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### Publication Date

2010

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Chicano and Black Radical Activism of the 1960s: A Comparison between the Brown  
Berets and the Black Panther Party in California

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Angélica María Yañez

Committee in Charge:

Professor Roberto Alvarez, Chair  
Professor Luis Alvarez  
Professor K. Wayne Yang

2010



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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010

## DEDICATION

I want to thank the Creator for another day of life. My Mother, **Emma** for everything. My **Tia Eloiza** for her unconditional love, inspiration, and light. My **Tia Tina** for her laughter, craziness, and generosity. **Ofelia Montoya** for being both my spiritual sister and amiga. **Esteban Lopez** for listening. **Rudy Guevarra** for the initial ideas for this project. **Milo M. Alvarez**, for your unwavering support and encouragement. **Destiny Carrera**, thank you for visiting with me, writing with me, for your smile but mostly for making me be in the moment with you. **My committee** for their constructive feedback and time. Lastly, **Jayde Gonzalez** for replenishing me and giving me a renewed gratitude for life and this academic process.

## EPIGRAPH

*I don't even call it violence when it's in self defense; I call it intelligence.*

*Malcolm X*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Roberto Alvarez for his support as the chair of my committee. Through multiple drafts and pressing questions, I was able to think through this project more critically.

I would also like to thank Professor Luis Alvarez, for your invaluable feedback, support, and generosity with your time. I appreciate it.

I would like to acknowledge K. Wayne Yang for being both inspirational and down-to-earth. Thank you for your conversations and insight.

Rudy Guevarra, thank for your encouragement, our "academic" discussions, interrogating whiteness, and guiding me through the beginning stages of this project.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Rice family (Alexander, Candice, Alexander Jr., Xavier, and Malcolm) for their love and support. Candice Rice, for the brilliant way you teach and talk about Ethnic Studies; and for all those times in seminar. I got your back like trees against wind

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Chicano and Black Radical Activism of the 1960s: A Comparison between the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party in California

by

Angélica María Yañez

Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego 2010

Professor Roberto Alvarez, Chair

This project seeks to disrupt a black and white paradigm that rests on the foundation of a dominant narrative of American society that creates a binary understanding of race relations in the U.S. This binary privileges the social position and historical trajectory of Euro-Americans by simultaneously creating a deviant “other” through black and brown bodies. I disrupt this binary by centering the parallel

experiences of Chicanos and Blacks during the 1960s and 1970s; and see their struggles as a common one. I take a comparative approach in my analysis of the historical Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party and use a Critical Race Theory framework of “counterstories”; a way for oppressed voices to disrupt dominant narratives of white supremacy, legitimacy, and “truth.”

I focus on the Power Movements, represented by both groups, which embraced a distinct political and cultural politic that resisted various forms of white racism; this politic typically veered from assimilationist models of integration. I was interested in the comparison of the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers and throughout the literature did not find compelling comparisons about the intersections of both racialized groups.

The primary sources that inform this project are the independent newspapers and its’ content, published by each organization, *La Causa* and *the Black Panther*. Major themes revealed in the newspapers included social justice, self-defense, cultural pride, and a re-evaluation of American society. These primary sources helped me identify the larger social intersections of the Chicano and Black community explicated by both organizations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The terminology I use in this thesis is intentional for example; the labels Chicano and Black have direct political and historical significance. I will use the term Chicana/o in a politically conscious sense. As it was a label used by activists like the Brown Berets to define and name themselves; it was a strategic political identity that was created in response to American racism. This term also emphasized pride in cultural ties to Mexico and did not necessarily embrace assimilation, as did Mexican-American organizations such as (LULAC and MAM.) In the same vein, the label Black, like Chicano, is used instead of African American due to its political significance. The term Black was also used to emphasize pride in one’s cultural roots toward Africa; though the Black Panthers did not necessarily want to go back to Africa but understood they had a dual value system. It is also important to note that not all definitions are agreed upon or understood the same amongst members of the respective communities or amongst scholars. However, when citing various authors I will use their original terminology.



## **Introduction**

### **Police Brutality and Slain Panther: Six Pallbearers for Thomas Melvin Lewis**

On a peaceful Saturday afternoon on August 11, 1968 in the parking lot of Trinity Baptist Church on 2040 W. Jefferson Street, in Los Angeles concerned people gathered in protest. There they stood in solidarity and in honor of 18-year-old slain Panther, Thomas Melvin Lewis, “125 Panthers, 75 Panther ‘Sisters’ and 30 members of Mexican American Militant group, the Brown Berets” staged a 45-minute militant demonstration.<sup>2</sup> LA Times reporter Ray Rogers commented that, “[...] 60 representatives of various peace groups, most of them white, in civilian clothes and about 100 local residents who viewed the scene from the perimeter of the lot, pallbearers for Lewis were 5 Panthers and 1 Brown Beret, all wearing white gloves.”<sup>3</sup> Earlier that week an unarmed Black male, named Melvin Lewis died after receiving numerous bullet wounds fired by local white police officers. Even today, details of the shooting remain unclear. However, what is clear is the habitual police brutality and state repression that Chicanos and Blacks have historically endured.

The vignette of the funeral is a useful starting point for considering how radical Chicano and Black organizations responded to social injustice during an era of political unrest.<sup>4</sup> The funeral illustrates how and why political organizations like the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party formed in the 1960s in order to combat and alleviate

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<sup>2</sup> For full story please see: Negroes, Mexican-Americans Drill at Funeral of Panther WILLIAM DRUMMOND; RAY ROGERS *Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File)*; Aug 11, 1968; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - pg. FB)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> By the term “radical,” I do not mean “extremist,” “militant,” or “self-separatist”, because these terms are typically associated with negative connotations and have been misinterpreted. I use the term radical to

social frustrations. For instance, such things included, unjustifiable murders committed by state officials (like that of Melvin Lewis), the violence of white racism in their lives, and in general, they hoped to fight inferior living conditions. The murder of Lewis helps us understand why groups like the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers formed, and how their everyday experiences of police and state violence (both overt and covert) exposed the darker side of American racism. Both the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers questioned the core of American democracy by interrogating the racial order and showed that there was no guarantee of democracy, freedom, and meritocracy for marginalized people of color. Therefore, *my historical tracing looks at the emergence of the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party in California during the 1960s to understand how both groups had comparable and/or varying political philosophies and objectives, why they formed, what they did, and how they responded to social oppression.*<sup>5</sup>

This project elucidates how segments of the Chicano and Black communities worked toward comparable social justice goals in both Los Angeles and Oakland,

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indicate a “radical” break with older assimilationist models of inclusion and fighting for American justice. I use the word radical in a more positive light. I use the term radical to mean politics that did not solely want inclusion within dominant society. Rather these groups radically advocated racial/ethnic uplift for the entire community for political, physical, economic, spiritual, cultural and mental autonomy.

<sup>5</sup> For the scope of this thesis, I primarily focus on the original (or founding) organizations of the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party and look at the inception of both groups in California during the 1960s. Though many chapters formed for both organizations in various parts of the U.S. I also primarily focus on comparative ideologies between both groups and do not necessary go into depth about the organizations’ structures. For example, there is plenty bodies of work that focus on their uniforms and military structures. See: Pulido, Laura. *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radial Activism in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006. Hillard, David and Donald Weise. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002. Foner, Philip S., ed. *The Black Panthers Speak*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970. Alkebulan, Paul. *Surviving Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2007. Newton, Huey P. *War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1980.

California during the mid-60s to the late 70s.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, my fundamental research questions interrogate, why it was necessary for the founding Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party to form and why they had similar social grievances and political strategies. More specifically, what is the larger social critique about racial hierarchies in the United States that both groups are proposing? I am interested in the kind of counterhegemonic narrative or counterstory these groups produced; how did the groups produce theories and implement practices that sought to contest the American racial order? My data will show that the independent newspapers and the political platforms reveal such analysis (both productions served as the organizational philosophies and the primary ideological purpose of the groups).

As the evidence will reveal, through the organizations' primary documents, the approaches of these two groups were similar (and, in fact, at times the same) in that the underlying principles, ideologies, and community organizing were parallel to their respective needs. Therefore, I was able to conclude that both groups were similarly racialized within the larger social structure of white racism.

The evidence provided in the independent newspapers and political platforms (ideological apparatus of the organizations); will help uncover the main claims of the thesis. This thesis illustrates how ideological similarities existed between radical Black and Chicano organizations in how they responded to white racism and other forms of domination that affected both communities equally, thus pointing to larger issues of how

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<sup>6</sup> This project is not necessarily about inter-ethnic solidarity or coalitions but rather how both ethnic groups have been racialized in a similar fashion and are therefore forced to politically organize in a similar way.

Chicanos and Blacks are similarly racialized within the dominant structure of white supremacy as 'racial villains'.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, we can then understand how race and racism work within a racial hierarchy of what Claire Kim calls racial triangulation, the stratification of racial groups in relation to one another.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the way one ethnic group is racialized is thus predicated on how other ethnic groups are viewed within the racial hierarchy. This racialization demonstrates how social conflict for all ethnic groups is therefore grounded in systemic and historical oppression leaving white dominance invisible and intact. I will therefore propose a way to understand why the Brown Berets and Black Panthers had similar radical organizations and objectives and how state oppression and similar racialization forces each ethnic group, Chicanos and Blacks within the context of the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers to articulate their oppression in a similar fashion. Thus, the guiding questions for this project allow us to explore the social goals of their political activism and how they circulated a discourse about race and racism within their newspapers to the wider society, thus providing a way for Chicano and Black communities to understand how racism had structured their lives.

For instance, in the book by Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*, "Race-and racial identity- is always relational, not inherent. By relational I do not mean oppositional ...

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen, Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society*, Vol 27. No. 1, March 1999, 105-138.

race is many things, not just a single thing. It can be stigmatizing, but it can also be liberating.”<sup>9</sup>

[I]f we think in categories, and think about race only as if it were a single category, we conflate many different spheres of racial meaning. We fail to specify if we mean biological race, political race, historical race, or cultural race. We simplify race as a fixed category from which many people want to escape. They seek exit, not acknowledgment; they want choice, not voice. The category becomes a barrier, fenced enclosure, and transgressing the boundary becomes an act of rebellion and self-definition.<sup>10</sup>

Both the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party adamantly used race as both an analytic and organizing tool as they transgressed the boundary into an act of rebellion and self-definition they advocated radical politics in their independent newspapers. Therefore, experiences of the everyday and the power of their stories are what Critical Race Theorist call “counterstories” as opposed to dominant narratives that favor the status quo.

Equally important, this thesis also concerns itself with the relations between Chicanos and Blacks and challenges the literature on race relations, which has primarily focused on the Black and white binary and has centered its attention on conflicts between Chicanos and Blacks. Again, using theories of racial triangulation, we can begin to see how a Black and white binary leaves little room or understanding for the relational construction of race and its material consequences for communities of color.

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<sup>9</sup> Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres. *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2002). 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## Review of Literature: Black and Chicano Relations

There is a polarized discussion and understanding of race-relations, racial imagery, and racial violence in the U.S. known as the Black and white binary. Racialized minority groups have had to understand themselves through the construction of “blackness” in American popular and academic discourse through accepted images, in school textbooks, and the media.<sup>11</sup> This creation has led to the continuous and perpetual binary logic of American society race relations, which is white versus black, constituted as the white-rational-normative-subject in opposition to the black-unintelligible-deviant-other. However, Critical Race scholars like Tara Yosso and Juan Perea have challenged the dominant approach of understanding oppression in terms of Black and white and offer an expanded understanding of racism and its effects on all people of color.<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to deconstruct the Black and white binary of understanding how racism operates amongst communities of color, I look at the Chicano and Black communities in a relational manner providing a comparative analysis of their racialization. My goal in this thesis is two-fold, first to construct a narrative that does not privilege one racialized group over another or claims a place in the “olympics of the oppressed,” but places the Chicano and Black communities in a historical context of white supremacy and

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<sup>11</sup> For more understanding of the Black/White binary in scholarship and popular media see: Interrogating “Whiteness” (De) Constructing “Race” by AnnLouise Keating, *Extending the Bounds of Race and Racism: Indigenous Women and the Persistence of the Black and White Paradigm of Race*, by Angelina E. Castagno, *Some Potential Casualties of Moving Beyond the Black/White Paradigm to Build Potential Coalitions*, by Rogelio A. Lasso, *Black Cultures and Race Relations* by James L. Conyers, *How the Black/White Paradigm Renders Mexicans/Mexican Americans and Discrimination Against Them Invisible*, by Eduardo Luna, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic and other work by Critical Race Scholars.

<sup>12</sup> See: Tara Yosso, *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. (New York: Routledge, 2006) 6. Juan F. Perea, *Why integration and equal protection fail to protect Latinos*. *Harvard Law Review*, 117, 1420-1469, 2004.

investigates how they have come to view and understand their social position.<sup>13</sup>

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century sociologists, provide critical insight as to why scholars should pay attention to the needs of both Chicanos and Blacks. In their seminal work on Black and Brown social relations Mindiola, Flores Niemann, and Rodriquez provide politically powerful insight on race relations and alliances between the two communities. They assert,

We believe that relations among people of color will be of central concern [...] because African Americans and Hispanics are the two largest racial-ethnic groups and live in proximity in urban areas, they are destined to receive much of the attention from the media, politicians, corporate America, and researchers. Our observations also indicate that conflict, cooperation, and accommodation characterize relations between Hispanics and African Americans, depending on the context.<sup>14</sup>

This suggests that, demographic patterns will foster cultural exchanges and interactions that will be inevitable between Chicanos and Blacks.

In the same vein, Professor Bill Piatt, in his book *Black and Brown in America*, contends that relationships between Chicanos and Blacks are crucial for political ends and advocates cooperation over competition between the two groups. He notes that the media has exaggerated and focused on conflicts between the two. Piatt proposes ways to look at the interactions between Chicanos and Blacks which would help disrupt the binary understanding of how racism operates but to critically engage the importance of

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<sup>13</sup> What I mean by the “olympics of the oppressed” is not to rank oppressions and to see what colonized subject has suffered the worst fate or atrocities but rather to understand the experiences of different racial groups and understand their struggles in common with one another. See Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 52-53.

<sup>14</sup> Tatcho Mindiola Jr. and et al, *Black and Brown Relations and Stereotypes*.(Austin: University of Texas Press), xii.

inter-racial cooperation . He states, “the challenge facing African Americans and Latinos, for their own prosperity and for that of America, will be to maximize the areas of mutual cooperation and minimize supposed, perceived, or even real differences.”<sup>15</sup> Equally significant, Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler too stress that "the literature [on both groups have] focused mostly on their conflicts and deficiencies.”<sup>16</sup> Again, making invisible the similar and shared struggle both groups face in the United States but rather constructing them at odds with one another through literature and popular media.

Unfortunately, the current body of literature on Chicano and Black relations highlights negative interactions between both groups; it offers few solutions for positive interactions and historical moments where cooperation has taken place.<sup>17</sup> The importance of deconstructing the Black and white binary, contend Critical Race scholars is that any binary approach to understanding how race and racism operate is dangerously reductionist and minimizes the shared experiences of oppression for all racial groups.<sup>18</sup> In order to consider any advancement for ending racism minority groups must look at their social oppression as relational to one another couched in white dominance. Though Piatt does not minimize the tensions, he provides ways to consider Chicanos and Blacks

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<sup>15</sup> Bill Piatt, *Black and Brown in America: the Case for Cooperation*. (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler. *Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latino, Blacks, Afro-Latinos*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 168. Such tensions that have been exaggerated are gang warfare, prison animosities, anti-immigrant sentiments from Blacks, and competition over resources and low-skilled jobs.

<sup>17</sup> I do not intend to negate the realities of negative tensions but more importantly and for the scope of this project, I would like to show how both these groups benefit mutually from political alliances.

<sup>18</sup> Stefancic, Jean and Richard Delgado. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 70.



in relation to one another. Piatt affirms that we must “abandon the practice of discussing Blacks and Hispanics as though they are mutually exclusive groups.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Luis Alvarez and Danny Widener also remind us of the importance of doing comparative work on these two populations, “both disciplines [African American and Chicano Studies] have for the most part avoided taking a broader look at the complicated histories and contemporary questions that structure life between America’s two largest nonwhite populations.”<sup>20</sup> In this way, we can begin to think of ways and solutions to enhance positive relations and minimize negative ones while understanding the over arching oppressive force.

In the same way, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall in their book *Agents of Repression: The FBI’s Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, exposes how the covert operations of the Federal Bureau of Investigation aided in dismantling the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement.<sup>21</sup> Both groups were targeted because they challenged state violence and posed a threat to the status quo-- both groups were labeled “enemies of the state.” However, Churchill is more concerned with how the state represses social movements or

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<sup>19</sup> Piatt, *Black and Brown in America*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> *A History of Black and Brown Chicana/o–African American Cultural and Political Relation*, by Luis Alvarez and Daniel Widener, in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 33, No 1 Spring 2008, 143-154.

<sup>21</sup> Founded in Minneapolis in 1968 AIM (American Indian Movement) became one of the most militant Native American groups that sought the right to self-defense and renewed interest in learning their traditional ways as they asserted notions of *Red Power*. Similarly, cultural nationalist like United Slaves and revolutionary nationalist groups like the Black Panther Party also espoused things like *Black is Beautiful* and *Black Power*. Many Native Americans had been denied the right to learn about their cultural ways as they faced the historical legacy of forced assimilation in Euro-American boarding schools and as a result, young urban activist energetically sought after the revival of traditional customs.

those concerned with social justice. The ultimate purpose of the books shows how the FBI quiets dissonance that opposes the dominant ideology of the government.

“Specifically, [the authors] argue that the Bureau was founded, maintained and steadily expanded as a mechanism to forestall, curtail, and repress the expression of political diversity within the United States.”<sup>22</sup> This book provides an excellent example of comparative research and how all racialized groups are under political scrutiny by the government if the status quo is challenged.

Not only does comparative research deconstruct the Black and white binary it allows for more sophisticated ways to think about how white racism operates across various ethnic groups and how they organize against it. In her latest book, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* Laura Pulido provides critical insight of the interlocking of race and class within revolutionary nationalist groups like the Black Panther Party, CASA, and East Wind of the 1960s particularly in Los Angeles . Her analysis offers a critical framework of differential racism that looks at Black, Asian and Latino radical activist during 1968-1978 that sought to contest capitalism and racism. The importance of addressing differential racialization allows us to understand how this process varies for different communities of color yet within the racial hierarchy people of color are racialized in specific ways.<sup>23</sup> The strength of her analysis lends to a

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<sup>22</sup> Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>23</sup>Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radial Activism in Los Angeles*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006) 21-23.

comparative approach of how Blacks, Chicanos, and Asians all systematically faced oppression yet found specific enclaves to alleviate such social ills.

While historically, Ethnic Studies scholarship like Chicano, Black, and Asian studies have been viewed and under-theorized in isolation from one another we can begin to address the intersections more thoroughly, she asserts, “individual groups should not be understood in isolation.”<sup>24</sup> Theoretically, Pulido maps out a comparative and relational scope of how communities of color combat various forms of injustice, which allows Ethnic Studies scholars to contest singular narratives of social oppression amongst communities of color. Pulido encourages the reader to move away from linear understandings of racism and U.S. imperialism but shows how both systems work in tandem to create complex racial hierarchies. Equally important, she provides a new reading of radical activism of the 1960s of how Black, Chicano and Asian activist sought similar yet distinct forms of social resistance.<sup>25</sup> However, in this thesis I will address how Chicanos and Blacks particularly the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets sought similar community organizing practices—as both groups are similarly racialized and yet at specific historical moments are racialized in distinct ways.

On the other hand, researchers like Nick C. Vaca are inclined to highlight the tensions between Chicanos and Blacks such as competition over low-skilled jobs,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> To see more works on how comparative research enhances our understanding of colonial dominance and its management of racism for various racialized groups: Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*. London: University of California Press, 2005. Rachel Buff, *Immigration and the Political Economy of Home: West Indian Brooklyn and American Indian Minneapolis, 1945-1992*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. L. Rain Cranford-Gomez, *Brackish Bayou Blood: Weaving Mixed-Blood Indian-Creole Identity Outside the Written Record*. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 32:2 (2008) 93-108.

political power, or cultural differences. Vaca claims that Chicanos and Blacks will not be able to get along nor form common alliances. In his, book *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America*, Vaca states, “Chicanos and Blacks will never get along because there are too many cultural differences.”<sup>26</sup> Vaca’s work does not offer resolutions to such conflicts as that of Piatt’s work. Equally significant, Vaca’s claims fall short in understanding how conflict over resources between communities of color are always embedded in power relations of white supremacy.<sup>27</sup> However, Vaca is correct in stating that “natural” alliances will not immediately foster because both groups face social oppression.<sup>28</sup> I contend that we must ask why these alliances are important and how they have been reality. First, communities of color need to articulate how racism structures their everyday lives. Then to understand how racism is relational and leaves the white power structure intact as the “natural order of things”—leaving all communities of color disenfranchised.

Again, what Vaca fails to address or recognize is how conflict is socially mediated to keep the American racial hierarchies intact and never discusses internalized racism. He underscores the importance of looking at race in a critical manner. For instance, he claims that many Blacks voted for Proposition 187-- a proposition attempting to curb illegal immigration from Mexico which would deny illegal immigrants from any social services, education, and health care benefits. In order to obtain services providers

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<sup>26</sup> Nicolas C. Vaca, *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America*. (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2004).

<sup>27</sup>This discussion and theoretical concepts came out Professor Jesse Mill’s course entitled U.S. Immigration Histories, Winter Quarter 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Vaca, *Presumed Alliance*, 186.

needed to verify immigrant status. Consequently, many Blacks supported the passage by 55 percent along with the majority of whites (83 percent) therefore passing the proposition. Vaca contends,

The majority of Blacks, however, favored the passage of Proposition 187. The heat of competition from undocumented laborers in the workforce, Blacks supported Proposition to 187 because it appeared to present a solution to the problem.<sup>29</sup>

However, the “problem” of illegal immigration particularly from Mexico is constructed as “heat of competition” for Blacks in the workforce but what is not deconstructed is how racism operates in this schism. Proposition 187 directly targeted any illegal immigration from South America, however other immigrants (whether documented or undocumented) from Europe or Asian are not looked upon as competition for Black Americans nor are they criminalized for their migration as Latinos have been.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, conquer and divide tactics are *not new* political strategies that the government uses between communities of color and between citizens and immigrants.<sup>31</sup>

Echoing Vaca, Brenda Walker too addresses how immigration particularly hinders African Americans. She claims that “As wages are depressed by an oversupply of cheap low-skilled labor [Latino immigrants], less-educated homegrown workers find it more difficult to find jobs that will support them. [...]People who work for a living should be alarmed. No one's job is safe, and black Americans are particularly at risk.”

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>30</sup> Mai Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 267-269.

<sup>31</sup> See the article: *Who is Hurt? Mass Immigration harms poor and black American Workers*, by Brenda Walker. <http://www.limitstogrowth.org/WEB-text/who-hurt.html>

Again, there is no serious or critical analysis as to why these two marginalized communities are forced into competing for low-skilled jobs.

Fortunately, Roberto Suro helps put this idea of conflict into the larger social issues and addresses how both groups are often rivals for similar resources. He states:

Both blacks and Latinos have come to this country primarily to meet a demand for cheap labor, and over the course of generations they have remained disproportionately represented among those who do physical work for low wages. That status has been a powerful factor in molding their group identities both in the ways they have been seen and treated by the white majority and the ways they see themselves. Their “otherness” is the result not just of color or culture but also of their place in the nation’s economic [and racial] scheme.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, racism and tensions between communities of color are mediated through legal policies, constructed through media, and couched within the racialized economic order of labor in the U.S.

On the other hand, Professor of Law Tanya K. Hernandez describes how conflicts between Latinos and Blacks are not solely economic but deeply ingrained prejudices. She asserts that Latinos have held an “anti-black racism” that fosters a “social distance” between the groups.<sup>33</sup> She highlights how these hostilities have spilled over to gang warfare and murder in various parts of Los Angeles. In addition, distrust from both groups exists.<sup>34</sup> It is precisely for these reasons that researchers need to offer solutions to

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<sup>32</sup> Roberto Suro, *Black and Latino in the United States: An Evolving Relationship*. Carnegie Corporation of New York. Vol. 51, No. 2 Spring 2009, page 4.

<sup>33</sup> Tanya K. Hernandez, *Roots of Latino/black Anger: Longtime Prejudices, not Economic Rivalry Fuel Tensions*. Los Angeles Times, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Vaca, *Presumed Alliance*, 1.

minimize such conflicts.<sup>35</sup> This projects hopes to provide ways to look at the Chicano and Black communities not as separate but to find solutions to challenge the tensions. Political alliances have been, and will continue to be crucial for Chicanos and Blacks to co-exist or to become a strong political base in the U.S.

I attempt to bring together bodies of literature that primarily remain interrogated in isolation for one another. I offer an analysis that significantly engages the similarities between Black and Chicano radicalism of the 1960s, while also interrogating the larger social issues that distress Chicanos and Blacks. More importantly, I ask, what can we learn from these movements and what do they offer today? In bridging some of the gap between disciplines and our understanding of racialized groups, I contend that it is important to understand these issues not separate from one another (i.e. “those are black issues”, or “those are strictly Chicano problems”) but to consider them in a relational manner. Thus, by investigating the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers, we can begin some of that work.

For that reason, I investigate the sites where both groups have had similar ideological approaches to address comparable social ills like police brutality, poverty, and inferior schooling that negatively affect both racialized groups. So generally, this

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<sup>35</sup> For more on Black and Chicano relations see: Jack Miles, “Black v. Browns: African Americans and Latinos,” *The Atlantic*, Oct. 1992, 21. Rosalind Muhammad, “Black-Latino Gangs Offer Peace to LA Neighborhood,” *The Final Call*, Aug. 30, 1995, 7. Larry Rohter, “As Hispanic Presence Grows, So Does Black Anger,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1993, 1. Carlos Sanchez, “Redirecting Racial Tensions: Black and Hispanics Ask Dixon for Study,” *Washington Post*, June 28, 1991. Audrey Steinbergen Lundy, “Racial Cooperation Advocated: Blacks, Hispanics Urged to Join Forces to Solve Mutual Problems,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 1993. Stephanie Chavez, “Racial Tensions over South LA Jobs Grow,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 1992.

work in itself offers a counterstory narrative-- as I have been arguing for a more thorough understanding of how power and race are interconnected.

**Analytic Framework: Critical Race Theory (A Critical Concept of Race, Racism and Counterstory)**

Critical Race Theory focuses on the relationship between power, race, and racism. Its primary critique is of American liberalism, dominant epistemologies, and narratives; this theory challenges covert forms of racism as ordinary or “common sense.” Dominant narratives or majoritarian storytelling are circulated in mainstream society, school textbooks, and conventional media as the norm. Professor Tara Yosso explains majoritarian storytelling as, “a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of those with racial and social privilege. Traditionally, mainstream storytelling through mass media and academia rely on “stock” stereotypes if and when they discuss issues of race.”<sup>36</sup> In this regard, counterstories are a form of resistance that demystifies majoritarian stories and “high” theory or “truth” as the only legitimate form of knowledge. Stories and epistemologies of people of color expose so-called claims of “objectivity” within knowledge production.<sup>37</sup>

I focus on newspapers produced by the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers and argue they constructed theories of social inequality and read them as “counterstories” that

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<sup>36</sup> Tara J. Yosso, *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8.

<sup>37</sup>For more Critical Race Theory references see above citation and *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Feminism*, edited by Adrien Katherine Wing, and *Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context*, by Daniel G. Solorzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal, in *Urban Education* 2001; 36; 308.



circulated their knowledge and theories as a critique of American subjugation and racism. I will deploy the concept of counterstory in my content analysis of *La Causa* and *the Black Panther*. Critical Race scholars contend that counterstories provide an outlet for the “oppressed” to give voice to their stories, histories, and perspectives.

### **Methodology and Sources**

The data for this thesis consisted primarily of archival materials such as organization newspapers created by the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers, primary documents, autobiographies, written interviews, and documentaries. I investigated newspapers that both groups produced *La Causa* by the Brown Berets and *the Black Panther* by the Black Panther Party, reviewed the Political Platforms of both organizations, and read these documents as counterstories.<sup>38</sup> The platforms are the ideological apparatus of both groups-- here is where I compare both the groups ideological similarities and differences in their political organizing.

I surveyed 25 issues of *La Causa*, newspaper published by the Brown Berets and 30 Chicano independent newspapers. The newspapers were published by different Chicana/o organizations that reported on or that echoed similar goals of the Brown Berets, during the late 1960s to the mid-1970s.<sup>39</sup> I reviewed 55 different issues of the *Black Panther* during the same period.<sup>40</sup>

From these primary sources, I explore how these groups articulated their politics,

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix for list various independent Chicano Newspapers from the 1960s.

<sup>40</sup> The *Black Panther* was in publication much longer than *La Causa* and I did not want to view more material of the *Black Panther* because material for *La Causa* was limited.

philosophies, and how they represented themselves to the wider Chicana/o and Black community. In addition, I investigate how both organizations discussed social issues, and explained race and racism in American society and how they used the newspapers as platforms for racial and cultural pride within their respective communities. *La Causa and the Black Panther* will elucidate the specific points of view from the radical segment of the Chicana/o and Black Community in my analysis; I offer a method to examine the material in a comparative manner.

### **Organization of Thesis**

This thesis is divided into 2 chapters. Chapter **one** consists of the early history of the original Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party and their role within the wider Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. I begin with the formation of the Brown Berets and then discuss these similarities to the Black Panther Party. However, rather than an exhaustive history of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets this chapter helps to contextualize why they these groups came into existence.<sup>41</sup> In addition, I focus on their political platforms and community services to demonstrate how the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers sought similar strategies and philosophies to address the marginalized status of Chicanos and Blacks. Mutually the organizations attempted to alleviate social ills by implementing political programs (ideologies) that would serve as the purpose for community services or survival programs (breakfast programs, free clinics, food drives,

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed history of the Panthers refer to: Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007). For history of the Brown Berets see: Ernesto Chavez, *!Mi Raza Primero!: Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles 1966-1978*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

educational classes, etc).<sup>42</sup> Primarily, this chapter is the historical context of this era.

Chapter two, interrogates the independent newspapers *La Causa* and the *Black Panther*. Through a comparison, I intend to elucidate ideological similarities between the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets. I explore how both organizations responded to white racism and police brutality through their community organizing. Also, I will focus on how the newspapers (and I read them as counterstories) served as an outlet to educate and empower the wider community about social issues. The conclusion presents an overview and brief summary of findings and other insights about the Black Panther Party and Brown Berets.

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<sup>42</sup> See Dionne Espinoza, in *Aztlán* 26:1 Spring 2001, 19 (for information on Brown Beret community activities.) *The Black Panther* issued April 1969 (about the Free Breakfast for School Children Program) and Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 28.

## **Chapter 1: The Making of a Radical Political Community the Brown Berets and Black Panther Party**

This chapter begins with the socio-political context and the historical emergence of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets in the latter half of the 1960s in California. One main goal of this chapter is to show how the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets responded to similar social oppression like state sanctioned violence (police brutality) and poverty (inferior schooling and housing conditions) that affected both Chicanos and Blacks.<sup>43</sup> Their responses and community programs were explicated in their political platforms (ten-point plan of the Black Panthers and the 13-point plan of the Brown Berets).<sup>44</sup> For instance, I explore the ideological similarities between the groups by highlighting their main philosophies that showed equivalent social concerns, to having access to full employment opportunities and decent housing; which historically both groups had been barred from due to institutionalized racism and classism. I argue that, their political programs revealed concerns for ensuring the survival of the communities through objectives of self-determination, political representation, and cultural survival.

Equally significant, I conclude that the plans can be read as proposals for liberation and serve as direct strategies for implementing community services and programs that would ensure the needs and general welfare of the people. In short, themes in both political platforms share the ideals of justice, peace, freedom, autonomy, and primarily self-determination. Self-determination meant that the people or the community

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<sup>43</sup> See the rest of the chapter 1 for specific details.

<sup>44</sup> Refer to the section titled: Monitoring the Police. Police brutality and legal violence were major concerns for both organizations and this was a fundamental reason why both groups came into existence.

would operate free from American subjugation and outside of a corrupt political system that had hindered their communities historically and in the present.

Summarized here, in order from one to ten, the Black Panthers' ten-points in the political platform demanded the right to self-determination, full employment, an end to capitalist exploitation, decent housing, inclusive history, exemption from military service, an end to police brutality, demanded an end to the murder of black people, wanted freedom for all black men in any institutional facility, fair trials by black community members, and lastly the right to justice and peace.<sup>45</sup> These ideals also held true for Chicano activist like the Brown Berets, which were inspired the Black Panthers, they created their own political platform to mobilize the Chicano community for political protest.<sup>46</sup> They had a comparable organizational structure, paramilitary uniform, and later circulated [a] program similar to the founding doctrine of the Black Panthers.<sup>47</sup>

Comparably, the Brown Berets political platform contained 13 demands and they insisted upon the following: the return of stolen land (the American southwest once the territory of Mexico), the end of occupation in the Chicano community by fascist police, the end of robbery by capitalist exploits, the exemption of Chicanos from the U.S.

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<sup>45</sup> Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> I do not claim that the Brown Berets were a mere "copy cat" of the Black Panthers. I hope to show how parallel social devastations caused the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets to seek similar remedies for community organizing. Rather these movements were happening simultaneously. The Black Panthers inspired the Brown Berets but they did not come into formation solely because of the Black Panthers this is why I trace the evolution of the Brown Berets.

<sup>47</sup> Rosales affirms that, "Many militant organizations, sported berets during this era, the most famous being the Black Panther Party, made up of Marxist-spouting activists whose antics Sanchez and his cohorts saw firsthand in California." See F. Arturo Rosales, *Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights History*. (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2006), 49.

military and release from political jails, they demanded a relevant judicial system for Chicanos, wanted Chicano control of their education, demanded the right to full employment and decent housing, demanded an end to the destruction of land and air, wanted open borders for “Raza” regardless of citizenship, and ultimately the last two points denounced the U.S. system and claimed solidarity with all people engaged in the struggle for self-determination and freedom.<sup>48</sup> I draw parallels between the plans and show how both organizations implemented equivalent strategies to empower their communities.

The major theme of both plans was the right to self-determination for each community. The ideal of autonomy entailed control of the infrastructure of the communities by Black and Chicano residents; this was evident in not only within the content of the newspapers but also in the types of community “survival” programs both organizations would implement such as free clinics, food programs for youth, and educational classes that taught the history of Chicanos and Blacks. This would mean that Chicanos and Blacks would have more power over how the neighborhoods would operate, function, and ultimately flourish— community members would serve both as educators and community leaders. For instance, the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets found it essential to call for inclusive history that challenged the majoritarian narrative that left Chicanos and Blacks at the margins of American society and relevant education that would address their place and social significance in society. This concern addressed how Chicanos and Blacks had been marginalized within knowledge production

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<sup>48</sup> See *La Causa* March 1969, page 10-11.

and the U.S. educational system by dominant narratives in Euro-American history.<sup>49</sup> For example, tenet 5 in the Black Panther's Ten-Point Plans states:

WE WANT education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

WE BELIEVE in an educational system that will give to our people knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

Echoing this the Brown Berets too addressed this concern in their 13 Point Political Platform:

We demand Chicano control of Chicano Education. We realize that under this racist system a Chicano will never receive relevant education because this racist educational system is only training people as slave laborers for the economic interests of the U.S. ruling and exploiting class.

The idea of self-determination included tangible things that ensured physical survival and personal health, like having access to affordable health care and demanded an end to physical violence and racism from state authorities that often engaged in racial profiling.

Equally important, self-determination also entailed what Malcolm X called

“psychological liberation.”<sup>50</sup> Psychological liberation entailed the other side of self-

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter two for a more in depth understanding of “dominant narratives.”

<sup>50</sup> See *Malcolm X and Fight Against Psychological Poison* by Peter Bailey, NNAP Columnist, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 article can also be accessed at <http://www.blackpressusa.com/news/Article.asp?SID=4&Title=Departments&NewsID=1320>. Also, see Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 173, 246. Refer to these pages for a discussion of mental colonization of the Christian bible in the Black communities. Also, see Malcolm X and the fight against psychological poison, News content published by [Frost Illustrated](#).

determination; it not only concerned itself with the physical well being of the community, but also advocated a mental decolonization process of mind and spirit. For the most part, the main themes of self-determination were simultaneously a process of decolonization.

Though the doctrines had, similar grievances as mentioned above, one main difference between the plans were issues of land and political borders. The Brown Berets concerned themselves with the matter of “stolen” land (the Southwest) because they identified as an indigenous group that had unique and historical ties to the Americas.<sup>51</sup> Tenet number one of their political platform reads: “We want all land stolen from our people returned. We realize that every inch of this continent which is now call the “United States” was stolen from the Indian and the Chicano people by barbaric foreign invaders.”<sup>52</sup> For example, Operation Tecolote-- the occupational plan of the peaceful takeover of Channel Islands by Brown Beret members. The Brown Berets insisted that “the Channel Islands are Mexican lands occupied by U.S. citizens.”<sup>53</sup>

The Brown Berets also deemed it critical to address issues of Mexican migration to the U.S. They demanded that the border be open to all “Raza” regardless of political citizenship. Number 11 in their political platform reads, “We demand that all border

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<sup>51</sup> See demand number 1 of the political platform of the Brown Berets (see Appendix section).

<sup>52</sup> Brown Beret 13 Point Political Platform. *La Causa*, March issue, 1969, page 10.

<sup>53</sup> *La Causa* issue published September 16, 1972. Cover page-3. During August 28 through September 26, 1972: the Brown Berets initiate 'Project Tecolote' and invade Catalina Island; inspired by the American Indian Movement's (AIM) takeover of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco. See: [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha\\_timeline.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/mecha_timeline.htm)



lands be open to La Raza whether born north or south of the ‘the fence’.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the issue of land and migration became transitional in scope in that the Brown Berets saw themselves as allies and were concerned with the welfare of Mexican nationals. The subject of land and the U.S.-Mexico border were significant enough that the mention of them is addressed three times in their political platform.

The Brown Beret’s identification with land goes beyond historical ties but shows concern by staking an environmental interest in “protecting” the land, as the 10<sup>th</sup> point states, “*We demand an end to the destruction of land and air by the corrupt ruling class.*” In contrast, the Black Panthers did not concern themselves with land issues or immigration rights at least not in their 10-point doctrine, nor did they have the same political historical identification with the Americas the Brown Berets had claimed. Overall, we can understand that both political platforms exemplified how both Chicanos and Blacks did have shared societal grievances and organizations like the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers sought remedies to these problems. Below is an abridged version of the political platforms.

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<sup>54</sup> “Raza” is a term to describe Latina/o people in general. See the Brown Beret’s 13-point political program, *La Causa* March 1969, page 10.

**Brown Beret 13 Point Political Platform:**<sup>55</sup>

To unite all people under the banner of independence!

- 1) We want land that was stolen from our people.
- 2) We demand the immediate end to the occupation of our community by the fascist police.
- 3) We want an end to the robbery of our community by dog eat dog businessmen.
- 4) We want all Chicanos exempt from U.S. military service.
- 5) We want all Chicanos being held in all political jails released.
- 6) We demand a judicial system relevant to Chicanos and therefore administered by Chicanos.
- 7) We demand Chicano control of Chicano education.
- 8) We want full employment for all Chicanos.
- 9) We demand housing fit for human beings.
- 10) We demand an end to the destruction of our land and air by the corrupt ruling class.
- 11) We demand that all border lands be open to La Raza whether born North or South of "the fence".
- 12) We as Chicanos stand in solidarity with all people who are engaged in the struggle for self-determination and freedom.
- 13) We denounce the U.S. System.

**Black Panther Ten-Point Plan:**

What We Want, What We Believe

- 1) We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of the Black community.
- 2) We want full employment for our people.
- 3) We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black community.
- 4) We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
- 5) We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
- 6) We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
- 7) We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
- 8) We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county, and city prisons and jails.
- 9) We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer groups or people from the black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
- 10) We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

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<sup>55</sup> For full versions of political platforms, see appendix section.

## The Emergence of the Black Panther Party in California: 1966

The political climate of the 1960s proved to be a tumultuous time for political activism and people fighting for their rights. The nation saw mass rebellion and agitation, “In the spring and summer months of 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968, massive black rebellions swept across almost every major U.S. city in the Northeast, Middle West and California.<sup>56</sup> In Watts and Compton, the black districts of Los Angeles, black men and women took to the streets, attacking and burning white-owned property and institutions.<sup>57</sup> Regrettably, even with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, racial tension and social upheaval grew and urban ghettos had especially felt the burden of police brutality and racism. The Act proved to be another broken promise on behalf of government officials. For instance, California created Proposition 14, “which moved to block the fair housing section of the Act. This created anger and a feeling of injustice within the inner cities.”<sup>58</sup> In the aftermath of the murder of Malcolm X and the Watts Riots, rage swept over the cities most burdened with police harassment, government neglect, and overt discrimination.

On August 11, 1965 in South Central California, one of the first race rebellions of the era erupted into a 5-day revolt. Black residents of Watts fed up with police harassment reacted in self-defense after 21-year-old African American motorist, Marquette Frye along with his brother Ronald Frye, were pulled over by a white police officer who suspected Marquette Frye was under the influence of alcohol. The

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<sup>56</sup> Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*. (Jackson University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 90.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> See Watts Riots article, [www.pbs.org/hueynewton/times/times\\_watts.html](http://www.pbs.org/hueynewton/times/times_watts.html).

community was accustomed to routine stops by police and endured various forms of abuse. However, during this not so routine stop, community members gathered to question the police officer of his interrogation of the Fryes'. The officer called for backup and immediately another officer appeared on the scene. The second officer reacted with violence and forcefully hit crowd members with his baton. By this time, more officers had arrived, as did the mother of the men, Rena Frye. A struggle quickly followed between onlookers and the officers, which ultimately lead to the beating and arrest of the all three family members.<sup>59</sup> Hours later, the city of Watts was up in flames. The crowd yelled, threw rocks, and destroyed nearby property, fueled by racial tension and social upheaval rioters primarily targeted white-owned businesses.<sup>60</sup> Black residents tired of maltreatment ironically resorted to revolting in hopes of gaining justice.

The Watts Rebellion of 1965 can help us understand how racism works at the micro and macro levels in American society. Black residents were tired of unnecessary police brutality such as that enacted upon the Frye family. The larger Watts community and the riot itself is a catalyst that can help us understand the broader social issues, then and now, that affected the Black community, and other people of color. Out of this political climate, the emergence of the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party emerged.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> For more information please see: <http://www.africanamericans.com/WattsRiots.htm>, Horne Gerald, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995). Sears, David O., and John B. McConahay. *The Politics of Violence: The New Urban Blacks and the Watts Riots*. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).

In what follows I describe the emergence of the Black Panther Party to illustrate the social context and militant organizing of Black youth as they reject models of non-violence to fight American tyranny. By the mid-1960s, the Civil Rights Movement had largely become a youth movement actively embracing a radical politic of armed self-defense as they organized themselves and their communities.<sup>61</sup> “[The youth] began to drop the strictly nonviolent approach that had characterized the strategy of previous movement leaders. In effect, the youth, people aged sixteen to twenty-nine, began to take over the movement leadership and present [...] demands in terms so uncompromising that the white establishment-and some black leaders-began to label them reverse racists, hot heads, militant demagogues, and traitors to their race, among other things.”<sup>62</sup>

The Black Panther Party was created in Oakland California, in October of 1966, shortly after the death of Malcolm X in February of 1965.<sup>63</sup> The founding members Huey Newton and Bobby Seale students at Merritt College in Oakland, inspired by Malcolm, were frustrated with the existing organizations on campus. The organizations they claimed were “too intellectual” and did not respond to the community’s concerns of police harassment and poverty. Newton and Seale decided to start their own organization

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<sup>61</sup> See Laura Pulido’s *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* for more examples of youth organizing in this era. Also see: Chicano Youth Association (CYA) formed in New Mexico, Rosales, *Chicano!*, 214. Young Revolutionaries for Independence and Young Lords Party, a Puerto Rican nationalist organization based out of New York in 1969, Torres and Velazquez, *The Puerto Rican Movement*, 108 and 112. Also, see Churchill, American Indian Movement (AIM) in *Agents of Repression*.

<sup>62</sup> Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party*. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), xix.

<sup>63</sup> Malcolm X was “the chief spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, he preached a militant message which changed the lives of thousands of poor and oppressed blacks.” See Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 85. Also, see Molefi Kete Asante, *Malcolm X as Cultural Hero and Other Afrocentric Essays* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

called the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, which later became commonly known as the Black Panther Party.<sup>64</sup> Huey Newton describes the spirit of the Black Panther Party, noting, “Although Malcolm’s program for the Organization of Afro-American Unity was never put into operation, he has made it clear that Blacks ought to arm. Malcolm’s influence was ever present. We continue to believe that the Black Panther Party exists in the spirit of Malcolm.”<sup>65</sup>

Influenced not only by Malcolm X the Black Panthers grew out of a long legacy of resistance. For example, the legacy of “[...] Harriet Tubman, David Walker, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Robert Williams, and the Deacons for Defense and Justice [...]”<sup>66</sup> The Deacons for Defense and Justice initiated some of the first “squads” that openly used armed self-defense in Louisiana in 1964 aimed at defending civil rights marchers. The Deacons were considered role models by the Panthers who also openly carried arms for self-defense.<sup>67</sup> The Panthers adopted their famed logo of the Black Panther from Lowndes County Freedom Organizations based out of Mississippi, an organization that advocated voter registration.<sup>68</sup> The Black Panther icon had symbolized that once the “big cat” was cornered it would ferociously attack. The icon symbolically

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<sup>64</sup> David Hilliard and Donald Weise. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 45-52.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 45-52.

<sup>66</sup> Austin, *Up Against the Wall*, xvii.

<sup>67</sup> I am using the term “squads” to mean a group of people, two or more, that are armed with weapons. Also, see *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* in the *Journal of Social History*, Fall, 2005 by Luther J. Adams

<sup>68</sup> Hilliard and Weise 51-52.

represented the group and asserted that the Panthers would no longer be “attacked” by the white establishment and do nothing to defend their rights.

Inspired by their predecessors in different regions of the U.S. the Black Panthers initiated some of the first squads to monitor the police in California, and armed themselves with weapons and law books.<sup>69</sup> They had been leery of previous police tactics of brutality and the unjust murder of Black people. The Panthers armed themselves and shared knowledge of legal rights with community residents during arrests or police interrogation of Black residents. Panther members followed police officers on duty questioning their arrest tactics and reasons for arresting members from the Black community. This inspired members of the community especially, the urban youth to join; the group they were attempting to target for membership.

In fact, they were successful in attracting youth as members. “[...] After an increasing number of people in the movement began to question seriously the tactic of nonviolence, establishment leaders found it difficult, then impossible, to explain why violence against blacks and extreme poverty remained as much a reality after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as it have been before these laws came into being. Because the explanation never materialized, young blacks began to ask themselves who would lead this new, more radical [youth] movement for social change.”<sup>70</sup> The Panther’s bold and aggressive style of patrolling the police with arms did not resonate with prominent civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King and

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Austin, xix.

his philosophy of nonviolence. However, many community members as well as other civil rights leaders agreed with the Black Panther Party approach.

The Black Panthers were concerned with heavy police surveillance in their communities and disagreed with the philosophies of Martin Luther King as relevant to the real issues of police aggression in their neighborhood. The Party viewed police aggression and violence as something that needed to be met with armed self-defense. Huey Newton addresses how people responded to state sanctioned violence enacted by the police after the Watts Rebellion,

We had seen Martin Luther King come to Watts in an effort to calm the black people, and we had seen his philosophy of nonviolence rejected. Black people had been taught non-violence; it was deep in us. What good, however, was nonviolence when the police were determined to rule by force? We had seen the Oakland police and California Highway Patrol begin to carry their shotguns in full view as another way of striking fear into the community.<sup>71</sup>

Armed self-defense in opposition to police brutality was a fundamental strategy of the organization. Huey Newton questioned the tactics of nonviolence in the face of heavy state reprisal. One of the founding principles of the Black Panther Party directly called for “an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.”<sup>72</sup> The call for the right to bear arms was intended for protection of the community against police harassment.

The Black Panthers did not necessarily believe in violence for the sake of

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<sup>71</sup> Hilliard and Weise, 49.

<sup>72</sup> See number seven in the ten-point plan (see Appendix section).



violence, nor did they have a haphazard notion that violence would end white tyranny; they felt that the Black community had suffered long enough and needed to organize.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, “the police were described as an occupying army in the black community that enforced the larger society’s illegitimate rule. The BPP believed the only way to remove the black communities’ fear was to confront the police with arms.”<sup>74</sup> In accordance with their political platform, the Panthers hoped to steer Black communities toward self-determination and advocate a liberation philosophy that would empower Black people and allow them to control their own communities in a more egalitarian way with the hope of eliminating white dominance and violence over their daily lives. However, young Blacks were not the only ones concerned with violence and police repression in their communities. Not surprisingly, it would not take long before the Black Panthers would capture the attention of the youth on a nationwide scale.

Black youth inspired by the Black Panther Party became involved in large numbers. The Black Panthers had a huge following outside of California nationally and internationally in places like Chicago, New York, and Seattle with an international section in Algiers.<sup>75</sup> “From 1966 to 1971 the [Black Panthers] grew from a small Oakland-based group [...] that operated at one time or another in sixty-one American cities and had more than two thousand members.”<sup>76</sup> Like the Black Panthers, Chicanos

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<sup>73</sup> See Newton, *War Against the Panthers*, 38-43 for the unjust murder of a twenty-one black male, Denzil Dowell by Richmond California police officers who considered him a “trouble maker.” Also, the article “In Defense of Self Defense” in *The Black Panther*, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1967, cover page and story continued on page 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 15.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Jones, *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 211.

<sup>76</sup> Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 46-47. Also see <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/black-panther-party>.

and others organized to form the Brown Berets--an organization that began in East Los Angeles but over time, the Brown Berets gained a national presence.<sup>77</sup> They incited interest across the nation among the youth and “at one point the Brown Beret leadership exceeded five thousand [members]” and chapters materialized all over the country.<sup>78</sup> “By 1969 there were ninety chapters stretching from Los Angeles to Chicago to San Antonio.”<sup>79</sup> A chief concern among Chicano and Black youth throughout the U.S. was combating police terror in their communities along with other issues like poverty, cultural racism, and institutional discrimination. Again, for this thesis I was interested in understanding how the Brown Berets and Black Panthers had comparable social organizing goals that would allow me to expand Pulido’s argument about racial differentiation and how various communities ethnic groups foster distinct yet related social activism.

### **The Emergence of the Brown Berets in California: 1968**

According to F. Arturo Rosales, “the late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of intellectual ferment and rebellion in the United States. Caught up in the mood, young Mexican Americans throughout the country sought a new identity while struggling for the same civil rights of [the old guard or the ‘Mexican American Generation’ like LULAC or

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<sup>77</sup> For the scope of this thesis, I do not interrogate the national chapters of the Brown Berets. Please see Milo Alvarez’s work (Doctoral student in the History Department at UCLA) on the National History of the Brown Berets. Where he looks at specific regional and state chapters of the Brown Berets that developed all over the country in places like Texas, Colorado, Washington, Minnesota, Michigan and Ohio, he identifies this as the “Brown Beret Movement” (forthcoming). Nor do I interrogate the national and international contingents of the Black Panther Party. My primary focus is the inception of these groups in California during the 1960s.

<sup>78</sup> Rosales, *Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights*, 49.

<sup>79</sup> Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left*, 116.

Club Vesta]. This activism became known as the “Chicano Movement.” [...] Proudly, Chicanos proclaimed an Indo-Hispanic heritage and accused older Mexican Americans of pathologically denying their racial and ethnic reality because of an inferiority complex.”<sup>80</sup> Chicano youth began asserting their own politics and re-conceptualizing their identities and racialized status in the U.S. and as they participated in public demonstrations, school politics, and youth conferences that furthered the growth of their social consciousness many youth questioned the tactics of their elders.

What made the Brown Berets’ stance radical was their militancy and rejecting of American ideals; they also did not represent the entirety of the Chicano community or the wider Mexican community. In fact, they were a small segment within the larger Chicano Movement that advocated for social change through armed struggle, and criticizing the white power structure; waiting for reform was no longer an appropriate option for these youth.<sup>81</sup> Just as the Black Power movement clashed with Civil Rights discourses, the same holds true for Chicano radicals that did not identify with organizations like LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens). LULAC exemplifies the old guard, which upheld the beliefs of the status quo, wanted to mark a clear distinction between themselves and Mexican immigrants, embraced Euro-American ideals and generally advocated moderate reform within a white power structure.<sup>82</sup> Professor David Gutierrez

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<sup>80</sup> Rosales, *Latino Civil Rights History*, 84. Also, see Rosales, *Chicano*, 96-100. Club Vesta formed in Arizona in 1954 and only admitted Mexican American college graduates into its organization ironically at this time the number of graduates was very limited. Furthermore, the organization prized Anglo symbols like the Roman goddess Vesta, educational success, and English.

<sup>82</sup> For more on this discussion please refer to Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 74-75. Also, David Gutierrez, *Walls*

reminds us that,

LULAC leaders consciously chose to emphasize the American side of their social identity as the primary basis for organization. Consequently, in pursuit of much-needed reforms they developed a political program designed to activate a sense of Americanism among their constituents. Considering themselves part of a progressive and enlightened leadership elite, LULAC's leaders set out to implement general goals and a political strategy that were similar in form and content to those advocated early in the century by W.E.B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: for "an educated elite" to provide the masses with appropriate goals that lift them to civilization.<sup>83</sup>

Even though LULAC originated in the 1940s, they held a strong organizational base two decades later. For instance, "for over 20 years LULAC served as the principal and most visible Mexican-American organization in the United States [...] LULAC by 1960 had become a national organization with councils throughout the Southwest and Midwest."<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers represented a new era and did not embrace integrationist models for gaining access to the white institutional world but instead denounced it. Both organizations sought self-determination for their communities that would allow for greater autonomy of their everyday lives; this entailed decolonization practices that did not glorify whiteness or Euro-American ideals.

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*and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity.* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 77. According to David Gutierrez, LULAC wanted to cultivate an "appropriate American public image by conducting their proceedings in English, displaying the American flag at their ceremonies, stationary and official iconography, by singing songs as 'America' at their gatherings, and by opening their meetings with a recitation of the 'George Washington Prayer,'" 76.

<sup>83</sup> David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 77.

<sup>84</sup> Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican American: Leadership, Ideology and Identity 1930-1960.* (Yale University Press, 1991), 59.

The older Mexican-American generations had bought into the façade of the “American Dream”—advocating assimilation into mainstream society. Unfortunately, negative aspects of assimilation entailed negating one’s cultural and historical trajectories to appease Euro-American dominant ideals. However, not the case for all Mexican-American organizations from this era, LULAC did “emphasize the American side of their social identity.”<sup>85</sup> The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers, in contrast, did not emphasize their ties to America in a positive sense but, in turn, the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets had excavated a public space (through their programs and newspapers) for a racial analysis of American society.

Their analysis operates within the theoretical confines of what Critical Race Theorist call, counterstories. Both groups circulated a discourse in their civil programs and their newspapers. For instance, political education was very important and used as a method to encourage decolonization and ways to understand the racial structures in American society. This education becomes a counterhegemonic narrative of how they understand their social position within America. They questioned the rhetoric of democratic ideals as attainable for racialized groups—but rather understood the American society as exclusive and typically benefited Euro-Americans. The Black Panthers created Liberation Schools that focused on “Panther ideology and African American history [which] were the most important items in the curriculum.”<sup>86</sup> This was important because it went beyond what Paulo Freire calls the “banking model” of education or the elevation

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<sup>85</sup> David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 77.

<sup>86</sup> Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 34.

of Eurocentric education.<sup>87</sup> The Party believed “[...] an educational system that will give [Black] people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything.”<sup>88</sup> Alternative forms of learning and education were key and encouraged the Black community to question the foundation of the American system and Black people’s position within the society.

In addition, the Brown Berets and other Chicano activists echoed these sentiments by highlighting the importance of retaining their culture and identity that was distinct from white America—they circulated this information through their newspapers and educational awareness. Brown Beret members asserted that “[the Chicano people] are enslaved not with chains around us that are visible. But, it’s an economic enslavement which in the educational system because this system does not teach us how to live in our society but, they teach us everything anglo.”<sup>89</sup> They vigorously fought for a cultural heritage deprived to them by mainstream American assimilation projects, like Eurocentric educational curricula to overt racist institutional policies. Rather they questioned what the American Dream truly held for people of color.

Like the Brown Berets, the Black Panthers rejected older generations of Black leaders that concerned themselves with self-help philosophies in achieving American success. For instance, in Booker T. Washington’s era,

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<sup>87</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2002).

<sup>88</sup> *The Black Panther*, May 11, 1969. Back cover.

<sup>89</sup> *La Verdad*, September 1970. Brown Berets de San Diego article. Page 7. Also, see *Es Tiempo* March 1972, *Evolution of Mind*, page 4-5, 11. *Aztlán, Perspective: Culture and Heritage*. Lavenworth, Kansas 1971.

the Tusgekeean sought advancement for African Americans, but this would be within clearly defined limits that did not threaten white supremacy. Moreover, the primary responsibility for achieving such uplift lay with blacks themselves through economic self-help. Indeed, the intrinsic truth of this message was most powerfully demonstrated by Washington's own life which so spectacularly transcends his humble beginnings. By implication, the depressing and disadvantaged living conditions endured by the vast majority of blacks could be blamed on their own inadequacies rather than the unfair and unequal treatment afforded to them by white America.<sup>90</sup>

By “blaming the victim”, the racists and classist institutionalized policies of the American government could go unchallenged. As the youth began, to debunk the “American Dream” they had witnessed for themselves that even through hard work and education they too were rendered into marginalized positions. However, by the mid-1960s Black and Chicano youth interrogated not only the power structure but also their racial and ethnic identities. For example, “Alurista a notable activist and poet of the era says, “The gringo has no identity he can't even call himself an ‘American’. So in terms of a people in this land that have roots on the one hand are willing to confront their contemporary realities, on the other hand, I think that we're talking about what the Chicano and Chicano culture are trying to bring about. You see it's a weapon. When you talk about nationalism based and founded on human values rather than on elitist economic priorities, then we're talking about a completely different way of life.”<sup>91</sup> Many participated in youth conferences that affirmed notions of Black and Chicano Power paradigms to interrogate issues of culture, identity, and resistance.

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<sup>90</sup> Kevern Verney, *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America*. (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 12.

<sup>91</sup> La Verdad, September 1970. *Culture as a Weapon: An interview with Alurista*, 9.

For instance, the Wilshire Boulevard Temple's camp with Hess Kramer sponsored a conference in Los Angeles for Mexican-American youth in April 1966.<sup>92</sup> The purpose of the Mexican-American Youth Leadership conference, "[...] was to examine emotions, feelings, values, identity and the label 'Mexican-American.'" <sup>93</sup> High school leaders that participated within the conference also discussed ways to help their neighborhoods and communities against social oppression. Six students from the conference- Vickie Castro, David Sanchez, Moctesuma Esparza, Ralph Ramirez, Rachel Ochoa, David Licon, and John Ortiz,-- created the Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA) in May of 1966. This organization sought to provide social services to the Mexican-American community because they began to understand the institutional disadvantage and the historical legacy of racism that the Mexican-American community faced. According to Ignacio M. Garcia

Mexican Americans could argue that their schools were just as segregated and inadequate as any found in the South or North in 1960, only 13 percent of all Mexican Americans had a high school education and less than 6 percent attended college. The dropout rate for many school districts with large numbers of Mexican Americans remained high. Those that stayed in school faced inadequate educational systems that often tracked them in remedial or 'slow' classes and away from college preparatory classes.<sup>94</sup>

As a result, these young activists concerned themselves with educational issues such as biased curricula, racist attitudes from school officials, and dilapidated school facilities, this group and supported Julian Nava, a state college professor in the San Fernando

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<sup>92</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 43.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Ignacio M. Garcia, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 26.



Valley, who attempted to secure a seat on the school board.<sup>95</sup> Primarily their community organizing centered on educational problems.

As the YCCA got more involved with community activism seasoned activists influenced their political evolution this included such leaders as, Father John B. Luce, who focused on the improvement of the Chicano community and the faith of restoring democracy. Equally influential was Cesar Chavez, a national leader, and his involvement with the farm workers heavily impacted these young people's political consciousness. As the YCCA political ideology matured, within a two year span the organization changed its' name twice, from The Young *Citizens* for Community Action to The Young *Chicanos* for Community Action. Finally, by January of 1968 they would officially declare themselves the Brown Berets.<sup>96</sup> Ultimately, the youth conference led to the politicization of Mexican-American youth, as they examined issues of police brutality more closely.<sup>97</sup> This politicization also helped cultivate a societal consciousness that criticized oppressive hierarchies. The name changes are symbolically and ideologically important because the decision to change their organizational name from *citizen* to *Chicano* indicated the direction their politics were headed which engaged a more radical perspective.

At this juncture, we are able to see how the Brown Beret's political ideology shifted; though the young members were in fact American citizens by birth— embracing

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<sup>95</sup>Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 42-49.

<sup>96</sup> Ironically, it was the East LA sheriffs that nicked name the young Chicana/o activists the Brown Berets. One member reflects on this, he says, "We would hear it because every time they had us up against the wall we'd hear all the radio messages from the patrol cars, 'Brown Berets here' and 'Brown Berets over there,' and so then it stuck." Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 46.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 43-46. Also, see Rosales, *Chicano!*, 187.

the term “Chicano” indicates a new political and social awareness of radical politics of the era. The word or label Chicano becomes critical because it signifies a political identity tied to a cultural heritage of Mexican descent especially for youth born in the U.S. The ideal of Chicana/o or “*Chicanismo*” moves beyond the status quo of American citizenship of place, time, and subjectivity that typically centered on the Euro-American subject.<sup>98</sup> By choosing to identify with a politically conscious term, activists called attention to the marginalized Chicana/o experience in the U.S. as being directly related to the structural powers of the American government but equally important embracing the term Chicano affirmed the agency of the youth. This assertion too helped inform how political identities were constructed among Chicanas/os.

It marked a shift in how these American born youth would identify culturally and politically. They felt a keen awareness for their Mexican “roots” and decided to emphasize their Mexican heritage as opposed to their American identities. However, the politics of being “Chicano” did not necessarily mean an embrace of only their culture but it overlapped with political philosophies of Chicano/a social activism-- that for the Brown Berets meant solidifying community relations to improve the social conditions for the Chicano/a community as a whole. This politicized identity was both important to their assertion of cultural and social politics that framed their organizing methods—that primarily denounced the American mainstream and white society for the subjugation of

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<sup>98</sup> I agree with Ignacio M. Garcia’s notion of Chicanismo as a militant ethos, he asserts, “[that it is a] body of ideas, strategies, tactics, and rationalizations that a community uses to respond to external challenges. In this case, a Chicano militant ethos would be a collective defensive and offensive mechanism that the Mexican American community uses to combat racism, discrimination, poverty, and segregation, and to define itself politically and historically.” See Garcia, *Chicanismo*, 4.

the Chicano/as. For instance, “Gabacho oppression which is the product of white [E]nglish speaking society, must be stopped, because it is a detriment to the Chicano spirit, culture, and existence to our people. [...] Because of this, he [white society] has made it difficult to organize, but because there are those who love their Raza, as we do, the vanguard of the Raza, the hearts of the Raza, LA RAZA will never die.”<sup>99</sup> This quote by David Sanchez is a section of an open letter written to Brown Beret members in *La Causa* affirming how cultural empowerment and their social politics are interconnected to their political identities.

Drawing on the work of Martha E. Bernal and George P. Knight we can define identity as “a psychological construct, a set of self-ideas about one’s own ethnic group membership, and it is multidimensional in that it has several dimensions or components along which these self ideas vary. Self-identification refers to the ethnic labels or terms that people use in identifying themselves, and to the meaning of these labels. Another dimension of this is people’s knowledge about their ethnic culture: its traditions, customs, values, and behaviors.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore, I take “Chicano” as a politicized term to mean political liberation from American racism and oppression but most importantly sought to organize against it; as a result, it was preferred by the Brown Berets as opposed to other ethnic labels like “Mexican American.”

According to historian Ernesto Chavez, “Law enforcement abuses had transformed [YCCA members] from moderate reformers into visually distinctive and

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<sup>99</sup> *La Causa*, May Issue 1969, page number unreadable. David Sanchez, letter, *To All The Brown Berets*.

<sup>100</sup> Martha E. Bernal and George P. Knight, eds. *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and other Minorities*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1.

combative crusaders on behalf of justice for Chicanos.”<sup>101</sup> More specifically , “On November 24, 1967, police responded to a family disturbance on the Eastside and beat the residents. YCCA protested the beating[...].”<sup>102</sup> After the unnecessary beating of a Chicano family, their politics began to center on the more brutal issues of overt racism and took a militant stance in their organizing and politics.<sup>103</sup> This became a “militant ethos” or a radical perspective because the Brown Berets became willing to use arms in order to defend their rights and have their list of demands, presented in their political platform, recognized by the wider society. Waiting for change was not desirable but demanding it with the perceived threat of violence was revolutionary because they did call for a change in government and had a vision of self-democracy for the Chicana/o people. For instance, David Sanchez, Prime Minister of the Brown Berets, adamantly expressed a staunch view against police harassment. He encouraged a more militant stance for the organization because he felt that the old philosophies did not address the importance of “protecting” the community from physical violence. By January of 1968, the founding members of the Brown Berets included David Sanchez (Prime Minister), Gilbert Cruz Olmeda (Chairman), Carlos Montes (Minister of Information), and Ralph Ramirez (Minister of Discipline) began to address police brutality and legal violence that was rampant within the Chicano community and asserted “masculine” militancy.<sup>104</sup>

This militant structure helps us identify embodied masculinities within the structure of the organization. Ernesto Chavez asserts,

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<sup>101</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 45.

<sup>102</sup> Pulido, *Brown, Black, Yellow and Left*, 116.

<sup>103</sup> See Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 42-60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

These titles, which reflected the militaristic, masculine, and hierarchical nature of the group, were similar to those adopted earlier by the Black Panthers. The structure implied by the titles, however, never took hold in the Berets and existed only on paper. That the leaders were all men further supports the claim that the organization had a masculinist orientation.<sup>105</sup>

Nevertheless, the need to “protect” and defend the rights of the Chicano community remained a primary goal for the organization. Along with a militant image and perceived structure police brutality became a pressing issue.

Though the original goals of the YCCA were preoccupied with improving educational services for the Mexican-American community, the Brown Berets still concerned themselves with such work; however, they did not limit themselves with school and student problems. Their philosophies developed and understood how these injustices were connected to more overt issues of police brutality that plagued their community not just in the present but historically. Angered by historical oppression Sanchez asserted “[F]or over 120 years, the Chicano has suffered at the hands of the Anglo Establishment” and he goes on to assert that the only way to stop this oppression is by the demand of “pressure” [force of political pressure] and by “any and all means necessary.”<sup>106</sup> Sanchez’s political demands are reminiscent of Malcolm X’s words “by all means necessary” directly spoke to the impatience and necessity that people of color

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<sup>105</sup> Ernesto Chavez, “*Birth of a New Symbol*”: *the Brown Berets’ Gendered Chicano National Imaginary in Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*. (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 213. This is a noteworthy chapter to consult on the gender relations within the Brown Berets; though this project does not particularly focus on this topic it is nonetheless important. Also, see Dionne Espinosa, “*Revolutionary Sisters*”: *Women’s Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967-1970*. *Aztlan: Journal of Chicano Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Spring 2001. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>106</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 46.

needed to demand their rights and break out of bondage from the American system. This phrase also carries with it a perceived threat that people would arm themselves and use these weapons against the ruling class that had exploited these communities for hundreds of years. Resistance took various forms, for example, the Brown Berets engaged in what I recognize as multiple levels of resistance both social and psychological (mental liberation).

Generally, we can understand Brown Beret resistance to be a form of opposition to a white hegemonic social order; equally significant, resistance can be identified on various registers within the operations of the organization: 1.) There is the palpable resistance to the maintenance of the American status quo that has historically rendered the Chicano experience as unimportant and has kept the majority of the community marginalized. For example, the Brown Berets organized themselves, raised awareness within their community, and provided social services that directly benefited community members, this included a free health clinic, security and protection from police officers, the Brown Beret's engaged in month long protests and marches to raise awareness across the southwest. 2.) A radical politic (as opposed to assimilationist strategies), that was both ideological and psychological. This kind of resistance was most clear when the group decided to undergo several name changes and renew group philosophies that directly addressed structural oppression. Also, Brown Beret members began to identify with a cultural history that liberated them and gave them a place in American history. As they embraced the Chicana/o ideal (or Chicanismo) it was not only a political statement but became an ideology and a lifestyle. This lifestyle was a direct opposition to

mainstream society that ultimately embodied ideals of self-empowerment and self-determination in the hopes of liberating the Chicana/o community.<sup>107</sup> Resistance can be identified with not only the material concern of the communities' prosperity but it moved beyond this realm and became an integral part of psychological resistance—a process of mental decolonization; where members would not be complicit with ideals of whiteness nor with the existing power structure but actively understood their colonial histories and how the legacy of American racism impacted their community.

### **Mental Liberation: The Evolution of Mind**

As in resistance, as explicated above, another major comparison between the Brown Berets and Black Panthers the groups' fundamental philosophies was a reflection of the self. In the same way, the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers were calling for social change and simultaneously calling for another type of change; however, this change would not necessarily demand change of the political system but would take place internally. This “inner” change sought to reconsider their identities and in large part their communities in order to understand how the legacy of colonialism had shaped the dynamics of subordination within their communities. Therefore, the history of conquest, violence, and subjugation had not only been physical or material, but equally significant, had emotional and spiritual consequences. Seeing that, Malcolm X approached black solidarity not, “to encourage the [re]evaluation of whites by blacks, but rather to convince

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<sup>107</sup> These types of resistance were also taking place among Black Panther members.

blacks of the need to [re]evaluate themselves.”<sup>108</sup> In doing so, “he pointed to the way of psychological liberation.”

In comparison, David Sanchez too pointed to the Chicano community for self-evaluation and social awareness. He said, “Talk to every potential Chicano who crosses your path. Because every Chicano that you miss is a potential enemy.”<sup>109</sup> Here Sanchez addressed the need for Chicanos themselves to become empowered and socially conscious about the social devastations that affect their community. Here we can understand Sanchez to mean, that because one may be “Mexican-American” does not mean they are “naturally” inclined in “protecting” the community; that (Chicanos and people of color in general) are also suspect and capable of “white-minded” thinking, which points to his reference to a “potential enemy”; therefore an enemy can be *anyone* that undermines the progress of the Chicana/o community as a collective or the advancement of people of color in general.<sup>110</sup> In the same way, the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers saw the community as a collective force that would aid in their own prosperity and psychological liberation that would aid in decolonization. Haunani-Kay Trask’s defines decolonization to mean, “a collective resistance to colonialism including

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<sup>108</sup> William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>109</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 46.

<sup>110</sup> “White-minded” was a term used generally at this time by radical leaders like Malcolm X and David Sanchez to address ways people of color also ascribed to and accepted white-dominant values. Terms that are better known today are: sell-out, white-washed; and people of color “acting white” and in doing so turned away from their culture, history, heritage, and/or language in order to assimilate with the hopes of full “acceptable/citizenship” in American society.



cultural assertions, efforts towards self-determination, and armed struggle.”<sup>111</sup> In accordance with this definition, I understand decolonization to be a process that counters or resists in various ways the effects of colonialism, conquest, and white racism in the everyday lives of people of color.

Decolonization as a concept and a practice is part of my understanding of “radical” politics because this helped inform new racial/ethnic identities strategically tied to politics, self-empowerment, and cultural ties to their particular experiences. Mental liberation offered a way to understand the experience of the marginalized person of color in the U.S. and in many ways it offered a philosophy of self-love. This philosophy was about appreciating the self and advocating self-love rather than attempting to fit into an unrealistic standard of whiteness for people of color. The development of the self both psychologically and politically was one-step closer to the realization of self-determination and freedom of mind, body, and spirit. It was also, why terms such as Chicano and Black became significant. It was an act of reclaiming their humanity, dignity, and affirming their particular histories and cultural practices.<sup>112</sup> Franz Fanon’s idea of decolonization was intimately tied to Malcolm X’s notion of psychological liberation. Decolonization was a process that broke down paradigms that normalized white values and governmental hierarchies of racism.

Where the government had failed to do their job to embrace and protect all its citizens including Chicanos and Blacks; the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets saw

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<sup>111</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai’i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 251.

<sup>112</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 43-71.

themselves as defenders or protectors of their respective communities.<sup>113</sup> Not invested in lawless acts of violence toward the police instead they came from a position of self-protection from having grown tired of the habitual police repression within the communities. Both groups decided that theorizing about these problems could only take them so far; they understood direct action like public demonstrations, self-defense, and hands-on organizing within the communities were necessary means to implement their goals of self-determination and serving the community. The political doctrines of the organizations were the founding documents of the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers, which elaborated on their fundamental philosophies of self-determination. The political platform mirrored each group's social and political aspirations for the realization of self-determination.

### **Political Platforms for Self-Determination: Serve the People**

The political platforms of the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party were fundamental and concrete social programs created in order to meet the necessities of the community. They were direct demands aimed at the government to make changes in order to assist the Chicano and Black community. The doctrines looked more like a bulleted list of demands followed with an explanation as to why the demands were necessary and important for empowering the community. Both doctrines clearly stated their objectives and made their philosophies relevant to community members most

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<sup>113</sup> See philosophies of both organizations (Appendix section). For example, the Brown Berets were instrumental to the planning of the 1968 Walkouts in Los Angeles, as well as, the main security enforcement. See Carlos Munoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: the Chicano Movement*. (New York: Verso, 1989), 85-86.

dispossessed, such as, the illiterate, single mother, the prisoner, or the person too busy working multiple jobs. The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers were attempting to reach the underclass and provide effective remedies to alleviate poverty and discrimination.

Prime Minister, David Sanchez stresses how theory can be alienating to working class people and warns the Brown Berets to be weary of “theory and ideology because intellectuals aren’t able to communicate with the dude on the street.”<sup>114</sup> Likewise Huey Newton echoes this sentiment, “[...] we did not want merely to import ideas and strategies [from philosophers]; we had to transform what we learned into principles and methods acceptable to the brothers on the block.”<sup>115</sup> Both organizations wanted to reach “street brothers” and/or working class people from the community. For it was the population that had been left out of elite circles and remained most marginalized according to both the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers.<sup>116</sup> For example, those who were targeted for membership in the Brown Berets were typically low-income males, “who had little formal education and were gang members, the so called ‘vatos locos.’”<sup>117</sup> Similarly, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale “saw the need for an organization that would appeal particularly to young urban blacks from working-class backgrounds.”<sup>118</sup> In the same way, both organizations formulated similar political programs and ideological

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<sup>114</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 47.

<sup>115</sup> Hilliard and Weise, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 50.

<sup>116</sup> *La Causa* April issue, 1971, 10-11. *La Raza* (Chicano Independent Newspaper) reporting on the Brown Berets asserted, “The Brown Berets are not a gang, car club, or private social group; it is an organization of young Chicanos dedicated to serving the Mexican American community.” *La Raza* June issue, 1968, page number not visible.

<sup>117</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), ix.

platforms that helped them identify core issues that adversely affected the underclass of Chicanos and Blacks.

The main motto of the Brown Berets “to serve, observe, and protect the Chicano community”, this summed up their core philosophies of aiding the community in all its fundamental needs hence; they implemented practical programs in order to serve the Chicano community. In comparison, Huey Newton addressed that “the political platform of the Black Panther’s served to bridge theory and action, “The purpose of these programs are to enable people to meet their daily needs by developing positive institutions within their communities and to organize the communities politically around these programs.”<sup>119</sup>

Primarily all ten demands of the political platform for the Black Panther Party fell under the ideal of achieving a sustainable Black community free from outside government subjugation. Clearly a top priority, point one, of Black Panther Party platform reads: “*We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*<sup>120</sup> *We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny* (italics mine).”<sup>121</sup> This was specifically important because the Black Panthers understood that within the confines of white American and the capitalist system racism and classism would always need to exploit the Black community for its labor and to keep the underclass thriving with Black bodies.

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<sup>119</sup> Huey P. Newton, *War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America*. (California: University of California Press, 1980), 36.

<sup>121</sup> See Appendix for Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program and Platform.

Similarly, the Brown Berets' platform also sought practical solutions to attain a self-determined community outside the realms of the American political system. This was achieved through bilingual instruction, relevant education for Chicana/os, and the right to self-defense. The Anglo establishment had historically rendered them second-class citizens and had exploited their labor. Ultimately, the communal concerns of the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers focused on community survival, economic prosperity, relevant education, and spiritual growth. This ideological similarity shared by the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers reflected how both strategized to combat similar social oppression; again indicating how both groups had been marginalized in the same manner by the government.

The political platforms revealed a critical reflection of American society; the philosophies interrogated how social structures perpetuated the marginalized status of Chicanos and Blacks. The doctrines of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets challenged notions of democracy, equality, freedom, citizenship status, and declared that they would achieve a dignified social status "by all means necessary." David Sanchez claimed, "If the Anglo establishment accommodated their demands in a peaceful and orderly process, then we will be only too happy to accept this way. Otherwise, we will be forced to other alternatives."<sup>122</sup> Ideals of freedom and an autonomous community were taken to new levels, as both organizations implemented survival programs to ensure independence, which remained the core essence of the political platforms and programs.

In conclusion, this chapter provides an understanding of how the political

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<sup>122</sup> Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero!*, 50.

ideologies and community activism of the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets not only formed political identities but also actively resisted imposed racial identities and rejected stereotypes. These new identity formations led to an oppositional consciousness about American society and the rejection of the labels “Mexican-American” and “Negro.” As a result of this shift, in social consciousness, new identity labels emerged. These new labels, Chicano and Black, were self-proclaiming and had precise political meanings.

The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers defined themselves against an imposed white identity or mentality. Members of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets understood the importance of psychological liberation and explicated it through their educational programs, artwork, and newspapers. These grassroots educational programs and philosophies would later inspire the groundwork for Chicano, Black, and Ethnic Studies programs across college campuses nation-wide. This shift allowed a cultural and racial identity to emerge within the Chicana/o and Black communities. Members of both organizations not only analyzed the “American nightmare” but also resisted the status quo that had rendered their experiences and cultural practices unimportant.

## Chapter 2: The Dissident Press: Guerrilla Writing and Counterstories<sup>123</sup>

This chapter seeks to provide an analysis of the independent newspapers created by the Black Panther Party titled *the Black Panther* and *La Causa* produced by the Brown Berets exploring their major themes and how they related to their political platforms. Through the analysis, I conclude that the newspapers provided an essential counterstory of which both organizations expressed their political opinions and the ideologies these were conveyed throughout the context of the newspapers. They also served as tools for educating the public about what was going on inside Chicano and Black communities. They reported on such things as police brutality, poverty, and government neglect but also challenged majoritarian narratives. For instance, in an editorial published on March 22, 1970 in the *Black Panther* members attest to why it was necessary to inform the community through their newspaper, they state

We [the BPP] found we as citizens of this country were being kept duped by the government and kept misinformed by the mass media. In an effort to give facts to the people, the so-called “underground press” developed with various groups setting up newspapers and magazines with differing emphasis. The Black Panther Party realizes that racism can only be eliminated by solidarity among oppressed people and the educating of all people [...]<sup>124</sup>

I primarily interrogate the newspapers through the analytic framework used by Critical Race scholars, called “counterstories.” Counterstories are a method that contain psychological liberation and assist in the process of decolonization that directly challenges leading narratives of white middle-class norms as “truth.”

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<sup>123</sup> The term “dissident press” is taken from Christian A. Davenport’s chapter titled: Reading the “Voice of the Vanguard,” in *the Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 193.

<sup>124</sup> See *Black Panther* issue March 22, 1970. Jones, *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 197.

More specifically, the purpose of this chapter is to center a socially marginalized voice and the social experience of Chicanos and Blacks that has been given scant attention in mainstream media, academic scholarship, and in dominant American narratives of history. For that reason, “revisionist history examines America’s historical record, replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately with minorities’ experiences. It also offers evidence, sometimes suppressed, in that very record, to support those new interpretations.”<sup>125</sup> Therefore, I offer a content analysis of print culture (text and visual communication) through the newspapers and see them as organizing tools that aided in social awareness, cultural empowerment, and the re-evaluation of American history and society. I focus on the concept of the dissident press and counterstories, and distinct aesthetic.

The dissident press, “can be defined as those newspapers, newsletters, leaflets, and other printed forms produced by groups that challenge the power relationships, institutions, and policies of the existing social order.”<sup>126</sup> The Black Panthers and the Brown Berets engaged in this type of resistance, political organizing, and raising awareness within their communities where primary goals. In the newspapers, they challenged existing power structures, provided ways for people of color to organize themselves, and provided alternative ways to view themselves.

Equally important, the newspapers were an outlet that would help both organization members to engage in critical self-reflection in order to help deconstruct

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<sup>125</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 20.

<sup>126</sup> Jones, *Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 193.



internalized notions of whiteness and white superiority. Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will show how the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers defined their own aesthetic that rendered their experiences, cultural practices, and beauty standards equally important as evident within the context of this literature.

The main argument of this chapter is to show how the newspapers provided an oppositional space (counterstory) and method to inform the wider Chicano and Black community about American injustice, while also providing a mechanism for self-representation that was successful in creating a distinct aesthetic that encouraged pride, beauty ideals, promoted self-empowerment, and used art to empower their respective communities. The newspapers were primarily extensions of political platforms. The topics they covered and they remained within their political agenda of self-determination and decolonization. For instance, the newspapers aimed at reporting police brutality, educating the community through social and cultural awareness, and analyzed America government policies and dominant ideologies.

### **Counterstories: *La Causa* and *the Black Panther***

The first issue of the *Black Panther* published on April 25, 1967 was a response that served to inform the community of unjust murders that were taking place in the Black community. The premature death of Denzil Dowell was the cover story of the front page of the newspaper. Denzil Dowell was shot in the back by police in Richmond, California.<sup>127</sup> This tragedy had provoked the founding of the newspaper as members of

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 196. Also, see *The Black Panther* Issue 1 Vol. 1, April 25, 1967, page 1.

the Black Panther found it necessary to inform the community of these types of facts.

The cover story clearly states that Denzil “was unjustifiably murdered by a racist cop.”<sup>128</sup>

For instance, Huey Newton notes,

We had never thought of putting out a newspaper before. Words on paper had always seemed futile. But the Dowell case prompted us to find a way to inform the community about the facts and mobilize them to action. Lacking access to radio, television, or any of the other mass media, we needed an alternative means to communication.<sup>129</sup>

The article on Denzil Dowell reports the facts of his death and why the police murdered him; they seek to provide their own understanding of his murder by arguing that the “facts” of the shooting were mere cover-ups on behalf of the police officers that shot him. The article brings into question the accuracy of the events in the murder of Denzil Dowell.

Nevertheless, the reporting this story is a call for action to mobilize the community in self-defense. The end of the article states, “*let us organize to defend ourselves*” and offered ways to end police brutality in Black communities and encourage self-empowerment.<sup>130</sup> For instance, “Panthers took the opportunity to write articles that traced the history of black rebellion and condemned American foreign policy, capitalism, and cultural nationalism. African Americans were called on to organize in their own communities. These positive activities allowed rank-and-file members to have a sense of ownership about party policy, which was invaluable in building morale and a sense of

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, *The Black Panther*, 1-4.

<sup>129</sup> Jones, *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 196.

<sup>130</sup> *The Black Panther*, Issue 1 Vol. 1 April 25, 1967, pages 1-4.

purpose.”<sup>131</sup> The newspapers served as informal ways to educate people about cultural survival, political awareness, state violence, critiques of American foreign policies, to recruit members and ultimately to empower its members and the community.<sup>132</sup> Both, *La Causa* and the *Black Panther* were used as recruiting tools to gain the attention of the community and expose police brutality as with the story and murder of Denzil Dowell. The newspapers and the content served to educate, inform, recruit, and organize the Chicano and Black community about larger social issues.

For instance, it was common for the Brown Berets to seek recruitment through artwork and announcements. One such advertisement reads: “*La Raza Needs You: To Serve, Observe, and Protect. Join the Brown Berets NOW. See your local recruiter at 5338 Olympic Blvd. Girls Too.*”<sup>133</sup> The picture that accompanies the above caption is a drawing of a male wearing a beret, bullets around his neck, and holds a knife in his hand. With this image we can identify whom and for what purpose the Brown Berets were attempting to recruit; typically youth both men and women ranging from ages 19-24 years old. The picture of the man holds a knife and wears a string of bullets around his neck; expresses the groups motto “serve, observe, and protect.” These objects (knife and bullets) allow us to visualize the Brown Berets overall message about armed self-defense for the Chicana/o community.

In comparison, another drawing serves as an example about whom the Brown Berets were attempting to recruit and their philosophical message of self-discipline. The

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<sup>131</sup> Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 39-40.

<sup>133</sup> *La Causa*, March issue, 1968, page 12.

drawing depicts a young man that is dressed in casual wear, pants and a long sleeved shirt, slouched over he holds beer bottle. It is clear by his facial expression and tongue hanging out of his mouth that he is drunk. The caption above him reads “*Bato Loco Yesterday.*” Another picture on the opposite side stands an upright young man, with a fist in the air wearing a Brown Beret uniform, which entailed military style clothing and a Brown Beret. The caption above him reads: “*Revolutionist Today. Be Brown, be Proud. Join the Brown Berets.*”<sup>134</sup> The overall goal of the Brown Berets was to raise social awareness, targeting the “bato loco” as drunk and unaware of larger social issues this bato loco is revamped into a strong and confident figure that is “brown and proud.” This picture alone insinuates how one could change their lives in a positive sense by being involved with such organizations.

Involvement with the Brown Berets encouraged “batos locos” to leave self-defeating street gangs, alcohol, and drugs and encouraged young men to use their misguided anger toward a common oppressor.<sup>135</sup> In an interview, captured in the independent Chicano newspaper called *La Verdada*, a Brown Beret representative explains the policy on drug use.

To deal with the man [the white establishment] we must have a clear head at all times. To help our people we must have a clear head at all times. A man who is high is a man who can be controlled. The man doesn't want his children to be hooked on dope. That's why now that the middle class gabacho is using stuff they call it a national problem. But before when only Chicanos were using they didn't care because they want Chicanos to stay high and numb.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *La Causa* April issue, 1971, page 10-11.

<sup>135</sup> Batos Locos is a slang term for crazy guys. Batos is also spelled with a v; Vato.

<sup>136</sup> *La Verdad* September Issue, 1970, page 7.

To engage the community about the organizations political goals and philosophical stances about drug use *La Causa* and other independent Chicano newspapers often reprinted the political platforms of the Brown Berets.<sup>137</sup> Primarily the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers elaborated on their political platforms within the context of their newspapers with the aims of raising social awareness within their respective communities while attempting to encourage unity.<sup>138</sup>

The idea of a distinct community with specific social needs emerges throughout the newspapers as a counterstory in direct opposition of “American social values [that] tended to lay undue emphasis on individual achievement at the expense of group experience.”<sup>139</sup> A major goal for both newspapers was to identify oppressions within the community and begin dialogue within the most marginalized sections of the Chicano and Black communities in order to radicalize the community to take action.<sup>140</sup> For example, *La Causa*’s editorial claim states that the newspaper was “News for a more aware community. *La Causa* is a Chicano newspaper dedicated to serve the Chicano barrio with local and national news. News for the purpose of illustrating the many injustices against the Chicano by the Anglo establishment. News to inform the Raza of current and coming events. News to better relations and communications between barrios throughout the country.”<sup>141</sup> Here we observe how *La Causa*’s purpose was to inform Chicanos on

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<sup>137</sup> See appendix section for list of independent Chicano organizations.

<sup>138</sup> Often the Political Platforms and Programs were reprinted in various issues of both newspapers (see appendix section).

<sup>139</sup> Verney, *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America*, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 125. (For the concept of dialogics).

<sup>141</sup> *La Causa*, May 23 issue, 1969.

issues affecting them throughout the country. It served as a medium to communicate and unite people across regions.

David Sanchez reminds readers to resist against “the many injustices against the Chicano by the Anglo establishment.”<sup>142</sup> One such injustice was the cultural domination Chicanos faced. David Sanchez states

Gabacho oppression which is the product of white English speaking society, must be stopped, because he is a detriment to the Chicano spirit, culture, and existence to our people. (Man is not made into what he is, he is conditioned into what he is.) The gabacho has conditioned our people to shoot dope, steal, and even shoot each other. Gabacho society has conditioned the Raza to be inferior as Chicanos so he may attempt his due white processing to make Chicanos white minded for a better dehumanized, racist society. Because of this, he has made it difficult to organize, but because there are those who love their Raza, as we do, the vanguard of the Raza, the hearts of La Raza, LA RAZA will never die.<sup>143</sup>

Sanchez points to the more abstract ways to resist domination of the Chicano spirit and culture. Again he addresses how larger social structures have marginalized the Chicano community but encourages those that “love their Raza” to organize. Social preservation of mind, body, and spirit were major concerns for both organizations as they attempted to encourage the larger Black and Chicano community to become involved, active, and participate to ensure social survival and community success through specific programs that fit the needs of the community.

For example, the Black Panthers provided strategic methods and strategies to fulfill the needs of the poorer segments of the Black community. They instituted a free

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> *La Causa*, May 23 issue, 1969. Gabacho is slang word for what person.

breakfast program for school-aged children. Often featured in the *Black Panther* was a call for volunteers to help with preparing and serving food to the children at the Concord Baptist Church located in Berkeley, California and thousands of children were reported to have been fed.<sup>144</sup> The implementation of the Breakfast Program attempted addressed the poverty in which Black children went to school hungry. Black Panther members asked, if children were going without the basics like food, what else were they being deprived of? Black Panther members Eldridge Cleaver states,

Breakfast for Children pulls people out of the system and organizes them into an alternative. Black children who go to school hungry each morning have been organized into poverty, and the Panther program liberates them, frees them from that aspect of their poverty. This is liberation in practice... If we can understand Breakfast for Children, can we not also understand Lunch for Children, and Dinner for Children, and Clothing for Children, and Education for Children, and Medical Care for Children?<sup>145</sup>

The Black Panthers made connections to other types of oppression and addressed the need for Black children in poverty to understand their hunger as, “[...] one of the means of oppression and must be halted.”<sup>146</sup> They concerned themselves with physical needs of the children like having proper nutrition that would aid them at school. Later the Breakfast Program became a nationwide community service program under the direction

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<sup>144</sup> See *The Black Panther*, October 26<sup>th</sup> issue of 1968, article titled: “*The Youth We Are Feeding Will Surely Feed the Revolution.*” Also see, G. Louis Heath, *The Black Panther Leaders Speak: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver, and Company Speak Out Through the Black Panther Party’s Official Newspaper.* (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 121-126.

<sup>145</sup> *The Black Panther*, August 16, 1969. “On Meeting the Needs of the People”

<sup>146</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 169. Also, see *The Black Panther*, March 26 issue, 1969.

of Black Panther branches. The Breakfast Programs constitutes a form of palpable resistance to secure the physical and material needs of the Black community.<sup>147</sup>

One avenue that provided funding for the community programs (medical clinic, political education classes, and transportation services), like the breakfast program, was to solicit donations from community businesses. The Black Panthers believed that all black business owners should donate a small portion of their profits to support the survival programs and, in turn, the Black Panthers would help business owners with other services.<sup>148</sup> The Black Panthers attempted to bridge the gap between the business segment of the community to the most impoverished community; with the ideal of the community as being “united” and actively calling on members to participate in the survival and betterment for the Black community.

A case in point is the Boyette boycott in Oakland, California.<sup>149</sup> Black liquor storeowner Bill Boyette approached Black Panther members and asked for their help in boycotting Mayfair, a larger chain store that discriminated against him. Black Panther members agreed to help him and put pressure on Mayfair, under the condition that Boyette would donate on a weekly basis between two to fifteen dollars that would contribute to the maintenance of the community programs. As it turned out the boycott was extremely successful, several stores shut down, and Mayfair agreed to negotiate with Boyette. Unfortunately, negotiations went array between Black Panther members and

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<sup>147</sup> In comparison other Chicano organizations, including the Brown Berets started Breakfast Programs to feed Chicano children in their neighborhoods.

<sup>149</sup> For the full story, please see *Black Panther Intercommunal News Service* July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971.



Boyette because he failed to hold up his end of the agreement of donating to the community programs. Unsatisfied and displeased with Boyette's decision the Black Panther Party members and the community began to boycott the establishment of Boyette.

The Boyette case offers an interesting example of how the Black Panthers believed that they would sustain an independent self-determined community by incorporating participation by all its members; in attempting to create community unison no member from the community would be left at the margins of society. On the other hand, it also illuminated the tensions between community members and Black business owners that did not comply with the demands of the Black Panthers; if they did not they would be ostracized. We can also infer that not all Black people were politically motivated by similar social objectives. Therefore, a rallying call to unite based on a racialized status did not compel all Blacks to organize or unite toward social justice for Black people.

Nevertheless, the Black Panthers believed that the Black community needed to unite as a collective force and support one another on all levels, financially, spiritually, and politically. They hoped that in turn this would create greater unison within the community and transcend differences among Blacks toward achieving self-determination.

In the same way, the Brown Berets embraced carnalismo (brotherhood) in hopes of uniting the Chicano community across geographic locations and class positions. According, to Professor George Mariscal carnalismo "[was a] vague category invoked to

promote a collective and militant identity” in order to engage in bringing the Chicano community together to empower themselves.<sup>150</sup>

In an interview with a Brown Beret member in *La Verdad* (Independent Chicano newspaper) the Brown Beret member discusses the need for such collective action amongst the Chicano community.

In uniting the barrios we would like to say to our carnales and carnalas that the enemy wants us to be divided so that they can control us better. By fighting each other we're not going to change anything. We are not our own enemy. The enemy laughs at us every time we fight each other. The gringo is the one that has created the conditions in the barrio that are building so much frustration in us that has to be let out. And we take this frustration out on each other. We blame ourselves. We should not fight a brother who lives in the same lousy housing who goes to the same lousy schools; who is in the same condition we're in. We have to fight together to help ourselves, not to destroy ourselves.<sup>151</sup>

The Brown Beret representative speaks to the social structures that have worked in favor of white supremacy and marginalize Chicanas/os in American society. The community is therefore racialized in order to maintain a marginal status and if they do not have access to resources then they are regulated to “lousy housing” and “lousy schooling.”

The representative also expresses how fighting within the community amongst Chicanos only serves the “gringo” in conquer and divide tactics. By seeing their oppressive conditions as a common struggle the community can therefore mobilize

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<sup>150</sup> George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons for the Chicano Movement 1965-1975*. (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2005) 63.

<sup>151</sup> Brown Beret interview with *La Verdad*, September 1970, page 7.

themselves for political action in order to improve their social position, not solely an individual person, but larger communities in common struggles.<sup>152</sup>

Similarly, the Black Panther Party was responding to social structures that had placed both Blacks and Chicanos in similar socio-economic status (faced similar poverty, housing marginalization, inferior school and job discrimination). Within this comparison, we are able to identify how Chicanos and Blacks had been marginalized in a similar fashion that therefore caused both the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets to respond to similar ways to alleviate problems and government neglect both groups faced; while uplifting and organizing the community as a source of political strength.

The Brown Berets began to see Chicanas/os in the southwest as having common social needs. *La Marcha de la Reconquista*, and other Brown Berets events were articulated not only in *La Causa* but other Chicano newspapers that reported on the importance of the event.<sup>153</sup> On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1971, the Brown Berets and community members marched from Calexico to Sacramento in protest of social inequality. The political march covered roughly 800 miles and lasted the about 3 months. The purpose of the march was to specifically protest against police brutality Chicanos faced but it was also a political message about American repression in Vietnam and educational cutbacks made during the Reagan administration.<sup>154</sup> Participants in the march strategically stopped in barrios to address this message and to investigate their community demands and

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<sup>152</sup>George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>153</sup> See *La Verdad*, September 1970, 7-8. *La Raza*, September 1968, 29-31. *Alacran* (Long Beach M.E.Ch.A) April 1971.

<sup>154</sup> See *La Raza*, Vol. 2, No. 2 Los Angeles December 13, 1968.

needs.<sup>155</sup> The Brown Berets and other marchers believed that by talking to the people in a humble way and living amongst them could they truly understand their complaints and it was also a way to see how these social issues were connected. The march's ideological protest was both domestic and international in scope as the Brown Berets linked their oppression overseas to the war in Vietnam; as they worked within their own community they utilized grassroots organizing as means to connect with the people.<sup>156</sup>

Once the marchers arrived in Sacramento they presented a list of demands to state the government and insisted that government neglect of the Chicana/o community would no longer be tolerated. Moreover, the Brown Berets addressed solutions to remedy poverty, high school dropout rates, and gang involvement, things which they had identified as structural (not personal) problems facing the community throughout California. Though not satisfied with only marching through California the Brown Berets embarked on yet another long-term protest march, this time they would march the entire southwest to spread social awareness (a key proponent in the political platforms) and find ways to improve the societal conditions of the Chicana/o community.<sup>157</sup>

The Brown Berets, like the Black Panthers embraced and articulated notions of “community” to combat American injustice.<sup>158</sup> The Brown Berets understood and viewed the needs of the Chicano community despite differences in regional areas. The notion of the Chicano community or Raza transcends a particular barrio or area for the

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<sup>155</sup> Barrios are commonly known as Chicano neighborhoods.

<sup>156</sup> Mariscal, *Brown Eyed Children of the Sun*, 2005.

<sup>157</sup> David Sanchez, *Expedition Through Aztlan*. (California: Perspectiva Press, 1978), 108.

Brown Berets, it is constructed in terms of identifying political repression anywhere Chicano or Mexican people reside. Similarly, the Brown Berets and the Black Panther's concept of community (empowering and achieving self-determination) was an important organizing tool; therefore, unity was also seen as a logical method to combat government subjugation that would free the community from white racism, societal marginalization, and police brutality. The community or collective force of members from the Chicano and Black communities would be called upon to recognize their social status and then be mobilized to take control over their destinies. This unity would not only mean strength in numerical terms but also ideologically. One would be fighting not only for their individual basic rights but also of those most closely associated with them through the process of racialization (or group racism) and how they are marginalized economically, educationally, and culturally.<sup>159</sup> As a result, finding solutions and providing concrete programs to serve the needs of the people were the methods both groups hoped to fulfill their ideals of ensuring self-sustaining communities that would function outside of white tyranny. The vision was that the communities could be independent and take control of their infrastructures.

I assert that this embrace of community for the motivation of both groups, to empower their respective communities is a critique of American individualism, capitalism, and greed. I agree with the notion that, "Community organizers [are people] who work with members of the community to identify their concerns and problems and issues and hopes and dreams, and then brings those together in the form of an

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<sup>159</sup> Ideas of group racism came out of the course with Dr. Sharon Elise, Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States. UCSD, Spring 2009.

organization to act collectively” the Brown Berets and the Black Panther exemplified this model of community organizing by seeing the needs of the community as important.<sup>160</sup> “Serving the people” and “all power to the people” became driving ideological forces that both organizations adhered to within their political principles and neighborhood organizing. The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers wanted to create strong affiliations with members of their own ethnic/racial groups. Therefore, in an abstract sense and in a politically viable way they identified with community members in various geographic locations and anticipated that their communities would be able to live a dignified life, have access to resources. The ultimate goal was to ensure the success of Chicanos and Blacks; success could be measured in various ways such as, helping one another or providing services free of cost to community members, and to ensure civil, social and cultural rights. There was a genuine concern for the welfare of all; not only a select few. As a result, this ideological stance of empowering the community became resistance to a capitalistic society that renders the individual as the ultimate signifier of success. On the contrary, throughout the newspapers, it is evident that this was one way that members of both organizations attempted to alter the power structure; compassion for others and self-love also become important practices that navigated away from an individualistic, racist, and unjust society.

Therefore the Black Panthers and Brown Berets were concerned for one another as both newspapers reported on each other’s struggles (as well as members of their communities and other oppressed groups around the world), building a connection, and

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<sup>160</sup> Kristin Layng Szakos, *We Make Change: Community Organizers talk about What they do—and Why*. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007), 2.

advocating for unity were underlining themes of both political platforms and the were major concepts within their respective newspapers.<sup>161</sup> Philosophies self-love and self-respect aided in a newfound identity that reinforced notions of Black and Chicano pride. It was about reclaiming what had been denied to them by the larger society. Both organizations embodied this in various ways through their politics, writings, newspapers, and artwork but ultimately the love for their communities was conveyed in their concern and motivation for organizing and implementing their political platforms. Another important theme that emerges from both papers is the distinct aesthetic of cultural symbols and public pride.

### **Internalized Racism: Glorification of “White Beauty”**

A reoccurring theme throughout the content within *La Causa* and the *Black Panther* included pictures, poetry, articles, and artwork, which embodied a unique or distinct aesthetic with a political message that emerged among the radical contingents of organizing groups in the 1960s.<sup>162</sup> This unique aesthetic included specific garments, clothing, labels, artwork, or slogans that both the Brown Berets and Black Panther embraced and utilized throughout the content of their newspapers to express their political message. Both organizations promoted ideologies that helped disrupt norms of whiteness and the glorification of “white” features.

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<sup>161</sup> For the scope of this project I do not get into analysis of the U.S. Third World left. See Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left*.

<sup>162</sup> This was also prevalent in other Chicano newspapers surveyed for this thesis see Appendix sections. I define a unique/distinct aesthetic as, a distinct aesthetic is a particular political both racial/ethnic and cultural identities that embrace specific things like clothes, artwork, and political philosophies.

A white standard of beauty can fundamentally be defined as—the glorification of European features such as white skin, straight hair, colored eyes, thin nose, and tall in stature are most preferred in dominant American culture like the media, magazines, mainstream movies, and the fashion industry.<sup>163</sup> In spite of the fact, another beauty ideal formed, the Black Panther and Brown Beret newspapers, one that valued dark skin, traditional clothing, and afros; to name a few. As I have been arguing, I view this embrace as a form of psychological resistance. This form of resistance promoted “ethnic” pride and self-love, which veered away from white standards of beauty and the internalization of racism.

Black Panther members, Assata Shakur and Elaine Brown address the need to reassess what was regarded as “beautiful” by society and how they had personally accepted a white value system uncritically as young women. Assata Shakur, New York Black Panther member asserts,

We [black people] had been completely brainwashed and we didn’t even know it. We accepted white value systems and white standard of beauty and, at times, we accepted the white man’s view of ourselves. We had never been exposed to any other point of view or any other standard of beauty.<sup>164</sup>

Assata Shakur reflects on how she had internalized white racism and accepted a standard of beauty that did not account for her features as a Black woman. She points out that Black people “had never been exposed to any other point of view,” therefore their

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<sup>163</sup> This white standard is a stereotype it nonetheless has served as the dominant beauty ideal that ultimately glorifies whiteness. Scholars that discuss this paradigm are: Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eyes*, Gurlie Grewal *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison* 1998, Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*.

<sup>164</sup> Assata, Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*. (Chicago: Zed Books, 1987), 31-32.



identify with a dominant view of white beauty. Assata helps us understand how *the Black Panther* newspaper operated as an oppositional space to mainstream media in that it provided the definition of beauty with which Black people could relate.

In the same vein, Elaine Brown, California Black Panther member, also touches upon how ingrained colonial values were in the psyche of people color. She recounts in her autobiography, *Taste of Power*, how she strived in her youth to be accepted by whites and aspired to be like them. As a young girl, Elaine attended a primarily all white elementary school and admits that she felt being “too dark,” having “nappy” hair, and “thick liver” lips were inferior to white features and the closer to whiteness the better.<sup>165</sup> Her “Black” features were in stark contrast to light skin, straight hair, and small lips (typically European features), even at a young age Elaine Brown recognized that white features were considered “better” by society and therefore she had considered her features to be inferior. She goes on to discuss how she attempted to assimilate and embrace whiteness. In order to do this she needed to move from the Black neighborhood in which she lived and within this logic she could also leave her “blackness” behind, she says, “I did anything to belong among them, those white children and white teachers [...] I was convinced I was actually beginning to join them, leaving York Street behind [a Black neighborhood].”<sup>166</sup> As a youth, Elaine had felt pressured by dominant ideals of beauty standards and white superiority so much to the point that she was ashamed of being Black and wanted to identify with whiteness. Unfortunately, this experience of shame and self-hate had been that of Chicanas/os and Blacks in the U.S. and organizing

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<sup>165</sup> See Elaine Brown, *Taste of Power: A Black Women's Story*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 29-35.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

groups like the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers sought ways to reject the internalization of racism. Chicanos and Blacks began to identify with their own culture and sought their own standards of beauty. For example, the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets venerated their own aesthetic through traditional garments or hairstyles specific to Africa or Mexico; this distinct aesthetic was also explicated through artwork and political cartoons.

Throughout the newspapers surveyed, what emerged embodied the creation of the archetypical figure (explained below) that represented the political ideologies of the groups and their unique aesthetic.<sup>167</sup> These figures served as both cultural symbols and political ideologies that undermined conventional norms of mainstream American politics. For instance, in the independent Chicano newspaper entitled, *El Tenaz* captures this point well. A political drawing showed an “archetypical” representation of what it meant to be “Chicano” during the 1960s and embodied ideologies of the concept of Aztlan. In *La Causa*, Aztlan is described as:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of it's proud historical heritage, but also of the brutal 'gringo' invasion of our territories, we the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlan, for whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and inevitable destiny.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> For the scope of this project I chose two look at pictures and representations that most embodied the ideals of both organizations; rather than describe hundreds of images.

<sup>168</sup> *La Causa*, May 23 issue, 1969, page 2.

Below I describe the image in depth that explicates ideological concepts and counterstories that discuss Aztlan.

Used as an advertisement for a play, a male figure (the Chicano) stands with his legs wide apart, holding a fist in the air, and in bold letters a sign hangs around his neck reads: *I'm Chicano*. He adorns traditional long hair and a bandana around his head that says, *Chicano for President of Aztlan*. The figure wears a t-shirt and jeans along with huaraches (sandals) and inscribed on the left sandal, *Made in the U.S.A.* and on the right sandal, it says, amor (love) and paz (peace).<sup>169</sup> This figure captures much of the principles represented in the radical segments of the Chicano Movement and the Brown Berets specifically.

We can understand the figure to be an imperative symbol of cultural pride and ideological representation of what Chicanismo embodied. Case in point is the use of the huaraches (peasant sandals). The huaraches are an important signifier as they are typically associated with the indigenous or peasant populations in Mexico worn for hundreds of years.<sup>170</sup> Stereotypically the sandals would be looked down upon by the upper classes in Mexico and in the U.S., therefore for a Mexican born in the U.S. to wear them disrupts notions of whom and what type of person would wear this sandal. Instead of associating the sandal solely with the peasant class of Mexico it is also worn by Chicano's in the United States from various social classes such as, a community organizer, college student, or professional.

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<sup>169</sup> See *El Tenaz* Spring issue, 1972.

<sup>170</sup> For a brief history of huaraches refer to article at:  
[http://www.huaraches.com/information/huarache\\_history.php](http://www.huaraches.com/information/huarache_history.php)

Equally significant, is the bandana around the figures head that states, “*Chicano for President of Aztlan.*” The bandana’s slogan calls for what the Brown Berets had aspired toward—self-determination, “a Chicano president for Aztlan”; fundamentally, this slogan offers concepts of self-representation and Chicano leadership amongst Chicano communities. The importance of Aztlan is illustrated by Arnulfo D. Trejo, in the book *The Chicanos: As We See Ourselves*, he claims, “Chicano is the only term that was especially selected by us, for us. It symbolically captures the historical past and signals a brighter future for the people of Aztlan. Aztlan was the homeland of the Aztecs [Mexicas]. Aztlan became a promised land and provided the spiritual unity it needed by the people involved in the Chicano Movement.”<sup>171</sup> Equally important is the concept of Aztlan as a homeland. Aztlan conceptualized as a homeland provides a literal and metaphorical space that Chicanas/os inhabit and home represents the private yet intimate space people share. Trejo again invokes the idea of unity however this time unity was not necessarily a material matter but rather in a spiritual sense. This spiritual unity provided the basis to move beyond rigid notions based on unity or community cohesion but sought to address deeper needs people had, though less quantifiable, it dealt with the psyche, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community. Again the idea of unity becomes a spiritual liberation that can provide an overarching way to address the needs of the Chicana community in order to secure “a brighter future for Aztlan” because Aztlan is considered to be the homeland of the Mexica it therefore places the Chicano in a historical perspective as indigenous to the Southwest; with direct ties to the land and the

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<sup>171</sup> Trejo, *The Chicanos: As We See Ourselves*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1979), xvi.

notion of Aztlan as being “home.” This was important because many Chicanas/os did not feel represented or accepted by mainstream American society, this was indicated by the political platform proposed by the Brown Berets as they sought cultural and citizen rights denied to them due to historical racism that led to the deprivation of the Chicana/o community.

Comparably, Blacks had been left out of American political and cultural representation. In the *Black Panther*, traditional African garments and dark skin were privileged, in the artwork, of the people in which it depicted, primarily by the artist Emory Douglas, prominent throughout the *Black Panther* was the artwork of Emory Douglas, Minister of Culture.<sup>172</sup> Douglas’s artwork was published in the paper from 1967 to the early 1980s; he served as the art director for the Black Panther Party for this duration. Given the importance of Black culture, the Black Panther Party found it necessary to create a position that regarded culture to be a necessary component to their politics. In this sense, art and culture were considered methods that could aid in political resistance and psychological liberation for Black people, but more specifically, Emory Douglas described his artwork as revolutionary art; in line with the Black Panther Party politics.

In an article titled, *Revolutionary Art*, in the *Black Panther*, Emory Douglas explicitly defines what revolutionary art is and calls for artists to join in the quest to

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<sup>172</sup> Other Black Panther positions entailed: Minister of Defense, education, foreign affairs, culture, and Secretary of Communications. See Hugh Pearson, *Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America*. (California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company), 176. *La Verdad*, September 1970, article: *Culture as a Weapon: An interview with Alurista*, page 9.

dismantle state power. He claims that revolutionary art is a visual representation of the struggle and publicly represents all elements of the ghetto; but more than that the art is produced for the “ghetto.” The art becomes a part of people’s daily lives, experiences, and serves as a reflection of what is happening in Black urban life. For that reason, his art is posted in community buildings or outside of neighborhood stores. “It is not in the schools of fine art,” nor the art sheltered in exclusive museums accessible for those that can afford to enter such establishments.<sup>173</sup> Art was therefore used a liberation tool for the Black urban community and Emory Douglas’s role provided the visual aesthetic that represented the political ideologies of the Black Panther Party. Hence, “Emory Douglas established an iconic visual style that communicated the organizations commitment to activism and social justice and created a powerful identifiable aesthetic that played a significant role in mobilizing [the Black] community.”<sup>174</sup>

Douglas primarily uses mixed media to convey his messages (the rest of this section will provide examples of this). Generally, his work is realistic and portrays everyday people from the black working class community. The pictures are bold and typically focus on one primary political message of self-defense and resistance. Many times the pictures were accompanied by short captions or phrases to enhance the meaning of the art. For example, he used cartoon depictions of police officers-- commonly referred to as pigs, and the caption would read, “*Off the Pigs.*” The message is relative to the needs of the community, equally importantly, one can grasp the pressing issues and how

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<sup>173</sup> See, *the Black Panther*, Position Paper #1 on Revolutionary Art by Emory Douglas, 1968. Also see <http://itsabouttimebpp.com>.

<sup>174</sup> Quote taken from Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) pamphlet, Black Panther Party Exhibit January 2008.

they relate to the needs of poor Blacks such as poverty, police violence, and inferior living conditions. Art was produced for a specific issue and entailed informing the community about Black Panther events or community forums. The pictures range from promoting the organization's survival programs such as the free breakfast program or advocating for the release of political prisoner. It was not uncommon for the artwork to expose what was taking place within the organization internally like the constant harassment of the members faced like high rates of arrest and/or being framed by police officials and the FBI.<sup>175</sup> This awareness yielded community support for rallies and protest from the wider community. This is one way that his art was used as a tool for mobilizing the community to confront police brutality.

It is safe to say that those unfamiliar with the politics of the Black Panther Party or the artwork of Emory Douglas may find them shocking or dangerous and they are just as powerful as they were almost forty years ago.<sup>176</sup> Self-defense was a critical component of the Black Panther Party and this was depicted in the artwork of the newspaper. It featured everyday working class people taking up arms and defending themselves against white racism and police brutality, the exploits of capitalism and imperialism, and poverty in general. What is powerful about these images is that they appear in an era where images of Black people were marginal or stereotypical. Images of Black people carrying guns in the name of social justice were definitely not common. Ironically, the pictures are about structural and social oppressions that black people face

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<sup>175</sup> Churchill, Agents of Repression.

but simultaneously it is a call for black people to reevaluate their place in society and take action to defend their rights.

One such image created by Douglas, allows for analysis that represents overarching themes that that were prominent throughout the political platforms such as... and the newspaper ultimately as counternarratives. For example, a Black woman wearing traditional African clothing, has prominent African features, and wears a natural.<sup>177</sup> The words in the background say, “*Afro-American solidarity with the oppressed people of the world.*” The message denotes unity amongst “the oppressed people of the world.” Again, ideals of unity in the Black community and third world people abroad embraces a unified struggle of resistance; as the slogan suggests. The figure clearly produces a proud African woman that interrupts stereotypical thinking of complacency and passivity with the oppressive power structure. The weapons in her hand convey the message that she will pick up arms in self-defense or to defend her birth rights. We can also understand how the modern and the traditional meet, the signifiers being--the gun and the spear in the picture. The gun indicates modernity and the spear is associated with indigenous and traditional cultural practices of hunting and fighting.<sup>178</sup>

Equally significant are the woman’s clothes and hairstyle, the woman’s clothing places her outside the norm of modern American clothing. Consequently, the artist has chosen these garments specifically to signify an embrace of an African heritage. Her

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<sup>177</sup> A natural is commonly known as an afro. See *the Black Panther*, 1969. Also, see Sam Durant, *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), 137. Also, see page 18 for another example of black women in traditional African clothing.

<sup>178</sup> See *Indigenous Tool and Weapons* article can be accessed at <http://members.ozemail.com.au>.



hairstyle too embraces this unique aesthetic in the sense that the figure adorns an Afro; in contrast to mainstream images, that privileges straight hair and a white standard of beauty.

The image of the woman can help us identify the physical, symbolic, and psychological liberation I have addressed throughout the thesis. On one level, the tangible resistance can be understood by the self-defense stance of the woman in which she holds a gun and a spear to illustrate that these weapons would be used to dismantle the power structure. The second type of resistance is less tangible and embodies beauty standards, self-esteem, and self-love. The picture conveys a strong and proud Black woman (in contrast to the early experiences of Assata Shakur and Elaine Brown). Therefore, the clothing and hairstyle in the picture are integral to the cultural affirmation which entail self-love, pride, and a counterhegemonic understanding of the Chicano and black community.

Emory Douglas is (re)claiming and (re)articulating black representation on his own terms, allowing for cultural empowerment and a direct challenge to stereotypical images, and beauty ideals constructed within the Black community. As mainstream images and even members from the Black community privileged lighter skinned portrayals of African Americans, Douglas does exactly the opposite.<sup>179</sup> He privileges dark skinned African Americans and highlights physical feature such as afro hairstyles,

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<sup>179</sup> Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation*. (California: University of California, 2005).

dark brown eyes, and full lips. He allows a distinct African aesthetic to emerge in his work that encompasses African pride and beauty.

Politicized Blacks and Chicanos embraced and reaffirmed their own beauty ideals as opposed to a white standard of beauty. Embracing a specific hair-do like an Afro became a political statement. Nonetheless, more than just a hairstyle or fashion statement this expressed affection and ties to one's ancestral homeland. bell hooks reminds us why this embrace was so important, "No one speaks about the topic of [B]lack people and love without addressing issues of self-esteem and self-hatred. It is common knowledge that the trauma of white supremacy and ongoing racist assault leaves deep psychic wounds."<sup>180</sup> We can see how the images and their political messages aided in a positive identity formation for Chicanos and Blacks in both organizations. I agree with Martha E. Bernal and George P. Knight as they describe identity formation to encompass, "[...] a person's knowledge of belonging to an ethnic group and pride in that group."<sup>181</sup> As we have seen with the artwork of Douglas creating an indigenous African space that promoted pride and self-pride, Chicanos were equally concerned indigenous issues that moved beyond the aesthetic.

Land, culture, and indigenous spirituality were important in the political platform and the content of the *La Causa*. For instance, a political cartoon echoes these themes but specifically raises issues about indigenous Mexico, cultural traditions, and value systems. The cartoon's overall message describes the land to be sacred. Its importance is

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<sup>180</sup> bell hooks, *Salvation: Black People and Love*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001), 55.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, 47

compared to one's life and how "Chicano" view the role of art. Therefore, land and art were epitomized; ideals of respect from an indigenous perspective were tied to appreciating the land and creating art served in one's life two purposes; one to attain inner peace and secondly, to achieve harmony with all things on earth; in this sense a higher power was in communion with all things. One did not need to turn to "gabacho" things like wine or promiscuity to find pleasure or to enjoy life.<sup>182</sup>

In attempting to understand Chicana/o identity, the cartoon (previously described above) embraces the indigenous aspect of what it means to be Chicana/o and helps us understand Chicana/o identity formation. For instance, this depiction is embodied through metaphor of a split face which represents Mestizaje. The split face depicts one side with "indigenous" features, traditional clothing, and long hair. The other half of the face shows a male with short hair and a t-shirt; the face that is "half" Chicano and the other "half" indigenous. The caption below reads, "We have Indian blood and it is strong [...]."<sup>183</sup> This representation helps deconstruct Chicana/o identity formation in understanding their historical experience in the Americas of being indigenous and/or mestizo. Specifically this cartoon chooses to exalt indigenous values—they are placed in high esteem compared to "gabacho" culture; again, the indigenous values community or honoring one's pueblo as utmost importance.

The political cartoon lends a counterstory of American society; it is a moral critique of American society of being corrupt on various levels. By offering a different

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<sup>182</sup> The term "gabacho" is a slang word for a white person.

<sup>183</sup> See *El Tenaz* published in San Juan Bautista California, 1971, issue unknown, page 11.

value system or world perspective, indigenous principles included dios-pueblo, family, and homeland that translated to Chicano ideals of carnalismo, La Raza, and indigenismo. The ultimate objective was to empower the Chicana/o community by offering an alternative perspective of life values. Therefore, Chicanos looked to the past to make meaning of their lives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; indigenous values were not the only things admired, artwork that represented indigenous culture continued to be political messages of cultural resistance and affirmation.

Mexica artwork was displayed throughout the Chicano publications; such figures included deities, symbols, and hieroglyphs.<sup>184</sup> Many times the symbols would serve as artwork or be incorporated with a story or poetry pertaining to a certain issue like cultural awareness; fundamentally, Mexica symbols were a part of the overall aesthetic. As a symbol of cultural pride *La Causa* promoted an aesthetic distinctly indigenous to Mexico, which operated as a space to resist simplistic or static ideas of Chicana/o identity. The art, indigenous symbols, and its political message provided an opportunity to define their own identity rather than be labeled by state or legal definitions of what it was to be Mexican born in the United States. The images in the newspapers were attempts to restore and understand the indigenous past of Mexican descendants. In this regard, the visual imagery and cultural practices of invoking and embracing indigenous México became a form of resistance to a hegemonic white social order that constantly indoctrinated Chicana/o children in a Euro-centric educational system.<sup>185</sup> This acceptance of identifying with the indigenous part of México allowed members of the

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<sup>184</sup> Mayan hieroglyphs were also prominent in the independent Chicano newspapers.

<sup>185</sup> Antonia Darder and et. all, *Latinos and Educaiton: A Critical Reader*. (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Chicana/o community to be proud, rather than ashamed, of one's present and past alike; this aided in a decolonization process, again hooks reminds us that "Decolonization is the necessary groundwork for the development of self-love. It offers the tools resist white supremacist thinking."<sup>186</sup> However, not all Chicana/o scholars agree upon this embrace of Chicanas/os "recuperating" their indigenous ties to the Americas as an attempt as self-love and decolonization of the mind.

These narratives and counterstories within the newspapers offered ways for people of color to understand the various manifestations of racism. The newspapers not only offered a critique of American liberalism but also attempted to expose state sanctioned racism. They offered tools and a vocabulary to talk about social injustice amongst the lower classes of Chicanos and Blacks. More importantly, the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers through the platform of the newspapers offered solutions to improve the marginal status of Chicanos and Blacks. Not only does the purpose of the newspapers become a fight for voice, representation, and political and cultural survival- it is at the heart, a fight for memory and history. It is a fight for memory because these perspectives are not typically told in school textbooks; significantly, the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers gave themselves permission to embrace their specific cultural practices, languages, and look to their ancestors for inspiration. The newspapers become a space to retell history and affirm the experience of the Chicana/o and Black experience in the making of American history.

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<sup>186</sup> hooks, *Salvation*, 73.

Within the content of the newspapers, new narratives emerge to analyze the social order. The newspapers contents illustrate how members of the Black Panther and the Brown Berets speak for themselves. Their commitment to social justice, self-empowerment, and political awareness to the Chicano and Black community, they challenge the status quo dominant views of history, American colonialism and reclaim their voices, histories, and experiences through poetry, artwork, and socially aware articles. For example, the artwork of Emory Douglas operates as an oppositional space (against an imposed white standard of beauty) ideologically and symbolically through images and pictures which provides a distinct Black aesthetic. Combating deeper issues of self-hate the choice of one's hairstyle was not simply a trend- it disrupted notions of what was considered "modern," "American," and "European." This type of resistance may not be politically altering through governmental change or legislature it nonetheless moved beyond fashion statements or fads but had a specific political meaning, purpose, and sometime served as alliances to other places like Africa and Mexico. The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers interrogate how race, class, and dominate white ideals affected their everyday their lives and life chances in urban areas of the 1960s.

## **Conclusion(s)**

The 1960s posed a challenge to more conservative notions of the civil rights era as the needs of Black people proved to be heterogeneous. The Black Power Movement called for politics that are more radical and did not seek assimilation paradigms to fulfill the needs of the Black community. Access to white institutions did not address issues of self-esteem, dominant stereotypes, or beauty ideals for Black people. The American public had internalized the notions of the “good Negro” versus the “bad Negro”. As epitomized in the polarization of leaders such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. For instance, the Black Panther Party, inspired by Malcolm X, sought to reaffirm their cultural heritage and maintained that Black people were worthy of their own aesthetic. Though the Black Panthers are more commonly known for their outlandish displays of self-defense, masculinity, and gun-toting; a weapon that has been critically overlooked by scholars is the artwork of Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party--Emory Douglas. His art was used as an avenue to educate the Black population and was an active call for social justice and revolution.

The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers did not achieve a full scale revolution, however they did transform their communities in other meaningful ways. They changed the way people understood overt and covert racism, they formed strategic identities to combat these issues but most importantly, they renewed pride and dignity in communities that have been subjected to not only physical forms of violence and hatred but mental and spiritual forms as well.

I argue that in the height of their movements and pinnacle of effectiveness there

are lasting remnants--of not necessarily the original breakfast program and free clinics—but of the pride and dignity attributed to the groups that have been subjected to hundreds of years of American racism and colonial oppression. The history of the Brown Berets and the Black Panthers help excavate a cultural revolution and a shift in consciousness that aided in a racial analysis of an American society.

Police brutality and surveillance within the Chicano and Black communities were top priorities for both groups but they also concerned themselves with various civil programs. This was the space in which both groups were able to directly effect change within the community; they were not simply espousing lofty theories about social inequality but were agents combating social problems that overwhelmed the Black and Chicano communities. The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers concerns included dilapidated housing conditions, inadequate healthcare, poverty, and disproportionately high levels of high school dropout rates. Both organizations implemented food programs for youth, ran free health clinics, organized anti-war demonstrations, produced their own newspapers, and called for cultural education in the public school system; ultimately, they called for a more just system for people of color.

The Black Panthers and the Brown Berets reclaimed a social and political space to express themselves, display a distinct aesthetic, and to articulate their political views through politicized labels and language. The use of self-identified ethnic and political labels of Chicano and Black were common within the newspapers. Today some may take the terms Black and Chicano for granted and commonly understand them as generic labels to identify a racial community. However, the label “black” became embraced as a



politicized term and the label Chicana/o is equally embraced as a self-defining term, which is open to political possibility and ideology.

The political platforms and newspapers became a discursive practice of how the Brown Berets and the Black Panther Party begin to identify structural oppression. They were able to contest ideals of democracy, equality, citizenship, and freedom and expose how the state neglected the needs of their communities. The Brown Berets and the Black Panthers were U.S. citizens though they maintained that they were regarded as second-class citizens due to historical and institutionalized racism. What is important about the political platforms is they question the “civil rights” that should have been granted to them. The Black Panthers and the Brown Berets demanded that American elites recognize their rights. *Their resistance showed that they would no longer be passive about accepting their inferior status.* They were willing to pick up arms in order to defend themselves and their birthrights.

The concept of “the people” or the community was both tangible and necessary in order to ensure the political and cultural survival of Chicanos and Blacks to succeed in a racist society. In this way, embracing the community would mean individual success was equally important to the entire success of the community. Greed and obsession with individual success or careerism, was combated within the ideological practices of the Brown Berets and Black Panthers but revolutionary success would mean that the community would eventually lead themselves into prosperity.

Today these organizations still exist. An active movement consists of Brown Berets all over California in places like San Diego and Watsonville that organize against police brutality and believe it is still important to serve the Chicano community. Every year in April at Chicano Park (located in a predominately Chicano barrio in San Diego) there is a celebration called “Chicano Park Day” on this day the park is overflowing with hundreds of people (Chicano and not) celebrating, watching traditional Aztec and ballet folkloric dancers, enjoying the sun, looking at the murals plastered all over the park, and of course people enjoy Mexican food. The event is about bringing the community together and has the feel of a family day outing rather than an overt political protest. Ironically, enough there is always heavy police presence there to “monitor.” I often wonder if wealthy citizens or Euro-American events have heavy police presence or Minutemen protesters. Nevertheless, as always, true to their motto “To observe, To Severe, and Protect” the Brown Berets of San Diego patrol the park to make sure the community members are safe.<sup>187</sup> Event today the Brown Berets of Watsonville California continue to protest against police brutality and bring awareness not just to the Chicano community but the Black community as well. As they understand, that police brutality still disproportionately affects both groups.<sup>188</sup>

In 2006 in Oakland, California dozens of former Black Panthers from all over the world and hundreds of people gathered for the 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary reunion of the Black Panther Party. The reunion focused on the influence the organization had across the nation of which many cities implemented Black Panther organizations and civil services

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<sup>187</sup> I have been to this celebration for years and have witnessed this firsthand.

<sup>188</sup> See appendix section

like the Breakfast Program, free medical clinics, and the busing to prison transportation program in order to serve the Black community.<sup>189</sup>

During the course of my research, I wondered if these radical politics that both the Brown Berets and the Black Panther so vigorously upheld, believed, and practiced still mattered today-- especially in a “color-blind” America that refuses to acknowledge how race and racism still operate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Do people still feel the need for such practices and radical activism? I am not sure but what I did find were pockets of these movements that were alive and well. Decolonization trainings take place every Friday in Los Angeles, California. These trainings encourage people to “regain control of their lives, control their bodies, their minds, their lives, their destinies, their future, and their lives.”<sup>190</sup> It might be safe to say that the legacy of community activism and decolonization that the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets exemplified still continues today.

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<sup>189</sup> For an audio report of this event, you may access it at [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org). Also, see appendix section.

<sup>190</sup> See appendix section

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# Appendices


## Appendix A

**OCTOBER 1966 BLACK PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM AND PROGRAM**

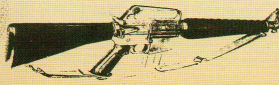
**WHAT WE WANT**

**WHAT WE BELIEVE**

- We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.  
We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
- We want full employment for our people.  
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.
- We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.  
We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now siding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
- We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.  
We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
- We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.  
We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
- We want all black men to be exempt from military service.  
We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.



- We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.  
We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense.
- We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.  
We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
- We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.  
We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.
- We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.  
When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.  
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.




**FREE HUEY NOW  
GUNS BABY GUNS**

(Black Panther Political Platform)

## Appendix B

*La Causa. Marzo Pagina 10*

**BROWN  
BERET  
13 POINT  
POLITICAL PROGRAM**



TO UNITE ALL OUR PEOPLE UNDER THE BANNER OF INDEPENDENCE !

1. We want all land that was stolen from our people returned.  
We realize that every inch of land on this continent which is now called the "United States" was stolen from the Indian and Chicano people by barbaric foreign invaders.
2. We demand the immediate end to the occupation of our community by the racist police.  
We realize that the police occupy our communities just as the U.S. armies occupy foreign countries. Only by organizing and arming to defend ourselves can we ever hope to stop the police brutality and genocide in our communities.
3. We want an end to the robbery of our communities by dog eat dog businessmen.  
We realize that business in our communities exploits LA RAZA by charging high interest rates and prices for cheap merchandise.
4. We want all Chicanos exempt from U.S. military service.  
We will not be exempt from service in the Chicano Liberation Struggle, but we refuse to be used as tools to protect economic interests or the United States.
5. We want all Chicanos being held in all political jails released.  
No Chicano has ever had a fair trial in the racist U.S. judicial system. All Chicanos being held are political prisoners.
6. We demand a judicial system relevant to Chicanos and therefore administered by Chicanos.  
Chicanos must be judged by other Chicanos from their respective communities. A relevant judicial system means that judge, jury and prosecuting attorneys are chosen from the peoples' respective communities. Any sentences imposed on LA RAZA should come from LA RAZA.
7. We demand Chicano control of Chicano education.  
We realize that under this racist system a Chicano will never receive relevant education because this racist educational system is only training people as slave laborers for the economic interests of the U.S. ruling and exploiting class.
8. We want full employment for all Chicanos.  
We realize that under this system full employment is impossible, and therefore due to its racist nature Chicanos are left unemployed and underemployed.
9. We demand housing fit for human beings.  
The inadequate housing in our Chicano communities which employers leave "after 5 P.M. to their better neighborhoods" are the result of the employers' "legally stealing" the workers of their rightful wages. Chicanos have, for too long, been exploited. We have a right to decent housing. If this right is not granted, we will seize so-called "government land" and property and fulfill LA RAZAS' needs.
10. We demand an end to the destruction of our land and air by the corrupt ruling class.  
It is crystal clear to us that the greed of a few will result in the loss of the masses. It is important for Chicanos to realize that an attack against the land is an attack against La Raza, whose communities' air and natural resources are becoming polluted by the wastes of the greedy capitalists' money-making machines.
11. We demand that all border lands be open to La Raza whether born north or south of "the fence".  
This right is guaranteed to La Raza by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
12. We as Chicanos stand in solidarity with all people who are engaged in the struggle for self-determination and freedom.  
We realize that people engaged in struggle against the U.S. are waging the same struggle against the same enemy that is exploiting the Chicano.

(Brown Beret Political Platform)

Appendix C

*La Causa*
*28 Febrero*
*Page 8*

**RAZA UNIDA PARTY IS FORMED IN SOUTHWEST TEXAS**

Jose Angel Gutierrez, who wrote a Master's thesis entitled "La Raza and Revolution: The Empirical Conditions for Revolution in Four South Texas Counties", is making a revolution there by organizing the Raza Unida Party. The Raza Unida Party has already scored a victory in Crystal City by gaining control of the City Council. The Party has been organized in Zavala County where Crystal City is located. It is also organized in Dimmit, La Salle, and Hidalgo Counties. All four of these counties have Chicano majorities; however, up till now they have been ruled by the local white merchants and growers.


With the formation of the Raza Unida Party, we Chicanos have a tool to help us further organize ourselves, and gain power over the local institutions that directly affect us in our daily lives.

There has long been talk of a party to serve strictly Chicano needs but never any action to follow-up. Now with the example that our Carnales from Texas have given us, we have a model to work from.

Formation of a Chicano Party in E.L.A. could take place around the following issues: the incorporation of E.L.A., the control of the Police, Schools, and welfare department by the community.

Anybody interested in forming a Chicano Party contact Chris Cebada at 2666237.

# CHICANO PRESS ASSOCIATION




**california**

**San Jose:** Superior Court Judge Gerald "Hitler" Chargin was transferred from the juvenile hearing section to superior court. This in essence is a promotion for the law and order Judge who implied that Chicacos should be exterminated. Demands for Judge Chargin's removal have been voiced by every Mexican American organization as well as by distinguished personalities and the press.

The California Attorney General's office recently refused to investigate possible criminal charges filed by Chicacos against the Judge.

**San Francisco:** Los Siete de la Raza challenged the Grand Jury system as not representing the population of San Francisco, especially Chicacos. Only five of the total Grand Jury nominees are Spanish-surnamed, despite the fact that Chicacos represent 15% of the total population. The average income of the Grand Jury nominees is \$20,453. Obviously since Chicacos in the Mission District only average \$5,000 annual income, they are excluded from serving in the lily white American legal system. How can a jury of rich, educated white people be called representative of the Chicaco community?




## THE NEED FOR AN INDEPENDENT CHICANO POLITICAL PARTY

guest speaker:  
**Froben Lozada** - Chicano Studies Department Chmn. Merritt College

**Friday February 27 8:30pm**

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info:269-4953

DONATION \$1.00  
H.S. STUDENTS .50



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San Bernardino, Calif.

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Denver, Colorado  
80218

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Española, New Mexico  
87532

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San Antonio, Texas

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Uvalde, Texas

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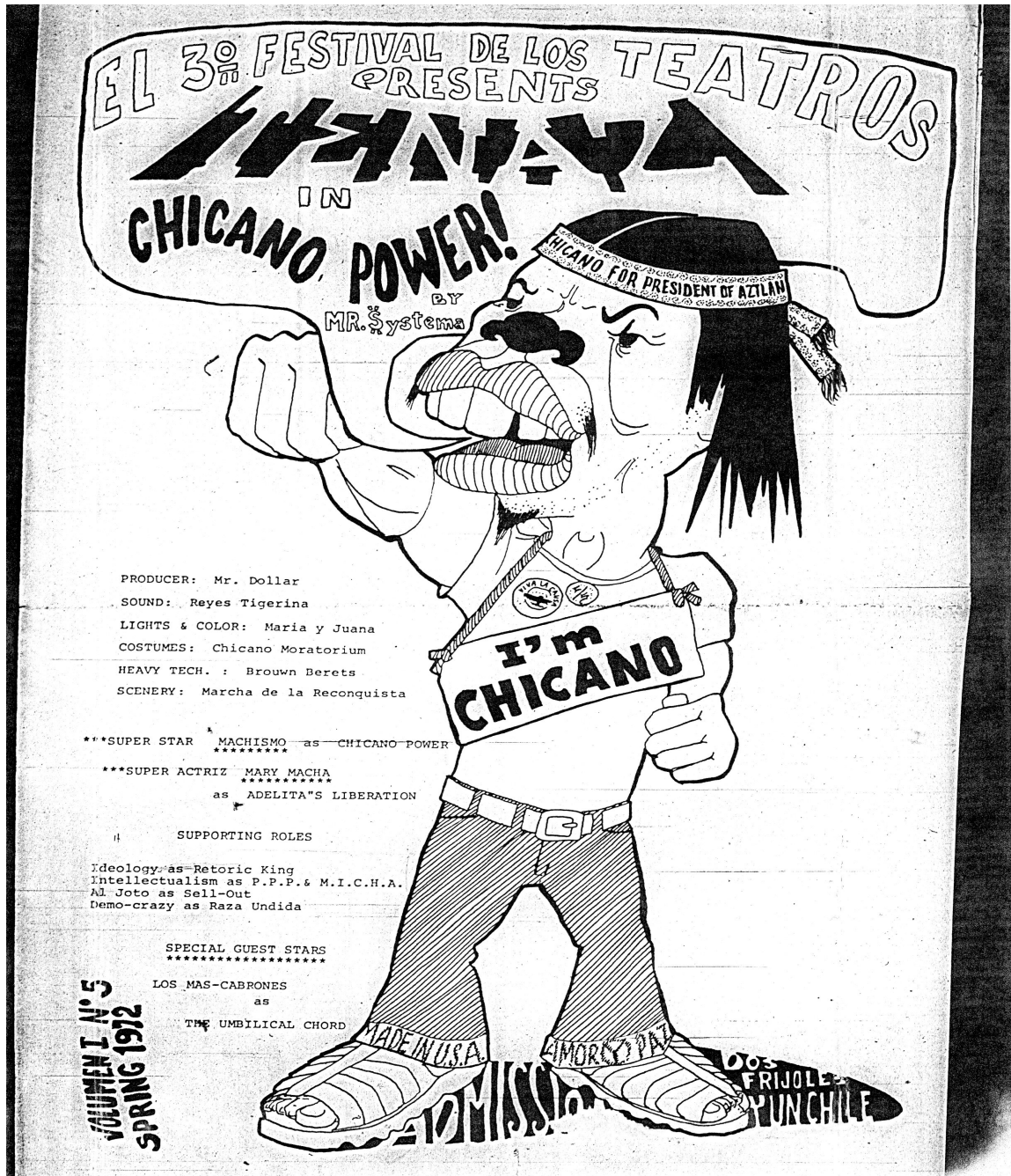
**CORAJE**  
c/o Mexican American  
Liberation Committee  
Tucson, Arizona

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Delray Beach, Florida  
33444

(Chicano Press Association)



Appendix D



(Chicano Archetype)



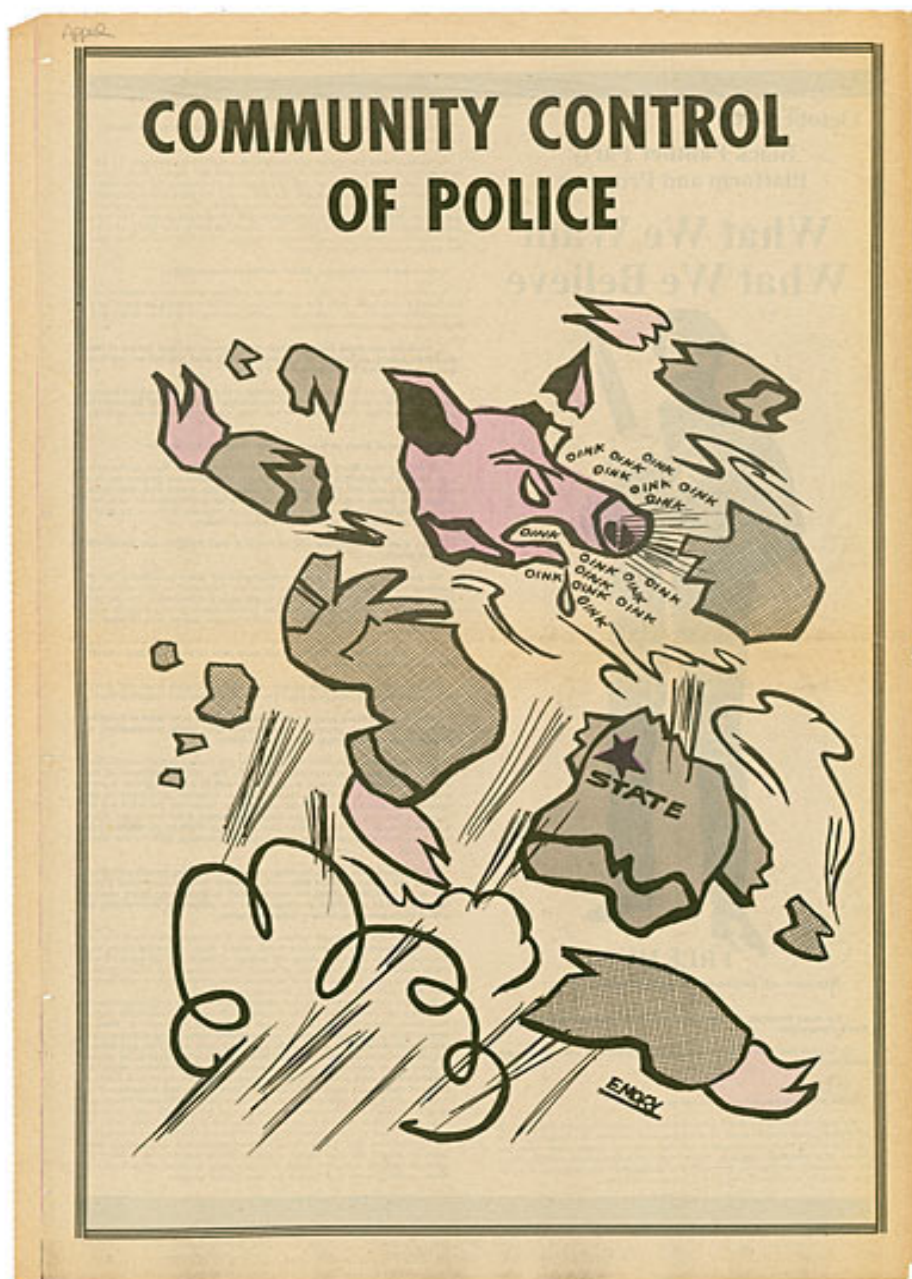
Appendix E

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(Revolutionary African American Woman Archetype)

## Appendix F



Emory Douglas, poster from *The Black Panther*, February 7, 1970, offset lithograph, Collection of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles, © Emory Douglas, digital imaging by Echelon

(Police Brutality a primary concern for the Black Panther Party)







Appendix H



(Pictures of Brown Berets of Watsonville, California organizing in 2008)



“There was a spree of gang killings in Salinas in early 2008 so we walked through gang neighborhoods handing out informational flyers for parents to notice signs of gang activity in their children and invite them to a community forum to come up with actual solutions, the police department was present as listeners only.”

-Courtesy of anonymous Brown Beret member.

(Berets of Watsonville, California organizing against police brutality with Black and Brown activists.)



Appendix I



(Pictures from the 40<sup>th</sup> Black Panther Party Reunion Anniversary in Oakland California, 2006)

## Appendix J

## Decolonization Trainings



@  
**TEOCINTLI**



**Decolonization – the process a people take to regain control of their bodies, their minds, their lives, their destinies, their future, and their lands.**

Who are we? Where are we? What are we?  
Where are we going? And who's going there?

These are 5 very important questions that many of us have asked ourselves, and if not, you should!

These series of workshops will be educational and interactive that will cover a whole range of themes and issues directly related to these questions above and that are present every day of our lives.



These symbols here all have important meanings that affect us today. We have been lied to about who we are, where we come from, and most importantly **WHY** we live in such unhealthy and unnatural conditions. These symbols were left to us by our ancestors as reminders of who we are. They knew we would need to find our way back one day so they created symbols that once we were able to remember them we would find the truth. And that's what this workshops and trainings are all about!

### **Panche Be**

Seeking the Root of Truth

Every Other Friday @ Teocintli at 6pm  
2717 E. 4<sup>TH</sup> ST. L.A., CA. 90033 (323)266-2117  
For more info email [tekoxiknau@gmail.com](mailto:tekoxiknau@gmail.com) or call or 323.404.0412

**Decolonize Yourself!!!!**

(Decolonization Flyer)