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**CANCIONES DEL MOVIMIENTO CHICANO/SONGS OF THE CHICANO
MOVEMENT: THE IMPACT OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS ON
THE 1960s CHICANO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

by

MARISA B. MENDOZA

**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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**PROFESSOR JULIE LISS
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Introduction

“Bueno pues, Quihubo, como les va, Que lindo día para cantar, prometiendo justicia y libertad/Well, then, hello there! How’s it going? Promising justice and freedom.”¹ The song lyrics of *Quihubo Raza* express the beauty and power of singing. This beauty and power that songs such as *Quihubo Raza* evoke are critical aspects of the history of labor struggles within the United States and more importantly the Chicano experience. The history of the Chicano movement often neglects to mention these songs of struggle, hope and vision that sustained its quest for civil rights, economic justice and cultural respect. This thesis argues that the songs of the Chicano movement expressed key goals of this particular political and social struggle, fueling its revolutionary spirit and motivating its participants. Exploring the use of singing traditions in the Chicano movement, this thesis highlights the value of placing songs of the Chicano struggle in national narratives of history as well as in the context of an enduring and thriving legacy of political and social activism that continues to allow the Chicano community to recognize and validate their current social realities.

By the time of the Poor People’s March on Washington in 1968, the Chicano community had already established a political bloc that had been called into action to support many local campaigns throughout the Southwest. Similar to other civil rights movements of the 1960s, the Mexican Americans were motivated to gain rights of equality and respect as a legitimate community of the United States. In 1965 Mexican American activists began mobilizing people within the community, particularly youth, who began to identify themselves under the term

¹ Daniel Valdez et al., *Rolas de Aztlan: Songs of the Chicano Movement* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings: 2005 cd) 34-35.

Chicano. Under this new socially and politically conscious identifier, the Chicano community forged a movement of political rallies, protests, and marches from which emerged the powerful political voices of leaders such as Reies Lopez Tijerina, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, Dolores Huerta, and Cesar Chavez. The Chicano movement produced vibrant soundscapes of chants, gritos, prayers, poetry and music that specifically created ambiance, focus, and documentation of social and political existence.² This music consisted of songs of various forms that were produced and sung by individuals and musical groups associated with the Chicano movement. These songs came to represent the voice of the Chicano movement that drew attention to the various struggles that were taken up by the Chicano community throughout the Southwest while mobilizing the community itself. Scholar and musician, Russel C Rodriguez cites scholar George Lipsitz who once stated that “music serves as a repository of collective memory, as a site for moral instruction...as a process in which communities are called into being, providing footprints that lead us to the hidden histories of specific places and times.”³ As historical documents, songs of the Chicano movement have served and will continue to serve as a historical lens through which familiar and non-familiar audiences can understand the revolutionary demands of the Chicano community during the 1960s and 1970s. The lyrics of these resistance songs reveal a community’s existence and resiliency to persist in an oppressive environment that sought to negate them as equals. Most importantly songs of the Chicano movement serve as an alternative lens and a historical legacy which post civil rights generations can explore as evidence of social resistance and quests for political justice.

1960s Historical Context: The Term Chicano

² Russel C. Rodriguez, “La Causa Cantada: Singing to the Movement,” *GIA Reader No. 2*, Fall 2002, www.giarts.org/article/la-casa-cantada-singing-movement (accessed 27 March, 2012) 1.

³ Rodriguez 12.

In order to understand the significant role songs served in narrating the struggles of the Chicano community, it is important to gain a clear understanding of the context from which they arose. The years leading up to 1965 had been troubling ones for Mexican Americans living in the United States. Similar to the oppression African Americans were facing, Mexican Americans also faced unequal treatment such as racist segregation in housing, schooling and employment that did not provide equal opportunities to those available to Anglo communities. By the 1960s, Mexican Americans redefined themselves as Chicanos because they were tired of being defined by negation. They were not Mexican citizens, and even though they were U.S. citizens, society and the government refused to provide them with equal rights of this citizenship. Mexican Americans no longer saw themselves as visitors being mistreated but as natives who were denied full equality. By the 1960s, Chicano activists categorically rejected the assimilationist and racial ideology that through assimilation Mexican Americans could belong in the U.S.⁴ Some may ask why Mexican Americans during the 1960s self-identified under the term Chicano and how has this historical legacy of self-identification maintained for new generations that take pride in referring to themselves as Chicanos?

Scholarly research has yet to provide a historically documented explanation of the origin of the term Chicano. Many Chicano researchers believe that the term derives from the word *Mexicano*, the Spanish word for Mexican. According to Telodigo Sinmadera the word *Mexicano* was used in ancient Mexico to identify a member of the Aztec Indian tribe. In modern usage, however, anyone born in Mexico, regardless of ethnic heritage, is a *Mexicano*. If the letters m and a are dropped from *Mexicano* the word becomes *Xicano*. The letter X is pronounced sh in

⁴ Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1996) 90.

Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. *Xicano* is therefore pronounced *Shicano* or *Chicano*.⁵ With this background we see the probable historic evolution of the word Chicano. Despite this probable evolution, throughout the early 1900s up until the 1960s the term Chicano acquired various negative connotations that often reveal the efforts of dominant U.S. to suppress Mexican and Mexican American communities. Throughout the 1910s to the 1950s, the term Chicano was associated with negative connotations such as “bandits, migrant field workers, welfare parasites, juvenile delinquents, and undesirables.” In his essay “Chicanismo” in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures (2002), Jose Cuellar dates the transition of the negative “Chicano” to positive affirmation in the late 1950s.⁶ With the emergence of the Chicano Movement, Mexican American students turned to the term Chicano as a self-identifier that they could find themselves in.

It is important to note that during the 1960s and 1970s the term Chicano functioned as both an ethnic and sociopolitical identity, primarily for those born in the United States. Ethnically the term captured the sense of being neither from here, nor from there, in reference to the United States and Mexico. As a mixture of cultures from both countries, being Chicano represents the struggle of being accepted into both cultural societies. Appropriating a word that previously had a negative connotation, the term politically assisted Chicanos in denoting their cultural heritage and asserting their youthful energy as they launched a crusade for social betterment. Refusing to be classified as hyphenated Americans, Chicanos united to combat this social oppression they were being subjected to in the United States. Among the issues they sought to address socially were the restoration of land grants, farm workers’ rights, better

⁵ Telodigo Sinmadera, “The Chicano Movement: The Meaning of Chicano,” 2004-2005, www.vividhues.com/BBS/chicanomovement.htm (accessed 19 March, 2012).

⁶ Jose Cuellar, “Chicanismo,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures; The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001).

education, and lastly, voting and political rights. Though these issues of the Chicano *movimiento* (movement) were broad and distinct, many Chicano people who became politically involved, particularly youth, were able to unite these struggles behind a Chicano cultural identity and the power of this cultural assertion.

Music as a Tool of Resistance

With a new-found cultural identity, the Chicano community drew upon different cultural foundations to develop the unique musical form of the Chicano movement song. Residing in the United States, the Chicano community had access to other singers, musicians, and composers such as Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie that assisted in establishing specific lessons on labor and introspective social critique of U.S. society. The Chicano community also had access to cultural connections with Latin American countries such as Mexico and Cuba, and their social and political struggles that offered global perspectives from “below.”⁷ Above all, the Chicano movement found support from other 1960s civil rights movements, particularly the African American civil rights struggle that possessed a useful musical library of already well known resistance songs, whose lyrics the Chicano community adapted and translated to Spanish appropriating the revolutionary music repertoire as their own. Most important of these cultural foundations that the Chicano community drew upon were musical traditions from their ancestral Mexican heritage. Utilizing traditional forms such as the *corrido* and *carpa* theatrical traditions that remained embedded within their cultural memory storehouse, the Chicano community created a cultural organizing strategy that both enhanced audience participation and highlighted their demands for a more equitable society. With this multifaceted cultural foundation Chicano

⁷ Rodriguez 1.

musicians and the community they represented engaged in an effective practice of using popular songs and rewriting lyrics to address the issues of cheap labor, education, health, and war.

Looking at the history of the Chicano movement through the lens of expressive culture, we must also confront questions that ask why the combination of telling history and forming a movement around both the politics of that history and contemporary events is so important. Delving into this topic we may also ask how does one generation learn the events of their ancestors and how is knowledge of those events used in various presents to articulate an identity and/or movement? As this history of expressive culture was consciously drawn upon during the Chicano movement, musical forms such as corridos, traditional Mexican ballads, huelga songs, strike songs used to motivate strikers and protestors, and the musical creations of Teatro Campesino, a theater group that used theatrical traditions to broadcast socially conscious songs, proved to be effective tools through which the Chicano community could narrate and bring attention to historical experiences that were neglected and excluded. Serving as vehicles of narration, these resistance songs assisted in constructing a collective self-identification that was central to the Chicano movement and its goal of social and economic justice.

Objective

This thesis historically grounds resistance songs as key representations of the identity and political formation that took place during the 1960s Chicano Movement. The following three chapters, readers will become familiar with the history behind the use of music in the Chicano movement and will gain perspectives about the broad political foundations of the Chicano movement's platform as well as the identity consciousness of its people united through the lens of particular resistance songs. Chapter 1, "Toquenme un Corrido," will focus on the traditional form of the corrido and how through the element of appropriation, the Chicano movement relied

on a cultural art form of their heritage to speak to various political aspects affecting their community during the 1960s. This chapter will also introduce the idea of cultural memory and its power in empowering a community to rely on cultural art forms of their past to help in improving and building their present and future communities. Chapter 2, “Canta Huelga en General: Huelga Songs of the Chicano Movement,” will look directly at huelga or strike songs and their particular association with the farm workers struggle, one of the dominant aspects of the larger Chicano movement. Chapter 3, “El Teatro Campesino: Musically and Theatrically Mobilizing the Chicano Movement,” will address a shift in *movimiento* music. Teatro Campesino embodied the movement’s shift to ensemble music and how the incorporation of theatrical qualities such as the *carpa* and *acto* still allowed the Chicano community to connect with their heritage’s roots as well as speak to the various aspects of the movement. Lastly the thesis will conclude with the legacy of the Chicano movement’s musical traditions: the power of these musical traditions to sustain a revolutionary political movement, their foundational use throughout the generations and the implications of their use in a world that is limiting access to ethnic studies.

The practice of singing as a resistance and unifying strategy during the 1960s provides a significant snapshot of a historical moment in which members of the Chicano community stood up for their civil rights as citizens and members of this society. Sung in Spanish, English, and in various musical forms such as the corrido, huelga style and theatrical performance, songs of the Chicano movement drew upon traditional musical art forms and created a new kind of Chicano music. Through the creation of a collective memory, the Chicano community utilized foundational musical art forms of their ancestors, appropriating and reinventing them to speak to their current social realities. As a second generation Chicana growing up in Southern California, songs of the Chicano movement have served as insightful historical documents through which I

have gained a better understanding of my own socio-political identity within the United States. For me to be a Chicana today means to have pride in one's culture and history, to be dedicated to the betterment and welfare of the community, to be committed to action that will effectively accomplish the goals of self-determinism, and to work toward the establishment of a society where equal rights and equal opportunities truly exist for all. It is empowering to see how music can assist in revealing political struggles and social criticism but can also express feelings and emotions associated with collective and individual identity. As I read the lyrics of songs such as *De Colores* and *Yo Soy Chicano* I can identify with the feelings evoked in the song and the goals of the Chicano movement overall. As Telodigo Sinmadera stated the "energy, power, and soul-stirring unity (found within Chicano music) takes it out of history and places it in the heart of shared struggle itself."⁸ The practice of singing resistance songs enabled the Chicano community to document their struggles musically within the narrative of United States history and gave them the power to create music that would remain engraved in history books as well as their hearts.

Chapter 1: Toquenme un corrido: Appropriation of Corridos during the Chicano Movement

⁸ Telodigo Sinmadera, "The Chicano Movement: The Meaning of Chicano," 2004-2005, www.vividhues.com/BBS/chicanomovement.html (accessed 19 March, 2012) 3.

Historian Stevan César Azcona explained in the record album project titled “Rolas de Aztlan,” that during the 1920s and 1930s pachuco slang (the language of Chicano youth who developed their own subculture in the Southwestern U.S.) converted the word “song” into the word *rola*. Each rhythmic beat represented a song, *una rola*. It was from these song rolls that music was created and took life. If you wanted to hear a song, you would simply say *toquenme una rola*, play me a song.⁹ The creation of the term *rolas* has come to symbolize the utilization of music as a medium to express and construct cultural identities as well as a verbal weapon to combat social inequities for the Chicano people. Looking through the lens of musical traditions, the corrido, a specific type of *rola* or song, has historically been used as social commentary and interpreter of the social realities of the Mexican and Mexican American experience. Used for many years prior to the Chicano movement, the corrido was one of the primary forms of musical expressions in Mexico that was passed down from generation to generation; inhabiting peoples’ memories as music they could call their own. Similar to how the precursory African American civil rights struggle borrowed from the spiritual and gospel traditions of their ancestors to sanctify their struggles, Chicanos likewise relied on the musical tradition of their Mexican forefathers through their appropriation of the corrido. As the revolutionary tide of the 1960s began to take hold of the nation, the corrido was summoned once again to address the social realities of Chicanos during the Chicano movement. With the resurrection of this ancestral musical tradition and the appropriation of it to reflect a political consciousness, the corrido gave voice to both the struggles and accomplishments of the Chicano people.

Corridos such as *La Adelita*, *Lavaplatos*, *Yo Soy Chicano*, *Corrido de Aztlan*, *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* and *Corrido de Sal Castro* are evidence of the social and political role that

⁹ Valdez, et al., 3.

expressive culture has played within the Mexican American and Chicano historical experience. As this history of expressive culture was consciously drawn upon during the Chicano movement, corridos were effective tools the Chicano community used to narrate and bring attention to their historical experiences that were often neglected and excluded from national historical narratives. Serving as vehicles of narration, corridos assisted in constructing a collective self-identification that was central to the Chicano movement and its goals of social and economic justice. As a traditional musical form that has historically been used as a people's newspaper, it played a significant role in constructing and preserving a collective Chicano memory. Intact within the cultural memory of the Chicano the corrido assisted in preserving and sustaining a useable past that allowed for its appropriation during the 1960s Chicano movement. It is this cultural appropriation that explains why the Chicano community felt the corrido was the appropriate medium for both political expression and mobilization. The use of the corrido singing tradition assisted Chicanos in grounding political action from a useable and transformative past through which they could narrate and validate their people's account of history and propel and sustain a political movement.

Collective Memory of the Corrido

Before analyzing the specific qualities of the corrido that assisted in making it a powerful expressive medium for Chicanos, it is important to understand the interrelated connection with oral expressive culture and memory. Steven César Azcona states that music provides a sense of symbolic identity through sound and collective memory. The memory of specific sounds and lyrics can act as a conduit between individuals and their cultural sense of belonging.¹⁰ In oral culture, specifically Chicano and Mexican oral culture, words become more than just spoken

¹⁰ Stevan César Azcona, *Movements in Chicano Music Performing Culture, Performing Politics, 1965-1979 Diss* (Austin: University of Texas, 2008) 11.

words; they become defined by their world- life context, becoming inseparable from that context and the voice of the people that speak them. Author Jose Salvador Treviño identifies in his memoir, *EyeWitness of the Chicano Movement*, that the music of the Chicano struggle heightened the relationship between memory and personal identity: “Our memory, our coherence, is our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing.”¹¹ Though an abstract idea, many saw the corrido as an inherent part of the mind, body, and soul of the Chicano. This idea explains why music was the most appropriate form of expression for Chicanos to create their own historical narrative that emphasized the uniqueness and importance of their cultural identity and struggle in the United States. Historian Azcona calls this phenomenon the cultural storehouse. Within the Chicano cultural storehouse, both cultural identity and cultural survival depend on memory. This cultural storehouse manifests itself in both the remembrance and transmission of the community’s knowledge through the community’s performance of musical forms such as corridos.¹² For many Chicanos, corridos as a traditional musical form remained preserved within their memory’s cultural storehouse, which allowed for their appropriation during the Chicano movement. Through a cultural storehouse, corridos were resources of the Chicano’s memory that they could recall on as social individuals and political agents who sought to change the world they lived in.

Characteristics of the Corrido

As a traditional musical form, the corrido embodied specific characteristics that motivated Chicanos to incorporate it into their movement. The musical makeup of the corrido is one of these characteristics that assisted Chicanos in utilizing traditional corridos as verbal tools

¹¹ Jesus Salvador Treviño, *EyeWitness: A Filmmaker’s Memoir of the Chicano Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico, 2001) xi.

¹² Azcona 127.

to comment, narrate, and interpret historical experiences of their time. For historian and author of *Mexican and Chicano Music*, Jose Pepe Villarino, the musical makeup of the corrido consists of five necessary elements: 1) the title of the corrido, 2) the introduction of the main characters, 3) the narration of what happens in the corrido, 4) the overall purpose or message, and lastly 5) the farewell or transition out of the corrido.¹³ Along with a basic harmony of a three-cord harmonic progression and a distinct rhythmic feel-prosody (which means how words fit into the melody), the musical make-up of the corrido allowed for interpretive explanations embedded in the verses of the corridos. For example verses from the *Corrido del Bracero* state:

Alla en Matamoros cruce la frontera,	I crossed the border there in Matamoros,
Por falta de modo, cruce ilegal	For lack of any other means, I crossed illegally
Senores les cuento, como ando sufriendo	Gentlemen, I am telling you about how I am suffering
Que me han dado ganas de volver pa'tras	How they are making me want to go on back ¹⁴

From these lyrics we can identify a location of Matamoros as well as a Chicano commentary surrounding the experience of a Mexican migrant worker who leaves Mexico for work in the United States. Equipped with their unique musical makeup, the corrido became an essential traditional method in interpreting key issues such as racism, economic deprivation and police brutality that the Chicano movement sought to combat.

Language: A Cultural Signifier of the Corrido

Another aspect of the corrido that is crucial to understanding its role as a signifier of cultural identity is language. The language of the lyrics in a song contributes greatly to its identity. As a traditional musical form from Mexico, the corrido was historically sung in Spanish, the language of the *mestizo*. As the corrido became more widespread along the U.S./ Mexico border and eventually appropriated into the Chicano movement, the language often

¹³ Jose Pepe Villarino, *Mexican and Chicano Music* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1999) 33.

¹⁴ Valdez et al., 13.

became a mixture of both English and Spanish, or Spanglish. Historian Azcona believes that this use of Spanglish was a marker of Chicano cultural distinction within the American landscape and a symbolic gesture to preserve the ancestral language of Chicanos.¹⁵ This use of Spanglish reflected the blending of American and Mexican cultures, an aspect that was integral to the Chicano identity. Despite this fact, many Chicanos felt it was important to stay true to the traditional form of the corrido, which consisted of the use of Spanish. Singing in Spanish allowed for Chicanos to connect with their Mexican heritage and firmly claim the right to speak Spanish in public schools, a distinct form of resistance against US and Anglo society. During the 1960s, Chicano musicians began to get involved politically by singing and writing protest songs, predominately in Spanish. By preserving the traditionally Spanish spoken corrido as well as reinventing it through the use of Spanglish, a hybrid language combining words and idioms of both Spanish and English, Chicanos helped to destroy the dominant racist belief that in order to be “American” one must speak English. Through dispelling these racist ideologies that had weighed heavily on the cultural identity of the Chicano, they would, as a collective, establish a unified front that could drive their social movement.

The Historical Trajectory of the Corrido

In order to understand the significance of the corrido within the Chicano movement and how memory assisted in its appropriation, it is necessary to understand its historical trajectory as an expressive medium that is not only central to a Mexican heritage but that can also be traced from pre-Columbian times to the present. The corrido as a musical tradition emerged during the early 19th century and reached its peak in popular use during the first half of the 20th century. The corrido as a traditional form is rooted in Mexico but can be traced back to Spain and has in

¹⁵ Azcona 222.

more recent years become a musical form widespread along the Texas-Mexican border.

According to Villarino, what was known as the *romance corrido* was brought about as a result of the Moorish invasion of Spain. With this invasion, around 711AD, the Moors introduced their own musical traditions such as the Vihuela guitar and *Jarchas* or songs that often reflected the composers' feelings, thoughts, and ideas.¹⁶ Through the musical influence of the Moors, the *romance corrido* took the form of an epic that had no limit on its length but had to be eight syllables per line, relying on qualities such as assonance. Assonance, which is defined as the repetition of vowel sounds, allowed for the creation of an internal rhyme that assisted in conveying the various messages of the romance corridos.

With the Spanish inquisition of Mexico in 1492, the corrido once again emerged in Mexico and the "New World." Through the Spanish conquest and the fall of Tenochtitlan, existing musical traditions of Mexico's indigenous peoples such as the Tlapahuehuetl and the Teponantliwere were replaced with harps, guitars and violins. It is clear that the act of imperial conquest and the result of cultural mixing influenced the emergence and development of the corrido as a musical form. After the conquest of Mexico, the *mestizo*, the product of the cultural mixing between the Spanish and indigenous people of Mexico, perpetuated and preserved the rich musical heritage of both cultures by combining Spanish and Indian ingenuity and changing the romance corrido to meet and reflect the Mexican way of life.¹⁷ As the corrido became more entrenched in Mexican musical traditions, it underwent a slight name change from the *romance corrido* to the *corrido mexicano*. The *corrido mexicano* soon became the primary musical form through which the Mexican people could narrate their own history, specifically significant historical events such as Mexican independence from Spain in 1810-1821 and the Mexican

¹⁶ Villarino 23.

¹⁷ Villarino 31.

Revolution of 1910, and famous historical figures like La Adelita, La Valentina, La Coronela, Francisco Madero, Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata and Felipe Angeles to name a few. According to historian Jose Pepe Villarino, the first corrido was written in 1821 by Pepe Quevedo and was called *La Pulga*, which established the traditional corrido make-up consisting of principal characters, a message and a farewell. As more and more corridos were entrenched within a cultural memory they soon became the primary musical form through which Mexicans could individually and collectively tell their stories of love, struggle, pride and, most importantly, life.

One of the most well-known revolutionary corridos to emerge out of the Mexican Revolution is *La Adelita*. The specific origins of *La Adelita* are not fully known, other than that it arose out of the tales of the Mexican Revolution assuming a special place in the memory of the Mexican people. *La Adelita* tells the story of a young woman who falls in love with a sergeant in a revolutionary regiment, whom she travels with and accompanies into battle.

La Adelita

Popular entre la tropa era Adelita
la mujer que el sargento idolatraba
que además de ser valiente era bonita
que hasta el mismo Coronel la respetaba

Y se oía, que decía aquel que tanto la
quería
y si Adelita se fuera con otro
la seguiría por tierra y por mar
si por mar en un buque de guerra
si por tierra en un tren militar

La Adelita

Popular among the troop was Adelita
the woman that the sergeant idolized
and besides being brave she was so pretty
that even the Coronel respected her.

And it was heard, that he, who loved her so
much, said:
If Adelita would leave with another man
I'd follow her by land and sea
if by sea in a warship
if by land in a military train.¹⁸

From the selected verses of *La Adelita*, the full lyrics of the corrido can be seen in the chapter's appendix, we see that the corrido could have been based on a real-life female character. The true identity of "Adelita" has yet to be determined, but according to popular myth she was said to

¹⁸ El Teatro Campesino, *Cancionero de la Raza* (Fresno: El Teatro Campesino Company) 4.

have taken part in the military as a nurse. Through the corrido's themes of a woman's beauty and strength, *La Adelita* has come to represent an archetype of a woman warrior in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution.¹⁹ The corrido supports the image of the *Adelita* as a *soldadera*, a female soldier, who not only cooked and cared for the wounded but also accompanied their male counterparts on the battlefield. In this sense, *La Adelita* highlights the various contributions women made to the war effort during the Mexican Revolution.

La Adelita shows how memory, particularly collective memory, evokes associations of particular historic time periods through traditional musical forms such as the corrido. Decades later, during the Chicano movement of the 1960s, we see the use of collective memory and a historical trajectory to draw upon musical traditions such as *La Adelita* and other corridos to create a new musical repertoire to confront social injustice.²⁰ Corridos became a genre that allowed the Mexican people to document the memory of significant persons and events, assisting in the construction of a community's history. Corridos of the revolutionary era such as *La Adelita* were to become a part of the greater repertoire of the Chicano Movement as historical documents that were appropriated to reflect the attitudes, values, and feelings of the 1960s.

After the Mexican Revolution, social and political issues generated new conflicts that were protested through a new set corridos. A climate of conflict grew heatedly out of the Anglo invasion and subsequent annexation of what became the American Southwest as a result of the Mexican American War in 1848. This time of heated war and conflict served as an ideal setting for the birth of an expressive culture that could key in on this conflict. Through the annexation of Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona (territories of Mexico) to the U.S., as well as a steady flow of Mexican migration to the United States, a large, solidified population of

¹⁹ Villarino 24.

²⁰ Azcona 104.

Mexicans and Mexican Americans lived in the U.S., particularly along the Mexico and U.S. border. Throughout the 1920s to 1940s the corrido served as a social barometer, collective diary, or oral newspaper, whose lyrics expressed tales of social and economic difficulties and injustice regarding immigration along the U.S. and Mexico border that contributed to the narration of a people's own account of history.²¹ The lyrics of corridos served as a literature of the Mexican people, where traveling singers would carry stories from market place to market place, often composing the songs themselves or getting them from local poets wherever they stopped. According to Chris Stachwitz, an American record executive and record producer and the founder and president of Arhoolie Records, in the days before the phonograph record these *corridistas*, singers of corridos, would have the texts printed up along with a picture illustrating the story and sell these broadsides to anyone who would buy them.²² Though these corridos were prevalent within the Mexican American community they were denied a role in mainstream publishing and mass media. These corridos that held such prominent value to the Mexican and Mexican American communities were found outside the matrix of power-politics, cultural, religious, and educational institutions, so that the corrido for a long time was basically ignored and neglected, particularly by the powers of dominant society.²³ Dominant views of society sought to repress the voice of the Mexican and Mexican American communities which allowed for the marginalization of their history and musical expressions.

From the 1920s through the 1940s Mexican American *troubadors*, traveling musical groups consisting of 3-4 musicians, produced a steady flow of corridos that depicted life for the Mexican American in the Southwest with great feeling and accuracy, describing in vivid detail

²¹ Ibid 53.

²² Chris Stachwitz, *Conjunto Texas-Mexican Border Music: Volume 2* (Rounder Records, 1988).

²³ Villarino 107.

both the sadness and humor of life in the borderlands. The widespread presence of *troubadors* led to the popularization of sound recordings of corridos that not only broke through regional boundaries but also created a larger and broader audience for corridos that could be known outside the peripheries of marginalization. As *troubadors* traveled along the U.S./Mexico border, their repertoire of corridos were passed on from one singer to another, making certain corridos of particular lasting interest widely popular. One of these corridos was *Lavaplatos*, recorded in Los Angeles in 1926 by the musical group Los Hermanos Banuelos. The corrido *Lavaplatos* narrates the story of a Mexican immigrant who comes to the U.S. during the 1920s with dreams of becoming a movie star but is confined to the role of dishwasher. The corrido *Lavaplatos* recounts with a humoristic tone the adventures of a poor Mexican who immigrates to the U.S. in search of a glamorous life in Hollywood, only to find himself drifting from one backbreaking job to another.

Sonaba en mi juventud ser una estrella
de cine, y un día de tantos me vine
a visitor Hollywood.

I dreamed in my youth of being a movie star
and one of those days I came to
visit Hollywood.

Un día muy desesperado por tanta
revolución,
me pase para este lado
sin pagar la inmigración

One day very desperate because of so much
revolution,
I came over to this side
without paying the immigration.

The *corridista* states that he had dreams of being a movie star which motivated his decision to leave Mexico for a life of supposed “glamour” in the United States. The *corridista*’s high aspirations represent the beliefs of many Mexicans during the early 1920s who felt that the “America dream” would solve their economic issues. The corrido’s lyrics also highlight how during this time period many Mexicans, particularly single males, left their homelands in Mexico to establish a better life in the United States. The *corridista*’s statement “I came over to this side without paying the immigration” highlights the absence of border restrictions at that time. Mexicans were free to move across the border, and often needed to in order to maintain their

work in jobs such as seasonal agricultural laborers and construction workers for the railroad. The *corridista* of *Lavaplatos* works in a warehouse, as an agricultural worker and lastly as a dishwasher. His work history was similar to those of many recently arrived Mexican immigrants who were immediately confined to work intensive and low paying jobs in the United States.

Adios sueños de mi vida
adios estrellas del cine,
vuelvo a mi patria querida
más pobre de lo que vine.

Goodbye dreams of my life,
goodbye movie stars,
I return to my beloved country
poorer than when I arrived.²⁴

To the *corridista's* surprise, his dreams of leading a life of glamour are crushed by the U.S. marginalization of the Mexican as a beast of burden and nothing else. Though the corrido portrays an experience of hardship, it is told in a very humoristic tone. According to historian Azcona, sometimes bitterly, sometime with a touch of irony and humor, corridos chronicled with perfect fidelity the hardships faced by Mexicans as they adjusted to the pits of American capitalism.²⁵ Despite the not-so-happy ending *Lavaplatos* demonstrates the significance of the corrido in giving voice to the Chicano, the new term that the Mexican American community chose as their ethnic identifier. Under the term Chicano, the Mexican American community could assert their ethnic pride as an American community with cultural roots from Mexico and recognize their social and political power as a united entity. Looking at its development and its continuous historical use, we see the corrido as apart of a useable past that continues to evolve, change and thrive along with the Chicano community that relied on this musical tradition to tell their unofficial account of history.

Connection to African American Civil Rights Gospel Tradition

²⁴ Chris Stachwitz, *Conjunto Texas-Mexican Border Music: Volume 2* (Rounder Records, 1988).

²⁵ Azcona 92.

In *When Men Revolt and Why*, James C. Davis states that with rising expectations, people redefine themselves and feel that they deserve more than they have. When people feel that they are treated unfairly they become outraged. And if outraged people see a possibility of gaining justice, they self-righteously join forces in an effort to get what they believe they deserve.²⁶ During the 1960s in the United States the phenomenon that James C. Davis, a politician and state representative, spoke of was occurring as political activists and youth of color excitedly discussed the social condition of their people. The African American Civil Rights Movement which challenged the social norms of the U.S. system, served as a catalyst to the unrest of young people who wondered how the ideals of democracy and equality, for which the nation supposedly stood, could exist alongside the repression of racial minorities. African Americans living in the U.S., particularly in the South, had lived under the veil of injustice where Jim Crow laws ensured unjust segregation in public facilities, public transportation, and public institutions. Through a unified, non-violent social movement, African Americans demanded an end to unconstitutional segregation and the unjust, sanctioned denial of equal rights. As the African American civil rights movement was gaining strides, the Chicano movement emerged as another example of the revolutionary spirit that fueled young people of color to demonstrate and picket for the eradication of institutionalized inequality.

Though the African American and Chicano struggles were two distinct social movements, they each incorporated traditional music from their past to create solidarity amongst their respective communities. The Chicano Movement paralleled the African American Civil Rights struggle in not only political theory but also in the adaptation and appropriation of traditional music forms from their past to address current social realities. Similar to how African Americans relied on the traditional gospel form of their forefathers to address the social

²⁶ Rosales 195.

inequities they were enduring, Chicanos likewise relied on the traditional corrido to confront the systematic exclusion of their people from educational institutions and desirable jobs. Relying on traditional gospels and spirituals that their ancestors used during times of slavery, activists in groups such as SNCC, (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), and the mass population who became known as freedom singers, reinvented these traditional songs of their past to convey the moral urgency of their current freedom struggle simultaneously expressing and helping to sustain the courage of the extraordinary people who were at the heart of it.²⁷ One of the most popular of these “freedom” songs was titled *We Shall Overcome*, which eventually became the unofficial anthem for the African American Civil Rights Movement.

We shall overcome
 We shall overcome
 We shall overcome some day.

Oh, deep in my heart
 I do believe
 We shall overcome some day.

We can see from the lyrics of *We Shall Overcome* that the song emphasizes a hope for the future, “We shall overcome, and we shall all be free one day.” Many of the songs of the Civil Rights Movement provided a specific view of the future, where African Americans could be free from unconstitutional racism and oppression.

We shall all be free
 We shall all be free
 We shall all be free some day.

As they sang their freedom songs, they offered among themselves definitions of the changes they would bring about in their world.²⁸ Similar to the traditional corrido used in the Chicano movement, freedom songs were designed for everyone to sing them; every individual could take

²⁷ Kerran L. Sanger, *When the Spirit Says Sing!": the Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Garland, 1995) 34.

²⁸ Sanger 37.

part in singing. Through improvisational possibilities and traditional call and response patterns, these freedom songs could not only be adapted to the current social situations of African Americans but also stressed an emotional involvement that in turn increased an emotional commitment to the movement. For many African Americans this emotional involvement was connected to faith in God and strong moral values, highlighting protest songs' traditional origins as spirituals. In many of these songs, particularly such examples as *Oh, Freedom* and *This Little Light of Mine*, the idea of freedom is identified as a key goal of the movement that is highly connected to a close relationship with God. The song, *Oh, Freedom* states, "no segregation, no segregation, no segregation over me, and before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave, and go home to my Lord and be free." Insertions of a close relationship with God or the Lord implied that African Americans merited divine support, which inevitably would help to reach the goals of their movement.²⁹ In the song, *This Little Light of Mine*, this "light" symbolized the light of freedom, which helped to fuel the movement. Placing emphasis on moral issues these protest spirituals sanctified the struggles of African Americans despite any opposition. Though corridos used in the Chicano Movement did not inherently include a divine relationship with God, they highlighted morality as a human issue and injustice as something that was morally wrong. Rather than be driven by religious beliefs, corridos highlighted collective views of morality to denounce injustice as wrong and to recognize their justice movement as morally right. Bernice Johnson Reagon, a member of SNCC, stated in relation to music "we called ourselves a singing newspaper, which reached out across racial and regional divides to show an audience of our peers on white college campuses around the country who we are."³⁰ Looking at the freedom songs of the African American struggle as historical documents that provide insight into their

²⁹ Sanger 38.

³⁰ Sanger 39.

lived history within the U.S., we see the connection they have to the corrido of the Chicano struggle and how they each reflect the power of oral tradition in narrating history, expressing cultural identity, and, most importantly, impacting the future.

Revival of the Corrido during the Chicano Movement

With a firm knowledge of how corridos such as *La Adelita* and *Lavaplatos* communicated a collective consciousness that assisted in constructing a historical trajectory of social music expression we can now turn to their presence and appropriation in the Chicano movement. During the 1960s Chicano movement, the corrido was appropriated and reinvented to highlight the current social realities of Chicanos. In the early 1960s, Carlos Muñoz, founder of UMAS (United Mexican American Students) at California State University at Los Angeles, stated in relation to the Chicano Civil Rights movement, “One day I woke up and said wait, what am I doing...We’ve got to start our own organizing.”³¹ In the early 1960s, Chicano activists began mobilizing people within the Mexican American community, particularly youth, who began to identify themselves under the term Chicano.

The years leading up to the emergence of the *movimiento* (movement) had been troubling ones for Mexican Americans living in the United States. Similar to the oppression African Americans were facing, Mexican Americans also faced unequal treatment such as racist segregation, in housing, schooling, and employment that did not provide equal opportunities that were available in Anglo communities. Other factor of racial discrimination that impacted the Mexican American community and how they saw themselves racially was legal violence. Professor of Law at University of California, Berkeley, Ian F. Haney-Lopez defines legal

³¹ Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1996) xvi.

violence from arbitrary beatings meted out by the police during public demonstrations and alleged police shootings of demonstrators to subtle exclusion of Mexican Americans from Los Angeles Grand Juries. According to Haney-Lopez this ongoing legal violence assisted in fueling the deconstruction of the dominant racial identity constructs held by the Mexican-American community. Prior to the 1960s, large segments of the Mexican-American community had clung to the belief that Mexican-Americans were not a separate racial group, and many believed themselves to be “white.” Haney-Lopez believes that this misguided belief was a principle cause for the inability of local leaders to effectively organize the community politically and it is essentially legal violence that causes a paradigm shift in perception, among both the general community and its leadership.³² This shift, from considering themselves to be Mexican American to identifying as Chicanos, was the transformation that allowed political mobilization to occur.

By the 1960s with the emergence of a political movement, Mexican Americans began redefining themselves as Chicanos. Chicano activists categorically rejected assimilationist and racial ideologies that only through assimilation could Mexican Americans belong in the U.S.³³ Refusing to be classified as hyphenated Americans, Chicanos united to combat this social oppression they were being subjected to in the United States. Among the issues they sought to socially address were the restoration of land grants, farm workers’ rights, better education, and, lastly, voting and political rights. Though these issues of the Chicano *movimiento* were broad and distinct, many Chicano people who became politically involved, particularly youth, were able to unite these struggles behind a Chicano cultural identity and the power of this cultural assertion.

³² Ian F., Haney-Lopez, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap of Harvard UP, 2003).

³³ Rosales 90.

In order to engage the community and increase participation, Chicanos turned to the traditionally Mexican corrido of their ancestors; where lyrics were either assigned new meaning as protest songs or were changed to reflect the struggles and accomplishments of Chicanos, alongside the emergence of a Chicano consciousness. This turn to a traditional form of their past signified a *rescate* or revival.³⁴ The Spanish term *rescate* had been historically used to refer to the procedure by which Spanish colonists would pay ransom to free Indians captured by rival natives. During the Chicano movement, the turn to the traditional musical form of the corrido represented a cultural revival or rescue of a past tradition of their ancestors. Mexican musical styles, such as the corrido, took on new meaning for Chicanos and musicians, who were predominately students and young people that had been empowered by the youthful energy of various social protests of the 1960s. Corridos became a symbolic expression of an emergent Chicano identity and mediation of the social ills that plagued their community. Historian John L. Aguilar believes that as long as ethnic minorities are deprived of political and economic power, ethnic movements will find instrumental ways to fight this deprivation. Aguilar also states that as long as such minorities are deprived of self-determination and social dignity, such movements will serve as expressive function. In addition, the use of symbolic resources to mobilize groups for political and economic competition derives its value from their expressive significance.³⁵ The main objective of the corrido as a historical document has been not only to convey news but also to interpret, celebrate, and dignify events of the Chicano movement. Through the appropriation of corridos, Chicanos were rediscovering their Mexican heritage. They embarked on their own rediscovery of Mexican musical traditions, learning new instruments and song genres that in turn led to unique blending of Mexican, Latin American and

³⁴ Azcona 117.

³⁵ Rosales 199.

American musical styles. Through analysis of the corrido we can see the significant role it has played in Chicano history as a marker of cultural identity and political protest. For Chicanos the re-appropriation of the traditional corrido served as a cultural bridge between their past and the social realities of their present, assisting them in forging a political movement that could address social inequities and establish a sense of hope for the future.

Corridos of the Chicano Movement

The historical background of corridos highlights a historical and musical trajectory that is grounded in both Mexico and the United States. Through the analysis of specific corridos, it becomes clear why this art form has served as a medium through which Mexicans and Chicanos could express their feelings and narrate their experiences. Equipped with a unique musical makeup the following four popular corridos of the Chicano movement, *Yo soy Chicano*, *Corrido de Aztlan*, *Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, and the *Ballad of Sal Castro*, demonstrate the Chicano interpretation of specific events, significant cultural figures and the importance of Chicano identity.

According to historian Azcona, no song celebrated the new sense of Chicano identity as much as the corrido, *Yo Soy Chicano*.³⁶ According to popular belief the corrido was said to have been composed on a bus that was headed to the 1968 Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C. While on the bus Juanita Dominguez, a member of the nationalist Crusade for Justice Organization of Colorado, adapted the lyrics of *Yo Soy Chicano* from a well-known revolutionary corrido called *La Rielera*. Developed during revolutionary times, *La Rielera* meaning the railroad worker, provided a social commentary on the hardships of railroad workers who helped construct railroad lines in Mexico.

³⁶ Valdez et al., 9.

Yo soy rielera
 tengo mi par de pistolas
 Con su parquet muy cabal
 Una para mi querida
 Y otra para mi rival

I am a railroad worker
 I have a pair of pistols
 With its park loaded
 One for my loved one
 And the other for my rival.

The revolutionary fervor and jargon representative of the Mexican Revolution present in the lyrics of the corrido, *La Rielera*, allowed for the use of adaptation and reinvention to depict the social revolution that the Chicanos were forging in the 1960s.

Yo Soy Chicano

Yo soy chicano, tengo color/
 puro Chicano, hermano con honor
 Cuando me dicen que hay revolucion/
 Defiendo a mi raza con mucho valor
 Tento todita mi gente/
 para la revolucion
 Voy a luchar on los pobres/
 Pa'que se acabe el bolon.
 Tengo mi par de pistolas/
 para la revolucion
 Una se llama El Canario/
 y otro se llama El Gorrion.

I am Chicano

I am Chicano, of color/
 Pure Chicano, a brother with honor
 When they tell me there is revolution/
 I defend my people with great valor.
 I have all my people/
 for the revolution
 I am going to fight alongside the poor/
 To end this oppression.
 I have my pair of pistols/
 For the revolution
 One is called The Canary/
 And the other is called the Sparrow.

Altering key phrases such as “yo soy rielera” to “yo soy Chicano, the Chicano community was able to reinvent a corrido that was specific to their current struggle through a traditional form that was inherent to their cultural identity. Along with a passionate desire to provoke a social revolution for their community the corrido is highly reflective of the cultural Chicano identity that assisted in fueling the mass participation of the Chicano movement as a solidified collective group. In addition to references about Mexican revolutionary tradition and history, references to “color café,” “orgullo,” and “cultura” were ways Chicano identity formation attempted to work

against decades of social erasure that often denied Chicanos of their indigenous roots.³⁷ Living under a limited perception of beauty that only included people who possessed European physical attributes, Chicanos found themselves marginalized as others that did not fit this mold. By reclaiming physical attributes that were once looked down upon through the lyrics of corridos, Chicanos validated their ethnic identity. In the corrido, *Yo Soy Chicano*, we see how the revival of the goals from the Mexican Revolution allowed Chicanos to actively fight for social justice and to reclaim of the right to define themselves by and for themselves.

Similar to the first corrido, *Yo Soy Chicano*, the corrido titled *Corrido de Aztlan*, emphasizes the importance of cultural identity in forging a social movement that was built upon a nationalist foundation. Through the *Corrido de Aztlan*, Chicanos established a sense of belonging to the Southwest, recognizing the importance of their contributions to the history of the United States.

Desde los files de los campos
de los barrios de los pueblos
veniendo la Raza
declaremos nuestras tierras
declaremos nuestro plan
nuestra gente es la Raza
y nuestro pueblo es Aztlan.
Ay, ay, ay, ay, al grito de guerra
Para liberar a nuestra gente
y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.

From the rows of the fields
from the neighborhoods of towns
coming are our people
we declare our lands
we declare our plan
our people is called the race
And our homeland is Aztlan.
Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
To liberate our people
And to the death for our lands

The first verse of the *Corrido de Aztlan* is the declaration of Aztlan as a mythical and ancestral Chicano land and the political need for unity to defend the land mentioned in the corrido's refrain. Although the exact location of Aztlan was never specified, in writings of the 16th century Aztlan was associated with what today is the Southwest region of the U.S. At the height of the

³⁷ Azcona 138.

Chicano movement in the 1960s, Aztlan garnered tremendous symbolic weight as the stolen homeland and future nation of the Chicano people. If Aztlan was the U.S. Southwest, then it was precisely that part of Mexico lost to foreign invasion and conquest after 1848. While many groups took the recuperation of the territory of Aztlan as a realistic political objective, others used the concept as a rallying cry around which a reinvigorated Chicano identity might take shape.³⁸ At the center of the corrido are declarations of belonging that highlight the necessity to defend one's people and one's property, in this case land.

Oye carnal, pon atención	Listen brother, pay attention
nosotros somos Raza	we are called the race
del pueblo del sol,	the people of the sun
Aunque vengas tu del Norte	Even though you come from the North
y yo del Sur.	And I from the South
Unidos venceremos pa' cavar la esclavitud.	Together united we will end slavery
Ay, ay, ay, ay al grito de guerra,	Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
para liberar a nuestra gente	To liberate our people
y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.	And to the death for our lands

With a very nationalistic tone, the corrido consistently repeats “we declare our land, we declare our plan, our people are the race and our home is Aztlan,” mirroring what could be a national anthem.

In reference to the idea of nation building, George Mariscal references Benedict Anderson who claims that nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.³⁹ It is during the 1960s that Chicanos imagined themselves as a community or a nation outside of foreign control particularly through the concept of Aztlan. Chicano poet Alurista believed that the myth of Aztlan, in the 1960s, was a

³⁸ George, Mariscal, *Aztlan and Vietnam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences in the War* (University of California Press, 1999) 1.

³⁹ Azcona 30.

way to identify a people, a land, and a consciousness that said, struggle do not be afraid.⁴⁰ We can see that whether or not people believed in the actual existence of Aztlán, it nonetheless was instilled within the mind and memory of the Chicano through political ideology and cultural expressive forms such as corridos. By glorifying the concept of Aztlán, *Corrido de Aztlán*, sought to give voice to Chicano communities that had been historically erased from foundational narratives of “American culture” by providing a cultural space through which to build a social movement struggling for social and economic justice that was based on a shared identity and counter narrative.

The third corrido, titled *Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, is slightly different than the other corridos in that it specifically commemorates the life of an individual and an event that were important to both Chicanos and the Chicano movement. By commemorating the life of an important figure of the movement, *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* provides historical recognition of people that were often not included in dominant society’s narrative of history.

Un dieciseis de marzo/
Jueves Santo en la mañana
Salio Cesar de Delano/
Componiendo una campaña

On the 16th of March/
A blessed Thursday in the morning
Cesar Chavez left Delano/
Organizing a campaign.

Companeros Campesinos/
Esto va a ser un ejemplo
Esta marcha la llevamos
Hasta mero Sacramento

Fellow farmworkers/
This is going to be an example
We Will take this march/
Right to Sacramento

In the *Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, the *corridista* provides listeners with the Chicano interpretation of the UFW or United Farm Workers’ 300 mile march. In 1966 on March 16, the UFW embarked on a historic 300 mile march from the city of Delano, California to the state capitol in Sacramento. According to popular belief, during the march, cofounder of Teatro Campesino,

⁴⁰ Mariscal 1.

Felipe Cantu wrote the lyrics to the corrido. Through the corrido's narration of this event we see the importance of Cesar Chavez and the UFW who, through strikes, boycotts, and other public protests, sought to bring national attention to the problems and injustices faced by farmworkers (such as extremely low wages, unsanitary working conditions and danger of pesticides) to the broader Chicano movement. Above all else, the *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* pays homage to Cesar Chavez as the humble leader of the UFW struggle and an integral figure in representing the goals of the Chicano people and the Chicano movement.

Oiga, señor Cesar Chavez/
Un hombre que se pronuncia
En su pecho usted merece/
La Virgen de Guadalupe

Listen, Mr. Cesar Chavez/
A name that is spoken.
On your heart you deserved
The Virgin of Guadalupe

Leader Cesar Chavez from Delano, CA was born into a migrant farmworkers' family and at an early age had witnessed and experienced the injustices plaguing farmworkers in the U.S. Determined to claim the violated rights of farmworkers, Chavez equipped with his dedication to nonviolence and his religious faith established a union that could assist in the fight for social justice. The historic background embedded in the lyrics of *Corrido de Cesar Chavez*, serves as a Chicano interpretation that sought to combat the misrepresentation and lack of recognition of Chicano culture by dominant historians, scholars, and, most importantly, the media. Honoring Cesar Chavez as a prominent leader not only within the Chicano community but also as an integral leader within U.S. labor history, *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* assists in combating the lack of "publicly recognized" leaders in U.S. mainstream society. As mentioned before, Chavez was a man of religious faith, which is very well represented in this corrido. Through the verse "contracters and scabs, this is going to be a piece of history, you will go to hell, and we on to glory" we can see the connection between the UFW struggle for justice and morality. With a moralistic tone, the *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* not only commemorates the life and dedication of

a leader crucial to the Chicano movement but also provides a historical interpretation that comes directly from the Chicano people.

The last corrido, titled *The Ballad of Sal Castro*, is similar to the *Corrido de Cesar Chavez* in that it also provides an interpretation that was often silenced by mass media and highlights the individual and collective contributions of the student struggle to the overall Chicano Movement. Throughout the early 1960s, Sal Castro a teacher at Lincoln High School continuously encouraged his students that the only way to fight societal oppression was through earning an education. In the *Ballad of Sal Castro*, we see the commemoration of Sal Castro as a significant individual and the interpretation of a specific event through the perspective of the Chicano people. As the corrido tells the story of the educational reform struggle that was carried out by Chicano youth in East Los Angeles, we see Sal Castro at the center of this struggle as a source of strength and inspiration.

The Ballad of Sal Castro

This is the ballad of Sal Castro
and the united Mexican people.
On the 26th of September they gathered
to combat disgraceful injustice
Sal Castro, a teacher dedicated to
advance his Mexican people
had been told by school officials
Don't come back
this is American justice.
And that is why the new people got together
justice was the cry of the people
with pride they marched to the test.
If not Sal Castro, then no schools.
And no school system!⁴¹

⁴¹ Trevino 74.

Prior to the movement, East L.A. schools, which were predominately Mexican American populated, had students dropping out at a rate greater than 50 percent. For students with an incomplete education dropping out was a short step to a life of gangs, drugs, and crime. The only alternative for a high school dropout was to go into the army, and Chicanos had the highest mortality rate per ethnic group in Vietnam. An entire generation of Chicanos was being offered just two options-crime or death-because their schools were not doing their job.⁴² On top of this, East L.A. public schools prohibited Chicanos from speaking Spanish and systemically tracked them into classes such as plumbing and home economics. As an educator, Sal Castro had witnessed these injustices and assisted in organizing students who wanted to make a difference in the education society was providing them. On March 1, 1968 three hundred high-school students at Wilson High in Los Angeles walked out of their Friday morning classes. On Monday, Lincoln High School students walked out. On Tuesday, two thousand students evacuated Garfield high. By Wednesday, the walkouts, or blowouts, as students called them, had extended to Roosevelt High School. By Friday, more than fifteen thousand students had left their classes throughout the Los Angeles area.⁴³ The corrido, *The Ballad of Sal Castro*, provides a historical narrative that praises the power of student walkouts as a way to bring attention to their poor educational conditions as well as the glorification of Sal Castro who, because of his sacrifices such as arrest and job removal, became a hero for the Chicano people, particularly the youth.

Conclusion

Exploring the use of singing traditions in the Chicano movement, it is clear that the corrido as a specific musical form anchored political action from a useable past that created a

⁴² Trevino 96.

⁴³ Rosales 184-185.

subjective environment through which Chicanos could acknowledge both their current social realities and their cultural identities. While the majority of these corridos express the frustrations and indignations of many Chicanos in the U.S., they also convey a profound desire to rise above such injustices and to bring about change through solidarity and personal empowerment. Corridos of the Chicano movement were creatively adapted and reinterpreted to inspire a once hyphenated community to fight under the name Chicano, deriving its power as a collection of songs by and for the Chicano people.

Chapter 2 Canta Huelga en General: Huelga Songs of the Farm Workers Movement

During March of 1966 hundreds of people, the majority striking migrant farm workers, embarked on a 300 mile march to California's state capitol to bring national attention to the local struggle for equality of the United Farm Workers Union and the larger Chicano movement. As these marchers walked together holding red signs with the infamous black UFW eagle on highways and freeways they began singing *Solaridad pa' Siempre* which translates in English to *Solidarity Forever*. As the marchers sang this song they were able to convey collectively the Sacramento march's central themes of pilgrimage, penitence, and revolution. Songs such as

Solidaridad pa' Siempre accompanied farm workers and protestors on the picket lines, at rallies, at meetings and other movement demonstrations. Central to the overall Chicano movement, and specific to the United Farm worker Struggle, these songs became known as “huelga” songs or “strike” songs because they assisted farm workers in not only demanding just wages and better working conditions but also in motivating their community during the difficult times of strikes. Similar to the oral tradition of corridos, the practice of singing huelga songs served as a political outlet that allowed farm workers to address publicly social injustices in the midst of oppressive intimidation by agricultural companies. As farm workers left the fields in resistance against inequality, huelga songs also served as a means to reflect on strikes but most importantly to document and project their own meaning of these revolutionary protests. As historical narratives of the farm worker community, these huelga songs demonstrate the vital role music played in creating effective labor activism during the 1960s and the development of the larger Chicano movement. At the heart of the larger Chicano movement, these huelga songs served as revolutionary fuel that consistently ignited this smaller struggle and its emphasis on a moral cause that was central to the foundational values of United States' democracy.

Huelga songs such as *Solaridad pa' siempre*, *El Picket Sign*, *La Peregrinacion*, *No Nos Moveran*, *La Guitarra Campesina y Huelga en General* serve as written testaments to the change that took place inside of people during the farm workers struggle. Kerran L. Sanger, author of *When the Spirit Says Sing! The Role of Freedom Songs* believes “that music does not change governments. Some bureaucrat or some politician is not going to be changed by music he hears. But we can change people as individual people. The people can change governments.”⁴⁴ With a changed mindset, the farm worker community continued to use music as a medium through which to call others to join their *Causa* (or cause) a hybrid civil rights movement

⁴⁴Sanger 48.

between a labor organizing drive and moral campaign. More than 40 years after the inception of the Chicano movement, these huelga songs document how music has served as an avenue of community for Chicanos and their *movimiento*, but more specifically how huelga songs as an oral art form assisted farm workers in demanding improved labor conditions, and in articulating a political consciousness that drew strength from a new vision of farm worker and Chicano identity.

Rise of the Farm Workers Movement

Sabino Lopez, a UFW participant once stated that “the farm workers movement gave us a chance to force people to know we existed, that we had decided it was time for better conditions and respect”⁴⁵ As Sabino Lopez stated, the 1960s farm workers movement grew out of the larger social Chicano movement that had taken hold of Mexican American/Chicano communities in Southern California. In the early 1960s with feelings such as Lopez’s, a large group of Mexican migrant farm workers, perhaps the poorest and most exploited in the state, planted seeds of social resistance that would eventually lead to the farm workers’ movement and *La Causa* (another name that refers to the farm workers’ struggle). From the mid 1950s the U.S. Southwest witnessed a growing farm worker struggle in the valleys of Southern California such as San Joaquin Valley and Coachella. These farm workers’ passionate desire and determination to change their unjust working conditions began to inspire a grassroots movement that correlated and fueled the larger Chicano movement for cultural and civil rights.

Workers of various ethnic groups have toiled for wages in California agricultural fields since the advent of commercial farming. By the 1920s, the largest segment of California’s farm

⁴⁵ Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval, *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1997) 165.

labor population was composed of Mexican immigrant field hands. Filipino immigrant workers also came to work in California in large numbers from 1910 to 1930. Both Mexican and Filipino immigrants left their homelands with the hopes of steady work, peace, and better pay wages. These Mexican immigrant workers indeed found work in the fields of California, but at a high cost of their individual equality and human rights. Mexican farm workers endured terrible living and working conditions. Rental housing in immigrant camps were in poor repair, unfairly priced and overcrowded. Rental housing often lacked basic facilities such as running water, toilets, heat, and electricity. Workers were commonly forced to buy overpriced goods in stores run and owned by growers, thus entering a cycle of debt that kept them tied to their employers. Performing grueling physical labor for extremely low wages, workers faced dangerous and inhumane conditions in the fields: cool, clean water and toilets were not guaranteed. In addition to unjust conditions that exposed workers to dangers pesticides, they were also subject to racial discrimination.⁴⁶

Accounts from the Official Website of the United Farm Workers of America elaborate further on the various injustices migrant farm workers faced during the 1960s. "Grape pickers in 1965 were making an average of \$.90/hour. State laws regarding working standards were simply ignored by growers. At one farm the boss made the workers all drink from the same cup 'a beer can' in the field; at another ranch workers were forced to pay a quarter per cup. No ranches had portable field toilets. Workers' temporary housing was strictly segregated by race, and they paid two dollars or more per day for unheated metal shacks often infested with mosquitoes with no indoor plumbing or cooking facilities. The average life expectancy of a farm worker was 49

⁴⁶ United Farm Workers, "UFW History," 2006, <http://www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html> (accessed 24 January 2012).

years.⁴⁷ With the rise of the Chicano movement in the early 1960s, farm workers began to reanalyze the consistent injustices they suffered as legally unjust and immorally wrong. Though they remained unprotected by a legal right to organize, Mexican and Filipino migrant farm workers looked to each other for strength and established an immediate urgency for change. Uniting as a collective group of farm workers suffering under a racist and unjust agricultural labor system they could call attention to their daily struggle and make their existence known.

Cesar Chavez and the UFW

The historic mention of *la Causa* and the role of huelga songs in the Chicano movement would not be complete without the acknowledgement of UFW leader, Cesar Chavez. Chavez was born in Arizona, but moved with his family to San Jose, California in 1938, where he lived in a barrio (Mexican neighborhood) called *sal si puedes* which translates to “get out if you can.” At an early age, Chavez believed that the only way to escape the cycle of poverty that had impacted so many people he knew was through hard work and education. After Chavez graduated from the eighth grade in 1942, his father was involved in an accident which forced him to help provide for his family and begin work as a migrant farm worker. With his family he worked the various fields of Southern California from Brawley to Oxnard, Atascadero, Gonzales, King City, Salinas, McFarland, Delano, Wasco, Selma, Kingsburg, and Mendota.⁴⁸ In 1948 Chavez married Helen Tabela and they settled in Delano, CA where they started their family.

⁴⁷ United Farm Workers, “UFW History,” 2006, http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html (accessed 25 January 2012).

⁴⁸ United Farm Workers, “The Story of Cesar Chavez,” 2006, http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/07.html (accessed 25 January 2012).

Chavez's life as a community organizer officially began in 1952 when he joined the Community Service Organization (CSO), a prominent Latino civil rights group. Serving as CSO's national director, Chavez conducted campaigns against racial and economic discrimination primarily in urban areas. In 1962 Chavez resigned from the CSO and founded the National Farm Workers Association, which would later become widely known as the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). Under Chavez's leadership, the UFW sought to convince state governments to pass laws that would give farm workers the legal right to organize into a union and allow collective bargaining agreements with agricultural companies. This legal right would allow farm workers to reclaim their rights of equality and the collective power to dictate their working conditions. As *la Causa* took hold, it incorporated the support of organized labor, religious groups, minorities, and students that used nonviolent tactics such as the boycott and the picket line as their political weapons. Through boycotts, strikes, and marches such as the 340 mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966, Chavez and the UFW sought recognition of the importance and dignity of all farm workers and national attention to their struggles for better pay and safer working conditions. Chavez was often willing to sacrifice his own life so that the UFW and its commitment to nonviolence would continue. Many of the UFW's nonviolent events were precipitated by fasts that were personal and collective declarations of non-cooperation against the terrible suffering of the farm workers and their children, the violation of their rights of equality, the dangers of pesticides, and the denial of fair and free elections.⁴⁹ Chavez's words are testament to his own persistence, hard work, faith, and willingness to sacrifice and also that of his fellow farm workers of the UFW. Committed to their struggle for justice through

⁴⁹ United Farm Workers, "The Story of Cesar Chavez," 2006, http://www.ufw.org/page_php?menu=research&inc=history/07.html (accessed 25 January 2012).

nonviolence, Chavez and the farm workers believed that they could build a great union while winning and keeping the self-respect of their people.

Years after his death, Chavez has become a national symbol for justice, humanity, equality and freedom. Though Chavez has attained national recognition, it is important that we remember his words and goals for the UFW and all humanity, “we must never forget that the human element is the most important thing we have. If we get away from this, we are certain to fail.”⁵⁰ Despite his achievements forging a diverse and extraordinary national coalition for workers rights, Chavez never earned more than \$6,000 a year and never owned a house. It is his human element and his ability to connect with various constituencies on a human level that has remained at the center of his historical presence. UFW supporters who were touched by Chavez’s presence and the fire in his heart continue to honor his memory through continuous battles for justice and equality.

The Use of Music in the UFW

Early in the formation of the United Farm Workers Union, Chavez and other organizers recognized that incorporating music into their struggle helped strengthen support within the community. In 1965 Chavez declared that it was time to begin using music as an organizing tool. As a child and young adult he had witnessed the power of music and was keenly aware of its value as a vehicle for mobilization. Chavez perceived a need to organize by means of a specific cultural language shared by the overwhelming majority of farm workers.⁵¹ Chavez and *La Causa* organizers believed that the cultural language that could speak to the masses was music. This

⁵⁰ Richard A. Garcia, “Cesar Chavez: A Personal and Historical Testimony,” *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 63, No.2, May 1994.

⁵¹ Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales, *Teatro Campesino Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas, 1994) 13.

revolutionary spirit of the Chicano movement became driven not only by a fervent desire for political and social change but also by its music and repertoire of songs that were made possible by guitars and voices of the people. The music of the farm worker struggle consisted of songs of resistance or huelga songs that were composed or translated by homegrown Chicano or Mexican musician activists. They became the familiar sounds to the period's marches, rallies, and demonstrations. Like the freedom songs of the African American civil rights movement, huelga songs fed the spirit of *La Causa*.⁵² Similar to the use of corridos discussed in the previous chapter, the practice of singing huelga songs likewise demonstrates the people involved in the Chicano movement's vital need for music to tell itself where it is. The practice of singing huelga songs served as a vehicle of meaning for those participating in the farm worker struggle. Huelga songs represented a community's collaborative work that reaffirmed a united farm worker identity by focusing attention on their current social realities and struggles.

This meaning of huelga songs arose from the use of music and singing in expressing the various concerns of the farm workers to both a local and national audience. Chavez and UFW organizers believed that singing traditions could help to anchor the goals of the farm worker struggle by suggesting a subjective environment in which its members could come to terms with new social identities.⁵³ In an environment that was dominated by fear, huelga songs served as a political outlet that allowed farm workers to publicly say what they felt they could not privately say to company owners' faces. Providing farm workers the strength to unionize and fight under a veil of injustice and danger, huelga songs, served as a powerful medium through which to foster the structures of feeling that motivated and shaped the farm workers struggle's united group cohesion and commitment.

⁵² Daniel Valdez et al., 2.

⁵³ Michael, Heisley, *Corridistas de la Huelga: Songmaking and Singing in the Lives of Two Individuals* (1983) 246.

Characteristics of Huelga Songs

Similar to corridos of the Chicano movement, the huelga songs that fueled *La Causa* of farm workers took many forms, from original songs to translated versions of civil rights songs like *We Shall Overcome* and other well known union songs. This variety of form speaks to the rich history of huelga songs. Many may ask, how was it possible that a civil war marching song became the anthem of the labor movement, fifty years later? That songs sung in Church ended up on the picket line? That gospels from the Deep South ended up in Spanish in the Southwest? For many UFW organizers and those that lived through the 1960s farm worker struggle, the reason for these rich historical connections stems from a shared knowledge and memory of resistance songs as well as a reaffirmation of identification or real experience through the song lyrics. This chapter will include various first hand testaments from participants of the 1960s farm worker movement. These statements are from *The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers*, a collective musical preservation project organized by Terry Scott. Scott and various UFW members' collaborative efforts are dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of the UFW as a significant part of United States labor history, (which is indicative of the revolutionary sustainability of the UFW and Chicano movement). For Jan Peterson, a UFW participant,

“huelga songs were the life-blood of our work with the UFW. We carried our singing with us everywhere: to meeting halls, to cities, to other countries, even to other continents. Many of these songs have traveled, just as farm workers have always done, from one generation to another; from one race to another, from another one worker to another, weaving themselves into a single thread of truth; a soaring of human spirit, a

laughing, irreverent, spirit, at times determined in the face of the greatest odds to take a stand for human dignity.”⁵⁴

Peterson’s statement illustrates how huelga songs situated themselves within the actual people who sang them. Without a deep connection that could reaffirm both a minority struggle and worker identity, huelga songs could not serve as an avenue of community formation within the farm workers struggle.

One of the most prominent tactics that allowed organizers to establish this sense of identification and personal connection with the singer was through language. Whether the huelga song was an original song or an adapted and translated song, the role of language was important in establishing a sense of connection between the singer and the song, between lyrics and lived experience. Due to the fact that the constituency of the UFW was predominately Mexican, the process of writing or translating huelga songs to Spanish proved to be a vital cultural organizing strategy within the movement. Utilizing the language of the movement’s constituency inspired people that did not have any training to jump right in. Huelga songs allowed the farm workers community to establish an inclusive environment where every member had a voice.⁵⁵ Both tactics of translation and language were used to adapt the well-known song *We Shall Overcome* or *Nosotros Venceremos* into the farm worker struggle.

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome

We shall overcome some day
Oh, deep in my heart

Nosotros Venceremos

Nosotros venceremos, nosotros
Venceremos

Nosotros venceremos ahora
O en mi Corazon

⁵⁴ Terry Scott, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Introduction,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/introductionsongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/introductionsongsandcommentary(final).pdf) (accessed 29 January 2012).

⁵⁵ Broyles-Gonzales 80.

I do believe
We shall overcome some day

Yo Creo
Nosotros venceremos⁵⁶

The original song *We Shall Overcome*, (see Appendix 2), has many different lives because it has been sung not only in the UFW but also in the African American civil rights movement, and before that, as an old church song. According to Gene Boutilier, a UFW participant, “it was wonderful to see how as the farm worker strike spread to the cities, African American congregations were adding the Spanish verses “Nosotros Venceremos” to demonstrate solidarity with the UFW.

Right after Dr. King’s death, during the Poor People’s Campaign, participants of the farm workers struggle traveled by mule train and other ways to Washington DC from all over the country. As people were traveling they would break out into song singing *We Shall Overcome*, where the multilingual version of the song served as a major point of unity during that time of despair and sadness.”⁵⁷

The use of translation and language allowed for *We Shall Overcome/Nosotros Venceremos* to become a huelga song that could unite people across racial and social boundaries. Above all, the translation of English lyrics to Spanish, which was also evident with the appropriation of historical corridos, freedom songs, and other labor songs, allowed farm workers of Mexican descent to identify specifically with the meaning and lyrics of the song, in turn linking farm workers to a wider struggle for integration, civil rights, and justice.

⁵⁶ Abby Rivera, “Song Lyrics with Translations-We Shall Overcome,” 2005, [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations\(combined\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations(combined).pdf) (accessed 1 February 2012).

⁵⁷ Gene Boutilier and Augustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-We Shall overcome,” “n.d.” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction to songsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction to songsandcommentary(final).pdf) (accessed 1 February 2012).

Another key aspect of the incorporation of huelga songs into the farm workers struggle and the larger Chicano movement derives from a shared knowledge and memory of resistance songs and cultural language through music. Shared knowledge of particular songs, be they from Church or popular sources helped weave together the experiences of those who comprised the farm worker movement. Similar to the corrido's history discussed in the first chapter, the cultural storehouses of collective memory likewise assisted Chicanos in selecting specific huelga songs to document and depict their farm worker movement. According to author Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez memory should not be understood as a cerebral, individualistic, psychological process, but in its collective and physical manifestation: as remembrance and transmission of the community's knowledge through that community's performance forms.⁵⁸ For many Gonzalez's statement highlights how the collective use of memory enabled the practice of singing huelga songs that the group as a whole could identify with. Utilizing resistance songs that resided in the participants of the UFW's memory, farm workers could collectively demand just wages and better working conditions. The huelga song, *Solidaridad pa' Siempre/Solidarity Forever* was one of these huelga songs that derived from UFW organizers' memory.

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever
Solidarity Forever
Solidarity Forever
For the unión makes us strong

When the union's inspiration
Through the workers blood shall run

For what force on earth is weaker
Than the feeble strength of one

Solidaridad pa' Siempre

Solidaridad pa' Siempre
Solidaridad pa' Siempre
Solidaridad pa' Siempre
Que viva nuestra unión

En las vinas de la ira luchan por su libertad
todos los trabajadores quieren ya vivir en paz

y por eso companeros nos tenemos que juntar
Con Solidaridad

⁵⁸ Broyles-Gonzalez 15.

But the union makes us strong⁵⁹

The original tune *Solidarity Forever* was originally written by William Steffe, from South Carolina as a religious revival song in 1856. Steffe's song was then transformed into an unofficial anthem of the American Civil War by a Boston-based regiment of soldiers who included, amongst them, a soldier named John Brown. The result was a poem, published first in February 1862 in the *Atlantic Monthly* and was later referred to as the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," becoming the best-known Civil War song of the North. The song soon became widely known as *Solidarity Forever* and the anthem for union struggle throughout the United States as a symbol of worker unity in the struggle for union representation.⁶⁰ The establishment of the song *Solidarity Forever* in public consciousness as a resistance song enabled UFW participants to recognize its relevance to the farm worker struggle. UFW participant, Lupe Murguia states that the huelga song *Solidaridad pa' Siempre* reminds her of the strike in Coachella in 1973.

"I remember this song because of all of the hard times that we had on the picket line. We had to get up at 3:00 am in the morning. We had to make sure everyone was in their place on the picket line, so that when the scabs arrived, we would be ready to talk with them when they came. *Solidaridad pa' Siempre* was the only song that we all knew. The whole picket line would sing the song. We never had a guitar, but we would all sing

⁵⁹ Abby Rivera, "Song Lyrics with Translations-Solidarity Forever," 2005, [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations\(combined\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations(combined).pdf) (accessed 3 February 2012).

⁶⁰ Lupe Murguia et al., "The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Solidarity Forever," "n.d" [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction to songsandcommentary\(fina\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction to songsandcommentary(fina).pdf) (accessed 3 February 2012).

together. We would either pray, or sing Solidaridad. It gave us courage, strength, spirit and valor.”⁶¹

Though *Solidaridad pa’ Siempre* was not originally from the farm workers movement, it did exist in the participants’ memory and through their practice of singing it, mixing Spanish and English, sometimes changing the tempos or syllables made the song “their own.” The very act of farm workers and volunteers singing together these two important songs brought them closer because of the warmth and spirit of the songs and how they sang them as means of a cultural and social revival.

Function of Huelga Songs

In *The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers*, Terry Scott quotes John Steinbeck who once stated “in that the songs of the working people have always been their sharpest statement and the one statement that cannot be destroyed...Songs are the statement of a people. Listening to their songs teaches you more about a people than any other means, for into the songs go all the hopes, hurts, the angers, fears, the wants and aspirations.”⁶² Steinbeck’s statement acknowledges that through huelga songs the farm worker community constructed a social and political voice that had a specific function and purpose. The connection between the practice of singing huelga songs and the location and context in which they were sung delves into the richer meaning of their social and political function. During the 1960s farm worker struggle, huelga songs were principally performed on the picket lines, at rallies, meetings and

⁶¹ Lupe Murguía, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Solidarity Forever,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction to songsandcommentary\(fina\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/scott/introduction%20to%20songsandcommentary(fina).pdf) (accessed 3 February 2012).

⁶² Terry Scott, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Conclusion,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 4 February 2012).

other union demonstrations. The picket line becomes the prime site for the meaning and performance of huelga songs. According to historian Stevan César Azcona, singing on the picket line had two specific purposes. One was to sustain the strikers during the long hours they spent picketing and the second was to use these songs as organizing tools with which to draw the attention of the scabs and draw them into the union.⁶³ For the UFW and the farm worker community, their struggle to increase national awareness about the social injustices they suffered was also connected to their consistent struggle to increase union membership and strength within their collective group. For the UFW this often meant convincing “scabs,” a nickname dubbed to farm workers who refused to participate in the movement or the union, that they too had a role within the community’s collective action. The song *El Picket Sign* by Luis Valdez, a farm worker organizer and founder of Teatro Campesino, demonstrates the inter-connectedness of the huelga song and its principal site of struggle.

El Picket Sign

El Picket Sign, el picket sign
Lo llevo por todo el dia
El picket sign, el picket sign
Conmigo toda la vida

Hay unos que no comprenden aunque
Muchos les dan consejos
Hay unos que no comprenden aunque
Muchos les dan consejos
La huelga es Buena pa’ todos pero unos se
Hacen pendejos

Y ahora organizando la gente
En todos los files
Y ahora organizando la gente
En todos los files

The Picket Sign

The Picket Sign, the picket sign
I carry it all day with me
The picket sign, the picket sign
With me throughout my life

There are some who don’t understand
Though favored with advice
There are some who don’t understand
Though favored with advice
The strike is good for everybody but
Some play the stupid fool

And now organizing the workers
In all the fields
And now organizing the workers
In all the fields

⁶³ Azcona 86.

Porque unos solo comen tortillas
Con puros chiles

Because some only eat tortillas with
Nothing else but chiles⁶⁴

The song *El Picket Sign* comes from, a Mexican song, *Se va El Caiman* or “The Crocodile Goes Away,” is presumed to have roots in either the Caribbean or Africa. The song *El Picket Sign* was adapted and rewritten specifically keeping in mind the morale of the farm worker community. The song *El Picket Sign* creates a picture for both unfamiliar audiences and those involved in *La Causa*. Picket lines appeared in front of various supermarket chains in city after city in California and would eventually spread to other parts of the country. Urban community organizing around the farm worker struggle soon incorporated fundamental issues that had long troubled the ethnic Mexican and Chicano communities such as poor quality of the educational system and the alarming rate of high school drop outs/push outs, police brutality, lack of adequate employment and other types of discrimination.⁶⁵ The song includes the verse “those that don’t understand though favored advice” which refers to both anti-farm worker constituencies such as large farming companies or scabs and the determination of the organizing farm worker community. The last line states that some organizers “only eat tortillas and nothing else” which highlight how many farm worker communities refused to eat the agricultural products they helped pick as a direct boycott of farming companies who remained insensitive to the needs of their farm worker employees. Another important aspect of *El Picket Sign*, is its up-tempo beat which energizes people to move and sustain their motivation and energy on the picket lines. UFW participant Lorraine Agtang-Greer said, “Going on strike and being on the picket line was the first time I said no more; it was time for change. For the first time, we were

⁶⁴ Abby Rivera, “Song Lyrics with Translations-El Picket Sign,” 2005, [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations\(combined\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations(combined).pdf) (accessed 6 February 2012).

⁶⁵ Azcona 116.

standing up and saying that we had a right to be treated with respect, to have clean water, just to have bathrooms! For Abby Rivera, another UFW participant, music helped accomplish these goals of the farm worker struggle, “The lyrics of the huelga songs were about things being said out in the picket line and we loved hearing them put to music.”⁶⁶ Memories from various UFW participants speak to how huelga songs embodied the voice of the farm worker community that was finally being heard at a national level. Through singing huelga songs the farm worker community could finally remove the *mordaza* or gag that for so many years kept them from expressing the pain of oppression.⁶⁷

Morality in Huelga Songs

A large majority of the UFW’s constituency was of Mexican descent and had firm religious beliefs in Catholicism. Though Cesar Chavez was a devout Catholic and a firm believer in non-violence, he did not want religion to be a crutch for both labor activists and his community. Though Chavez’s commitment to non-violence may have been influenced by his religious beliefs, he believed that the movement’s non secularism would allow for it be an inclusive space where anyone could join the fight for humane social justice. Chavez and other Catholic organizers saw the farm worker movement as autonomous, working alongside God to accomplish compatible goals. The incorporation of spiritual themes through huelga songs and iconic images enabled UFW participants to address any lingering self-doubt about their worth as individuals within the U.S.⁶⁸ The image of the Virgen de Guadalupe served as an iconic symbol and rallying point for farm workers in their fight to gain union representation and recognition of their rights. The image of the Virgen de Guadalupe has become important throughout Mexico

⁶⁶ Lorraine Agtang-Greer, Abby Rivera, and Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-El Picket Sign,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us./media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us./media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 6 February 2012).

⁶⁷ Azcona 177.

⁶⁸ Sanger 90.

and Latin America as a representation of *mestizo* identity and a symbolic image of Latino patriotism and nationalism. Cesar Chavez believed that the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe had an intense emotional appeal to the farm workers of Mexican descent. Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the UFW, said about the use of the Virgen's image, "she is a symbol of faith, hope, and leadership. God and history are on our side."⁶⁹



The image of La Virgen, such as the one seen above, was proudly displayed in UFW rallies and speeches. She became a unifying symbol of the moral justice migrant farm workers were trying to attain with their movement. The image above titled "UFW Marcher and La Virgen 1974", not only shows a woman carrying the symbol of La Virgen during a UFW march in Modesto, CA

⁶⁹ Labor Archives and Research Center, "Cultivating Creativity: The Arts and the Farm Workers' Movement During the 1960s and 1970s," 2007 <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/exhibits/cultivating/history.html> (accessed 6 February 2012).

but also captures this essence of unity and morality that the image of the Virgen evoked for the UFW struggle.⁷⁰

In September 1965, Chavez called a meeting of the National Farm Workers Association at our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Delano, CA just north of Bakersfield. The union unanimously voted to join Filipino grape pickers in a *huelga* or strike. When strikers were intentionally sprayed with pesticides by angry company growers, Chavez organized a protest march from Delano to Sacramento. The pilgrimage or *peregrinacion* in Spanish happened in 1966 with the Virgen de Guadalupe banner leading the group along the 340 mile route. After arriving in Sacramento on Easter Sunday, the marchers again met in Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento.⁷¹ In 1966, just days before the March from Delano to Sacramento, Agustin Lira a member of Teatro Campesino wrote the song *La Peregrinacion*, which highlights the UFW and its participants' relationship with religion, God, and most importantly morality.

La Peregrinacion

Y que yo he de decir?
Que yo estoy cansado?
Que el camino es largo
Y no se ve el fin?

Coro:

Desde Delano voy
Hasta Sacramento
Hasta Sacramento
Mis derechos a pelear
Mi Virgencita Guadalupana
Oye estos pasos,

The Pilgrimage

And what should I say?
That I am tired?
That the road is long
And the end is nowhere in sight?

Chorus:

From Delano I go
To Sacramento
To Sacramento
To fight for my rights
My Virgen of Guadalupe
Here these steps,

⁷⁰ Jesus M. Mena Garza, "Chicano Photographer: The 70s from a Chicano Perspective," 2006 http://www.jmmgarza.com/_ix/virg_mar.html (accessed 8 March 2012).

⁷¹ Labor Archives and Research Center, "Cultivating Creativity: The Arts and the Farm Workers' Movement During the 1960s and 1970s," 2007 <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/exhibits/cultivating/history.html> (accessed 6 February 2012).

Que todo el mundo
Lo sabra

Because the world
Will know of them⁷²

La Peregrinacion highlights the connection of morality to the movement through the incorporation of symbols such as Virgen de Guadalupe that provided a source of strength that would get UFW workers through their journey. Agustin Lira would later say about his process of writing *La Peregrinacion*, “I took the ideas of the words for this song from the picket lines, from the farm workers’ lives. There were thoughts and feelings behind their actions: they were picketing for better wages, better conditions in the fields. But behind that, was self-respect and dignity.”⁷³ The huelga song *La Peregrinacion* and other huelga songs emphasize the moral concerns and social identity of farm workers, aspects that they used to underlie and define their struggle and underscore the moral authority of their cause.

Analysis of Huelga Songs

As mentioned before, huelga songs have a deep and rich history that reveals a substantive amount about the historical context of the 1960s farm worker movement. Emerging from a cultural storehouse of vast musical knowledge, huelga songs were drawn from and influenced by many different musical sources. It is this deep history of huelga songs that prompt various questions surrounding the practice of singing huelga songs and the significance of this act for the farm workers movement and its participants. What were the social and material bases for the production of songs within this social movement? What do these songs tell us about the historical moment of their production? What were the relations between movement

⁷² Abby Rivera, “Song Lyrics with Translations-La Peregrinacion,” 2005, [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations\(combined\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations(combined).pdf) (accessed 7 February 2012).

⁷³ Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-La Peregrinacion,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 8 February 2012).

musicians/performers, audiences, and the politics of ideology of the movement. The most significant of these questions, why was the huelga song such a powerful effective vehicle in this moment of historic change for the farm worker community and Chicano movement overall? By taking a deeper look at the lyrics of specific huelga songs we can begin to answer some of these questions that allow us to comprehend why the farm worker community turned to music to sanctify their struggle for political and social justice, equality, and respectful recognition.

No Nos Moveran/ We Shall Not Be Moved

A big component to understanding huelga songs is the historical context from which they arose. Local organizing throughout the movement made real the need to work on behalf of the farm worker movement, whether motivated by family histories of working in the fields or urban boycotts of grocery store chains. Many huelga songs were written to highlight these local organizing motivations, while “solidarity” huelga songs on the other hand were more distinct because they were not written by farm workers themselves but could still identify with their social justice movement.⁷⁴ The song *We Shall Not be Moved* or *No Nos Moveran* was among these solidarity huelga songs that did not originally arise from the farm worker movement but could be applied to its key goals. The song has origins as a spiritual song, that refers to Bible Psalm 1:3 “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”⁷⁵ The song was first sung on the picket line by striking North Carolina textile workers in the 1930s where strikers faced violence by state troopers. The song was then made more well-known as it was incorporated into the African American civil rights movement. According to UFW participant, Kathy Murguia, “the song *We Shall Not Be Moved* was translated into Spanish in the fall of 1965 and was a hit on the picket

⁷⁴ Azcona 148.

⁷⁵ Kathy Murguia, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-We Shall Not Be Moved,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 9 February 2012).

lines. The NO aspect became a source of conviction that the farm workers would never give up. I loved the counterpoint used at times to echo the NO. It was powerful.”⁷⁶

We Shall Not Be Moved

We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
We shall not be moved

The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water

United we will win
We shall not be moved
The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
We shall not be moved

No Nos Moveran

No, no, no, nos moveran
No, no, no, nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio
No, nos moveran

La union con nosotros
No nos moveran
La union con nosotros
No nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio

Unidos ganaremos
No no nos moveran
Unidos ganaremos
No nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio
No nos moveran⁷⁷

The oral practice of adapting already existing songs into protest songs has a long tradition within the civil rights and farm worker movements. According to historian Stevan César Azcona, the process of translating a traditional solidarity song to Spanish was done in the spirit of the songs and was not necessarily literal. Some songs were sung bilingually as was the case with *No Nos Moveran* and *Nosotros Venceremos*; there was however a kind of Mexicanizing of these songs musically.⁷⁸ As Kathy Murguia mentioned, the “No” aspect of the translated *We Shall Not be Moved* served as a powerful affirmation of an end to unjust treatment. The act of translating the line “We shall not, we shall not be moved” to Spanish allowed bilingual

⁷⁶ Kathy Murguia, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-We Shall Not Be Moved,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 9 February 2012).

⁷⁷ Abby Rivera, “Song Lyrics with Translations-We Shall Not Be Moved,” 2005, [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations\(combined\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/songlyricswithtranslations(combined).pdf) (accessed 9 February 2012).

⁷⁸ Azcona 95.

speakers to emphasize the farm worker community's stance against unequal treatment and pressure of opposition. Analyzing the huelga song *We Shall Not Be Moved/No Nos Moveran* we see how music allowed the farm worker community the opportunity to express social critique and cultural commentary in times of crisis. Songs such as *No Nos Moveran* are historical entities compacted with social, cultural, and musical significance, revealing as much about the people who sang them as their particular social movement.⁷⁹ The verses of *No Nos Moveran* tell us that the farm worker struggle was determined in achieving the social, political and economic goals of their movement and with the help of songs such as *No Nos Moveran* this determination would not be waived by counter-oppositional challenges.

La Guitarra Campesina

Although huelga songs were lyrically written toward the political goals of the strike, the use of descriptive imagery allowed lyrical content to highlight the physical aspects of the farm worker community, particularly focusing on pastoral themes of the *rancho* and *el campo*. *La Guitarra Campesina* is one of these huelga songs that illustrate the physical and emotional environment of the farm worker community as well as the symbol of *la guitarra* or guitar for the unity found within music.

La Guitarra Campesina

Oye hermanos campesinos
Yo les vengo aquí a cantar
Que en este país tan rico
Aprendimos a luchar

Yo vengo del Imperial
De Coachella y San Joaquín
Pa' pelear con los rancheros
Y pa' darles ya su fin

La guitarra campesina

The Farm Worker Guitar

Listen farm worker brothers
I have come here to sing to you
That in this rich country
We must learn to struggle

I come from Imperial County
From Coachella and San Joaquín
To fight against the ranchers
To give them their end

The farm worker guitar

⁷⁹ Azcona 116.

En huelga se levanto

Has risen up in strike⁸⁰

While many of the other huelga songs discussed in this chapter narrate the feelings of solidarity between the demands for justice and the farm workers movement, *La Guitarra Campesina* is more a personal statement of solidarity with other farm workers. Written in *huapango* form, a musical style that originated in La Huasteca region in Mexico, by Ramon Chunky Sanchez, the song speaks to his farm workers' origins from Southern California's imperial county and experiences in the fields of the Coachella and San Joaquin valleys. Although a *huapango* originally, the song has a subtle narrative quality as the verses speak directly to the use of the first person. Sanchez's experience as a farm worker gives authority to his statement of solidarity for playing and singing to the world about the inequality of farm worker life.⁸¹ Besides proclaiming a distinct connection with the land they toiled, the use of "I" in the song *La Guitarra Campesina* recognizes the individual commitment of those within the farm worker community to fight for their equal rights. *La Guitarra Campesina* demonstrates how declaring individual commitment and responsibility within a collective social movement increased group unity. The last verse of Sanchez's song states, "the farm worker guitar has risen up in strike." This verse demonstrates how the farm worker struggle and music were inter-connected. Many huelga songs were generally composed for guitars and song, which allowed for rapid reproductions so that any member of the movement could participate, learn, and disseminate the song on their own.⁸² Identifying and proclaiming their individual identity as political agents allowed for farm workers to collectively and individually use their voices as defenses against institutionalized inequality.

Huelga en General

⁸⁰ Azcona 150-151.

⁸¹ Azcona 150-151.

⁸² Azcona 131.

Said to be Cesar Chavez's most favorite huelga song, *Huelga en General* vividly illustrates the revolutionary demands of the Chicano movement, specifically the farm worker struggle and how through the process of appropriation their struggle is documented in this historic period of social revolution. The lyrics of *Huelga en General* reflect the emerging idea of universal equality for the farm worker community; it becomes not only a Chicano struggle but also a struggle inclusive to all mankind. Like so many other huelga songs discussed in this chapter *Huelga en General* also has a deep history rooted in appropriation. According to historian Azcona, the song was originally heard by Luis Valdez, a UFW participant and founder of Teatro Campesino, during a trip to Cuba in 1964. The original lyrics from Cuba are as follows:

Original Huelga En General

Hasta México ha llegado
la noticia muy alegre
de que Cuba es diferente;
Ya no hay nadie que la estorbe
ni tiranos engreídos
que acababan con la gente;
Y como somos hermanos
la alegría compartimos
con toditos los cubanos.
¡Viva la revolución!
¡Viva la reforma agrarian!
¡Viva Fidel Castro Ruz!

Original General Strike

From Mexico has come
the good news
that Cuba is different;
For now no one can obstruct her
not even arrogant tyrants
who are destroying the people;
And as we are brothers
the happiness we share
with all the Cubans.
Long live the revolution!
Long live Agrarian Reform!
Long live Fidel Castro Ruz!⁸³

The effect of the Cuban Revolution on Chicanos and Mexicanos both sides of the border had tremendous influence on the musical production of Chicanos during the *movimiento*, and it manifested itself in the initial weeks of the farm worker strike of 1965. In tandem with the revolutionary and triumphant rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the imagery and sloganeering that identified these historical periods was also appropriated to politicize the

⁸³ Azcona 99.

current struggle in the consciousness of both strikers and scabs.⁸⁴ UFW participant Agustin Lira shares his memories of the song *Huelga en General*,

“When Luis Valdez returned from Cuba, he had a bunch of melodies that he brought back with him. Huelga en General is one of those songs, Luis didn’t change the melody at all. He just changed the words. Actually, we all worked on it together. We all helped each other figuring out the verses. We were looking for material that we could use, that we could translate; that we could adapt; and also, material that we were creating on our own.”⁸⁵

Though *Huelga en General* was originally about political revolution in Cuba, both the Chicano and farm worker communities could identify with the social battle depicted in the song’s lyrics. Through the process of appropriation, the farm worker community adapted *Huelga en General* to document their political movement, specifically the emergence of their farm worker union and the role of their great grape strike in September 1965.

Huelga en General

Hasta México ha llegado
la noticia muy alegre
que Delano es diferente.
Pues el pueblo ya está en contra
los rancheros y engreídos
que acababan con la gente.
Y como somos hermanos
la alegría compartimos
con todos los campesinos,

¡Viva la revolución!
¡Arriba con nuestra unión!
¡Viva huelga en general!
El día ocho de septiembre

General Strike

All the way to Mexico has come
the good news
that Delano is different.
But the people are now against
the ranchers and the arrogant
who are destroying the people.
And as we as brothers
the happiness we share
with all the farm workers.

Long live the revolution!
Long live the our union!
Long live the general strike!
On the eighth of September

⁸⁴ Azcona 101.

⁸⁵ Lorraine Agtang-Greer and Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers- Huelga en General,” “n.d”
[http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 10 February 2012).

de los campos de Delano

from the fields of Delano⁸⁶

Looking at a few verses of the farm worker's *Huelga en General* we see the visible similarities to the original lyrics. The process of appropriation was a pragmatic aesthetic choice in terms of the size and selection of the repertoire by using lyrics and or melodies that were either easy to learn or already recognizable. Furthermore, at the picket lines, marches or rallies where the songs could be performed the constant repetition that associated with the style aided in the learning process.⁸⁷ Applying the same revolutionary spirit that was present in the original lyrics, farm workers declared their struggle as a contemporary social revolution of the people, incorporating slogans such as "Long live the general strike," and "Long live the revolution." *Huelga en General* also symbolizes the unity of all people who identify with the farm workers' community. Including verses such as "And since we are all brothers, we share our happiness with all farm workers" emphasizes the UFW movement's inclusivity to other farm workers such as the Filipino workers but also those not from the farm worker community. Anyone could identify with the right to equality and anyone could have a role within the farm workers' contemporary revolutionary struggle. Agustin Lira once expressed surrounding the use of huelga songs in the movement,

"It was wonderful, frightening, horrific, beautiful and scary, all of it. It was horrific and scary to see the kinds of injustices that the *campesinos* were made to endure, the harassments they had to put up with when they were trying to organize. It was beautiful and wonderful because it was people of all ages fighting for their rights and they were

⁸⁶ Azcona 99.

⁸⁷ Azcona 96.

farm workers, people who no one ever imagined would be able to stand up and fight for themselves.”⁸⁸

The incorporation of huelga songs into the farm workers movement assisted in solidifying a collective spirit that could mobilize people from all walks of life around social justice issues. For many UFW participants the act of singing huelga songs allowed them to recognize the hardships of their struggle but they also helped to celebrate the beauty of a united farm worker/*campesino* energy determined to stand up for social equality in the face of great odds.

Conclusion

After exploring more of the rich history of huelga songs, we come back to the principal question of why was the huelga song such a powerful and effective vehicle in this moment of historic change for the farm worker community and the 1960s Chicano movement overall? It is clear through analysis of popular huelga songs that the huelga song itself and the practice of singing it gave the farm worker community access to a politically and socially conscious realm. Through tools such as language, translation, and appropriation, farm workers were in a position where they could create their own musical tradition that not only documented their struggles and experiences but validated them within the larger 1960s Chicano movement and the unfamiliar national U.S. population. The huelga song gave a political voice to the farm worker community that invited a national audience to listen to their demands of equality but most importantly their invitation to take action. Rodolfo Corky Gonzales, Chicano activist and author of “I am Joaquin,” once said in relation to the use of music in the Chicano movement, “guitars, singers, and songs have silenced weapons of oppression and have inspired a noble people to struggle for

⁸⁸ Lorraine Agtang-Greer and Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Huelga en General,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 11 February 2012).

our cause.”⁸⁹ I believe it is important to note that by the 1980s the UFW/farm worker community had voted in masses for union in state-conducted elections, which allowed for about 40,000 farm workers to be protected by UFW contracts.⁹⁰ As late as 2005 the UFW membership has reached 50,000 active members who have continued to use their voices, as Gonzales says, to combat oppressive agricultural companies and state federal laws.

Chapter 3 El Teatro Campesino: Musically and Theatrically Mobilizing the Chicano Movement

As stated in their mission statement, Teatro Campesino believes that “we will consider our job done when every one of our people has regained his sense of personal dignity and pride

⁸⁹ Lorraine Agtang-Greer and Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-Huelga en General,” “n.d”
[http://www.farmworkermovement.us./media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us./media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 11 February 2012).

⁹⁰ United Farm Workers, “UFW Successes Through the Years,” 2006,
http://www.ufw.org/page_php?menu=research&inc=history/07.html (accessed 11 February 2012).

in his history, culture, and raza.”⁹¹ Unlike the corridos and huelga song traditions, Teatro Campesino as a musical and theatrical entity plays a slightly different role within the larger Chicano movement. Teatro Campesino, which means the farm workers theater, grew out of the United Farm Workers struggle and marked the distinct transition of *movimiento* music such as corridos and huelga songs to *movimiento* ensembles and theatrical performance. Adapting and reinventing theatrical performance qualities that were closely associated with “guerrilla theatre” such as *actos* and comedy, Teatro Campesino toured throughout the United States performing skits that addressed the political goals and experiences of the people involved in the Chicano movement. Though Teatro Campesino differs from the corrido and huelga musical traditions, it has helped greatly to achieve public recognition by addressing key themes of Chicano identity, local and nationalist struggles, and nationalist consciousness. Most importantly, at Teatro Campesino’s core is the use of performance theater to produce community shows or skits that reflected the Chicano experience which often was interpreted through song.

As a collaborative community group comprised of activists, artists, musicians and people involved in the Chicano movement, Teatro Campesino fused theater, music, and lived experience together not only to popularly disperse *movimiento* songs and issues of the Chicano community, but also to organize *la raza* both politically and economically. The popular songs incorporated by Teatro Campesino such as *Niños Campesinos*, *De Colores*, and *Quihubo Raza*, illustrate the musical and theatrical context from which they sprung. As a vehicle through which specific *movimiento* songs were popularly performed, Teatro Campesino demonstrates how the shift to musical ensembles allowed the Chicano people to broadcast the goals of their political movement and to reconstruct and preserve their history as they embodied it in their individual

⁹¹ Teatro Campesino, *Cancionero de la Raza* (Fresno, CA) 8.

and collective performance traditions. Historian Anita Gonzales once stated that “there are telescoping levels of veracity within folkloric performance as cultural symbols or elements are reused, reinterpreted, reshaped and reinvented to create contemporary fluid meanings for the cultural community.”⁹² Teatro Campesino’s power rested in its ability to preserve and reinvent musical and theatrical traditions to affirm a Chicano community’s ever evolving identity. Teatro Campesino represented and continues to represent the influence of cultural performance in solidifying communities, both regional and national, which is evident in its ability to serve as a musical and visual medium through which the Chicano people as national citizens and individuals remember and transform their past.

Contextual History of El Teatro Campesino

As corridos and huelga songs became popular musical aspects of the Chicano movement, there was a shift to musical and theater ensembles that many felt could better incorporate acting, performing and singing. In 1965, Luis Valdez a recent graduate of San Jose State University had a vision of a theater group that could serve as an important source of consciousness-raising for farm workers. Originally from Tulare, CA, Valdez was a student activist in college who had traveled to Cuba as a member of the Progressive Labor Party. Upon his return, he joined the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a foremost exponent of guerrilla protest theater emerging in the turbulent 1960s’ atmosphere of the Bay Area.⁹³ San Francisco Mime Troupe has become known as a theater group of political satire combining aspects of guerrilla theater such as *commedia dell’ arte* (improvised performances based on sketches or scenarios) melodrama, and broad farce. Teatro Campesino was the first and only Chicano theater to become a professional company.

⁹² Anita Gonzales, *Jarocho’s Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro-Mexican Dance*, (University Press of America, 2004) 73.

⁹³ Rosales 138-139.

Created in response to the UFW and the farm worker struggle, Teatro Campesino functioned in two manners: first it promoted solidarity among striking farm workers and attempted to proselytize strike-breakers, and, second, it served as a propaganda organ for the grape boycott among non-farm workers.⁹⁴

Prior to the establishment of Teatro Campesino in 1965, Cesar Chavez had wanted to use a theatrical tradition known as the *carpa* as an organizing tool. As a child and young adult he had witnessed the power of *carpa* performances and was keenly aware of the value of humor as a vehicle of critique and mobilization. Chavez's strong reliance on Mexican cultural practices to consolidate farm workers politically was new in the annals of U.S. labor unions. Chavez and other organizers perceived the need to mobilize by means of a specific cultural language shared by the overwhelming majority of farm workers. Chavez once said, "I wanted a *carpa* in the union for purposes of communication. It would be funny. Yet it could communicate union issues."⁹⁵ As Chavez's statement shows, Teatro Campesino always had a close connection to the farm workers struggle. Co-founder of Teatro Campesino, Agustin Lira once stated that

"we started the Teatro Campesino in 1965. We had been picketing all day. Luis Valdez was there and he asked us if we wanted to go to the restaurant to get some coffee. Sitting in the restaurant, he told us that he had an idea about starting a theater group, and about recruiting other members into it... We recruited members and started practicing our actos after the picket lines, in the office, or at the union meetings. It started to really take off, and that's when we went to Cesar Chavez to get his permission to recruit people into the Teatro, and to take it on the road. We started making plans, building the actos, trying them out on the farm workers

⁹⁴ Nicolas Kanellos, *Mexican American Theatre: Then and Now* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1983) 20.

⁹⁵ Azcona 13.

after the picket line, and then finally, when it really took off, we started to go outside of California.”⁹⁶

The farm workers’ fight for equality inspired Luis Valdez and theater members to create *actos* or skits that made strikers laugh and counteracted the depressing effects of a draining and exhaustive struggle. The majority of the people in Teatro Campesino created their own material that was based on their personal experiences as farm workers. These members incorporated aspects of acting and performing traditions, particularly singing traditions that gave them access to lyrics that could reflect the reality of the movement. As Teatro Campesino began receiving national recognition as an innovative, agit-prop troupe where the primary concern was popularizing the plight of southwestern farm workers, Valdez sought to create more of a national theater that would speak to concerns of the entire Chicano community.

By 1970 Teatro Campesino was in streets, parks, churches, and schools, spreading a newly found, bilingual-bicultural identity through *actos*, short improvisational pieces that explored all of the issues confronting Chicanos, the farmworker struggle for unionization, the Vietnam War, the drive for bilingual education, community control of parks and schools, and the war against drug addiction and crime.⁹⁷ Teatro Campesino’s extensive touring and the publicity it gained from the farm worker struggle all effectively contributed to the launching of a national Teatro movement. By 1976 various other Teatro groups such as Santa Barbara’s *El Teatro de la Esperanza*, Tuscon’s *Libertad*, Teatro Chicano de Austin, *Compania Trucha of Chicago’s Eighteenth Street Barrio*, and Denver’s *Teatro de la Causa de los Pobres* had entered the scene

⁹⁶ Agustin Lira, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-La Peregrinacion,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scotti/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scotti/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed by 25 February 2012) 13.

⁹⁷ Kanellos 9.

and had developed their own genres, themes, and community bases from California to the Midwest. Following Valdez's inspirational example, the university students and community people creating teatro groups held fast to their grass roots of being Chicano. In doing so they created the perfect vehicle for communing artistically within their culture and environment. In truth, they discovered a way to mine history and cultural folklore for elements that could best solidify the heterogeneous community and sensitize it to class, cultural identity and politics. The creation of art from the folk materials of a people, their music, humor, social configurations and environment, represented the fulfillment of Luis Valdez's vision of a Chicano national theater.⁹⁸ The contextual history of Teatro Campesino illustrates how generated by the anger and hope of the progressive social movements of the 1960s, such as the civil rights movements, the United Farm Workers Movement, and the anti-war movement, a widespread theatrical mobilization sought to affirm an alternative social vision that relied on a distinctly Chicano aesthetic. Teatro Campesino the first Chicano touring theater, served as a community representation of Chicano people by carrying on traditional forms of acting, performing and singing that was broadcasted within the community and eventually the nation at large.

Teatro: A Mexican Cultural Tradition

Teatro or theater as a cultural practice has a deep traditional lineage in Mexico and Southern California. According to historian Ann Betty Diamond, the roots of Chicano theater derive from the ritual dramas of the Mayas and the Aztecas, pre-Colombian indigenous people of Mexico. The mystery and morality of plays brought to the continent of North America by the Spaniards were disseminated by Franciscan priests to the indigenous peoples. After the Mexican

⁹⁸ Kanellos 11.

Revolution, rural theaters were imposed with the goal of teaching the Indians to be civilized.⁹⁹ As immigration brought people to the United States, early Mexican Americans drew upon these traditional *mestizo* and indigenous roots as they created the first Mexican American vaudeville companies that toured the Southwest in tent theaters. For Mexicans and Chicanos living in the 1960s it was important to reclaim a theatrical and musical tradition that was once an oppressive act as something that could be empowering.

According to Nicolas Kanellos, author of *Two Centuries of Hispanic Theatre in the Southwest*, the first European-centric dramatic performance north of the Rio Grande River took place somewhere near El Paso in 1598 when Juan de Onate's men improvised a play based on their adventures exploring New Mexico.¹⁰⁰ By the turn of the 16th century, major Spanish-language companies were performing all along the Mexico-United States border, following a circuit that extended from Laredo to San Antonio and El Paso and through New Mexico to Arizona and Los Angeles, then up to San Francisco and down to San Diego. The advent of rail transportation and the automobile made theater more accessible to smaller population centers. The two cities with the largest Mexican populations, Los Angeles and San Antonio, became theatrical centers, the former also feeding off of the important film industry in Hollywood. Los Angeles became a powerful source for Mexican American and eventually Chicano theater.

Nicolas Kanellos argues that the Los Angeles early vaudeville groups served a public that was hungry to see itself reflected in stage, an audience whose interest was piqued by plays relating to current events, politics, sensational crimes and of course the real-life epic of a people living under the cultural and economic domination of an English-speaking American society on

⁹⁹ Betty Ann Diamond, "Brown Eyed Children of the Sun: The Cultural Politics of El Teatro Campesino" (1997) 66.

¹⁰⁰ Kanellos 19-38.

land that was once a part of Mexican patrimony. Lastly with Kanellos' statement it should also be reemphasized that, from the beginning of Chicano theater, the relationship of performers and theaters to the community and the nationality was close; Mexican American theater served to reinforce the sense of community by bringing all Spanish-speakers together in a cultural act of preservation and the support of the language and art of Mexicans and Chicanos in the face of domination from a foreign culture.¹⁰¹ Similar to corridos and huelga songs, the phenomenon of reliance upon cultural and traditional practices sheds light on how the theater movement sought out a commonality of origin within the Mexican popular performance tradition. Chicanos found this commonality of origin within the physical memory of a dominant Mexican performance tradition. This Mexican performance tradition was to become the foundational framework for 20th and 21st century theater groups who embodied "guerrilla theater" elements to transform any space into a politicized stage for entertaining social commentary.

For the Chicano people their reliance on traditional art forms such as teatro marked a revolutionary turn. It was crucial that their teatro *actos* or skits educate people toward an appreciation of social change, on and off the stage.¹⁰² Teatro Campesino became the first Chicano touring theater that continuously turned to their traditional cultural roots. Teatro adopted the concept of "in lak ech" one of the most important Mayan principles governing human action. "In lak ech" is the term used by the Maya to designate the other person, commonly referred to in English as you, but in the Mayan tongue it is rendered as you are my other self. The adoption of this term speaks to the belief of inter-sectionality and connectedness amongst the participants of Teatro Campesino as well as those within the Chicano community.

¹⁰¹ Kanellos 19-38.

¹⁰² Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino Organization, *Luis Valdez Early Works: Actos, Bernabe, and Pensamiento Serpentino* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1990) 7-8.

Together as one, Chicano people saw Teatro Campesino as a vehicle through which one could rediscover old cultural forms in order to create images of those involved in the Chicano movement both on and off stage.

Theatrical Ingredients of Teatro Campesino

Luis Valdez once said that what made Teatro Campesino successful was its healthy mixture of minimalism and humor combined with a large dose of corazon or heart.¹⁰³ Besides the crucial element of heart and passion that was poured into the theatrical work of Teatro Campesino, it was revolutionary and effective because it fused together a multiplicity of theatrical qualities that allowed Chicanos the opportunity to rediscover and reinvent their heritage's traditional art forms in order to reflect a new political consciousness within the context of the 1960s Chicano movement.

Guerrilla Theater

During the 1960s, Teatro Campesino emerged as a people's directed guerrilla theater. The term guerrilla (which translates to little war in Spanish) theater was first coined in 1965 within the San Francisco Mime Troupe to describe its performances. The term "guerrilla theater" was inspired by the writings of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, a revolutionary in Cuba. His writings from which the term "guerrilla" is taken from were committed to revolutionary socio political change. The term is specifically associated with theater groups who incorporate spontaneous performances in unlikely spaces to unsuspecting audiences. For Teatro Campesino this was exactly the case. They performed in a multiplicity of locations such as the streets, farm worker fields, or in front of super markets. The spontaneity of their performance location as well as their performance themselves allowed Teatro Campesino to establish itself as a guerrilla or political

¹⁰³ Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino Organization 3.

theater that could use its theatrical voices to draw attention principally to the farm workers' demands but also to the various struggles within the larger Chicano movement. The multiplicity of performance locations solidified Teatro Campesino as a guerrilla theater group that had the ability to transform any space into an opportunity to engage audiences with their socially and politically conscious performance pieces.

The Carpa and Rasquachismo

One of the key ingredients that emphasize this vital linkage between Teatro Campesino and the expressive cultural practices from Mexican popular performance tradition is the use of the *carpa* and reliance on the philosophy of *rasquachismo*. The Spanish term *carpa* has been used to describe tent shows that have been associated with a Mexican tradition of comedy for many years. Historian Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez places the emergence of the term *carpa* in the 18th century, "there is a popular tent theater that comes down to us from the eighteenth century, but more than likely even before that, it has given something of its vitriolic quality even to our elite political theater."¹⁰⁴ It is within a context of social resistance that we can best understand the traditional use of the *carpa*. Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales includes Mexican artist Covarrubias' description of the *carpa* in the 1930s in her work *Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*.

collapsible, barn-like carpas, show tents that were drawn on trucks and over mule carts from suburb to suburb and from village to village, quickly set up in the main square or out in the middle of the street, a presage of a coming fair. The carpa, a development of post-revolutionary Mexico and now a permanent institution, consists of a canvas tent, often walled by detachable wooden panels, a gaudy

¹⁰⁴ Broyles-Gonzales 7.

small stage with bizarre painted drops, lit by a single naked glaring electric bulb.

The music is provided by a melancholy orchestra.¹⁰⁵

From Covarrubia's description it is clear that throughout the history of Mexican popular performance tradition the use of the *carpa* has served as a counter hegemonic tool of the disenfranchised and oppressed. Throughout historic periods of social upheaval the *carpa* is revived as a cultural art form that can allow the politically and socially oppressed an alternative voice. In 20th century Mexico, the *carpa* experienced a major resurgence in connection with the Mexican Revolution and it is during the 1960s civil rights movement that the *carpa* is revived once more. The use of the *carpa* tradition continued with full force into the 1960s with a resilience that was attributed to its native and working class roots, as well as its ability to speak to the daily reality of Mexican workers in an entertaining manner.¹⁰⁶

On numerous occasions Luis Valdez and other members affirmed and reaffirmed their strong roots in the *carpa* tradition, and the *carpa* aesthetic or philosophy referred to as *rasquachismo*. *Rasquachismo* is the term used to describe expressions of affection and disaffection all the while referring to something that is earthy, unpretentious, and resourceful. According to historian Stevan Azcona, *rasquachismo* was an underclass sensibility rooted in everyday linguistic practices and in artistic works put together out of whatever was at hand, recognizing the creativity born out of the subaltern experiences of Mexicanos and Chicanos who would identify with this subaltern experience in the United States during the 1960s.¹⁰⁷ Many of Teatro Campesino's *actos* or skits that also incorporate the term *carpa* in their title such as "La Gran Carpa de los Rasquachies" are based on the philosophy of *rasquachismo* that is associated

¹⁰⁵ Broyles-Gonzales 10.

¹⁰⁶ Broyles-Gonzales 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ Azcona 122.

with the plight of the underdog. As a traditional cultural art form from Mexico, the *carpa* and the ideology of *rasquachismo* has historically emerged and continues to emerge from a community and political context. It was this cultural knowledge of the *carpa* and *rasquachismo* aesthetic that influenced Teatro Campesino as a political theater that could rely on traditional art forms from their past to critique the social realities of their present in a fun and entertaining manner.

Comedy

A key element that allowed for the fusion of the *carpa* and *rasquachismo* to be effective and relatable to various types of audiences was the power of comedic humor. The *actos* or skits of Teatro Campesino were known for their incorporation of humoristic qualities that made audiences laugh but also understand the severity behind this laughter. The comedic humor that was incorporated into the *carpa* tradition of the Teatro Campesino drew from a comedic tradition that was specific to comedian Cantinflas. Fortino Mario Alfonso Moreno Reyes, a Mexican comic film actor, producer and screenwriter became known as Cantinflas and gained much popularity during the 1930s and 1940s as a comedic pioneer within Mexican popular performance. Veered as a comedic superstar in Mexico, Cantinflas crossed over to Hollywood where he starred in many Hollywood movies, earning himself international recognition. In the majority of his movies, he assumed the underdog role, often playing impoverished *campesinos* or peasants. Characters would strike up a normal conversation and then complicate it to the point where no one understood what they were actually talking about. As the underdog role he would manage to humiliate other characters without their even being able to tell. Cantinflas' comedic way of talking became known as *Cantinfleada*.¹⁰⁸ Teatro Campesino adopted aspects of *Cantinfleada* which allowed them to address very controversial issues such as racism against

¹⁰⁸ Broyles-Gonzales 6-7.

farm workers, and harsh treatment received on the job, to audiences unfamiliar with these issues. Through the comedy of *Cantinflas*, Teatro Campesino was able to create a comedic voice that could speak with honesty about demands of the farm workers movement and the larger Chicano movement without the worries of offending audiences. The use of humor and satiric comedy not only allowed Teatro Campesino to address important issues in a non-threatening manner but also promoted universality. Anyone, whether associated with the movement or not could identify with humor and the ability to laugh. Equipped with their unique satiric comedy, Teatro Campesino's audience reached a national scale.

The Acto

Teatro Campeino channeled their fusion of the *carpa* and *rasquachismo* aesthetic qualities into their theatrical skits known as *actos*. According to historian Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales the *actos* of Teatro Campesino were born in response to what was happening in Delano, CA, the center of the farm workers struggle. Anything and everything that pertained to the daily life, *la vida cotidiana*, of the *huelguistas* (workers involved in strikes) became food for thought, material that could be incorporated into *actos*. *Actos* in all reality were skits, but the Spanish term allowed Chicanos and Spanish speakers to identify with the cultural form. Teatro Campesino had five specific goals for their *actos*: inspire the audience to social action, illuminate the opposition, show or hint at a solution and express what people are feeling.¹⁰⁹ With these goals firmly set, *actos* incorporated the use of satire and comedy as verbal weapons that could be used to criticize company contractors, growers, and *mayordomos* (*agricultural bosses*). *Huelguistas* portrayed *huelguistas*, drawing their improvised dialogue from real words they exchanged with the *esquiroles* (scabs) in the fields every day. The first *huelguista* to portray an

¹⁰⁹ Broyles-Gonzales 10.

esquirol in the Teatro did it to settle a score with a particularly stubborn scab he had talked with in the fields that day.¹¹⁰

In Teatro Campesino's *acto* "Quinta Temporada" (Fifth Season), which was first performed in 1966 in Delano, CA during a grape strikers' meeting, we see how the characteristics of guerrilla theater provide a basis for social critique of farm labor contractors. The *acto* is made up of following characters: a farm worker, the patron (or supervisor), Don Coyote or the farm labor contractor, and the season summer.

PATRON: Well, I don't much care what he looks like, so long as he can pick.

COYOTE: Oh, he can pick, patron!

PATRON: Summer! Get in here.

(The FARMWORKER attacks the SUMMER, and begins to pick as many dollar bills as his hands can grab. These he stuffs into his back pockets. DON COYOTE immediately takes his place behind the FARMWORKER and extracts the money from his back pockets and hands it over to the PATRON, who has taken his place behind the contractor. This exchange continues until SUMMER exits.)

WORKER: Hey! Where's my money?¹¹¹

In the *acto* "Quinta Temporada," qualities of guerrilla theater such as improvisation, comedy, and *rasquachismo* ideology allow Teatro Campesino to satirize the real life character and role of farm labor contractors. Seen as one of the most hated figures in the entire structure of agricultural business, the farm labor contractor is known for being paid by company growers to round up cheap labor and delivering it to the fields. Comedy allows this *acto* to inspire laughter, while the improvisation and *rasquachismo* element of the story recognize the reality of exploitation and injustice that the farm worker suffers at the hands of farm labor contractors and company supervisors and growers.

¹¹⁰ Broyles-Gonzales 11.

¹¹¹ Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino 10.

As seen in “Quinta Temporada,” Teatro Campesino made *actos* their own, utilizing them as collectively created art forms that communicated directly through the language and culture of the Chicanos to present a clear and concise political message. As something that is improvised by the Teatro collectively, the *acto* became an art form that not only drew on traditional Mexican theatrical qualities but also directly arose from the members’ common experiences. Due to its flexibility and unique ability to embody the feelings of the Chicano movement, the *acto* as a cultural theatrical form became the primary vehicle for the varied experiences of farm workers and Chicanos, not only in the fields but also in factories, steel mills and college campuses.¹¹² With the *acto*, Teatro Campesino emerged as a peoples’ theater that could embody the various cultural theatrical and performance traditions of their heritage to reaffirm a new Chicano identity and stress the urgency in constructing a more equitable world.

Oral Tradition and Oral Memory

The last aspect of the Teatro Campesino that helped to ground it in Mexican popular performance tradition is the use of oral culture and cultural memory. Historian Broyles-Gonzales once said that the human body, memory, and community are inter-twined phenomena that came to bear on the *carpa* and *campesino* oral culture of performance in other significant ways. Memory in this context signifies a remembrance of lived experience within a community; usually one’s directly lived experience combined with the great communal historical experience transmitted to youth by elders in oral historical discourse.¹¹³ For Teatro Campesino, this use of cultural language and memory was vital to the improvisation of many of the group’s political *actos*. Much of the material in Teatro Campesino was learned and transmitted orally and visually without the use of scripts or notes. The community of Teatro Campesino preferred to improvise

¹¹² Broyles-Gonzales 12.

¹¹³ Broyles-Gonzales 6.

their material collectively and then memorize the parts.¹¹⁴ The context in which Teatro Campesino used language, Spanish or English, allowed various communities the opportunity to identify with the material they performed. This reliance on cultural language and cultural memory highlight how performers of Teatro Campesino performed from their mind, body, and soul. Broyles-Gonzales said that oral culture is typically not just spoken words but words defined by their lifeworld context, hence inseparable from that context and from the body and voice that utters them.¹¹⁵

El Teatro Campesino as a Vehicle for Resistance Songs

It is important to note that the dialogue of Teatro Campesino's politically charged *actos* was in conjunction with other forms of cultural expression; one of the most important of these cultural forms was music. From the beginning, Teatro Campesino combined singing with their dramatic presentations to warm up the audience in preparation for the *actos*, to create variety, or to reinforce the themes presented in the *actos* themselves. For instance the local UFWOC (which stands for the United Farm Workers of California) workers after seeing the *actos* performed at a rally learned the material and began performing the skits on picket lines in front of supermarkets. This also occurred, of course with the songs that Teatro Campesino composed and sang. In fact, sheets of lyrics were handed out to the audience so that they could sing along.¹¹⁶ With the incorporation of particular resistance songs into *actos*, Teatro Campesino distinctively marked the shift in *movimiento* music from corridos and huelga songs to stylistic innovations of community-based ensembles. By analyzing songs written and performed by Teatro Campesino, *Ninos Campesinos*, *De Colores*, and *Quihubo Raza*, we will explore how this shift in *movimiento* music helped the Chicano community to utilize collectively theatrical traditions

¹¹⁴ Kanellos 20.

¹¹⁵ Broyles-Gonzales 5.

¹¹⁶ Kanellos 27.

inherent to their culture to innovatively create a public and political consciousness about their struggles and urgency for social change within their vast communities.

Ninos Campesinos

Born directly out of the United Farm Workers' struggle, the incorporation of the song *Ninos Campesinos* into Teatro Campesino's *actos* helped to emphasize the goals of the farm workers to the broader Chicano community as well as to a non farm worker audience. Members of Teatro Campesino such as Agustin Lira were also activists within the farm workers movement, which gave them a deep understanding of the experiences and hardships of the farm worker community. With this understanding, Teatro Campesino's founding members, Luis Valdez, Agustin Lira, and Felipe Cantu believed that the incorporation of songs that spoke directly to the farm workers struggle could express the feelings of their community, persuade other farm workers to join the struggle, and mobilize audiences to take up the fight for justice. Through highly improvised *actos*, which expressed the need to organize against the abuses of the farm bosses, Teatro Campesino became an effective instrument in expressing the union's message. During the grape strike, the Teatro was also tasked with composing new songs for the strikers on the picket lines and the union's Friday night meetings. Much of the huelga song repertoire was composed by three founding members of Teatro Campesino, Felipe Cantu, Agustin Lira, and Luis Valdez.

"People would be giving their reports and stuff, and Cesar would be up at the podium, and then he would ask people to back up. And so they would open up a little space, about 12 feet wide, and that's where the Teatro would come out and sing and perform. And it would be a lot of hootin' and hollering, because it was a revivalist meeting, you see. And so it was important that we begin to get these

songs out, and then we began out of necessity, to put them out, week after week. I mean, in the first few weeks of the strike, all the classics that had been sung ever since then emerged in those first few weeks because it was urgent.”¹¹⁷

Much of the song repertoire that Teatro Campesino, created including songs such as *El Picket Sign*, *Llegando a Los Files*, y *No Tengo Miedo a Nada*, were composed by the three founding members, Felipe Cantu, Agustin Lira, and Luis Valdez but were sung and preserved by the collective farm worker and Chicano community. According to the authors of *Rolas de Aztlan: Songs of the Chicano Movement*, the song *Ninos Campesinos* showcases the voices of Teatro Campesino’s members Daniel Valdez and Socorro Valdez who sing in conjunction with a suitably adorning autoharp that addresses what it was like to be a child of a farm worker family.

Ninos Campesinos

Van a los files de la uva,
Betabel y de manzana
Y ahi los ninos se la pasan
Todo el dia entre las ramas
De sol a sol hasta
Que llegan pagadores

Pero algun dia esos ninos
Seran hombres y mujeres
Trabajadores campesinos que
Defienden sus quereres,
Y mano en mano tomaran
Otro camino

Como a la una, dos, tres, cuatro
Cinco, seis, de la mañana
El sol calienta ranchos anchos
Y de luz todo los bana,
Y a esos campos solo van

Farmworker Children

They go to the grape
beet, and apple fields
And there, the children spend
the entire day among the branches
From sun up to sunset
until the paymasters arrive,

But one day those children
will be men and women,
Farmworkers who defend
their interests,
And hand-in-hand,
they will take another road

Around one, two, three, four,
five, or six in the morning
The sun heats wide ranches
and bathes everything in light.
And only those who do not know

¹¹⁷ Valdez et al., 5.

Los que no saben
 Viva la huelga
 Viva la huelga
 Viva la causa de verdad

better will go to the fields,
 Long live the strike
 Long live the strike
 May the cause truly live on.¹¹⁸

Teatro Campesino's *Ninos Campesinos* serves as an ode to the children of the farm worker community, and is somewhat akin to a nursery rhyme that offers a serious look at the realities of farm worker life, yet maintains a sweet sense of hope for the future.¹¹⁹The lyrics of *Ninos Campesinos* illustrate in an eloquent and graceful way the harsh reality that many farm worker children had to confront at an early age. Stating "from sun up to sunset, until the paymasters arrive," this verse highlights how farm worker children out of necessity and means of social and economic survival accompanied their parents to the agricultural fields toiling under the sun "from one, two, three, four, five or six in the morning" till dark. Though farm worker children lived and understood the cycle of poverty and social degradation, as young individuals they still maintained hope for the future. One of the primary goals of the farm workers movement, and therefore a part of Teatro Campesino's agenda, was to build a new pathway for the young people of the farm worker community so that they did not have to endure the injustices of agricultural contracts and companies. The lyrics of *Ninos Campesinos* state "but one day those children will be men and women, farm workers who defend their interests, and hand-in-hand, they will take another road...And only those who do not know better will go to the fields, Long live the strike!" These words emphasize the importance of the farm worker struggle and the larger Chicano movement in achieving urgent demands such as equal social, political and economic rights not only to benefit those in the movement but ultimately to benefit future generations. By incorporating *Ninos Campesinos* into their song repertoire, Teatro Campesino helped to spread

¹¹⁸ Valdez et al., 16-17.

¹¹⁹ Valdez et al., 16.

the message that through education and mobilization for equality, the farm worker and Chicano community could build a better future for their children and the generations to come.

De Colores

UFW participant Kathy Murguia recalls the spiritual power of singing Teatro Campesino's song *De Colores*: "For me, singing *De Colores* felt powerful. Even today recalling the smiles and brightness on the faces of the workers as they sang provides a sense of hope. We were part of a movement and in small incremental ways, we believed we were changing the course of history and ending exploitation."¹²⁰ The song *De Colores* came to symbolize the spirit of a new beginning for the UFW struggle, Teatro Campesino and the Chicano movement at large. According to writer Chuy Varela of *El Tecolote Magazine*, the song *De Colores* was brought to the Americas from Spain in the 16th century and is a traditional song sung throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The traditional song *De Colores* was adopted as the anthem of the Cursilla movement, a Catholic Revivalist movement that originated in Spain in the 1940s, and moved to the Spanish-speaking Southwest of the U.S. in the late 1950s, beginning in the state of Texas. Founded on the concept of renewing one's faith through weekend retreats, the Cursillista or "short course" movement eventually spread throughout the United States to the entire Catholic community.¹²¹ The lyrics of the traditional song *De Colores* embodied the spirit of love, non-violence, and unity in the quest for social equality for both the farm workers movement and Teatro Campesino.

De Colores

Of the Colors

¹²⁰ Kathy Murguia, "The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-De Colores," "n.d" [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 27 February 2012).

¹²¹ Kathy Murguia, "The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-De Colores," "n.d" [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(final\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(final).pdf). (accessed 28 February 2012).

De Colores,	Of colors
De colores se visten en los campos	the fields dress themselves in colors
En la primavera	in the springtime
De colores, de colores son los pajaritos	Of colors, the little birds that come
Que vienen de afuera	from afar are many colors,
De colores, de colores es el arco	Of colors, the rainbow that we see
Iris que vemos lucir	shining is of many colors
Y por eso los grandes amores	And that is why
De muchos colores me gustan a mi	I love many colores ¹²²

The traditional lyrics of *De Colores* reflect the deep connection between farm workers and the landscape that surrounds their social, economic, and political status. Through the glorification of environmental aspects such as the spring, birds, and the rainbow, we understand the relationship between the farm workers and the agricultural fields as socially destructive but also beautiful. Though the traditional lyrics of *De Colores* do not directly highlight the revolutionary activity or demands of the farm worker struggle, it symbolizes unity amongst farm workers but also all humanity as we search for ways to incorporate love and peace into our social and political realms. The symbol of “colores” or “colors” that is interwoven throughout the song allowed Teatro Campesino not only to promote unity but also to counterbalance the political and satirical criticism of agricultural companies, grape growers, and scab laborers that comprised the majority of their *actos*.

The incorporation of the song *De Colores* has a greater significance for the transition of Teatro Campesino as solely the farm worker theater to the first Chicano theater to speak to struggles of the whole Chicano community. Throughout the 1960s, *De Colores* was predominately associated with the farm worker struggle. In 1966 after the UFW’s 300 mile *peregrinacion* from Delano to Sacramento to gain support for the grape strike, El Teatro

¹²² Valdez et al, 11.

Campesino, under the auspices of the UFW, recorded the album *Viva La Causa: Songs of the Delano Strike* to continue to promote the cause. Soon thereafter, the Teatro relocated outside the confines of the UFW and continued performing around broader issues of Chicano identity.¹²³ By 1970 the song had become successfully popularized by Teatro Campesino and their touring *actos*. Throughout the 1970s the song had become so popular that other factions of the Chicano movement, such as the land grant movement and the student movement, reclaimed it as their own as well. UFW participant Kathy Murguia remarks on the use of *De Colores* by Teatro Campesino: “While the lyrics don’t speak of social justice, it is a song of the season of springtime and beauty, of life and colors—and we were all kinds of different colors...the rooster, the hen, the chicks that sing, the great loves of many colors—these images brought such joy, such pleasure and lastly for those who sang it, such hope.”¹²⁴ Teatro Campesino would sing *De Colores* in all their guerrilla theater performances throughout the Southwest as a representation of unity and hope amongst the Chicano community, of being connected in a singular struggle for justice.

Quihubo Raza

Composed in the fervor of the late 1960s, the song *Quihubo Raza* indicts the second-class treatment of Mexicans and Chicanos in United States’ history and is one of the most emblematic songs of the Chicano movement music repertoire that highlights the “quest for homeland” aspect of the Chicano struggle. *Quihubo Raza* was one of many Teatro Campesino songs written by Agustin Lira. Lira was instrumental in co-founding Teatro Campesino and in establishing music and theatrical performance as tools to portraying and improving the

¹²³ Valdez et al., 5.

¹²⁴ Kathy Murguia, “The UFW: Songs and Stories Sung and Told by UFW Volunteers-De Colores,” “n.d” [http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary\(fina\).pdf](http://www.farmworkermovement.us/media/Scott/Introductiontosongsandcommentary(fina).pdf), (accessed 28 February 2012) 6.

conditions of migrant farm workers. Lira also founded and currently leads the acoustic trio Alma that performs mostly original music that brings to life the Chicano/Latino experiences and the struggles of farm workers and immigrant laborers then and now. The song *Quihubo Raza* is particularly important because it was different than other Teatro Campesino songs. With the frequent use of modulation, the song has a relatively unorthodox harmonic structure, compared to the *movimiento* repertoire. Lira sought to expand the musical vocabulary of movement songs by breaking away from the linear harmonic structures that define much of Mexican traditional music.¹²⁵ With the song *Quihubo Raza*, Teatro Campesino completes its transition from a farm workers theater to a theater for the whole Chicano community.

Quihubo Raza

Bueno pues, Quihubo, Comes les va
Que lindo dia para cantar
Noticias que han llegado de Nuevo Mexico
Mil ochocientos cuarenta y ocho
Pues fue firmado el gran trado
De Guadalupe Hidalgo
Prometiendo justicia y libertad
A tierras y terrenos de gente indigena

No hombre, que mentirosos
Cuando firmaron el tratado
Los americanos

Estribillo

Y el mexicano hacerse gringo,
No puede, ni quiere
Y el mexicano hacerse gringo,
No puede, ni será
Porque en sus venas trae la sangre
Chichimeca, Zapoteca y de los yaquis

Hello People

Well, then, Hello, there! How's it going?
What a beautiful day for singing!
News from New Mexico
Eighteen forty-eight
That the great treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
Was signed
Promising justice and freedom
For the lands and property of
indigenous property
No, man! What liars!
When they signed the treaty
Those Americans

Refrain

And the Mexican, to become gringo
He doesn't want to, nor can
And the Mexican, to become gringo
He doesn't want to, nor will be
Because in his veins he has
Chichimec, Zapotec, and Yaqui

¹²⁵ Valdez et al., 36.

Todo estas tierras fueron robadas
 Y al presente nos encontramos
 Rogandole al gobierno
 Reis Lopez Tijerina en Nuevo Mexico
 Ha levantado armas, sus tierras reclamo

Ahi esta y aqui nos tienen
 Nuestra cultura aplastada
 Y hablando English

All these lands were stolen,
 And today, we find ourselves
 Begging the government
 Reis Lopez Tijerina in New Mexico
 Has taken up arms and reclaimed
 his people's land.
 There it is, and here they have us
 Our culture crushed
 And speaking English.¹²⁶

The lyrics of *Quihubo Raza* specifically speak to the historic Treaty of Guadalupe as well as the historic legacy it had on Mexican identity and culture. The states Texas, Utah, California, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico that had once been Mexico became parts of the United States. Mexican citizens that had inhabited those states thus became second class citizens, suffering the sense of displacement in the land that they had once called home. This sense of problematic belonging was accompanied by pressure to assimilate to mainstream white society, “to become a gringo,” in order to be fully accepted as a U.S. citizen. The lyrics emphasize the historic Treaty of Guadalupe as an attack and attempt to destroy Mexican culture: “there it is, and here they have us, our culture crushed and speaking in English.” Generation after generation of Mexican Americans living in the U.S. accepted this social reality of second-class treatment, and it is not until years later during the 1960s that they witness the growing unrest of their sons and daughters, the new Chicano generation as they discover the importance of collective history, the power of mass action, and the urgency for a Chicano movement. This sense of dis-belonging, accompanied with second class treatment enacted by institutions of state and federal government legislature fueled the revolutionary and collective mobilization of the Chicano movement.

¹²⁶ Valdez et al., 34-35.

The incorporation of the song *Quihubo Raza* in Teatro Campesino acto performances assisted in emphasizing the land grant movement in New Mexico in 1966 and 1967 as a foundational precipitation to the larger Chicano movement. This land grant movement was led by activist Reies Lopez Tijerina who fought to convince the federal government to honor the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and to galvanize Mexican American and Chicano populations about their inherent right to the Southwest region. During the early 1960s, Tijerina founded the Alianza crusade in New Mexico on the basis that the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, guaranteed Mexicans all the rights of citizens; the right to their property and the right to maintain cultural institutions, i.e. the Spanish language and Mexican traditions. Indeed, the Treaty and the perception that Anglo-America had violated its stipulations became a foundational reason for the Chicano Movement. Historian Francisco Rosales includes David Cargo, a sympathetic New Mexico governor during the era when much of the Alianza activity was taking place, in his *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*.

“many of what they call the land grant movement didn’t have a great deal to do with land grants. It had to do with all kinds of political problems, not all of them connected even with the land grants. Unemployment, welfare...no roads, poverty, no medical care, all kinds of things.”¹²⁷

As Cargo pointed out, though the Alianza movement was specifically associated with the land grant movement, it also energized Mexican and Chicano communities throughout the country into joining civil rights activities and the push for educational reform. Understanding the contextual history of the land grant or Alianza movement in the Southwest allows us to comprehend how Teatro Campesino’s incorporation of *Quihubo Raza* demonstrates their ability

¹²⁷ Rosales 154-155.

to confront in a theatrical manner the deceptions that had confronted ethnic Mexicans and Chicanos in the United States.

Teatro Campesino's incorporation and performance of *Quihubo Raza* allowed them to reference the land grant movement as a historic and foundational component of the Chicano movement that expressed and mobilized Chicano communities to understand their historical rights to the United States and the importance of emerging as a united people with a new found political, social and cultural consciousness. As Teatro Campesino engendered strength for the farm worker struggle, they also used their musical and theatrical creations to mobilize political action around various other aspects of the Chicano movement. The song *Quihubo Raza* established Teatro Campesino itself as a community theater that embraced Cesar Chavez and the farm workers, the struggles of urban youth, and the growing awareness and participation of La Raza Unida Party. Most importantly *Quihubo Raza* set the tone for Chicano/Latino musical groups such as Ozomatli, Quetzal and In lak'ech that followed in the coming generations.

Conclusion

Theater has always been essential to Chicano and Mexican culture as a form of expression, cultural preservation, entertainment, and political documentation. The historical legacy of theatrical performance within Mexican and Chicano communities and how a cultural reliance on theatrical performance traditions assisted in shaping Teatro Campesino as a political medium for the revolutionary platform of the Chicano movement. A touring Chicano theater group that is still in existence today, with foundational roots in the 1960s Chicano movement, Teatro Campesino remains a people's theater that is in constant flux, evolving and adapting to its times. According to Luis Valdez, Teatro Campesino is continuously shedding its dead skin like the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, a feathered serpent that would shed its skin to create new life. Adopting

this myth, once a revolutionary goal or plateau was attained, Teatro Campesino would work towards the next objective immediately.¹²⁸ The Teatro Campesino of today is not the Teatro Campesino of the 1960s, it has continuously evolved to its social times, addressing important issues of the Chicano/Latino communities along the way. As the first Chicano touring theater, Teatro Campesino has paved the way for current theater groups that utilize music and various performance and theatrical qualities to address their social realities in a fun and constructive manner. As a people's theater that has relied on various cultural performance traditions, Teatro Campesino continues to serve as a cultural link between the collective past and the collective future of the Chicano community, giving life and continuity to its existence. Similar to their cultural forefathers, contemporary Chicano theater groups as well as musical groups, such as Ozomatli, Quetzal, and In'lak ech, continue to rely on theatrical and musical performance traditions that highlight their words and voices as they provide social commentary and political suggestions to 21st century issues affecting Chicano/Latino communities.

Conclusion

Decades have passed since the original voices of the Chicano community were heard singing the revolutionary agenda of their 1960s struggle. Their creation of a cultural music genre

¹²⁸ Broyles-Gonzales 94.

was revolutionary then and continues to remain revolutionary today as their socially and political conscious songs live on in the new, emerging Chicano generations. As evident in this thesis, the use of cultural music traditions assisted the Chicano community in creating a cultural memory that instilled revolutionary consciousness within the community's present generations as well as the coming generations. With this cultural memory storehouse, the Chicano community collected and stored corridos, huelga and Teatro Campesino songs that have influenced newer Chicano generations who have continued to carry on this legacy of social and political music into contemporary times. Contemporary Chicano music of today draws upon these traditions, particularly that of musical and theatrical ensembles such as Teatro Campesino, to address contemporary issues affecting Chicano and Latino communities such as identity, immigration, urban conditions, racism, and environmental justice. The political and social strides made by the Chicano movement provided Chicano communities with access to equal opportunities but also established intersectionality with Latino (people of Latin American descent) communities. Despite cultural differences, Chicanos and Latinos found commonalities and intersections between their communities that were rooted in their experience within the United States. Similarly Chicano/Latino groups are currently continuing this legacy of cultural performance music and theater, preserving and reinventing in their own distinct ways what it means to perform Chicano music and how songs can be used as social communication. Three contemporary groups, Ozomatli, In lak'ech and Quetzal, are examples of how newer generations are embodying the musical legacy left behind by the music and songs of the Chicano movement and making it their own.

Ozomatli

For the past fifteen years, the band Ozomatli has served as the voice of their city, Los Angeles, and has used their music to talk about issues that are pertinent to the people there in

their city. Ozomatli emerged as a product of Los Angeles' grassroots political scene. Proudly born as a multi-racial crew in post-uprising 1990s Los Angeles, Ozomatli has over five full-length studio albums and a relentless touring schedule. The band has built a formidable reputation for taking party rocking so seriously that it has become called new school musical activism, which links culture to politics in the context of musical performance.¹²⁹ Originally formed to play at a Los Angeles labor protest over a decade ago, Ozomatli spent some of their early days participating in everything from earthquake preparation “hip hop ghetto plays” at inner-city elementary schools to community activist events, protests and city fundraisers. Ever since then their music has been synonymous with their city; Los Angeles officially declared April 23rd, 2010, “Ozomatli Day” to recognize their musical and representational contributions to the city.¹³⁰ Since their inception, Ozomatli has included songs that are committed to social justice and progressive politics in their repertoire. Their song titled *Mi Gente/My People* is an example of this commitment to social commentary particularly within the socio-cultural environment of Los Angeles.

Mi Gente

Si yo trabajo de sol a sol
 Si ser honesto es mi religión
 Y no necesito que me digan
 Que es lo que pudo hacer, no no que no
 Si yo vine de lejos a esta tierra,
 Fue por que habia escuchado la promesa
 Que aquí encontraria la manera
 Para poder vivir major

Yo quiero que entiendan que en mi tambien
 Corre el sudor, que yo quiero a mi tierra
 Que a mi también duele lo mismo que a usted

My People

If I, work from dawn to dawn
 If being honest is my religión
 I don't need anybody to tell me
 What I can or cannot do
 If I came to this land from far away
 It's because I had heard the promise
 That here I would find the way
 To live a better life

I want you to understand that
 I sweat like everyone else, I love my land
 that it hurts me the same that it hurts you.

¹²⁹ Ozomatli Fan Page, *About Ozomatli*, (2012), <http://www.ozomatli.com> (accessed 24 March 2012).

¹³⁰ Ozomatli Fan Page, *About Ozomatli*, (2012), <http://www.ozomatli.com> (accessed 25 March 2012).

Que sepan que yo soy de aqui	I want you to know that I am from here
Como lo es cualquiera	just like everyone else
Que también me da pena	that I also feel the pain
Las injusticias, la pobreza de mi gente	of injustices and the poverty of my people ¹³¹

This song was in distinct collaboration with A.B. Quintanilla from the musical group Kumbia Kings. It specifically narrates the tale of Latino immigrants and their struggle and survival in the United States and urban cities such as Los Angeles. Ozomatli's song *Mi Gente* specifically addresses the experience of so many living in Los Angeles, one of the most multicultural diverse cities in the United States and one of cities that is predominately home to large populations of Latino communities. Despite this fact, the experience of Latino immigrants in Los Angeles is often forgotten. Through their song, Ozomatli seeks to reclaim Los Angeles as a space that is inclusive and sensitive to these issues, "understanding and highlighting the injustices and poverty" of the people that live there. Similar to the musical tradition of the corrido, Ozomatli's *Mi Gente* utilizes narrative qualities to document and validate the immigrant experience in the United States. Though there are traces of the corrido's narrative qualities in *Mi Gente*, Ozomatli draws upon this musical narration to address the changing demographics of Los Angeles. Since the 1960s, the city of Los Angeles has become a multicultural hub, home to vast multicultural communities. Drawing on the musical tradition of corridos, Ozomatli has continued the musical legacy of the Chicano movement by utilizing music as a means of narrative documentation, addressing the vast array of issues encountered by the multicultural communities that inhabit Los Angeles. Combining various rhythms such as reggae and *cumbia*, Ozomatli for the past fifteen years has dedicated themselves to spreading the message of peace, communication and

¹³¹Ozomatli Fan Page, *Music*, (2012), <http://www.ozomatli.com> (accessed 25 March 2012).

understanding through their unique music and a longstanding tradition of performing that speaks specifically to Latino and multicultural communities of Los Angeles.

In Lak' Ech

The musical and theatrical performing group In Lak' Ech has traveled throughout California and the Southwest giving a voice to many who continue to be engaged in social struggles for dignity, culture, and life. Through expressive art forms such as *canto*, comedy, and poetry, they have created a unique blend of modern day oral tradition that explores politics, spirituality, love and pain. In August 14, 2007 the Los Angeles based performance poetry collective of women released their debut CD through Xicano Records and Film. Their album titled "Mujeres con Palabra" (Women of and with Word) provides an introspective look into the mind, heart, and soul of Xicana/Chicana women. In Lak' Ech defines itself as a performance poetry collective composed of all Xicana multi-media artists, writers, mothers, teachers, and organizers unite to tell her story through poetry and song: in *xochitl*, in *cuicatl* (indigenous languages of Mexico). Their words and songs bring awareness and empowerment to the issues of women, family, humanity, and mother earth."¹³² Similar to Teatro Campesino, In Lak'Ech as a musical collective also embodies the Mayan concept of "in lak'ech" meaning "you are my other me or I am you, you are me to remind people that we all inhabit this world and must do in collaboration and peaceful unity," which for them obligates everyone as human beings to be sensitive to issues of humanity such as environmental justice, poverty and respect.

Unlike Teatro Campesino, In Lak' Ech is an all female collective comprised of Chicana multi-media artists, writers, mothers, teachers, and organizers who have united to use their

¹³²In Lak'Ech Fan Page, *Mujeres con Palabra Biography*, (2012), <http://www.inlakech.net> (accessed 25 March 2012).

female voices to express concerns and solutions about 21st century problems. The exploration of an all female Chicana collective warrants the mention of Chicana feminism and its importance to the Chicano movement and contemporary groups such as In Lak' Ech. The Chicana Feminist Movement formally began to take shape in the 1970s during the height of the Chicano Movement. Ironically, as Chicana women were fighting alongside Chicano men in their struggle to rid U.S. political and social structures of inequalities, they began to realize the gender inequalities that existed within and outside of the movement. During this time, Chicana women found a collective voice through feminism and began to question machismo (sexist) attitudes, articulate their own criticisms and concerns involving issues of gender and sexuality, and organize around these issues.¹³³ The women of In Lak'Ech have embodied and infused Chicana feminism in their performances, cultural celebrations, conferences, and workshops. The songs and performance pieces of In Lak'Ech include a fusion of spoken word, drum, poetry and song that assist in telling an alternative story of social consciousness and political identities from a female Chicana perspective that carries on performance traditions of Teatro Campesino, but in a slightly different way.

One of their most famous performance pieces, *Mujer de Maiz*, glorifies the role of Chicana women as mothers but also as activists for the environmental issues affecting communities across the United States.

Mujer de Maiz

Yo soy una mujer de maíz
 Soy la mujer
 La mujer de maíz
 Y de cuerpo nace el maíz
 I am the woman

¹³³Alma M. Garcia et al., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Goddess of corn
 And from my body corn is born¹³⁴

The song combines the languages of Spanish and English as they highlight connections between women and mother earth or in this particular case corn. Emphasizing this connection, In Lak'Ech highlights the important role Chicana women play as mothers to newer generations but also the role they play as the protector of environmental justice, ensuring that the food we eat and how we retrieve this food is in balance. The songs and performances of In Lak'Ech serve as tools for expression, healing communication, and organizing for Chicano communities and families, which reflect many of the strategic goals of the 1960s Chicano movement. Drawing on Teatro Campesino's use of performance qualities such as the *carpa* and *actos*, In Lak'Ech combines *actos* with music and poetry to construct powerful female voices. Their songs serve as sources of documentation of the Chicana experience and how they continue to ensure that their political and social voices are heard. Cherrie Moraga, acclaimed author, stated in relation to In Lak'Ech, "I am impressed at a heart level with the work of In Lak'Ech because it responds to a Xicana-Indigenismo thirty-five years in the making. Blending northern native musical influences with Southern indigena filosofia (their music) celebrates the myriad spiritual and political roads Xicanas have walked to acquire a living, uncompromised identity and cultural practice in the United States."¹³⁵

Quetzal

Since the early 1990s, Quetzal, a musical ensemble, has come together to create music that tells the social, cultural, political, and musical stories of people in struggle. The band was founded by Chicano rock guitarist Quetzal Flores with the intention of pushing the boundaries of

¹³⁴ In Lak'Ech Fan Page, *Songs*, (2012), <http://www.inlakech.net> (accessed 25 March 2012).

¹³⁵ CD Universe, *In Lak'Ech Discography of CDs*, (2012), <http://www.cduniverse.com> (accessed 25 March 2012).

Chicano music and is currently one of Los Angeles' most important and successful groups. Martha Gonzales, lead singer of the group, defines Quetzal as an "East LA Chicano rock group, summing up its rootedness in the complex cultural currents of life in the barrio, its social activism, its strong feminist stance, and its rock and roll musical beginnings. Besides being a rock band, the group and its members participate in a much larger web of musical, cultural, and political engagement."¹³⁶ Playing a mix of Mexican and Afro-Cuban rhythms, jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock music, Quetzal uses music as a medium for social change and is highly informed and inspired by global grassroots movements. Quetzal, similar to the songs of the Chicano movement, emerged out a particularly contentious time generated by events such as the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, the 1994 Proposition 187 Campaign (which sought to deny medical and public services to undocumented immigrants and public education to undocumented children) and the repercussive reach of the Zapatista insurrection in Mexico. These events spurred a powerful synergy, in which avenues of expressive culture such as music and public art emerged as platforms from which to voice marginalized peoples' desires, opinions, and resistance to the conditions in which they found themselves. The proactive strategy of Quetzal and other artists was to maneuver through the societal problems that were affecting the communities in which these artists were living. As a prominent force in this East L.A. creative culturescape, Quetzal vividly portrays how music, culture, and sociopolitical ideology come together in a specific place.¹³⁷ In Quetzal's song *Migra* they emphasize how expressive culture such as music, can be used to discuss the societal issues of their community.

Migra

En los montes y en los cerros
Minutemen buscando miedo

Migra

In the mountains and the hills
Minutemen looking for trouble

¹³⁶ Quetzal East LA, *Band Biography*, (2012), <http://www.quezaleastla.com/history> (accessed 26 March 2012).

¹³⁷ Quetzal East LA, *Band Biography*, (2012), <http://www.quezaleastla.com/history> (accessed 26 March 2012).

Listo para disparate	Ready for nonsense
Migra!	Migra!
Quieren encontrar alguien	They want to find someone
Para darle bala Americana	To give them an American bullet
Estos fácil fácil van!	These will easily come
Vamos hablarle pronto a los testigos	We will soon talk to witnesses
Que esos fácil fácil van	These will easily come
Si tu quieres alguien que te emigre	If you want someone who will migrate
Ponte buzo del caiman	Go put on your uniform made of alligator ¹³⁸

Quetzal's song *Migra* confronts the heightened fear and racist attitudes towards Latino immigrant communities that has existed throughout the history of the United States but has in particular become heightened in recent years through the development of ICE, an investigative agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the presence of Minutemen along the U.S./Mexico border and the passage of legislative laws such as S.B. 1070. The song's lyrics emphasize the role of "la migra" as a hyper vigilant group hunting down immigrants. For many Chicano and Latino communities, the term "migra" refers to ICE officers, border patrol officers and Minutemen. ICE is currently the second largest investigative agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is dedicated to enforcing federal laws governing border control.¹³⁹ These enforcement policies include raids, detentions and deportations of immigrant Latino communities. Minutemen, which the term "migra" also refers to, are a volunteer group of individuals who have taken it upon themselves to protect the U.S./Mexico border from "illegal" immigration. The volunteer collective was founded in 2004 by Jim Gilchrist with the sole objective of monitoring the U.S. Mexico border from the flow of illegal immigrants. As Quetzal's lyrics say "Minutemen search for trouble," this private collective is known for riding

¹³⁸ Quetzal East LA, *Music, Photos, Videos*, (2012), <http://www.quezaleastla.com/history> (accessed 26 March 2012).

¹³⁹ ICE US Department of Homeland Security, *Mission*, (2012), <http://www.ice.gov/about/overview> (accessed 26 March 2012).

on ATVs, arming themselves with guns and immediately reporting any immigrants they see to ICE. Quetzal's song *Migra* concludes with "ponte buzo del caiman" which translates to go put on your uniform of alligator (which are usually green). This statement is both a direct reference to ICE whose uniform is green but also is a statement that addresses the heightened tension against immigrant communities in states such as Arizona that have passed laws such as S.B. 1070 that authorize law enforcement to racially profile and stop anyone in order to determine their immigration status. These current immigration policies have forced a broader issue of protest. For Quetzal, similar to the Chicano community in the 1960s, protest was made possible and sustained through music that could both narrate and criticize but also visualize a more equitable society. The musical band Quetzal has followed in the footsteps of Teatro Campesino by using music to politically criticize and raise awareness about the injustices occurring within their community in a fun and entertaining manner. Martha Gonzales exemplifies the power of the intersection of music and community stating, "when we become critical of the discourses that teach an outlook of community assessment through a lens of deficit and instead look to our communities from an asset-based perspective, we stand to create something much more sustainable. In this sense we imagine. We visualize. We gather our resources. We design and construct."¹⁴⁰

Conclusion:

The musical repertoires of Ozomatli, In Lak' Ech and Quetzal demonstrate the gradual evolution of Chicano music and how a collective community effort has developed the ability to adapt to the changing society. The musical repertoires of these three groups, as well as Teatro Campesino which is still in existence today, show how the songs of the Chicano movement have

¹⁴⁰ Quetzal East LA, Band Biography, (2012), <http://www.quetzaleastla.com/history> (accessed 26 March 2012).

continued to live on through new generations' reliance on music as an effective tool of social and political expression. Beyond the continuance of traditional musical legacies left behind by the Chicano movement, Chicano music today has deeper connections to identity expression and identity development.

As a Chicana preparing to graduate from Scripps, I believe that a firm understanding of Chicano history and my exploration of the musical traditions used by the Chicano community that came before me has allowed me to develop a new found confidence about myself which I hold dear as I embark on my post-college journey. Given my own experience exploring a topic within Chicano history, I believe that it is more important than ever for younger generations of Chicanos and Latinos to study and have access to these historical legacies. In 2010 Arizona State Senator Jan Brewer signed House Bill 2281 which prohibited Unified School Districts from allowing students to read any literary material that promoted "ethnic solidarity, the overthrow of the U.S. government, or cater to specific ethnic groups."¹⁴¹ The passage of this legislation essentially dismantled Arizona's Mexican American studies program and prohibited Chicano/Latino students from learning about their heritage. I believe that it is more important than ever that people have access to histories of the Chicano movement such as the songs discussed in this thesis whose lyrics give us great insight into a moment of political resistance and collective unity that should not be excluded from historical narratives of the United States. Above all else, I hope that the exploration of the songs of the Chicano movement have revealed a historical trajectory of resistance, survival, and reinvention of the Chicano community that can be noted within the music of the past and within newer generations. Musician Chunky Sanchez of the musical group, Los Alacranes Mojados, once stated that "there are no borders to Chicano

¹⁴¹ Jessica Calefati, *Arizona Bans Ethnic Studies*, (2010), <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2010/05/ethnic-studies-banned-arizona> (accessed 26 March 2012).

music. You don't have to just sing a corrido to talk about revolution. You can do it in many other ways."¹⁴² Sanchez makes a beautiful point that though corridos have served as powerful instruments of revolution they have also contributed to the expansion of Chicano music. Today the Chicano community continues to use music as a medium for identity and political expression but in many different ways as groups such as Ozomatli, In Lak' Ech, and Quetzal show. Today Chicano groups continue the musical performance traditions set forth in the 1960s Chicano movement as they combine rhythms and beats creating music that can transcend borders within the Chicano/Latino community and speak to a national audience about their experiences as Chicanos.

Appendix 1

Complete Lyrics of Corridos

La Adelita

En lo alto de la abrupta Serrania,

La Adelita

In the heights of a steep mountainous range,

¹⁴² Susie Albin-Najera, *Chunky and Los Alacranes-Mexican American Music Legends Promoting Cultural Understanding and Tolerance*, (2001), <http://www.themexicoreport.com> (accessed 26 March 2012).

A campado se encontraba un regimiento
Y una moza que valiente los seguía
locamente enamorada del sargento

Popular entre la tropa era Adelita
la mujer que el sargento idolatraba
que además de ser valiente era bonita
que hasta el mismo Coronel la respetaba

Y se oía, que decía aquel que tanto la
quería
y si Adelita se fuera con otro
la seguiría por tierra y por mar
si por mar en un buque de guerra
si por tierra en un tren militar

Y si Adelita quisiera ser mi esposa
y si Adelita ya fuera mi mujer
le compraría un vestido de seda
para llevarle a bailar al cuartel!

a regiment was encamped
and a young woman bravely follows them
madly in love with the sergeant.

Popular among the troop was Adelita
the woman that the sergeant idolized
and besides being brave she was so pretty
that even the Coronel respected her.

And it was Heard, that he, who loved her so
much, said:
If Adelita would leave with another man
I'd follow her by land and sea
if by sea in a warship
if by land in a military train.

If Adelita would like to be my wife
If Adelita would be my woman
I'd buy her a silk dress
To take her to the barrack's dance.¹⁴³

Lavaplatos

Sonaba en mi juventud ser una estrella
de cine, y un día de tantos me vine
a visitor Hollywood.

Un día muy desesperado por tanta
revolución,
me pase para este lado

The Dishwasher

I dreamed in my youth of being a movie star
and one of those days I came to
visit Hollywood.

One day very desperate because of so much
revolution,
I came over to this side

¹⁴³ El Teatro Campeino, *Cancionero de la Raza* (Fresno) 4.

sin pagar la inmigración

without paying the immigration.

Que vacilada,
que vacilada
me pase sin pagar nada.

What a fast one,
what a fast one,
I crossed without paying anything.

Al llegar a la estación
me tropecé con un cuate,
que me hizo la invitación
de trabajar en el "traque."

On arriving at the station
I ran into a buddy,
who gave me an invitation
to work on traque.

Yo el traque me suponía?
que sería algún almacén
y era componer la vida
por donde camina el tren.

I supposed the traque
to be some kind of warehouse
and it was to repair the track
where the train runs.

Ay, que mi cuate,
ay, que mi cuate,
como me llevo pa'l traque.

Oh, what a buddy,
Oh, what a buddy
how could he take me to the track?

Cuando me enfadé del traque
me volvió invitar aquel
a la pizca del tomate
y a desahjar betabel.

When I grew tired of the track,
he invited me again
to the tomato harvest
and to thin beets.

Y allí me gané
indulgencias
caminando de rodillas,
como cuatro o cinco millas
me dieron de
penitencia

And there I earned
indulgence
walking on my knees,
about four or five miles
they gave me as
penance.

Ay, que trabajo
tan mal pagado
por andar arrodillado

Oh, what work
so poorly paid
for being on one's knees.

Es el trabajo decente
que lo hacen muchos Chicanos
Aunque con l'agua caliente
se hinchan un poco las manos

It (dishwashing) is decent work
that many Chicanos do,
although with the hot water
the hands swell a little.

Pa' no hacérselas cansadas,
me enfadé de tanto plato,
y me alcance la puntada
de trabajar en el teatro.

To make a long story short,
I got tired of so many dishes,
and the thought came to me
of working in the theater.

Ay, que bonito
ay, que bonito
circo, maroma y teatrino.

Yo les pido su licencia
pa' darles estos consejos
a los jóvenes y viejos
que no tengan experiencia.

Aquel que no quiera creer
que lo que digo es verdad,
si se quiere convencer,
que se venga para acá'

Adios sueños de mi vida
adios estrellas del cine,
vuelvo a mi patria querida
más pobre de lo que vine.

Oh, how pretty
oh, how pretty
Circus, somersaults, and puppetry.

I ask your permission
to give this advice
to the young and old
who may be inexperienced.

He who doesn't believe
that what I say is true,
if he wants to be convinced
let him come over here.

Goodbye dreams of my life,
goodbye movie stars,
I return to my beloved country
poorer than when I arrived.¹⁴⁴

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome
We shall overcome
We shall overcome some day.

Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

¹⁴⁴ Chris Stachwitz, *Conjunto Texas-Mexican Border Music: Volume 2* (Folklyric Records: 1988).

We'll walk hand in hand
 We'll walk hand in hand
 We'll walk hand in hand some day.

We shall all be free
 We shall all be free
 We shall all be free some day.

We are not afraid
 We are not afraid
 We are not afraid some day.

We are not alone
 We are not alone
 We are not alone some day.

The whole wide world around
 the whole wide world around
 the whole wide world around some day.

We shall overcome
 We shall overcome
 We shall overcome some day.

Yo Soy Chicano

Yo soy chicano, tengo color/
 puro Chicano, hermano con honor
 Cuando me dicen que hay revolucion/
 Defiendo a mi raza con mucho valor

Tento todita mi gente/
 para la revolucion

I am Chicano, of color/
 Pure Chicano, a brother with honor
 When they tell me there is revolution/
 I defend my people with great valor.

I have all my people/
 for the revolution

Voy a luchar on los pobres/
Pa' que se acabe el bolon.

Tengo mi par de pistolas/
para la revolucion
Una se llama El Canario/
y otro se llama El Gorrion.

Tengo mi orgullo y machismo/
Mi cultura y Corazon
Tengo mi fe y diferencias/
y lucho con gran razon.

Tengo todita mi gente/
Para la revolucion
Voy a luchar con los pobres/
pa' que se acabe el bolon

Tengo mi orgullo, tengo mi fe/
soy diferente, soy color café

Tengo cultura, tengo Corazon/
y no me lo quita a mi ningun cabron.

I am going to fight alongside the poor/
To end this oppression.

I have my pair of pistols/
For the revolution
One is called The Canary/
And the other is called the Sparrow.

I have my pride and my manliness/
My culture and my heart.
I have my faith and my diffences/
And I fight with great conviction.

I have all my people/
For the revolution
I am going to fight alongside the por/
to end this oppression.

I have my pride, I have my faith/
I am different, I am of brown color.

I have culture, I have heart
And no son-of-a-gun will take it away from me.

Corrido de Aztlan

Desde los files de los campos
de los barrios de los pueblos
veniendo la Raza
declaremos nuestras tierras
declaremos nuestro plan
nuestra gente es la Raza

Corrido de Aztlan

From the rows of the fields
from the neighborhoods of towns
coming are our people
we declare our lands
we declare our plan
our people is called the race

y nuestro pueblo es Aztlan.
 Ay, ay, ay, ay, al grito de guerra
 Para liberar a nuestra gente
 y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.

Oye carnal, pon atención
 nosotros somos Raza
 del pueblo del sol,
 Aunque vengas tu del Norte
 y yo del Sur.
 Unidos venceremos pa' cavar la esclavitud.
 Ay, ay, ay, ay al grito de guerra,
 para liberar a nuestra gente
 y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.

Nuestras luchas de pobres
 y no de ricos ni opreseros.
 porque mi raza a dicho basta
 abajo la explotacion
 por todita la nación
 esta vez llegaremos a la gloria.
 Ay, ay, ay, ay al grito de guerra
 para liberar a nuestra gente
 y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.

Somos hijos de Zapata
 con el alma de la Raza
 y espíritu de Pancho Villa.
 Y para Aztlan lucharemos
 que sus tierras protegemos
 que nos guilla y nos une como hermanos.
 Ay, ay, ay, ay al grito de guerra
 para liberar a nuestra gente
 y hasta morir por nuestras tierras.

Ya con esta me despido
 con el alma y mucho orgullo
 porque mi raza ya dicho
 declaremos nuestras tierras
 declaremos nuestro plan
 nuestra gente es la raza
 y nuestro pueblo es Aztlan.¹⁴⁵

And our homeland is Aztlan.
 Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
 To liberate our people
 And to the death for our lands

Listen brother, pay attention
 we are called the race
 the people of the sun
 Even though you come from the North
 And I from the South
 Together united we will end slavery
 Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
 To liberate our people
 And to the death for our lands

Our struggle is of the poor
 Not of the wealthy or the oppressors
 because my race has said enough
 under exploitation.
 for the whole nation
 This time will reach glory
 Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
 To liberate our people
 And to the death for our lands

We are the children of Zapata
 with the soul of the race
 And the spirit of Pancho Villa
 For Aztlan we fight
 And our land we protect
 That guides us and unites us as brothers
 Ay, ay, ay, ay, the battle cry
 To liberate our people
 And to the death for our lands

And with that I say good-bye
 with soul and lots of pride
 because my race has said
 we declare our lands
 we declare our plan
 our people are the race
 And our homeland is Aztlan

¹⁴⁵Valdez 14.

Corrido de Cesar Chavez

Un dieciseis de marzo/
Jueves Santo en la mañana
Salio Cesar de Delano/
Componiendo una campaña

Companeros Campesinos/
Esto va a ser un ejemplo
Esta marcha la llevamos

Ballad of Cesar Chavez

On the 16th of March/
A blessed Thursday in the morning
Cesar Chavez left Delano/
Organizing a campaign.

Fellow farmworkers/
This is going to be an example
We Will take this march/

Hasta mero Sacramento

Cuando llegamos a Fresno/
la gente gritaba,
“y que viva Cesar Chavez/
y la gente que llevaba.”

Nos despedimos de Fresno/
despedimos con fe
Para llegar muy contentos/
Hasta el pueblo de Merced

Ya vamos llegando a Stockton/
Ya mero la luz se fue,
Pero mi gente gritaba/
Sigán con bastante fe.

Cuando llegamos a Stockton/
Los mariachis nos contaban
“Y que viva Cesar Chavez/
y la Virgen que llevaba.”

Contratistas y esquirolas/
Esto va ser una historia
Ustedes van al infierno/
Y nosotros a la Gloria

Oiga, señor Cesar Chavez/
Un hombre que se pronuncia
En su pecho usted merece/
La Virgen de Guadalupe

Un dieciseis de marzo
Jueves Santo en la mañana,
salio Cesar de Delano/
Componiendo una campana

Compañeros campesinos/
Esto va a ser un ejemplo
esta marcha la llevamos
hasta mero Sacramento

Right to Sacramento

When we arrived to Fresno,
All the people yelled
“Long Live Cesar Chavez/
And the people he brought with him.”

We bid farewell to Fresno/
We left with faith
to arrive, feeling good/
to the town of Merced.

Now we are arriving to Stockton/
the light of day had gone.
But my people shouted/
“Continue on with great faith.”

When we arrived to Stockton
the mariachis sang to us.
“And long live Cesar Chavez/
And the Virgin who accompanied him.”

Contracters and Scabs/
This is going to be a piece of history
You will go to hell/
And, we on to glory.

Listen, Mr. Cesar Chavez/
A name that is spoken.
On your heart you deserved
The Virgin of Guadalupe

On the 16th of March/
A blessed (Holy) Thursday in the morning
Cesar Chavez left Delano,
Organizing a campaign.

Fellow farmworkers/
This is going to be an example
We will take this march/
Right to Sacramento.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Valdez 15.

The Ballad of Sal Castro

This is the ballad of Sal Castro
and the united Mexican people.
On the 26th of September they gathered
to combat disgraceful injustice
Sal Castro, a teacher dedicated to
advance his Mexican people
had been told by school officials
Don't come back
this is American justice.

And that is why the new people got together
 justice was the cry of the people
 with pride they marched to the test.
 If not Sal Castro, then no schools.
 And no school system!¹⁴⁷

Appendix 2

Complete Lyrics of Huelga Songs

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome

We shall overcome some day

Nosotros Venceremos

Nosotros venceremos, nosotros
 Venceremos

Nosotros venceremos ahora

¹⁴⁷ Trevino 74.

Oh, deep in my heart
 I do believe
 We shall overcome some day

O en mi Corazon
 Yo Creo
 Nosotros venceremos

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever
 Solidarity Forever
 Solidarity Forever
 For the unión makes us strong

When the union's inspiration
 Through the workers blood shall run

Solidaridad pa' Siempre

Solidaridad pa' Siempre
 Solidaridad pa' Siempre
 Solidaridad pa' Siempre
 Que viva nuestra unión

En las vinas de la ira luchan por su libertad
 todos los trabajadores quieren ya vivir en paz

For what force on earth is weaker
Than the feeble strength of one
But the union makes us strong

They have taken untold millions
That they never toiled to earn
But without our brain and muscle
Not a single wheel can turn

We can break the growers'
Power, gain our freedom
While we learn that
The union makes us strong

y por eso companeros nos tenemos que juntar
Con Solidaridad

vamos, vamos campesinos
los derechos a pelear
Con el Corazon en alto
y con fe en la unidad

que la fuerza de los pobres
como las olas del mar
la injusticia
va a inundar

El Picket Sign

El picket sign, el picket sign
 Lo llevo por todo el dia
 El picket sign, el picket sign
 Conmigo toda la vida
 Desde Tejas a California, campesinos estan luchando
 Desde Tejas a California, campesinos estan luchando
 Los rancheros a llore-llore, de huelga ya estan bien pandos
 Un primo que tengo yo andaba regando ditches
 Un primo que tengo yo andaba regando ditches
 Un dia con Pagarulo y el otro con Zaninoviches
 Hay unos que no comprenden aunque muchos les dan consejos
 Hay unos que no comprenden aunque muchos les dan consejos
 La huelga es buena pa' todos pero unos se hacen pendejos
 Me dicen que soy muy necio, griton y alborota pueblos
 Me dicen que soy muy necio, griton y alborota pueblos
 Pero Juarez fue mi tio y Zapata fue mi suegro
 Y ahora organizando la gente en todos los files
 Y ahora organizando la gente en todos los files
 Porque unos solo comen tortillas con puros chiles
 Ya tenemos muchos años luchando con esta huelga
 Ya tenemos muchos años luchando con esta huelga
 Un rancho ya murio y otro si hizo abuelo

The Picket Sign

The picket sign, the picket sign
 I carry it all day with me
 The picket sign, the picket sign
 With me throughout my life.
 From Texas to California, farm workers are fighting
 From Texas to California, farm workers are fighting
 And the growers a' -cryin', 'a-cryin', from the strike they're knuckling under.
 A cousin of mine was out irrigating ditches
 A cousin of mine was out irrigating ditches
 On one day with Pagarulo, the next with Zaninoviches.
 There are some who don't understand though favored with advice,
 There are some who don't understand though favored with advice
 The strike is good for everybody but some play the stupid fool
 They tell me I'm too head strong, yell too much and incite people
 They tell me I am too head strong, yell too much and incite people
 But Juarez was my uncle, my father-in-law, Zapata
 And now organizing the workers in all of the fields
 And now organizing the workers in all of the fields
 Because some only eat tortillas with nothing else but chiles

We've been many years, fighting in this strike
We've been many years, fighting in this strike
One grower bit the dust, another's a granddaddy

La Peregrinacion

Y que yo he de decir?
Que yo estoy cansado?
Que el camino es largo
Y no se ve el fin?

Yo no vengo a cantar
Porque mi voz sea buena
Ni tampoco a llorar
Mi mal estar

Coro:

Desde Delano voy
Hasta Sacramento
Hasta Sacramento
Mis derechos a pelear
Mi Virgencita Guadalupana
Oye estos pasos,
Que todo el mundo
Lo sabra

The Pilgrimage

And what should I say?
That I am tired?
That the road is long
And the end is nowhere in sight?

I do not come to sing
because I have such a good voice
Nor do I come to cry
About my bad fortune

Chorus:

From Delano I go
To Sacramento
To Sacramento
To fight for my rights
My Virgen of Guadalupe
Here these steps,
Because the world
Will know of them

We Shall Not Be Moved

We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
We shall not be moved

The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water

United we will win
We shall not be moved
The union is behind us,
We shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
We shall not be moved

No Nos Moveran

No, no, no, nos moveran
No, no, no, nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio
No, nos moveran

La union con nosotros
No nos moveran
La union con nosotros
No nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio

Unidos ganaremos
No no nos moveran
Unidos ganaremos
No nos moveran
Como un arbol firme junto al rio
No nos moveran

Oye hermanos campesinos
Yo les vengo aquí a cantar
Que en este país tan rico
Aprendimos a luchar

Yo vengo del Imperial
De Coachella y San Joaquín
Pa' pelear con los rancheros
Y pa' darles ya su fin

La guitarra campesina
La guitarra campesina
La guitarra campesina
En huelga se levanto

Listen farm worker brothers
I have come here to sing to you
That in this rich country
We must learn to struggle

I come from Imperial County
From Coachella and San Joaquín
To fight against the ranchers
To give them their end

The farm worker guitar
The farm worker guitar
The farm worker guitar
Has risen up in strike

Hasta México ha llegado
la noticia muy alegre
de que Cuba es diferente;
Ya no hay nadie que la estorbe
ni tiranos engreídos
que acababan con la gente;
Y como somos hermanos
la alegría compartimos
con toditos los cubanos.
¡Viva la revolución!
¡Viva la reforma agrarian!
¡Viva Fidel Castro Ruz!

From Mexico has come
the good news
that Cuba is different;
For now no one can obstruct her
not even arrogant tyrants
who are destroying the people;
And as we are brothers
the happiness we share
with all the Cubans.
Long live the revolution!
Long live Agrarian Reform!
Long live Fidel Castro Ruz!

Huelga en General

General Strike

Hasta México ha llegado
la noticia muy alegre
que Delano es diferente.
Pues el pueblo ya está en contra
los rancheros y engreídos
que acababan con la gente.
Y como somos hermanos
la alegría compartimos
con todos los campesinos,

¡Viva la revolución!
¡Arriba con nuestra unión!
¡Viva huelga en general!
El día ocho de septiembre
de los campos de Delano

All the way to Mexico has come
the good news
that Delano is different.
But the people are now against
the ranchers and the arrogant
who are destroying the people.
And as we as brothers
the happiness we share
with all the farm workers.

Long live the revolution!
Long live the our union!
Long live the general strike!
On the eighth of September
from the fields of Delano

Appendix 3

Complete Lyrics of Teatro Campesino Songs

Ninos Campesinos

Como a la una, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco
 Seis de la mañana
 El sol calienta ranchos anchos y de
 Luz todo los bana.
 Y a esos campos van
 Los ninos campesinos
 Sin un destino, sin un destino
 Son peregrines de verdad

Van de camino los veranos,
 Inviernos y primaveras
 Cruzando estados y condados
 Y ciudades extranjeras
 Como los golondrinas van

Dandose vuelvo, dandose vuelvo
 De sus anhelos de verdad

Van a los files de la uva,
 Betabel y de manzana
 Y ahi los ninos se la pasan
 Todo el dia entre las ramas
 De sol a sol hasta
 Que llegan pagadores
 Dandoles flores, dandoles flores,
 Para Dolores de verdad

Pero algun dia esos ninos
 Seran hombres y mujeres
 Trabajadores campesinos que
 Defienden sus quereres,
 Y mano en mano tomaran
 Otro camino
 Con un destino, con un destino
 Pa'campesinos de verdad

Como a la una, dos, tres, cuatro

Farmworker Children

Around one, two, three, four, five
 or six in the morning
 The sun heats wide ranches and bathes
 Everything in light.
 And the farm worker children
 go to those fields,
 Without destination, without destination
 they are true pilgrims

They are on the road in the summers,
 winters, and springs,
 Crossing foreign states
 and counties and cities
 Like the swallows, they go
 beneath the skiles,
 Giving flight, giving flight
 to their true yearnings

They go to the grape
 beet, and apple fields
 And there, the children spend
 the entire day among the branches
 From sun up to sunset
 until the paymasters arrive,
 Giving them flowers, giving flowers
 For their true pain

But one day those children
 will be men and women,
 Farmworkers who defend
 their interests,
 And hand-in-hand,
 they will take another road
 With a destiny, with a destiny
 truly for the farmworkers

Around one, two, three, four,

Cinco, seis, de la mañana
El sol calienta ranchos anchos
Y de luz todo los bana,
Y a esos campos solo van
Los que no saben
Viva la huelga
Viva la huelga
Viva la causa de verdad

five, or six in the morning
The sun heats wide ranches
and bathes everything in light.
And only those who do not know
better will go to the fields,
Long live the strike
Long live the strike
May the cause truly live on

De Colores

De Colores,
De colores se visten en los campos

Of the Colors

Of colors
the fields dress themselves in colors

En la primavera
De colores, de colores son los pajaritos
Que vienen de afuera
De colores, de colores es el arco
Iris que vemos lucir
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores me gustan a mi

Canta el gallos , canta el gallo
Con el quiri quiri quiri quiri quiri
La gallina, la gallina con el
Kara kara kara kara kara;
Los pollitos, los pollitos con
El pio pio pio pio pi;
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores me gustan a mi

in the springtime
Of colors, the little birds that come
from afar are many colors,
Of colors, the rainbow that we see
shining is of many colors
And that is why
I love many colores

The rooster sings, the rooster sings
cock-a-doodle-doo,
The hen, the hen with
her cluck, cluck, cluck;
the chicks, the chicks with
their peep, peep, peep;
And that is why
I love many colores.

Quihubo Raza

Bueno pues, Quihubo, Comes les va
Que lindo día para cantar
Noticias que han llegado de Nuevo Mexico

Hello People

Well, then, Hello, there! How's it going?
What a beautiful day for singing!
News from New Mexico

Mil ochocientos cuarenta y ocho
 Pues fue firmado el gran trado
 De Guadalupe Hidalgo
 Prometienddo justicia y libertad
 A tierras y terrenos de gente indigena

No hombre, que mentirosos
 Cuando firmaron el tratado
 Los americanos

Estribillo
 Y el mexicano hacerse gringo,
 No puede, ni quiere
 Y el mexicano hacerse gringo,
 No puede, ni será
 Porque en sus venas trae la sangre
 Chichimeca, Zapoteca y de los yaquis
 Y en su cuerpo trae la sangre
 De Cuauhtemoc
 De Morelos y Zapata,
 Y el famoso Pancho Villa

Texas y Utah y California,
 Wyoming y Colorado,
 Nevada y Nuevo Mexico:
 Todo estas tierras fueron robadas
 Y al presente nos encontramos
 Rogandole al gobierno
 Reis Lopez Tijerina en Nuevo Mexico
 Ha levantado armas, sus tierras reclamo

Ahi esta y aqui nos tienen
 Nuestra cultura aplastada
 Y hablando English

Eighteen forty-eight
 That the great treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
 Was signed
 Promising justice and freedom
 For the lands and property of
 indigenous property
 No, man! What liars!
 When they signed the treaty
 Those Americans

Refrain
 And the Mexican, to become gringo
 He doesn't want to, nor can
 And the Mexican, to become gringo
 He doesn't want to, nor will be
 Because in his veins he has
 Chichimec, Zapotec, and Yaqui
 And in his body he has
 the blood of Cuauhtemoc,
 Of Morelos and Zapata,
 and of the famous Pancho Villa.

Texas and Utah and California
 Wyoming and Colorado
 Nevada and New Mexico
 All these lands were stolen,
 And today, we find ourselves
 Begging the government
 Reis Lopez Tijerina in New Mexico
 Has taken up arms and reclaimed
 his people's land.
 There it is, and here they have us
 Our culture crushed
 And speaking English.

Appendix 4

Complete Lyrics of Conclusion Songs

Mi Gente

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Si yo; trabajo de sol a sol
Si ser honesto es mi religion
Yo no necesito que me digan
Que es lo que puedo hacer, no no que no

Si yo vine de lejos a esta tierra
Fue por que havia escuchado la promesa
Que aqui yo encontraria la manera
Para poder vivir mejor

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Yo quiero que entiendan que en mi tambien corre el sudor
Que yo quiero a mi tierra
Que ami tambien me duele lo mismo que austed
Que sepan que yo soy de aqui como lo es cualquiera
Que tambien me da pena
Las injusticias, la pobreza de mi gente

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Sufro por ti para que no sigas asi
Gozo al sentir que tu me entiendes a mi
Rio al mirar toda mi gente reir
Grito al saver que tu te sientes asi

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, con toda mi gente
Sufro, siento, rio, lloro
Callo, grito, por que no me entienden

Por mi gente es que grito yo
Es que grito hoy
Por mi gente es que canto hoy
Es que canto pa' mi gente

Por mi gente es que grito yo
Grito al saver que tu te sientes asi
Por mi gente es que canto hoy
Canto de mi gente
Canto por mi gente eh, eh, i, eh, oh, oh

Por mi gente es que grito yo
Que no sufra mas asi
Por mi gente es que canto hoy
Por mi gente es que canto hoy

Esta es mi tierra por
Ella es que hoy canto yo
Canto, canto
Esta es mi tierra I suffer, I feel, I laugh, I cry, I'm silent, I yell

My People (English Translation)

With all my people
I suffer, I feel, I laugh, I cry, I'm silent, I yell
Because they don't understand me

If I; work from dawn to dawn

If being honest is my religion
I don't need anybody to tell me
What I can or cannot do
If I came to this land from far away
It's because I had heard the promise
That hear I would find the way
To live a better life

I want you to understand that I sweat like everyone else
that I love my land
that it hurts me the same that it hurts you
I want you to know that I am from here just like everyone else
that I also feel the pain
of injustices and the poverty of my people

I suffer for you, to not continue like this
I'm happy to feel that you understand me
I laugh seeing my people laugh too
I scream out knowing you feel this way too

For my people, I will scream today
It's that I scream today
For my people I will sing today
It's that I sing for my people

I scream knowing that you feel the same
I sing of my people, I sing for my people

That they won't suffer anymore like that

This is my land, for which I sing today

Mujer de Maiz

Yo soy una mujer de maíz
Soy la mujer
La mujer de maíz
Y de cuerpo nace el maíz
I am the woman

Woman of Corn

I am a woman of corn
I am the woman
The woman of corn
From my body is born corn
I am the woman

Goddess of corn
And from my body corn is born

Goddess of corn
And from my body corn is born

Migra

En los montes y en los cerros
Minutemen buscando miedo
Listo para disparte

Migra

In the mountains and the hills
Minutemen looking for trouble
Ready for nonsense

Migra!
 Quieren encontrar alguien
 Para darle bala Americana

Para desquitarse!
 Es que no pueden con la profecía
 La gente se viene día tras día
 Brincando cuanto monte de noche y de día
 Con las condiciones cualquiera se echaría
 Migra

No me importa si me sacan
 Yo regreso con mas
 Fuerza para organizarme
 Migra
 Como en China arman muro
 Pa' evitar el Mexicano
 Pesadilla del Tejano

Si tu quieres alguien que te émigré
 Estos fácil fácil van!
 Vamos hablarle pronto a los testigos
 Que esos fácil fácil van
 Si tu quieres alguien que te emigre
 Ponte buzo del caiman

Migra!
 They want to find someone
 To give them an American bullet

To get even!
 They cannot with prophecy
 People come every day
 Mount jumping like night and day
 With any conditions
 Migra

I do not care if they take me
 I will return with more
 With strength to organize
 Migra
 Like in China with the great wall
 To avoid the Mexican
 Nightmare to the Texan

If you want someone to migrate
 These will easily come
 We will soon talk to witnesses
 These will easily come
 If you want someone who will migrate
 Go put on your uniform made of alligator

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