCA returned from that important 1967 Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference after having discussed the failures of the educational system, the Church of the Epiphany provided them the opportunity to plug right into the election campaign of the first Mexican American on the Board of Education. Their involvement and participation was significant, and, as Victoria Castro explained, youth were becoming agents of change. Would YCCA have had the opportunity to be as involved in Dr. Nava's campaign were they not already meeting at the church? That answer may never be known, however, it was their relationship with the church and its political involvement that further raised the consciousness, leadership, and organizational skills of Mexican American youth in East Los Angeles prior to the High School Blowouts. Rather than talking about their lack of representation in decision making positions, as they had at the Hess Kramer camp, YCCA was able to put their words into action. Additionally, organizing to have one of their own on the School Board would be an important factor in the coming days.

The election of Dr. Nava brought great hopes to the Mexican American barrios. Not because they had incredible faith in him as a politician, but because it was one of the first times the community was able to flex its political power locally. In the first edition of *La Raza*

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[410] Victoria Castro, interview by Virginia Espino for Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles, March, 1, 2013. https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz002hkcwp?counter=11

newspaper, published in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany, it stated, “the Nava campaign was an excellent beginning, but we must have even more ‘Grass Roots’ support and representation at both the state and local level.”[411] The Church of the Epiphany was also overjoyed at the extensive grassroots efforts of the Mexican American community, stating in their newsletter, “In an amazing and wonderful affront to all the predictions of the ‘political experts,’ and incumbent member of the Board of Education (Mr. Smoot) was defeated for re-election…and, most surprisingly by a minority candidate.”[412] The Church of the Epiphany was housing and facilitating YCCA members, *La Raza* newspaper, and their own congregation, in a training in civic engagement and grassroots organizing. The election of Dr. Nava was one of the first tangible and meaningful fruits of their labor.

After the Nava campaign, YCCA directed their attention to their own educational issues. Sal Castro was one of the few Mexican American teachers at Lincoln, but by far the most progressive. In 1964, at thirty-one years old, Castro was transferred to Lincoln High School. When he arrived, he became immediately critical and vocal of the conditions facing Mexican American students, the lack of counselors, the tracking of students, and the lack of respect for Mexican American history and culture. Castro recalls his time in the teachers’ lounge when his colleagues would belittle Mexican students, saying, “These kids, I don’t know. I teach them all I can, do everything I can, and then June comes and they all go back to Mexico and forget everything I’ve taught them.”[413] The deficit mentality so rampant at Lincoln irked Castro and convinced him that something needed to be done to change this culture, so he began to organize.

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[411]September 4, 1967, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {0}, La Raza Publication Records, 1.

[412] The Church of the Newsletter, September 1967, Epiphany Records, 2.

[413] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout!,* 116.

He was already well respected by Chicana/o students at Lincoln and his involvement in the Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference at Camp Hess Kramer became another important area where he had an opportunity to raise the issue of Mexican American inequality with the youth.

The proximity of Lincoln High School and the Church of the Epiphany was a critical factor in bringing Sal Castro, Father Luce, and the Chicana/o youth who would organize the high school walkouts together. Castro and Father Luce did not become meaningfully close, but shared the same goals – supporting Mexican American youth and developing their leadership. Sal would come to Epiphany for meetings, events, and participate in the many campaigns the church was hosting. He says of Father Luce, "As a friend, as a colleague, he was supportive, I could never say a negative word."[414] In fact, Sal recognized the importance of having supportive clergy and he often encouraged Father Luce to wear his priest's collar as much as he could. Both Sal and Luce played critically supportive roles for students, but Father Luce was much more on the sidelines when they were organizing the walkouts. He understood that it was important, and most meaningful, if Chicana/os were organizing themselves.

Several of the youth working at Epiphany were students of Castro, but others, like Victoria Castro, first remember meeting Sal for the first time while at the Church of the Epiphany. During one YCCA meeting at the church, Victoria remembers "going to meet Sal Castro and I remember his *platica,* there had been an article in *Time Magazine* that described East LA and it talked about the streets smelling of wine, it was a very negative ad and I remember him having that magazine and saying, 'This is what they are saying about you', in the sense of 'what are we going to do to change this narrative.'"[415] For Sal, this article was the straw

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[414] S. Castro, interview by Rocío Zamora.

that broke the camel's back. If articles like this could be published about Mexican Americans without any repercussions, then, Sal believed, the youth were the only ones that could demand meaningful change. Victoria recalls that it was Sal who had planted a seed about a big student strike or demonstration. YCCA was indeed receptive to the idea of a student protest, however, its members also felt the need to provide evidence, tangible proof, that schools were in fact treating Mexican Americans as second-class citizens.

As such, in the fall of 1967, while at the Church of the Epiphany, YCCA developed a survey to gauge eastside students' responses to the conditions of their schooling. The idea was to gather data that they could then present to the administration and the School Board. The surveys were composed of about a dozen questions inquiring about the state of education for Mexican American high school students in East Los Angeles. Victoria Castro was also an afterschool programs director at the time and used her access to a mimeograph to make hundreds of copies of the surveys in order to disseminate. YCCA, and others, split into teams to distribute them across the various high schools, Lincoln, Garfield, Roosevelt, Wilson, and in various government sponsored Teen Post programs around the city, one of which was at the Church of the Epiphany. According to Victoria Castro,

> We would go and push that we wanted better education, better schools, and we needed your input. There were questions on there like, you know, have you talked to a counselor? Have they told you about going to college? Do you feel like they pushed you out, if you've dropped out? Very, just direct questions, and we were gathering evidence to show whoever we were going to present these to in the school district, "Look how you do not service our community. Look how we're not encouraged to go to college. Look how we don't have classes to attend college to prepare us." So we were gathering that kind of documentation. That was the purpose of the survey.[416]

[415] V. Castro, interview by the author.

[416] V. Castro, interview by Virginia Espino.

YCCA gathered hundreds of surveys which were then compiled into a report that they prepared to send to the superintendent and the Los Angeles Unified School Board District to see how they would react. With Dr. Nava, whom they had helped elect now on the School Board, the students did receive some attention and concern regarding the documented inequities eastside students were facing. However, "Board members politely received the petitions and then discarded them."[417]

While YCCA was organizing the surveys, *La Raza* newspaper was being launched in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany. Educational issues became front and center for the new publication. Joe Razo, longtime editor of La Raza, remembers discussions about meeting the community where they are at, and doing research and publications about things they cared about. Education was an easy target, Razo stated, because "no one is against education, no one can say, 'no, I don't want you to be educated, I don't want these kids to be educated.'"[418] In the months prior to the walkouts, *La Raza* newspaper was documenting the educational inequities on the eastside, from the dropout rates, the prevalence of tracking, lack of Mexican American teachers, and even cold lunches, while at the same time publicly pressuring Dr. Nava to provide more attention to his Spanish speaking constituents. *Chicano Student News* was another important publication founded in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany. They were more focused on high schools and continued communicating to students the lack of quality schooling on the eastside. These Chicana/o underground newspapers were passed out in schools and local teen hangouts and were making the case that something dramatic needed to change in the educational system. Victoria Castro remembers that educating students about the need for a large student

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[417] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Woman in Twentieth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 102.

[418] Razo, interview by the author.

demonstration was important in those early planning meetings. They wanted students to really understand why they would be walking out. Paula Crisostomo shared about her role in disseminating the Chicana/o underground newspapers: "I would bring a whole stack to school and I would give a few to people, and they would pass them out to their friends. And then the school said we couldn't do it anymore, so I'd get to school early and I'd leave them around the campus. I would go into the bathroom and I would put them in the bathroom, the cafeteria, where I knew kids hung out."[419] As such, the role of *La Raza* and *Chicano Student News* served as the educational and communications arm of the walkouts.

Sal Castro also began getting the word out about a walkout to college students. He met with newly created organizations, such as United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Mexican American Student Association (MASA), and others from East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles State College (now Cal State LA), San Fernando State College (now Cal State Northridge), Long Beach State, Occidental, and Loyola Marymount to seek their support. Castro developed a broad network of Mexican American students from his participation at the Hess Kramer camp. He remembers, "I got as many phone numbers and addresses as I could, knowing that this would be crucial in organizing any protest that would involve kids, not only at Lincoln but throughout the Eastside. This was before e-mail and cell phones, so all I had was a handwritten list of these contacts, but it would come in handy."[420] Victoria Castro and Moctesuma Esparza, YCCA members that were now in college, also served as critical liaisons between the high school strike committees and the colleges. Sal reminded the college students that the high schools were already organizing and taking the lead, but they

[419] Crisostomo, in Delgado-Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized," 128.

[420] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout!,* 140.

needed their bodies to function as a barrier between them and any police repression. This was also a role that the Brown Berets were intent on serving -- protection for the youth.

The lack of meaningful attention to the surveys convinced students that the time for a massive civil disobedience was the rational next step. Tensions began to rise between students and administration as word about a mass action spread. A meeting was held at the Brown Beret headquarters at La Piranya coffee house between the various strike committees to formalize plans for a walkout. A particular concern coming from Sal Castro was that any mass walkout needed to be organized and disciplined. He worried about the violent repression that might come from the police, which is why he put so much effort in recruiting college students to assist. The committee, to the chagrin of some of the more radical members like the Brown Berets, decided on a June date for the walkout. Sal Castro was pleased with the extra time because he thought it was necessary in order to develop the demands with input from all the area schools. Additionally, Castro confessed in his testimonio that he had secretly hoped that the walkouts would never materialize, stating, "I deliberately told no one, including my students, that deep down I hoped we could bluff our way into getting the changes desired."[421] Many students were taking the lead from Sal Castro and agreed on that June date. However, others, like the Brown Berets, were following David Sánchez and wanted to walkout earlier. By early 1968, there were many diverse organizations involved, each with their own leaders and agendas that made a unified front increasingly difficult to contain.

The lid came off on Thursday, February 28, 1968 when Wilson High School students walked out of school. The principal, Donald Skinner, triggered the walkout by canceling a student play the week before its opening. Skinner attended the final dress rehearsal of *Barefoot in*

[421] Ibid., 148.

the Park, a play that students had been preparing for weeks. The conservative principal heard a line in the play that he did not condone. It involved a "young married couple after they've returned to their New York apartment after their honeymoon. The guy says to his wife: 'Shall we go to work today or go back to bed?'"[422] Upon hearing this, the principal canceled the show. Students, upset at Skinner's decision, walked out in protest the following day.

The Wilson High School protest upset the organizational plans of the walkout. The students at Wilson were not a core group of the strike committee, but word of a walkout had already spread across the eastside. Skinner's canceling of *Barefoot in the Park* became entangled with all the issues Mexican American students were already feeling. As a result, about 200 students engaged in the demonstration, receiving some media attention on the evening news that the strike committee picked up on. Consequently, the plan for a well-organized, proactive, general student strike was thrown off. After that, says Victoria Castro, "we became reactionary, and then, I think, that's what allows for violence to occur."[423]

The premature walkout at Wilson High school set off the student strikes. However, Sal Castro still believed that they could hold off on walking out of the other schools, but David Sánchez and the Brown Berets believed they needed to capitalize on the moment. As the current prime minister of the Brown Berets, Sánchez ran the organization under a military system of rank and file. In other words, the organization was set up in such a way that if there was a decision made from the top (i.e., Sánchez), the others followed. As such, Sánchez told the Beret leadership, "We have to go ahead and do the walkout now because it's hot and because Wilson walked out. It's a hot issue and the students are ready… Let's go ahead and do the walkout."[424]

[422] Ibid., 149.

[423] Castro, interview by Virginia Espino.

Joe Razo, of *La Raza* newspaper, also independently tried to trigger a walkout at Garfield High School, but he was unsuccessful. He admitted that he did not have the organizational structure that the Berets had. Razo stated that it was the Brown Berets that made it happen: "without coordinating with anyone, [Sánchez] took the Brown Berets to Garfield High School and walked them out."[425] On March 5, 1968, led by the Berets, 2,000 Garfield High School students marched out of school. Sánchez stated, "we jumped the gun because we felt it was the right thing to do." [426] The reactionary move, however, left students vulnerable to police repression. The Los Angeles Police Department declared the walkout an unlawful assembly and proceeded to use excessive force against some students leading to a chaotic, yet well publicized, event. Garfield High School's walkout left the other strike committees with no other choice but to join them as well.

After Garfield's walkout, emergency meetings by the strike committees were called. One of the meetings was at the Church of the Epiphany with organizers from *La Raza* newspaper and others. Sal Castro met with students at an organizer's home. What was clear was that they could no longer hold off and needed a coordinated effort to walk out the next day. Before the days of cellular phones and the internet, this was done through phone trees. Calls were made across the eastside high schools to encourage students to support the walkout. Calls were also made to college students to delegate them to the various schools to assist with the organization and to serve as a buffer between them and the police. Word about the walkout was also circulating throughout the administration offices of the high schools, so they knew it was coming. Razo

[424] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino..

[425] Razo, interview by the author.

[426] Sánchez, interview by Virginia Espino.

recalls the final stages of the planning in the church's basement, "the can is open, that's it, the lid is off, and we gotta go. Lincoln Heights tomorrow, we set a date, a time, and we said we will meet at *La Raza*, and walk from *La Raza*, the Church of the Epiphany, to Lincoln [High School]."[427]

The next day, March 6, 1968, everything was in place for a massive East Los Angeles high school student walkout. A group of organizers met at the Church of the Epiphany that Wednesday morning and walked over to the school. Razo remembers, "We just went up the steps, and the administrators said, 'wait, where are you going,' we pushed right through them, went through the hallways, yelling walkout, kids pulled the fire bell."[428] Victoria Castro had arranged to meet and distract the principal that morning. When she arrived, he was visibly flustered and canceled their meeting just before it was about to begin. On her way out of his office, Victoria Castro recalls seeing "Razo leading the words, 'Walkout, walkout, walkout," going up and [down] the halls."[429]

Years of Mexican American radicalization and organizing was unleashed that morning. Sal Castro stated his famous words, "out they went… with their heads held high, with dignity, it was beautiful to be a Chicano that day."[430] Mexican American youth evolved into Chicana/os that day and dramatically shifted their narrative in the history of the United States. Dr. Nava also famously stated after the Blowouts, "This is BC and AD. The schools will not be the same

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[427] Razo, interview by the author.

[428] Ibid.

[429] V. Castro, interview by the author.

[430] Sal Castro in "Taking Back the Schools," part 3 of *Chicano: A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, segment producer, Susan Racho (Los Angeles: National Latino Communications Center & Galin Productions, Inc., 1996), DVD.

hereafter."[431] All the eastside high schools walked out that day, including Lincoln, Roosevelt, Garfield, and Wilson. However, some of the demonstrations went smoother than others. Whereas at Lincoln, the walkouts had no major hiccups, at Roosevelt, students faced off against a repressive police presence. Yet, students persisted and convened at Hazard Park, about a mile away from Lincoln High School, for a teach-in. The media was also there waiting. The principal request from the walkouts that day was that the School Board meet with students to formally hear their demands. This was the only request that day because the list of demands had not yet been flushed out since the walkouts were set off prematurely.

The first phase of the walkouts was largely successful. All eastside schools had walked out and they had garnered enough media attention that their actions could not be ignored. However, no response from the School Board was given. Later that evening, Sal Castro and high school students met at the Church of the Epiphany again. They were elated, overcome with pride, and ready to repeat the actions of that day. However, Castro talked them into waiting to see what the response of the school officials would be. Furthermore, because the walkouts happened impulsively, the student demands needed to be solidified. As a result, there, in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany, Sal Castro remembers "a good 50 some odd demands pounded out by the kids. No adults, no adult influence, I guess, other than the old man you're looking at."[432] The demands included bilingual and bicultural education for schools with majority Mexican students; professional development for faculty working with large Mexican student populations; removal of teachers or administration who show that they cannot properly appreciate the history, culture, or language of Mexican students; new high schools to alleviate overcrowding; student

[431] Julian Nava, in Wauters, "The Borderland Cultures Encounter the Church," 403.

[432] S. Castro, interview with Rocío Zamora.

evaluation of teachers; the elimination of corporal punishment; and others. The demands were a radical reevaluation of the way Mexican American students would be treated at schools, “HOW CAN THEY EXPECT TO TEACH US IF THEY DO NOT KNOW US?,”[433] argued *La Raza* newspaper. As the demands were finalized, Castro and the students decided that it was time to apply more pressure. As such, on Friday March 8th, the students walked out again, this time more prepared, more coordinated, and with a proper media strategy that the School Board could no longer ignore.

In the end, over 10,000 students from 15 schools had walked out that historic week. Students from Montebello to Venice; Black, white, and Brown students; high school to middle school students – all supported students in East Los Angeles.[434] It was an unprecedented level of coordinated activity. *La Raza* newspaper reported on how “The Myth of Mexican-American “fatalism,” “lack of imagination,” “passivity,” and “apathy” exploded in those first historic days of March.”[435] The School Board finally caved in and agreed to meet with students. Yet, 200 organizers arrived at the Boardroom only to demand that they meet on their turf, on the eastside. With the mounting pressure, the Board hesitantly agreed to meet at Lincoln High School where the special session saw 1,200 people in a 1,000-seat auditorium. The students symbolically handed the 55 demands over to the Education Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC), a newly organized body consisting of community members, organizations, parents, and college students that would take over the negotiations from the students. Vahac Mardirosian, a Baptist minister, assumed the leadership role and became the voice of the EICC. He stated, “We are not going to

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[433] *La Raza* Yearbook, September 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {17}, La Raza Publication Records, 16.

[434] García, *Blowout.*

[435] March 31, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {11}, La Raza Publications Records, 6.

allow this situation to continue. We are not going to let young people below the age of 18 do the work that belongs to us."[436] At the special School Board session, students arranged for EICC to read their demands to make clear the transfer of negotiating power. After that meeting, there were no more walkouts organized, however, the tone was set. It was this historic week in March of 1968 that put urban Chicana/o issues on the map.

The Walkouts and the Church

As students were planning and engaged in the walkouts, they sought the support of their whole community, including the church. Paula Crisostomo, one of the student leaders of the walkouts, remembers being encouraged to speak to Catholic priests about publicly supporting their fight for educational equality. Unfortunately, she said, none did so publicly. However, the Church of the Epiphany, and other Protestant churches were steadfast in their support. The YCCA students were already an active part of the Church of the Epiphany when the walkouts were being planned, which were supported by Father Luce. Crisostomo stated that "it was the Church of the Epiphany and the Parish of East Los Angeles that really gave us the major support, not only because of their physical space, which was important, but because it was, like I said in the beginning, because of those three remarkable priests, and what the Episcopal church allowed them to do."[437] On the other hand, Crisostomo stated with frustration that the Catholic Church was just five or six blocks away, however, "none of them would [support], not publicly."[438]

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[436] Vahac Mardirosian in "Taking Back the Schools," segment producer, Susan Racho, DVD.

[437] Crisostomo, interview by the author.

[438] Ibid.

The lack of Catholic support was significant to the families of students that walked out of their schools on that historic week. On the Saturday following the walkouts, Sal Castro agreed to meet with parents to try and ease their feelings about the punitive threats being made by the schools, including suspensions, expulsions, threats of removing scholarships, or canceling senior activities. Castro wanted to get some Catholic priests to attend the community meeting so that they could offer moral and spiritual support to students and parents. Castro stated that he had "attempted to get some of the Catholic pastors in East L.A involved, but they avoided me. I even told the students to see if the priests in their churches might support them, but they got nowhere… Only Father Luce and his associate pastor, Father Roger Wood, from the Epiphany Church openly supported us, and they weren't even Catholic."[439] Two other Protestant ministers, Reverend Vahac Mardirosian and Horacio Quiñones offered their support to parents at that meeting and assured them that standing up for their rights was acceptable. Castro remembers the impact that the clergymen had: "I had never met the ministers, but they impressed me with their talks. They made the parents feel much better about the walkouts."[440] More than symbolic, these priests and pastors were authentically concerned with the community's well-being. It was this meeting that set the stage for the development of the Education Issues Coordinating Committee, the organizational body of parents and community members that would carry forth the demands of the walkouts. Reverend Mardirosian, an Armenian born in Syria and raised in Mexico City and Tijuana, Mexico, would eventually become the head of the EICC and they would continue meeting regularly, evolving into an important avenue for the community to get involved with

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[439] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout,* 179.

[440] Ibid., 180.

educational inequalities on the eastside, and which included politicians, parents, organizations, and clergy.

East L.A. Thirteen

After the walkouts, the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee took over as the organizing body, negotiating the demands on behalf of students with the Los Angeles Unified School Board. As the deliberations were ongoing, the student walkout committees suspended any additional demonstrations, and the Board decided against disciplining anyone involved in the protests.[441] As a result, the political situation and momentum from the walkouts cooled down considerably as the academic year was coming to a close. Yet, Father Luce received word that indictments were coming down against some of the main organizers of the walkouts. He stated: "You can always count on district attorneys and police chiefs to do something stupid – and thank God for them because…[then] you don't need any organizers or outside agitators, the ones who organize are the establishment themselves."[442] Indeed, months after the walkouts, it was the establishment that brought an idle movement back into the headlines.

In the last few days in May of 1968, thirteen Chicana/os involved in organizing the blowouts were indicted and arrested, including Sal Castro. Joe Razo, one of those arrested, was not surprised because he knew that "something was going to happen after walking out 10,000 kids."[443] The move to indict organizers of the walkouts on behalf of the Los Angeles School Board and the chief of police indeed had community repercussions. Jesus Treviño, a member of

[441] Treviño, Jesus. *Eyewitness: A Filmmaker's Memoir of the Chicano Movement* (Houston: Arte Público, 2001).

[442] Luce, interview by Rocío Zamora.

[443] Razo, interview by the author.

the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee, stated of the bad faith negotiations with the Board,

> Before the indictments, many of us in the EICC thought that a meaningful dialogue with the Los Angeles School Board had, at last, been established. We had hoped that our ongoing meetings with school officials would bring about changes in the deplorable conditions that had provided the walkouts in March. Now we discovered that, instead of dealing with us in good faith, school officials had been testifying secretly in front of a grand jury to bring about the indictments against the leaders of the walkout movement.[444]

However, Father Luce was correct in stating that the unjust arrests of those that became known as the East L.A. 13 revitalized and restimulated the movement in Los Angeles. The arrests became a kind of political stimulus to the Chicana/o movement because it brought the walkouts and the issue of Mexican American educational inequalities back into the headlines.

The apprehension and detention of the East L.A. 13 were well publicized. Warrants were served around the city of Los Angeles to bring in the "outside agitators" of the walkouts. *La Raza* newspaper reported, "The establishment-run police department of the city of Los Angeles, showed their true colors in a week long to be remembered as LOS ANGELES' WEEK OF SHAME."[445] *La Raza* dramatically exposed the arrests by publishing a photo of Moctezuma Esparza on the cover. At 19 years old, Moctezuma was the youngest of the thirteen arrested. A total of seven Chicanos were apprehended with arrest warrants that week, including Joe Razo, Eliezer Risco, Cruz Olmeda, David Sánchez, Carlos Muñoz, Moctezuma Esparza, and Sal Castro. The other six, Fred López, Patricio Sánchez, Richard Vigil, Henry Gómez, Carlos Montes, and Ralph Ramírez, were told to turn themselves in. Sal Castro remembers, "Each of us was charged with two counts of disturbing the peace and disturbing the peace of the schools. In addition, there were fifteen counts of conspiracy involving those two other charges, for a total of

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[444] Treviño, *Eyewitness*, 49.

[445] June 7, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {13}, La Raza Publication Records, 5.

thirty counts, with each count carrying a maximum sentence of five years. If convicted, we faced 150 years in jail!"[446] Furthermore, their bail was set at $12,500, an overwhelming and disproportionate amount of money at the time.

Chicana/os capitalized on this political moment. While in jail, they immediately went on a hunger strike to highlight the unjust arrests against those practicing their first amendment rights. A statement from Esparza was published in *La Raza* newspaper, "We KNOW our cause will triumph. We are political prisoners. Never forget what this system is capable of in order to destroy us. We are on a hunger strike and we will not eat until we are all set free. Do as you think necessary."[447] Because of the public arrests, word quickly got out to the Chicana/o community and, as Razo stated, "all the political imaginations started, the gears started revolving, and… we organized the community, marches down to downtown Los Angeles, and protest to the police station, and the community got involved, thousands of people went down there to march."[448] On June 2, a demonstration was quickly organized at the central police station with over 2,000 in attendance. After circling the police station, protestors marched to Placita Olvera, and then to the county jail. The protests were increasingly diverse, including members of Black liberation movements, concerned Anglos, and clergy. The demonstration showed the growing influence of Chicana/os to a civil rights movement at-large. Walt Bremond, the Chairman of the Black Congress was quoted in *La Raza* newspaper as saying, "The Man (Reddin) made a mistake, a very serious mistake. He underestimated the ability of black and brown to mobilize together."[449]

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[446] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout,* 206.

[447] June 7, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {13}, La Raza Publication Records, 7.

[448] Razo, interview with the author.

[449] June 7, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {13}, La Raza Publication Records, 9.

Michael Hannon, one of the lawyers representing the 13 arrested stated, "the D.A and the police have declared war on the people. We are ready."[450]

As Father Luce had stated, the arrests of the East L.A 13 set the foundation for a resurgence of the high school walkouts. Furthermore, the Chicana/o community showed that they could flex their collective power as an organizing body at a moment's notice. The June issue of *La Raza* showed the wide support for the growing Chicana/o movement, which published solidarity statements from Black civil rights leaders such as Stokely Carmichael, Maulana Karenga, and Walt Bremond, to a wide Chicana/o network, including Cesar Chavez and Bert Corona. Its national reach was also on display, demonstrated by a vigil held by Chicana/os in Washington, D.C. until the 13 Chicanos were released. The D.C. contingent stated, "We dedicate ourselves not only to support the East Los Angeles Thirteen but are also determined to correct the oppression and injustices that all of our people suffer in this nation. We are determined to bring about the changes regardless of the sacrifice or the methods needed to gain our freedom, our liberation, and our self-preservation."[451] The national and cross racial coalitions highlighted the growing influence of a Mexican American movement.

Another unlikely source of support came from the two Democratic presidential primary frontrunners in 1968, Robert Kennedy and Senator Eugene McCarthy. The two candidates publicly showed their support and even contributed to the bail fund to release the thirteen Chicanos. Joe Raza stated that when he got arrested at the *La Raza* offices, Dolores Huerta happened to be there. The farm workers were campaigning heavily for Kennedy, and as Razo stated, "they were after the Latino vote, they didn't want one guy to outshine the other." Through

[450] Ibid., 10.

[451] Ibid., 11

Huerta, Razo shared, both primary frontrunners put up money and political support for the release of the 13 Chicanos and "eventually we got released because of those two candidates."[452] Kennedy eventually defeated McCarthy in the primaries the following week; however, in the early hours of June 5th, Kennedy, a champion of the marginalized in the United States, including the cause of Chicana/os, was shot and killed.

Because of the high profile of these arrests and the political support it garnered, the East L.A. 13 were released after only 72 hours. The community was ecstatic and more motivated than ever for having mobilized to free their own freedom fighters from what was the Chicana/o Movement's first political trial. *La Raza* reported, it "was a victory that was in reality a victory for the whole community. The freedom of the Chicano Prisoners of Liberation from the jails in which political opportunism had placed them is a milestone in our movement for the liberation of *La Raza*."[453] After the release, the Chicanos gathered at Las 4 Milpas while Sal Castro celebrated on his own, stating, "I didn't go because I had other friends waiting for me. I wanted to go drinking and dancing since I had missed the prom."[454] Castro was set on going back into the classroom the following day. On the day before his release from prison, with his one phone privilege, he called the administration offices at Lincoln High School to tell them to cancel the substitute teacher because he was going to be in class the next day. However, on Tuesday May 3rd, when Castro arrived after a long night of celebrating, principal George Ingles informed him that until his case was settled, he could no longer teach. A livid Castro left Lincoln High School knowing that this would, again, trigger a community response. Like Father Luce had mentioned

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[452] Razo, interview with the author.

[453] June 7, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {13}, La Raza Publication Records, 12.

[454] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout,* 206.

earlier, the establishment provided the next opportunity for the community to rally -- this time, to get Castro back into the classroom.

The Los Angeles Unified School Board District Sit-In

Sal Castro was removed from his position as a teacher at Lincoln High School for his role in organizing the student walkouts. The School Board, with the exception of Julian Nava, decided that he should be removed from his teaching post until the issue with his case was resolved. As such, he was to report to the Instructional Materials Center as a non-instructional audiovisual consultant evaluating old movies until his case was settled. Like Father Luce had stated earlier, Castro mentioned to his principal, "I think the school district is making it worse on itself because this will have community repercussions."[455] Indeed, the community would once again come to the defense of one of their leaders, leading to another dramatic event that would come to represent the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, the sit-ins at the Los Angeles Unified School Board of Education.

The energy from the East L.A.13 was quickly transferred over to the movement for the reinstatement of Sal Castro. The EICC played an important role in this new stage of organizing that involved not only high school and college students, but was more inclusive of the community at-large, including parents, organizations, politicians, and clergy. The EICC, *La Raza* newspaper, the Brown Berets, and various college organizations began organizing protests to reinstate Castro. They started at the School Board and then shifted to Lincoln High School when classes started in the Fall. A month before the academic year was set to begin, *La Raza* reported that "A crowd of about 400 Mexican-American supporters of Sal Castro invaded the Board of

[455] Ibid., 208.

Education last Thursday demanding the return of Castro to his RIGHTFUL PLACE at Lincoln High School by the time school opens next month."[456] When classes started, hundreds showed up at Lincoln to picket, demanding the reinstatement of their beloved teacher, carrying signs that read "Sal is for you, are you for him?" Throughout the month of September, demonstrations were happening daily at Lincoln while EICC members also continued attending weekly School Board meetings. However, as time passed, the younger faction of the organizing bodies became dissatisfied with the pace and tone of the Board's response, or lack thereof. Turning up the pressure, on Thursday, September 26, Raul Ruiz stated, "About fifty of us from *La Raza*, CSM, the Brown berets, UMAS, and EICC, along with grad students from Cal State and UCLA, just stayed put and took over the Board of Education."[457]

In late September, after the completion of another Board meeting, and taking a page from the sit-ins occurring in the Black civil rights movements, Chicana/os elected to occupy the Los Angeles School Board. Known as the LAUSD sit-in, the move was both a radical and festive moment of the early Chicana/o movement. Students immediately declared the space a "Free and Liberated Board of Chicano Education."

The sit-in began with high spirits. Chicana/o demonstrators brought guitars, sang songs, performed theater, had critical conversations, and strategized for the coming days. On one evening, a Mariachi band arrived to elevate the momentum. Additionally, in a strong show of support, parents and community members brought homemade food, including tacos and burritos,

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[456] September 3, 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {16}, La Raza Publication Records, 3.

[457] Raul Ruiz, in Mario García, *The Chicano Generation; Testimonios of the Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 50.

to feed those sitting in.[458] When Sal Castro saw that parents and the community members were supporting students in their demands to have him reinstated, he stated, "I felt that we were going to win."[459] Surprisingly, neither the Board nor the police immediately suppressed the occupation, possibly hoping that the conditions would be too difficult to sustain. Raquel Galan, one of the Chicanas occupying the Boardroom stated, "At one point they turned off the air conditioner, at one point they turned off the phones, at one point they turned off the heat, they did all these interesting things to make us uncomfortable."[460] Nonetheless, spirits remained high day after day and night after night. Chicana/os were determined to bring back Castro.

One highlight of the occupation that shows the intersection of religion and the movement was the tortilla Mass celebrated by Father Luce. Father Luce was already a trusted ally and confidant to Chicana/os and their families. When students were planning a walkout, Luce opened the doors of the church; when the East L.A. 13 were arrested, Father Luce was picketing outside the hall of justice; and when Sal Castro was removed from his teaching post, Luce sat in the Boardroom with them. Moctezuma Esparza says of Luce participating in the sit-in, "To have the church, from our point of view, whether it was Episcopal or Catholic was secondary, sanction and endorse what we were doing, to connect it to the theology of liberation… to Christ bringing a message of justice as well as salvation for poor, for working people, that was something that we wanted."[461] On the one Sunday that students were occupying the Boardroom, Esparza

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[458] "Taking Back the Schools," part 3 of *Chicano: A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, segment producer, Susan Racho (Los Angeles: National Latino Communications Center & Galin Productions, Inc., 1996). DVD.

[459] Castro, Sal, in García, *Blowout,* 217.

[460] Raquel Galan, in "Taking Back the Schools," segment producer, Susan Racho. DVD.

[461] Esparza, interview by the author.

remembers that they asked Father Luce to celebrate Mass for them. The iconic image of Father Luce celebrating a tortilla Mass remains in the imaginary of all those present at the sit in and those who study Chicana/o movement history. Father Luce is standing at the head of the Boardroom with a few empty chairs to his left looking down at what is likely the Episcopal book of prayers. His hands are folded and lifted to bless all those present in the room, his raised hands lift his large white robe. Behind Luce is a chalkboard full of messages from the Chicana/os occupying the Boardroom: “the Free + Liberated Board of Chicano Education,” “Viva La Raza,” “Viva Mexico,” “Brown Berets,” amongst other radical messages (Figure 5.1).

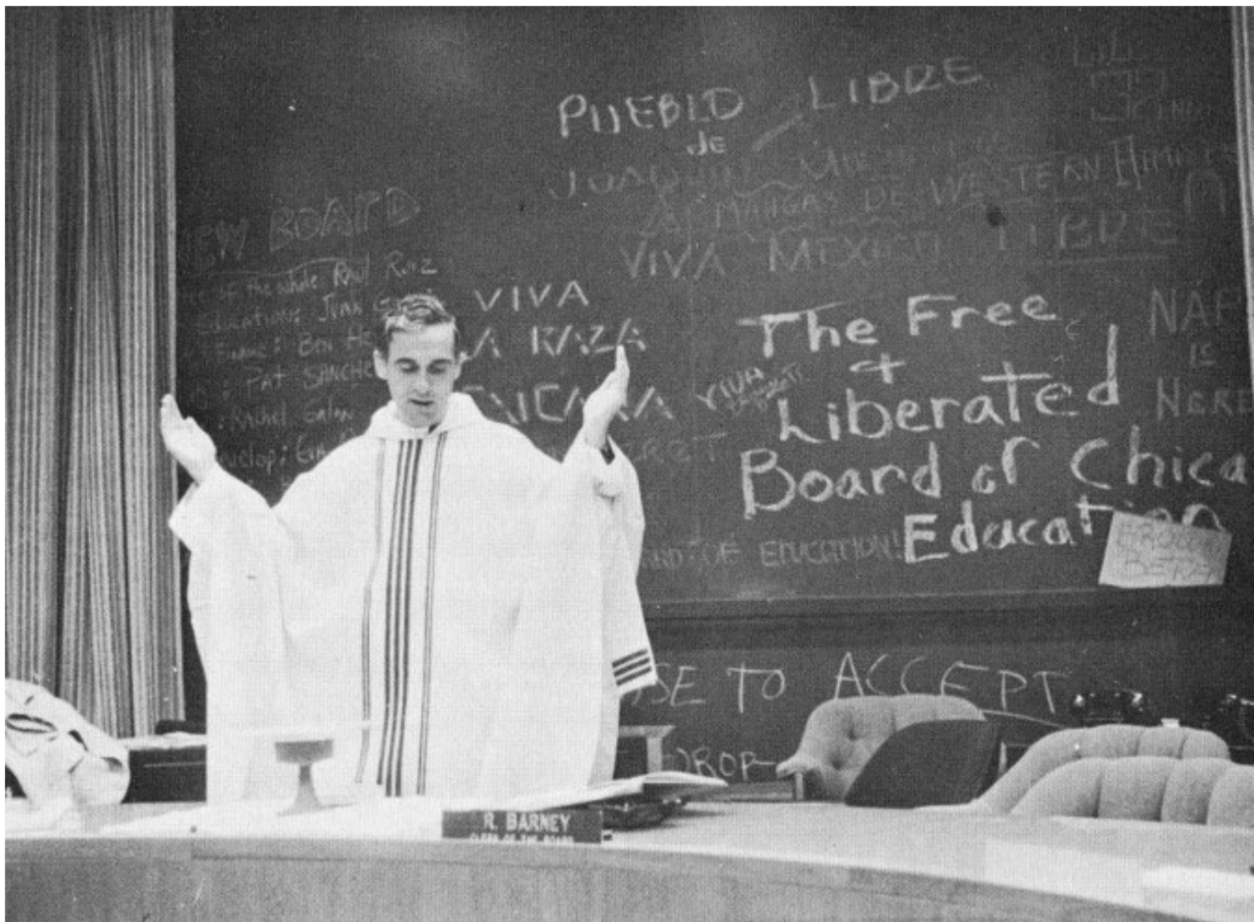

Figure 5. 1. Church of the Epiphany pastor John Luce celebrating a tortilla Mass inside the Chicano Movement occupation of the Los Angeles School Board of Education. Church of Epiphany.

On Wednesday, October 2nd, six days after the sit-in began, the School Board made the decision to remove the occupiers. The police notified the protestors that if they did not vacate, they would be arrested. Chicana/o lawyer Oscar Zeta Acosta notified everyone of the legal ramifications of being arrested. After internal deliberations, some decided it would be better to not get arrested, like Moctezuma Esparza, who was still indicted from the walkouts. Others decided they wanted to stay. The list of those who were arrested that day shows the growing diversity of what would come to represent the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. *La Raza* reported, "On the night of October 2nd thirty-five more arrests were made, making it clear to everyone that a large liberation movement had grown and could no longer be denied."[462] *La Raza* published the names of all those who were arrested and the organizations they represented, including UMAS, Brown Berets, the Welfare Rights Organization, EICC, the Mexican American Political Association, LUCHA, *La Raza*, and the Church of the Epiphany, including Father Luce, Father Wood, and the son of Virginia Ram, Richard. Father Luce stated of his reason for getting arrested: "Talking and having seminars doesn't change anything."[463] In another epic photograph of the sit-ins, Father Luce is blessing everyone in the Boardroom moments before being taken away by police (Figure 5.2))

[462] October 15, 1968, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [2], Number {1}, La Raza Publication Records.

[463] Luce, interview by Rocío Zamora.

Figure 5.2. Church of the Epiphany pastor John Luce appears to pray at a Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education meeting in 1968. © Devra Weber. From the La Raza Photograph Collection. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

On the day following the arrests, Chicana/os filled the Boardroom again, demanding the release of the 35 detained along with the reinstatement of Sal Castro at Lincoln High School. *La Raza* reported, "Mexican-American mothers, fathers, and students expressed their feelings without fear and produced the most eloquent display of oratory and human concern I've ever been a witness to."[464] The Reverend Mardirosian, leader of the EICC, stated, "We are here to express to you that in accepting a Mexican teacher who says that it is good to be Mexican, you're also accepting a principle that may govern our city without barbed wire in the middle of the street."[465] The Board decided to take up the issue of Castro and voted on his reinstatement after the community expressed the importance of Castro to their communities and to the Chicana/o

[464] October 15, 1968, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [2], Number {1}, La Raza Publication Records, 18.

[465] Vahac Mardirosian, "Taking Back the Schools," segment producer, Susan Racho. DVD.

youth. The special motion to reinstate Castro passed by a vote of 5-1. The room exploded with emotion at another political victory. When everyone quickly realized that Castro had arrived for the vote and was standing in the back of the Boardroom, they immediately embraced him and put him on their shoulders as the rest of the room started the Chicana/o clap, made famous by the farm worker movement. *La Raza* reported, "One could certainly sense the historical significance of this action and that the joy and gaiety expressed in the room was that of LA RAZA fulfilling its God-given destiny."[466] It was an incredible victory for Chicana/os in East Los Angeles. This was also a significant moment for Dr. Julian Nava, the only Chicano on the School Board, to emerge as an institutional ally for students. Once again, it showed the growing power of their collective action and the strength of nonviolent direct action.

The School Board sit-in was another profound steppingstone in the larger movement for Chicana/o self-determination in Los Angeles and beyond. It displayed the growing diversity, sophistication, and organization of a still developing Chicana/o movement and identity. The arrest of the East L.A. 13 and the removal of Sal Castro from his teaching post at Lincoln High School provided Chicana/os opportunities to channel their newfound organizational capacity and strength.

The state attacks on the community leaders also allowed for the religious community to show how much they were indeed in support of the movement for Mexican American self-determination. For example, Father Luce and Father Wood played an important role in the Chicano Legal Defense Fund, an organizational body established in the summer of 1968 to raise funds for the East L.A. 13's legal defense. The group functioned as a "union of organizations who are concerned with the problem of legal justice for the Chicano. These organizations have

[466] October 15, 1968, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [2], Number {1}, La Raza Publication Records, 18.

banded together because they recognize the significance of the conspiracy charges here in Los Angeles for all who are actively engaged in the struggle for the betterment of the social, political, economic, and educational system."[467] Father Luce sat on the board of directors for the defense fund as the only clergy and one of only two non-Latinos. Father Garver, because of his accounting experience, was the only non-Latino to sit on the executive committee. For Father Luce and Wood to sit on the board and executive committees of the Chicano Legal Defense Fund speaks to the incredible trust that the Chicana/o community had in the religious leadership and support of the Church of the Epiphany. Father Luce and Father Wood doubled down on their support by standing alongside the Chicana/os occupying the School Board. When students were locked inside on a Sunday morning, requesting to celebrate Mass, Father Luce officiated a profound historical moment, one at the visual intersection of religion and the Chicana/o movement. And when the police came to arrest those Chicana/os occupying the School Board, Father Luce and Father Wood were unwavering in their support, leaving no doubt about what side they were on.

Although it is impossible to quantify, the inclusion of clergy in these early days of the Chicana/o movement surely functioned to recruit members into the movement. Lydia López recalls being moved by witnessing how committed the clergy were. She remembers first encountering priests on the picket line in front of the hall of justice for the East L.A. 13. She was surprised at the sight of priests at a protest. Two were Baptists, Vahac Mardirosian and Horacio Quiñonez, and three were Episcopalians, Father Luce, Father Wood, and Father Garver. She was even more surprised to "find out that they really care about education, and they are not necessarily there to proselytize."[468] It was here where López was invited to a party at the Church

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[467] August 15, 1968, *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {15}, La Raza Publication Records, 9.

of the Epiphany for the first time by the late Juan Gómez-Quiñonez. Moved by the incredible respect she experienced when she arrived at the church, López spent the next 50 years of her life there, fighting for the rights of Latina/os in Los Angeles and within the Episcopal church.

Reverend Mardirosian played another critical role, heading the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee, formed after the walkouts. Jesus Treviño remembers the reverend's speeches in board and organizational meetings as "a powerful secular sermon that took hold of the audience by the throat. He spoke of the courage the students had demonstrated by their walkout action."[469] Like Father Luce and Wood, Reverend Mardirosian provided the EICC with spiritual and moral authority, particularly important because the collective was made up of parents and community members. As such, the religious leadership functioned to provide legitimacy to the movement as well as to garner the support of those on the fence about supporting Chicana/o political activity. After the high school blowouts, Sal Castro stated that it was the Reverend Mardirosian who was able to settle the minds of the parents of those young students who had walked out. The Reverend assured parents that what the students were doing was justified; it "made the parents feel much better about the walkouts,"[470] said Castro. Although these priests and pastors were not Catholic, they were indeed able to settle the hearts and minds of the predominantly Mexican Catholic parents.

In the ensuing months, the participation of parents and community members would continue forging a Chicana/o identity and movement, one that rejected American assimilation as much as their second class citizenship. Mexican Americans in Los Angeles were gaining

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[468] López, interview with the author.

[469] Treviño, *Eyewitness.* 11.

[470] S. Castro, in García, *Blowout,* 180.

political momentum and were bearing the fruits of their collective power, as seen in the walkouts, the release of the East L.A. 13, and the reinstatement of Sal Castro at Lincoln High School. *La Raza* newspaper was in a unique position to document these important victories to the community. At the same time, *La Raza* also began recording the incredible number of Chicano casualties in the Vietnam war. With the political momentum in East Los Angeles continuing to grow, Chicana/os again shifted their energies, this time towards a Chicana/o Moratorium of the war in Vietnam.

The Chicana/o Moratorium

As the fight for educational equity continued, the late 1960s was also a moment of intense international conflict, namely the Vietnam War. The war was highly unpopular in the United States, yet, for many Mexican Americans, the military was often a means to prove their American-ness and a path to pulling their families out of poverty. For example, during World War II, thousands of Mexican Americans enlisted and sacrificed their lives in order to display their allegiance to the country. Yet, "By the late 1960s, it became evident to many in Mexican American communities, as it had to many all across the country, that U.S. involvement in Viet Nam was not a battle to defend democracy, as World War II had been."[471] Indeed, the timing and nature of this war was different. Mexican Americans were having a profound awakening of identity and questioning their role in American society. Chicana/os were recognizing that their war was with racism and police brutality at home, not abroad.[472]

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[471] George Mariscal, *Aztlan and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 29.

[472] Zaragoza Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011).

Participation in the war highlighted and exacerbated the second-class citizenship of, not only Mexican Americans, but all people of color. Scores of eligible draftees risked arrest as conscientious objectors to the draft and the war. None was more famous than the objection from boxing heavyweight Champion Muhammad Ali, who famously stated, “no Vietcong ever called me a n_ _ _ _ _.” To Ali as well as to a new generation of Chicana/os, their quarrel was not with poor Brown people in Vietnam, but with the flagrant racism at home. The willingness of many Chicanos to enlist, be drafted, and consequently become casualties, made the war an unavoidable issue for Mexican American families. This was particularly evident in East Los Angeles, where the highest concentration of Mexican Americans resided. As more and more Chicanos went overseas, less and less returned, raising concern about the disproportionate number of Chicanos sent to the front lines. When hard data confirming these suspicions surfaced, it triggered another wave of Chicana/o organizing.[473]

A report by Ralph C. Guzmán, a Ph.D. in political science at UCLA, documented the unbalanced number of Chicanos dying in the war. *La Raza* newspaper was quick to report the findings, stating, “American servicemen of Mexican descent have a higher death rate in Vietnam than other GI’s. Analysis of all combat and non-combat deaths between January 1, 1961 and February 28, 1967 indicates that a large number of young people from this minority group reach the Southeast Asia theatre of war and that a considerable number of them are involved in hazardous duty.”[474] During this time, Chicanos represented 10 to 12 percent of the population of the Southwest, yet comprised 19.4 percent of Vietnam casualties. From its first year as a publication, *La Raza* newspaper problematized issues affecting Chicana/os in the barrios.

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[473] Mariscal, *Aztlán and Viet Nam.*

[474] September 1968. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [1], Number {17}, La Raza Publication Records, 33.

Encouraging readers to question the United States' role in an imperialist war was a clear issue to take on for the radical publication, but the evidence that Mexicans were disproportionately sent to the front lines is what caused the community to organize. National anti-war networks and organizations were already well established during the 1960s. In fact, the civil rights and anti-war movements were occurring in tandem across the country. Carlos Muñoz Jr. states, "Communist and socialist youth groups became visible on college campuses as did nonsocialist New Left groups like SDS. Campus protest against the Vietnam War was also becoming visible, as manifest in the 'teach-ins' organized by white liberal and leftist faculty and students."[475] Yet, Mexican Americans had not yet been involved in the anti-war movement en-masse.

Reasons for Chicana/os to be against the war were considerably different than anti-war whites. For one, attending college qualified citizens to earn a deferment to the war. The significantly smaller number of Chicana/os in higher education than whites greatly inhibited their options for legal deferment. For another, whites had financial means to avoid going to war: "the Anglo kid refuses to go and goes to Canada or Sweden, or merely gets lost in the country, forcing draft boards to dig deeper into the Chicano communities, for quotas to be met, one way or another."[476] As such, it became increasingly clear to see that the burden of going to war was felt heavier in Chicana/os and communities of color. Chicanos recognized a kind of reverse discrimination, meaning that Chicanos sent to war were selected and placed on the front lines, "protecting the 'güeros' in the safe zones."[477] Mexican Americans were beginning to question

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[475] Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 67; See also Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Walter L. Hixson, *The Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: Garland, 2000).

[476] Mariscal, *Aztlan in Viet Nam,* 189.

[477] Ibid.

their allegiance, not to the country, but to the war. Joining a moratorium against the war was becoming a more serious consideration.

Rosalio Muñoz emerged as one of the principal figures of the Chicana/o Moratorium. Muñoz was mentioned earlier in this research because of Virginia Ram, who was his Boy Scout leader while at the Church of the Epiphany. Muñoz was raised a Baptist, but participated in the service programming that was available at the Episcopal church in the late 1950's and early 1960s. Muñoz was one of the small minority of Mexican American students who attended UCLA, even serving as the student body president. He then worked in various capacities to support Chicana/os gain more access to higher education, including serving as a minority recruiter at the Claremont Colleges. However, Muñoz was drafted and ordered to report for duty on September 16, 1969. After discussing his objections with his former UCLA student body president campaign manager, Ramsés Noriega, they decided to organize against the draft and the war. They started a *Chale con el Draft* tour and went up and down the state of California connecting with grassroots movements, and utilizing Muñoz's objection "to aid individual Chicanos in their deliberations about whether to seek a deferment or to resist being drafted."[478] Muñoz mentioned that he received a lot of statewide contacts from Elizear Risco, editor of *La Raza* newspaper and former organizer with the United Farm Workers. Throughout Noriega and Muñoz's travels, they found that "a lot of folks were already organizing, but we were knitting them together."[479]

Muñoz and Noriega were highly successful in raising the issue of objections to the war with the organizations they came across. One of their principal strategies was to start "organizing

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[478] Chávez, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 63.

[479] Rosalio Muñoz, interview by the author, Los Angeles, September 25, 2020.

amongst Chicanos to help build the Chicano peace stuff nationwide and align with the Chicana/o movement."[480] Muñoz received invitations to speak at national conferences which then assisted in broadening his base of support, which included that of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Bert Corona, José Ángel Gutiérrez, and Corky Gonzalez. Muñoz met Corky, leader of the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado, at a conference in Hayward on Dec. 14th, 1969. Both Muñoz and Corky spoke at the conference and talked about the importance of Chicana/os beginning to organize demonstrations in their local barrios. Later, the two discussed plans for a National Moratorium, an idea they then shared with the 300 attendees at the conference, receiving strong support. In response, plans were discussed to organize regional protests leading up to a large national demonstration in the summer of 1970 in Los Angeles.

The first Chicano Moratorium Committee meeting was held in early December of 1969 back in East Los Angeles. The Brown Berets hosted the first committee meeting at their headquarters and David Sánchez and Muñoz were quickly named co-chairs. With little time to organize, the first demonstration was planned for December 20th, only weeks away. Muñoz and Noriega's strategy of merging the developing Chicana/o movement with the peace movement proved largely effective. The Chicana/o organizing that began with the United Farm Workers and then shifted to the high school walkouts was already activated, they were already recruiting, and were ready for the next action. Muñoz states, "we began to systematically go to the MECHAs as key places…those were the places we began going and reaching out from."[481] Again, the strategy was largely effective and the December Moratorium was a surprising

[480] Ibid.

[481] Ibid. MEChA (*El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán*) became the official student organization of the Chicana/o Movement. Various Chicana/o organizations in the southwest were consolidated after an educational plan of action conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara, known as *El Plan de Santa Barbara.* (See Acuña, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies*; Luis Urrieta Jr., "Chicana/o Activism and Education: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *The High School Journal* 87, no. 4 (Apr. – May 2004).

success. Over two thousand demonstrators attended the first rally, defiantly announcing, "Bring our *Carnales* Home…Alive!" Muñoz stated, "The Chicano people, through its Moratorium, is now saying that the front line for Chicano youths is not in Vietnam but is the struggle for social justice here in the United States."[482]

If the first local demonstration did not prove that there was a growing interest in a Chicana/o peace movement, the second Chicano Moratorium made it crystal clear. The next regional demonstration was scheduled for February 28th, 1970, again on short notice, but with the momentum and network of Chicana/o activists growing. This time, five thousand marched in support of a Chicano Moratorium against the war. What was most telling about the strong showing for the second demonstration was that there was pouring rain. Yet, despite the difficult conditions, Chicana/os from Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and other areas attended. The momentum for a national anti-war demonstration was mounting as local demonstrations were taking place all over the Southwest, "with eighteen taking place during the months before August in such cities as Fresno, Riverside, San Francisco, San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and Chicago."[483] By summer, wide support for a Chicana/o anti-war peace movement had been established and the stage was set for the large national Chicana/o Moratorium. Everywhere, "bumper stickers on cars, home meetings, and campus rallies invited people to the first National Chicano Moratorium which was scheduled to take place in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970."[484]

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[482] Rosalio Muñoz in Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power,* 65.

[483] Chavez, *Youth, Identity, Power,* 66.

[484] A paper prepared for the Commission of Historical Studies of the Church in Latin America by Rev. Juan Romero, December 5, 1986, "Two Days in the Life of the Chicano and the Church in Southern California." Lara Medina Research Collection. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles. The collection is hereafter referenced as Lara Medina Research Collection.

On that historic day, thousands convened to voice their opposition to the war, the draft, the overrepresentation of Chicano casualties, and the general second-class treatment of Chicana/os. The demonstration began at Belvedere Park, followed by a three-mile march from 3rd St. to Atlantic and south to Whittier Blvd, and then finally to Laguna Park where the main activities, speakers, and entertainment were to be held. With a strong commitment to non-violence, the coordinating committees recruited hundreds of peace keeping monitors. Their responsibility was to monitor the march and quell any disturbances. Along the long march, the monitors were indeed utilized, attending to issues of marchers fainting because of the heat, scuffles with police, and issues with anti-war demonstrators. Rudy Tovar, a member of the Church of the Epiphany that became involved in the organizing of the Moratorium, remembered his time as a monitor: "There were some people that were intent on breaking it up, there were guys that we had to grab, there were (pause), I don't know what to call them, young punks, that threw boxes through the windows of the stores, if we could grab them in time we would, not everyone was doing that, but there were some that were intent, I don't know if they belonged to those police clubs, anyway, we monitored all the way down to the park."[485] Indeed, there were agitators along the route, and anticipating some disturbances, the committee wisely notified authorities of the march. However, as a result, hundreds of police officers lined the streets along the route.

The Chicano Moratorium was an incredible moment of Chicana/o unity. It became "the largest mass protest in Mexican American history, indeed the largest antiwar effort by any American minority group, between 20,000 and 30,000 people took part in the Chicano Moratorium."[486] In addition to being a radical opposition to the war, it was an exceptionally

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[485] Tovar, Rudy, interview by Rocío Zamora.

festive environment: “Mothers with their infants in baby buggy cars marched as a unit, fathers carried their sons on their shoulders, and young Chicanos and Chicanas shouted ‘Chicano Power’ and ‘Viva la Raza.’”[487] As the march passed southward on Atlantic in front of St. Alphonsus, one of the principal churches in East Los Angeles, “a wedding was just finishing. In a spirit of solidarity and in extension of their own marriage celebration, the newlyweds joined in the march for a couple of blocks.”[488] Echoing Sal Castro’s statement when Chicana/o students walked out of their high schools in March of 1968, it was another beautiful day to be a Chicana/o.

Unfortunately, shortly after the demonstrators arrived at Laguna Park, the festive environment turned to chaos. Upon arriving, marchers tended to their tired feet, opened their lunch baskets to eat, and searched for cold refreshments as the program was taking place. Green Mill Liquor store was one of the closest and only places open to find a cold drink; however, the business was quickly overwhelmed by the number of customers. Attempting to handle the situation, the owner, Morris Moroko, locked the doors to attend to those inside, however, police received word that assistance was needed. According to *La Raza*, the owner made no such call. A swarm of police arrived at the liquor store causing a scene which drew the attention of the demonstrators and peace monitors. Both the police and the monitors lined up to create a formation, leading to a face off. The “monitors begged the police not enter the park, explaining that there were many women and small children in the area.”[489] Rather than stand down, the police formation advanced towards the peacekeepers and the park, pummeling, battering, and

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[486] Montoya, *Chicano Movement*, 121.

[487] Chicano Press Association Special Edition 1970. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [2], La Raza Publication Records, 20.

[488] Romero, “Two Days in the Life of the Chicano and the Church in Southern California, ”Lara Medina Research Collection, 4.

[489] Rudy Acuña, *Occupied America* (New York: Canfield Press, 1972), 259.

arresting anyone who got in their way. Chicana/os defending themselves threw rocks and bottles at the police advancements, giving the police more justification to increase their force. The chaos that ensued is remembered vividly by Chicana/os to this day. *La Raza* reported an eyewitness account,

> Families of Chicanos were sitting on the lawn listening to speakers and enjoying the musical festivities. Suddenly, loud booms were heard, and there was choking smoke everywhere. People began to run, families were separated, men and women alike began screaming. The park suddenly became a contested battlefield: a battlefield in which one army had bottles, rocks, and sticks as their weapons while the other had clubs, guns, and tear-gas missiles that can pierce stucco-walled buildings. The sickening thud of billy-clubs connecting with human tissue was heard everywhere…[490]

The melee ended with mass arrests, sixty wounded, three deaths, and 158 damaged buildings.[491] Aside from the police aggression, what received most of the attention from that dark day was the death of *Los Angeles Ti*mes journalist, Ruben Salazar.

Father Luce was on a flatbed truck at the demonstration with Salazar hours before his death. They eventually split because Salazar continued to report on the demonstration. After the chaos settled down, Salazar and another journalist took refuge at the Silver Dollar, a bar located on Whittier Boulevard, to compile their notes. Sheriffs arrived at the scene shortly thereafter, claiming they had received reports of a gunman inside. Without warning, sheriffs shot a tear-gas projectile into the bar, followed by several more, suggests Raul Ruiz, who documented the entire scene.[492] One of the projectiles struck Salazar in the head, killing him almost instantly. Salazar, who was one of the only mainstream journalists to cover issues concerning Mexican Americans,

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[490] Chicano Press Association Special Edition 1970. *La Raza* Newspaper, Volume [2], La Raza Publication Records, 2.

[491] Ibid.

[492] Ibid., 5.

became an instant martyr to the Chicana/o community. Laguna Park was renamed Ruben Salazar Park in memory of the revered journalist.

Tactics of state and police repression were and are a common strategy to quell social movements and infiltrate political organizations, especially during the 1960s. Unfortunately, they functioned all too well in the Chicana/o community. Demonstrations in response to the violence Chicana/os faced by police at the National Moratorium were met with additional and increased violence and repression by the state. The Los Angeles Police and Sheriff's Departments harassed the Moratorium committee, the Brown Berets, and *La Raza* newspaper; they raided their offices, used intimidation tactics, and infiltrated the organizations. Clashes between Chicana/os and the police became more common after the August 29th Moratorium. The broad base of families, young people, and organizations that brought out tens of thousands to demonstrate were no longer willing to subject themselves to the risk of confrontation with the police, of getting arrested, or worse. The motivation and excitement that had been built up for the last few years had been neutralized, likely the intention of law enforcement. Noriega, one of the principal organizers of the demonstration stated, "The Moratorium is over. The reason why is that there is too many killings, too many attacks, everybody's confused, there's too many problems… I am not going to be responsible for one death, because from now on, the killings are going to escalate."[493] The heavy-handed police response that came to represent the Chicano Moratorium was the beginning of a steady decline of the Chicana/o movement.[494]

As with the other actions throughout this chapter, the Church of the Epiphany's involvement in the Chicana/o Moratorium was peripheral. However, bringing out tens of

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[493] Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero,* 79.

[494] Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Si! Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

thousands of demonstrators called for a wide and broad network of support, as such “enthusiastic help also came from many people in the community who were not unaffiliated with a specific protest group.”[495] The Church of the Epiphany was already viewed as an important institutional ally to Chicana/o protest groups. Although hard evidence speaking to Epiphany’s specific role in planning the march is difficult to find, those involved in the Moratorium committee recognized the church as an important center of organizing. Rudy Tovar, a member of Epiphany, was highly active in the organization meetings of the Moratorium and remembered hosting planning meetings at Epiphany. Rosalio Muñoz first met Luce during his time organizing for the Moratorium. Muñoz remembers having a special affinity with Luce because of their shared background as non-violent Christians. Muñoz remembers Luce helping to organize and orient a meeting of ecumenical ministers in the Los Angeles area to support the Moratorium. Muñoz stated, “Epiphany was very much involved [in the Moratorium], they took all kinds of people there.”[496] In fact, the Church of the Epiphany’s ballet folklórico group was just about to go on stage before the police stormed the demonstration on August 29th. The day after the chaos, Father Luce told Nancy Von Lauderbach, one of his staff at the church, to collect all the documentation of what the media outlets were saying about the events that transpired. For the next several weeks, Von Lauderbach archived newspaper clippings and wrote notes about how the church was involved in the community response to the police repression.[497] Von Lauderbach’s documentation shows how invested the Church of the Epiphany was in supporting Chicana/os after that tragic day.

[495] Ibid., 66.

[496] Muñoz, interview with the author.

[497] Handwritten notes by Nancy Von Lauderbach, September 2, 1970. Epiphany Records.

Father Luce and Virginia Ram spent a considerable amount of time with the families of those that died on the day of the Moratorium. Upon news of Salazar's death, Father Luce spent the next few days with Salazar's family. Much less attention has been given to Ángel Gilberto Díaz, who also died at the demonstration. He suffered "multiple gunshot wounds and crashed into a utility pole when he reportedly tried to drive his car through a barricade set up by the Sheriff's Department."[498] The Church of the Epiphany was informed by Bert Corona that "the Díaz family, of the other man killed, were hungry and forgotten. There were 5 children and no money. Community money had all gone for bail."[499] Ram and Von Lauderbach rushed to assist the family, gathering food from their pantry, assisting them to apply for emergency funding, and offering money vouchers. Ram spent extensive amounts of time with the Díaz family. Von Lauderbach noted on September 3rd, after Ram had returned from the Díaz residence, "This evening Virginia is exhausted & has gone home & doesn't intend to answer the phone."[500]

Father Luce also made sure that the Episcopal hierarchy had a proper response to what happened on August 29th. He wanted Episcopalians to make a statement denouncing the aggression from the police. According to Von Lauderbach's notes, on September 2nd, Father Garver and Virginia Ram went to the Episcopal Diocese Council meeting to pressure them to make a public statement. Von Lauderbach describes the events in her notes,

- Fr. Garver, Virginia & Sol all went to Diocesan Council meeting.
- Not Father Luce, who was with the Salazar Family.
- Father Garver is said to have spoken eloquently, angrily, and at great length to the council. He praised the genius of Luce.
- Virginia spoke, unburdening all her pent-up anger.

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498 Richard Vasquez, "Second Victim of Riot Dies; Militant Chicano Freed on Bail," *Los Angeles Times,* September 2, 1970.

499 Handwritten notes by Nancy Von Lauderbach, September 2, 1970. Epiphany Records.

500 Handwritten notes by Nancy Von Lauderbach, September 3, 1970. Epiphany Records.

- Father Luce walked into the meeting late, but just at the right moment, and the Bishop had him write a press statement for immediate release.[501]

Father Luce quickly wrote a statement on behalf of the Bishops and Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles regarding the Chicano Moratorium. It stated, “The Bishops and Diocesan Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles express profound grief at the treatment given by the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department and other cooperating police departments to the thousands of Mexican-Americans from Los Angeles and around the nation who were gathered at Laguna Park last Saturday for a beautiful Fiesta of Peace and Justice.”[502] Father Luce’s statement also made reference to the Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio, Rev. Patrick Flores, who also made an unusual public statement calling for an investigation into the heavy handed approach by the police and the killing of Salazar. Not surprisingly, Father Luce also had a hand in the Catholic Bishops’ statement.

Bishop Flores was the first Mexican American Bishop ordained in the United States, having only been appointed the previous year. Bishop Flores happened to be in Los Angeles at the time of Salazar’s funeral because of a canceled conference in Delano, California. As such, Bishop Flores was invited to visit the body and console the wife of Salazar by some of the more active Catholic Chicano priests, namely Father Henry Casso and Father Juan Romero, both of whom were present at the Chicano Moratorium. After the funeral, Father Casso invited Bishop Flores to attend a community meeting of people of faith. At the meeting, they “expressed a desire that the Church somehow speak to this moment of history, and witness to justice and peace…Church people wanted to proclaim Gospel values as they related to this specific

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[501] Handwritten notes by Nancy Von Lauderbach, September 2, 1970, Epiphany Records.

[502] Press Release, Diocese of Los Angeles (Episcopal), “Bishops and Council Issue Statement on Chicano Moratorium Parade.” September 2, 1970. Epiphany Records.

situation, and to exercise the ministry of healing."[503] The loose ecumenical group that included Father Luce and Father Garver decided to use the weight of the first Chicano bishop to convoke a press conference. Father Romero, who was present and documented this gathering, remembers that "Father John Luce suggested that the spokespersons for the press conference be priests, and moreover Chicano priests. 'After all,' he protested, 'I'm from Massachusetts! [original emphasis]'" The Chicano, and mostly Catholic priests, called a press conference the following morning.

At the press conference, the priests described their participation in the largely peaceful demonstration while denouncing "the violence and the deaths, and demanded a thorough Congressional investigation of the circumstances surrounding the death of Rubén Salazar."[504] This moment, suggests Father Romero, was a profound moment in the Southern California history of Chicano/Catholic relations. It was one of the few times that Catholics publicly stated their support of Chicana/o self-determination. In the background, again, was Father Luce, who understood the significance of having the Catholic Church get behind the issues most impacting the Chicana/o community. Speaking to the religious leadership and the behind-the-scenes nature of Father Luce, it appears as if he rejected any speaking role in this press conference. Although it is not absolutely clear that they asked Father Luce to speak at the press conference, in Romero's account of the events, Luce *protested* when stating, "After all, I'm from Massachusetts!," suggesting that he was given the chance to share some words. Luce, in protesting his opportunity to speak here, is consistent with what others have said about him, namely that he did not want to be known or remembered as having any significant role in the Chicana/o movement. In fact, as

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[503] Romero, "Two Days in the Life of the Chicano and the Church in Southern California, Epiphany Records, 9.

[504] Ibid., 10.

this situation with the Catholic priests suggests, Father Luce actively put himself aside so that Chicana/os would be seen as the leaders. In one of the few interviews that Father Luce gave about his role in the Chicana/o movement, he stated, "How can a Yankee from Massachusetts be a leader of a Chicana/o community, that is an absolute lie, they can't be, ok? If someone says that, they are lying."[505]

Conclusion

This chapter recounted the explosion of political activity by the Mexican American community in Los Angeles in the second half of the 1960s. It was this political activity that brought the Mexican American community into the national struggle for civil rights. Prior to March of 1968, there was not any real mass Mexican American movement in Los Angeles, much less on a national scale. When Father Luce arrived in 1965, he had heard from reporters that "you couldn't get a Mexican-American anywhere to carry a sign."[506] However, within a few short years, Mexican Americans developed a new self-determining identity; they staged the largest student walkout in United States history, and began electing their own candidates to office, freed their political prisoners, and organized the largest antiwar demonstration of any ethnic group. For Mexican Americans, the late 1960apes became known as the Chicana/o movement, a period that would radically shift their socio-political trajectory in the United States.

Whereas previous chapters documented the ways the Church of the Epiphany assisted and supported the early stages of Chicana/o organizing, this chapter shows how the church, and Father Luce, shifted to the periphery during these historic demonstrations. In 1967, a year before

[505] Luce, interview by Rocío Zamora.

[506] Andrade, *History of 'La Raza' Newspaper,* 27.

the political explosion, Father Garver Jr. stated, “The role of the Church is not to dominate. Ours is a behind-the-scenes labor of encouragement, support, offering of our facilities and resources, and participation in the ranks. The leaders must be the poor themselves.”[507] Father Garver’s projection is largely how things played out between the church and the social political activity of the Chicana/o Movement. However, the church did not flee when the going got tough, rather, they withdrew so that the Chicana/o leaders could emerge, so that the credit and the glory went to the indigenous leadership of the community. As this chapter has shown, once the action started, Father Luce was largely absent, and this was intentional. Episcopalian historian William Wauters stated of Luce, “John made sure that he was not the hero.”[508]

The gathering of Chicano priests to denounce the police violence at the Chicano Moratorium is a perfect example of Luce rejecting any recognition for his role in the movement. Father Luce protested at the idea of him speaking at a press conference of priests, stating that it should be Chicano priests at the helm. This was not because Luce was timid; as he is often remembered for his fiery sermons at the church. Von Lauderbach also documented the impassioned speech Father Luce gave to the Episcopalian Council in order to pressure them to issue a statement against the police violence. As such, Father Luce could have easily made a statement at the press conference. However, he recognized this moment as an opportunity for Chicano *Catholic* priests to make a public statement in support of Chicana/os, and Luce gladly stepped aside. Everyone that worked closely with Father Luce knew that he never wanted the spotlight; he wanted all the glory to go to Chicana/os. Yet, Father Luce, Virginia Ram, and the church were never too far away; remaining close enough to provide what was needed and to step

[507] Undated paper by Oliver Garver Jr., “Christians as Agents of Social Change”, Epiphany Records, 22.

[508] Wauters, interview by the author, December 10, 2020.

in when appropriate, such as opening the doors of the church to the student walkout committees, delivering a tortilla Mass to those who occupied the School Board, attending to the casualties of the Moratorium, and making sure the institutional church defended Chicana/os by denouncing the actions of the police. Although the Church of the Epiphany's role in this chapter is marginal, it must be put in context with the other chapters of this research in order to understand the full scope of how the church was one of the most critical and important spaces of the Chicana/o movement.

Conclusion

When Joe Razo shuffled through his archives of *La Raza* newspaper photos to find images of religious figures and symbols during the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, he was surprised at what he found -- that from the beginning, religion and spirituality were an almost omnipresent force. Similarly, this research returned to the late 1960s Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles to examine the role of religion. Just as Razo found when shifting through his photos, I have shown that the presence of religious leaders, members, and symbols were in fact everywhere and present right from the very beginning of the Chicana/o movement, albeit oftentimes behind the scenes. From the 1966 United Farm Workers March to Sacramento to the Chicana/o Moratorium in 1970, religious figures walked hand in hand with the Chicana/o struggle for self-determination.

As Chao Romero's theoretical framework of the Brown Church has conceptualized, in virtually every instance of social injustice, the U.S. Latinx church has, in one way or another, sometimes en masse and sometimes on individual levels, challenged social inequalities. Wherever there has been injustice, there has also been resistance stemming from the deep faith, and faith politics, of the religious community. This research has uncovered and documented one of the historical sites of the intersection of religion and Latinx social movements, the Church of the Epiphany. By examining the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles through a faith politics lens, it becomes clear that one of the most critical and overlooked organizations of the Chicana/o movement and of Chicana/o history is the Church of the Epiphany, and one of the most consequential figures of the movement was Father John B. Luce. Not only has this been my argument throughout the research, but this has been the view of many of the principal organizers of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

While the early history of the Episcopal church in the United States was anything but progressive, the Protestant church could not help but be influenced by the radical changes stemming from the global uprisings of the mid twentieth century. Like Vatican II and Latin American Liberation Theology, two monumental Catholic reforms that called for the church to engage in the world in more meaningful ways, Episcopalians in the United States also reevaluated their own theological praxis. One of the first attempts came from the Episcopalian Bishop in Los Angeles, Francis Eric Bloy, who called for a radically different way of serving the predominantly Mexican American community of East Los Angeles. In 1961, Bishop Bloy launched the Parish of East Los Angeles (PELA), a union of parishes on Los Angeles's eastside, as a theological experiment to better minister to, and improve the conditions of, the Mexican American barrio. This research has shown the consequential impact of Bishop Bloy's experiment, including, most critically, the introduction of Father Luce to the Church of the Epiphany in October of 1965.

When Father Luce arrived in East Los Angeles to direct PELA, there was no evidence of a national Mexican American movement. The farm worker movement transpired as an ethnic-religious movement, strategically intersecting faith and politics, and was effective in building a critical mass of support. When the UFW advanced their struggle into the cities, the Church of the Epiphany became a critical urban hub; housing, supporting, and providing financial assistance to the farm worker movement. The relationship between the UFW and the Church of the Epiphany transformed the church into a center of social political activity. Between Father Luce's arrival in 1965 up until the high school Blowouts, the church was creating a socio-political environment that was intersecting faith and politics, or what Mario García has called "faith politics." I have

argued in this research that this intersection of faith and politics crucially supported the early stages, and the development, of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles.

In the years before the high school walkouts, young Chicana/os were becoming increasingly politicized during their time at the Church of the Epiphany. Whereas Sal Castro names the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference as the critical moment of Chicana/o *conscientización*, I argue that it was Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany that provided Chicana/os the opportunity to radically question their second-class citizenship, in schools and in society. While students founded the Young Citizens for Community Action after the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference, it was at the Church of the Epiphany and during the heightened socio-political environment happening at the church that the Young Citizens for Community Action changed their name to the Young *Chicanos* for Community Action. Then, with the help of Father Luce, they opened up their own organizing space, La Piranya, and took a decisively militant turn, changing their name once again to the Brown Berets. It was at the church, again during this time, that *La Raza* newspaper was founded, which is one of the most radical Chicana/o social commentaries of the Chicana/o movement period. *La Raza*, while housed at the Church of the Epiphany, was critical in organizing and raising the alarm about Chicana/o inequalities prior to the high school walkouts. If Camp Hess Kramer was the cradle of the Chicana/o movement, this research has shown how the Church of the Epiphany was the training grounds. It was the exposure to the farm worker activity and civic engagement at the Church of the Epiphany that caused urban Mexican American youth to ask, “What about us?” Chicana/os began to question the educational inequalities so prevalent in their communities and with the support of the Church of the Epiphany, they began organizing against them.

My principal thesis regarding the importance of religion to the Chicana/o movement is most evident in chapters three and four, where I show the impact of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany on the developing Chicana/o movement. By opening up the doors of the church to the local community, the Church of the Epiphany became a critical hub of Chicana/o organizing. Victoria Castro stated, "truly, if I had to say there was a center of the Chicano movement, it was Father Luce's church."[509] The intersection of faith and politics started with the United Farm Workers movement, and became more focused on local issues, such as the election of Dr. Nava, the first Mexican American on the Los Angeles School Board of Education, the founding and printing of *La Raza* newspaper in the basement of the church, educational inequalities on the eastside, and the political development of the Young Citizens for Community Action and the Brown Berets. This early organizing activity, centered at the church, inspired and advanced what today we consider the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles, namely, the high school Blowouts, the release of the East L.A. 13, the occupation of the Los Angeles School Board of Education, *Católicos por la Raza,* and finally, the Chicana/o Moratorium.

Through a faith politics lens, this research examines the Chicana/o movement with fresh eyes. Viewed in this way, the portrait of the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles drastically changes and the role of religion, namely of the Church of the Epiphany, becomes increasingly apparent. A faith politics application also introduces Father Luce to Chicana/o movement history. In a period of blatant racial hostility toward Mexican Americans, they found a stalwart ally in Father Luce. When he arrived in 1965, his first order of business was to make the barrio families feel comfortable in their own skin. He dramatically changed the social environment of the church to better represent the predominantly Mexican community, including honoring La

[509] V. Castro, interview by Virginia Espino.

Virgen de Guadalupe, instituting Mariachi Mass, decorating the church with *papel picado*, providing services in Spanish, offering cultural programming, Mexican American history classes, Danza Azteca, and *ballet folklórico*. Father Luce shared about his strategy: "we floated, in a sense, the organizational work to build Mexican American power on a sea of culture, including music and art, and that's what produced the identification. Once they saw that it was not only alright, but a positive thing, more and more people came."[510] Father Luce facilitated a space where Mexican Americans and Chicana/os were able envision a reality that they felt a part of, and in turn, could become agents of change. As such, the Mexican American barrios sought other institutions to also recognize and appreciate their cultural wealth. Whereas faith politics movements are not per se revolutionary movements, García states, "they lead to the empowerment of oppressed communities and the achievement of basic human rights."[511] This was clearly the case at the Church of the Epiphany.

Faith politics is to recognize the intersection of faith and politics that have been the basis of various Chicana/o and Latina/o social justice movements throughout history. García states that "there are many other similar movements in various Chicano and Latino communities that bear the influence of churches and faith-oriented individuals and whose stories need to be told."[512] The impact of Father Luce on the Chicana/o movement is a sorely overlooked narrative in Chicana/o history. As Richard Reyes stated, the biggest tragedy of the movement "is that Father Luce is not known, because we owe him so much."[513] Not just Reyes, but all the interview participants shared that it was a surprise that the significance of Father Luce is seldom

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[510] Luce, interview by Rocio Zamora.

[511] García, *Father Luis Olivares,* 10.

[512] Ibid., 9.

[513] Reyes, interview by the author, July 9, 2021.

considered in Chicana/o movement history. While his legacy is largely unknown outside of the Chicana/o activists he came across, Father Luce was so alive in their memories.

Importantly, the allyship of Father Luce is not a story of white saviorhood, something that the Chicana/o participants were asked to consider in the course of this research. They all vehemently reject the notion that Father Luce was some white savior coming in to save Mexicans. When asked to comment about Father Luce's white saviorhood, Esparza stated, "Nah, because he didn't tell us what to do, he just gave us support, he gave us a place, he never participated in the actual organizing and strategy sessions, he didn't do that, we did that."[514] For all the support, financing, and mentorship that Father Luce provided, he wanted no recognition for it; in fact, he resented it. Reyes stated, "he made such a strong effort to be anonymous and that punctuates what a great man he was."[515] The participants in this research all recognized Father Luce's humility. He wanted the glory of organizing the largest Mexican American social justice movement in United States history to go to them, the Chicana/os, the youth, the community, the organizers. Father Luce rarely gave interviews about his role in the Chicana/o movement and made sure to state that if anyone ever called him a leader, "they are lying."[516] The difficulty in finding documents, photos, speeches, interviews, or history on Father Luce is further evidence of his pursuit of obscurity, even within the Episcopal church. On the hundredth anniversary of the Los Angeles Diocese, the *Episcopal News* highlighted 100 of its leaders, naming important figures such as Father Wood, Father Garver, Virginia Ram, Lydia López,

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[514] Esparza, interview by the author, August 25, 2021.

[515] Reyes, interview by the author, July 9, 2021.

[516] Luce, interview with Rocio Zamora.

Nicholas Kouletsis, and 95 others, but there was no mention of Father Luce.[517] Even today, if you walked into the Church of the Epiphany, there is not a single photo of Father Luce. Yet, if you ask many of those in the barrio, they still refer to the Church of the Epiphany as Father Luce's church.

However, Father Luce was not the only person from the Church of the Epiphany to have played a meaningful role in the lives of Mexican Americans during the Chicana/o movement. While the contributions of Father Wood and Garver assisted the movement forward, particularly their legal and administrative expertise, it is the faith politics of Virginia Ram that is another unfortunate omission in Chicana/o movement history. If this research is arguing for the inclusion of Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany to Chicana/o historiography, then Virginia Ram must also be included. Dolores Delgado-Bernal states that leadership paradigms must be reconceptualized in order to recognize the leadership of women, stating that "rather than using traditional paradigms that view leaders as those who occupy a high position in an organization, feminist scholars have developed alternative paradigms that more accurately consider gender in the analysis of leadership."[518] Through this framework, the religious leadership of Ram becomes increasingly visible. Ram was the glue that held the Church of the Epiphany together. William Wauters stated that while she was not involved in so much of the political work, without Ram, the political activity would not have happened. However, Ram's role, much less her leadership, is rarely considered in Chicana/o movement or religious histories. Although her work was behind the scenes, Ram had her hands in almost all activities of the church, including with the farm workers, community relations, managing the large fiestas, and organizing the families of the

[517] "We are 100: Beginning Our Second Century as the Diocese of Los Angeles," The Episcopal News, November/December 1995, Epiphany Records.

[518] Delgado-Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized," 1998.

church. One of her biggest contributions was as programs director of BUSCA, which housed the cultural programming of the church. Through BUSCA, alternative educational and cultural programs were integrated into the programming with the youth and family members of the Church of the Epiphany, including Mexican American history classes. Through this radical intersection of faith and politics, Ram bridged families to become more involved with the Chicana/o movement. Whereas much of Chicana/o history has highlighted the *conscientization* of Mexican-American youth, the BUSCA programming at the Church of the Epiphany provides an alternative lens to examine how families also became politicized alongside their children. At the center of this was Virginia Ram. Further research could make clearer connections between the social and cultural programming of BUSCA and parents' involvement in the Chicana/o movement.

The absence of Virginia Ram in Chicana/o studies scholarship is remarkable because of her significance to all of the Chicana/o activists interviewed. They recognized her critical role at Epiphany, appreciated her care and attention to their needs, and respected her dedication to the church and the community. Her story also crosses multiple intersections that have historically been barriers to the heteropatriarchal narratives that make it into history books. She was a woman, a person of deep faith, and did not care for attention. Historical narratives of the religious leadership of women is another casualty of overlooking the role of religion in social movements. As a result of traditional patriarchal paradigms of leadership, the behind the scenes work that many of the women did at the Church of the Epiphany did not qualify them as traditional leaders. However, through the oral histories of the Chicana/o activists, the leadership of Chicana women cannot be denied. Maylei Blackwell's oral history of the role of women in the Chicana/o movement states, "without their rich life narratives and analyses, we could miss the

complex and multisited formation of Chicana feminist consciousness and fail to see the hidden transcripts of gendered insurgencies within the political mobilizations, marches, and battles that are usually told as heroic stories."[519] As such, examining the Chicana/o movement through a religious lens further exposes the gendered "internalities of power" that Blackwell and Delgado Bernal expose. Further research on the leadership of religious women such as Ram, Lydia López, Nancy Von Lauderbach, and others, would deepen the analysis and uncover narratives that have been buried by the secular and patriarchal history of the Chicana/o movement.

The history of Lydia López is a glaring example of women's leadership gone largely unnoticed. López's personality is as strong as it is warm and her and Father Luce became incredibly close. She was one of the only Chicana/os who converted to the Episcopalian faith as a result of the faith politics of Father Luce. She was inspired to participate in the Chicana/o movement when she saw Fathers Luce, Wood, and Garver protesting against the indictment of the East L.A. 13. López's role in this research is marginal because she arrived midway through the focus of this study, however, she served one of the longest tenures at the Church of the Epiphany. López credits Father Luce with teaching her that there was a way to intersect faith and politics, stating, Luce "taught me about doing something with my faith. That putting some action to my faith, it wasn't just praying and being so called holy, but you had to have action. So I'm hearing stuff I've never heard before."[520] It was this faith politics that López learned from Father Luce and the Church of the Epiphany that she has held onto for all these years. In addition to playing an active role in the Chicana/o movement, López became the president of the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO), an interdenominational multi-issue organization dedicated

[519] Blackwell, *Chicana Power,* 44.

[520] López, interview by the author.

to addressing the social and economic issues facing East Los Angeles residents throughout the 1970's and 1980's. The Church of the Epiphany played a critical role in assisting to finance and organize UNO. Throughout her years as an activist, López maintained an active role at the Church of the Epiphany. Her own application of faith politics took López to the very top of the Episcopalian hierarchy, where she was appointed as a canon for her work in pushing the church to continue finding better ways to serve the Latinx population. López was also heavily involved and supporting undocumented immigrants during the sanctuary movement at the Placita Olvera, alongside another monumental social justice clergyman in Los Angeles, Father Luis Olivares.[521] Showing her persistent commitment to her faith politics, at the national Episcopal convention, when she was called up to the stage to be ordained as a canon, she insisted they continue calling her a Chicana. The history of Lydia López is another beautiful intersection of faith and politics waiting to be told.

The role of space was another critical factor in this research. Using Gaye Theresa Johnson's spatial entitlement theory as a lens of analysis, underscores the critical use of space provided by the Church of the Epiphany to the Mexican American community. The original PELA proposal issued by Bishop Bloy in 1960 recognized the benefit of transforming the space of the church so that it could be considered a center of community engagement. The proposal did not go as far as saying that the church should be a center of organizing, yet, Chicana/os quickly transformed the holy space of the church into a center of political activation. Theresa Johnson suggests that "Spatial articulations in this era refer to the transformation of the ways in which people moved themselves through space, shaped the space where they congregated, and asserted their entitlements with the cultural currency they created."[522] Indeed, in the basement of the

[521] García, *Father Luis Olivares.*
[522] Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity,* 65.

Church of the Epiphany, in addition to the spiritual and moral support available to them, Chicana/os maximized the material resources at their disposal, namely the space for them to organize. As the Chicana/o activists interviewed here shared, it was in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany where the famous high school Blowouts were planned, where *La Raza* newspaper was founded and printed, and where the Young Citizens for Community Action and the Brown Berets developed their organizational chops. It was these organizational bodies that became the "usual suspects" in all the historical moments that made up the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles. A spatial entitlement theoretical lens uncovers how Chicana/os developed strategies "to create new possibilities in the spaces that were open to them and to hold open the potential to reach across spaces and make new affiliations, identifications, and alliances." These alliances, affiliations, and identifications that were created in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany are now remembered and recognized as the Chicana/o movement.

The history of the Church of the Epiphany tells us so much about how the Chicana/o movement got on its feet. Notwithstanding any of the religious features so obviously present, the role of the Church of the Epiphany in the Mexican American struggle for civil rights is a valuable piece of the Chicana/o movement puzzle, underscoring the spaces, places, and inspirations of its beginnings. At the same time, this research represents a fresh take on Chicana/o movement history. By centering religion and faith politics, new agents of change, novel uses of space, and unknown narratives emerge. That the starting line for the Chicana/o movement in Los Angeles was in the basement of a religious institution may fall flat to those invested in the traditionally secular histories of the Mexican American peoples, yet, this research has shown that that was indeed the case. The Church of the Epiphany showed its incredible faith politics by standing alongside Chicana/os in their struggle for self-determination.

This research thus shows the potential of recognizing and utilizing faith-based institutions as centers for radical community building. In an environment where Latinxs and other minoritized communities continue to face systemic barriers, educational inequalities, and police brutality, the church, broadly speaking, may still provide critical institutional support. The faith politics of the Church of the Epiphany allowed it to take risks, open their space, and support their clergy to be active in the community. Pope Francis recently encouraged clergy to "be shepherds with the smell of the sheep."[523] Churches, broadly speaking, can play a critical role in the fight for equality and can take practical steps to support their communities to mobilize for change. However, faith politics is not only a position that should be taken by religious institutions, but by secular organizations as well. There is great potential in integrating and recognizing the religious and spiritual identities that mean so much to marginalized communities of color into organizing spaces. A faith politics organizing framework accepts the full identities of communities and invites them to create and organize towards the ideals of a utopian otherworld in the here and now. Faith politics has played a critical role in social justice movements that have worked towards a more egalitarian society throughout history and could play a critical role in social movements in the future.

Chicanx history will have to continue coming to terms with what Robert Chao Romero has stated -- that in virtually every instance of social injustice, the Brown Church has risen to support Latinx struggles for self-determination. This research fills an important gap in Chicana/o and religious history, underscoring the role of religion to Latinx social movements. I follow a growing number of Chicanx and Latinx scholars that have paved this path, such as Mario García, Lara Medina, Felipe Hinojosa, Jacqueline Hidalgo, and others that recognize the importance of

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[523] Robin Gomes, "Pope to Priests: Be 'Shepherds with "The Smell of the Sheep."'" *Vatican News,* accessed 6.8.22. https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-06/pope-francis-priests-students-church-louis-french.html

religion to communities of color and to their movements for social change. Continuing to center the role of religion in Chicanx history will undoubtedly generate new and fresh intersectional figures and narratives that have impacted Chicanx and Latinx movements throughout space and time.

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