

THE WAR IN THE DESERT: THE VIETNAM ANTIWAR MOVEMENT IN THE
AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

A Thesis

by

BRANDON MICHAEL WARD

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2009

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ABSTRACT

The War in the Desert: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement in the American Southwest.

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The Vietnam antiwar movement developed in the American Southwest out of a coalition of Chicanos, GI's, and students who agreed that the Vietnam War was racist, imperialist, costly, and negatively affected them and their communities. The antiwar movement in the Southwest formed in 1967, made possible by the emergence of the Chicano and GI movements. Chicanos criticized the military for a disproportionate number of Mexican American combat deaths in Vietnam. The military sent activist youth from across the country to bases in the Southwest, where they protested the war alongside Chicanos and college students. Connections between Chicanos, GI's, and students developed into a strong antiwar movement in 1968-1969. Beginning in 1970, the coalition fell apart as Chicanos increasingly pursued a strategy of separatism from mainstream American society as the key to self-determination. Frustration over perceived lack of progress in ending the war led the antiwar movement into an escalation in protest tactics and radicalization of its message, pushing out

moderate voices and further weakening the movement. This thesis offers an original contribution because historians have failed to pay attention to the vibrant antiwar movement in the Southwest, instead, mostly focusing on the East Coast and San Francisco Bay Area. Historians of the Chicano movement have not adequately shown how it allied with other movements in the 1960s to achieve its goals. The use of underground newspapers allows a window into the writings and ideas of the protestors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST, 1966-1967

While students at elite universities protested the Vietnam War as early as 1965, in the Southwest the antiwar movement did not gain much traction.¹ The pervasive influence of the military-industrial complex, anti-communist politics, and most importantly, support for the military by the significant Mexican-American population stunted the development of an antiwar movement in the Southwest. These factors persisted throughout the war, but in 1967, the movement broke through and gained momentum, due to the emergence of the Chicano movement and the GI movement. The antiwar movement became a force for broad social change in the Southwest, connecting American foreign policy to problems on the home front. A coalition of Chicanos, GI's, and students agreed that the lives and resources spent in Vietnam could be put to better use in America.²

A movement is more than the sum of its individual parts. The antiwar movement developed in the Southwest because it provided common ground for

This thesis follows the style of *The Journal of American History*.

¹ The best works on the antiwar movement include Charles Chatfield with Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (New York, 1990); Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (Berkeley, 1994); Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick, 1988); and Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War* (Berkeley, 2005).

² In this essay, I use the term Mexican American to denote broadly all American residents of Mexican descent, and it is used without regard to citizenship status. Chicano is used to distinguish the younger generation of Mexican Americans with a militant, brown pride ethos.

a number of individual social movements. Students, GI's, and Chicanos had different goals for their activism, but they all agreed that the Vietnam War was racist, imperialist, and costly, and it obstructed their own political agendas. The groundwork for the antiwar movement was laid in 1966-1967, the interactions between movements converged into a strong antiwar movement in 1968-1969, and in 1970 the movement started to unravel as the individual groups abandoned the antiwar movement to pursue their own struggles. Political scientist Charles Tilly defined a social movement as "a sustained *interaction* in which mobilized people, acting in the name of a defined interest, make repeated broad demands on powerful others via means which go beyond the current prescriptions of the authorities."³ In the American Southwest, a region notable for its lack of organizations and leaders, the antiwar movement was the story of the *interaction* between activists, who were connected by the belief that the war negatively affected them and their communities. The movement was at its strongest when activists could connect the problems at home to the Vietnam War. Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield called the antiwar movement the "story of the Vietnam War on the home front." As "a broad coalition for social change," the antiwar movement was almost always about America first, not Vietnam.⁴

³ Charles Tilly, "Social Movements and National Politics," in Charles Bright and Susan Harding, eds. *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory* (Ann Arbor, 1984), quote on p. 313; emphasis in the original. See also Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK, 1998).

⁴ Charles DeBenedetti with Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, 1990), 4, 1.

Antiwar movement histories have often claimed to be “national” in scope, but their sources have led them to focus only on the most visible aspects of the movement. Tom Wells, in *The War Within: America’s Battle over Vietnam*, made extensive use of the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and interviews with “leaders” of the movement. The result, not surprisingly, is a book focused on only the most visible protests and organizations, located usually in New York City, San Francisco, and the nation’s capital. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones’ *Peace Now!* argues that the antiwar movement exerted a significant influence on American foreign policy. Rather than attempt a state-by-state analysis of the movement, Jeffreys-Jones writes the national story of the antiwar movement by analyzing just two states, New York and California. He chose these states not because they were unique, but because “both states were representative of America as a whole in being diverse and cosmopolitan.”⁵ *Peace Now!* represents an extreme example of histories that have attempted to tell the story of the national antiwar movement through limited sources. Furthermore, even though California is chosen as a focus, Chicanos receive only one mention in a state with a noisy and important Chicano movement.

The Chicano, GI, and student movements have well-developed historiographies.⁶ Historians, however, have often failed to show how each of

⁵ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven, 1999), 6, 59.

⁶ Some notable works on the Chicano movement include Ignacio Garcia, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson, 1997); Ernesto Chávez, “*Mi Raza Primero*”: *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978* (Berkeley, 2002); and Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!*.

these parts interacted in the antiwar movement. Lorena Oropeza's important *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War* demonstrated that the Vietnam War was the most important factor driving the emergence of the Chicano movement. She argued that the Chicano movement, in part due to the Vietnam War, challenged the traditional tripod of Mexican American citizenship of masculinity, whiteness, and military service as the key to upward mobility. This book has deepened our understanding of the Southwest during the Vietnam War as well as the development of the Chicano movement.

My goal is not to dispute her findings, but rather to connect Chicano protest of the war to the rest of the movement in the Southwest. Oropeza's findings do not demonstrate how Chicano protest contributed to the larger antiwar movement, or how they allied with Anglo students and GI's to promote their own political causes. Chicanos contributed greatly to the antiwar movement in the Southwest, but showing their interactions with GI's and student protestors will increase our understanding of how individual movements were connected by opposition to the Vietnam War.

The GI movement, an important element of southwestern antiwar protest, similarly has been studied in isolation from other groups making up the movement. The first study of the GI movement, David Cortright's *Soldiers in Revolt*, is still the best on the subject. Cortright argued that the GI movement, in the critical years between 1968 and 1972, practiced the "politics of survival," and

that the evasion of combat was the primary motivation behind GI dissent.⁷ While this accurately characterizes much GI dissent *in* Vietnam, the story on the home front, I argue, was far more complex. This does not explain the involvement of the many GI's who joined local causes and fought with activists in the base communities. They criticized not just the military in Vietnam, but also racism and injustice on the home front. Historians have failed to explore the relationship between GI's and Chicanos in the antiwar movement, which this thesis addresses.

This thesis considers the Southwest as a region that extends along the border states roughly from Fort Hood, Texas to New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. The combination of a significant Mexican American population and a substantial military-industrial complex set this region apart from the rest of the United States, and the confluence of these two factors shaped the antiwar movement. Underground newspapers form the backbone of the primary source research. Histories of the antiwar movement have often been written from national newspapers, in the process writing out the movement in the Southwest. The best way to study the antiwar movement in the Southwest is through the underground press. Studying the antiwar movement from the organizational or leadership perspective simply will not work, because few movement organizations operated in the Southwest. A mailing list of

⁷ Quote in David G. Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: the American Military Today* (Garden City, 1975), 33. Other important works on the GI movement include Andrew E. Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York, 1999) and Richard R. Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent during the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, 1996).

approximately 1,400 movement organizations in 1973 shows only 109 located in the Southwest, and the vast majority of these were in Los Angeles.⁸ The underground press emerged first in Los Angeles and Austin, and then spread into the interior after 1967. The story of a complex, diverse, and active movement that mobilized GI's, Chicanos, and college students into a coalition seeking to end the war in Vietnam and bring social change at home emerges from these newspapers. This thesis offers an original contribution with the contention that the antiwar movement in the Southwest mobilized the large population of Mexican Americans, soldiers, and students into a broad coalition seeking to end the war in Vietnam.

The antiwar movement emerged out of a unique political, social, and economic context in the Southwest. Religious anti-communists interpreted the Vietnam War as a spiritual battle, pitting godless communism against a Catholic South Vietnamese government. The John Birch Society demanded the containment of communism abroad and containment of radicalism on the home front, and was especially strong in Texas and southern California.⁹ The mayor of Amarillo, Texas, and a number of congressmen from southern California were "Birchers" early in the sixties. Also in Los Angeles, the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade was headed by evangelist Fred Schwarz, who led the attack against antiwar protestors throughout Southern California. In Texas, Dallas-Fort Worth

⁸ "Mailing List of Movement Organizations [1973]." Central Committee of Correspondence. Social Movements Collection, Virtual Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

⁹ Mark Stoll, "Crusaders Against Communism, Witnesses for Peace: Religion in the American West and the Cold War," in Fernlund, ed., *The Cold War West* (Albuquerque, 1999).

became the epicenter in the American West for anti-communism, home to oilman H. L. Hunt who ran his “Defender Hour” show on border radio, broadcasting a mix of messages that were anti-communist and anti-Semitic. Antiwar activists often referred to the difficulty of building a movement in such an anti-communist region, usually pointing to the repressive activities of the John Birch Society.

Conservative groups in the Southwest attempted to stem the emerging protest. The anticommunist John Birch Society, headquartered in Orange County, California, struggled to maintain 1950s-style Cold War consensus amidst a growing counterculture and antiwar movement. “Birchers” attempted to block an arts festival in Ventura County because of its strong countercultural content, though the organizer insisted that it was not a hippie fest.¹⁰ The society attempted to strong-arm city councils into refusing permits for antiwar marches. Berkeley’s underground newspaper the *Barb* often observed in its pages the repressive atmosphere of Orange County, criticizing groups like the John Birch Society for creating “culturally deprived millions.”¹¹ While Bay Area had a strong antiwar movement by 1967, the *Barb* criticized the political and cultural conservatism of southern California for blunting the movement.

In Austin, students at the University of Texas accused the administration of interfering with their right to protest the Vietnam War, blaming repression on the close relationship between administrators, state politicians, and President

¹⁰ *Open City*, May 5, 1967, p. 1.

¹¹ *Berkeley Barb*, March 10, 1967, p. 4.

Lyndon Johnson. The Texas Student Publications Board of Directors censored a student publication in 1966 that caricatured Johnson, fearing that it would insult the president, because “after all this is the President’s University,” as one board member declared.¹² Students argued that the close relationship between the president and the university made demonstrations particularly embarrassing to the administrators. The Board of Regents charged that student protests were “against the best interests of the University of Texas.”¹³ *The Rag* noted that the chairman of the university’s Board of Regents, Frank Erwin Jr., was Johnson’s friend as well as the Texas representative to the Democratic National Committee.

Prior to the militarily disastrous Tet Offensive in January, 1968, “establishment” media sometimes exaggerated pro-war marches and news favorable to the Johnson administration, contributing to the popular belief that the antiwar movement was a vocal minority.¹⁴ A Los Angeles “Support Our Servicemen” parade in September, 1967, drew 2,000 onlookers watching a march of 450 people reported a Saturday edition of the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*.¹⁵ The following morning, however, the same newspaper inflated the original estimates, headlining the front page with “10,000 See Parade in Support of GIs,” and estimated 5,000 marchers. The media contributed to the Johnson

¹² *The Rag*, May 1, 1967, p. 2.

¹³ *The Rag*, May 1, 1967, p. 2.

¹⁴ Melvin Small, *Covering Dissent: The Media and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement* (New Brunswick, 1994), 29.

¹⁵ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Sept. 29, 1967, p. 6.

administration's attempts to paint a rosy picture of the war and marginalize antiwar protestors.

During the first years of the Vietnam conflict, especially through 1967, pro-war demonstrations were commonplace in the Southwest. In San Antonio, North side high school students organized a pro-war rally in front of the Alamo, which the mayor attended. The San Antonio *Inferno* resented the rally held by the "well-to-do people who live comfortably and enjoy the war in Vietnam. They like to read about the bloody jungle fighting while sipping martinis poolside."¹⁶ Mexican Americans especially resented the organizers who "will undoubtedly be sitting out the war in some college while you know who will be doing the fighting."

Signs emerged, especially in Austin and Los Angeles, that the antiwar movement was ready to break through in the Southwest, due to the recognition that the Vietnam War was stealing resources that could better be used at home. Johnson's political advisors alerted the president in 1967 to the rifts developing in Southern California's political scene. With an eye towards the 1968 election, the president's advisors urged him to campaign heavily in Southern California and they considered two issues central to winning the state: race and Vietnam. Johnson's advisors failed to recognize the relationship between the two issues. The president could divide the "doves," they argued, if they emphasized "recent great domestic advances with the President. Efforts should be made to

¹⁶ *Inferno*, June 8, 1967, p. 7.

persuade the ‘doves’ that the President’s position on Vietnam is essentially moderate and at any rate they should be persuaded to support the President in domestic matters even if they continue to disagree on Vietnam.”¹⁷ The advisors misread the situation—separating foreign and domestic affairs was not realistic.

The effects of the Vietnam War on the home front turned many former supporters of the war into antiwar advocates. Instead of dividing the doves, “domestic matters” heightened opposition to the war throughout the Southwest. By 1967, it was increasingly apparent that the War on Poverty and the Great Society were unsustainable during a war. It was the classic “guns or butter” dilemma. Blacks and Chicanos began opposing the war on grounds that it stole resources that could be used to combat inner-city problems. In his famous speech “Beyond Vietnam,” Martin Luther King, Jr. argued that the burdens of the war fell disproportionately on the poor. Despite his high hopes for the War on Poverty, “I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw onn and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube.”¹⁸ As the war stole resources from the poor, it also sent “their sons and brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population.”

¹⁷ “Memo to President Lyndon B. Johnson from Marvin Watson,” May 10, 1967. Larry Berman Collection, Virtual Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

¹⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam,” in Clyde Taylor, ed. *Vietnam and Black America: An Anthology of Protest and Resistance* (Garden City, 1973), 79-98, quotes on 81.

Chicanos and blacks throughout the war drew inspiration from King's criticisms. In an article in the Los Angeles newspaper *Open City* entitled, "Why Blacks Resist the War," poet Cleveland Harris connected the failures of the War on Poverty with the Vietnam War, writing, "The people who vote against fair housing, equal employment opportunities, voting rights laws, anti-poverty programs and other measures which might benefit the Negro, are identical with the ones who say 'Bomb Hanoi,' 'Drop more napalm,' 'Wipe out the Viet Cong,' and 'We won't get out of Vietnam.'"¹⁹ In the inner city, where federal money was desperately needed to revitalize blighted areas and bring back jobs, residents were sensitive to the broken promises of the War on Poverty, and they blamed the Vietnam War for this failure. Antiwar sentiment in Los Angeles developed in urban areas almost simultaneously with the suburban colleges, a unique situation since the colleges in many parts of the country were the first loci of dissent.

Efforts to alleviate the ghetto problems were especially intense following the summer of 1967, when riots broke out in the urban areas throughout the nation. The rioting threatened to undermine support for Johnson's Great Society as well as the Vietnam War. Congressman Augustus Hawkins joined with nine other California Democratic Congressmen to warn, "the crisis of the ghettos is more urgent than the war in Vietnam."²⁰ Hawkins represented the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts, site of the devastating riots in 1965 that caused thirty-

¹⁹ *Open City*, Aug. 17, 1967, p. 3.

²⁰ *Open City*, Aug. 31, 1967, p. 11.

four deaths. Historians have argued that the Watts riots divided the black and Mexican American communities. Following the riots, federal money poured into South Central Los Angeles. Mexican Americans questioned why blacks were seemingly rewarded for unruly behavior while their neighborhoods in East Los Angeles were ignored by Washington liberals. By 1967, however, blacks and Chicanos increasingly argued that their fates were intertwined, connecting the failures of the War on Poverty to the Vietnam War. For blacks and Chicanos, protesting the Vietnam War meant promoting the interest of their own communities.

Urban riots in 1967 heightened the awareness that inner-city problems were directly impacted by the Vietnam War. A student-run radio show at the University of New Mexico marked the two-year anniversary of the Watts riot. Guests of the show included a number of Watts riot participants, who were pulling together a Watts' Writers Workshop to publish literature from the riot. Participants of the interview agreed that a continuum existed between racial subjugation at home and colonization of third world people abroad, especially the Vietnamese. The Vietnam War had become a "Frankenstein" for the United States, insisted Vallejo Ryan Kennedy, "but they can't kill him, because his image in the eyes of the world would be bad, so he's got to pacify and quiet his Frankenstein down. See? But Frankenstein keeps growing bigger every day."²¹

²¹ "Transcript of a Discussion at the Duglass House," Social Movements Collection, Virtual Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

The other participants agreed, connecting the pacification of the Vietnamese with the pacification of minorities in America.

Connection of urban riots to the Vietnam War is also evident in María Herrera-Sobek's "Cinco poemas." While white people with power lounged in segregated country clubs and sent minorities to war, she wrote, "a bomb was planted/ in our minds/ a bomb exploded/ Watts, East Los/ Black Panthers/ Brown Berets/ Drank the night/ and lighted up the sky/ with homemade/ fireworks/ the war had come/ to roost/ in our own backyard."²²

The desert Southwest is marked by vast spaces interrupted by urban oases and military installations. It is not surprising, then, that the antiwar movement would emerge in the inner cities and military bases. The Fort Hood Three was the first public instance of GI dissent against the Vietnam War. Three soldiers finished their basic training in June, 1966, at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, and then refused orders for deployment to Vietnam.²³ They included a white, a Puerto Rican, and an African American, giving the sense that this was a sample of the composition of the American military. David Samas, Dennis Mora, and James Johnson challenged the constitutionality of the war in a lawsuit filed against the government.²⁴ In a joint statement, they rejected the prospect for being pawns of American imperialism, "We oppose the criminal waste of

²² Maria Herrera-Sobek, "Cinco poemas," first published in George Mariscal, ed. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (Berkeley, 1999), 232-235, quote on 234.

²³ Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 155.

²⁴ Terry H. Anderson, "The G.I. Movement and the Response from the Brass," in Melvin Small and William Hoover, ed., *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (Syracuse, 1992), 93-115, 95.

American lives and resources. We refuse to go to Vietnam!!”²⁵ The three were court martialed and sentenced to prison in the stockades at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they stayed until October, 1967. Although this was a much-publicized event, it was downplayed by much of the press as the actions of a trio of disgruntled young men. While laying some important groundwork for the GI movement, the event did not spark a movement of followers. A movement required more than a sporadic protest to create momentum.

Fort Hood regained the national spotlight in May, 1967, when military officials court martialed Pfc. Howard Petrick for his antiwar activities.²⁶ While on a ten-day pass, Petrick attended the Young Socialist Alliance convention in Detroit, and upon returning, discovered that his locker had been searched and his radical literature confiscated. This was an apparent response to Petrick passing out literature on everything from Vietnam to Malcolm X. Petrick received a dishonorable discharge for his membership in the Socialist Workers Party.²⁷ The Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick sought an honorable discharge, arguing that soldiers retain first amendment rights. Petrick’s case raised a significant question: does a civilian lose his or her constitutional rights upon entering the military? This was the central organizing question for the GI movement during the Vietnam War. Some historians have

²⁵ Statement of the Fort Hood Three reprinted in “We Demand Freedom for GI’s,” in G. Louis Heath, ed., *Mutiny Does Not Happen Lightly: The Literature of the American Resistance to the Vietnam War* (Metuchen, NJ, 1976), 150-154, quote on 152.

²⁶ *The Rag*, May 8, 1967, p. 8.

²⁷ “Defend the Right of GIs to Free Speech,” Social Movements Collection, Virtual Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

painted the movement as though soldiers were only concerned with avoiding combat in Vietnam. The first scholar of the GI movement, David Cortright, argued that the movement boiled down to the “politics of survival.”²⁸ While true in a narrow sense, it mischaracterizes the intellectual content of their protests and their broad attacks on American racism, imperialism, and militarism, especially important in the Southwest. The war deployed a generation of activist youth from across the nation to bases throughout the Southwest, where they engaged with the local communities to fight for positive social change. In the process, they gave legitimacy to the growing antiwar movement in its ability to protest the war. Fort Hood became the epicenter of the GI movement in the Southwest, built on the foundations of the Fort Hood Three and Howard Petrick.

In the Southwest, the military-industrial complex dominated politics and the economy, and became an early target of activists. Chicanos found in the military-industrial complex an enticing target, because the 1964 Civil Rights Act held corporations with federal contracts to a higher standard of integration and equality. Still, fears that their jobs were at risk if they defied the corporations or the military bases subdued the efforts. An editorial in the San Antonio *Inferno* expressed why workers and Mexican Americans were not mobilizing against the war: “Mexican American civil service workers at the five major military installations...believe war is good business. But in their patriotic zeal and in their newly acquired affluence, they are receiving a poor return on the investment of

²⁸ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 33.

their sons.”²⁹ The San Antonio underground the *Inferno* sarcastically congratulated Kelly Air Force Base on its anniversary: “Happy 50th Anniversary Kelly Air Force Base: ‘Fifty years of discrimination against Mexican Americans.’”³⁰ The newspaper lobbed criticism of racism not only at the base, but also at the surrounding military industries in San Antonio.

Chicano protest of the war began in earnest in 1967, fueled by the inequities of the draft system and the disproportionate Mexican American deaths in Vietnam. Sociologist Ralph Guzmán at the University of California - Santa Cruz found that “a disproportionate number of young men with distinctive Spanish names did not return from the Southeast Asia theatre of war.”³¹ Guzmán’s findings were significant in part because the military did not specifically track Mexican Americans, but classified them as white. Data had to be inferred by Spanish surnames. In the Southwest, Guzmán found that between 1961 and 1967, 16.4 percent of all the killed soldiers in Vietnam had Spanish surnames, while they made up 11.0 percent of the general population in the 1960 census. Guzmán merely confirmed what Chicanos already suspected, that Mexican Americans carried an unfair share of the burden of fighting. Chicanos began arguing that they should fight for the *raza*, often translated as “the race” or “the people,” an appeal that grew throughout the war as the Chicano Movement developed.

²⁹ *Inferno*, Feb. 29, 1968, pp. 3-4, quote on p. 3.

³⁰ *Inferno*, May 11, 1967, p. 2.

³¹ Ralph Guzmán, “Mexican American Casualties in Vietnam.” Douglass Pike Collection: Unit 03 -Statistical Date. Texas Tech Vietnam Virtual Archive, Lubbock.

Chicanos blamed the draft for targeting their communities. The newspaper *El Malcriado* summarized the situation, “Southwestern states have disgraceful records when it comes to Mexican Americans and the draft....”³² Of the Southwestern states, only New Mexico had Mexican American representation on draft boards proportionate to the population. While comprising 14.8% of the population in Texas, they only made up 5.3% of draft board members. In the Rio Grande Valley, not a single Mexican American sat on a draft board. An advertisement for Chicano Draft Counseling office in San Diego announced the defiance of one young Chicano, “In Honor of My Mother, I Won’t Go!”³³ The advertisement suggested why an East Los Angeles native, Jose Sanchez, was resisting the draft, “I am fighting my war . . . here at home.” The Chicano Draft Counseling organization accused the war of “wiping out the young men of the brown community in the Southwest at an alarming pace.” Criticizing middle-class Anglo draft resisters, an Albuquerque paper opined, “REMEMBER—In New Mexico, every time a gringo escapes the draft by going to the University...a Chicano gets drafted!”³⁴

Draft evasion was popular with middle-class youth, but blacks and Chicanos pointed out that they did not have the same opportunities to obtain deferments. Middle-class students had access to the medical deferments, draft counseling, and fellow draft resisters that allowed them to avoid combat and let

³² Story reprinted in *Inferno*, Nov. 23, 1967, p. 2.

³³ “La Verdad,” *Chicano Yearbook* 1968, p. 66.

³⁴ “Why the Gringo Doesn’t Like to be Drafted,” *Chicano Yearbook* 1968, p. 71.

the burden of fighting fall on the working class.³⁵ While draft evasion was common throughout the United States, in the Southwest its loudest critics were blacks and Chicanos. Draft evaders, blacks and Chicanos noticed, were often privileged, college-bound, middle-class whites. In the Los Angeles area, of thirteen draft counseling offices listed by the underground newspaper *Open City*, only two specifically served the South Central or East Los Angeles sections of the city, home to the majority of blacks and Chicanos.³⁶ Levi Kingston, chairman of the Freedom Draft Movement, summarized why blacks and Chicanos needed anti-draft resources, “The white middle class isn’t affected by this war. It’s the minority groups.”³⁷ Although an exaggeration, Kingston reflected the sentiments of many minorities. A number of draft counseling offices operated throughout the Southwest aimed specifically at blacks and Chicanos, but these efforts often could not treat the basis of the problem—racism and poverty.

Although criticisms of the war became more common throughout the Southwest, protests and marches were sporadic and sparsely attended. Critics of the war were isolated, blacks and Chicanos lobbed their own condemnations of the war, students mostly organized amongst themselves, and the GI movement was not yet on anyone’s radar. An important turning point occurred in the fall of 1967 in Los Angeles, as blacks, Chicanos, students, and other critics of the war participated in the massive national Stop the Draft Week, beginning

³⁵ Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, 1993), p. 36, 51.

³⁶ *Open City*, July 28, 1967, p. 5.

³⁷ *Open City*, Sept. 7, 1967, p. 6.

on October 16 and climaxing five days later with a rally. While most of the Southwest was quiet during the week, it established common ground between Chicano struggles and the antiwar movement that would later be important throughout the region. Protestors picketed the L.A. Induction Center, the sole military induction point for Southern California. They marched on the Federal Building, burning draft cards and induction papers. Colleges and high schools staged walk-outs, antiwar business owners shut down shops for the day, and protestors picketed draft board members' businesses and homes.³⁸ One historian argues that "Stop the Draft Week was a prologue to the explosions of 1968," because of its participation by a diverse assortment of "middle-class liberals, student radicals, hippies, civil rights workers, black power advocates, Vietnam veterans," and others.³⁹

Los Angeles Stop the Draft Week connected the antiwar movement to Chicano struggles in the Southwest. Festivities kicked off at East Los Angeles College Stadium, in the Mexican-American community.⁴⁰ Reies Tijerina, leader of the revolt by New Mexico *hispanos* to reclaim land grants, headlined the rally. Other notable speakers included Rodolfo "Corky" Gozales of Denver's Crusade for Justice, Mary Clarke from Women Strike for Peace, Frank Greenwood of the Los Angeles Black Congress, and comedian Dick Gregory.⁴¹ El Teatro Campesino, the farm workers' "Peasant Theatre" provided entertainment. The

³⁸ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Oct. 6, 1967, p. 13.

³⁹ Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York, 1995), 179.

⁴⁰ *Open City*, Oct. 11, 1967, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Oct. 13, 1967, p. 1.

crowd numbered in the thousands, the largest turnout for an antiwar event anywhere in the Southwest to that point.⁴² Tijerina and Gonzales connected the struggles of Chicanos in the Southwest to the war in Vietnam. Gonzales charged, "The war in Vietnam is only an extension of the same conditions that exist here against the minorities. The young cats in the barrios...are fighting for their self-determination."⁴³ It was the first time that struggles in the Southwest were fused with the national antiwar movement.

Antiwar activism in the Southwest was ignored by the mainstream press, a problem that remained throughout the war, leading to the still-prevalent belief that nothing significant occurred there.⁴⁴ The emergence of the underground press, then, was important to building an antiwar movement, because it offered movement participants an outlet to report their own activities and successes. A riot at Fort Hood on 3 October 1967 almost went unreported. The Berkeley *Barb* broke the story a full month later acting on a tip from "Scotty Frame," a private stationed at the base.⁴⁵ The 198th Light Infantry Brigade rioted on October 3rd, the night before they were scheduled to leave for Vietnam. Rioters nearly beat to death a second lieutenant with the military police. The extent of the damages or the number of rioters arrested was not reported by the military. Fort Hood brass downplayed the event, calling it a "beer brawl," and Pentagon spokesmen

⁴² *Los Angeles Free Press*, Oct. 20, 1967 and *Open City*, Oct. 18, 1967, p. 5.

⁴³ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Oct. 20, 1967, p. 10.

⁴⁴ George Mariscal noted this problem in *Aztlán and Viet Nam*, 1-2.

⁴⁵ *Berkeley Barb*, Nov. 3, 1967, p. 3.

denied that anything rowdy had occurred.⁴⁶ Colonel Robert Berens said that a minor fracas started when beer sales were ended early at an event. The “psychedelic press” exaggerated the incident, Berens claimed. An anonymous official at the base leaked to the *Rag* that a riot of 250 men had indeed occurred, but officials continued to publicly deny the event.⁴⁷ The brass told the *Austin-American* that “nobody was angry about going to Vietnam.”⁴⁸

Students began protesting the military-industrial complex throughout the Southwest in 1967, made possible by the emergence of the underground press. Students did not need to leave campus to find evidence of the Vietnam war making machine. Through their newspapers, students alerted their communities to the influence of the military and defense industries on campus. Perhaps no company better represented what the students found despicable about the war than the Dow Chemical Company. Best known for its napalm product, or “Johnson’s Baby Powder,” as protestors called it, napalm was a petroleum jelly bomb that ignited when dropped from planes, engulfing its victims in flames. Dow sent career recruiters to the University of California - Los Angeles, prompting a group of students to demand that the university ban representatives from the war industries. Students and faculty at the University of Texas demonstrated outside of a room where a Dow recruiter was conducting interviews. One protestor hoped to “get people to think about the effect of

⁴⁶ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Dec. 8, 1967, p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Rag*, Nov. 13, 1967, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Austin-American Statesman*, Nov. 10, 1967, A1.

napalm on women and children in Vietnam.”⁴⁹ A philosophy graduate student at UCLA covered his arm with homemade napalm and lit himself on fire, wanting “to experience what the Vietnamese people had to go through,” while, hundreds of demonstrators forced a Dow job recruiter to lock himself in a coffee room.⁵⁰ Students circled a petition seeking in jest to award the president of the Dow company with a Degree of Humane Letters. Students promised more demonstrations if the university did not cancel planned visits by recruiters from the Air Force, General Research Corporation, Litton Industries, and the CIA. Administrators at California State University - Los Angeles blamed the Black Student Union for a demonstration that drew 300 people and forced two Dow recruiters to flee through a window.⁵¹ Police arrested thirteen students and three faculty members for disturbing the peace and inciting to riot.

Efforts against Dow spilled off campus, as students allied with concerned members of the local community. Los Angeles activists planned what they expected to be the biggest demonstration against Dow to date, the “Peace on Earth Now!” parade, rallying outside the Torrance city hall and then marching to Dow’s napalm plant.⁵² A newsstand operator predicted that the march would turn violent, “There will be trouble because most of the kids around here are proud to be Americans. These peace people aren’t.”⁵³ Torrance police advised the group to expect strong resistance from groups with “adverse philosophical

⁴⁹ *Rag*, Nov. 6, 1967.

⁵⁰ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Nov. 10, 1967, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ *Harambee*, Dec., 1967, p. 1.

⁵² *Open City*, Dec. 8, 1967, p. 3.

⁵³ *Open City*, Dec. 15, 1967, p. 1.

ideals.”⁵⁴ Pro-war demonstrators attempted to disrupt the march, but motorcycle police effectively guarded the marchers, reportedly confiscating over 100 weapons from the hawkish crowd.⁵⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* exaggerated the success of the pro-war factions in disrupting the event, but the scuffles primarily took place among the hawks as a fight erupted between Young Americans for Freedom and the Nazis.⁵⁶ Anti-Dow activities exasperated company president Herbert Doan, who called the matter “a stinking, lousy, goddamn mess.”⁵⁷ Several board members advocated ending napalm production immediately, but were outvoted.

It was a noisy ending to a year that began with little antiwar protest in the Southwest.

⁵⁴ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Dec. 15, 1967, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Dec. 22, 1967, p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 18, 1967, pp. 1, 3.

⁵⁷ *Los Angeles Free Press*, Dec. 15, 1967, p. 5.

CHAPTER II

THE RISING TIDE OF PROTEST, 1968-1969

Between 1968 and 1969, the antiwar movement capitalized on the growth of dissent in the Southwest, made possible by the expansion of the Chicano movement and the emerging GI movement. The emergences of GI coffeehouses and underground newspapers in 1968 were the most important factors in creating a GI movement. The Oleo Strut in Killeen, Texas, was the third GI coffeehouse to open, serving the nearly 40,000 men and women stationed at Fort Hood.⁵⁸ Oleo Strut opened in June, 1968, during the “Summer of Support,” as the GI movement drew the attention of civilians and the military. The coffeehouse served several functions: it offered soldiers a place to relax, drink coffee (no alcohol was permitted in this dry town), browse the library of GI and antiwar newspapers, discuss politics, and learn about movement demonstrations and activities.⁵⁹

Members of the local community and military base leadership resisted the creation of the press and coffeehouses. The Oleo Strut faced severe harassment by local and military authorities. Customers complained that they were monitored, illegally searched, and stereotyped as drug users. Fort Hood’s Major William Friend, a staff member of the commanding general, belied his own

⁵⁸ *Space City News*, Oct. 25, 1969, p. 3. The Naval Investigative Service’s “Counterintelligence Brief” reported 39,000 GIs at Fort Hood. August 1, 1968, San Diego, California. Douglass Pike Collection: Unit 02--Military Operations. Texas Tech Virtual Vietnam Archive, Lubbock.

⁵⁹ *Space City News*, Oct. 25, 1969, p. 3, and *Notes from the Underground*, Aug. 1, 1968, p. 5.

ignorance of the GI movement and the objectives of the Oleo Strut, stating, “We really don’t know what it’s about except that it’s a hippie joint, and hippies are sort of destructive, I guess you could say.”⁶⁰ Members of the Killeen community charged that the Oleo Strut was a drug haven and at times physically harassed its customers. Oleo Strut opened its doors in July and staged a “love-in” in the town park on Independence Day. A group of “cowboysspurred on by the Killeen cops” broke up the celebration.⁶¹ This was a common refrain from the customers, complaining that they faced harassment by a group of “local toughs” who called themselves “cowboys” and interfered with coffeehouse-sponsored activities.⁶² Local police tried but failed to get the coffeehouse’s lease revoked.⁶³ Managers tried to dissuade customers from bringing drugs into the bar, fearing that authorities could raid the store and use this evidence to shut down the shop.

Military officials took note of the burgeoning GI movement, particularly at Fort Hood. A Counter-Intelligence Brief by the Naval Investigative Service Office in San Diego directed Navy and Marine Corps commanders to be vigilant against antimilitary propaganda.⁶⁴ The memo instructed commands to confiscate the San Francisco-based GI newspaper the *Bond* and forward it to the Naval Investigative Service, along with any other information available about the

⁶⁰ *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 1968, B1.

⁶¹ *Space City News*, Oct. 25, 1969, p. 3.

⁶² *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 1968, B1.

⁶³ Harvey Stone, “GI Coffee houses Push Peace,” *Notes from the Underground*, Aug. 1, 1968, p. 5, 15.

⁶⁴ “Counterintelligence Brief” The Naval Investigative Service, August 1, 1968, San Diego, California. Douglass Pike Collection: Unit 02--Military Operations. Texas Tech Virtual Vietnam Archive, Lubbock, Texas

recipient. Despite a June Counter-Intelligence Brief reporting that establishment of GI coffeehouses was a “pipe dream,” the August memo noted that the Summer of Support “is achieving some of its goals.” It then reprinted in its entirety a June *Wall Street Journal* article describing the Oleo Strut coffeehouse and GI activism at Fort Hood. Despite their best efforts, military brass could not undermine the movement through court-martials or deploying soldiers to Vietnam, in part because they did not understand where the dissent originated. Oleo Strut volunteers wrote to Houston’s *Space City News*, a movement newspaper, claiming, “The brass didn’t understand that the movement doesn’t grow out of leaders,” they argued, “but rather it flows from the real oppression of men and women in the army.”⁶⁵ Army brass at Fort Hood attempted to limit the influence of Oleo Strut on the GI’s by ordering their soldiers to avoid the coffeehouse. Military officials at Fort Hood told the *Dallas Morning News* that the rumors of widespread disorder were exaggerations. They defended their attempts at eliminating drug use, claiming that officers and noncommissioned officers were trained in identifying marijuana during inspections. “We go so far as to light up a marijuana cigarette to let them smell it, so they will know what they are looking for,” said Colonel Robert Carpenter.⁶⁶

The emergence of the GI movement was on full display during the October 1968 demonstrations in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Peace Action Council demanded that Americans should “Defend Those Who Resist the Draft!

⁶⁵ *Space City News*, Dec. 20, 1969, p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 2, 1968, p. 10.

Support GI's Who Oppose the War, Support Our Servicemen in Vietnam, Not Those Who Send Them There!"⁶⁷ One of the Fort Hood Three, David Samas, spoke at the rally, one day after being released from serving his prison sentence at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A number of pro-war demonstrators attempted to disrupt the rally. A group calling itself the Westlake Patriots donned Nazi uniforms and carried signs that read "Victory in Vietnam" beneath swastika symbols.

The development of an underground press at many college towns gave students the power to fight the university-military complex and connect with the Mexican American community and nearby bases. At many colleges in the Southwest, students targeted compulsory Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. At the University of Arizona, an editorial in the *Bandersnatch* newspaper questioned why ROTC remained compulsory when the military's own research found that voluntary programs could meet the demand.⁶⁸ At the New Mexico A&M University, the *Conscience* reported that the American Civil Liberties Union was willing to support any freshman or sophomore willing to resist mandatory ROTC.⁶⁹ Students at the university voted more than two-to-one in favor of voluntary ROTC in 1967, though the measure was merely symbolic. The ROTC had its supporters on campus, however, and at the University of California at Santa Barbara a group called Friends of the ROTC was organized

⁶⁷ *Open City*, date not legible [Oct. 1968], p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Bandersnatch*, Sept. 13, 1968, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *The NM A&M Conscience*, Oct. 16, 1968, p. 1.

by the Military Science program and enjoyed support from the John Birch Society.⁷⁰ Military officials fiercely defended the programs as crucial to meeting their manpower needs.

Students in the Southwest targeted mandatory ROTC as the most overt overreach of military authority in the universities. At New Mexico A&M University, students pressured the Board of Regents into investigating the abolishment of mandatory ROTC. Students were not very sanguine about their chances of success, and suggested that “we will have to abolish mandatory ROTC ourselves.”⁷¹ The students were probably encouraged by signs from the ACLU that it was willing to legally assist students in challenging the legality of mandatory ROTC.⁷² The *Conscience* suggested that sophomores and incoming freshmen should be organized and the ACLU contacted. Anti-ROTC actions had some success in the Southwest. At Arizona State University, many administrators sided with the students, slashing the budget for military-related activities, and no longer funding ROTC activities with student fees. Students argued that this early success should not forestall further protests: “An attack on ROTC is an integral part of the anti-imperialist struggle and the program on the campus.”⁷³

The presence of military-related research on the campuses offended many students. *The Rag* instructed incoming freshmen to be wary of the military

⁷⁰ *Probe*, Oct. 9, 1968, p. 1.

⁷¹ *The NM A&M Conscience*, Aug., 1969, p. 2.

⁷² *The NM A&M Conscience*, Oct. 16, 1968, p. 1.

⁷³ *Druid Free Press*, Sept. 17, 1969, p. 1., quote on p. 7.

presence on campus, as represented by recruiters, the ROTC, funding from the defense industries, and administrators with ties to the federal government.⁷⁴

After NBC news corporation reported that Fort Huachuca engaged in biological and chemical warfare training, students at the nearby University of Arizona demanded to know whether the university was engaging in weapons research. Student investigators encountered resistance from the university. Unable to prove that the university engaged in researching chemical and biological weapons, they still concluded that a close relationship between the Department of Defense and the university merited student opposition. The efforts did not bear results. The millions of dollars invested by the military and defense corporations proved far more powerful than student dissent.

Chicano rejection of the war facilitated the penetration of the antiwar movement into the interior of the Southwest, especially Arizona, New Mexico, and South and West Texas, fueled by Chicano sociologists discovering a disparity between the size of minority populations and their rate of deaths in Vietnam. Even though these numbers leveled off by the end of the 1960s, the perception persisted that blacks and Chicanos bore a disproportionate burden of the fighting. Throughout the war, it remained a powerful metaphor that connected the military's treatment of minorities at home and subjugation of Third World people abroad. Reies Lopez Tijerina stated, "I will not go to die in

⁷⁴ *Rag*, Sept. 15, 1969, pp. 8-9, and 14.

Vietnam—I am going to die here in San Joaquin.”⁷⁵ This became a common refrain of Chicano protestors—that it is better to fight for *la raza* than die in Vietnam.

In a conversation published in the Chicano journal *El Grito*, Johnny, a disabled Chicano veteran, talks to a group of men from his hometown in San Jose, California.⁷⁶ One of the men, Trini, asks if there were other Chicanos in his company, and Johnny responds that he was one of sixteen in a company of one hundred. “Why do you ask that, Trini?” Trini responds, “Oh some Chicanos were passing out leaflets around here that said where Chicanos were 9% of the population in California and that 21% of the Vietnam dead were Chicanos.” Referring to the heavy burden of fighting placed on minorities, Johnny snaps: “Well, that ain’t nothing. There were about twenty-five Negros in that company I was in. All dead, except one. There were some Puerto Riqueños too, about four or five. About half of the company was Negros and Latinos.”

The San Diego *Free Press* announced at the beginning of 1969 that the movement was ready to challenge “militaristic, racist, exploitative and arrogant” San Diegans.⁷⁷ The emergence of an antiwar movement in this military town was made possible by the growth of the GI movement. The end of the San Antonio *Inferno*, however, could be taken as a warning of the difficulty of running an underground newspaper in a military town. In early 1969, editor of one of the

⁷⁵ *El Grito Del Norte*, Oct. 31, 1968, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Robert Barrón, “Viet Nam Veteran,” reprinted in George Mariscal, *Aztlán and Vietnam*, 215-216, quotes on 216.

⁷⁷ *San Diego Free Press*, Jan. 1., 1969, p. 4.

first Chicano newspapers, Tom Cahill, was forced to shut down the *Inferno* after running afoul of the Mexican American community by criticizing the war and the Johnson administration.⁷⁸ Much of the Mexican American community drew paychecks from one of the four Air Force bases or the two Army bases. Protesting the Vietnam War was bad business for the *Inferno*. The draft counseling office of the San Antonio Committee to Stop the War closed down in January after only six months due to lack of money. Members of the dwindling peace movement in San Antonio lamented the prospects for future activism.

The GI movement, by necessity, engaged with the local community for support in the form of activist allies as well as financial donations. The Los Angeles GI newspaper *Up Front* thanked the local Women Strike for Peace chapter for its financial assistance, but begged further civilian support, because “we as GIs have very little we can contribute financially.”⁷⁹ As at Fort Hood, a stable system of support in the community was necessary to sustaining the GI movement. Coffeehouses and newspapers provided continuity in the movement, despite the high turnover of military personnel. Women Strike for Peace made efforts to secure a GI coffeehouse in San Diego.⁸⁰ Seeking assistance from coffeehouses in Los Angeles and San Francisco, they argued that San Diego desperately needed an outlet for activism, as it was a bigger military center than either of those cities.

⁷⁸ *Notes from the Underground*, Feb. 5, 1969, pp. 6, 15.

⁷⁹ *Up Front*, July, 1969, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *San Diego Free Press*, June 27, 1969, p. 5.

In August, 1969, protestors organized a demonstration at “Nixon’s Summer White House,” his home in San Clemente, California, making several demands: “No sanctuary for Nixon. Bring all the troops home now. End the war in Vietnam. Self-determination for the Vietnamese, Blacks, Browns, Indians.”⁸¹ The PAC advertised that the march would be led by GI’s and veterans, who should be willing to fight for minorities at home. “While tens of thousands of our *brothers*—Blacks and Browns—are sent to Vietnam to kill and be killed in a racist war, politicians continue to use unlawful violence, and shout the hypocritical cry for ‘law and order.’” Students were also well-represented at the rally, where they asked for support for “quality education not ROTC to kill friends and neighbors,” and an end to “Pentagon subsidized war-research projects on our nation’s campuses.” The march emphasized the brotherhood of minorities, GI’s, and students, under the catch-all banner of self-determination as the key to freedom.

One outcome of the efforts at GI-Chicano interaction was the degree to which GI’s supported strikes by farm workers in the Southwest. Leaders of the migrant labor strikes struggled to find ways to connect their struggles in a meaningful way to the rest of the nation. For most people, the plight of the farm laborers was a distant issue. The United Farm Workers in 1969 were in the midst of a strike against the grape farmers and promoted a nationwide boycott of the fruit. In June, 1969, the Department of Defense admitted to the *Los Angeles*

⁸¹ *Up Front*, Aug., 1969, pp. 8-9. Emphasis is mine.

Times that it was a major purchaser of “scab” grapes, sending two million pounds to Vietnam in the first half of 1969.⁸² The union charged that the massive military purchases of “dumped California grapes” could only have been done under orders from the federal government to break the strike. Although the strikers could never prove that the military consciously used its purchasing power to bail out the grape growers, the charge was damning. GI’s took up the farm workers’ cause, publishing the reports in their underground newspapers. An article in the *Long Beach Free Press*, “Grapes of War,” reported that the Pentagon undermined the efforts of the California grape strike by buying enormous quantities of grapes and sending them to South Vietnam.⁸³

The October Moratorium provided a united front against the war, and in many ways was a climax of cooperation and participation by Chicanos, blacks, GI’s, students, and civilians. It was one of the few moments during which Chicanos and GI’s were consciously integrated into the events. Cesar Chavez, in one of his few statements about the antiwar movement, supported the moratorium, stating, “There is no chance of achieving full participation of all of our citizens in our own system here in America so long as our government is preoccupied with interfering in the affairs and aspirations of poor people around the world. I, therefore, hope that all Americans will join in and support the activities of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee.”⁸⁴ Los Chicanos, a moderate

⁸² *As You Were*, Aug., 1969, unpaginated.

⁸³ *Long Beach Free Press*, May 23, 1969, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *NM A&M Conscience*, Oct. 15, 1969, p. 3.

Mexican American student group at New Mexico A&M, issued a statement supporting the Moratorium, arguing that ending the war would allow the nation to “focus its resources to correcting the problems at home.” At Arizona State, a list of organizations supporting the Moratorium attest to the inclusiveness of the event, including Young Democrats, Mexican-American Liberation Committee, Black Student Union, Student Peace Association, and Students for a Democratic Society. The Moratorium at California State University - Long Beach, included black and Chicano speakers at the rally, several of whom argued that the real fight was in the ghettos and barrios and not in the jungle. At Austin, events drew a number of participants and speakers from Fort Hood.⁸⁵ New Mexico A&M students considered the Moratorium the first major antiwar action at the university.⁸⁶ The Board of Regents, the President, and deans at the University of New Mexico publicly supported the Moratorium, the earliest instance of administrators at a major southwestern university supporting an antiwar stance by students.

Some antiwar protestors remarked that the Moratorium represented a turning point. The lack of response by the federal government to the demands of the antiwar movement frustrated Long Beach activists into declaring that “the anti-war movement no longer engages in symbolic acts.”⁸⁷ Momentum from the October Moratorium spilled into November, when many communities organized

⁸⁵ *Rag*, Oct. 21, 1969, p. 8, and *Space City News*, Oct. 25, 1969, p. 11.

⁸⁶ *NM A&M Conscience*, Oct. 15, 1969, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Long Beach Free Press*, Oct. 15, 1969, p. 3.

more protest actions. The November Moratoriums may have been more important than the October demonstrations. At Arizona State, November Moratorium organizers sought to bring more Chicanos and GI's into the events. The *Druid Free Press* remarked that the "November Moratorium in Tucson extends beyond the University to Tucson's schools and the community at large."⁸⁸ A Brown Beret spoke at the events and a vigil was held at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in an effort to more actively engage with the community at large. Police estimated that 5,000 attended the events in Tucson and about 400 at Davis-Monthan.⁸⁹ The nation's largest rallies at San Francisco and Washington, D.C were out of reach for most southwesterners, especially for the GI's. Local protests allowed activists to connect the Vietnam War to problems in their own communities. The November San Diego Moratorium included black, brown, GI, and student speakers, and concluded with a vigil at the Navy's hospital. The moratorium was a cross-section of the San Diego community and included symbolic attacks against the military locally.⁹⁰ The *San Diego Free Press* remarked at how it was the largest procession through the streets by antiwar protestors in the city's history, a stark contrast to the military revues that often paraded through the downtown.⁹¹

The November Moratorium was an opportunity for GI's for Peace, one of the most important GI organizations to emerge in the Southwest, to demonstrate

⁸⁸ *Druid Free Press*, Nov. 5, 1969, p. 1.

⁸⁹ *Druid Free Press*, Nov. 19, 1969, p. 2.

⁹⁰ *San Diego Free Press*, Nov. 14, 1969, p. 3.

⁹¹ *San Diego Free Press*, Nov. 28, 1969, p. 3.

its power. GI's for Peace was founded on August 17, 1969, when a number of Fort Bliss soldiers gathered at El Paso's McKelligan Canyon "to proclaim the following purposes: to promote peace, secure constitutional rights for servicemen, combat racism, improve enlisted living conditions, and provide aid to the local Chicano community."⁹² *Gigline* was its underground newspaper. The organization's founding principles suggested its recognition that success depended on establishing connections with the local community, especially the importance of cooperation with minorities in the community. Historian David Cortright suggested that it was this broad social mission that helped GI's for peace avoid the radical-versus-moderate factionalism that later plagued many organizations. The Army attempted to rid the base of the organization, deploying Paul Nevins, its first chairman, and many other supporters to Vietnam. Activities at the November Moratorium included a protest at the site of the usual Veterans Day parade in El Paso. It was one of the largest demonstrations by GI's during the nationwide November Moratorium. In the New York *Times* on Sunday, November 9, 1969, a full-page ad appeared with the signatures of 1,366 active-duty servicemen announcing support for the Moratorium and opposition to the war. 141 GIs from Fort Bliss signed the statement. It was a major moment for the antiwar movement in the Southwest.

⁹² Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, pp. 62-63, quote on p. 63.

CHAPTER III

THE UNRAVELING, 1970-1972

The antiwar movement began to unravel in 1970. The strong showings by the 1969 Fall Moratoriums also contained within them the seeds for destruction. The Chicano movement took the antiwar movement's message of self-determination and began pursuing its own strategies for ending the war, culminating in the massive Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles in 1970. An escalation in the confrontational tactics and rhetoric of militant Brown power and the students' turn towards violence turned off many moderates in the antiwar movement. The Chicano movement separated from the antiwar movement and students turned their energies towards other causes, including environmentalism and women's liberation. The movement in the Southwest splintered in 1970 and the de-escalation of the ground war in 1971 caused it to fade almost completely.

The explosion of the GI movement in 1969 caused the military brass to redouble its efforts at quelling dissent in the armed forces. GI's in San Diego noticed an increase in police repression following the creation of a chapter of Movement for a Democratic Military. They accused the police of harassment, illegal searches and seizures, and entering their meeting places without warrants.⁹³ The commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Leonard Chapman, Jr., according to the *Los Angeles Times*, had "declared internal war" against the

⁹³ *San Diego Street Journal*, Feb. 14, 1970, p. 3.

organization, finding it a serious threat to national security.⁹⁴ These efforts to forcibly disband the organization in turn increased interest in the cities in which it was located. A colonel at Camp Pendleton blamed Movement for a Democratic Military for inciting race riots after a February incident in which a handful of black and white marines came to blows. The *San Diego Street Journal* and MDM together filed a lawsuit in San Diego seeking an immediate end to police abuse of powers in attempting to disrupt the activities of both.

Frustrated by the lack of apparent success in stopping the war, students turned confrontational. Bank of America executives blamed antiwar protestors for firebombing a branch in Isla Vista, California, running a full-page advertisement in the *San Diego Tribune* blasting the youths for mindless violence. It seemed that students were moving from protest to violent resistance. Students retorted that the bank ought to run a full-page advertisement criticizing the American government for destroying entire towns in Vietnam with napalm and bombs. "Bring the war home, baby," they taunted.⁹⁵ This turn towards violence pushed many moderate protestors out of the movement or into other arenas of activism.

Spring actions included nationwide protests April 13-18. At the University of Texas, "U.S. Out Now!" events included guerilla theater, GI demonstrations, teach-ins, and an anti-ROTC march.⁹⁶ The ROTC remained on many campuses

⁹⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 15, 1970, pp. B, B3.

⁹⁵ *San Diego Free Door*, Mar. 12, 1970, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Rag*, April 6, 1970, p. 15, and *Rag*, Apr. 13, 1970, p. 15.

as a symbol of the connections between the university and the military. Students interpreted the ROTC as a weakness in the military training system. One hundred cities nationwide participated in the demonstrations. The San Diego Citizen's Mobilization Committee promoted the theme that money spent on the war would be better used at home for education, transportation, and health care. "Let's start spending money for human life," they declared, "instead of for human death!"⁹⁷ A representative of the Chicano community, Ed Ruiz, spoke in front of the San Diego rally, connecting the deaths of Vietnamese to Chicanos suffering in the barrios.⁹⁸ The crowd stretched for ten blocks.

Then, Nixon invaded Cambodia. Nixon claimed on national television, "This is not an invasion of Cambodia," but students were not persuaded.⁹⁹ Nor were the protesters at Kent State University on May 4 when the National Guard shot and killed four students. The event stunned the movement. Even the nonpolitical hippie newspaper, the Santa Fe *Hips Voice*, which usually refrained from antiwar news, devoted an issue to the shootings and why the war must be ended. It headlined, "Kent Victims Opposed to Violence," and asked, "Who guards against the guard?"¹⁰⁰ The killings at Kent State mobilized and reinvigorated the GI movement and the rest of the antiwar movement, if only for a very short time. Throughout the Southwest, military and civilian organizations mobilized for protest during Armed Forces Day. Throughout the country, the

⁹⁷ *San Diego Free Door to Liberation*, April 9, 1970.

⁹⁸ *Street Journal*, April 17, 1970, p. 1.

⁹⁹ *Rag*, May 11, 1970, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Hips Voice*, May 13, 1970, p. 1.

military cancelled festivities for the Day at twenty-eight bases because of fear of antiwar disruptions. Over seven hundred soldiers from Fort Bliss marched in the streets of Killeen while GI's For Peace demonstrated at the University of Texas - El Paso.¹⁰¹

Chicanos began holding their own antiwar moratoriums in the Spring of 1970. An antiwar rally in Santa Fe, according to one "Spanish-American" observer was poisoned by the radical Chicanos who were not open-minded to strategies of self-determination other than separatism and brown power.¹⁰² Though ostensibly an antiwar demonstration, the open stage became a forum for all grievances of Chicanos. Some of the moderate Mexican Americans at the rally wrote to the Santa Fe *Hips Voice* to criticize the Chicanos for advocating violence. "The Indians, the blacks, the gays, the hips have all felt the jabs of discrimination," they agreed, but they pointed out the hypocrisy of Chicanos advocating aggression to oppose Anglo violence in Vietnam and the Southwest. Moderate Mexican Americans rejected the separatist agenda of radical Brown Power, arguing that the best way to improve their position was to work within liberalism, not apart from it. They agreed that the war negatively affected their communities, but argued that separatism would marginalize Mexican Americans politically.

¹⁰¹ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, p. 67.

¹⁰² *Hips Voice*, May 27, 1970, p. 18. Mexican-Americans in New Mexico and Colorado often considered themselves "Spanish-American," but this was not a preferred label for Mexican Americans in Texas, California, or Arizona.

In San Diego, the “Moratorio Chicano Contra La Guerra” connected the war to the long history of U.S. imperialism in Latin America and the Anglo conquest of the American Southwest.¹⁰³ Some Chicanos advocated guerilla warfare against Anglos to reclaim the Southwest, suggesting that it would be necessary to mobilize the border towns with their high Chicano populations and proximate access to Mexico. Like the Vietnamese fighting American imperialism, Chicanos would have the similar advantage of fighting a war in their own homeland. The new state they aimed to create was Aztlán, a throwback to the mythological birthplace of the Aztecs, and comprised the southwestern states of Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

While claiming a fraternal connection to other minorities in America, the rhetoric of the San Diego Chicano Moratorium blamed white Americans for the injustices perpetrated against *la raza*. No longer would Chicanos seek white political alliances to solve their problems, they claimed. Now, they would take responsibility for the care of their own people. The Vietnam War was evidence of efforts by whites to eliminate minorities in American and throughout the world, they argued: “If anyone doubts this genocidal claim, they only have to look to the Red man, the half-brother of the Chicano, to realize that through conscious neglect and warfare their population has been cut down to a few thousand.” Ostensibly an antiwar protest, the aims of the Moratorium were much larger. It was an announcement that *la raza* had arrived, “the Moratorium is a nation of

¹⁰³ *San Diego Street Journal*, May 27, 1969.

people rising.” They blamed the hypocrisy of liberalism: “While billions are spent on the military-industrial complex, Chicanos are faced with poor housing, discriminatory employment, and inferior education. La Raza is faced with physical elimination as are the blacks.” Despite the insistence that they would band together with blacks, their rhetoric was separatist, like that of many Black Power organizations, poisoning the atmosphere for cooperation. Brown Berets in San Diego attempted to draw the parallel between their struggle and that of blacks, using the Vietnam War as evidence of racial injustice in the United States. “Black and Brown is the color of an unemployment line. Black and Brown is the color of the Welfare waiting rooms. Black and Brown is the color of the pintas. Mostly Black and Brown is the color of the military. Black and Brown, and Yellow, is the color of the dead in Vietnam.”¹⁰⁴

The ascension of Chicano antiwar activity in the late 1960s crested with the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles on August 29, 1970, a date sealed in the memories of California’s movement participants. The largest ethnic-based protest of the Vietnam War, the Moratorium attracted 30,000 mostly-Mexican Americans to the streets of East Los Angeles, including participants from across the Southwest.¹⁰⁵ Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department deputies, donning riot gear, batons, and tear gas launchers, dispersed the crowd in the early afternoon following a disturbance at a nearby liquor store. The scuffle provided the pretense for the Sheriff’s Department to end the antiwar rally. Most Mexican

¹⁰⁴ *El Barrio*, July 3, 1970.

¹⁰⁵ Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! Guerra No!*, p. 145.

Americans left peacefully, but some younger Chicanos fought back with rocks and bottles, putting themselves in the paths of swinging batons.

The Moratorium ended in disaster when a Sheriff's Deputy fired a tear gas projectile into a nearby bar, fatally striking Ruben Salazar, a popular Mexican American journalist for the *Los Angeles Times*, in the head. Mexican Americans considered Ruben Salazar's death a political assassination, connected to his opposition of the Vietnam War and representation of minorities at the *Times*. In the following weeks, Chicanos criticized the Sheriff for attempting to "whitewash" the investigation.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, African American leaders in Los Angeles supported the efforts by Chicanos to force federal investigations.¹⁰⁷ The death connected the two most-salient problems shared by blacks and Chicanos: the Vietnam War and police brutality.

The strength of the Chicano movement to protest the war ended along with the life of Ruben Salazar. The tragedy compelled *Regeneración* to appeal for a "moratorium on moratoriums."¹⁰⁸ The antiwar movement for Chicanos was now largely dead. The use of the war as a metaphor for racial injustice at home was no longer cultivated. Moderate Mexican Americans ditched the antiwar movement, leaving brown power advocates free to pursue separatism and self-determination. The antiwar movement in the Southwest, which derived its

¹⁰⁶ "Chicanos and the War" *La Raza* (Sept. 1970).

¹⁰⁷ Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁸ *Regeneración*, 1 (1970), p. 2.

strength from the cooperation of GI's, blacks, Chicanos, and students, was now largely splintered.

By 1971, the antiwar movement had exhausted its effectiveness to challenge the Vietnam War. Even as support for the Vietnam War dropped, the movement became marginalized by its escalation in confrontational tactics, the radicalization of its message, Nixon's troop withdrawals, and the explosion of the "kaleidoscope of activism" that drew antiwar movement participants into other arenas of social activism.¹⁰⁹ Though the antiwar movement declined, it was already successful in creating a generation of activists who carried the mantle of social activism into the seventies.

Nationally, the antiwar movement was on the decline, although not as precipitously as in the Southwest. Tom Wells argues that the antiwar movement weakened because its participants doubted that they were making progress in ending the war. This frustration led to an escalation in protest tactics, ultimately pushing out its moderate supporters. Many of the most enduring images of the movement, though, took place while the movement waned. The Winter Soldier investigations, veterans tossing their medals onto the steps of Capitol Hill, and the half-million marchers on Washington D.C. occurred in 1971 while the movement supposedly declined. In the Southwest, the antiwar movement ended largely because Chicanos abandoned it as central to their own political struggle following the Chicano Moratorium. Without this important element of support, the

¹⁰⁹ Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 356.

movement unraveled, and students and GI's pursued their own struggles separately.

The Chicano movement stopped participating in the mainstream movement, but it continued to capitalize on Mexican American military service to criticize American society. The June issue of *El Grito del Norte*, a Chicano journal of art and literature, included an account of the war by a Chicano soldier. "The military calls me a Caucasian. The military says that, to the military, there is no such thing as white, black, or brown color; we are all the same," the anonymous author claimed, "It doesn't say how the racist lifers try to separate us so we won't unite against them."¹¹⁰ The United Farm Workers attempted to promote its consumer boycott of lettuce by appealing to the GI's. As during the grape strike, when the Department of Defense bought up massive amounts of scab grapes to ship to Vietnam, the department once again bought alarming amounts of scab lettuce. One large grower in California under siege by the union increased his lettuce sales to the military three-fold.¹¹¹ Cesar Chavez lambasted the strike-breaking power of defense purchases, while the military claimed it was neutral on the UFW strike. Many soldiers donned patches and stickers reading "Lifers Eat Lettuce," and editorialized in support of the UFW in GI newspapers.

Scholars attempted to unravel the contradiction they noticed whereby Mexican Americans privileged military service as a means for social advancement but opposed the Vietnam War. An opinion survey in Santa

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, "A Question Every Chicano Should Ask," *El Grito del Norte* 4 (June, 1971).

¹¹¹ *Door*, March 17, 1971, p. 5.

Barbara showed that Mexican Americans were “more troubled by the war than Anglo-Americans.”¹¹² Military service as a means for upward mobility continued to resonate, yet the Vietnam War decreased in popularity among Mexican Americans. The authors of the Santa Barbara study concluded, “Conditions in the barrios are aggravated by the inflationary war economy that strikes hardest at the many families with incomes below the poverty level.” Chicano protest of the war often stemmed from local problems rather than sensitivity to foreign policy or concern for the Vietnamese people.

April, 1972, antiwar demonstrations in Los Angeles included speakers representing a laundry list of causes. Speakers included Rev. Ralph Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Bobby Seale from the Black Panther Party, Manuel Gomez of the “anti-imperialist contingent,” Raul Ruiz from La Raza Unida, a contingent of Viet Vets, representatives from the United Women’s Contingent, Student Mobe, Asian Americans, and gay and lesbian rights organizations. Some observers were encouraged by the wide ranging representation of social movements, but others decried the lack of focus on Vietnam. Said one observer, “None of the speakers really analyzed the economic and political roots of racism and imperialism; nor did they show the intimate, functional relationships between the two.”¹¹³ Vietnam War demonstrations such as this no longer focused on the war itself. Although they

¹¹² Charles Ornelas and Michael Gonzales, “The Chicano and the War: An Opinion Survey in Santa Barbara,” *Aztlán* 2 (Spring 1971), quotes on p. 34.

¹¹³ *Los Angeles Free Press*, April 28, 1972, p. 2.

could include an array of causes, they no longer sought to connect the war to their struggles.

The antiwar movement in the Southwest flatlined.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The antiwar movement in the Southwest never had any 100,000-person rallies. Students never occupied any buildings of a university. To many it appeared as if there was no significant antiwar movement in the Southwest, largely because it lacked national television coverage of the important events. Historians have continued to ignore the movement in the Southwest. This thesis has attempted to provide a better understanding of the antiwar movement by demonstrating that there was a vibrant movement where historians have not previously looked. Historians have barely scratched the surface of examining the antiwar movement outside of San Francisco and the East Coast. Examining the movement in the Southwest shows what can be gained from the regional perspective. The findings here challenge arguments by historians that the antiwar movement was mostly directed by Students for a Democratic Society. Students here play an important role, but were only one actor among a grander coalition. Historians should take greater care when discussing the antiwar movement to emphasize regional and local diversity within the movement.

A regional focus allows a synthesis of a vast literature on the student, GI, and Chicano movements, a brief moment during which they all converged with the purpose of ending the war, if for different reasons. These groups can be better understood in relation to each other. Historians of the Chicano movement

have mostly focused on the separatist, Brown Power aspects. Early in the movement, however, Chicanos realized that they could better achieve their political goals by cooperating with blacks, students, and GI's to end the war and confront the establishment. The Southwest perspective complicates the literature of the antiwar movement, and also contributes to a better understanding of each of the groups that made it.

The movements that spun off the antiwar movement had lasting influence in the Southwest. GI's were successful in moving the military to create strong anti-racism policies and many of the educational programs created during this era remain. Many former antiwar protestors participated in the emerging environmental movement, which recognized the ecological fragility of the Southwest. They redirected their protests of military-industrial complex from the Vietnam War to its harm on the environment.

Of all the movements, though, the Chicano movement had the greatest impact in the Southwest throughout the seventies and beyond. The young men that were encouraged to fight for *la raza* and not in Vietnam took this mission seriously. Many antiwar Chicanos joined the political party La Raza Unida, which enjoyed some success in city and county elections in South Texas. A report from Santa Barbara in 1971 predicted, "The war in Vietnam may fade away, but the

struggle in the barrios will go on.”¹¹⁴ Armed with their experiences in the antiwar movement, Chicanos were in a better position to assist in the political struggle.

Despite efforts by militant Chicanos to emphasize self-determination and separatism from the United States, the military ideal survived the Vietnam War. The military remained a place for young men and women to test their mettle, escape the barrio, and gain career training. Indeed, in the all-volunteer military, Hispanics are still vastly over represented.

On January 3, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were ratified. The war was over. But for many activists, the fight for environmental health, women’s liberation, Native American self-determination, and for every other point in the kaleidoscope of activism, the struggle was just beginning.

¹¹⁴ Charles Ornelas and Michael Gonzales, “The Chicano and the War: An Opinion Survey in Santa Barbara,” p. 34.

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