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# BECOMING LATINOS: MEXICAN AMERICANS, CHICANOS, AND THE SPANISH MYTH IN THE URBAN SOUTHWEST

JOSEPH A. RODRÍGUEZ

*Believing that Latinismo supplemented, but did not replace, their own identity, Mexican American leaders have supported the movement since the late nineteenth century. Chicano nationalists, however, rejected Latinismo, holding that it transformed victims of Spanish American conquests (the Mexican people) into victimizers. This paper discusses Mexican Americans' and Anglo city-builders' support of a pan-Latino identity, with a close look at the fight over Latinismo in San Jose, 1969.*

ON 1 JUNE 1969, an estimated 75,000 spectators lined the streets of downtown San Jose to witness the revival of the city's Grand Floral Parade. The event culminated the week-long Fiesta de las Rosas marking the two-hundredth anniversary of the Spanish missions in California. The celebration featured a golf tournament, a grand ball, a rodeo, and a longhorn cattle drive through downtown San Jose. Lorne Greene, star of television's *Bonanza*, served as the parade's grand marshal. The excited crowd enjoyed the colorful procession of high school marching bands, drill teams, drum and bugle corps, antique cars, mounted horsemen, and flower-covered floats.<sup>1</sup>

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In this paper, mestizos are the offspring of European and Indian parents. Tejano refers to Mexican Americans born in or residing in Texas. Chicano refers to those Mexican Americans who came of age during the 1960s. Chicanos chose the name to assert a more militant ethnic identity. Capitalization of the fiestas follows the style of the sources.

<sup>1</sup> *San Jose Mercury-News*, 1 and 2 June 1969.

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The order of the parade, however, soon dissolved as 75 to 100 Chicano youths wearing black berets amassed on both sides of First Street carrying placards denouncing the fiesta. When the protestors attempted to enter the parade they confronted uniformed and plain-clothed police officers stationed along the route. The confrontation escalated as bottles, sticks, and rocks rained down on officers who beat resisting demonstrators with night sticks while making 30 arrests. During the ensuing melee at least a dozen Chicanos and three police officers suffered injuries that required hospitalization. After the police subdued the demonstrators, the parade continued without incident.<sup>2</sup>

The disturbance indicated a conflict between two views on Mexican American identity. The fiesta could be characterized as embodying a pan-Latino perspective since it included positive representations of both Spanish and Mexican culture and history. The city's Mexican American middle class supported this pan-Latino perspective.

The celebration had been held annually from the 1890s to the 1930s, and it publicized the mild climate and fertile farmland of the Santa Clara Valley. Thirty years later, in 1966, city health official Luis G. Juárez proposed that San Jose revive La Fiesta de las Rosas.<sup>3</sup> Juárez hoped renewing the fiesta would increase resident awareness of the city's Hispanic heritage and would unify Anglo and Mexican residents, as well as energize the city's dormant downtown.

Though Mexican American, Juárez praised the city's Spanish founders: "Don Felipe de Neve, Governor of California, under the crown of Spain in 1777, saw the potential of the San Jose area to be the site of California's first civil settlement. Throughout its long and eventful history, San Jose has achieved an important place in the development of the state recently becoming California's 4th largest city. In addition to being the first Spanish pueblo, it was the state's first capitol and the first incorporated city. With union and foresight, San Jose can become one of America's great cities."<sup>4</sup>

Not all Mexican Americans, however, embraced the pan-Latino identity, as the parade disturbance indicated. A younger generation of Mexican Americans who called themselves Chicanos opposed any positive representation of Spanish history.<sup>5</sup> The Chicanos viewed the Spanish as white, European colonizers who had victimized the

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<sup>2</sup> Reports of the clash appeared in the *San Jose Mercury-News* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 June 1969. On the injured demonstrators, see *San Jose Mercury-News*, 4 June 1969. See also *San Jose Mercury-News*, 1 October 1970.

<sup>3</sup> *San Jose Mercury-News*, 5 October 1966.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 September 1967.

<sup>5</sup> On the Chicano movement, see Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power* (New York, 1989); Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, 1989); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin, 1995); Juan Gómez-Quirón, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque, 1990), 101-53; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Community, Patriarchy and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality," *American Quarterly* 45 (March 1993): 44-72.

mestizo and Indian people of the Southwest. The San Jose fiesta “naturally glorified, in the Anglo tradition, the Spanish conquest of the native Indian and his civilization along with the vicious exploitation of the mestizo (Mexican) by the Spaniard,” wrote one Chicano commentator. Chicano college students and Vietnam veterans opposed the celebration of San Jose’s Spanish past as a cynical attempt by city officials to stimulate downtown business.<sup>6</sup>

Chicano opposition to the fiesta reflected criticism of what is termed the “Spanish myth.” Historically, Anglos used the myth to obscure the Mexican heritage of the Southwest. The myth originated in the 1890s, as southwestern urban boosters, like Los Angeles journalist Charles Fletcher Lummis, celebrated the Spanish colonial era to provide the region with a romantic history appealing to tourists and real estate developers. The myth essentially praised the Spanish who explored, conquered, and settled in what became the southwestern United States.<sup>7</sup>

Anglo enthusiasm for things Spanish encouraged some Mexicans to claim Spanish ancestry to avoid Anglo discrimination.<sup>8</sup> Chicanos in the late 1960s criticized these Spanish Americans for denying their Indian heritage. Academics have generally accepted that the Spanish myth and the Spanish American identity harmed the Mexican community. Historian David G. Gutiérrez argues that “existing historical evidence demonstrates that only a tiny fraction of the original Hispanic colonists of the Southwest could legitimately claim pure Spanish descent, the overwhelming majority being descended from Mexico’s vast mestizo population.”<sup>9</sup> By claiming to be Spanish, many mestizos separated themselves from the Mexican majority.

Chicanos refuted the Spanish myth during the late 1960s. They researched and wrote about the indigenous and mestizo cultures that resisted Spanish and American colonization. They argued that Mexicans needed to be proud of their Mexican

<sup>6</sup> “Fiesta de Las Rosas: An Analysis,” *La Palabra* 1 (November 1969): 10–1; *San Jose Mercury-News*, 19 April 1969, 16 May 1969.

<sup>7</sup> On the Spanish myth, see Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1948; second edition, New York, 1968), 35–47; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, 1992), 335–60, and “The Spanish Legacy in North America and the Historical Imagination,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (February 1992): 5–24; Miguel Patricio Servin, “California’s Hispanic Heritage: A View into the Spanish Myth,” in *Spain’s Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540–1821*, ed. David Weber (Albuquerque, 1979), 117–33; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley, 1966), 277–96. On Lummis, see Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York, 1985), 81–3.

<sup>8</sup> See Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Unraveling America’s Hispanic Past: Internal Stratification and Class Boundaries,” *Aztlán* 17 (Spring 1986): 91; Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley, 1994), 73. On Spanish Americans, see Alvar W. Carlson, *The Spanish-American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico’s Río Arriba* (Baltimore, 1990); Richard L. Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland* (Norman, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> See David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, 1995), 33.

heritage and not hide behind a Spanish identity. They regarded any Mexican Americans who praised the role of the Spanish in the region as sell outs or assimilationists who denied their true Mexican (or mestizo) heritage.<sup>10</sup>

However, some Mexican Americans who praised the Spanish did not wish to deny their Mexican heritage. Some Mexican American leaders celebrated the Spanish history of the Southwest in support of a pan-Latino identity that valued Mexican and Spanish culture and history. They used the myth, but altered it to include Mexican history and culture in order to benefit the Mexican community.

As historian George J. Sánchez recently noted, Mexican identities were not a "fixed set of customs surviving from life in Mexico but rather a collective identity that emerged from daily experience in the United States."<sup>11</sup> Though some Mexicans embraced Spanish identity, Mexican identity was also an invention since Mexico was a diverse society of cities, communal farms (*ejidos*), and Indians, peasants, and Europeans with many indigenous languages. Mexican leaders and the Mexican consulate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tried to forge a sense of *Mexicanidad* among the diverse populations of Mexico and the many immigrants to the United States. This meant creating or strengthening Mexican patriotism among many who identified with a village or pueblo. Thus, many immigrants viewed themselves as Mexicans only after taking Mexican history and Spanish-language classes sponsored by the Mexican consulate in the United States. They became Mexican Americans after exposure to the influence of Anglo Americanizers.<sup>12</sup>

While the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles encouraged Mexicans to identify with Mexico, some Mexican American leaders advocated a broader pan-Latino perspective.<sup>13</sup> After World War II, a new Mexican American middle class increasingly

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<sup>10</sup> See Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 49; John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque, 1984), 141; Phillip B. Gonzales, "The Political Construction of Latino Nomenclatures in Twentieth-Century New Mexico," *Journal of the Southwest* 35 (Summer 1993): 173.

<sup>11</sup> George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1993), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 29–30. See also David Frye, *Indians into Mexicans: History and Identity in a Mexican Town* (Austin, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> On Latinismo, see Laurie Kay Sommers, "Inventing Latinismo: The Creation of 'Hispanic' Panethnicity in the United States," *Journal of American Folklore* 104 (Winter 1991): 32–53; Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame, 1985). For a comparison, see Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, 1992). Asian American panethnicity attempted to unite diverse groups of Asians in the defense of the whole Asian community. Pan-Asian movement advocates used American misidentification of Asians as a reason for unifying. Latino panethnicity, however, was slightly different. It too insisted that Latino groups unite. However, it was also directed toward Anglos who, instead of lumping all Latinos together, tended to favor Spaniards over Mexicans. Thus, Latino panethnicity refuted the Anglo tendency to separate Spaniards and Mexicans, as well as the tendency of Latinos to maintain distinct national identities.

referred to Spain's colonial role in the Southwest, the Catholic church and missions, the Spanish language, and *mestizaje* (racial/cultural mixing) as shared elements of a Latino culture. They did so to unify those in the Southwest who identified themselves as Mexican Americans, Mexicanos, Spaniards, Hispanos (descendants of Spaniards), and Canary Islanders (also Spanish), native born and immigrant.

These Mexican American middle-class leaders argued that Mexicans should identify not just with Mexico, but also with other Latinos living in the United States. This broader ethnic identity promoted partial assimilation. Immigrants would add to their national identity a new affiliation with the many Latino nationalities living within the United States. A pan-Latino identity required that immigrants change, but since it also encouraged the maintenance of traditions shared by Latinos—particularly language, religion, and ethnic pride—it was only a partial assimilation.<sup>14</sup>

The early evidence of a pan-Latino identity clearly existed in organizational nomenclature. In 1894, a Tucson mutual aid society chose the name *Alianza Hispano Americana* to reflect its Mexican and Spanish immigrant organizers and the need for an alliance between Mexicans and Spaniards in the Southwest.<sup>15</sup> The major Mexican American civil rights organization was called the League of United Latin American Citizens, a name chosen precisely to encourage unity among groups of various national origins. An earlier group called Sons of America, stated its intent to serve “citizens of the United States of Mexican or Spanish extraction.”<sup>16</sup>

Another civil rights organization that evidenced Latinismo was *El Congreso*, founded in 1938 by Guatemalan immigrant Luisa Moreno. Moreno worked in New York's garment district, where she associated with Puerto Rican socialists. She later organized Italian and Cuban workers in Florida and Mexican Americans in San Antonio and Los Angeles. *El Congreso's* stated purpose was to encourage the trade union movement among the “Mexican and Spanish-Speaking people.” *El Congreso* labor-leader Josefina Fierro de Bright noted that “for the first time Mexican and Spanish American people have gathered together for unified action against the abuses of discrimination and poverty which have embittered and paralyzed them for so many years.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Unlike in the United States, where I argue Latinismo promoted assimilation of American values, Latin American intellectuals supported Latino unity in opposition to United States economic and cultural imperialism in the hemisphere. See Sommers, “Inventing Latinismo,” 36.

<sup>15</sup> See Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 108 and Jose Amaro Hernandez, *Mutual Aid for Survival: The Case of the Mexican American* (Malabar, FL, 1983), 34. Hernandez, in searching Chicano history, notes the rise of *Alianza Hispano Americana*, a mutual aid society formed in 1894. However, one of its founders, Pedro C. Pellon, was a Spaniard who helped establish numerous chapters of the alliance in the Southwest.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 247 and Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans* (New Haven, 1989), 153.

The pan-Latino nature of these organizations contested Anglo attempts to divide the Spanish-speaking population in the Southwest. Anglos credited Spaniards with the founding of southwestern cities and ignored the contributions of Mexicans. Anglos understood Spaniards to be white and native to the region, while denigrating Mexicans as non-white immigrants. Anglos identified Mexicans as racially mixed to justify exploitation, segregation, and the appropriation of Mexican land.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the pan-Latino organizations insisted on the equality of all Latino groups and cultures.

The Spanish myth increasingly had negative consequences for Mexicans after World War II, as tourism generated as much wealth as mining, railroads, and agriculture in the West. Anglo urban elites who promoted and created the Spanish myth received access to jobs and influence over urban development, while Mexicans garnered few benefits from the tourist trade.<sup>19</sup>

Mexican Americans resisted Anglo efforts to denigrate their culture and history by celebrating Mexican holidays like 5 de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day. But some understood that if they only acknowledged Mexican holidays they would exclude all other Latinos who did not identify themselves as Mexican. A narrow nationalist Mexican identity also reinforced the Anglo stereotype of Mexicans as foreigners. Some Mexican American leaders hoped to unite the Latino population by suggesting instead that all Latinos living in the United States had a common culture and common goals.

Political scientist Susan Herbst notes that politically marginal groups must use creative means to influence mainstream discourse. The pro-choice movement, for instance, used the image of the wire clothes-hanger to raise awareness about the dangers to women of outlawing abortion. Through symbols and rituals, groups can "broadcast the ideas and goals of a community beyond the boundaries of that community."<sup>20</sup> Some Mexican American leaders used the symbols of the Spanish myth—particularly the missions, pueblos, and presidios—to unify a diverse Latino population and to educate Anglos about the Hispanic heritage of southwestern cities.

Historian John Bodnar argues that public memory is contested. There is an "official" history promoted by elites interested in national unity and patriotism, and a "vernacular" history created by "ordinary people" who stress their group's distinct experiences. Sometimes these views clash. After World War II, Mexican American leaders belonged to an ethnic middle class that stressed the importance of "loyalty to larger political structures." They also endeavored to increase their group's influence in

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<sup>18</sup> See Arnolfo De León, *They Called them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900* (Austin, 1983) and Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, 45–74.

<sup>19</sup> Holly Beachley Brear, *Inherit the Alamo: Myth and Ritual at an American Shrine* (Austin, 1995), 15 and Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson, 1993), 84.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Herbst, *Politics at the Margin: Historical Studies of Public Expression Outside the Mainstream* (New York, 1994), 24.

urban affairs. They embraced, yet altered, the Spanish myth to create a broader Latino identity that united a diverse group for greater political power.<sup>21</sup>

Recently, David Gutiérrez, in his book *Walls and Mirrors*, argued that immigration from Mexico constantly pushed and pulled Mexican Americans in two directions: on the one hand, it affirmed their Mexican identity, on the other, it confirmed how Americanized they had become in relation to the newcomers.<sup>22</sup> While immigration was central to the creation of a Mexican American identity, the pan-Latino identity grew from conditions related to southwestern urbanization. The growth of southwestern cities corresponded with the rise of middle-class Mexican American leaders who were proud of these cities. Since many were military men, they identified with the historic dependence of these cities on the Spanish, Mexican, and United States militaries.

Within these cities, Mexicans also encountered other Latino groups. Sometimes these were direct encounters with Spaniards and Canary Islanders. Urban popular culture in the form of the Spanish-language newspaper, radio, records, and the cinema exposed Mexican Americans to the national activities of Latino celebrities living in the United States.

Finally, Mexican Americans confronted the Spanish myth in southwestern cities in the form of old churches, plazas, mission architecture, and numerous festivals and galas that celebrated the Spanish era. The Spanish myth raised the question of how the Mexican community should react to the Spanish history of the cities. While some participated in events as Spaniards, others, like the Chicanos, rejected anything to do with the Spanish and embraced a Mexican identity that emphasized Native American roots. Still others straddled both worlds, adding a pan-Latino identity to their Mexican-American consciousness.

After World War II, many Mexican Americans understood their history in relation to urbanization primarily because western cities grew rapidly. The urbanization of the Mexican American population, according to one scholar, was "one of the dramatic population movements of modern times."<sup>23</sup> In Southern California, 80 percent of Mexican Americans resided in cities by 1960.<sup>24</sup> Besides rural to urban migration, southwestern cities often annexed smaller neighboring towns incorporating Mexicans.<sup>25</sup>

In these cities some middle-class Mexican American leaders strategically linked

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<sup>21</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992), 14–5.

<sup>22</sup> See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 4–5.

<sup>23</sup> John E. Crow, *Mexican Americans in Contemporary Arizona: A Social and Demographic View* (San Francisco, 1975), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Fernando Penalosa, "The Changing Mexican-American in Southern California," in *The Changing Mexican-American*, ed. Rudolph Gómez (El Paso, 1972), 144–45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 143; Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin, 1983), 79; Joseph A. Rodríguez, "Ethnicity and the Horizontal City: Mexican Americans and the Chicano Movement in San Jose, California," *Journal of Urban History* 21 (July 1995): 597–621.



the region's Spanish and Mexican history to create a pan-Latino identity. After the war, Mexican-American intellectuals like George I. Sánchez and Ignacio L. López pointed to the many similarities and continuities of Spanish-Mexican culture in the modern Southwest, refuting the view that Spanish culture, though significant, only existed in the distant past, and that Mexican culture was less important or praiseworthy. They insisted that the presence of Mexican Americans indicated the long and powerful legacy of the initial Spanish and Mexican settlers, and they pointed to the wide range of Hispanic contributions to southwestern history, economy, religion, language, folklore, and popular culture.

Pride in the Spanish language unified the diverse Latino community. Support for Spanish instruction and bilingualism was a central component of the pan-Latino identity. After World War II, University of Texas professor George I. Sánchez criticized Anglo teachers who lacked respect for the Spanish language and who prohibited its use in the classroom. He wrote of having witnessed children who would "cringe and crouch, physically and emotionally, because the language of the home was taboo in school and the language of school was nonfunctional at home." He concluded that "here is the genesis of the pachuco, the delinquent."<sup>26</sup>

The cultivation of bilingualism in schools, he noted, would benefit the nation, not just the Mexican American population. "We extol the virtues of foreign languages in the development and the achievements of the educated man. Yet in the Southwest, one of the world's great languages is suppressed. It does not make sense," Sánchez noted with exasperation.<sup>27</sup>

Though national self-interest promoted bilingualism, Sánchez also used Spanish history to support the maintenance of Spanish. He referred positively to the Spanish. Since Spanish speakers had resided in the Southwest since the sixteenth century, Mexicans had a right to claim Spanish as one of their primary languages.

Sánchez praised the early Spanish explorers and noted the many connections linking Spaniards and Mexicans. Mexicans, he said, "derive much of [their] cultural substance from Spanish, a native 'foreign' language, a language bequeathed by Cabeza de Vaca, de Niza, Serra, Zavala, and a host of others." Sánchez insisted that Anglos acknowledge that "Spanish-Mexican" culture "undergirds the culture of the Southwest."<sup>28</sup>

Yet Sánchez did not accept the Spanish myth that denigrated Mexican culture. Sánchez argued that Spanish and Mexican cultures were equally estimable because both were fusions. While Anglos denigrated Mexican Spanish and praised the Castilian of Spain, Sánchez noted that the Spanish spoken in Spain was no more pure than the Spanish spoken by Mexicans in the Southwest in the twentieth century. How could it

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<sup>26</sup> George I. Sánchez, "History, Culture, and Education," in *La Raza: Forgotten Americans*, ed. Julian Samora (Notre Dame, 1966), 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

be, when, he noted, "Spain has been a cultural crossroads from the earliest days of recorded history" and therefore the Spanish represented the result of Phoenician, early Greek, and Carthaginian influences—with extensive Arab contributions—so that "today there are 4000 words in Spanish that are not Latin but Arabic."<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Sánchez noted that in the Americas, the Spanish encountered indigenous groups whose vocabulary enriched their own. He then criticized those "otherwise competent scholars" who denigrated so-called "'border Spanish.'" Rather than encouraging students to develop their bilingual skills, the instructors disregarded the student's Spanish-speaking ability and "in their ignorance" referred to it as "'Mexican' distinguishing it from Spanish to avoid dignifying it."<sup>30</sup>

Sánchez celebrated the hybridity of Spanish culture, and insisted that the borrowing of elements from many diverse groups had made Spanish a rich language. Thus, Mexican culture was no less significant or unworthy because of its hybridity. Numerous Hispanos in New Mexico claimed direct descent from white Spaniards, refusing to acknowledge their racial mixture. Sánchez's position suggested that all Latinos, including Mexicans and Spaniards, no matter what racial background, were mixed, and questioned the whole notion of Spanish culture as pure compared to Mexican *mestizaje*.

Ignacio L. López, editor of the predominantly Spanish language weekly *El Espectador* published in the city of Pomona, east of Los Angeles, also referred positively to the Spanish past and present to support Latinismo. He worked to help the Mexican community recognize its links to the Spanish and other Spanish speakers of the region and throughout the United States. He did so not to denigrate Mexican culture or to accommodate Anglo views, but to encourage political activism among Latinos in support of expanded civil rights.

A pan-Latino consciousness, he hoped, would produce a unified and politically formidable Latino community. Latinismo also dovetailed with his business interests. As a publisher, López was interested in selling his paper to all Latinos, not just to Mexicans. He announced in 1947 that *El Espectador* was dedicated to serving "all Americans who speak Spanish."<sup>31</sup> That the paper also published some articles and advertisements in English indicated López was attempting to reach all Latinos, from recent immigrant to third generation descendent.

The wide variety of ethnic identities present in Southern California cities challenged any pan-Latino consciousness. One historian noted that Pomona included numerous "descendants of the pioneer Spanish-speaking families."<sup>32</sup> The identities in

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 2–3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4, 14.

<sup>31</sup> *El Espectador*, 12 December 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Fernando Penalosa, *Class Consciousness and Social Mobility in a Mexican American Community* (San Francisco, 1971), 40.

the area included Mexican immigrants or Mexicanos, Mexican Americans, Spanish Americans, and Hispanos, along with Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South and Central Americans.

This diversity of identities occasionally divided the Mexican community. In 1956, for example, local organizers canceled plans for a 5 de Mayo celebration following disagreements over whether to limit membership on patriotic committees to those who maintained their Mexican citizenship. Some Mexican Americans questioned whether the community should honor a "foreign" holiday. They supported instead renaming the celebration the Fiesta de San Jose based on the fact Pomona and nearby communities were located in the area encompassing Rancho San Jose.<sup>33</sup>

To overcome such divisions, López emphasized the many historical and cultural ties linking Latino groups. He did not equate Hispanic culture with white, Spanish, or European racial heritage. He, in fact, celebrated Mexican mestizaje. He praised the contributions of Spaniards and Indians to Mexican culture when he called on Pomona's Mexicans to participate in Columbus Day (*Día de la Raza* or Day of the Race) festivities to acknowledge the importance of the Spanish conquest for racial mixing:

The Spanish navigators in the middle ages[sic] discovered the world civilizations of the American continent. Our Mexican community will never forget that date because we know what it signified for our civilization and culture that we possess today. We know that day began the rise of a race that drew from the other races of the land, creating a race of strength, youth, and goodness. Without a doubt the Mexican public has to be ready to participate in the Day of the Races. We must share with everyone on this day our wealth of cultural information.<sup>34</sup>

López connected all Latinos by emphasizing the positive attributes of Spanish and Indian history. Thus, for López, talking about the Spanish conquest was a way to create Latino unity. But he also realized that Mexicans needed to instruct Anglos about Hispanic history, so that the Spanish myth did not distort the equally important Mexican role in southwestern history.

In the context of Susan Herbst's analysis of marginal group political activities, the many Southern California festivals became a form of ritualized activity that acknowledged national distinctions while simultaneously promoting Latino unity. The diversity of Hispanic groups in Southern California meant cultural festivals occurred frequently. Many of these events included positive references to both Spanish and Indian cultures. One celebration devoted to Mexican Independence Day included a

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<sup>33</sup> *El Espectador*, 6 April 1956. In 1936, López had helped put together a four-day celebration marking the centennial of Rancho San Jose. See Gloria Ricci Lothrop, *Pomona: A Centennial History* (Northridge, CA, 1988).

<sup>34</sup> *El Espectador*, 3 October 1947.

play featuring “the fiesta highlights of old Mexico,” and the dances and music of “Spanish and Indian origins.”<sup>35</sup>

*El Espectador*’s coverage of Hollywood gossip also promoted a pan-Latino consciousness. Residing near the heart of the United States film industry, Pomona’s Latinos wanted detailed news of movie celebrities. *El Espectador* covered the Mexican American favorites such as Dolores Del Río, Lupe Velez, and Ramón Novarro, but also included information about other Latin American film stars popular in the community. A story in 1947 described María Antonieta Pons as “the incomparable Cuban actress” who starred in many “Mexican and Cuban films.” The story noted her trip to New York and then to Spain, a country in which she had not previously acted, and concluded that Pons was well-known in Spain because of her international reputation for dancing the rumba.<sup>36</sup> The Mexican American community also idolized Cuban stars Desi Arnaz and César Romero. When César Romero made a personal appearance at a church festival in Pomona, he received praise for speaking “perfect Spanish.”<sup>37</sup>

López was proud of his Mexican heritage, yet he understood that an exclusive national identity undercut Latino unity. Like many in the Mexican American middle class, López felt strong national identities discouraged naturalization and impeded Latino political power. López was patriotic; he believed that American freedoms mandated that Mexicans naturalize and vote.

López criticized corruption within the Mexican government to encourage naturalization and greater appreciation for American democracy. He disdainfully called Mexico a “directed democracy,” and denounced the Mexican consulate for failure to meet the needs of the Mexican migrant worker.<sup>38</sup> López castigated those in the community who did not vote; he felt not voting made it appear that they were aliens rather than United States citizens.<sup>39</sup> Since the United States constitution provided the opportunity for citizens to vote, he believed they were obliged to participate in the electoral process. He called the election of Mexican American Edward Roybal to the Los Angeles city council in 1949 a “victory for the community—and of the ideas and principles of an abundant democracy.”<sup>40</sup>

López’s disagreement with the leadership of the California-based Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) demonstrated his support for a pan-Latino identity. He joined MAPA, formed in April of 1959, to help promote the election of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1947.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 21 November 1947. Cuban-born actress María Antonieta Pons appeared in both Mexican and Cuban films.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 28 August 1959.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 14 February 1958, 30 May 1958.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 19 October 1956.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 31 April 1951.

Mexican American candidates to California office.<sup>41</sup> But he left the organization because he disagreed with its Mexican American exclusivity, which he felt would alienate “thousands of Spanish-speaking Americans who could have added strength to its ranks.”<sup>42</sup> López suggested using the pan-Latino term “Hispano Americanos” to underscore the “unity of the Americans whose common heritage is the Hispanic culture.”<sup>43</sup>

López criticized MAPA because he felt that the term “Mexican American” implied resistance to assimilation. He thought that since the United States did not recognize dual citizenship “no one [could] be Mexican and an American citizen at the same time,” and “the use of a hyphenated name [would go] against the best tradition of the true image of America: the nation of immigrants, who [had] absorbed America and [had] been absorbed by it.” But he had no problem with the term “Hispano Americano” since Hispanics needed “an organization with a broad base and liberally oriented, to lead the way towards a more aggressive and effective political nation.”<sup>44</sup> López did not feel these ideas were contradictory. Becoming Latino meant immigrants would augment their national identities by affiliating with all Americans of Hispanic descent. They would assimilate partially, yet maintain their ethnic traditions.

By using the term Hispano Americanos, López connected all Latinos through Spanish culture and the history of the Spanish in the Americas. Yet like Sánchez, López also supported mestizaje. Sánchez indicated that both Mexican and Spanish cultures, infused with Arab and Indian influences, were hybrids. López celebrated Día de la Raza. Neither saw any conflict in viewing favorably both Spanish and Indian cultures. In the forceful words of another contemporary, Mexican Americans were infused with the blood of “adventurous Castelian [sic] noblemen, the whitest blood in the world, and the blood of the cultured Aztecs and the fierce Apaches, the reddest blood in the world.”<sup>45</sup> This positive view of Spanish and Native culture was the basis for the pan-Latino identity.

Mexican American leaders who promoted Latinismo relied on their understanding of southwestern history and culture. In addition, others outside the Mexican American community promoted a pan-Latino identity. During the 1960s, southwestern urban boosters once again used history to promote downtown growth. Many downtowns were declining due to the rise of competitive suburbs. In response, Anglos used the Spanish myth to draw outsiders back to the city. Only this time, they highlighted both the Spanish and Mexican cultures of their cities.

By the 1960s, accelerated growth had erased most evidence of the frontier origins of southwestern cities. The suburban construction of freeways, housing developments,

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<sup>41</sup> Gómez-Quíñones, *Chicano Politics*, 67–8.

<sup>42</sup> *El Espectador*, 13 May 1960.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 April 1960.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1960.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Benjamin Márquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin, 1993), 31.

and strip malls produced growing criticism of western urbanization. Many residents felt the cities had lost their distinctive southwestern character. A resident complained that Phoenix was becoming “like those ‘Eastern cities’ . . . homogenized into a dispiriting sameness. The franchise food shops, the gas stations, the ranch houses to say nothing of the movies and the television programs—are identical from coast to coast.”<sup>46</sup> In Albuquerque, “new houses go up in batches of 50 to 300 at a time and transform barren mesas before you get back from lunch.”<sup>47</sup>

Urban sprawl not only produced monotonous landscapes, but also drew visitors and businesses away from older downtowns as residents increasingly lived, shopped, and worked in new “edge cities.” In Albuquerque, “while downtown stirred with some residential life during the day, by night it lay deserted, utterly bereft of the noisy communal activity that had enlivened its streets in times past.”<sup>48</sup> Downtown Phoenix, by the 1960s, had become “a mercantile graveyard, and in many ways a slum” as the area “suffered perhaps the worst decline in land use and commercial activity of any major American city.”<sup>49</sup>

Other residents complained that since one southwestern city mirrored another, there existed no sense of community. High rates of residential mobility and dependence on the automobile weakened social ties. In San Diego, planners criticized “development characterized by formless, noncontiguous and unaesthetic land utilization, excessive utility, service, and social costs, and the absence of community identity.”<sup>50</sup> Planners of San Diego’s Centre City endeavored to build “a healthy, dynamic administrative and cultural heart which [would] promote social identity and economic soundness in the future physical development of this rapidly emerging metropolitan complex.”<sup>51</sup>

To compete against the contemporary architecture in the new suburbs, urban planners developed ways to renovate older structures for new uses. They also promoted neighborhood and ethnic festivals in hopes of drawing suburban shoppers and tourists back into the city to enjoy urban density and diversity.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, they used the

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in James E. Buchanan, ed. *Phoenix: A Chronological and Documentary History, 1865–1976* (New York, 1978), 134–35. See also Michael F. Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest* (Tucson, 1995), 70–85.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Marc Simmons, *Albuquerque: A Narrative History* (Albuquerque, 1982), 372. See also Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall*, 142–43.

<sup>48</sup> Simmons, *Albuquerque*, 373–74.

<sup>49</sup> Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson, 1989), 196.

<sup>50</sup> Citizens’ Advisory Committee on the General Plan, *The General Plan for San Diego—1985* (San Diego, 1965), 61.

<sup>51</sup> San Diego (CA) City Planning Commission, *Biennial Report, 1959–1960 and 1960–1961* (San Diego, 1961), 6–7.

<sup>52</sup> For a national perspective, see Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940–1985* (Baltimore, 1990), 241, 283.

Spanish myth to produce a stronger sense of community and to provide a theme around which to develop more compact and unified downtown districts.

However, the renewed interest in the Spanish myth in the 1960s differed from the interest in the early 1900s. Increasingly, city leaders launched fairs and festivals that pointedly included Mexican cultural exhibits. This occurred for several reasons. First, the Mexican population had, by the 1960s, become an obvious presence in all southwestern cities, and Anglos realized the many economic benefits of appealing to these consumers. Second, some cities wanted to strengthen already important and growing economic connections across the border. Third, increased immigration stimulated new interest in Mexico, and Mexican native culture as an alternative to U. S. materialism. Finally, Mexican Americans demanded some input into the cultural activities their taxes supported. They initiated the call for the celebration of their city's Hispanic roots.<sup>53</sup>

In 1969, planners in San Diego prepared for the 200-year celebration of the first California mission. Creating a community identity that would bring residents together was important to the planners. While the Chamber of Commerce was the festival's initial supporter, soon the "citizenry responded" and "leadership came from every part of the community," and included labor officials, managers, military personnel, clerics, and educators.<sup>54</sup>

Though the event celebrated the establishment of a Spanish mission, the festival included art displays, dances, and other exhibits depicting Mexican culture. Organizers presented Mexican culture as indicating a more humane lifestyle supportive of community and family traditions. Mexican folk culture was viewed as authentic—in contrast to overly commercialized American culture. A San Diego festival brochure noted that in Mexico "numerous religious or civic fiestas take place during the entire year. Each community has a fiesta for its patron saint or commemorates an important event from its past."<sup>55</sup> The closeness of the Mexican community was contrasted to the lack of community in the suburbanizing Southwest, where mobility weakened a sense of neighborliness.

Similarly, commentators contrasted the mass produced United States consumer goods with Mexican folk art. "The fairs in Mexico have a plus that is lacking in the United States. This is the ancient heritage of native artistry. The peasants working in the fields may be and likely are experts at weaving, basketry, leather working, and wood carving."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Citizens' Advisory Committee on the General Plan, *The General Plan for San Diego*—1985, 104. See also Brear, *Inherit the Alamo*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> San Diego 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Inc., *Mexican Fiesta 200* (San Diego, 1969), n.p.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

This understanding of Mexican culture grew out of stereotypical notions of Mexico's village traditions.<sup>57</sup> One commentator noted that "virtually every Mexican is an artist in some form of creative work, be it glass blowing, leather tooling, wood carving, copper-smithing, pottery, jewelry making, iron forging, paper-mache figures or painting." Another observer stated that "it is as natural for a Mexican to be skilled in the creation of hand-made articles as it is for an American to be able to drive a car."<sup>58</sup>

American enthusiasm for Mexican art reflected the search by many Americans for an authentic cultural experience. The stereotype of Mexican culture as traditional or exotic spawned numerous fairs and festivals that included examples of Mexican folk life.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the tendency to present peasant and Indian artifacts as Mexican culture, these celebrations also included less stereotypical examples of Mexican culture, including the sophisticated work of modern Mexican painters. Moreover, more cities began officially celebrating Mexican national holidays. Thus, after World War II, southwestern cities were increasingly praising both Mexican and Spanish cultural influences. By recognizing the cities' Spanish and Mexican heritages, these cities were, in effect, promoting a pan-Latino identity; the Mexican American leaders who advocated Latinismo found that their cities supported their efforts.

In San Jose, Luis Juárez's Latinismo was reflected in the city's La Fiesta de las Rosas. This festival, which occurred in 1969, portrayed, in a positive manner, both Spanish and Mexican cultures. Anglo and Mexican American leaders believed that the city was growing so rapidly that it was losing any sense of a distinct history. By the mid-1960s, they hoped San Jose could revive its "flagging community spirit and establish a solid identity at the same time by bringing back the gala pageantry of the old Fiesta de las Rosas."<sup>60</sup>

Luis Juárez was proud of San Jose's rise, yet sensitive to mounting criticism of the city as an overgrown suburb lacking any authentic culture or personality. He lamented the fact that there was no life in downtown San Jose. The city's growth seemed to eliminate feelings of community. "Many citizens of San Jose have long sought to give our community the identity it needs to set it apart from other Western cities and to generate pride and a feeling of belonging among its old and new residents."<sup>61</sup>

San Jose leaders—Mexican and Anglo—exhibited a growing attention to Latinismo. La Fiesta de las Rosas included an exhibition by modern Mexican artists

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<sup>57</sup> On the appeal of Mexican culture, see Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1992), 128–29.

<sup>58</sup> San Diego 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Inc., *Mexican Fiesta 200*.

<sup>59</sup> This American view of Mexicans goes back to the 1930s. See Stuart Chase, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* (New York, 1931).

<sup>60</sup> *San Jose Mercury-News*, 5 October 1966.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 September 1967.



along with traditional Mexican dancing. The fiesta preceded Mexican Week, held in honor of Mexican Independence Day. The city, with the assistance of the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana*, transformed the central plaza into “another Olvera Street” with Mexican food concessions, Mexican curios, and folk music. The festivities concluded with a Mexican Parade and the Queen’s Ball.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Anglo and Mexican American officials in San Jose celebrated the city’s Spanish and Mexican heritages. Mexican American leaders encouraged further efforts to recognize the Hispanic past of the city. Mexican Americans urged San Jose city planners to “utilize the city’s rich Hispanic heritage” in its redevelopment plans, including Spanish architecture and the construction of a Mexican public market.<sup>63</sup>

By sponsoring events that linked Mexican and Spanish culture, southwestern urban boosters increasingly utilized a pan-Latino perspective that corresponded with the identity of many middle-class Mexican Americans. The Anglo and Mexican American city leaders agreed by the 1960s that a broad Latino image would appeal to more residents than would a narrow Spanish perspective. This pan-Latino perspective engendered criticism from Chicanos who identified with the victims of the Spanish conquest.

Both Anglo and Mexican American enthusiasm for the pan-Latino celebrations were partly motivated by the urge to celebrate the significant military presence within the cities. Recounting the history of Spanish and Mexican influences meant celebrating both nation’s military efforts in the region. Mexican Americans found support for their *Latinismo* in the cities’ military origins, which reflected their own involvement with the United States military.

Many of these celebrations incorporated the United States military—a significant presence throughout the Southwest. During the Spanish and Mexican periods, many settlements had begun as military outposts. The military’s role in these cities expanded after the Anglo conquest. After World War II, the federal government increased investment throughout the region in bases, research facilities, airports, troop centers, and veterans hospitals. City politicians and industrialists lobbied for defense dollars and feted military personnel during patriotic celebrations.<sup>64</sup>

Many Mexican Americans had served in the military during World War II and the Korean War. They readily identified with the recognition of the military in these urban celebrations.<sup>65</sup> Between 375,000 and 500,000 Mexican Americans served in

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> See Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910–1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York, 1992); Abbott, *Metropolitan Frontier*, 59–60; John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley, 1992), 19–20.

<sup>65</sup> See Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Lincoln, 1985), 107–27 and Martin J. Schiesl, “Airplanes to Aerospace: Defense Spending and Economic Growth in the Los Angeles Region, 1945–1960,” in *The Martial Metropolis: U. S. Cities in War and Peace*, ed. Roger W. Lotchin (New York, 1984), 135–50.

World War II.<sup>66</sup> Some of these veterans, like Juárez, attended college on G. I. bills and purchased homes with Veterans Administration loans. After the war, many continued to work on military bases.<sup>67</sup> Despite numerous incidents of discrimination, Mexican Americans viewed the United States military as having provided them with the opportunity to refute racial stereotypes and to prove their abilities as leaders.<sup>68</sup>

Mexican American experiences in the armed forces strengthened a sense of Latino identity and ties to southwestern cities. In 1947, Mexican Americans in Corpus Christi, Texas, formed the American G. I. Forum, a civil rights group organized to fight discrimination faced by *veteranos*. In these urban areas, G. I. Forum members ran for public office, owned businesses, published magazines and newspapers, and headed civic commissions that looked into problems of discrimination.<sup>69</sup>

Two well-known Mexican American politicians demonstrated the link between the rise of the Mexican American middle class, the growth of southwestern cities, and the United States military. Dennis Chávez from New Mexico, a United States Senator from 1935–1962, championed the implementation of the Fair Employment Practices Commission, which monitored defense hiring during World War II.<sup>70</sup> After the war, Chávez sat on the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations and helped ensure that New Mexico benefited from atomic research and development funding. As chairman of the committee, he was instrumental in garnering for New Mexico funds to support the White Sands Proving Grounds, Holloman Air Force Base and Development Center, and Sandia Base.<sup>71</sup>

Fellow New Mexican Joseph Montoya served in the House of Representatives from 1957–1964, where he sat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, a subcommittee on energy, space and defense, and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.<sup>72</sup> Chávez and Montoya helped ensure the rapid post-war growth of Albuquerque, which eventually housed 75 separate federal agencies, bringing it the nickname, “Little Washington.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (1972; 2d ed., New York, 1981), 323.

<sup>67</sup> See Martha Menchaca, *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California* (Austin, 1995), 103 and Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 264–65.

<sup>68</sup> See Raul Morín, *Among the Valiant: Mexican Americans in World War II and Korea* (Los Angeles, 1963) and Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans, American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (New York, 1993), 161.

<sup>69</sup> Carl Allsup, *The American G. I. Forum: Origins and Evolution* (Austin, 1982), 35. Veteran involvement in civic affairs in and around Pomona can be traced in *El Espectador*, 18 December 1956; 19 June 1959; 27 May 1960; 5 February 1960.

<sup>70</sup> Gómez-Quíñones, *Chicano Politics*, 39–46.

<sup>71</sup> Maurilio Vigil and Roy Lujan, “Parallels in the Career of Two Hispanic U. S. Senators,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 13 (Winter 1986): 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Gómez-Quíñones, *Chicano Politics*, 46.

<sup>73</sup> Simmons, *Albuquerque*, 373.

Despite their personal success, Mexican American politicians and community leaders realized that many problems confronted urban Mexicans. They especially denounced police brutality and discrimination in education, employment, and housing, and the displacement of barrio residents by urban redevelopment.<sup>74</sup> However, their positive view of the U. S. military led Mexican Americans to look upon cities favorably, in contrast to the views of the Chicano generation.

While Mexican Americans supported the military's presence in southwestern cities, Chicanos denounced the military, beginning with the original Spanish conquistadors who they equated with the American forces in Vietnam. The Chicanos were also critical of the displacement of poor Mexican Americans due to urban renewal, which targeted barrios.<sup>75</sup> In general, Chicanos viewed cities as demonstrating Spanish and American colonialism in the Southwest.

The major conflict of La Fiesta de las Rosas concerned the representation of San Jose's Spanish past. The city's fiesta committee spent public money on a commemorative medallion, featuring a Spanish missionary and a conquistador. Chicano activists sued to stop the use of public money for the medallion, which celebrated their "conquest and enslavement by the Spanish conquistadors."<sup>76</sup> The Chicanos staunchly opposed the participation of military personnel in the parade.<sup>77</sup> They blasted the Catholic church for receiving community money without providing enough social services in return.<sup>78</sup>

Anglo and Mexican American supporters of the fiesta responded by pointing to the presence of Mexican art.<sup>79</sup> However, the Chicanos protested not just the favorable image the fiesta presented of the Spanish in the founding of the city—the inclusion of a false Chicano history also angered them. The fiesta's pan-Latino perspective collapsed Mexican and Spanish history and culture. This merging of two traditions argued for the essential common history and culture of the oppressor and the oppressed.

Chicanos identified with the indigenous victims of the Spanish conquest. The fiesta placed Mexicans, or mestizos, side-by-side with the Spanish. The fiesta celebrated the Spanish conquest and failed to acknowledge those victimized by

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<sup>74</sup> See Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall*, 131–46. Logan demonstrates that Mexicans in Albuquerque resisted urban renewal which displaced some community members.

<sup>75</sup> Rodolfo F. Acuña, *A Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945–1975* (Los Angeles, 1984).

<sup>76</sup> City of San Jose Memorandum, "Report on Vasquez, et al vs. Fiesta de la Rosas, Action No. 221837," 25 August 1969, 1, file 8323, City Clerk's Office, San Jose, CA.

<sup>77</sup> *San Jose Mercury-News*, 19 April 1969.

<sup>78</sup> Chicanos in Santa Clara asserted that the Catholic Church owed the community \$350,000. They claimed while giving only \$50,000 for barrio services, it held \$500 million in real estate in the county. See *Catholic Voice*, 28 May 1969.

<sup>79</sup> See *Official Program, La Fiesta de las Rosas* (San Jose, 1969), 44, located in Fiesta de las Rosas file, San Jose Historical Museum, San Jose, CA.

Spanish colonialism. The inclusion of Mexican history and culture in the event served to represent Mexicans as partners in the conquest, rather than as the victims of that conquest, exactly reversing the Chicano historical perspective. Thus, the essential error of the fiesta for Chicanos was its pan-Latino perspective—which essentially linked Mexican and Spanish history and culture, making the victims the victimizers.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike the middle class, Chicanos associated cities with Spanish and American imperialism, oppression, and assimilation. Chicanos reconceptualized the Southwest as Aztlán, the original Aztec homeland, to argue that Mexicans were indigenous to the region, while Europeans (Spaniards as well as Anglos) were the newcomers.<sup>81</sup> Chicano mythology praised the communal relations present in rural society. “Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops, and not to the foreign Europeans. . . . With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, We Declare the Independence of our Mestizo Nation.”<sup>82</sup>

Even while they identified themselves as mestizos, Chicanos condemned their Spanish heritage and emphasized their indigenous culture. This strategy reversed that of the Californios and Hispanos who became Spaniards to cover mestizo roots.<sup>83</sup> By distancing themselves from the Spanish, the Chicanos had to ignore the large role mestizos played in the settlement of the missions, presidios, and pueblos, and therefore they rejected any Mexican participation in founding southwestern cities.

In contrast, Mexican Americans venerated southwestern cities. They saw the cities’ Spanish-Mexican heritage as the embodiment of a pan-Latino culture. Texas Representative Henry González believed that Mexican Americans had benefited from urbanization, and he attacked the Chicanos for criticizing it. “In San Antonio . . . the character and classification of employment patterns has changed radically. Thirty years ago, the majority of Mexican Americans were in semi-agricultural or rural categories. This has changed radically.”<sup>84</sup>

Even though the active period of the Chicano movement died down in the early 1970s, tensions over Latinismo remained alive. In San Antonio, conflict surrounding the Alamo as a historic site demonstrated the continued debate over identity in the Southwest. San Antonio was founded in the early 1700s as a Spanish outpost, settled by mestizos, Indians, and Spaniards, among them immigrants from the Canary Islands.

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<sup>80</sup> For an excellent discussion of similar historical debates, see Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994).

<sup>81</sup> See *San Jose Mercury-News*, 19 April 1969. On the name Aztlán, see Chávez, *The Lost Land*, 129–55.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán*, by Jack Forbes (Greenwich, CT, 1973), 174–77.

<sup>83</sup> See Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley, 1990).

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Tony Castro, *Chicano Power: The Emergence of Mexican America* (New York, 1974), 153.

The city was part of a string of forts and missions built under Spanish authority to guard the northern frontier. The Alamo included the presidio and the Mission San Antonio de Valero.

The Alamo has become a symbol for Spaniards, Tejanos, and Anglos. As the site of the martyred defenders of Texas in 1836, it has a contentious connection to the Texas rebellion. Seven of those who perished inside the Alamo were Tejanos fighting for the rebellion.<sup>85</sup>

San Antonio Mexican Americans always sought a more positive recognition of the Mexican role in the history of the Alamo and the city. They criticized the use of the Alamo to illustrate Anglo history while portraying the Mexicans as the enemy of the United States. Mexican Americans joined with Canary Islanders in pushing for greater recognition of Adina de Zavala, a Canary Islander, who, in the early 1900s, raised funds for the preservation of the Alamo.<sup>86</sup> They also called for greater recognition of contributions of Canary Islanders and Tejanos to building the city and the Alamo. Thus, Mexican Americans and Canary Islanders demonstrated a pan-Latino unity to ensure that the Alamo promoted a more positive account of the city's Latino population.<sup>87</sup> Canary Islanders and Mexican Americans maintained their distinct national identities while also exhibiting pan-Latino unity.

Not all Mexican Americans, however, supported Latinismo. Many found nothing to celebrate about the Alamo or the missions and therefore had no desire to make Mexicans part of the story.<sup>88</sup> They viewed the Alamo as a symbol of both Spanish and United States imperialism in the region. Their identity as Mexicans and mestizos, and their perspective on Spanish and Anglo imperialism, undercut a pan-Latino outlook.

The clash over representing the Alamo's history helps explain the riot during the parade in San Jose. Throughout the Southwest, both Chicanos and Mexican Americans shaped their identities in response to urbanization. Mexican Americans like Juárez, who were proud of their cities' growth, looked positively on the Spanish era and supported a pan-Latino identity. However, Chicanos insisted that these celebrations did not accurately represent their culture. Rather than assent to the Spanish history of

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<sup>85</sup> See David Weber, *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque, 1988), 144; Pauline R. Kibbe, *Latin Americans in Texas* (Albuquerque, 1946), 33. On San Antonio under Spain, see Jesús F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque, 1995).

<sup>86</sup> On Adina de Zavala, see her book *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions in and around San Antonio* (San Antonio, 1917) and García, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class*, 98.

<sup>87</sup> Zavala, *History and Legends of the Alamo*, 297–211; Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History* (1979; 4<sup>th</sup> ed., New York, 1991), 320, 326, 337, 369; Brear, *Inherit the Alamo*, 113–14.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Miguel De Oliver, "Historical Preservation and Identity: The Alamo and the Production of a Consumer Landscape," *Antipode* 28 (November 1996): 1–23 and Brear, *Inherit the Alamo*, 122.

southwestern cities, Chicanos identified with mestizo and Native American cultures. They constructed an identity around their opposition to the Spanish and Anglo urbanization of the Southwest and the Spanish myth.

The pan-Latino orientation of Sánchez, López, and Juárez certainly did not represent the view of all Mexican Americans or even all who were middle class. Yet scholars have overlooked the attempt by some Mexican Americans to create a pan-Latino identity linking Mexicans, Spaniards, and the many other Latino groups residing inside and outside the Southwest.

Mexican American leaders like Juárez, who viewed Spanish history positively, were not necessarily accommodationists or assimilationists. By using the Spanish myth, yet amending it to include Mexican history, they criticized Anglo historical interpretations of the origins of the communities by calling for recognition of Mexican contributions. Also, they represented themselves as the authenticators of the Hispanic heritage of their cities, thus increasing their influence over city-planning efforts.

Moreover, a pan-Latino identity fit their efforts to increase their community's political power. They believed that Latinos, immigrant and native born, needed to augment—but not jettison—national identities in order to unite around common goals. Thus, Latinismo supported both naturalization and the maintenance of the Spanish language. Much of the pan-Latino identity grew from Mexican American support and pride in the growth of their cities. Nevertheless, Latinismo also suggested that in order to be overcome, numerous problems needed united action from the Latino community. Chicanos held a much less favorable view of cities, and they reacted in opposition to any celebration by cities of Spanish history. The confrontation in San Jose stemmed from this clash over ethnic identity.

It is fashionable to argue that the decline of the nation-state is producing a new border culture. Experts now celebrate multiple identities, partial assimilation, and a diasporic perspective. But what is perceived as new is not new at all. In fact, the pan-Latino identity for years has offered an alternative to complete assimilation. Latinismo continues to give Latinos the opportunity to maintain an ethnic identity, even while joining the mainstream.<sup>89</sup>

Critics have responded to this border culture by calling for “English Only” laws. These laws are attempts to build levees to control the mainstream. Despite their efforts, the stream grows wider. Both Mexican Americans who supported a Latino identity and Chicanos who identified with working-class Mexicans and Indians, helped widen the channels.

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<sup>89</sup> See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands=La Frontera: The New Mestizaje* (San Francisco, 1987). David Hollinger criticizes those who predict the decline of the nation-state in *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York, 1995), 151–53. On assimilation as a social process, see Jean Bacon, *Life Lines: Community, Family, and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants* (New York, 1996).