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Organizing the Brown Tide: La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006, an Insider's Story

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Jesse Díaz

August 2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Alfredo Mirandé, Chairperson
Dr. Scott Brooks
Dr. Ellen Reese

This Dissertation of Jesse Díaz, Jr. is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Organizing the Brown Tide: La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006, an Insider's Story

by

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University of California, Riverside, August 2010
Dr. Alfredo Mirandé, Chairperson

The three largest mass mobilizations ever witnessed in this country occurred in 2006 on March 25th, April 10th, and May 1st, when undocumented immigrants and supporters marched against repressive enforcement-only antiimmigrant legislation and then for immigration reform. Academics have since scrambled to understand these mobilizations. Some misguidedly labeled the Latino community as a “Sleeping Giant.” Contrarily, interviewed in this research were dozens of veteran Immigrant Rights Movement (IRM) activists who illustrated that there is a longstanding immigrant rights struggle in the cradle of the IRM, Los Angeles, the majority of which have been mobilizing against repressive antiimmigrant legislation as far back as the 1960’s. Drawing from the social movement literature, this dissertation utilizes two dominant concepts to examine the IRM—the political opportunities and resource mobilizations models. From the dual perspective of a participant and researcher, the present researcher examines the IRM’s organizational history in order to understand the decision-makers,

while paying closer attention to the efforts leading up to and during the spring 2006 mobilizations, thus providing a unique contribution to this literature based on an insider perspective of the *Movimiento*. In this analysis, two factions in the IRM emerge, the leftist faction that includes both the radical and traditional factions of the Movement, and the moderate faction that represents the elite level of the IRM. The traditional faction by itself has gained much respect amongst the immigrant rights community in LA and has a history of working with either the radical or moderate factions. This research found the necessity for a future examination of the immigrant community's response to join in the IRM's mobilizations to investigate more systematically the effectiveness of leaders and organizations in their mobilizing efforts by which to guide the immigrant rights community's future endeavors. It also challenges other students of social movements and Latino Studies to involve themselves in the *Movimiento* to garner first an insider perspective that would draw a more in-depth look into the inner-workings of the IRM, thus reliably adding to the extant social movement literature, the burgeoning literature on the IRM, and Latino Studies.

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PART I: CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The largest mass mobilizations ever witnessed in this country occurred during the spring of 2006, a period I coin *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* in Los Angeles, because of the sequence of “*Gran*” *marchas* and events beginning with *La Gran Marcha* on March 25th,¹ and cresting with *El Gran Paro Americano* on May 1st, 2006.² In both events, over one million undocumented immigrants and their supporters took to the streets to protest repressive immigration legislation, namely HR4437,³ and then to demand amnesty that would be devoid of any guestworker programs. These marches in Los Angeles were not isolated events, but part of a larger series of protest actions occurring across the nation against HR4437. The decisions to call these actions, made by immigrant rights organizers, including myself, were tactical, strategic, and controversial.

In this analysis the “traditional faction” is described as the longstanding immigrant-serving organizations that date back to the *Bracero* era such as the *Ex-Bracero* organizations in LA, and *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, and its newer factions, *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana*, and the newest faction that I have worked with since its inception in 2005, *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*. I use “radical faction” to describe the sector that includes socialists, ultranationalists, communists, and

¹ “The Great March 2006.”

² “The Great American Boycott 2006”

³ HR4437 was a draconian bill introduced by Representatives Sensenbrenner and King, that passed through the House of Representatives on December 16th, 2005, and would have affected all Americans in one form or another. It would have criminalized 12 million undocumented immigrants and anyone that aided and abetted them; authorized local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws; constructed hundreds of miles of fencing along the México-US border; and most dastardly would have called for the immediate deportation of all unauthorized and deportable immigrants.

other similarly oriented organizations that have dedicated a liaison or committee to the broader immigrant rights community in LA. From this point forward, I will use “leftist” to describe the union of the radical and traditional sectors of the immigrant rights community in LA. As such, the leftist faction of the Los Angeles Immigrant Rights Movement (IRM) began demonstrating against HR4437 in late December, but these organizations chose not to massively march until “*La Gran Marcha*” on March 25th, 2006, as a strategy to pressure the Senate to terminate any consideration of HR4437 on March 27th, 2006. On that date, it was to begin deliberating the parameters of the proposed bill.

Weeks later, on April 10th 2006,⁴ the moderate faction of the IRM in Los Angeles joined with national efforts to mobilize against HR4437. Although the organizers headlined the participation of Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Mayor Villaraigosa, and labor movement leader Maria Elena Durazo, it drew only a modicum of participants in comparison to the turnouts for *La Gran Marcha*, *La Gran Marcha Estudiantil*,⁵ and *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*. The latter three actions were organized by the leftist sector of Los Angeles’ IRM.

The March 25th demonstration effectively put the nails in the coffin of HR4437. In *La Gran Marcha*, an estimated 1.7 to 2 million individuals marched in downtown LA from Olympic and Broadway, and then gathered at City Hall for a large rally that lasted

⁴ Despite much outreach by the moderate sector, only 8 to 10,000 participants actually showed up to march. When it was time to march, less than that actually marched from *Placita Olvera*, through Chinatown, and to the federal building in Downtown.

⁵ “The Great Student March 2006” occurred on April 15th, 2006, and drew an estimated 25 to 30,000 students from elementary school through college, their parents, and their supporters which included droves of teachers and other school affiliates and advocates.

until approximately 4PM⁶ Arguably, it could have easily been much more than two million individuals participating, but many could not participate for an array of reasons. For example, most routes to downtown closed, freeway exits to downtown were also closed or rerouted away from downtown, the buses were cancelled or rerouted, and the Metrolink trains and rented buses transporting march participants downtown left thousands upon thousands of folks behind in cities around Southern California.

There were certainly controversies that plagued the organizing efforts of the *Gran Marcha*, but it was the decision to boycott on May 1st, that drew the line in the sand between moderates and leftists, and resulted in the organization of two separate marches on May 1st, 2006. In Los Angeles, the march on May 1st was again attended by well over 1 million individuals. Beyond this and hundreds of other marches around the country, millions upon millions observed the national boycott, “*El Gran Paro Americano 2006*,” around the world, making it the most massive protest in world history.

Although the media portrayed May Day 2006 as another “marching day,” it was clear that millions worldwide had observed the call and in solidarity boycotted everything “American” and that multitudes of US citizens and their foreign-born counterparts flexed their economic power by boycotting schools and work, and not buying or selling goods and or services. The morning march of the leftist sector was for boycott observers, and the moderate faction organized an afternoon march for those individuals that chose not to observe the boycott. When the midday march was over, an estimated 500,000 participants decided to continue marching west on Wilshire Blvd where the *Somos*

⁶ Many march participants were still streaming in at 4pm, and the picture that was later digitally analyzed to estimate the crowd number was taken early in the afternoon.

America event was being held, and joined the 3,000 to 5,000 individuals who had gathered there at 3pm, on time.

At the core of this investigation is an analysis of the historical development of the organizational infrastructure of the Immigrant Rights Movement; and, how it has bifurcated into two distinct politically ideological trends in the IRM, one liberal—corporately institutionalized and moderate—and the other illiberal—or traditionally grassroots and or leftist and radical—which becomes particularly evident during epochs of insurgency.

As a result, attention began focusing on the longstanding immigrant rights struggle in the US that for decades has struggled against antiimmigrant legislative attacks. Since then academics have been seeking to understand these mobilizations, particularly the participation of Latinos and undocumented immigrants. Some of these scholars analyzed this phenomenon during and after *La Gran Epoca Primavera*, and claimed that the insurgencies were “spontaneous” and or “contemporaneous,” and that the metaphorical “sleeping giant” had finally awakened. Some even claimed that the media organized the marches, failing to give due credit to the longstanding immigrant rights struggle in the US and the organizing work of many activists. In contrast, I reject the simplistic portrayals of the Latino community as a “sleeping giant.”⁷ In the words of

⁷ Los Angeles has historically been the home of Latino political activity, yet the Latino population has long been characterized as a “sleeping giant” because of its size and low levels of political participation. Most notably, in the 1970s and the 1990s, an approximate 60% increase in the Latino population was predicted to yield a comparable increase in the Latino electorate. While some folks may argue that these population increases did not give way to the expected growth in the Latino electorate, there is ample evidence that Latino political activity was readily evident in the highly politicized climate of California in the late 1990s post-187 period, and most recently during spring 2006 to the present.

immigrant rights activist Bert Corona,⁸ "...the *Mexicanos* in this country had never been asleep. We had always been giants, working like hell to produce, to stay alive, and to keep the Southwest and other areas going. So how could they call us [a] "sleeping giant?" (cited in García, 1994: 221).

Historically, and contrary to popular perception, these mobilizations were not "spontaneous" eruptions. Rather, they were part of a longstanding IRM that includes a cadre of organizers, organizations, and immigrant community members that have been organizing and mobilizing against consistent repressive antiimmigrant legislation as far back as the late 1960s. These entities have all served to shape, propel, and maintain the longstanding IRM in Los Angeles, which has clearly established the city as its main cradle, but which extended beyond it in Southern California. The Latino infrastructure and leadership that organized the 2006 mobilizations in Los Angeles was in place prior to these historical mobilizations, and many individuals during this time came into the fold of the leftist immigrant rights faction lending their resources, networks, and themselves by way of decades of experience to the massive organizing effort in early 2006. The moderate faction was slow to respond but it eventually pulled together its resources and joined in the organizing efforts that contrasted in numerous ways to the efforts of the radical and traditional factions. Consequently, this dissertation will contend that had these entities not been in place prior to "*La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*," the outcomes would have been radically different.

⁸ Bert Corona is widely recognized as the bona fide founder and longtime leader of the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement and was instrumental in the rise of the *Mexican American Political Association* and *CASA*, and the restructuring of *La Hermandad Mexicana* while bringing it from San Diego to Los Angeles in the late 1960s.

The current research is primarily an examination of the organizing efforts of the broad immigrant rights community before and during the spring 2006 mobilizations, and secondarily it considers the nature of the immigrant community's response to these efforts. I examine these events from the dual perspective of participant and observer, or researcher, further aiming to capture the activists' organizing work in order to inform better future investigations pertinent to the immigrant rights struggle in the US. Furthermore, this investigation contributes to the extant social movement literature and to the burgeoning body of literature on the IRM discussed more in depth in the following chapter. In particular, it sheds light on how leadership embarks upon decision-making processes, and how and when the two broad factions—leftist and moderate—of the IRM cohered into a unified cluster of immigrant rights activists collectively working in solidarity with each other.

In 2006, for example, the *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, which later organized the first mega march in Los Angeles on March 25th grew from "*La Tierra es de Todos*," a coalition comprised of radical immigrant rights activists, organized to confront the Minutemen in the summer of 2005 in Eastern San Diego County into an immigrant rights organization. Most of these organizations had already been engaging in confrontations against other antiimmigrant hate groups that were targeting day laborers across Southern California. Contrariwise, the moderate faction of the IRM in Los Angeles, which became "*Somos America*," was a top-down strategy that worked hand in hand with the Democratic Party. While it might be that this faction protects elite interests, this was not the explicit purpose of this strategy. Nevertheless, this coalition

comprised of nonprofit community-based and nationally tied immigrant-serving nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the labor movement, along with the elite-level of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles, all supported legislation that would create a guestworker program, a compromise they were willing to make in order to establish a “pathway to citizenship” for the nation’s undocumented residents. These positions for and against a guestworker program, and whether to struggle for “legalization” by way of a “pathway to citizenship,” that would take for some individuals nearly two decades to adjust their status; or, whether to demand “amnesty,” which has been the core demand of the traditional grassroots and radical sector since the 1970s, has kept the IRM divided.

The organizational experience by itself does not determine the trajectory of the IRM. Leadership also plays a vital role in the decision-making process that propels and directs the movement and the organizations they represent into their assumed courses of action. For example, in summer 2005, Gloria Saucedo⁹ director of the *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* (LHMN), Panorama City office, and Alicia Flóres and Gabby Rodríguez, directors of the Oxnard and South Central offices of *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* respectively, and Martha Ugarte,¹⁰ left the moderate sector of the IRM in Los Angeles to organize with *La Tierra* Coalition. This leadership represents the traditional sector of the IRM, an exclusive sector that has stayed true to the *Movimiento* over the years by still pushing for “amnesty” as introduced by Bert Corona,

⁹ Interviewee Gloria Saucedo, longtime immigrant rights activist, and current director of La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional’s Panorama City office. She is cofounder of *La Placita Olvera Proimmigrant* Working Group, and March 25th Coalition.

¹⁰ Martha Ugarte is a media specialist who organized the press conferences for LTTC during the summer of 2005. She also worked in the Placita Olvera Proimmigrant Working Group, and briefly in the March 25th Coalition.

who was instrumental for bringing together the Chicano activists that formed the contemporary IRM, and never swayed from that position. Like Corona who campaigned for the termination of Public Law 78, the *Bracero* Program in the 1960s, most of *La Hermandad Mexicana* factions¹¹ have also remained adamantly opposed to guestworker programs.

Since 2006, Saucedo and Flóres have supported the actions of both sectors of the IRM, and with me, made the call to mobilize the radical and traditional factions in November 2008, to pressure the incoming Presidential administration and other policymakers to end the repression of the immigrant community via raids, deportations, and detentions. The Southern California Immigration Coalition is the product of that call, and this organization has been actively organizing the leftist faction of the immigrant rights community in LA since that first meeting.

The Latino immigrant rights community in Los Angeles is also multifaceted. In the IRM, Latinos to a certain degree have had to struggle with a generic racial and ethnic identity. However, like Bert Corona, most early participants in the IRM identified as *Mexicano* and most still do even in the present. Moreover, *Mexicanos* have been a major part of the organizing efforts over the years. Yet there are droves of white allies in the leftist community in Los Angeles, and the Central American community has aligned itself to the immigrant rights struggle over the years. The dominance of *Mexicanos* in the IRM has made it difficult for other ethnic groups to participate. At times, activists forge

¹¹ The three factions include the original *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional de Trabajadores*, now *La Hermandad Mexicana* that is directed by Angelina Corona; *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* whose current director is Nativo Lopez, who when Bert Corona died, took over a few offices alongside Chole Alatorre; and, *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*, directed by Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flores, which was founded in 2005.

alliances across political and ethnic differences in order to mobilize mass numbers for protest, especially when direct threats to undocumented immigrants appear imminent. This ethnically charged occasion rarely comes without problems, however.

During the *Gran Paro Americano* march on May 1st, 2006, the *Mexicanos* in the March 25th Coalition were accused of being ethnocentric in terms of using red, white, and green flyers, and not including other Latino groups in the program, which was simply not true. This researcher was in charge of the section of the rally program in which an assembly of *Centro y Sudamericanos* were gathered on the spot, and ensured that they participated, even though some charged that the Filipino speakers, which were in the actual program line up, were favored over them. The group of *Latinamericanos* was an impromptu addition. More examples of interethnic conflict and solidarity are documented, which require additional analysis and study, as does the participation of various ethnic groups within the IRM. This study focuses on the *Mexicano*-oriented leadership and the participation of the *Mexicano* immigrant community across Southern California. *Mexicano* activists and leaders played central roles in the immigrant rights struggle as they mobilized the region's largest group of immigrants and outnumbered other ethnic groups.

This research will take a two-pronged approach, combining data from participant observation and in-depth interviews with immigrant rights activists, in order to better understand the leadership of the IRM and the people that it mobilizes to protest. I focus on the core leadership of the IRM in Los Angeles, putting its response to antiimmigrant legislative attacks, including the mobilizations that occurred in the spring of 2006, in

historical perspective. My analysis highlights the contradictory reality of the distinct factions of the IRM, while paying close attention to the decisions in the immigrant rights struggle that have shaped the very fabric of US and world histories.

The protests that occurred in the spring of 2006 may have been the high point of a movement that has yet to reach its ultimate goal of integrating 12 million undocumented immigrants into US society. Understanding how these protests were organized and why they succeeded in mobilizing so many immigrants is important for both political and intellectual reasons. As such, this research asks three questions that will guide its discussion of the apexes of insurgency in the immigrant rights struggle in the US:

1. *Who are the leaders and organizations that comprise the Latino-oriented factions of the IRM in Los Angeles?*
2. *What role has the Latino leadership and community-based, traditional immigrant-serving organizations and their allies played in mass mobilizing for immigrant rights during three waves of protest: the 1970s and 1980s; in the 1990s; and most recently in late 2004 through spring 2006?*
3. *Why did so many Latino immigrants and their advocates respond to calls for action in the spring of 2006, and why were these protests so much larger than previous actions for immigrant rights?*

METHODOLOGY

My research is based on a combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews with immigrant rights activists, and where available, secondary historical accounts of earlier periods of the movement. A unique contribution of this study is the researcher's insider perspective as an organizer and participant, which now is brought to bear on scholarship. As a scholar activist, I aimed to continue in the tradition of numerous Chicano Movement participant scholars. As such, I have already conducted a decade of participatory action research and have been intimately involved in the IRM over the past decade, and particularly in the 2006 mobilizations.

My participation in organizing during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* can add a very insightful perspective in relation to the flurry of recent studies that have produced misinterpretations and limited snapshots of the IRM. Through my participation, I have collected a wealth of documentation and experience within the Movement, specifically fieldnotes, files, reports, and signup sheets, minutes, newspaper articles, and nearly 4,000 email messages. I have engaged in many informal interviews and conversations with IRM leaders and community members that have given me a much deeper understanding of the Movement and its rich history in Los Angeles.

In addition to participant observation, I conducted thirty interviews with leaders and community members in the IRM from Los Angeles that had participated at one point or another in the Movement. These interviews shed light on how these organizers' prior experiences in various movements informed their work within the contemporary IRM. They also reveal how and why or why not they opted to mobilize their organizations in

response to the political threats presented during the three epochs under consideration in this study.

My interviewees ranged in age from 29 to 78 years old, and all identified as *Mexicanos* with the exception of one Argentinean woman, Veronica Federovsky, and one white male clergy, Father Gregory Boyle. Most of the participants had been in the IRM for many years, none were new to the struggle, and for the most part all had taken part in one of the mobilizations featured in this paper. The participants split nearly equally, in terms of gender, and in terms of total family income they ranged from between \$20-30,000 to \$100,000 and above per year.

Their employment profile ranged from being directors of immigrant-serving organizations to immigration lawyers, and from union organizers to tenured professors, with the exception of two participants, all of the participants reported full-time employment. All of the participants resided in Southern California, from as far north as Oxnard in Ventura County, to the southeast in San Bernardino in the Inland Empire, and as far south as San Diego, others lived in the San Fernando Valley, and Orange County, but most lived in or near central Los Angeles. Only after having been interviewed, did one participant refuse to release their information, and all participants agreed to be identified by their actual names.

In my first round of interviews, I recruited leaders and organizers from organizations that were involved and led the charge against HR4437 in the IRM in 2006 in Los Angeles, which lasted from summer 2008 through spring 2010. This group included leaders of churches, immigrant rights organizations, ethnic organizations,

student groups, and political parties. Some of the interviewees were active in the *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, the group that organized the mass marches of spring 2006 in Los Angeles. I selected informants who were the most visible and well known leaders of their organizations. The interviews took place mostly in the workplace offices of the participants; only a handful of the interviews were in public areas. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and where necessary translated. The majority of the interviews were in English, and a handful were conducted in Spanish

The interviews consisted of questions on the processes by which immigrant rights organizations decided to engage in mobilization efforts, the strategies organizations have historically used to mobilize immigrants, the policy platforms they pursued and the messages they employed to reach out to immigrants, and which segments of the immigrant population were targeted during these mobilization efforts. Many folks who organized demonstrations and protests during *La Gran Epoca Primavera* 2006 in Los Angeles have not been publicly recognized for their efforts. It is my aim to draw also from their experiences as well.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE

In the first section of this project, offered are the introduction, methodology, theoretical framework, and literature review components. In this chapter, assumed above was the introduction and methodological outline, which included a demographic profile of the interviewees in this study and a discussion on my participation in the IRM as a participant observer for over a decade. Undertaken in chapter 2 is the theoretical framework and literature review that establish the backdrop for the next four substantive chapters that comprise section two, which focuses on the organizational infrastructure of the Movement in Los Angeles. Drawing insights from the political opportunities and resource mobilization models of social movement mobilization, I argue that political threats motivated the immigrant rights community to organize three cycles of protest between the 1970s and 2010, and which culminated in the spring 2006 insurgency that was the grandest ever witnessed in the country.

In Part II, I explore the production of the organizational infrastructure of the IRM in Los Angeles, beginning with pioneers of the immigrant struggle in the Southwest. Chapter 3 discusses the creation and introduction of traditional immigrant-serving organizations that predated and highly influenced the contemporary IRM, some of which are still active today, and make up the traditional wing of the Movement. Chapter 4 focuses on the Mexican American-serving organizations that have comprised the foundation of the moderate faction of the immigrant rights struggle. Like the previous chapters in section two, chapter 5 offers a history of the emergence of the organizations that have come to comprise the contemporary moderate wing of the IRM in Los Angeles.

Next, Chapter 6 provides my narrative as a movement insider on the series of organizations that I cofounded beginning in 2003. These early organizations such as *Estamos Unidos*, *Southern California Human Rights Network*, and *La Tierra es de Todos* coalition ultimately led to the establishment of later organizations that served as vehicles to mobilize millions of undocumented immigrants and their advocates during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*. These organizations include *La Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, The Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437, and the March 25th Coalition.

In the third section of this dissertation, I argue in Chapter 7 that the IRM has experienced three epochs of insurgency. The first wave of protest began in the late 1960s when immigrant rights activists mobilized against employer sanctions and it lasted through 1986 when amnesty was won for millions of undocumented immigrants. The next wave of insurgency occurred between 1993 and 1994 when the IRM mobilized against California Proposition 187, which sought to terminate public social services to undocumented immigrants. The final wave of insurgency occurred in 2006 when immigrants and their allies mobilized against HR4437 through massive street demonstrations and marches. I argue that the constriction of political opportunities through antiimmigrant legislation prompted these insurgencies. Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the factors that influence, shape, and or plague the IRM. I then discuss the implications of my findings for the IRM in the next stage of struggle.

PART I: CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Drawing insights from social movement literature, this dissertation will utilize two dominant theoretical models of social movement mobilization as a starting point to examine the rise and decline in protest activity by the IRM between the late 1970s to the present: The political process and resource mobilization models. Until the megamobilizations of 2006, there had been relatively little analysis of the IRM by social movement scholars. I will use a grounded approach to examine whether and how the dynamics of the IRM fits the expectations of these two theoretical models.

The political process model may be unable to explain fully the trends in mobilization among undocumented immigrants. One of the major problems with the social movement literature in general, and the political process model in particular, is that it assumes that participants have legal rights to make claims against the state. The IRM, therefore, forces academics to take into account the issue of participants' legal status. In this vein, the primary struggle for the *Movimiento* has always been a fight for "citizenship," marginalizing them from identifying with other US "citizens." On the one hand, it can be argued that the undocumented are incapable of participating in the political arena in the US. On the other hand, one would expect them to participate in politics by fighting with their presence, feet, and voices. Thus social movement literature highlights the various possibilities of political action for those who cannot or choose not to participate in the formal electoral arena. Even so, it still does not take into account how the situation of undocumented Latinos, under attack and easily deportable, impacts

their mobilization and the receptivity of elected officials to their demands. Is it possible for an undocumented immigrant to change his or her legal status without mobilizing against the establishment on all levels? Is the federal government really looking out for this population's best interest?

Consistent with the political process model, I argue that immigrant insurgency emerged in response to political threats to immigrants' interests. However, it is vital to consider why undocumented immigrants respond to certain threats over others when certain individuals, organizations, or factions of the immigrant rights community convey these threats to them. This example has come to the fore during times of struggle between the moderate faction and the radical and traditional factions of the IRM. Why undocumented immigrants have increasingly participated in collective action is also an important issue considered in this investigation.

Over the years, Latino (mostly Mexican) immigrants have fought a distinct struggle from that of their US-born counterparts, especially other native-born groups of color. For blacks, popular mobilization clearly followed in response to expanding political opportunities (McAdam, 1996; Piven & Cloward, 1977). In contrast, Latino immigrant mobilization emerged largely in response to threats to their interests, and when political opportunities appeared to be "constricting" rather than expanding. Chicano activists, while struggling for Chicano civil rights, were present at the "*Dream March*" alongside black civil rights leadership (García, 1994). Yet, their participation in poor people's and civil rights movements as well as immigrant rights struggles, was largely ignored by many social movement scholars who tended to rely on black-white binary

conceptions of race relations. This study puts Latino immigrants at the center of the analysis while considering their unique characteristics, including their variation in identity and legal status.

Political Opportunities and Emergent Threats

Scholars have sought to understand the emergence of movements in terms of the institutionalized and informal power relations at the national level. The political process model highlights “the timing and fate of movements as largely dependent upon the opportunities afforded insurgents by the shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power” (McAdam, 1996: 23). McAdam (1996), Piven and Cloward (1977) and other political process scholars have traditionally highlighted the role of expanding political opportunities for stimulating protest among underprivileged social groups. They argued that the civil rights movement emerged in the mid 1950s in response to expanding political opportunities; as King Cotton declined this stimulated outmigration from South to North and from rural to urban communities. As new employment opportunities opened up for blacks in the North, they were able to invest more in their own institutions and organizations. The result was larger churches, the growth of black colleges, and the induction of the NAACP. Moreover, as blacks faced less oppression in the north, they voted in larger numbers and politicians began to court their vote. In other words, expanding political opportunities and resources to mobilize set the stage for black liberation.

Scholars in the political process tradition are now putting greater emphasis on the role of perceived threats to groups' interests and values for galvanizing collective action (Almeida, 2003). Yet others have claimed that while political opportunities open opportunities for challengers, they are typically not open enough to satisfy them, which requires them to mobilize in order to gain the attention of policymakers (Meyers & Staggenborg, 1996).

Scholars have also provided cross-national analyses of the "structure, extent, and successes of comparable movements," identifying distinct political characteristics of the nation states in which they are rooted (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). Recent scholarship however still embraced the basic underlying conviction that broad political constraints and opportunities that are unique to their national origin shape social movements (Marks & McAdam, 1996). While political opportunities may be relatively open for various kinds of organized US citizens to make social change possible, the political system remains fairly closed for undocumented *Latinamericanos*. Activists in the *Movimiento* are well aware that international neoliberal free trade policies such as the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA), the Central American Free Trade Act (CAFTA), and "whatever-AFTA" have promulgated the rising volume of immigrants to the US (Bacon, 2008), given that passage of such ostensibly "free" trade acts have constricted the political opportunities and the very livelihood of *Mexicanos* and *Centroamericanos*, pushing them northward.

Consistent with the political process model, and consistent with that part of the tradition that emphasizes the mobilizing role of threat, I argue that statewide and federal

restrictive antiimmigrant bills and legislation propelled the rise of a mass-based IRM. I argue that these legislative antiimmigrant attacks become overly punitive; consequently, they can also be viewed as “political threats,” as they threatened undocumented immigrants’ access to the “American way of life.” The threats posed by antiimmigrant bills and legislation spurred the waves of mobilization by immigrants and their supporters that began in the late 1960s and culminated in the massive actions that occurred in the spring of 2006.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the history of the IRM challenges the assertion that popular mobilization occurs in response to expanding political opportunities. Although there have been waves of immigration to the US throughout the 20th century, economic shifts during the 1930s and 40s that resulted in the repatriation of droves of *Mexicanos*, and even political shifts throughout, there were no significant insurgencies in response. There were isolated protests and uprisings by Mexican laborers, which were quickly quelled by agribusiness associations embarking upon night raids that would move laborers from ranch to ranch to keep “problemmakers” from gaining popularity but also from unionizing as well (Galarza, 1964). For women and other groups of color however, gains institutionalized through the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1965. That same year, the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which for the first time set a limit on immigration from the Western Hemisphere, made it more difficult for Mexican and Latin Americans to enter the country legally, contributing to the growth of the “undocumented” Mexican worker.

The next struggle against employer sanctions for business owners that willfully hired undocumented workers, eventually culminated in the passage of the Immigration and Reform Control Act of 1986, which “legalized” agricultural workers and those undocumented immigrants in the US before 1982 but at the same time implemented sanctions against any employer hiring undocumented immigrants (Rolph, 1992; González-Baker, 1990; Juffras, 1991). Clearly, there was a short history of political threats, by default and or indirect, against the livelihood of undocumented workers. Emboldened by the social uprisings of the 1960s, Chicano activists in Los Angeles involved in Mexican American civil rights issues, began organizing their Mexican-born counterparts when the injustices against them became too much to bear for them in the US and in México. This new breed of Chicano activists embraced their *Mexicaness*, and viewed themselves as an integral part of their compatriot’s plight. After studying in the tradition of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary struggle, they endorsed the mantra, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”¹² Although the conditions prior to the late 1960s rarely prompted insurgency by immigrants, the challengers that later propelled the immigrant rights struggle forward gained critical organizational skills and experience during the 1960s that later helped them to mobilize undocumented immigrants.

In the 1990s, the IRM soon became concerned with both state and national policies. In California, several state initiatives marked the antiimmigrant sentiment during the 1990s but Proposition 187 was particularly heinous. Proposition 187 would have denied social services to undocumented California residents, including children.

¹² Interview Jorge Rodriguez, former *casista*, unionist, and was instrumental in the logistics of the spring 2006 mobilizations.

This initiative tethered many native-born blacks with US-born Latinos and Asians during this period, clearly marking them as outsiders, making “Uncle Tom” blacks and “Tio Taco” Latinos “part of the nation” (Pulido, 2006). Opponents of Proposition 187 also mobilized against several pieces of repressive antiimmigrant federal legislation passed in 1996, namely the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996,¹³ which restricted legal immigrants’ access to federal public assistance for their first five years in the country, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, that criminalized not only those that were in the country impermissibly but also permanent residents. Some of these individuals were subjected to deportation for a past felony or misdemeanor charge. During this struggle however, the IRM came together and again employed a campaign of mobilizations in protest of this repressive legislation. The *Movimiento* had experienced a long struggle before winning amnesty in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act and much was learned from that experience, so it was a natural procession for various individuals and factions of the IRM to put their learned experience into action in the next epoch of insurgency.

There is little doubt that these two important struggles were instrumental in propelling and shaping the IRM into what it is today. For the IRM and Latinos in general, legislative attacks have been consistent since long before the civil rights struggle. Although there have been many notable struggles over the history of the *Movimiento*, surely too many to mention in this limited space, it is the most recent struggle against

¹³ Singer & Gilbertson (2000) reported that it established “restrictions on the eligibility of legal immigrants for...public assistance and broadened restrictions on public benefits for undocumented immigrants. It also required the INS to verify an immigrant’s status before he or she could receive benefits” (3). Though in 1997 some immigrants who entered the US before 1996 had their benefits restored (Fix & Passel, 2002).

HR4437 and for immigration reform that dwarfed those preceding struggles because of the greatly higher stakes—12 million undocumented individuals currently residing in the US. The threat that these legislative attacks posed to Latino immigrants drew the Latino community closer together, and along with the IRM leadership’s guidance, they have nonetheless served as catalysts for collective insurgency. Yet to understand how policy or proposed legislation is widely understood to be a “threat” and how a community responds to that policy, it is necessary to examine also the role of the leadership and community members.

The political process model, while pointing to shifting social conditions does not focus sufficient attention on the role of leadership identifying these opportunities, acting on them, and effectively transmitting these moments of opportunity to the community. In terms of the IRM, the model does not take into account how factions in the *Movimiento* ideologically, tactically, and strategically, differed on a number of distinct positions during these struggles. Awareness of these policies and the importance of contesting them has been neither a natural nor an inevitable process. As such, the political process model by itself does not account for how political threat is transmitted or interpreted by people in such a way that it is not only viewed as an imminent threat but also seen as something that could be resisted actively through collective mobilization. During “*La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*,” undocumented Latino immigrants across the country

sensed an urgency to mobilize against the establishment because of the unjust Congressional bill HR4437 that was unwarranted and or unexpected.¹⁴

Clearly, the immigrant community felt the impending doom they and their advocates would face if HR4437 became law. Subsequently, a sense of “collective efficacy” (McAdam, 1982) amongst the Latino community emerged and led to a call to action which sent millions of citizens and noncitizens to the street to vote with their feet. To advance this theoretical tradition even further, this research considers the processes through which the political threats associated with immigration reform was transmitted from the IRM leadership to the immigrant community, and or to the membership in their organizations, and more broadly how the community responded. To recognize the role of leadership, I explore how it mobilized the immigrant community in Los Angeles and the tactics it employed in organizing *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* in Los Angeles.

Extant Mobilizing Structures and Resource Mobilization

Mobilizing structures are “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). As such, organizations become a central feature in social movement literature because they can acquire and then deploy resources to achieve their well-defined goals. True to the literature, the IRM is comprised of a variety of organizations including coalitions and other typical grassroots organizations, traditional immigrant-serving organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. These and other groups that make up the immigrant rights universe in Los Angeles include leftist, labor, and faith-

¹⁴ Which transcended into a criticism of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus for not warning the immigrant rights community and one which I will further elaborate on in the dissertation-

based organizations. Yet, we must go beyond the political process model and the resource mobilization model to understand how the heterogeneity of the IRM's organizational universe and leaders' strategic decisions shaped the dynamics of the IRM. We must take the history of alliances and rifts between leadership and organizations into account as well as leaders' roles in making decisions pertinent to strategy and mobilization. Indeed, dissent alone is not enough to produce social change (Kendall, 2006).

Resource mobilization theory is comprised of two camps, the economic version originated by John McCarthy, and the political version espoused by Mayer Zald, Charles Tilly, and Doug McAdam (Kendall, 2006). The unique characteristic of the *Movimiento* can support both of these traditions. I would argue that both are intrinsically important not only for the *Movimiento* but for Latinos in general. Consequently, both theoretical camps could essentially speak to the IRM's fundamental structure.

In this research, the original "scope conditions" proposed by McCarthy and Zald (2006) are considered. The first one is the notion that societies have voluntary association traditions; in other words, individuals can choose to affiliate and participate in voluntary associations and knowledge of how to organize them is widespread. The second is that freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are accepted normatively, even if not universally applied. Thirdly, there is a mass media and it is open to reporting grievances and protest. Moreover, the fourth is that the electoral system is so structured that small groups have little chance of gaining legislative office, thus mobilizations and action outside of the electoral system is encouraged (McCarthy & Zald, 2006). For

undocumented persons organization has to be outside of the political process by definition. As such, they can appropriately explain the motivations and conditions that propel the IRM into action, especially the issues surrounding the lack of resources for some organizations in the IRM, and the political struggles that immigrants have had to endure over the years, especially having to operate outside of the electoral system.

Because Latinos are among the most impoverished ethnic groups in the US, it is natural that their struggle frequently focuses on better working conditions, wages, and status. More importantly, millions of them are limited in terms of access to US citizenship, a policy used by the establishment to maintain them in the low socioeconomic status in which they have long held. While there have been political gains for immigrants over the years in the US, the preponderance of recent immigration-oriented policies have criminalized them by blocking their access to mere privileges such as drivers' licenses, and lawful employment. This growing criminalization has led to a dramatic rise in the number of deportations and detentions which have become institutionalized through the Immigration Industrial Complex (Díaz, forthcoming; Fernandes, 2007; Golash Boza, 2009; Saenz & Douglas, forthcoming). The grievances of the Latino immigrant community are substantial but they alone do not account for the mobilizations against their conditions, as these grievances are certainly not new and mobilization in response to them is seldom spontaneous.

The resource mobilization model assumes that core groups must, to be successful in their aims, harness disaffected individuals, raise funds, attract other likeminded organizations, draw media attention, reach out to political allies, all the while maintaining

their own organizations. Based on my own participation in the IRM, I believe that this model is too simplistic and cannot fully explain the 2006 mobilizations. My research thus focuses on the roles of organizational leaders within the IRM in building alliances over time, forging collective identity among participants, building organizational “cultures,” and choosing alternative strategies. I also draw attention to the implementation and timing of the chosen strategies, and reasons for their success or failure in mobilizing undocumented immigrants and their supporters.

The resource mobilization perspective does not explain how unity is forged given the vast cultural heterogeneity among social movement participants (Kendall, 1999). Nevertheless, it draws attention to the fact that the process of creating crowds, groups, associations, and organizations for the pursuit of a given movement’s collective goals requires the mobilization of various types of resources. These would include (1) moral resources (solidarity and support to realize collective aims), (2) cultural (prior collective action experience, comprehension of related issues, and strategy), (3) human cadre (staff, volunteers and leaders), (4) material (monetary, equipment, physical capital), (5) social-organizational (organizational and recruitment strategies, social networks). By merely focusing on organizational resources however, another limitation of the resource mobilization perspective is its failure to account for the development of collective identities (Kahn, 1982).

The Latino community and organizational universe that comprises the IRM are not monolithic, however. Various social movement scholars suggest that groups’ capacity to mobilize is facilitated by organizational cooperation and coalition building,

which can be hampered by organizational competition and in-fighting (McAdam, 1999 [1982]; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Yet, there are moments when threat is perceived to be direct and imminent and it is at such moments that bridges are built and mass mobilizations, such as those occurring during the spring of 2006, are possible. This research shows that restrictive antiimmigrant legislative attacks have consistently propelled the IRM to action and immediately shared were resources between individuals, groups and or factions. Hence, the literature on social movements points to organizations as the providers of resources for the *Movimiento*.

Gamson (1990) found that challengers are more likely to win when they have well-structured organizations. On the other hand, Piven & Cloward (1977) argued that “organizations” did not matter. Instead, they suggest that a small number of heads are needed to lead the charge of the insurgency (this point was contested by Jenkins, 1979). Nevertheless, Crossley (2002) asserted that resource mobilization theory has paid particular attention to the participation of the elite sponsorship, and Pichardo (1995) asserted that it was devoid of the creation of leadership roles discourse. This current research will contribute to this area of study by presenting the experience of key decision makers in these organizations. My research reveals how, bound within the framework of their respective organizations, the individuals that comprise the leadership in Los Angeles, experienced a long history of alliances and rifts over time.

The immigrant rights struggle, specifically the bevy of traditional and radical organizations that comprise the leftist illiberal faction has had to do a whole lot with very little. Contrariwise, the liberal moderate organizations in Los Angeles that include labor

unions, the Catholic Church, nongovernmental immigrant-serving organizations (NGOs) and the Democratic Party, have had extensive resources made available to them in the form of membership dues, donations, or grants. In 2006, the latter consortium of organizations gelled into the *Somos América* Coalition, which was affiliated with the Democratic Party. It pushed diligently for a guestworker program as part of a negotiating tool for immigration reform. Its character supported the contention that "...a strong alliance with a political party may push a social movement organization to greater structuration" (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 156).

Although well structured and staffed into "greater structuration," this organization failed to account for the experience of the longstanding IRM community-based leadership and their constituencies who fought hard against earlier antiimmigrant legislation that would have cajoled the undocumented community into a guestworker type of program that some had already fought to terminate in the 1960s. The moderate wing of the IRM divided its resources during this time as well, some to mobilizing its bases, and others to undermine the grassroots and more radical wing of the *Movimiento*. Again, the grassroots sector had momentum on its side, and to recapture its dominance of the Movement there was little the moderate groups could do during this epoch. It became abundantly clear however, that although the leadership of these factions did not always agree on strategies, in 2006 they did share the same pressing goal of abolishing HR4437, which helped to unite them.

PRIOR STUDIES OF THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A burgeoning body of literature has emerged since *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* on the Immigrant Rights Movement. Some scholars mistakenly contended that these “mega” protests in 2006 were spontaneous and with little or no leadership, almost as if they were happenstance, supernatural, and or automated—I review some of these studies below. The present research seeks to challenge, correct, and or build upon the extant IRM literature from an insider perspective, to counterfactually address the misinformed representations in the literature outlined below. As such, the study points to the absence of the contemporary IRM from two bodies of related research, which include social movements and Chicano/Latino Sociology. In addition to highlighting this problem, the present study aims to add substantively to both of these bodies of literature by examining the IRM employing a *Chicano Sociology* narrative methodology while also aiming to add theoretically to the social movement literature.

This literature on the immigrant rights movement has been timely and brought much needed attention to an understudied movement. Yet, it focused excessively on the motivations of individuals and organizations that represent the moderate faction of the IRM. That is, some literature post *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*, has erroneously thrown the moderate, leftist, and traditional factions into one homogenous pot, even dismissing the *Movimiento* entirely by sidestepping the many years of immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles.

Rim (2009) examines the insurgency as “community-based” mobilizations” and analyzes interethnic relations between Latinos—who dominate the immigrant rights

struggle in Los Angeles—and Asians in the contemporary immigrant rights movement. Rim concludes that Asians number too few to make a political difference and that Latinos outdid Asians in garnering participation in their respective communities. While otherwise insightful, this analysis fails to acknowledge how this recent wave of protest emerged from longstanding immigrant rights struggles. For example, radical Asian organizations, namely the Eastwind Movement, the Yellow Brotherhood and Asian American Hardcore, participated alongside Chicano activists in past immigrant rights struggles (Pulido, 2006). While Rim claimed that Koreans and Filipinos “...were among the most active Asian ethnic groups that organized the rallies,” the researcher failed to distinguish in what faction they participated, such as the key participation of BAYAN USA’s Chito Quijano and Fernando Fernando, and the Immigrant Solidarity Network’s Siu Hin Lee in the leftist faction during the spring 2006. Rim also fails to note the incorporation of Asian speakers, including Korean community activist, “Grandma Kim” Il Bok,¹⁵ in the speaker list for the *Gran Marcha*. Rim overlooks the ideological divisions amongst Asian organizations and the conditions under which they chose to work with either the liberal or illiberal factions in the Movement.

Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio & Montoya (2009) distinguished the 2006 immigrant rights organizing efforts in a Midwest new immigration destination in Nebraska to other historically active urban metropolitan areas with heavy Latino presence

¹⁵ Grandma Kim, Dae Yoon, Executive Director of the Korean Resource Center, and a Korean pastor were confirmed to attend and speak at La Gran Marcha in my conversations with Su Yon Yi from the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium. Because of the heavy police security at the steps of City Hall, and the massive presence disallowed for the majority of the speakers to actually come up to the stage. It was never confirmed if this trio of speakers were prevented or were unable to make it through the crowd to come up to the stage and speak.

but referred only once to the longstanding Immigrant Rights Movement in the US, as “the movement.” Like Rim (2009), the researchers treated the *Movimiento* as monolithic, overlooking the internal and ideological differences between individuals, groups, and factions. Examining the role of leftists within the movement, and their strategic decisions regarding the timing of protest, would have helped them to understand better their finding that the number of protest participants spiked at certain times in spring 2006.

Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio & Montoya (2009) rightfully claim that the 2006 mobilizations signal a turn in how “political participation” develops in these new destinations for immigrants. They claimed that these mobilizations were possible because with movement actors coalesced with organizations and on “different geographic scales” and with the “burgeoning networks” in new immigrant destinations. They overlook the role of the leftist faction in Los Angeles, Houston, Denver, and other metropolitan cities in connecting these networks to “the movement.” Leftists built these networks when they organized the protests for March 25th, 2006, two days before the Senate was going to enter debate on HR4437. Moreover, it was this traditional, radical, and militant network that organized the *Gran Paro Americano 2006*, on May 1st, 2006. While their geographic assertions can be lauded, the trio of researchers ignore the entire other half of the *Movimiento* of longtime activists that are connected to new destinations.

According to Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio & Montoya (2009), “the movement” in Omaha was essentially comprised of Churches, and interfaith coalitions, and the Union of Food and Commercial Workers local 271, all of which were at the time connected to the moderate faction of the Immigrant Rights Movement, specifically *Somos America*.

This was a strategic top down organization that served as a front for the Democratic Party, which organized the “national day of protest” on April 10th, 2006, the day of mobilization that the researchers examine. Leading up and immediately following the passage of HR4437, these organizations refused to enter initially into the efforts already undertaken by the leftist faction in Los Angeles and beyond. After *Somos America* gelled together in late March to regain control of “the movement” and channel the “political participation” on the streets into the voting booths, it organized the “day of protest” under the mantra “*Ahora Marchamos, Manana Votamos.*”¹⁶ Then, *Somos America* worked diligently to nationally dissuade participation in the “militant” *Gran Paro Americano 2006*. Again, the analysis overlooks ideological differences and diversity amongst distinct individuals, organizations, and factions. If these factors were considered, it would have opened up new research paths, possibilities, and insight into the future political participation of immigrants. Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio & Montoya (2009) ultimately blamed the disappearance of threat, and the absence of preexisting organization, as the primary reason mobilizations decreased in new destination areas. This overlooks the importance of the political battle that ensued after the mobilizations over the future strategy of the movement, and the failure of the moderate faction to collaborate with the leftist faction to mobilize additional street protests.

Somos America wrestled for control of the Movement, essentially selling out the immigrant community by supporting a guestworker program and pathway to citizenship, components that were attached to the immigration reform legislative proposals

¹⁶ “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote.”

considered by Congress in 2006 and 2007. This certainly had an impact on the morale of the *Movimiento*, dividing it, taking the reins, and essentially channeling it away from its goal of reform into a major campaign drive for the Democratic Party, which has proven to be fruitless. Since taking control of Congress and the Presidency in 2006, the Democratic Party shelved the struggle for immigration reform to maintain a favorable political image. Democrats have failed to pass a comprehensive immigration reform and President Obama has failed to keep his campaign promise to curb the heightened enforcement of immigrants in workplace raids. Those workplace raids that initially plagued the Midwest in the years following the mobilizations helped to reduce popular participation in Movement activities, a factor overlooked in Alvarado et al's (2009) analysis.

Barreto, Manzano, Ramírez & Rim (2009), on the other hand, would not commit to labeling the IRM as such, positing that whether or not it was a “new Latino Social Movement,” or “Immigrant Rights Social Movement,” “many Latinos participated.” These authors also gloss over the diversity in the IRM even while they examine Latino panethnic transnational solidarity. They also posited that the surge of mobilization in 2006 was due to “extensive mobilization efforts in Latino majority schools, Catholic Churches, and Spanish-language media...” all of which were widely reported across the country. Barreto et al (2009) also found widespread Latino solidarity, even amongst Catholics because the “Church took a lead role in organizing and disseminating information in the Latino community.” Yet, the Catholic Church discouraged participation in some protest events, such as the *Gran Paro Americano 2006*, even as

they encouraged participation in other protest events associated with the moderate faction of the movement.¹⁷ Consequently, these aforementioned articles failed to consider adequately the political intricacies of the IRM that has long roots in Los Angeles.

In contrast to other scholars, Barreto et al correctly cited the similarities between the mobilizations of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and the mobilizations of the 1990s in California, and the national ones in 2006. They also acknowledge that some of the leadership from the earlier mobilizations participated in the most recent mobilizations. However, Barreto et al failed to distinguish the differences between the three distinct spring 2006 mobilizations, and the individuals that organized them in terms of their positions on the immigration question. Barreto et al (2009) claimed that the farmworker and student movements together comprised the Chicano Movement, discussing these two strands of the movement as if they were coherently related. Many of the students that participated in the Chicano Movement opposed the antiimmigrant position that the United Farm Workers adopted.

César Chávez took a very strong antiimmigrant approach to organizing immigrant farmworkers, which was a position that many young Chicano activists would not embrace and therefore sought to pursue a very different trend distinct from the moderate Mexican American/Chicano organizations of that era (Muñoz, 1989; Rodríguez, 1977). Barreto et al (2009) claimed that the mobilizations of the 1960s and 1990s were similar, but they were organized essentially for different *causas*¹⁸ and by different groups of

¹⁷ Interviewee Nativo Lopez, longtime immigrant activist and Casista, and now current director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana*, and the Mexican American Political Association.

¹⁸ Causes

Mexicanos, the US-born, and the Mexican-born (García, 1994; Chavez 2002). This present research considers the ideological differences within both the Chicano Movement and the IRM of today. I argue that these two movements were much different in both nature and scope, even if leaders of the first movement became leaders of the second one.

There is a rich history of immigrant rights organizing in the US in general and in Los Angeles in particular, that goes beyond “Barreto et al’s “Latino solidarity,” and goes further back than the 1990s. My aim, therefore, is to examine the immigrant rights struggle in more depth, moving beyond the monolithic view of the IRM. Historically, academic “outsiders” of the IRM have typically focused on the role of moderate organizations. I argue that those moderate organizations have a history of advocating for their own interests, agendas, and continue to make decisions outside of the traditional line of the IRM, for full, immediate, and universal amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, and in opposition to guestworker type of programs. Like Pulido (2006), I focus on the history of the leftist faction of the IRM in Los Angeles, a faction that has played a vital role in mobilizing the immigrant and immigrant rights communities for decades.

With reference to the organizing efforts of the leftist faction over the years, it has been unfortunate that outside of the “radicalism” of the student and Chicano movements, there has been minimal attention paid to the traditional, radical, and militant organizing efforts for immigrant rights in Los Angeles, especially the 2006 mobilizations. For example, one anthropologist claimed they “...caught most people by surprise,” including academics, or they had a “spontaneous nature,” or that “...the marches brought together many groups and constituencies,” and that “Rather than being initiated by well-

established organizations that have long advocated for Latino rights, this was largely a self-organized, decentralized protest with no charismatic leaders at top” (Zlolniski, 2010: 6, 7). These claims deserve a contextual response that clarifies the role of the leftist faction of the IRM, especially in spring 2006.

First, the mobilizations certainly did not catch the leftist faction in Los Angeles by surprise; that faction organized the major mobilizations. They were, therefore, not spontaneous but the work of the leftist faction leading up to the passage of HR4437 (Akers Chacón, 2006). Secondly, the notion that they were “self-organized,” and that “well-established organizations” had nothing to do with the initiation of the mobilizations, and even that they had no “charismatic leaders” is not only wrong-headed and misguided but absurd. This research challenges this type of misinformed investigation by presenting the leadership or well-established organizations in the traditional and radical sectors of the IRM that were behind the mobilizations in Los Angeles and beyond. Surprisingly, some authors from the left even sidestepped the longstanding immigrant rights struggle in the US.

One socialist scholar claimed it was “immigrant workers and Latino students,” that mobilized the initial mobilizations and joined others in calling the mobilizations the emergence of a “new immigrant civil rights movement” (Akers Chacón, 2006; Banerjee; 2007; Hing & Johnson, 2007; Kyriakou, 2006). Even after her analysis of the nascent contemporary leftist faction that was centered on the emergence of *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma*, which evinced the early immigrant rights organizing in Los Angeles and what followed, Pulido (2006) still employed the awakening of the “Sleeping Giant” metaphor.

Pulido also asserted that Los Angeles was “Ground Zero” for the Movement, and that *El Gran Paro Americano* was riffed from the movie “A Day without a Mexican” (Pulido, 2006). While she is certainly correct in her contention of the former, it is the latter claim that is misguided.

At the risk of appearing arrogant or egocentric, I would like offer the reader the actual motivation behind the *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*. I date the genesis of the “general strike” concept of the *Gran Paro* to the mid2003 and to the present. I have never seen the film “A Day without a Mexican.” In fact, I called into KPFK after the May 1st, march in Downtown and informed the panel which included two of the creators of the film,¹⁹ that despite their efforts to connect the film and *Paro*, the latter unfortunately had nothing to do with the film. In fact, the motivation for the *Gran Paro* in the call (see chapter 6), was in response to the claims made by the antiimmigrant forces that began gaining momentum in the early years of the 21st century, asserting that “immigrants were a drain on the economy.” That vacuous contention irked me exponentially.

The general strike, or “boycott,” was based on our early boycotts that began in October 2003, which transpired into “*El Paro Economico 2003*,” that we organized out of Ontario, CA, and was felt across the state on December 12th, 2003, *El Dia de la Virgen* (see chapter six for more details). I put the concept into motion using the *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group as the vehicle for its initiation and then the March 25th Coalition brought it to fruition. Supported by Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres through

¹⁹ Directors includey Sergio Arau, Caroline Aaron, Tony Abatemarco and Melinda Allen

La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional, Javier Rodríguez, and myself, traveled nationally to solicit broader support.

This study will give a more in depth account of how the militant-oriented individuals in the IRM have played instrumental roles in the immigrant rights struggle in LA, because there is certainly the need for a counterfactual account from the perspective of the leftist faction. For example, some scholars have made presuppositions and given faulty information in their accounts of the events leading to and during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*. Navarro (2009) has attempted to explain the 2006 mobilizations relying heavily on printed media, which have garnered misinformation and consistently aggrandized the role of the National Alliance for Human Rights (NAHR), an organization that he founded and commands.

Although Navarro led the charge against the Arizona ranchers who hunted immigrants crossing their properties along the México-US border, he publicly refused to confront the Minutemen in a more militant confrontational fashion. It was instead participants at a meeting I organized at Pitzer College that wished to confront the Minutemen face-to-face, and with force, violence, and a wide array of tactics. He purported that he and NAHR condoned the militancy of anti-Minutemen protestors. However, he actually argued for an alternative strategy, that of holding a press conference on the *Agua Prieta* corridor of the border to detract the media from covering the Minutemen in Tombstone, AZ. As he explained, he “did not want to be responsible for anything that would happen to the students.” Reports from his delegation confirmed that Maria Anna González from NAHR, who sided with the Pitzer meeting participants

that night, actually militantly confronted the Minutemen at Tombstone when they met for the first time on April 1st, 2005. Because Navarro and NAHR refused to confront the Minutemen in Arizona, we created the Southern California Human Rights Network (SCHRN) immediately after the Pitzer meeting to take up the charge, but the group soon began focusing on the Save our State protests in early 2005. We organized the first action at home of the leader of the Minutemen, James Gilchrist, in Aliso Viejo, in Orange County. Navarro again refused to confront the Minutemen in California at an NAHR meeting in February 2005. Amongst an NAHR meeting in San Bernardino, only Raul “Gato” Wilson and I wanted to confront the Minutemen in Campo, CA. Wilson did not attend and Danny Morales and Vicente Rodríguez were the only members of NAHR that participated in the confrontation with the Minutemen in summer of 2005.

Because of the consistent refusal of Navarro and others to confront the Minutemen in Arizona, and then again in California, I organized a conference at UC Riverside in May 2005 to garner participation from the broader immigrant rights community from across the Southland (Navarro, 2009). While Navarro (2009) cited the media for reporting “...on the incipient organizing efforts of James Gilchrist” and Chris Simcox, who were leaders of the Minutemen, he failed to acknowledge that it was a group of us from UC Riverside that discovered the Minutemen. On March 18th, 2005, we exposed Gilchrist to his neighbors and the press for the first time at his home (see chapter 6). To Navarro’s credit, he does claim to have “disengaged” from his “leadership role” in the anti-Minutemen organizing in May 2005 (Navarro, 2009). He unfortunately offered misinformation on the *Gran Marcha* as well.

Navarro (2009), like the aforementioned researchers, described the events of spring 2006 as if there were a united front amongst all factions of the IRM. He identifies Maria Elena Durazo, Nativio López, and others as key members of the March 25th Coalition that led in the organizing efforts of the “Great March.” Navarro also claimed that SEIU assisted in security, and that there was funding support from labor unions. Invited by Javier Rodríguez, López did not assist the Coalition in organizing the *Gran Marcha* but came in only two days before the march. Although Durazo did participate in the march program, she along with the SEIU and other labor organizations never assisted with staff, members, security, or funding for the *Gran Marcha*, despite our having invited them into the Coalition since early January 2006.

In a February 2006 conference, Navarro (2009) asserted that conferees agreed on a march date, which was March 10th, 2006, writing, “...on March 10th, honoring the call for a massive mobilization for this date as agreed at the February Riverside summit, Emma Lozano, and Julie Santos from *Coalicion Sin Fronteras*, made political history” (Navarro, 2009: 325). To my knowledge, other than the march in Chicago, Illinois, initiated by Lozano, no other marches occurred on March 10th, 2006. Following less attended ones in Atlanta, GA, Detroit, MI, Philadelphia, PA, and Trenton, NJ, etc., the Chicago march signaled the first megamarch of spring 2006, but certainly not the first. Like other research, Navarro’s (2009) account of the 2006 mobilizations could have been better informed if he would have made the effort and reached out to interview and or converse with some of us in the March 25th Coalition. He certainly had access, and others made the effort to give a more accurate and complete version of the march.

González' (2009) provides a Gramscian analysis of the “historic bloc” that emerged through the protests that occurred in the spring of 2006. He claimed that there was a period of “Brown Hegemony” during *La Gran Epoca Primavera*. He also claimed that *Gran Marcha* organizers did not know how many participants to expect on the 25th, but probably estimated 5,000 individuals based on the permit taken out for the *marcha*. In fact, there were “in kind” donations given to us in the Coalition by way of the Mayor’s office for port-o-potties and extra LAPD security in the final stretch of the organizing campaign because organizers realized the magnitude of the march they were organizing. However we could not claim “one million individuals,” an estimate that most of us accepted to be quite accurate in the days leading up to the event, or we would have had to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover the expenses demanded by City Hall, and we only had raised \$5,000. The relationship between the Rodríguez brothers, who eventually came in to assist the Coalition with the logistics, and their longtime friend Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, proved to be quite valuable in the logistical planning. Other scholars made similar claims in terms of the components of media outreach.

Reyes (2008) posited that “three factors in particular proved critical to the success of the movement: the Spanish language media, the World Wide Web, and the use of text-messages” (2). I agree that the organizational success of the *Gran Marcha* was largely due to the dominant role of Spanish-language media as argued by Reyes. However, the other two factors played a questionable role at best in mobilizing support for the march. Most of us in the Coalition did not use texting as a form of outreach, although some youth may have done so. Reyes suggested that the Coalition’s website was used to do

outreach for the *Gran Marcha*. However, the website did not go up until after the *Gran Marcha*. We did use many email list-serves and googlegroup tactics, as interviews with the core organizers of the *Gran Marcha* would have been very helpful in informing the study undertaken by Reyes (2008). Other scholars did make that effort. Robinson & Santos, (2007) interviewed Javier Rodríguez and I on the history of the IRM and our participation in the 2006 mobilizations, González (2006), and Kozameh (2006) both interviewed me on my participation in the mobilizing efforts during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*.

The current research on the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement, specifically its organizational infrastructure, and the leadership's historical experiences is based on both participant observation and in-depth interviews with key activists. While the above authors have missed the mark on some historical and or organizational facts, they have rightfully brought academic attention to the Immigrant Rights Movement among scholars of social movements and Latino studies. My research helps to shed light on the ideological and political divisions within the IRM and movement leaders' strategic decisions to the development of the IRM. There is a rich history of immigrant rights advocacy in Los Angeles that is examined in this study, and in terms of the beginning of the contemporary IRM, it was not all amiable. Regrettably, there were periods during which *Mexicanos* were pitted against each other, some proimmigrant, others antiimmigrant. In the late 1960s, this hot button issue came to loggerheads and the contemporary IRM was born.

Antiimmigrant Labor Activists: An Injury to One is an Injury to All

By the late 1960s, César Chávez and other United Farmworkers (UFW) leaders and much of the local labor movement had become an antiimmigrant force in the Chicano community. However, many Chicano civil and labor rights activists rejected their position. In fact, in Los Angeles many urban Chicano activists were separating from the Chicano Movement unaware at the time of the impact they would subsequently have in advocating for the undocumented community and helping to forge a longstanding movement. Chávez fought to disassociate himself from any leftist leaning organization and many individuals in the Chicano movement noted that he purged radical leftists from the UFW (Pulido, 2007). Since then, the UFW and its allies have adhered to a moderate position on immigration issues, a position that needs to be further explored in order to better understand the historical background of the contemporary immigrant rights struggle. As outlined in chapter six, that moderate line almost undermined the massive *Gran Marcha 2006* in Los Angeles that put the final nails in the coffin that served to bury HR4437.

Though few in the Immigrant Rights Movement wish to discuss it, much less relive this dark period of Chicano history, many activists within the Chicano Movement and the Immigrant Rights Movement are aware of César's antiimmigrant position. Chavez was torn between protecting the jobs of Chicano farmworkers and going against a growing number of other Chicano activists that were protecting the undocumented community's livelihood. Addressing the Subcommittee on Labor of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare in DC, he stated,

...potential competition appears almost unlimited as thousands upon thousands of green carders pour across the border during peak harvest seasons. These are people who, though lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence, have not now, and probably never had, any bona fide intention of making the United States of America their permanent home. They come here to earn American dollars to spend in México where the cost of living is lower. They are natural economic rivals of those who become American citizens or who otherwise decide to stake out their future in this country.²⁰

In the same breath he further argued that,

In abolishing the *Bracero Program*, Congress has but scotched the snake, not killed it. The program lives on in the annual parade of thousands of illegal and green carders across the United States-México border to work in our fields. To achieve law and order in any phase of human activity, legislators must pay heed to other laws not made by man, one of which is the economic law of supply and demand. We are asking Congress to pay heed to this law in the light of some hard facts about farm labor supply along our southern border. Otherwise, extension of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 coverage to farmworkers in that part of the country will not produce much law and order.²¹

Although coming close to openly advocating for the sealing of the border to northbound Mexicans, like other traditional Chicano organizations since the 50s, Chavéz demanded employer sanctions. He pleaded,

“What we ask is some way to keep the *illegals* and *greencarders* from breaking strikes; some civil remedy against growers who employ behind our picketlines those who have entered the US illegally, and, likewise those *greencarders* who have not permanently moved their residence and domicile to the US.”²²

The antiimmigrant stance of César Chávez and his allies, which included the UFW and AFL-CIO—a vociferous proponent of deportations (Rodríguez, 1977)—and other early Chicano nongovernmental national organizations such as LULAC, National *Concilio de la Raza* has also been part of the dark history of Latinos in the Southwest. It should be

²⁰ Cesar Chavez, Director of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, before the Subcommittee on Labor of The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, April 16th, 1969.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

noted that the present analysis is intended to point to contradictions between the antiimmigrant and proimmigrant forces that led to the emergence of proimmigrant organizations in the 1960s, not to undermine the hard work, dedication, and endless hours of organizing in the fields, which led to improved labor conditions for countless Latino workers.

Two Trajectories and Two Movements

Chicano authors have clearly documented the period between the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the onset of the formal Chicano Movement in various seminal compositions (Acuña, 1981; McWilliams, 1948; Mirandé, 1985, 1987). While it is necessary to recognize the long history of struggle between so-called *bandidos* and *rinches* along the México-US border that has morphed into the “war on the border,” this study focuses on the struggle for immigrant rights in Los Angeles from 1968 to 2006. This analysis considers the period immediately leading up to the 1970s as critical to the formalization of the Immigrant Rights Movement.

Like the Chicano Movement, the Immigrant Rights Movement has its origins in the Mexican American War, and most specifically the annexation of half of México’s territory to the US under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2nd, 1848. The Chicano Movement came about after Mexicans who stayed in the US and became US citizens fought for their rights in the ensuing decades, which culminated in the formalization of the Mexican American Movement during the 20th century, crystallizing in the 1960s around identity, labor, territory, violence and other *Chicano*-related rural and urban struggles.

On the other hand, the Immigrant Rights Movement spawned because of the politicization of the México-US border. *Mexicanos* and other *Latinamericanos* immediately faced forces preventing “unauthorized” entry into the US. Despite their being the same people, they have followed two distinct trajectories that have had consequential negative ramifications in the present era and which I argue prompted the initiation of the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement and set the stage for the major cleavages in the struggle for progressive and comprehensive immigration reform.

It is necessary then to begin to put the first insurgency against employer sanctions into context and show how *Chicano* Movement icon César Chávez and the United Farm Workers divided the *Mexicano* community further by espousing an anti-Mexican immigrant stance. It was essentially an antiimmigrant position that played right into the hands of California’s nativists inside and outside of the California legislature. It thus exacerbated the antiimmigrant discrimination and racism in the US labor movement and the myopic nationalist vision of the Chicano Movement. The ironic and unforeseen consequence, however, was that this anti-*Mexicano* position prompted many *Chicano* activists to forge the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement. As such, socioculturally, and sociopolitically, by the late 1960s, the conditions were ripe for the upsurge of a new movement concentrating particularly on immigrant rights, and enough interest was mustered in Los Angeles to extend the movement beyond the parameters of the Chicano Movement, especially because of the antiimmigrant position taken up by César Chávez and many unions. And the immigrant rights activists that were streaming out of the Chicano Movement because of its basic anti-*Mexicano* position, began

organizing in the community under the mantra, *Despierta Chicano Defende Tu Hermano!*²³ It marked the birth of a new movement that focused on fighting for the rights of undocumented workers in the US that is outlined in the ensuing chapters.

²³ Wake up Chicano (the US-born *Mexicano*), Defend Your Brother (the México-born *Mexicano*)!

PART II: CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN LA

Most organizations that have comprised the venerated struggle for immigrants' rights in the US have historically been progressive in nature, although some have been moderate and a few even conservative in nature. The resource mobilization literature has argued that it is typically when established organizations, coalitions, and movements in general lend themselves to struggle by making available resources, that insurgency is possible. However, the reality is that in their long history of struggling for immigrant workers, organizations had to do a whole lot with preciously few resources. This continues to be the trend among the various factions and organizations that comprise the leftist immigrant rights community in Los Angeles, made up of the radical and traditional trends of the IRM in LA.

Meier and Rivéra (1972) posited that early Mexican American organizations were local and regional but much has changed since then in terms of the growth of organizations that have purported to protect the interests of *Mexicanos*. What has remained static is that the diversity of goals and philosophies have virtually remained the same, some organizations have survived for decades still advocating for total assimilation into American society, while others with more "radical" philosophies and missions still work toward the retention of *Mexicano* identity, practices, and goals. Moreover, some organizations from both factions have comingled their goals, philosophies, and even resources to some degree under certain conditions, even though they are typically contradictory at other times. According to Meier and Rivéra (1972), most organizations

seem to occupy a central position between the opposite ends of the continuum, and because most are moderate in their approach, their goal is usually to work within the existing system. What is clear among organizations in the US that cater to the *Mexicano* and *Mexicoamericano* communities, is that their economic and social needs typically lead to their developing and furnishing, in lesser measure, mutual aid and security in a hostile environment (Meier & Rivéra, 1972).

Immigration has been a hot button issue for most of the 20th century and all indications are that it will remain one in the 21st century, especially where the geopolitical relationship and immigration between México and the US is concerned. Although the immigration question has not particularly been a popular rallying call from which US-born *Mexicanos* organized in the early 20th century, they nevertheless organized around community-based political and social issues that sometimes affected immigrants living in their communities. For the most part, the ideological missions and goals of Mexican American organizations was and continues to be the integration of US-born *Mexicanos* into the broader social, political, and economic structure of the US.

This chapter outlines the ideological frameworks from which early Latino-serving organizations were organized and maintained. Also considered are their goals and missions, and for some, the key individuals that played a role in their development, including Bert Corona a key figure whose helped to shape the political and social reality of his time, which was instrumental in the rise and development of the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles and beyond. This chapter draws from his autobiography and from historical accounts of fellow immigrant rights activists in Los

Angeles that worked shoulder to shoulder with him at some point between the early 20th century and early 21st century. One cannot accurately assess Corona's impact on the movement without examining the organizations in which he played a vital role. To understand fully the vibrant yet controversial history of the IRM, it is crucial to examine first the forerunners and organizations that served to establish, promote and further the struggle for immigrant rights. Corona, like many of his progressive contemporaries, organized in the early years of the labor movement, while paying especially close attention to the plight of the Mexican immigrant worker.

Immigrant Rights Trailblazers

Muñoz (1989) contended Ernesto Galarza spoke out in defense of immigrant workers at Stanford University in 1929, which may have served as a precursor to the broader movement. There were also other immigrant rights efforts being undertaken at the turn of the century in New York City by Grace Abbott and the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born advocating for ethnic white immigrants, and other efforts across the Southwest to protect the rights of Mexican immigrant laborers. These latter efforts were undertaken by Latina leadership in the Labor Movement such as Texan Lucy Gonzáles Parsons, a cofounder of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); Emma Tenayuca, another Texan from San Antonio who reached national prominence for spearheading a local pecan-shelling worker strike in 1938; Josefina Fiero de Bright, a young and bright anarchist from Los Angeles, who worked the fields of the San Joaquin Valle before graduating from UCLA; and Luisa Moreno, a Guatemalan who organized on the East Coast for the AFL-CIO but was most notable for her efforts in the Southwest

with the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), the most progressive union of the day (Gonzales, 1999). Another icon of the Immigrant Rights Movement is Chole Alatorre²⁴ who should be recognized for the decades she fought against the rise of nativism after the 1965 Immigration Act, and for cofounding the organization, *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma Hermandad General de Trabajadores*, that together with its sister organization, *La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores*, created “...the progressive template for the protection of the foreign-born” (Acuña, 1994: 254).

El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Español (1938)

According to Gonzales (1999), Fiero de Bright and Moreno were instrumental in early civil rights organizing for *Mexicanos*. Their most notable contribution was establishing *El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Español* on December 4th, 1938, in Los Angeles. The organization was Moreno’s “brainchild,” and Fiero de Bright served as its executive secretary over its short three-year lifespan. Even though it had a reformist vision, its brief existence could be attributed to its perceived “political radicalism” considered too extreme for even *Mexicanos*, and the onset of the war, when workers were being called upon to work together for the “common good,” which effectively countered complaints and dissatisfaction among workers (Gonzales, 1999).

During the late 1930s, *Mexicanos* in Southern California had also commenced labor organizing as part of *El Congreso*’s objective. Immigration legislation policies at

²⁴ Interviewee Chole Alatorre, longtime immigrant rights and labor activist since the 1930s. She is currently a director emeritus for the San Fernando Valley La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana office, and also enjoying her retirement in Southern California.

this time did not overtly target Mexican labor in the US. However, the treatment they endured at the hands of the ruling class became unbearable. According to Bert Corona, then a labor organizer with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the “...workplace was the main site of struggle,” and working toward extending protection and organization to *Mexicano* and other Latino undocumented workers was the only way through which justice was attainable for them (García, 1994).

This organization became very important in the early immigrant rights struggle because of the participation of Corona, and the support of the Mexican American and Spanish-speaking Leftists in Los Angeles, which despite being red baited by the Congressional House of Un-American Activities Committee in Washington DC, successfully organized a national convention of *El Congreso* in Los Angeles. Furthermore, despite the *Congreso* eschewing electoral politics, it did serve as a leadership training ground for the many men and women it attracted, especially for Corona, who went on to champion immigrant rights until his untimely death in 2001. *El Congreso* was to flex its nominal muscle within and against the labor movement, which chose not to focus on the plight of immigrant laborers of color. In other organizations Bert Corona soon learned about the importance and potential the electoral process could have in terms of fighting the good fight; and in the end, incorporated both labor rights, and political participation, in his immigrant-serving organization *La Hermandad Mexicana* that is still in existence today.

Community Service Organization (1947)

The first meeting of the Community Service Organization (CSO) was called by Eduardo Roybal in 1947, when he decided to try Latino politics by running for Los Angeles City Council after a *Raza* leader had been elected to city council in Chino, California, in 1946. This generated a flurry of political activism amongst likeminded *Raza* (Steiner, 1970). Roybal lost that round but CSO was born because his campaign committee decided it would stay unified after the election. After World War II, Roybal ran again using CSO as a “political lever,” and won. Nevertheless, the organization stagnated with frustration after twenty years of holding to its “innovative yet cautious course, sometimes showing boldness, but always tempering it with politeness, which was frequently ridiculed by *Raza* activists” (Steiner, 1970). The critique of the CSO was that without broader involvement in the *barrios* that included the working and under classes, scrutiny against it would come again, and it did. Steiner for example cited a young *Mexicano* leader who stated, “In California they put a ceiling on *La Raza*... You can elect so many, no more. You can earn so much, no more” (1970: 181). Essentially, CSO’s membership plummeted in the 60s from 12,000 in 1960 to 4,000 in 1968.

Bert Corona uneasily worked within the framework of CSO because its goal was to undermine the “reds” from growing a base in the *barrios*. He did not agree with the CSO leadership’s “redbaiting tactics.” Because Corona organized for the CSO in Northern California, he had little contact with CSO’s chieftain, Fred Alinsky, and with its other leaders Fred Ross or César Chávez—who was organizing across the state around issues of “adequate and affordable housing, sanitation, and police brutality.” Corona

enjoyed organizing around the issues of “...defending the rights of the Spanish-speakers, advocating for redress of their grievances, and of seeking to bring them into the mainstream of American life, especially through voting” (García, 1994: 164). But he refused to embrace Alinsky’s redbaiting tactic of threatening potential contributors that if CSO did not organize in their communities the “commies” would. He also did not agree with Alinsky’s frequent redbaiting in the media, especially because he was clearly referencing Mexicans in the Communist Party, particularly the *Asociación Nacional México-Americana* (García, 1994). Alinsky often stated,

“We are not a communist organization...we know all about the commies, and we’re not in agreement with them. They don’t fool us one bit. We’re out here to organize the Spanish-speaking in conjunction with the Catholic Church. Don’t for one minute think that we sympathize with the reds in any way, shape, or form. We’re accused of being reds, but we’re not. We’re against the reds” (García, 1994: 164).

Steiner (1970) reported that the Community Service Organization (CSO) was a “middle class” *Raza*—serving agency founded in the optimistic late 40s “...to guard and further [its] democratic rights: to become more aware of [its] responsibilities as citizens; to better discharge [its] civic duty” (179). In the tense summer of 1968, CSO planted 168 trees in East LA, and called the *proyecto*, leafy “Green Power!” Its middle class efforts are traceable to its membership. One CSO member claimed if anyone wanted “...to go to the political side, there is the Mexican American Political Association...and those other groups... [another member claimed] our members are the older people...The CSO doesn’t have the people of the streets. [While a Brown Beret posited] “The CSO is a middle class bag...It’s OK, but it’s too *Malinche*” (Steiner, 1970: 181).

Corona held that CSO was a successful social movement organization but unlike the *Congreso* it did not receive outside funding or have paid organizers, CSO was able to expand because of the funding it received from Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), especially in its earlier years (García, 1994). Although both struggled against racism and injustice *El Congreso* had a more thorough commitment to grassroots control and organization, while CSO's commitment to grassroots democracy rested exclusively in the hands of Chávez and Ross (García, 1994). According to Corona, he also felt "The real inheritor of *El Congreso*'s more militant and left tradition was not CSO, but ANMA, the *Asociación Nacional México-Americana*" (García, 1994: 168). Corona understood and embraced the social missions and political goals of CSO, but concomitantly worked in other organizations, as did Herman Gallegos, Jimmy Delgadillo, and another key organizer in CSO from the Inland Empire, Ignacio López, who later became instrumental in the expansion of the Mexican American Political Association.

While CSO still exists today, its membership is modest when compared to its earlier years. Nonetheless, in Los Angeles during the Proposition 187 struggle in California, and during the spring 2006 mobilizations, it organized its membership for demonstrations. It also continues to work in the community offering English and citizenship courses to the East Los Angeles community.²⁵ All the same, and to its credit, CSO's electoral accomplishments have earned it much respect over the years.

²⁵ Interviewee Carlos Montes, CSO member, and longtime Chicano activist from Los Angeles.

Asociación Nacional México-Americana (1949)

During the early 20th century, the government by way of Mexican consulates used to stifle the organizing efforts of *Mexicanos* in the Southwest. Therefore, by the 1940s, and only after some limited gains made for better wages and working conditions, the hopes and aspirations of *Mexicano* workers continued to be stifled by repressive and exploitative conditions and extensive discrimination in the workplace (Meier & Rivéra, 1972). To begin confronting these repressive forces, Bert Corona recalled that the *Asociación Nacional México-Americana* (ANMA) was formed by a group of “...*Mexicanos* who were very deeply committed to their communities and to achieving, full rights and better conditions for the Spanish-speaking workers and their families (García, 1994: 169). Although Corona was clearly a labor-oriented activist, his labor activism overlapped with immigrant rights with respect to his advocating primarily for Mexican immigrant laborers in the Southwest, especially in a period when other Latino-oriented organizations were focused on issues relevant to US-born *Mexicanos*.

During its history, the labor groups with which Corona had ties, the Longshoremen’s Union, the Furniture Workers, UCAPAWA, and its chief patron, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers— were recognized simply as Mine Mill (García, 1994) supported ANMA fully. The Mexican workers of Mine Mill stayed active defending the civil rights and culture of *Mexicanos* after it ANMA founded at a national Mine Mill convention in Phoenix in 1949. Its headquarters was in Denver, where the main Mine Mill office was located.

According to Corona, he was introduced first to the ANMA struggle in Northern California, when the organization began to support the strikes of the *braceros*. Although working within CSO, Corona attracted and organized quite a variety of members, mostly Mexican and Central American *braceros* who had abandoned the fields, skipping out on their contracts and who as undocumented workers had moved into urban *barrios* (García, 1994).

Through ANMA's strong alliances with unions, it was able to earn acceptance from the labor movement, which viewed it as a "friendly organization," especially because of the widely venerated *Salt of the Earth Strike* in southern New Mexico among Mine Mill workers, which was later immortalized in the classic film of the same name. The strike captured the attention not only of progressives in the labor movement but also of the Mexican community because of the *Mexicano* workers and their families that enabled its success (García, 1994).

On behalf of Mine Mill, Corona attended a Mexico City conference and garnered support for the lead actress in the film, Rosaura Revueltas, who had been incarcerated in *El Paso* and subsequently deported by INS before finishing filming because of an expired visa. Delegates from all over Latin America were very sympathetic with the struggle but the most sympathetic were the array of Mexican artists that also attended, which included Diego Rivéra and Frida Kahlo, among numerous others. Rivéra and Revuelta's brother José, according to Corona, appealed to university students and the Mexican working class to protest her detention, this appeal transpired into a "picket line of five or six thousand

people” at the US embassy. Because of this swelling fury over Revueltas’ detention, the day after the action *in* México City she was released and repatriated (García, 1994).

Riviera showed a great interest in the struggle for equal justice and civil rights as they pertained to the law for *Mexicanos* in the US and global peace but was most concerned about the US’ effort to expand and maintain hegemony within Latin America and Asia. As the 1950s continued so did the pressure on *Mexicanos* by the *migra*, especially in Southern California. During this period, Latino immigrants, mostly *Mexicanos* as “commuter” labor, were typically allowed to freely cross the Mexico-US border in their pursuit of agricultural work. At other times they were restricted (González Baker, 1990) or were even expelled en masse—as in the 30s when deportations and repatriations promptly occurred (Díaz, forthcoming) once the *migra* had been handsomely funded (García, 1994).

Corona reported that based on the INS’ “friendly” opportunity for *braceros* to regularize their expired labor contracts, many who complied received their *permisos*. Corona was well aware that it was a ploy by the INS to gather intelligence, and ANMA refused to endorse this action, while CSO “...bought this INS policy at face value and helped the undocumented to register with the INS (García, 1994: 183). The INS then knew exactly where they lived, which made it very easy for it to round up an estimated over one million *Mexicano* laborers in 1954, and deport them after sending them “baggage letters” thirty days prior (García, 1994). According to Corona, this was the onset of “Operation Wetback,” a series of deportations that lasted for years, and named after *Mexicanos* that worked in the US without documents, or wetbacks, “...a pejorative

term suggesting aliens who were in the country sponging off its riches...[but were actually] working [here] productively” (García, 1994: 182), and had merely crossed the border in search of work because of the high unemployment in Mexico, and were unable to enroll in the *Bracero* Program.

It becomes clear by this period that Corona’s vision went beyond viewing *Mexicanos* as workers. He started considering them community partners, as legitimate members of society in the sense that labor issues were only part of their reality. Despite the terror transmitted by the *migra* raids, it failed to stop the course of *Mexicanos* into the US. The number of undocumented workers surged. In contrast to the Communist Party, and other middle class Mexican American organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens, that viewed the “wetbacks” as scabs, or “scroungers,” that took jobs away from US workers, Corona’s position was that ANMA pledged to help them because they were “workers who had to be helped” (García, 1994).

During these periods, Corona essentially pursued and methodologically trained in a much more progressive and or leftist tradition in terms of the electoral process, civil and labor rights issues. What set Corona apart from other *Mexicano* activists was that he saw beyond the separatism and red baiting and looked to package these processes in a palatable manner, which others would respond to in advocating for US-born *Mexicanos*. He also sensed the imminent need to organize undocumented individuals in the *barrios* that had limited access to their own political and social development. This vision was unpopular among Mexican American-oriented organizations, but Corona where and when possible would bridge these goals, which later became evident in the mission and goals of

the following three organizations in which he played a vital part, el *Centro de Acción Social Autónoma*, *La Hermandad Mexicana*, and the Mexican American Political Association.

Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born (1950)

Despite the national resistance of the New Mexico-based pro-Mexican, *La Asociación Nacional México-Americana*, the 1950 and 1952 McCarran Acts were responsible for union-busting and heightened intimidation of the *Mexicano* community. According to The Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born in 1954: it defended 7 individuals in the US for over 7 years, 3 in the US for over 20 years, and 3 for more than 30 years in the US, 17 with US-born children and grandchildren, and 22 of these were trade unionists (Acuña, 1988). Acuña asserted that human rights violations were rampant under the shotgun approach of these two laws. Many activists from the proimmigrant group, the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born—an affiliate of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born—feared incarceration because of its challenging the two antforeigner and subversive acts, especially after it was placed on the Title I subversive list by the Subversive Activities Control Board (Acuña, 1988).

La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores (1951)

La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores founded in 1951 by a former member of *El Congreso*, Felipe Ursquiano, and his brother Albert, in San Diego to advocate for the labor and legal rights of undocumented workers, mostly *bracero* railroaders. Because Humberto “Bert” Corona espoused *La Hermandades*’ mission

dedicated to the plight of marginalized undocumented workers. In 1968, he along with *compañera* Soledad “Chóle” Alatorre opened an office in Los Angeles, to organize undocumented Mexican workers, and assist them in acquiring their citizenship, knowing their rights in the detention and deportation process, and their right under the Fifth Amendment to refuse to provide any information that would incriminate them. They titled the new Los Angeles branch of the organization, *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* (LHMN), which by 1972 had amassed several thousand members, and was servicing approximately 60,000 immigrants. Corona admired the multifaceted mission of the organization, which was partly *mutualista*,²⁶ and the fact that it imparted social and legal services. However, it still concentrated on organizing immigrant Mexican workers at a time that most unions eschewed them from enjoining their ranks, assuming that they were “unorganizable” (Pulido, 2007).

In Corona’s eyes however, “...one of the most important contributions *La Hermandad* has made has been to prove to the world, to employers, and to unions that immigrant workers are among the most organizable, most militant, and most prouion members of the workforce” (García, 1994: 296). Union members divulged to Corona that their interest in organizing undocumented workers was lacking. When the Immigration Naturalization Service would threaten this group of workers with

²⁶ *Mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies, emerged throughout the Southwest and Midwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Organized by workers and the middle class, *mutualistas* linked their members to Mexico and other Mexicans and helped them combat racial discrimination, while representing their interest and concerns vis-à-vis US society. These groups originated in Mexico and Latin America and were brought to the US by immigrant workers to help them integrate into society. Voluntarily formed, they offered protection for members who incurred debts because of illness or old age and helped the survivors of affiliates who died. *Mutualistas* varied in ideology, with some being more radical than others. Among their ranks were anarchists, criticized by socialists who believed that mutual aid societies relieved capitalists of their obligation to pay for the social costs of production.

deportation, they would run like “quail” (Pulido, 2006). Many union organizers also rarely spoke Spanish, even US-born Latino organizers, but many among LHMN’s membership could. So according to Corona “[He and *Hermandad* members] talked to the workers outside the plants in the mornings and in the afternoons... members also worked inside some of the plants, and they organized internally” (García, 1994: 296).

The primary reason for *Hermandad*’s success in organizing undocumented workers in electrical, plastic, and auto parts plants was that most of the workers trusted the organization rather than the regular union organizers (García, 1994). The unions that benefited from *Hermandad*’s efforts were the Teamsters, the National Maritime Union, the UAW, and the Longshoremen’s Union, which put Corona and Alatorre on their payroll, and in some cases, the mostly undocumented workers had no choice but to strike. Corona pointed out “The employers initially thought that they could break the strikes because most of the workers were undocumented. But they found out different... [Even] the threat of the INS didn’t scare the people once they were united” (García, 1994: 297). Furthermore, because of many undocumented workers’ “conviction and courage,” they unionized because they were fully aware of *La Hermandades* history of defending immigrants against deportation; they trusted that if the employers brought in the INS, the organization would defend them, an arrangement that drew many new members into its fold (García, 1994; Pulido, 2007).

Angelina Corona, Bert’s widow, directs *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, which still exists today. Her office in San Fernando Valley opened in 1985, and soon began to offer the English and citizenship classes needed for undocumented individuals

to attain their citizenship. When *La Hermandad* organizers offered the opportunity to Angelina to offer English instruction at the San Fernando Valley office in the following years, she accepted and has been there ever since.

Angelina Corona reported that after the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the Bert Corona Leadership Institute in Washington DC, which functioned as part of *La Hermandad* was established. Because of Bert's dedication to working within the electoral process and lobbying directly to the congressional representatives, he had to communicate with them face to face. She further stated, "We would take groups of members and students to DC and teach them how to speak to their congressmen. We would empower them and show them that they could be a part of their struggle...that they could influence the decisions being made."²⁷ According to Angelina Corona, this was an important work of *La Hermandad*, to teach the members about politics and to be a part of the political process.

The institute carries on in this tradition, training high school students and their parents on leadership and being part of the political process. By the early 1990s, the institute was unsustainable for *La Hermandades* leadership; it was relinquished to the individuals that operate it now after having established its own nonprofit status. The leadership institute operates today in the tradition of Bert Corona's attitude of incorporating a variety of tactics of political participation into the broader immigrant struggle. Corona also bought a house near the Capitol for him and the members he took to DC to lobby around issues of immigration. Angelina Corona noted, "I think that in

²⁷ Interviewee Angelina Corona, director of La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional in Pacoima, CA, and widow of Bert Corona.

CASA the activists were really radical during that period, real “red” and Marxist. Bert was also, but he was also a realist. *La Hermandad*’s mission was to bring immigrants together and empower them to participate as the source of their own changes.”²⁸

When *La Hermandad* was in full swing after the Immigration Reform and Control Act struggle in the mid 1980s, the government had given the organization large sums of money to embark upon English and citizenship classes. There were allegations of corruption amongst staff in the offices; although no charges of misconduct were filed, the stress experienced behind the allegations caused irreparable rifts amongst management. Nativo López, the director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*’s office in Orange County, and Chóle Alatorre, the most recent director of the Pacoima, California, office, buckled under pressure, unfortunately and mutually left their posts in that organization, and founded *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* in the late 1990s. The main office is still located in Santa Ana, California. This second faction of *La Hermandad* has ebbed and flowed over the years but has remained intact and has played a vital role under the leadership of Nativo López in the organizing of undocumented immigrant workers in Southern California.

A third faction, *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* has emerged in its short history. *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*, truly lives up to its title. In its nascent stage, LHMT 2005 its primary director, Alicia Flóres, recognized the importance of engaging in the confrontation against the minutemen when they came to California to “patrol” the border. The organization mobilized a busload of its early membership to a

²⁸ Ibid.

marcha and border confrontation with the antiimmigrant group in Calexico on Mexican Independence Day, some of which included volunteers from its sponsor office of LHMN in Panorama City, directed by Gloria Saucedo. LHMT was the only traditional immigrant serving organization from Los Angeles that joined the campaign to halt the Minutemen along the border during this period.

When the media effort to warn potential border crossers not to cross during the three weeks the Minutemen planned to be present began to take effect, encampments began to appear on the Mexican side, which included the east *Tecate* to *Jacumba* corridor. Under the direction of Rafael Hernández from *Angeles del Desierto*, a rescue mission organization, Gloria Saucedo, Alicia Flóres, and Angela Sambrano, then director of CARECEN, and myself, along with UC Riverside and San Diego City College students under the direction of English and Chicano Studies Professor, Elva Salinas, began to organize food and water drives to take to potential border crossers. LHMT members at the Panorama City and Oxnard offices collected a large quantity of the donations.

Soon after the arrest and deportation of Chicago immigrant rights activist, Elvira Arellano, in Los Angeles in the summer of 2007, Alicia Flóres of LHMT, and Gloria Saucedo of LHMN, and other *La Hermandad* volunteers and directors, founded *La Casa de Refugio de Elvira Arellano*, in Tijuana BC. When Arellano was deported to Tijuana she had no one to immediately help her except Gloria's lawyer brother Felipe, and his family, both of which agreed to take her in until she had a place prepared in Michoacán, México, to which she could travel, and until she was able to see her son again. The

experience prompted the founders of the *Casa* to think through the plight of the many deportees in general, and women and children in particular, who are left merely to fend for themselves in Tijuana, sometimes in the middle of the night and at risk of being mugged for the few dollars, they may have.

Some deportees are cast off shoeless, without outerwear in the cold, penniless, and or with cellphones void international service, or none at all. Organized by San Diegan immigrant rights activist Michaela Saucedo, *Casa de Refugio* staff actively seeks potential *Casa* temporary residents that are deported by ICE. For the most part, they seek women and children to provide for them victuals and boarding until they are able to begin fending for themselves, or they are picked up after making contact with family members. The *Casa* staff has also addressed the issue of Tijuana law enforcement accosting recent deportees for their money and personals, there is an understanding amongst *Casa* staff and the local authorities that these individuals are already at a clear disadvantage, therefore deserve to be protected not violated any further.

Mexican American Political Association (1959)

The Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) was founded mostly by *Mexicano* Democrats that sought to organize a Southwestern political organization but issues of terminology that are still provincially evident today dampened the efforts at one of the first meetings in Texas in 1958. Members outside of California embraced “Hispanic,” while Californians mostly embraced the term “Latino.” In addition, considered and debated were the terms “Spanish-speaking” and “Latin American.” Corona who was among the majority of Californians who had decided to continue the

effort of organizing a Mexican-oriented national political group, therefore thought the best term was “Mexican American” to be clearly identified, and because of previous organizing experience, the group felt that if *Mexicanos* identified with the name, they would participate (García, 1994). After much debate, the group concluded that *Mexicanos* had to organize themselves before they could offer support to other marginalized Latino groups, and left the criteria to join based on race, ethnicity, and political affiliation, open.

The group of 150 delegates from across California—many former affiliates of CSO, ANMA, and *El Congreso*—met in Fresno in 1960. Some participants included Frank Paz, Fred Castro, Julio Castelan, Herman Gallegos, Ed Quevedo, Nacho López, and Lucio Bernabe, and many women that worked closely with the Democratic Party like Mary Soto from East LA, and Hortencia Solis from Bakersfield, but felt the Party was not responding to the needs of *Mexicanas* and their communities (García, 1994). They represented a wide array of middle class professionals from the public and private sectors including lawyers, engineers, and trade unionists. Their mission was “...dedicated to the constitutional and democratic principle of political freedom and representation for the Mexican and Hispanic people of the United States of America. Only by penetrating the system can we move our issues to the top of the agenda. That is why Latinos and Latinas across the country must claim a place in the political arena” (MAPA, 2009)

After much debate delegates also agreed, that MAPA would involve itself in electoral politics as an “independent political organization,” not solely civil rights, like CSO, ANMA, and *El Congreso*. The compromise was that although the Democratic

Party had treated *Mexicanos* arrogantly in past elections, it was still the liberal choice and that there would have to be collaboration for the time being. From Corona's observation, this was especially important because the more progressives among the group felt that,

...it was more important to further the concept of unifying Mexican Americans and to establish a vehicle for political involvement...instead of [having] a free for all and possibly winding up with no agreement because people were stubborn...the crucial thing was to build an organization as we entered the 1960s. The progressives in the group also felt that] the direction of MAPA would be decided by those of us who had experience organizing in the communities...we could steer MAPA in progressive directions. The purpose behind MAPA was not to build a party or association with an economic ideology but rather to build a party or association that would encourage the fullest participation of Mexicans in political life (García, 1994: 201).

MAPA was an electoral vehicle and protest movement aimed at the Democratic Party for failing to afford *Mexicanos* the opportunity to participate in Party activities, especially because of its failure to support Latino political candidates.

Rodríguez (1977) is critical of these types of efforts by Chicano liberals because they believed they could solve the problem of *Mexicanos* under capitalism, and that their strategy rested on concessions from the ruling class, particularly by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Rodríguez cited a MAPA brochure as a clear example of its moderate political posture which stated, "We have contended since our inception that, with a sound political instrument at our command we would again reenter the political arena and again become a part of the total economic and political life of our country" (66). Rodríguez also claimed that MAPA had mobilized the Chicano vote for the Democratic Party in almost every election since 1960. Its survival is inherent to its symbiotic relationship with the Democratic Party; as long as Mexican American voters

stay embedded in the Democratic Party so will MAPA—with rare, uncharacteristic, and brief political ventures of course.

Although MAPA has been a viable political vehicle within the Mexican American community, its influence within the community has waned sufficiently over the years. In one of its 2003 executive meetings, there were approximately 15 members, some of whom I have never seen again at any immigrant rights struggle event or other organization. In recent years, MAPA began to organize student chapters on university campuses, and has consistently organized annual MAPA student conferences. Over the years, there have been numerous changes in the presidency; immediately following the presidency of Ben Benavidez in 2003, Nativo López has served as its president.

In recent years, MAPA joined the Green Party, but during the height of the Obama campaign, López unabashedly mobilized behind the Democratic Party, along with Armando Navarro and José Calderón in the Inland Empire. The trio pursued the novel effort to form “Obama clubs” in the spirit of the Kennedy and Johnson clubs of the 1960s. Yet, earlier in the election, López predicted McCain would have had huge success amongst Latinos, posting that their voter turnout would exceed Bush’s, and if so he argued “My prediction is that McCain will do very, very well among Latino voters...That spells disaster for a Clinton or Obama candidacy... [McCain is] a compassionate conservative of substance” (Mathews, 2008: 1). His argument was that McCain had been mentioned in Spanish media—over the last eight to 10 years—“tens of thousands of times in favor of immigration reform.” Although not a formal endorsement, under the leadership of López and past presidents, MAPA has worked well within the

framework of both parties. These contradictory words and actions are most likely tied to MAPA's aim to be a bipartisan organism. Historically, however, Republican members have joined and or renounced their membership to MAPA based on statewide political conditions or the change in leadership.

Under the leadership of López, MAPA controversially supported Proposition 77 in 2005, which would have taken the task of redistricting out of the hands of the legislature and into the hands of retired judges (League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, 2005), which with much support from progressive organizations across the state, lost in a resounding manner. However, despite his personal objection to the proposition, it was the failure of MAPA to take a stand against Proposition 8, that would have supported gay marriage that subjected him to intense criticism from Los Angeles progressives in 2008 (Arellano, 2008). It is the last saga that has brought López much off-putting acclaim amongst anti-immigrant critics, however. Despite the legacy of controversies that have plagued López' political activism in Southern California, it appears that the latest charges against him may take their toll.

In the midst of the struggle against the EVerify terminations of Overhill Farms, Long John, and American Apparel workers in Los Angeles, led by López' organizations, and the Southern California Immigration Coalition, four felony charges were filed against him by the Secretary of State and Los Angeles District Attorney, for "...fraudulent voter registration, fraudulent document filing, perjury and fraudulent voting" (Weikel & Grad, 2009: 1). According to the pair of journalists, the offenses carry penalties of up to three years of incarceration; and, "in 1997, the Orange County district attorney opened a

criminal investigation into allegations that a group in which López was a leader registered some clients to vote before they took the oath of citizenship” (2009: 1). In the latter case, no criminal charges were filed, prompting López to then demand an apology from critics. The charges this time around are much more severe and it appears the establishment is seeking bloodletting.

Because López is a longtime immigrant rights activist, the organization has also launched itself into the broader immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles, and most poignantly MAPA has worked with and among both moderate and grassroots sectors of the Movement in Los Angeles at different periods as well. As a consequence in early 2004, López took another controversial stand on immigration reform, surprisingly praising then President George W. Bush in “the spirit of Bert Corona” for his first offer of a guest worker program that would have only allowed guest workers three years to work in the US, then immediately return home. It was odd because it was only weeks after the December 12th, 2003, statewide boycott protesting the inability undocumented immigrants to have driver’s licenses, an event that brought together the traditional grassroots base of the immigrant rights struggle across the state. Although not as successful as the 2006 *Gran Paro Americano*, that statewide boycott certainly laid the groundwork for the infrastructure of the 2006 *Gran Marcha*.

Although MAPA has been visible in recent years, it has not proven to be in as favorable a light as it once was because of the controversies surrounding the organization and its leadership, and bringing about negative attention to the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles. As such, the latest round of events certainly calls into

question democracy within MAPA, specifically in terms of the election of officers, and why López is allowed indefinitely to serve as president.

In sum, MAPA's participation among the grassroots sector of the Movement in Southern California is oftentimes controversial. And, even if López' destiny is to serve time in prison, in his absence the *Movimiento* would certainly have to work harder to replace the luminous debates and or suggestions he brings to the table during organizing meetings, a flair that has dazzled *Movimiento* newbies for years. López has not fully taken the spotlight however, David Bacon, photo journalist and labor and immigrant rights activist from the Bay Area captured López praising Bert Corona for helping found MAPA, and "...work[ing] in the Democratic Party, trying to make it deal with the political aspirations of *Mexicanos* and workers. [Corona] saw that our struggle for immigrant rights and *Mexicano* political power was tied to much larger movements" (Bacon, 2001: 3). This statement exemplifies Corona's internationalist political persuasion, working even in a typically moderate grassroots organization like MAPA. *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma Hermandad General de Trabajadores (1972)*

Because of *La Hermandades* popularity and success, its leadership thought to expand its offices around the greater Los Angeles area. The new chapters were named *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT)*. When the founding pair of immigrant worker activists, Bert Corona, and Soledad "Chole" Alatorre, left the organization in 1974, the organization transformed into a distinct socialist party for *Mexicanos* in the US, by the new leadership; specifically, the immigration service-orientation that the organization once donned was quickly

supplanted by an ideological Marxist Leninist program entrenched in propaganda that sought to indoctrinate social revolution.²⁹ However, in the beginning it had a very different direction, according to a cofounder of CASA, Chole Allatore stated,

“After CASA-MAPA began to organize other organizations...were afraid of us. They would say that we were a communist organization. I would ask myself who are the communists among us, most of us were Catholics...so we called it CASA - *Hermandad General del Trabajadores*, a center for organizing and social action, so we started to see how we could attract the people to come and handle their citizenship process...”³⁰

According to Gomez Quiñones (1990), members that joined CASA were from the United Farm Workers Union (UFW), *Católicos por la Raza*, as did former *Mapistas*.³¹ Dozens of *Casistas* are still active today in Los Angeles in both liberal—moderates—and illiberal organizations—also recognized as the radical wing of the Movement. Some played significant roles in the grassroots led insurgencies against California Proposition 187 in 1994 and against HR4437 in 2006. Its primary tactic of advocating for immigrant workers during this epoch was in direct contradiction to the antiimmigrant sentiment exhibited in state and national immigration legislation, the blatant draconian INS activities in the *barrios*, and most dishonorably the labor movement—specifically the antiimmigrant position embraced by the AFL-CIO and its intimate affiliate, the UFW.

²⁹ Pineda, Raúl. (2009). CASA HGT (collection of documents).
<<http://www.huellasmexicanas.com/libreria/casa-hgt>>. Last modified July 3rd, 2009.

³⁰ Interviewee Chole Alatorre, Longtime labor and immigrant rights activist, Cofounder of CASA and La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores, and until 2008, the director of the San Fernando Valley La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana office.

³¹ MAPA members

In light of the antiimmigrant position of some UFW leaders during the end of the 1960s and early 70s, Chole Alatorre recounted:

César [Chávez] was convinced that to help the undocumented was a triumph given their status, Dolores [Huerta] sometimes did not understand this. For instance, one time she ordered a group of *campesinos* to do a picket line at our *La Hermandad* office, which was not CASA yet, because undocumented workers were breaking their strike and that we should bring them out.³²

When Bert was informed of the picket he instructed her to invite the *piqueteros*³³ into the meeting hall and they complied. In the meantime, according to Alatorre, “Bert called César and he really got infuriated...and when Bert arrived he told [the *piqueteros*] that they were welcome in their house, *La Hermandad Mexicana*, and that it was there to assist them.” Furthermore she stated,

“Bert asked them, which ones among you need help with your papers? Look, a lot of hands went up. Bert asked them, well, why are you protesting us? What are you doing, if you yourselves are also undocumented he asked them? He [further explained to them] they should learn not to get into work that is being done around a struggle.”³⁴

When the situation had subsided, Bert informed the staff and others to prepare the youth to go to San Diego and El Centro to speak to the strikebreakers there. Alatorre added, “Bert told us that this is the work that we must all do...[typically] we always worked like

³² Interviewee Chole Alatorre, Longtime labor and immigrant rights activist, Cofounder of CASA and La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores, and until 2008, the director of the San Fernando Valley La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana office.

³³ Picketers

³⁴ Chole Alatorre

that with César and he with us...the ones that started this issue was Dolores and Pete Velasquez, the treasurer.”³⁵

Recalling his tenure at CASA in the early 1970s, Ramón “Chunky” Sánchez stated “One of the best things I think Bert Corona did was forming that organization, to make [the workers] aware of their rights...when immigration stops [them], to make sure that they didn’t sign the voluntary deportation papers.”³⁶ These papers once signed, make undocumented immigrants immediately deportable, and waive your right to a formal immigration hearing. Since then, if apprehended during a future unauthorized border crossing would make the subsequent charge a felony. Furthermore, he recalled Corona always “...giv[ing] some dynamic speech. They [also] always seemed to bring in someone from a labor union to come in and speak with the workers.”³⁷ Sánchez acknowledged that overall it was about empowering the workers,

...they met on Friday nights in a big auditorium that was packed, sometimes there were so many people that they went down the stairs and out into the parking lot...this was the place that they could come and not be harassed. They felt camaraderie, they felt strength, and they felt unity right there in CASA...A lot of [the members] began to show some pride, some *bolas*, not afraid to stand up and speak their minds.³⁸

Carlos Vellanoweth, another former *Casista*, and current immigrant rights lawyer and activist, reflected on the motivation and empowerment of many Chicanos that joined organizations like CASA during the late 1960s. Vellanoweth stated that “In 1968, we

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Interviewee Chunky Sanchez, a former casista, a current revolutionary musician and Chicano activist.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

had two assassinations, Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4th, and Robert Kennedy on June 6th, only two months later. So 1968 was a very emotional time; we thought that we could change the world, but there were enemies that wanted to stop people that wanted to change the world.”

During this epoch there were conflicts over how the world needed to be changed, excluding the militant rhetoric of Chicano organizations in the struggle for their civil rights, the proposals of José Angel Gutierrez, Reies Tijerina, and Corky Gonzáles, mirrored those of the earlier civil rights groups that preached “accommodation,” and “assimilation” (Gómez Quiñones, 1990). Their cultural nationalism, and their separatist and militant rhetoric was in direct contradiction to their demands, which included better housing, education, social services, and employment opportunities, Chicano studies programs, equal recognition amongst Chicano artists, and electoral equality and representation in the community, etcetera. That is, though attempting to appear radical, their efforts were merely designing “ethnic liberalism.”

Though some *Mexicano* youth were satisfied with this reformist course, other more militant Chicano activists were ready to take it further by fostering the organizational capability to embark upon a political revolution. Pulido (2007) posited that as the Chicano Movement evolved, a growing number of activists were confronting the limits of cultural nationalism, feeling the “...need to adopt more materialist and international politics, thus giving rise to groups like CASA” (117). Though their revolutionary pragmatism made political sense, its call for a unified response to the political conditions made it a much more effective vehicle with which to challenge the

state. According to Vellanoweth CASA's hierarchic structure was geared to reflect the organization's disciplined ideological mission and the membership's dedication to the struggle for immigrant rights,

As you moved up the ranks in the organization you would be considered a *miembro de base*, and after a period of time, when you had committed yourself more to the organization, you became an affiliate, or *afiliado*, and then to the highest level, the highest honor of a membership in CASA was a *militante*, or militant, that was a person that would do anything for the Movement, he would sacrifice his family and all for the Movement. If his own father was sick he would not see him because he would be involved in the Movement, it was kind of a very, very straightjacket, dogmatic way of looking at things but that is the way we developed the organization.³⁹

In its earlier stages, CASA's organizational foci were organizing undocumented workers while assisting them with their immigration adjustment paperwork. This was exhibited in its demands for:

- ✚ Unconditional amnesty
- ✚ To stop the deportations
- ✚ Jobs for all, and the right to organize
- ✚ To end the *Bracero* Program
- ✚ To get the *migra*—out of the factories
- ✚ To overturn the Bakke decision⁴⁰
- ✚ To respect the rights of undocumented people.⁴¹

³⁹ Interviewee Carlos Vellanoweth, longtime immigrant rights activist, former CASA member and current Legal Adviser

⁴⁰ Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, case decided in 1978 by the US Supreme Court in a closely divided decision that race could be one of the factors considered in choosing a diverse student body in university admissions decisions. It also held however, that the use of quotas in such “affirmative action” programs was not permissible; thus UC Davis, medical school had, by maintaining a 16% minority quota, discriminated against Allan Bakke, a white applicant. The legal implications of the decision were clouded by the Court's division. Bakke was rejected twice by the medical school, even though he had a higher grade point average than a number of minority candidates who were admitted. As a result of the decision, Bakke was admitted to the medical school and graduated in 1982.

⁴¹ Laura Pulido. 2007. Black, Brown, Yellow, and Red: Radical Activism in Los Angeles. Box 31, folder 12. CASA Collection. Courtesy Antonio Rodriguez and Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

CASA's demands, in contrast to the aforementioned Chicano activists, were against the ruling class and the status quo, specifically not reforming the system, but tearing the system apart if it meant the means to the end. The *Casista's* demands did not involve making mere concessions, integration, and or assimilation: In others words, worker solidarity across all cultural, racial, and class lines. At the pinnacle of its tenure, it was able to mobilize its base against one of the first antiimmigrant legislative bills that indirectly targeted undocumented workers by directly targeting their employers, which would ultimately be a disaster in terms of organizing them as was the mission of CASA.

Whether some past members wish to deny or veil their participation in the organization, they cannot deny that CASA's history is richly entrenched in the Labor and Immigrant Rights Movements in LA and beyond (Bacon, 2008). Moreover, many of its membership have not only stayed involved in the long history of advocacy for immigrant workers in Los Angeles, a consortium of these individuals have gone on to state level politics and continued their immigrant rights advocacy. For example, former *Casista* Gloria Romero, as Democratic Party California Majority Leader, introduced the proposal that served to shut down the state capitol for the "*Gran Paro Americano 2006.*" Moreover, former *Casista* Gilbert Cedillo has staunchly fought to return driving privileges back to undocumented drivers in the state senate.

Though CASA has been widely researched, recent research (Milkman, 2008) devoted to the "real" LA story of immigrant labor uncomplicatedly sidestepped CASA's enormous role in organizing the "unorganizable," at a time when it was unpopular and downright illogical to the mainstream Labor Movement. It is well documented that

unions often overlooked the harassment of undocumented workers under the threat of Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) intervention (Gomez Quinones, 1994).

This lack of attention to this sector of LA's workforce often forced it to form its own organizations in its own defense such as the *Comité Obrero en Defensa de Indocumentados en Lucha* (CODIL),⁴² that established in 1976 and closely allied itself with the *Comisión de Asuntos Obreros y Sindicales* (CAOS),⁴³ a section of CASA solely oriented to labor issues, and headed by José "Pepe Jacks" Jacques Medina, who himself was threatened with deportation (Gomez Quinones, 1994). The CODIL campaign started against Ortho Mattress in Pacoima, CA, to deter INS raids, and reinstate 19 of 45 workers that were deported at the factory, and during the same period the Teamsters refused to represent fired undocumented workers from Kern Foods in Los Angeles, but Carlos Vellanoweth the legal representative for CASA reinstated them (Gomez Quinones, 1994).

In all, CASA's labor sector CAOS under the leadership of Medina, Andrés González, Hector Alvarado, Magdalena Mora, Carlos Vellanoweth, Mario Vasquez, Rafael Lániz, and others participated in at least 17 labor conflicts, and ultimately put enough pressure on the unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, the United Auto Workers, United Electrical Workers, the Carpenters, the Teamsters, amongst others, to pass resolutions on the rights of undocumented workers, a work that clearly "...antedate[s] the work in defense of undocumented workers undertaken by organized labor itself" (Gomez Quinones, 1994: 224).

⁴² The Labor and Defense Committee for the Undocumented in Struggle.

⁴³ Commission for Issues of Labor and Unions

The short life of CASA was in part due to its leadership's resistance to maintaining its mass base by community-level organizing—and the lack of experience to see why—and also its ideological pipedream that the workers would be instinctively attracted to CASA's "party line." It was difficult to operate an immigrant-serving center, while concomitantly building a revolutionary party. Bert Corona summed up the foreseeable fall of CASA, by stating,

The young people, because of their lack of experience, didn't believe they actually had to build a base. They somehow believed that the workers would come on their own and form the base. They thought the people would be attracted by the political line, by the rhetoric, or by the glamour. They were wrong. There is no substitute for hard work and persistence. You build one step at a time...One individual...One family...This becomes a mass base if you keep on long enough. The problems the young people encountered were a matter of their not having the experience with mass organizing and—unfortunately, I think—of their unwillingness to learn from what they considered the "old left." They saw themselves as a vanguard, but it was a vanguard without a "guard"—without a base (García, 1994: 311, 314)!

Corona did acknowledge that Antonio Rodríguez, the executive director of CASA, and the numerous others had sincerely learned from the experience. Corona noted Antonio Rodríguez, for example, is very honest and frank about it. He told me, 'I don't know what happened. We just couldn't do it!' To their credit, most of them have remained politically active" (García, 1994: 315).

CASA essentially disbanded in Los Angeles in 1978, but until its absolute dissolution in 1981, in Chicago, Illinois, its primary focus remained to be the defense of undocumented Mexican workers at a time when this course of action was unpopular in and outside of the Latino community. Its fall from grace as perhaps one of the largest proimmigrant organizations was a contentious one and a divide in many respects currently exists amongst former *Casistas* that have continued the work amongst the

various factions in the labor and immigrant rights struggles in LA. As a result, a cluster of CASA's heyday organizers that became active in the Labor Movement in Los Angeles certainly played a role in trying to undermine the other larger cluster of former *Casistas* in the radical grassroots sector of the Immigrant Rights Movement around positions, tactics, and strategies, during the events of 2006.

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the early organizations that Bert Corona was involved in that pushed for the rights of immigrants in Los Angeles. Along with Corona, other labor organizers began to see the impact antiimmigrant policies were having on the immigrant community, therefore making consistent efforts to organize the "unorganizable." Although most of these organizers were from a leftist persuasion, some were able to weather the red scare sweeps in Los Angeles during the early and mid20th century, others were deported, and some disillusioned with the government's tactics, returned to México voluntarily. Many individuals in the Immigrant Rights Movement can learn from the tenacity and historic struggle of many early immigrant rights organizers, even under intense government scrutiny.

Although most of the organizations highlighted in this chapter comprise the traditional trend of the IRM, only a handful have not ceased to exist, which includes the three factions of *La Hermandad Mexicana*, and the MAPA. These two organizations have ebbed and flowed in terms of their ideological positions, but have mostly stayed true to the longstanding goals of the IRM, full unconditional, immediate, and universal amnesty for undocumented immigrants and no more guestworker programs. Bert

Corona, who reportedly also coined the terms “undocumented immigrant,” “no human is illegal, *ningun ser humano es ilegal*,” and “an injury to one is an injury to all,” initiated this position.

Clearly, Bert Corona who could no longer stand by and witness the antiimmigrant position that held undocumented immigrants were impossible to organize formalized the Immigrant Rights Movement in the late 1960s. Della Porta and Diani (1999) posited that organizational choices are “influenced by preexisting structures within which movements are formed...inheriting ideas, constraints and facilitations as well as allies and opponents...‘early riser’ movements help produce their ‘spin-offs’...overlapping memberships from within the same subculture” (157). At this time, the Chicano Movement was in full swing, and many young Chicano activists who had begun to study Marxism from an internationalist perspective and whom had become increasingly dissatisfied with the myopic scope of the Chicano Movement’s nationalist tradition and its failure to consider the immigration question.

For the Chicano activists that began organizing with Corona, the position that individuals born in either the US or Mexico were one people separated by an imperialist border, was at the very core of their decision to organize undocumented immigrants when their peers refused. As two trajectories emerged among *Raza* in the early and mid20th century, around advocating for the right of US-born *Mexicanos* and Mexican-born workers, the antiimmigrant position that was taken by César Chávez and his UFW minions, and labor in general, was countered by many other Mexican American, and *Mexicano* worker activists that formed *La Hermandad Mexicana* and CASA. These

organizations both focused on the plight of Latino immigrants in Los Angeles and around the country, and this standoff between the two factions lasted over the life of CASA, and is alive and well today.

Historically some moderate Mexican American groups took the antiimmigrant position of Chávez. Despite this position, Corona respected Chávez for his honorable work, according to Chole Allatore, César called upon Corona very frequently for advice. Corona although admonishing Chávez for his position in public gatherings and even press conferences along the Calexico Mexicali border, sought to assist him in organizing the many *Mexicanos* that were brought in to work on farms while the UFW was striking them. Considering César Chavéz' struggle to eradicate the *Bracero Program*, and now the current position of the UFW that embraces employer sanctions and guest worker programs, it is almost sacrilegious for the UFW to accept and more so push the guestworker line.

Despite organizational differences, decisions, and or strategies entertained and or implemented by some of the organizations above, the one unifying strand that runs through them is that they were all influenced by Bert Corona's organizational brilliance and his steadfast commitment to the Movement. A former UFW leader and current vice president of SEIU, Eliseo Medina, succinctly described Corona's wherewithal, stating "What was typical of Bert was that he would not raise a finger to see which way the wind was blowing, he would assume a position to which he remained true."⁴⁴ Regardless of

⁴⁴ Eliseo Medina, who was a leader of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) and who is now vice president of the Service Employees International Union. In "El Valiente Chicano, Bert Corona" by David Bacon.

the opinions of Corona that “senior members” in the Movement still entertain, he stayed true to his position for “amnesty” and “no guestworker programs” even to his death.

PART II: CHAPTER FOUR

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF THE LA MEXICAN AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Despite the open pleas not to join the US military by the leftist *Mexicano* community, specifically from anarchist icon and Wobbly, Ricardo Flóres Magón, many *Mexicanos* still served during both World Wars. At that juncture, many individuals in the *Mexicano* community had initiated the naturalization process but were still Spanish monolinguals, whereas others considered themselves to be *Mexicanos* not *Americanos* (Meier & Rivéra, 1972). Although some authors (Acuña, 1972; McWilliams, 1948; Muñoz, 1989) have painted a picture that suggests discrimination and racism against Chicanos began to worsen after the World Wars-era, I would argue that the racism was well established prior to World War II. Magón's position clearly marked the resistance to fight for the ruling class, essentially resisting to serving it in light of the lack of access to upward mobility for *Mexicanos*. Available opportunities and the status of *Mexicanos* in society is exemplified by Manuel Fraijo, a copper striker in 1946, who stated,

Before the war...all good jobs---hoistman, mechanic, pumpman, and time-keeper---were held by Anglo Americans. The low-bracket jobs, common jobs were held by Mexicans. When the war came, millions of men were drafted and sent overseas...the majority of those drafted from our town were Mexicans. Curiously enough, a good percentage of these supposedly stupid Mexicans became pilots, radio operators, and radarmen and many became sergeants and lieutenants...Now that we are together again, if only some of these Aryan-minded 'Anglos' would discard their white supremacy theories, they would realize that we are just workers kept divided to be used against each other (McWilliams, 1948: 198).

The notion that after the World War I and II military service of many Mexican Americans as an “ultimate sacrifice,” discrimination against them began to occur upon their return home is spurious. Meier and Rivéra (1972) contend that prior to and during

the war there was a legacy of discrimination against *Mexicanos*, and that many whites did not consider them to be “American.” In fact, *Mexicanos* during the war were strongly discriminated against because of Germany’s promise to México that it would return its stolen land when the war against the US was won.

In protest to the Selective Service Act of 1917, which made US citizens and noncitizens alike vulnerable for draft into service, many *Mexicanos* fled to the Midwest and other regions of the country, and also back to México. But many other *Mexicanos* voluntarily enlisted in the Army and Navy in record numbers and that proportionately surpassed all other ethnic groups in World War I, and despite the “...hostility, suspicion, discrimination, and prejudice [they] encountered...most remained extremely patriotic during the war” (Meier & Rivéra, 1972: 132).

The Mexican American Movement during the mid20th century can be traced to efforts to overcome their discrimination and exploitation by assimilation into a system that was fueled by the very exploitation they sought to end—*Mexicanos* organized in force to change their image in the eyes of their fellow Americans. As such, the response to this anti-Mexican attitude during the postwar epoch was that moderate and conservative Latino groups primarily focusing on Chicano and or Mexican American issues emerged. More specifically, they were formed in response to veterans returning home and being treated indifferently, with disdain, and or discriminated against. This forged among US-born *Mexicanos* a united front based on patriotism and the need to struggle for their basic civil rights, which exacerbated the discrimination and exploitation they had endured for nearly a century in the US.

The Catholic Church and the labor movement also joined the ranks in the struggle for immigrant rights. However, in some cases and periods they, along with the traditional Mexican American organizations outlined in this chapter, have acquiesced to employer sanctions and guestworker programs in exchange for “amnesty” in 1986, and to a “pathway to citizenship,” thus serving to hinder the advancement of bona fide immigrant rights. The most dishonorable of these positions is now that all of these organizations have on some level consented to the further criminalization of immigrants since the 2006 insurgency, which has alienated some longtime organizers in the traditional and radical factions of the IRM. These positions including the institutionalization of employer sanctions, guestworker programs, and that “enforcement first” is necessary before immigration reforms should be considered are all counter to the primary aspirations of the Immigrant Rights Movement. Some of these positions have been directly embraced by some nongovernmental immigrant-serving organizations in Los Angeles as well. In this and the following chapters, I discuss the consequences that have resulted from the positions taken by these moderate organizations. These differences were at the core of the divisions that plagued the spirit of the *Movimiento in 2006 during La Gran Epoca Primavera*.

The Roman Catholic Church (325AD)

In recent years, the most conservative proimmigrant rights entity has been the Catholic Church (Heredia, 2009). Because of its position on birth control, abortion, same sex issues, etc., it is a conservative entity on social issues that are very similar to the views held by its Latino membership (Sobrino, 2008). And although many of its white

members have proven to be antiimmigrant (Acuña, 1996), the Church still advocates for the rights of immigrants, especially in light of ample evidence that point to the dwindling of its membership for years now.⁴⁵ According to the Pew Forum (2009) those individuals that have "...left Catholicism outnumber those who have joined the Catholic Church by nearly a four-to-one margin. Overall, one-in-ten American adults (10.1%) have left the Church after having been raised Catholic, while only 2.6% of adults have become Catholic after having been raised something other than Catholic" (8). Other studies that have informed that if it were not for the recent massive migration about half of US Latinos would probably identify as non-Catholic (Oklobdzija, 2006).

Some authors have reported that the Catholic Church could be extinct by 2097. This argument goes beyond the beliefs and values of the Church, and the political persuasion of its members, while paying more attention to the demographic shifts that look to dramatically shape the Church in the near future (Garrido, 2009). This shift is inherently tied to the influx of Catholic immigrants, mostly from México. In general however, Latinos were somewhat less likely to identify as "...mostly conservative on political and social matters, [they] were no more likely than others to say they [we]re "mostly liberal" in such areas. In other words, [they] gravitate toward a middle-of-the-road ideological posture on social and political issues" (Barna, 2009: 2).

⁴⁵ Majorities of former Catholics who are now unaffiliated also cite having stopped believing in Catholicism's teachings overall (65%) or dissatisfaction with Catholic teachings about abortion and homosexuality (56%), and almost half (48%) cite dissatisfaction with church teachings about birth control, as reasons for leaving Catholicism. When asked to explain in their own words the *main* reason for leaving Catholicism, about half of former Catholics (54% of those who are now unaffiliated and 47% of those who are now Protestant) cite a disagreement with the Catholic Church's religious or moral beliefs. Among former Catholics who have become Protestant, nearly one-in-five (18%) say their departure was due specifically to discomfort with the Catholic Church's teachings about the Bible. Pew Forum (2009). Faith in flux: Changes in religious affiliation in the US. April 27th, 2009. <[http://pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux\(3\).aspx](http://pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux(3).aspx)>. Retrieved February 11th, 2010.

Oklobdzija (2006) reported that in the US as many as 600,000 Latino Catholics flock to Protestant churches every year where 30% of non-Catholic Latinos can be found, and of which 88% identified as “born-again.” However, of the 37 million Latinos in the US, about 26 million remain to be Catholic, an estimated 70%. Thus, the Catholic Church is still a viable contender for Latino membership given that evangelical churches have long been present amongst Latino communities, converting and recruiting their members. Since 1906, evangelists have worked to convert Mexicanos in migrant camps around Los Angeles, a campaign that later became known as the Azusa Street Revival named after the Downtown Los Angeles street (Oklobdzija, 2006).

Barna (2009) argued that the political, economic, relational, and cultural impacts that living in the US has had on Latinos, and the transformation of US culture because of the Latino influence, is a “two way street” which should now include “faith perspectives and practices.” The changing dynamics of faith and spirituality among Latinos underscores the energy and dedication they spend on maintaining a pious connection to an organization in which they worship, and without a doubt the Catholic Church remains the single most important church to the majority of immigrant Catholics. As noted by Barna however, this is a changing relationship, “While many Latino immigrants come to the US with ties to Catholicism, the research shows that many of them eventually connect with a Protestant church...Even more significant is the departure of many second and third generation Latinos from their Catholic tradition” (2009: 2).

The history of the Catholic Church beginning in 325AD under the leadership of Constantine, has been wrought with controversy and contradiction, especially the

atrocities carried out at the hands of early popes (Njoya,1998). This study is concerned with its capricious behavior to Latinos in general and its positions on federal immigration policies in recent decades. Arguably, the bloodshed carried out at the hands of the Church during the Dark Ages in the name of Christendom, and for well over a millennium, would mirror or shadow that of most modern wars, was fortunately put to rest during the Enlightenment and rise of Protestantism prompted by Martin Luther's discovery of biblical truths. Latino scholars in general and Chicano scholars specifically have distinctly documented this campaign of terror in the Church's role of the conquest of Latin America by Spaniards beginning in 1519, well before Martin Luther's breakthrough.

The role of the Catholic Church in *Mexicano* history has been detrimental where its leadership and its relationship to the Mexican people are concerned. Popular piety, or the meshing of Spanish and Indian religiosity in the Mexican Catholic tradition, has long been the order of the day for *Mexicanos*. Samora and Simon (1993) posited that while other disenfranchised groups of color have organized alongside other parishioners and religious leaders such as blacks in the civil rights era, the formal religious structure of the American Roman Catholic Church has discouraged *Mexicanos* from taking an active leadership role in their churches and or communities

Clearly, the Catholic Church has played a vital role in the historical development of México and the US, and their respective population. Mirandé argued that while the Church has typically served as an instrument of colonization and domination for both Mexicans and Americans individual priests have not infrequently resisted these exploitive

effects of colonization and subordination. On the other hand, religion in general has served to "...help the people cope with, or to resist, the insidious effects of colonization and exploitation" (1985: 114). Debatably, the role the Church has played in the Immigrant Rights Movement and among Latinos overall works like a microcosm of this broader understanding.

This paradox has clearly played itself out between the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and its local clergy and in some cases even between the Church elite and its undocumented parishioners in Los Angeles. In some ways the Church elite believes themselves to be not only infallible, but also above the layman (Njoya, 1998). Contrariwise, there is a long history of local clergy working shoulder to shoulder with parishioners to protect the human rights of undocumented immigrants in their midst. There is evidence supporting the view that the Church helped to protect the rights of immigrants at the turn of the 20th century.

By 1920, the Catholic Church sought to protect the rights and to meet the needs of the mostly white immigrants who made up approximately 75% of US Catholics—by expanding its "...parishes, schools, hospitals, mutual aid societies, religious communities, and fraternal and sororal groups. For these Catholics, the Church tried to offer an array of educational, medical, social service, and social institutions that paralleled those of the larger society" (Kerwin, 2006: 1). While the US government had been preoccupied with restricting Asian immigrants and Asian immigration and then began expanding their agenda to include white Southern and Eastern European immigrants, these "Restrictionists accused Catholics of being inassimilable due to their faith, just as some

vilify Muslim-Americans today...Newcomers suffered from low wages and dangerous working conditions. Many families split apart and dissolved” (Kerwin, 2006: 1). Kerwin reported that although reliable statistics were unavailable for his 2006 report, it was estimated that among all US Catholics, an excess of 40% were foreign-born. Many of these individuals bring with them varying views of what role the Church should play in their lives, especially on issues of reproduction and family.

At a time when there were militant labor drives across California, the Catholic Church also played a role in promoting labor rights for *Mexicanos* in Texas. During the 1930s, a Catholic Workers Union was formed by 450 spinach pickers in Crystal City, to protect the rights and obligations of the workers as taught by the Church (Gomez Quiñones, 1994). Gomez Quiñones reported that despite its position against child labor, a decent minimum wage, the elimination of contractors, and other demands the union would not support “...outside laborers be brought in to work” (1994: 141). As such, *Mexicano* immigrants were largely excluded during this period from unionization efforts there as well. For this reason, the work of ANMA and other immigrant worker organizations in the coming years played a vital role in efforts to unionize *Mexicano* workers.

The Catholic Church and other churches have also engaged in the immigrant rights struggle because immigrants are in many cases the lion’s share of their membership. It has become incumbent on the Church to accept immigrants into its fold over the years, and after a long struggle by *Mexicanos* to be a part of its order. For instance, Mirandé (1985) pointed out that the only way *Mexicanos* have received some

status in the Church was because it was scrutinized in the 1960s when its own contradictions were exposed by *Católicos por la Raza*, and PADRES, an organization of Spanish-speaking priests. On the one hand, you have the exemplary image of Christ living penuriously but striving to feed and help the poor, and on the other hand, you had evidence that the Church had evolved into a corporate for profit entity rich beyond imagination and situated in severely impoverished neighborhoods. The protests by these groups dramatized the clear contradiction of the Church, the life of the *Mexicano*, and Christianity.

While Kerwin (2006) claimed that the “Catholic Church occupies the center of the US debate on immigration, and in 2003 both US and Mexican bishops released the statement *Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope*, which basically outlined the need for a “comprehensive approach to immigration reform.” It was essentially the product of antedated statements *One Family under God* in 1995, and *Unity in Diversity* in 2000. The issue is not that the Church is in the debate as Kerwin claims, or if it is even central to it, the issues that are tied intrinsically to its position in the debate are what are troublesome for the Immigrant Rights Movement.

Where the contradictions lie are in its position on the legal question that abounds in the immigration debate, different than the debates that existed on the question in the 1980s, when the Catholic Church took a more radical approach to adjusting the status of the millions of undocumented immigrants in the US. In 1986, a statement put out by the US bishops when IRCA passed giving amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants and instituting employer sanctions for those that employed undocumented workers. The Church’s position was that “It is against the common good and unacceptable to have a

double society, one visible with rights and one invisible without rights—a voiceless underground of undocumented persons” (Kerwin, 2006: 1).

After IRCA was enacted, the Catholic Church worked to adjust the status of many unauthorized immigrants in Southern California.⁴⁶ Although the Catholic Church today believes that the current immigration system is “generous in many respects,” and in badly need of reform,

...it does not support open borders, illegal immigration, or an ‘amnesty’ that would grant legal status to all unauthorized immigrants. It believes nations have a legitimate responsibility to promote the common good by denying admission to certain migrants and by regulating the flow of all those who are seeking to enter... [but on the other hand], the Church does not believe that criminal prosecution and deportation of unauthorized immigrants offer a viable, much less a humane, approach to the problem (Kerwin, 2006: 2).

Kerwin (2006) reported that in *Strangers No Longer*, the Catholic Church imparted that people possess the right not to have to migrate, that they should be able to live unabatedly in their mother countries. However, when impossible due to “extreme poverty or persecution,” it is the position of the Church that they then have the right to migrate, and that the nations to which they gravitate have an ardent and humane duty to accept them. Furthermore, the Church believes that doing nothing to confront the situation would facilitate the increasing of second-class immigrants with limited rights, security, and fewer prospects. In all, its position is that a just immigration system would allow new citizens the opportunity to realize their dreams and aspirations not only be benefitting them but more broadly serve the good of society. For the aforementioned

⁴⁶ Interviewee Martha Soriano, Director of *La Casa del Mexicano* in East Los Angeles, and longtime immigrant rights activist.

reason the Church's devotion to helping immigrants will be in place long after immigration reform passes (Kerwin, 2006).

Kerwin (2006) also claimed that the reason that the Catholic Church cares to involve itself so much in the reform movement is that it sees itself as a "pilgrim people in a pilgrim church," and views the "Holy Family—in their flight to Egypt—as the archetypal refugee family. Migrants evoke its own history, including the biblical exodus and exile, the itinerant ministry of Jesus, and its 2,000-year missionary tradition. The stranger is welcomed as a Gospel imperative" (3). Generally speaking, two fundamental strands of the Church's mission are—protecting the dignity of all—and gathering God's scattered children into one—which come together in its "ministry to migrants and newcomers." The Church teaches that all people are "brothers and sisters" and citizenship status makes no difference or changes this reality, and therefore through its 159 agencies that comprise its Catholic Charities program it facilitates for "all vulnerable migrants and newcomers, regardless of their religious beliefs," legal consultation, community organizing grants, and refugee resettlement services (Kerwin, 2006).

Another organization that has helped to resettle an estimated 900,000 refugees in dioceses throughout the country since 1975 is the Catholic Church's immigrant and refugee-serving Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) division supported by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., which services nearly 400,000 immigrants per year. This network of Catholic agencies help low-wage newcomers secure work authorization, reunify with their family members, become US citizens while in receipt of protection from persecution (Kerwin, 2006).

Similar to the US-based MRS, in 2005 the Church began the *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope* (JFI) campaign that supports the development of “immigrant-sending countries,” and “...allowing necessary, unauthorized workers to earn the right to remain (permanently) through their labor, good moral character, and payment of a fine (a proportional punishment); and expanding avenues for employment—and family-based immigration” (Kerwin, 2006: 3). Overall, the JFI campaign has provided a legislative vehicle for the Church’s leadership and membership to use in the struggle for immigration reform; essentially JFI has been the Church’s lobbying voice in DC.

During *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*, Cardinal Roger Mahony “electrified” the US immigration reform debate by announcing on March 1st, 2006,⁴⁷ that he would instruct archdiocesan priests and lay Catholics to ignore the “enforcement only” provisions of HR4437, mainly those that would make it a crime to aid and abet unauthorized immigrants (Kerwin, 2006). In fact, he called for mass civil disobedience amongst his flock if the legislation were to make it through the senate to be instituted. While he was certainly not part of the initial efforts to mobilize Angelino immigrants during that spring, after this homily he began to collaborate with the moderate wing of organizations in Los Angeles and eventually, including Maria Elena Durazo the head of the LA County Federation of Labor and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The three of them became the headliners for the *Placita Olvera* manifestation on the evening of April 10th, 2006, that only drew roughly 10,000 marchers, and coincided with the national day of protest organized by *Somos America*, a national coalition that comprised the moderate

⁴⁷ In his Ash Wednesday homily 2006.

wing players in the immigrant rights struggle—outlined at the end of the following chapter.

Immediately following that protest—a mere shadow of the outpouring of between 1.7 to 2 million individuals that attended the grassroots *Gran Marcha* in Downtown weeks before—Cardinal Mahony soon became very vociferous against *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*, the ongoing student walkouts, and any other protests that would interrupt the status quo in Los Angeles.⁴⁸ He did so with little effect and support. Even his members expressed that they would go against their leader and abide by the tenets⁴⁹ of the momentous and rapidly growing *Gran Paro 2006* crusade. One clergy on *Primero de Mayo 2006* with whom I spoke to on the phone, called him “Cardinal *Rahony*”⁵⁰ for the unpopular positions the elite level of the Catholic Church was embracing and advocating. Catholics and the immigrant community in general has advocated for mass civil disobedience against HR4437, but when it came down to it, Cardinal Mahony reneged on his position to openly challenge the state.

Alvaro Maldonado, a longtime immigrant rights activist, who was instrumental in organizing the mass march against Proposition 187 in 1994, and who also participated in building the 2006 mass mobilizations in Los Angeles conveyed the sentiment felt by

⁴⁸ Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, along with superintendent Roy Romer and Cardinal Roger Mahony, urged parents to send their children to school, writing “To express our belief in and commitment to the future of this great country, let us focus our advocacy for just, comprehensive immigration reform by writing and calling our Congressional representatives and expressing ourselves responsibly.” KABC (2006). Mayor Villaraigosa Against Students Missing School. KABC News. April 26th, 2006. <<http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local&id=4058538>>. Retrieved February 19th, 2010.

⁴⁹ Interviewee Nativo Lopéz, director of La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana, and MAPA.

⁵⁰ *Rajo* is a Spanish slang term for “reneged.” In this case a play on words about a Cardinal that “reneged” and broke an open promise to Angelinos in general, and to his faithful in particular.

numerous grassroots organizers across the Southland, which essentially was that they were busy building toward *El Gran Paro Americano*, when the elite level of the Catholic Church undermined those organizing efforts that were well underway,

...next thing you know here comes Cardinal Mahony with all of his garb and his strange hat, saying “We ask you not to have your children boycott, we shouldn’t boycott and protest. Let’s just pray and have a peaceful procession [up Wilshire Boulevard] after work and that is the way we are going to express [ourselves]. Don’t boycott.” [Then] Dolores Huerta came out representing the UFW, with a history of boycotts and strikes and she says “Oh no! I don’t think you should boycott and strike.” There was [also] Carlos Montes with a fist sitting there...”saying, “Don’t boycott, don’t strike.” Maria Elena Durazo was there...[and] there was the Cardinal...go in the photographs of *La Opinion* and you will see...It was despicable, it was a retreat as far as I am concerned. It was a betrayal of the mass movement of what it could have really done.⁵¹

Essentially, these individuals were some of the same ones speaking against the *Paro Economico 2003*, which like the 2006 *Gran Paro*, stated, “it was not the right time,” which begs the question, “will any of them ever support a boycott they do not initiate, organize, or fund?” But more specifically, “will any of these organizations support an immigrant rights boycott?” The issue in terms of the position of the Church is why it would not support a boycott if it professes to speak on behalf of the immigrant worker. What the *inmigrantes* needed more than anything was to express in the *Gran Paro 2006* that they were a force with which to be reckoned. Alvaro approached it by asking me and responding, “Jesse what are the immigrant workers? They are the most productive work force in this country. The one power that can really stop the wheel from

⁵¹ Alvaro Maldonado, International Socialist Organization member, and longtime antiwar and immigrant rights activist in Los Angeles.

turning is the immigrant neighbor, and if they decide to strike and boycott, if they do that, they will stop the country.”⁵²

Despite the efforts put forth by the moderate segment of the Los Angeles immigrant rights community, the city’s immigrant workforce turned downtown into a ghost town on *Primero de Mayo 2006*. Reportedly, business districts in metropolitan areas throughout the country and abroad observed the boycott on May Day of that year in solidarity with the *Gran Paro Americano*.⁵³

Clearly, the Catholic Church’s service to the immigrant community is nothing short of astounding, but the positions that it, like the moderate-oriented Latino-serving organizations outlined below, embraces are questionable. The remainder of this chapter speaks to the participation of the moderate wing of the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles by describing the Latino-serving organizations that have been in some way a part of the struggle. However, it should be noted that the elite level of the Church has frequently worked alongside these organizations on immigrant rights in Los Angeles, and across the country. Moreover, at the parish level the Church has a long history of working alongside organizations that comprise the grassroots or traditional segment of the immigrant rights struggle in Southern California.⁵⁴ Most importantly, these levels of the Church and *Movimiento* have over the years cross organized and in some cases have

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Larry Holmes. (2006). The May Day uprising of 2006. Worker’s World. May 9th, 2006. <<http://www.workers.org/2006/us/may-day-0518/>>. Retrieved March 28th, 2010

⁵⁴ Father Gregory Boyle, longtime immigrant rights activist, and current director of Homeboys Industries.

joined forces—albeit briefly. The accounts presented in the following chapters support this organizational scenario.

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) launched the *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope* (JFI) campaign, comprised of a variety of Catholic organizations with national networks. It was “designed to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic institutions, individuals, and other persons of good faith in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform principles.”⁵⁵ Therefore, the Catholic Church embarked on a national level campaign with the goal of enacting comprehensive immigration reform.

League of United Latin American Citizens (1929)

One of the most influential Mexican American groups is the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). It was founded in Texas, on a rainy Sunday, February 19th, 1929, after two years of squabbling among Mexican American leadership, and nearly a century of racism and exploitation against *Mexicanos* in the US. It was specifically founded at a time when prejudicial attitudes and discrimination acts had reached such extremes that since 1921 Mexican Americans were rapidly forming organizations as defensive measures against such anti-American practices. LULAC was a product of three Texan organizations merging (Meier & Rivéra, 1972), which included the Order of the Sons of America with councils in Sommerset, Pearsall, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio; the Knights of America in San Antonio; and the League of Latin

⁵⁵ Kerwin, Donald. 2005. *Justice for Newcomers: A Catholic Call for Solidarity and Reform*. Catholic Charities 2005 Policy Paper. Mirna Torres Personal Files. Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc: Washington, DC.

American Citizens with councils in Harlingen, Brownsville, Laredo, Penitas, *La Grulla*, McAllen, and Gulf (LULAC, 2009a). At the initial meeting where the new organization blossomed, the delegates were so impressed with the calmness of Ben Garza and his outstanding efforts in the merger that he was quickly ushered in as the first President General of LULAC.

Prior to LULAC there were many short-lived and regional Mexican American organizations that were formed to protect the community from local aggression at the hands of their white neighbors, and with an array of agendas. After LULAC was formed, some members still wanted to revolt and regain the territories ceded to the US after the Mexico-Texas War. Others simply wanted to defy the authority of the white ruling class. In those days, *Mexicanos* meeting in large numbers needed to be cautious not to raise suspicions of communism. Because members embraced the ways of the white society, many others felt insulted and considered LULAC members as a bunch of “*vendidos*” (LULAC, 2009a). Outsiders could not see why LULAC would go out of its way to embrace a white society that had long been so cruel to them. However, because the founders had witnessed so many Mexican American organizations flourish and disappear within a couple of years, and without accomplishing much, they were determined to make LULAC a success; therefore, in order to to be a safe haven and avoid suspicions of “unAmerican activities,” many members set aside their own convictions (LULAC, 2009a).

Some of the official rites LULAC adopted had never before been adopted by any Mexican American organization: The *American Flag* became its official flag, *America*

the Beautiful its official song, and the *George Washington Prayer* was soon its official prayer. *Roberts Rules of Order* was also adopted to control meetings and conventions. It certainly can be argued in some respects LULAC members may have out-Americanized some of their white counterparts (LULAC, 2009a). Nevertheless, over its 80 years of advocacy for the legal rights of *Raza*, the organization has garnered voting rights and full access to the political process, boosting educational opportunities for youth. Its activism has also extended to the realm of language and cultural rights, including struggling against the “English Only” movement, and for equality in justice, employment, housing, healthcare, and education for Latinos in this great nation known as the “United States of North America” (LULAC, 2009a).

The LULAC founders envisioned a strong acceptance for the organization among Mexican American *Tejanos*, but never imagined its rapid growth in its first three years into Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. Eventually it grew its arms of service into 48 states, Puerto Rico, México, South America, and the armed service base in Heidelberg, West Germany, all under the auspices of LULAC International (LULAC, 2009a). Over the years, the mission of the founders has evolved. LULAC’s more than 700 councils nationwide that operate its community-based programs, remain dedicated to the advancement of the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of Latinos in the US, not exclusively for Mexican Americans (LULAC, 2009b).

Because of its dedication to serve other countries around the world, it makes sense for LULAC to integrate itself into the immigrant rights struggle here in the US. Earlier

this year LULAC staunchly supported the Dream Act 2009 introduced by Senators Lugar of Indiana and Durbin of Illinois, and joined hundreds of allied organizations from across the country that launched the campaign to Reform Immigration FOR America.

In 2000, LULAC organized a human rights border summit while urging Congress to include three provisions that are the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act (LIFA) in the final version of the Commerce, Justice and State Appropriations Bill, which it argued would have stabilized the immigration status of up to 800,000 immigrants. LULAC maintained that many of these individuals who had for many years been living, working, paying taxes, and raising families in the US, would have corrected the wrongs of the 1986 and 1996 immigration bills (Rosa, 2000). The organization had been advocating for the passage of LIFA since 1998 when it joined a fast to bring attention to thousands of immigrants that had awaited the resolution of their residency status because of improprieties in the law for more than a decade. Afterward the INS admitted it had illegally turned away qualified applicants under the 1986-amnesty program. In fact, LULAC's National Executive Director Brent Wilkes reported that these cases had become a collection of class action lawsuits designed to force them to process the applications.

Although LULAC has been integral to the immigrant rights struggle, it has also played a role in distressing the chief goal of "full unconditional amnesty" of IRM by adopting at least two legislative proposals that came to be specifically during the spring of 2006, and spring of 2007. On April 2008, LULAC National President, Rosa Rosales, made the following statement,

Over the last few months a failure to reach consensus on immigration reform has resulted in raids around the country including Texas. For this reason LULAC applauds the members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus for their leadership in supporting the STRIVE act today which would more thoroughly address the security and labor concerns at hand (Olmos, 2008: 1).

The STRIVE Act had 75 cosponsors but was the most detrimental legislation coming out of Congress since S2611, which would have also hurt the immigrant community because of its provisions, and mainly because like the Strive Act it would have left millions of undocumented immigrants in the cold, thus reentering the same type of struggle it faced in 1998 with the “amnesty class.” In the tradition of imposing fear to push a half-baked comprehensive reform, LULAC jumped aboard the S2611 train like it had in 2006, another corporate-oriented answer to reform, which included a guestworker program serving only to benefit the ruling capitalist class.

And because of the advancement of the economic condition of Mexican Americans in the community, it is not surprising that Rosales’ primary concern is “...the negative impact the raids were having on the economy and for the hardworking immigrants that want to contribute to this great nation but on the other hand LULAC supports strengthening our borders, strengthening interior enforcement, employment verification and earned legalization for and will continue to work for a comprehensive immigration bill that is fair and just” (Olmos, 2008).

Rosales was clear that “The League of United Latin American Citizens is ready to support a bill that fixes our broken immigration system...[and that it support[s] Representative Gutierrez (D-IL) and the entire Congressional Hispanic Caucus’ commitment to taking bold action to break through the drawn out stalemate on Capitol

Hill” (Olmos, 2008). Furthermore she stated, “We need smart, sensible, and humane solutions to the issues facing all of our communities, including immigrants...We take citizenship very seriously and want to help shape the direction of our nation” (Olmos, 2008).

Interestingly, Olmos adopted the term “progressive” to describe a more ambiguous and coded word for a “conservative” type of immigration reform that would include the expansion of border and interior enforcement failing to specify how many *immigrantes* would qualify for citizenship, which is problematic in the eyes of the grassroots and traditional sector of the Immigrant Rights Movement, nonetheless she described a reform that LULAC would support including:

A (1) path to legal status and eventual citizenship for the current undocumented immigrant population, (2) a program that keeps American families together, (3) an allocation of sufficient visas to close unlawful migration channels, (3) labor rights for immigrant and native-born workers, (4) enforcement measures that enhance our nation’s security and safety while reflecting American values, (5) a commitment to assisting immigrant integration, and (6) protection of fundamental rights for all (Olmos, 2009).

Instead of pushing to repeal the security provisions of any legislation, much like the grassroots sector of the Immigrant Rights Movement, LULAC is notorious for supporting “to the letter of the law” enforcement first policies. That is, because of its patriotic nature of being “law abiding” and prone to embrace white nationalist customs and rites, therefore undermining any opportunity to speak out against such measures as border enforcement, the immigration detention industry, and local law enforcement imposing federal immigration enforcement.

Like other Mexican American-serving corporate-funded NGOs, it is popular for them to speak to immigration reform but not directly against the structural obstacles that

immigrants face—like the raids—without pushing a legislative piece devoid of a guestworker program, supporting, the notion that national security is realized, and that would only include the adjustment of citizenship status for only a slight portion of “law-breakers.”

However, given the position of the organization, this analysis does not intend to argue that amongst the ranks of the organization that dissenting voices are not present. According to Dr Gabriela Lemus, LULAC’s Director of Policy and Legislation in 2008 for LULAC, the issue of immigration has always prompted contentious attitudes. Lemus wrote, “Since our nation’s inception xenophobic attitudes have cyclically risen and abated depending in large part on the state of the economy, the ability of the newest-arrived immigrant community to integrate itself, demographic growth, and general fear of “outsiders.” She also spoke out against the local law enforcement agencies enforcing federal immigration law, the denial of licenses to undocumented drivers, and the need for undocumented youth to go to college (Lemus, 2008).

Dr Lemus further acknowledged the “overarching bills” in the Senate that included the Cornyn-Kyl, Hagel-Martínez, and Kennedy-McCain bills, amongst others. Moreover, she was clear that the latter, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005, though not perfect, came closest to the need of satisfactorily addressing these concerns. Unlike previous bills focusing only on increasing border and interior enforcement, it provided a more realistic approach to national security because it protected the pay rates of undocumented workers already in the US, sought to reunite

their families and restore healthy migration patterns, while ensuring a timely, transparent, and secure process for future flows of workers (Lemus, 2008).

On a more grassroots level, and unlike the positions of other national corporate-funded Mexican American nongovernmental organizations, it appears that to some extent she understood the ground level struggle of the immigrant rights struggle. Lemus spoke out against the civilian border-patrolling vigilantes such as the Citizens Patrol and the Minutemen Project; Lou Dobbs and his antiimmigrant rhetoric, the failure to accommodate the growth of the current and future foreign born worker pool because of the decline among the US-born workforce. She also spoke out about the dangers entailed for workers forced “to risking their lives with human traffickers across a dangerous border” (Lemus, 2008). In addition, Lemus addressed the economic calamity related to the increasing costs of the enforcing federal immigration law, which has increased five-fold since 1992, and the shortened immigration legislative debates based on the government officials trapped in election cycles whereby only in years when there are no elections is it opportune to engage in the immigration debate (Lemus, 2008).

Furthermore, in LULAC fashion in terms of the economy but with a dissenting voice on national “security,” Lemus spoke against the message a high and wide enough wall across the southern border would send to our “second largest trading partner, to our future trading partners, and to the US regime of allies and friends in Latin America.” Moreover, she added, “[The Wall] says that the United States does not trust you, does not want you, and does not need you. Such a decision would be myopic and bad for national

security, public safety, and the economy (Lemus, 2008). For her, the bottom line was that “Drug traffickers, human traffickers and members of organized crime organizations will view it as an opportunity to exploit and entrench themselves into societies already desperate for economic improvement. Businesses will be harmed because of the ensuing and inevitable increase in costs and challenges of moving their goods across the Mexico-US border—a situation antithetic to the goals of free trade” (Lemus, 2008).

Although LULAC has integrated itself into immigration affairs it has maintained its position on national security at times, and to some degree, it is obvious that there are dissenting and more progressive views amongst its leadership. During our lobbying efforts in 2006 against the Hagel-Martínez Senate bill S2611, I encouraged the others in our group to accompany me while visiting with the leadership of the Latino-oriented NGOs in DC; joining me were Alfonso González, Esther Portillo, and Oscar Sánchez. We did not have an appointment but went anyway and sat down with Dr Lemus. She informed us that she too was against the bill despite the then LULAC national director, Hector Flóres’ decision to support the impetuous proposal. We informed her of our position after the analysis Peter Schey had done with us in Los Angeles weeks before, and she told us that we did not have to sing to the choir, and that she wished us luck in pushing against the proposal that would have done more damage to the already exploited immigrant community.

I again heard from Lemus in early 2008 when she was working alongside Chicago area activists in the Waukegan struggle against local antiimmigrant forces while representing the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA). I saw her

soon after when a throng of grassroots immigrant rights activists convened on DC later that year to hear for the first time a proposal by Representative Gutierrez, which sought to legalize the undocumented parents of US-born children. Because of Lemus' more progressive outlook on immigration policy, it made sense that Dr Lemus would cross over to LCLAA, which has a much more progressive position that is in line with the AFL-CIO and the Immigrant Rights Movement in support of full unconditional amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, and no guest worker programs.

American GI Forum (1948)

Perhaps the most assimilation-oriented of the Mexican American organizations coming out of the World War II period has been the American GI Forum (AGIF), founded on March 26th, 1948 in Corpus Christi, Texas by Dr Hector Perez García, an Army veteran medical doctor. Soon after returning home from World War II with great pride for his accomplishments and eager to pursue the so-called American Dream (GI Forum, 2009a), to his dismay he observed and experienced what most Latino servicemen were encountering across the country in their own pursuit of the “American Dream”—deeply rooted prejudice—especially in veteran’s hospitals (Meier & Rivéra, 1972).

García was a man who passionately quoted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, applying their texts “...to the outcast minorities of society,” so with sheer determination to overcome these injustices, he successfully formed the AGIF, a formidable and patriotic organization that has successfully broken down barriers for Mexican Americans in the US (GI Forum, 2009c). García encouraged Mexican Americans to edify themselves in democratic principles, and then worked to apply those

principles to all people via the AGIF. For his lifelong devotion to his organization and community, García was ultimately honored on March 26th, 1984, by President Reagan who bestowed him the nation's highest civilian medal, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Although García passed away in 1996, in remembrance of his contributions the organization still honors him decennially in the Corpus Christi (GI Forum, 2009c).

Like other Mexican American-serving organizations such as CSO, LULAC, and MAPA, AGIF heavily accents political incorporation, and though nonpartisan like them as well, it is likewise Democratic in its sympathies and inclination. According to Meier and Rivéra (1972), in the 1950s through registration drives, it successfully increased Democratic Party strength, and along with its Mexican American organizational counterparts, AGIF was prominent in the *Viva Kennedy Club* campaign in the 1960 presidential election.

Today AGIF's main concerns include (1) arming and motivating young Mexican American youth with information about educational opportunities, (2) training new leaders to establish communications with corporations, businesses, and job placement organizations, to assist with job training, referrals, placement, and to ensure equal employment opportunities, (3) enforcing, defending, and protect the civil and human rights of Latinos, women, and other minorities and to ensure equal opportunities as mandated by federal and state laws, and (4) providing input on enforcement of legislation that protects the rights of Latino veterans, their families and other minorities concerning affirmative action, which is consistent with AGIF's motto, "Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business" (GI Forum, 2009b).

It is also important to understand that at one time GI Forum participated in the IRCA legislative coalition alongside other conservative Mexican American-oriented organizations and called for the more liberal UFW to take a stand against supporting employer sanctions, to no avail (Acuña, 2007). To my knowledge however, GI Forum has not openly advocated for immigration reform in the most recent campaign. Nowhere in its materials, including its website, does it impart that the organization is an immigrant rights advocate. Unfortunately, this tradition dates back to its early era and experiences that shaped the political consciousness of AGIF's pioneers who embraced anticommunism, patriotism, and the American side of their Mexican American identity. Muñoz (1989) posed that in these veterans' minds political assimilation and accommodation were the only path to achieve racially equality in a racist society, and that integration in education, they believed, would realize their acceptance as first-class citizens.

Within the AGIF ranks, activists have participated in the immigrant rights struggle, however. This becomes clear in the later discussion of the confrontation we undertook against the Minutemen in Eastern San Diego County in the summer of 2005. During this campaign, Danny Morales from the Inland Empire chapter of AGIF played a key role in the organizational development and realization of that three-week struggle. Morales and Vicente Rodríguez went against the moderate political vision of Armando Navarro, head of the National Alliance for Human Rights, which opted against participating in the Southern-most California desert confrontation.

On the race question, Muñoz asserted that these servicemen eschewed the category of ‘people of Color,’ and embraced the image of Mexican Americans as a white ethnic group to lessen the discrimination that blacks and Native Americans experienced—ultimately some embraced a “Spanish” and or “Latin American” identity. As such, for AGIF “Mass protest, confrontation, radicalism, and coalition politics with other people of color were therefore rejected as alternatives in the pursuit of civil rights and equal opportunity for jobs and education” (Muñoz, 1989: 49).

Adhering to this myopic position undoubtedly prompted the palpable disregard of AGIF’s contributions in much of the Chicano Movement literature, especially from analyses of its radical wing, but most poignantly by up and coming scholars that looked upon the previous “middle class” generation with disdain, and as *vendidos*⁵⁶ (Gonzales, 2000). Nevertheless, the American GI Forum is the largest federally chartered Latino veterans’ organization in the US with chapters in 40 states and Puerto Rico, and supports other Latino-oriented organizations such as LULAC, NCLR, IMAGE, HACER, and many others (GI Forum, 2009).

The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (1959)

In 1959, the same year 1.5 million union members could be found in California (Samora, 1966), the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (LACFL) was founded by a merger of one Congress of Industrial Organizations labor council and six from the American Federation of Labor, which represented approximately 320 local unions and 700,000 union members (Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008). Fletcher and Gapasin posited that

⁵⁶ Sellouts

despite the resistance from Los Angeles leftists who opposed the Vietnam War, the traditionalist brand of union leaders that led the LACFL, along with George Meaney, and the LACFL secretary-treasurer Sigmund Arywitz, all confidently and openly supported the unpopular quandary of that war. Furthermore, they argued that this type of political persuasion amongst its leadership continued until Miguel Contreras, a former United Farm Worker organizer, became the LACFL secretary-treasurer and the Union Cities Program was launched that "...illustrate[d] how labor movement transformation can begin to restore hope to working class communities" (102). It can mostly illustrate how a consortium of labor organizations could make a difference in terms of bringing its financial resources to the table as well.

The LACFL played a key role in the Justice for Janitors struggle in 1990, the United Food and Commercial Workers grocery market strike of 2003, and in the not so successful LA Manufacturing Action Project in 1992. After the 1994 struggle against Proposition 187, the most noteworthy accomplishments of the LACFL include supporting the successful campaigns of former immigrant rights organizers, Senator Gilbert Cedillo, Assemblyman Kevin De Leon, former State Speaker Fabian Nuñez, Senator Gloria Romero, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Regardless of the positions of these immigrant and labor rights activists turned politicians, their political careers were undoubtedly launched by the Labor Movement in general, and the LACFL specifically. A large portion of former *Casistas* including those mentioned above, with the exception of Nuñez, began their activism in CASA, including Miguel Contreras' widow and current head of the 840,000 member LACFL, Maria Elena Durazo. In CASA, she represents the

link between students and labor in *La Alianza proUnidad Obrero Estudiantil*, and spoke to that question during the “*Despierta Chicano Defende Tu Hermano* political forum on deportation raids and the present role of Chicano students” in February 1974.⁵⁷

According to Muñoz (2008), Maria Elena Durazo, President of UNITE HERE Local 11 from May 1989 until March 2006, has become “One of the most successful and dynamic labor leaders in the country. She has been at the center of organizing, negotiating, and election efforts that have made Los Angeles a union city with a county wide labor force that is 19% organized compared to a national rate of 11%” (1).” Durazo further added,

We have had a great degree of success locally with home care, truckers, janitors, construction and other industries but the scale has to be two to three times more, labor has political clout locally but not as strong in the state and nation. There are more and more poverty level jobs, the cost of living has risen with gas prices, record repossessions increasing deportation “(Muñoz, 2008: 1).

Durazo, conveyed her allegiance to the Obama presidency and her trust in the “change” he promised relative to the immigrant and labor rights struggles when she stated “When we elect Barack, knock on wood, we will have someone who responds to labor, to people’s needs, the plight of immigrants, but he can’t win change alone. It will take a larger movement” (Muñoz, 2008: 1).

⁵⁷ “*Despierta Chicano Defende Tu Hermano*” political forum on deportation raids and the present role of Chicano students, poster by John Alvarez. February 22nd, and 23rd, 1974. At California State University, Los Angeles. Sponsored by MEChA Unity Committee. In Chávez, Ernesto. (2002). *My People First, Mi Raza Primero: Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles 1966-1978*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA. University of California Press, Ltd. 105.

⁵⁸ Email from the National Alliance for Immigrant Rights listserve on September 10th, 2007. Subject: National Day of Action Boycott the Economy! We are All Elvira & Saulito!

In the middle of the organizing the voter turnout of her membership in LA and in battleground states she dedicated three days to fast for immigrant rights in the *Placita Olvera*. She is clear that the political climate is dim and dimming because of the growing difficulty to organize because "...it has become more dangerous, going back to the days of Joe Hill. The immigration raids are increasing, workers are treated like terrorists...The Republicans have been the worst, but many Democrats are from conservative and moderate districts" (Muñoz, 2008: 2).

Durazo clearly understood the struggle that needed to continue regardless of who took the presidency in 2008. According to Durazo,

Continued action will be needed to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, defend Social Security, win comprehensive immigration reform, end the war in Iraq... We will have to take the lead, if we don't the Democrats will weaken under corporate pressure" said the union leader. I firmly believe the unions have to invest more and more into organizing, regardless of the law; it is our responsibility (Muñoz, 2008: 1).

Durazo committed herself to the "Fast for Our Future," to remind Latinos and others of the importance of voting, alongside an array of diverse constituencies, including "immigrants rights, clergy, youth, and labor activists." Their goal in the fast was to motivate one million people to "vote for immigrant rights, to fast one day, [and] to mobilize others to support the campaign, and to work on the issue after the election" (Muñoz, 2008: 2).

Durazo's actions have been consistent with those of her husband Miguel Contreras, and his effort to work alongside immigrant rights organizers in Los Angeles. While her commitment to immigrant rights is unquestionable, what is questionable from the perspective of grassroots organizers in Los Angeles is that unlike her husband she has

failed to work consistently with the traditionally radical and militant faction of the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles. The LACFL seldom collaborates with traditional and or community-based immigrant rights organizations besides CHIRLA and or CARECEN, and this failure may explain some of the divisions between the immigrant rights and labor movements. These divisions are discussed and further explored in ensuing chapters.

The positions on immigration reform that LACFL took in January 2007, when it signed onto the Unity Blueprint was discarded later that year when *Somos America*, or the We Are America Coalition, that was comprised of the moderate groups in Los Angeles and across the US embraced the enforcement driven legislative proposals introduced by Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL). The LACFL typically collaborates with Cardinal Mahony of the Los Angeles Dioceses, CHIRLA, CARECEN, and most recently some Mexican hometown associations and organizations, and of course other individuals that are closely allied with the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles such as its political son Gilbert Cedillo, who has a fulltime representative, Arturo Chávez, that works closely with the labor consortium.

In general, whether under the direction of Durazo or someone else, the LACFL typically chooses to work apart from the traditional community-based immigrant serving organizations and other similar groups except for a few high-profile situations like *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*. After the short-lived collaborations in 2006 between the illiberal and liberal factions, and after the antipolice coalition that followed the events of May 1st, 2007, the most recent time that unity was forged among the multitude of

immigrant rights organizations and activists in Los Angeles was in September 2007 after Elvira Arellano was arrested leaving the *Placita Olvera* Church. Prior to her arrest Arellano had been in sanctuary in the Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, Illinois, for over a year for defying an immigration order of deportation. She came to California to march with us but was followed out of *La Placita* by ICE agents and surrounded before being taken directly to Tijuana, México.

The “We Are All Elvira and Saulito Unity Coalition”⁵⁸ was formed immediately following her arrest, comprised of a wide array of immigrant rights organizations, which included the LACFL. Together the Coalition called for a national day of action, which included a vigil, a boycott that would demand the stop to the no match letter campaign, an immediate stop to the raids and deportations, and for no 15 year wait for a green card, the coalition demanded immediate legalization.⁵⁹ However, this collaboration was short-lived as well. What did emerge and is still operating today is a home of refuge in Arellano’s name. Immediately after Arellano’s arrest, Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres promptly facilitated a stay for her with Saucedo’s brother Felipe, an attorney in Tijuana. In December 2007, they and other members of *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*,

⁵⁸ *Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*, UNITE HERE, SEIU 1877, *Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, Father Luis Angel Nieto, Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish, Father Richard Estrada, Father Giovanni Bizotto, CLUE, NALACC, One-LA IAF, Latinos Against the War, International Action Center, UCLA Labor Center, Anti Raids Network, COFEM, CARECEN, MIWON, New Sanctuary Movement, FOMUSA, PWC, KIWA, NDLON, IDEPSCA, SALEF, APALC, BAYAN-USA, May 1st National Movement, UFW, Dolores Huerta Foundation, FMLN, *Casa El Salvador*, CA Dream Network/Wiseup, UCLA Students for a Democratic Society, The Wall-*Las Memorias*, Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, *Adelante*, ACLU of Southern California, Latino Movement USA, *Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana*, Immediate Response Network, and the Pomona Economic Opportunity Center, March 25th Coalition, CHIRLA, We Are America Coalition.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

including myself assisted in establishing “*La Casa Refugio de Elvira Arellano*,” in Tijuana for other deported women and children.

Although the LACFL has continued working on immigrant rights in Los Angeles, it has chosen to work closely with mostly moderate and conservative organizations. This has prevented an opportunity for collective mobilization that would have been enhanced in immeasurable ways but it would take the type of leadership such as was provided by Contreras in forging the two factions.

In 1994, for instance, under the leadership of Cedillo it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised to fund the mobilization of an estimated 150,000 in downtown Los Angeles. This did not occur in 2006, despite the work that was being done by the moderate faction. There is reason to believe as noted by Angela Sanbrano, Director of the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, that the Movement was “caught off guard.”⁶⁰ It would certainly been a different story had there been a figure like Cedillo in the Labor Movement, with ties to the Immigrant Rights Movement, been at the helm during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*.

In the following chapters, I will discuss how even after being caught off guard, the efforts of the moderate faction to undermine the mobilization efforts of the grassroots sector included holding back funding, failing to produce security volunteers, and refusing to partake in collaborative press conferences. This created an atmosphere of competition that in some respects may have also been part of the impetus for the mass mobilization.

⁶⁰ Interviewee Angela Sanbrano, former director of the Central American Resources Center in Los Angeles, and current director of the National Association of Latin Americans, Latinos and Carribeans.

In some cases, the moderate faction publicly takes absolute credit for the mass attendance at an afternoon rally it organized in the Wilshire District on May 1st, 2006, in opposition to the *Gran Paro Americano 2006*, specifically for those individuals who went to work, school, and bought and sold, and who still wished to participate in “something.” Though *Somos America* never publicly admitted its miniscule numbers at the beginning of the rally, one eyewitness estimated to be approximately 3-5,000,⁶¹ and in comparison to the nearly two million marchers on March 25th, 2006, and over a million again earlier that day. The 500,000 individuals that ended up by the rally’s end were marchers that had apparently boycotted and marched at the noon march and rally at city hall that the grassroots sector organized in Downtown for boycotters.

Essentially, when the afternoon rally was over, at least half of that mass of people marched five miles west to the opposition rally some of them had already coined “*La Marcha de los Cobardes*.”⁶² Jorge Rodríguez, a former *Casista* and unionist who played a key role in the logistics of the 2006 mobilizations reported that SEIU labor leader Mike García, a longtime LACFL associate, offered his taciturn concession. García admitted that if it were not for the work of the more progressive faction mobilizing the boycott and mobilizing the million plus to Downtown again, their work would have been a failure—referring to the late afternoon rally the moderate faction now known as *Somos America*, organized in opposition to the *Gran Paro Americano 2006*.⁶³ Marchers rallied In Orange

⁶¹ Celia Garza, daughter of longtime Socialist Worker’s Party member Virginia Garza, both attended the afternoon rally and arrived early enough to witness logistical preparations, and stayed through the program.

⁶² “March of the Cowards,” referencing the fact that they had organized the march in opposition to the May 1st, 2006 boycott instructing individuals not to buy, sell, go to work, or to school.

County until at least 10PM and in other cities where the police ultimately asked for the crowds to disperse without incident.

United Farm Workers Union (1965)

The agricultural struggle in California existed long before the Delano Strike in 1965, the Native Americans formed the state's first cheap labor pool, then were replaced by the Chinese until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, then the Japanese until the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907 (Meier & Rivéra, 1972). Years before the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) was established *Mexicanos* had formed a slew of unions. Some of these included the Mexican Workers Union in Imperial Valley in 1933, the Mexican Agricultural Workers Union in 1934, *Union de Campesinos y Obreros* active through 1935, Union of Mexican Workers active in 1936, Laborers & Field Workers organized in 1937, and in Los Angeles County the Federation of Agricultural Workers Union of America was formed in 1936, and was comprised of *Mexicanos*, Filipinos, and American fieldworkers (Forbes, 1973). Despite these labor antecedents to the UFW, it was not until the *Filipinos* and *Mexicanos* galvanized their efforts in 1965 that they made their mark on labor history, when they called for the Delano Strike.

Before the Delano Strike however, traditional Mexican America leaders in Madera, CA accused Chávez who was working with the Community Service Organization of being a Communist for his organizing tactics. His response was to oust the lot of them, and so he supplanted the CSO executive board with farmworkers having learned a lesson not to trust the "middle class" to support grassroots organizing (Griswold

⁶³ Interviewee Jorge Rodriguez, former Casista, labor activist, and March 25th Coalition member.

del Castillo & García, 1995). The Communism issued plagued Chávez for many years, and he sought in every way possible to distance him from the “reds.” The UFW expunged all of its communist-leaning members and it has numerous confrontations with the Socialist Workers Party at the height of the Chicano Movement (Gomez Quiñones, 1994). The disdain that Chávez had for leftists was most likely the result of his early organizing days alongside anticommunist Fred Ross.

Through the 1950s, Chávez continued organizing with CSO where he was confronted for the first time with the effects of the *braceros* being imported to undermine the efforts of lemon pickers in Oxnard, CA. The workers complained that the *braceros* were taking their jobs, and according to Griswold de Castillo and García (1995), he began confronting the issue on various fronts. Chávez boycotted local merchants that benefitted from the corrupt system, picketed a meeting in Ventura County when the secretary of labor, James Mitchell appeared, and orchestrated sitdown strikes in the fields to challenge the hiring of the imported laborers. He toiled for years alongside UFW members against the *Bracero* Program and got his break when it was banished in 1964, coincidentally a year before his most notable action.

By 1958, statewide efforts to organize farmworker unions were well underway and Dolores Huerta, an “outspoken,” “dynamic,” “assertive,” and “aggressive...housewife with several children...[who was] completing her college degree,” and who also later became “Chávez’ most trusted associate,” was part of those efforts (Griswold del Castillo & García, 1995: 30, 31). A year later, Huerta and Father McCullough had convinced the AFL-CIO to organize the Agricultural Workers

Organizing Committee (AWOC), which supported hundreds of strikes in the early 1960s. In addition, from within its ranks emerged Larry Itliong, a Filipino worker who built an alliance with Chávez on September 8th, 1965, which led to the beginning of the grape strike and boycott that propelled both of them into national prominence (Griswold del Castillo & García, 1995).

At a MAPA annual convention in 1965, Chávez (2002) reported that the United Farm Workers Association picketed the organization because it was recruiting Mexican laborers on behalf of farmers. This sentiment exacerbated when then president of MAPA Eduardo Quevedo was named as a special consultant to the US Department of Labor to ensure that Spanish-speaking workers were represented. The position of the UFW, which only worsened against *Mexicano* laborers, was that their lack of English proficiency prevented them from bargaining adequately. Chávez further reported that when Quevedo attempted to give Huerta the floor at the convention to “diffuse the situation,” she “blasted” MAPA for contributing to the “*bracero* evil,” and demanded for the organization to back off and leave the bargaining with agribusiness to groups like the UFW. The antiimmigrant position that the UFW cadre embraced eventually crystallized into a very unpopular position amongst proimmigrant *Mexicano* activists, and led many to leave the ranks of the UFW in the early 1970s and join organizations that sought to organize undocumented workers.

In 1965, the United Farm Workers Association formed and struck Central Valley farmers by refusing to pick their Californian table grapes to get recognition of their union efforts and to guarantee a safe job and decent wage, which garnered them support from

liberal churches and an array of civil rights groups, and eventually organized labor. In short, the UFW strike quickly captured the “attention, sympathy, and support” of the nation (Servín, 1974). Servín pointed out that the nonviolent manner in which the strike was conducted, and the fact that the only organization that backed Chávez was the *Filipino Agricultural Workers organizing Committee*, rendered all these strikers much respect, especially Chávez.

Through 1965 to 1975, the organizational structure of the UFW had a major influence on Mexican politics, and essentially drew many young Chicano activists from both rural and urban areas into its fold, many Mexican activists from the center to the left and regardless of their political affiliation supported the farmworker struggle (Gomez Quiñones, 1990). Whether or not it was over the positions against other *Raza*, namely undocumented workers, its ranks plummeted from its high point of 40,000 workers and 180 contracts to approximately 15,000 workers and only 40 contracts, and the membership even dropped further to 6,000 workers by 1975, then rose, and dropped again in 1979 (Gomez Quiñones, 1994). Between 1973 and 1974, the UFWA staff organized “wetlines” along the Mexican-US border near Yuma, AZ, and San Luis Colorado, Baja California, to impede *Mexicano* immigrant labor from crossing into the US. Gomez Quiñones claimed there were reports of violence and allegations of torture from both sides during this period.

By the 1980s the UFW organization had dwindled because of internal problems that caused Larry Itliong to leave in the early 1970s and at a convention in 1981, 50 of 350 delegates walked out and were fired, and later sued by the UFW president for libel.

Between 1980 and 1985 the UFW was heavily involved with national Democratic Party politics, offering up volunteers and donating up to \$625,000 in one year, and during boycotts it was no longer counting on volunteers, it had relied heavily on computerized direct mail campaigns (Gomez Quiñones, 1994). Today it is a mere shadow of what it once was but it “continues to its strong support for world peace [and] the rights of decent living standards, civil rights, and sound ecological practices” (255) under the leadership of Arturo Rodríguez, since the untimely death of Chávez in 1993. In the César’s spirit, the work that he envisioned continues.

In retrospect it is clear that Chávez’ overall strategy was essentially reformist, in that he never called for the overthrowing of the government but he did wish that *La Causa* would ultimately instigate a cultural revolution, knowing it would be hard work and improbable given the image of the culture of violence that already existed in the minds of Americans toward *Mexicanos* (Orozco, 2008). Orozco ultimately claimed that in no way did Chávez believe that *Mexicano* and or Chicano culture was devoid of violence either but that the ultimate goal was to create a culture of peace and to build a better world.

In essence, he believed that the goal of a social justice movement was to challenge the “myth of violence” by creating alternative nonviolent ways to garner “power and authority.” He believed that *La Causa*’s strength was in giving the people this option stating, “If we provide alternatives for our young...perhaps fewer...will seek their manhood in affluence and war...*La Causa* organizing [is] difficult work...[it is an] elusive task of getting people together—to act together and to produce something”

(Orosco, 2008). In his view, organizing would delimit the chances for the engagement of violence, and at the same time create a revolutionary change to the violence he witnessed in the world, inevitably creating an opportunity to change the world and the injustices that plagued it. Ideally, the nonviolence mantra under which the UFW organized was clearly conveyed to the masses, but apparently, some UFW organizers did not get the memo.

An issue that has represented a “black eye” in the history of the UFW was the violence that it perpetrated, despite its nonviolence mantra under which broad participation and empathy was garnered by organizations inside and outside of the Chicano civil rights struggle. Jeri Taylor, an Indio resident, questioned a new documentary being filmed on the plight of Chávez and the *campecinos*, asking if the truth will be revealed or will the onesided history book on Chávez continue to be propagated in our schools. Taylor asked “Will the documentary show packing houses set afire? Will it show thousand-dollar tractor tires slashed to ribbons in the dark or night? Will it show a local farmer who didn’t even grow grapes being hauled out of his pickup and beaten because he dared to speak against César Chávez at church?” (2008: A15). This account evinces the longstanding animosity that still exists toward the *Campechino* Movement, and brings to light the fact that some UFW members were suspected of engaging in violence in farming communities.

Taylor further questioned the UFW mantra by recalling the times when the “Chávez henchman” arrived in town. Taylor’s son worked in a sporting goods store during the height of the farmworker struggle and recalled “...oddly enough, every

baseball bat sold out as soon as they arrived. When one watches the assaults and mayhem that occurred in the fields it was obvious the baseball bats were not being used on a baseball diamond.” (2008: A15). With the aforementioned nonviolence mantra, it is difficult to believe that Chávez would personally engage in these types of violent acts toward others and or their properties.

While there are certainly accounts that would support Taylor’s version, Acuña maintains that (2007) the violence was self-defense. When the Teamsters declared war on Chávez and the UFW in the Imperial Valley, near Indio, the Seafarers Union offered to “get rid of the thugs” but Chávez’ commitment to nonviolence prohibited him from fighting back. Maybe sugarcoated to some extent, but certainly self-defense is much more commonsensical explanation for the violence. The Teamsters had no qualms about employing violence against the UFW, eventually fighting took place, many UFW members were arrested and two were killed before Chávez called off the Schenley Strike in the Imperial Valley and initiated a boycott (Gomez Quiñones, 1994). Gomez Quiñones further reported that during these 1972 events the UFW singled out *Mexicano* workers for the Union’s aggravation, getting behind the Dixon Arnett Bill in CA that would implement employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers and, that the UFW’s operations resembled those of a “...theater of war, with several fronts and multiple logistical and deployment problems (1994: 248).

In Downtown Los Angeles, similar accounts of violence were documented. Former CASA member and UFW activist in Blythe, CA, Ramon “Chunky” Sánchez,”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Interviewee Ramon “Chunky” Sánchez, former Casista, Chicano activist and musician.

now residing in San Diego reported that during his tenure as secretary at the CASA offices in Pico Union LA, the UFW barged into the CASA offices armed with baseball bats. His account places Dolores Huerta there and he claimed that from his perception they were there for no other purpose than to rumble with *Casistas*. Juan José Gutierrez, former *Casista* and long time immigrant rights advocate, has a similar recollection of the incident, "...all of a sudden someone came running up the stairs to the hall saying hey man come on down because the UFW and the Teamsters are coming and carrying bats and all that; it almost reminded me of a gang situation."⁶⁵

Chunky Sánchez further reported that Bert Corona defused the situation by inviting the UFW members into their weekly Friday night meeting and began asking them, "Do you all have *papeles*?"⁶⁶ Some responded in the negative, he then asked, "*Pues que hacen*?"⁶⁷ He invited them to sit down and be a part of the *proceso*.⁶⁸ They did. According to Sánchez, after this engagement between the antiimmigrant and proimmigrant factions of the Chicano civil rights struggle, it started becoming clearer to organizers on both sides, but it took years before Chávez would change his antiimmigrant position.⁶⁹

The UFW's position on the undocumented worker is clearly another black eye to Chicano history that the legacy of the UFW has left behind. Pulido (2007) posited that

⁶⁵ Interviewee Juan José Gutierrez, former *Casista* and long time immigrant rights advocate

⁶⁶ Proof of citizenship by proper documentation

⁶⁷ Well what are you doing?

⁶⁸ Process

⁶⁹ Interviewee Ramon "Chunky" Sánchez, former *Casista*, Chicano activist and musician.

many Chicano organizations, including the UFW, viewed immigrant laborers as a problem rather than as potential organized workers. What is most tragic about this position are the negative actions that the UFW took to stop the workers from crossing the “wetline” at the Mexican-US border. Gutierrez stated that, “Bert Corona was unable to have good relations with César Chávez as a result of that conflict, I think that nothing exemplifies that sad state of Chicano politics than the fact that in the 1970s the UFW took the position that the undocumented were scabs and that they were destroying the organizing efforts of the UFW.”⁷⁰ Gutierrez claimed that,

...as a result of [the conflict] it was necessary to prevent [mainly Mexican immigrant workers] from coming into the country, [so] I guess the only effective way that they could come up with was to [do] one better than the Minutemen. They sent Manuel Chávez...the brother of César Chávez to lead UFW organized commandos that started patrolling the border area between México and the United States [near] Calexico...and actually proceed[ed] to arrest undocumented workers, they would...handcuff them and turn them over to immigration authorities, that is an ugly stain in the history of the Chicano Movement.⁷¹

In retrospect, interviewee José Calderón, a student of Cesar Chávez, was more forgiving on his mentor’s position. He stated, “César was caught in the middle between being a union leader, and the Chicano Movement wanting him as a leader. César would say the INS would be in collusion [with agribusiness, and] that they would literally open the gates or the doors of the border to allow those workers to be brought in [atop] trucks and break the strikes.”⁷² As such Calderón continued,

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Interviewee Juan José Gutierrez, former Casista and long time immigrant rights advocate

César to me got caught in a...very difficult position where on the one hand the people would push him, we got a deal with the scabs. [Then telling him] we can't talk to them, they're scabs... [while he is] trying to win them over. I think he made some mistakes, but you know even Bert says in his book, that ultimately in the end César came out very strongly against the *Bracero* Program and then came out in support of immigrant workers in the union, clearly shifted to organize immigrant workers, undocumented workers.⁷³

The work of the UFW struggle continues to the present, and in the spirit of brother Chávez, the organization has brought much peace and justice to countless working poor immigrants. Regardless of the actions he commanded against *Mexicano* immigrants, he had the “Chicano” worker at the top of his agenda, working to better the lives of the US-born *Mexicano*. It was an absurd position that boggles the mind to even comprehend how someone of his stature, in the midst of injustice and the struggle for basic civil and human rights, could circumvent the right to work for the undocumented worker.

Especially because they are workers only differentiated by an illogical political boundary that has been used for centuries now to pit one group of worker against another, like between the *Filipino* and *Mexicano* conflicts that predated the Delano Strike.

Unfortunately, the UFW today advocates for guestworker programs and a pathway to citizenship, and as I point out in the next chapter, in some respects it still has postured itself against the leftist faction of the immigrant rights struggle in LA.

The National Council of La Raza (1968)

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR), founded first in 1968 as the Southwest Council of La Raza (SWCLR), is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt

⁷² Interviewee José Calderón, former CASA member, longtime immigrant rights activist and cofounder of the Latin@ Roundtable in the Inland Empire's Westend, Pitzer College Sociology and Chicano Studies professor, and like for Fabian Nunez, Jose is my initial mentor in the immigrant rights struggle.

⁷³ Ibid.

organization headquartered in Washington, DC. It is the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the US, and seeks to work for the improvement of opportunities for Latinos in the US, and has regional offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Long Beach, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

It also claims that through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations (CBOs), NCLR reaches millions of Latinos each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia (NCLR, 2009). To achieve its mission, NCLR embarks upon applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino point of view in five fundamental areas—assets and or investments, civil rights, which includes immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health (NCLR, 2009). In general, its CBOs provide capacity building assistance at the state and local levels to advance opportunities for individuals and families

Preceding the emergence of Southwest Council of *La Raza*, Ernesto Galarza who had been organizing for the UFW, and was working alongside Bert Corona in MAPA and CSO as well was greatly concerned with making organization like these more responsive and committed to grassroots needs. Meeting in hotel rooms beginning in 1965, Bert Corona recounted that he, Galarza, Herman Gallegos, Jimmy Delgado, Hector Abeytia, Nacho López, Ed Quevedo, all involved in MAPA and CSO, would discuss how to expand the political organization of the Spanish-speaking. They agreed that essentially electing a surname was not enough, they had to be held accountable to them and to the people, to carry out a program in their interest, and if not, then would defeat them if they

“compromised or equivocated” (García, 1994). They wanted an organization that in the fields would take the form of a “union,” and in the *barrios* would involve itself as a “strong barrio organization,” one that would represent the poor, and assist them in organizing around the issues that affect them.

According to Corona, Galarza believed that in urban areas this organization would have to go beyond MAPA and CSO to reach every “nook and cranny” of the *barrios*. Galarza was bent on “establishing *concilios*, or councils, everywhere—around churches, the Boy Scouts, the teachers, and existing organizations...[to] meet regularly to discuss common problems and to plan a strategy for combating the establishment” (García, 1994). Ironically, NCLR discarded this strategy over the years and the organization now seeks to protect its corporate interests first, working well within the “establishment.”

The group of Latino activists organized a group called the Mexican-American Unity Council in 1966, patterned after Galarza’s concept but it was predicated from bottom up on organizing, especially adopting the ideas of Paolo Freire, liberation theology, and *comunidades de base*, which meant organizing and channeling the power of the community. Corona noted that in the following years at an El Paso convention Galarza raised the cry of “*Raza Unida*,” supplanting the Mexican American Unity Council with the idea of the Southwest Council of La Raza. This resulted in the birth of a new organization, and soon after Galarza sold the concept to the Ford Foundation, which put up the money to establish the SWCLR (García, 1994). Corona observed that “...the problem here was that despite the good intentions of Galarza and others such as Maclovio Barraza, who was appointed executive director, they in the end were beholden to the Ford

Foundation...[which] limited the effectiveness and autonomy of the group and steered it toward more of an establishment perspective” (García, 1994: 229). Within six months, Galarza was thoroughly disappointed and eventually decreased his participation in the SWCLR.

Gomez Quiñones (1990) supported Corona’s claims but added that unions and some churches also contributed a modicum of funding to SWCLR, adding that the initial objective for the organization was targeting Anglo power structures and neighborhood maintenance and civic organizational enhancement for Latinos. Gomez Quiñones added that in 1972, SWCLR became the NCLR under the leadership of Ernesto Galarza. He asserted that it continued to advocate for the “...integration of Chicano interests into all major facets of society and for providing coordination or clearinghouse activities as well as dissemination of information...NCLR was projected as the national pan-organization vehicle for the community and as the major voice of advocacy” (1990: 110).

Its resources were to be used to mobilize projects initiated at the local level, yet the organization did not have the leadership or financial support to carry this optimum goal out, and because of this arrangement, the leadership it did have necessarily adjusted its role and “It became more frequently a liaison office for federal agencies, gathering data and issuing statement on current issues or on pending legislation...insiders believed that ‘economic’ efforts, rather than [NCLR’s] more idealistic and overarching goals, were the key to future empowerment” (Gomez Quiñones,1990: 111). By the time it came under the leadership of Raul Izaguirre, who was previously affiliated with the GI Forum, it became widely recognized as a lobby group and intermediary between “corporations

and the community.” As a result, following its organizational shifts a conservative and corporative-oriented stand has ultimately supplanted NCLR’s “moderate reformist posture” and energetic advocacy mission.

In general, on immigration reform and legislation NCLR’s conservative stand has proven to undermine the interest of *Mexicanos* and other Latinos in the US. After the struggle to end the *Bracero* Program, through the 1970s and 80s, there was a flurry of statewide and federal immigration legislation battles and NCLR joined traditional immigrant serving organizations like *La Hermandad*, legal, religious and ethnic organizations in the National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices, to confront the legislative attacks against immigrants (García, 1994). Corona recounted that the fight against the Simpson Mazzoli legislation, that would have left thousands of undocumented immigrants out in the cold if passed prematurely, and would have imposed employer sanctions as well, was won in 1982 and 84, and by 1986 NCLR and church groups acquiesced to the revised legislation citing “...that this was better than nothing” (García, 1994: 317). The compromise left thousands of individuals that had been living in the US unable to adjust their citizenship thus leaving them vulnerable to deportation.

Although moderate groups have openly advocated for intraethnic solidarity, and both civil and labor rights for Latino immigrant groups across the Americas, when the time arises for its true unwavering allegiance and seeking to best protect the interest of its constituents, NCLR has yet to deliver fully, especially after it supported the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). For mostly poor and desperate

undocumented Latinos from Mexico and Central America coming north because NAFTA, and other neoliberal unfair trade agreements undermined their ability to earn a living at home, and leaving them little or no choice than to come north or perish (Lendman, 2007).

Despite the promises made for higher wages and employment opportunities, during NAFTA's history millions of jobs have disappeared and real wages as a result of a globalized market system crafted for investor elites to profit at the expense of ordinary working people paying the price (Bacon, 2008; Lendman, 2007). Lendman reported that they have been devastated hugely by a sustained massive wealth transfer to the top of the economic pyramid that in the US alone has been a generational process toppling well over a \$1 trillion annually to corporations and the richest 1% (Lendman, 2007).

On the one hand, it makes sense why NCLR would embrace a corporate-oriented program like NAFTA at the expense of Latino immigrants for which it purports to advocate but on the other, the NGO has compromised them to another *Bracero* like program in the past five years under corporate-oriented legislation such as S2611, the Strive Act, and now the Comprehensive Immigration Reform—America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009, all of which would have criminalized undocumented in the least, and exploited them in guestworker type programs at best.

The corporate-oriented, NCLR has strongly opposed efforts to make state and local police responsible for the enforcement of federal immigration laws citing the detriment to the Latino community, and the erosion of the relationship between the immigrant and law enforcement communities, translating into reporting fewer crimes and

the rise in racial profiling and other civil rights violations (NCLR, 2009b). The one high profile struggle in which it was involved was the “Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act” (CLEAR Act) introduced in 2003 and reintroduced in 2005. As amendments to other bills, its provisions have been introduced every year since. In general, these bills and amendments would give state and local police officers the authority to enforce all federal immigration laws, give financial incentives to states and localities to comply criminalize all immigration law violations, and place the names of any individuals believed to be in violation of immigration laws in the National Crime Information Center database (NCLR, 2009b).

Nevertheless, this shows how NCLR and other likeminded Mexican American-serving organizations typically seek to reform from within the establishment instead of advocating the eradication of all repressive measures against its constituents, especially coming from the Department of Homeland Security, and its efforts to further criminalize the undocumented community. Like the conversation I had with Gabriela Lemus, I also had a conversation turn revelation for me at the time it occurred. When a group of us went to lobby against S2611, a corporate bill supported by NCLR, the Service Employees International Union, UNITE-HERE, and other NGOs, we went to the Minority Leader, Harry Reid (D-NV), office to inform them of our disdain for that bill and that the position of the grassroots sector of the Immigrant Rights Movement was to kill it. Marcela informed me that she was not aware of our position.

In fact, she noted that they always listened to the position that NCLR was offering. This made sense given the geographical proximity of NCLR and ties between

the two offices. The young Marcela also confided to us that she had worked for NCLR in the past before coming to work for Senator Reid. The revelation clearly was that NCLR holds much weight in DC but among many immigrant rights activists, there is much disparagement still toward the organization that rarely now follows the main tenets against the establishment and for the people who are its constituents.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (1968)

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) was founded in 1968 during one of America's darkest hours. After Dr Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy, two of the greatest civil rights advocates, were assassinated (MALDEF, 2009). Both MALDEF and the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP) were products of the Southwest Council of *La Raza*, and more significantly outgrowths of the Chicano Movement. Both organizations strove to bring about change from within the system (Rosales, 1996). Lawyers Pete Tijerina and Gregory Luna to create a ray of hope that was to fulfill the critical needs for the nation's growing Latino community secured seed funding for the new organization.

The MALDEF has strived to implement programs structured to engage Latinos in mainstream American political and socioeconomic life by providing better educational opportunities; encouraging their participation in all aspects of society while offering a positive vision of their future. MALDEF's unique approach also aims to combine advocacy, educational outreach, and litigation strategies to achieve socioeconomic change (MALDEF, 2009). The MALDEF has subsequently become the nation's leading non-profit Latino legal organization, and is often described as the "law firm of the Latino

community,” which promotes equality and justice through litigation, advocacy, public policy, and community education in the areas of employment, immigrants’ rights, voting rights, education, and language rights (MALDEF, 2009). In its past however, the organization was heavily involved in documenting police abuse and violence against the Chicano community, and advocated for it in a letter it presented to the US Attorney General. In 1978 it documented 16 deaths of Chicanos along the border carried out by rank and file law enforcement officers, which in its view had reached epidemic proportion in the Southwest (Mirandé, 1987).

Currently headquartered in Los Angeles, MALDEF is headed by a President and General Counsel and is governed by a 30-member national Board of Directors, all of which operate four regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Washington DC (MALDEF, 2009). Gonzales (2000) posited that not all community organizations were operated by working class individuals (i.e., LHMN or CASA), but that organizations like MALDEF were founded by professional *Mexicanos*. It is obvious that MALDEF was lofted to prominence because of these individual’s ability to secure private funding, which translated to winning cases, coupled with the ability to attain employed leadership that shared the organization’s mission to mobilize upwardly the Latino community through civil rights-oriented litigation and economic advocacy.

The MALDEF’s historically acclaimed legal victories have protected the Latino vote by safeguarding communities from at-large redistricting systems, secured free public education for all schoolchildren regardless of their parent’s immigration status, struck down a Texas law that allowed districts to charge tuition to children of undocumented

immigrant parents (MALDEF, 2009). It also reversed a Texas Congressional redistricting plan, which resulted in new lines drawn for the 23rd Congressional District and a special election resulting in the Latino community having the opportunity to elect its candidate of choice to Congress (Rosales, 1996). Rosales (1996) claimed that the combined efforts of the SVREP, and the MALDEF have worked to register and mobilize the Mexican American vote, while litigationally protecting and assuring the rights enveloped in the electoral system guaranteed by the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Essentially, it sought to empower the Mexican American community through litigation, advocacy, and leadership development on issues that affected children and immigrants.

Chapter Summary

In their comfort zone, the Mexican American organizations that organized post WWII stayed on track in terms of fighting for the civil rights of US-born *Mexicanos*. The moderate and patriotic line these groups took during the early and mid20th century focused largely on electoral politics; specifically, running campaigns for Latino candidates across the Southwest. These groups had a myopic view that included only advocating for the rights of their own, thus marginalizing their México-born counterparts, mostly factory workers, and *campesinos*. This is perhaps the most prominent reason that immigrant-oriented organizations began formally organizing in the mid20th century to stand truly for the individuals marginalized by these Mexican American organizations.

As exhibited in this chapter, it took years for Chávez to recant the position he and Dolores, among others like Marshall Ganz, and a slew of well recognized UFW organizers took. Corona recalled this moment, and forgave Chávez before they died.

Today, although criticized by many in the Immigrant Rights Movement for its lone mentality of only advocating for its members in the field, has in some regard had to readjust its position against immigrants because the lion's share of them are working undocumented. This has been the case of all the nongovernmental organizations like NCLR, LULAC, MALDEF, etc, most have had to on some level recant their antiimmigrant position and begin advocating for the millions of undocumented immigrants now among their constituencies, and because they now constitute a looming and mighty political voice, especially their US-born children.

Because the traditionally immigrant-serving organizations have not received corporate contributions, and or because politicians have not fully embraced them and supported them because of their leftist persuasion, they have not had the impact in DC, or even in local statewide politics that they deserve. For instance, the farmworker movement's second challenge, which favored agribusiness, was unlike its first "local fascist" one of the 1930s, because liberals and labor had formed a coalition that attacked the policies that affected farmworkers and provided extensive resources, and also because politicians were split on the farmworker question (Jenkins & Perrow, 2007).

The labor movement has had to change its position on the immigration question because many of its members are undocumented immigrants but primarily is its insatiable appetite for their membership dues. The Catholic Church in this vein is losing members, therefore its newest members have been newly arrived immigrants, and it has no choice but to fight for their rights. Moreover, Democrats and corporations fund and ultimately benefit from all of this process. The Democratic Party expects that when immigrants

adjust their status, they mostly register as Democrats. To protect the ruling class interests is most likely the political party in power, therefore its fight is for “votes.” For this reason, all of these organizations have all thrown much of their efforts on voter drives. This has been at the very core of the factional divide in the IRM, between these organizations that comprise the *corporatocracy*, and the leftist faction comprised of mostly grassroots community-based immigrant-serving organizations and coalitions.

The bottom line is that the lion’s share of the organizations in this chapter have mostly been privy to membership dues and offerings, but more substantially federal and private corporate contributions, consequently, however, attached to these contributions are the condition of having to follow the line that most represents the protecting the interests of the ruling class. For this reason they have “sold out” the immigrant community by acquiescing to policies that have opened the door to deeper repression such as employer sanctions, guestworker programs, and the further criminalization of the immigrant community. Their participation in the *Movimiento* is on one hand controversial because the NGOs truly do not have a direct line to the immigrant community, they essentially count on the local NGOs to claim they do, and the others have no choice.

The contentious divisions that occurred among immigrant rights organizers was clearly related to these old positions, and mostly because of the lack of insight among the moderate groups, the organizers in the Immigrant Rights Movement that were members of CASA, and of which were involved in the organizing efforts of *La Gran Epoca Primavera en Los Angeles 2006*. The moderate groups were caught with their head in the

sand. They had put all of their eggs in the Fox Bush talks basket, pushing for the guest worker program, but more so the Kennedy McCain legislative proposal during 2005, and other federal legislative proposals that would have been absolutely detrimental to the immigrant community nationwide.

The distinct positions enveloped in the political purview of these organizations came to loggerheads in terms of tactics and strategies where the boycott was concerned, and the April 10th mobilization that *Somos America* had in Downtown Los Angeles at the *Placita Olvera* Church. This mobilization was a sure fire sign that they were caught off guard. There was little evidence to show otherwise, especially because of the position that the democratic establishment including the mayor, senators, and the council, alongside Cardinal Mahony, and labor and immigrant rights leaders in their coalition took. It was obvious that the *pueblo* could see right through their unfortunate effort to steer the movement in their direction, for moderate and terrible legislative proposals that if passed would have been detrimental to the people. Nevertheless, this has been the moderate organizational structure of the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles and beyond.

PART II: CHAPTER FIVE

CONTEMPORARY LATINO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN LOS ÁNGELES

In the contemporary phase of the IRM, some coalitions in Los Angeles have coalesced into longstanding parts of the immigrant rights struggle. In other cases, temporary coalitions have formed between organizations struggling for immigrant rights, and closely related issues. In 2000, many unions finally felt inclined to participate fully in the immigrant rights struggle due in part to pragmatism and pressure from workers and immigrant rights activists (Ness, 2005). Even though some unions have reversed their earlier antiimmigrant stance, in recent years some of these unions have erroneously made precipitous concessions on the immigration issue that would only serve to undermine the best interest of immigrant workers. In particular, they have embraced a new-type of *Bracero* program that has been entrenched in recent immigration reform legislative proposals known as “guest worker programs.”

Because of unions’ support of such programs, there have emerged deep divisions between coalitions that represent the liberal and illiberal wings of the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles. This has played itself out in numerous ways not only in LA but also among the moderate wing of the IRM across the country. In this chapter, I examine the formation of coalitions for immigrant rights and the political divisions among immigrant rights groups, focusing especially on those led by Latinos, in Los Angeles between the mid1970s and 2006. I also discuss the organizations that have emerged from grassroots origins, recognizing that some no longer exist, while others

have institutionalized themselves into the national “nonprofit industrial complex” over the years, which are heavily tied to the Democratic Party and which together comprise the *corporatocracy*.

National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices (1978)

The Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices (NCFILP) was founded in 1978 amidst a flurry of antiimmigrant legislative proposals, which it organized against, continuing this work from its inception until the mid1980s (Gale, 2004). Bert Corona reported that the initial work of the NCFILP was against the Rodino Bill, which sought to impose employer sanctions for the first time in any federal immigration legislation. This work was carried out by various organizations and groups, including a network of *La Hermandades*, CASA, various church and welfare groups, and individuals and organizations in Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Maryland, as well as throughout the Southwest (García, 1994). According to Corona, this group formalized into the NCFILP and the foremost issue on its agenda was pressuring respective congressional representatives to reject the Rodino Bill in its entirety (García, 1994).

In Los Angeles, the *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma* (CASA) was one of the organizations involved in this effort after Bert Corona and Chole Alatorre left the organization in 1975. Working together in the NCFILP however, Corona and Alatorre, met at least once a month with the young *Casistas* (García, 1994). They did so even after

turning over the organization in late 1974 after they had both resigned.⁷⁴ According to Carlos Vasquez, the new leadership had shifted CASA's ideology "...from a defensive organization to an offensive and potentially clandestine organization prepared for a protracted struggle."⁷⁵ The organization continued to struggle against a myriad of causes and issues, and developed an effective voice in the newspaper *Sin Fronteras* (originally the organ of NCFILP), even after it had moved from San Antonio, *Tejas*, to Los Angeles in the mid1970s.⁷⁶

CASA continued to do important work in terms of organizing and defending immigrant workers, pushing individuals in the Chicano Movement to adopt a more progressive stance on immigrant workers. CASA did this mostly by organizing around antiimmigrant legislation, and essentially cofounding a national conference, while interacting with whites, which eventually led to the formation of NCFILP (Pulido, 2007). Pulido posited that this conference caused the discourse in the Chicano Movement to shift where immigrant rights were concerned, which caused the conferees to refocus their demands and call for amnesty for workers and an end to deportations. Over NCFILP's history, mostly moderate organizations waffled from this position while leftist grassroots organizations did not. The latter remained steadfast in their positions in support of amnesty and in opposition to guest worker programs, government raids to deport undocumented immigrants, and employer sanctions for employing undocumented

⁷⁴ Centro de Acción Autonomo Papers. Special Collections M0325. Page 2. Early Years. Online Archive of California. <<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/data/13030/hp/tf587004hp/files/tf587004hp.pdf>>. Retrieved February 3rd, 2010.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

workers. They felt that employer sanctions were an indirect class-oriented attack on the livelihood of the working poor.

This work is demonstrated best by Rosa Martha Zapata, an immigrant rights activist who has worked tirelessly with *braceros* on many issues including salary restoration for those who are still owed salaries from both the US and Mexican governments. She stated that:

When the leadership of the Movement began coming together to pressure for amnesty, it was a climate of collaboration. I remember there was more unity among the groups of organizations. We were more united. I remember how we worked with Bert Corona. We worked a lot with him to go to churches to build consciousness, to no longer tolerate the exploitation, so it was to unite the community and to organize.⁷⁷

Felipe Aguirre, former *Casista* and Maywood Mayor Protem, and now director of Pro Uno, recalls his attraction to NCFILP, the role amongst the leadership and the focus of *Sin Fronteras*:

I immediately got involved here in 1976, when [President Jimmy] Carter was President, and we began to fight for legalization. I came to head up a group called the National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices, which was at that time headquartered off of McBride Street in East LA. We were basically developing relationships with churches and other organizations to push for the rights of immigrants and against the raids that were taking place in factories. At that time CASA had a newspaper called *Sin Fronteras*, which was the first truly bilingual newspaper in the United States to educate the people about the rights of immigrants. We saw the rights of immigrants as the rights of all *Mexicanos*, whether they were born in the United States or outside. We were trying to get the immigrants to be accepted and this is the great problem we have today.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Interviewee Rosa Martha Zapata, an immigrant rights activist, musician, and codirector of *Libreria del Pueblo* in San Bernardino.

⁷⁸ Interviewee Felipe Aguirre, former *Casista* and director of community and immigrant serving Pro Uno, and now Maywood Councilmember and Mayor Protem.

Central American Resource Center (1983)

The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), founded in 1983, is an advocacy center for Central Americans in general and Salvadorans in particular and was organized in the aftermath of the civil war in El Salvador (Acuña, 1996). CARECEN has grown from an undersized human rights group with a staff of one and an annual budget of \$20,000, into a 30,000-square-foot immigrant-serving agency with a budget of \$1.4 million that serves 60,000 people each year via service, education, organizing, and advocacy in four areas: academic and cultural enrichment, legal services, civic participation and the day laborer program (CARECEN, 2008a).

In recent years, CARECEN has gone beyond its current services, "...and has begun to provide immigration legal services for victims of domestic violence in the form of relief under the Violence Against Women Act and the U Visa for victims of crime" (CARECEN, 2008b: 3). Currently a primary goal of the program is to assist victims of crime to adjust their citizenship status, garnering them a work permit under those conditions. In terms of protection, CARECEN's clients are usually able to then report abuse to the police without fear of being deported. In 2008, CARECEN submitted immigration petitions for more than 100 victims of domestic violence, thus giving them access to better jobs, economic freedom, and the opportunity to leave their abusive partners to ensure stability for their children (CARECEN, 2008b).

While CARECEN participated in the three major mobilizations in spring 2006, it left the March 25th Coalition immediately after *La Gran Marcha* (CARECEN, 2006). CARECEN certainly participated in the beginning with *La Placita Olvera Proimmigrant*

Working Group, the organization that morphed into the *Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill*⁷⁹ weeks before the *Gran Marcha*, and then evolved into the March 25th Coalition the following day at a debriefing meeting that took place in Monterey Park at Antonio Rodríguez⁸⁰ law office. But it abandoned the March 25th Coalition immediately following the *Gran Marcha*, and worked to forge a new coalition with organized labor, Catholic Church leaders, other nongovernmental organizations, some *federaciones*,⁸¹ and the Democratic Party in Los Ángeles.

The organization left the March 25th Coalition the Wednesday night following the *Gran Marcha*. At the beginning of the meeting at the *Placita* that night Angela Sanbrano, the director of CARECEN, was present and I was the facilitator. When I turned my back and began chalking in the agenda for the meeting, which I did at every meeting before, during, and after the *Gran Marcha*, with the exception of one meeting discussed in the following chapter, Sanbrano left. I turned around and never saw her again. In my mind, this was a clear indicator that we had lost any chance of collaborating with the conservative faction of the movement. That night, the point of contention at the top of the agenda was literally the “writing on the wall,” *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*. Along with her loss, the opportunity to debate appropriate timing and political readiness for the boycott was lost. Most of us already knew there would be criticism as in the statewide *Paro Economico 2003*, when Sanbrano, Angelica Salas on behalf of the

⁷⁹ See the original *Gran Marcha* posters.

⁸⁰ Interviewee Antonio Rodriguez, former CASA executive director, and longtime civil and defense attorney.

⁸¹ Mexican Hometown Associations

Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights in Los Angeles, various unions including the leadership of SEIU in Los Angeles and San Diego, and other conservative Latino Angelinos, declared that it was “not the time” for the boycott. CARECEN has nonetheless continued to do stellar work organizing the Central American community.

One Stop Immigration Center (1985)

A faction of CASA went on to form One Stop Immigration Center (OSIC) in LA, which has existed since the 1970s and was founded by Richard Alatorre as a community organization Model Cities Program and used to help immigrants legalize their status.⁸² This organization was once led by Juan José Gutierrez,⁸³ a legal counsel in East LA who now heads Latino Movement USA, a fringe group that works closely with antiwar ANSWER and the *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* faction. This was a natural progression for him because of the focus CASA had on workers. It was also a natural progression for some to remain integrated in immigrant serving agencies such as *La Hermandad Mexicana* and One Stop Immigration Center (Pulido, 2007).

Felipe Aguirre recollects, “CASA was done away with in the mid-1970s and four or five years later we got involved in One Stop Immigration. When IRCA was created, I was working in an organization called One Stop Immigration, and I was actually on the board.”⁸⁴ Aguirre further recalls getting involved with OSIC in 1985, when it was located at the Hispanic Urban Center, on 1st and Mission. He stated, “By the time I got

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Interviewee Juan Jose Gutierrez, former *Casista*, Legal Consultant in East LA, and head of Latino Movement USA,

⁸⁴ Interviewee Felipe Aguirre, former *Casista* and director of community and immigrant serving Pro Uno, and now Maywood Mayor Protem.

involved with the board by the invitation of Mario Vásquez, who I believe at that time was president of the board of One Stop, we were battling to maintain that organization and keep it alive, and to continue to provide services.”⁸⁵ The immigration law [IRCA] got signed and One Stop decided to make that a cornerstone of their operation and over the next two or three years were able to legalize about 35,000 immigrants in California.⁸⁶

Aguirre further called to mind OSIC’s focus on service expansion:

We took mass organizing politics into service delivery, we were providing services at a most inexpensive rate. I think we were charging \$200 to fill out their applications. So quickly, the organization was able to develop a large amount of customers using its services and we were able to provide services to people. And we were opening offices all around California from Oakland, San Jose, Fresno, all the way down to Escondido and National City, and different parts of LA, here in Huntington Park, and even at this location in Maywood.⁸⁷

These efforts clearly show that One Stop politics were distinctly different from the ones CASA chose to pursue. Instead of moving away from massively serving the community’s immigration-oriented needs, OSIC moved away from a more exclusive political orientation tied to *vanguardismo* to a more community-based orientation.

During the anti187 campaign, OSIC played an essential, but controversial, role. Alvaro Maldonado,⁸⁸ a member of the International Socialist Organization in Los Angeles, who also played a vital role during this campaign, recalled the political divisions between certain organizations tied to the grassroots sector, namely OSIC, and the moderate faction which included the National Council of *La Raza*. In some respects,

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Interviewee Alvaro Maldonado, longtime Los Angeles antiwar and immigrant rights activist, member of the International Socialist Organization, and main organizer of the anti187 mobilizations in the early 1990s.

the divisions between these two factions still exist today and became deepened around issues of strategies, tactics, and positions in the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles.

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (1986)

For the last quarter century, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) has fought for immigrant and refugee rights in Los Angeles and beyond. Immigrant rights advocates in Los Angeles united to confront the unique challenges prompted by the political and social struggles that plagued the immigrant community. One struggle was trying to adjust the status of undocumented immigrants after the passage of IRCA, and the other was the mass exodus of refugees and asylum seekers because of the civil wars in El Salvador and other Central American countries, and Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries (CHIRLA, 2006).

Under the direction of Father Luis Olivares, the Our Lady Queen of Angels Church at *La Placita Olvera* in downtown, along with the leadership of Father Gregory Boyle and the membership of the Dolores Mission on the eastside,⁸⁹ sanctuary was being provided to refugees facing deportation. While established organizations such as MALDEF were helping immigrants navigate the post-IRCA legalization process, and together these factors created an unprecedented need for coordination between direct service providers and advocacy groups (CHIRLA, 2006). To meet these demands in 1986 a steering committee with representatives from other organizations such as CARECEN, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and the LA Center for Law and Justice, convened CHIRLA under the fiscal sponsorship of the United Way (CHIRLA,

⁸⁹ Interviewee Father Gregory Boyle, then Clergy leader at the Dolores Mission, and now founder and director of East LA's Jobs for the Future, and *Homies Unidos*.

2006). Immigrant rights activists from across Southern California also played a vital role in the foundation of CHIRLA, and since its inception the majority has on some level played a role in the organization, or worked in conjunction with the organization.

This organization has, on the one hand stayed true to its roots in terms of organizing for the betterment of immigrants. However, its limited scope is linked to its alliance with other national moderate Latino-oriented corporately funded NGOs such as LULAC, MALDEF, and NCLR and of course, the Catholic Church and the LA Labor Movement as well as the Democratic Party. As a result, CHIRLA like other traditional immigrant rights organizations cannot demand full and immediate amnesty, an end to militarization of the border, or any other antiestablishment demands. As such, CHIRLA has transformed into a politically moderate assembly, which is, in many respects, criticized by other immigrant rights activists. In response to these activists, Angelica Salas, the current executive director of CHIRLA, argued that “...no matter what, we are all on the same side. Sometimes it appears that amongst activists in the *movimiento*, that we are just all trying to out left each other.”⁹⁰ Although numerous LA immigrant rights activists would take her contradictory political positions to task, few would be able to rival her dedication to immigrant rights activism since her arrival to the US (Ochoa, 2005).

Before becoming executive director in 1999, she served as the associate director and administrator. Under her watch, CHIRLA has helped to win in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students and along with other organizations has served to

⁹⁰ Interviewee Angelica Salas, director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, and immigrant rights activists since the 1980s soon after her family migrated to the US.

establish day laborer job centers that have served as a model for the rest of the nation.

According to the California Rural Legal Assistance Inc (CRLA), under Salas' leadership one of CHIRLA's "greatest accomplishments have been the transformation of a coalition of social service providers into an organization that empowers immigrants to engage in advocacy on their own behalf" (2007: 6). CRLA also cited Salas convening a coalition of organizations in Southern California, which "...successfully mobilized millions of immigrants to demand comprehensive immigration reform including legalization with a path to citizenship, family reunification, and the protection of civil and labor rights" (CRLA, 2007: 6).

CHIRLA in general, and Salas specifically, had little to do with turning out the millions of marchers on the streets of Los Angeles during spring 2006 but there is no doubt that CHIRLA and Salas participated once the efforts were well underway. In fact, many folks came forward to participate in the immigrant rights actions that spring. However, they immediately abandoned the popular efforts of the movement in the midst of the mobilizations, and began to work with a moderate coalition of labor, religious, and immigrant serving organizations in Los Angeles, which later became *Somos America*.

This coalition was comprised of politically moderate and tactically cautious organizations such as CHIRLA, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, the elite level of the Catholic Church and some apolitical organizations such as the *federaciones Mexicanas*⁹¹ motivated by its ties to the Democratic Party. While this coalition certainly had the resources to bring out millions to the streets, it seriously failed to produce those

⁹¹ hometown associations

numbers. Ironically, these groups were essentially caught “offguard” by the massive mobilizations against the draconian HR4437—an undertaking carried out by the traditionally illiberal organizations and activists in the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles. In the following chapters, I outline these historic events in detail.

The formation of CHIRLA also coincided with the realization that unions had been slow to organize the Los Angeles immigrant labor workforce. To fill this void, workers’ centers and other organizations across the Southland formed, such as the *Hermandades*, the Korean Workers Center, the Filipino Workers Center, the Association of Latin American Gardeners of Los Angeles, and the Garment Workers Center (Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008). According to Victor Narro, a longtime labor activist in LA with close affiliations to CHIRLA, the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center, and most recently with the National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON), who stated, “Immigrant workers are creating their own movement and creating their own union” (Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008: 103).

Pablo Alvarado, the shining star of the *Jornalero* Movement was voted one of America’s top Latinos, and as coordinator of NDLON is considered the César Chávez among *jornaleros*⁹² He has worked vehemently alongside CHIRLA organizers. Steptoe (2005) credited Alvarado with, among other victories, spearheading legal campaigns that have overturned ordinances across the country prohibiting “...day laborers from soliciting work in public places and with forming alliances on issues like better working

⁹² Mostly male Latino immigrants who assemble on street corners, offering to do odd jobs for minimal pay and who are oftentimes exploited by their employers and targeted by antiimmigrant protesters.

conditions and higher wages with union federations, which tend to see immigrants as competitors” (1).

This “movement,” independent from the traditionally established Labor Movement in LA, has grown substantially in terms of immigrant labor organizing in Southern California. This is exemplified in the struggle against labor related policies that have targeted day laborers since the rise of the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA) under the leadership of Veronica Federovsky⁹³ and Pablo Alvarado working in NDLO, amongst others. In 1997, CHIRLA formed an alliance with IDEPSCA to found the Los Angeles Day Laborer Program, which now runs eight day laborer sites across the Southland, providing better working conditions for the workers and more access to advancing their social and economic plight through popular education and organizing (Bacon, 2008). Its moderate political positions are recurrently overshadowed by its actual day-to-day work done by its organizers, and its work alongside other organizations. While CHIRLA credits itself for opening the first day labor site in the US, a questionable claim, its participation in day laborers’ struggle is not.

In 2001, after the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued its decision that it was violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendment rights of the day laborers to prohibit them from soliciting work. Solicitation of work by the day laborers was prohibited at that time by a Los Angeles County anti-solicitation ordinance. An alliance between CHIRLA and IDEPSCA, and MALDEF, which had won the legal victory, sent letters to cities and towns across Los Angeles County urging them to also repeal similar ordinances. The

⁹³ Interviewee Veronica Federovsky, Regional Director for National Day Labor Organizing Network, and former Institute of Popular Education of Southern California director.

alliance savored their win when the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department ordered its deputies to cease enforcing the ban (Fine, 2006). This victory was monumental for the *Jornalero* Movement, because in the ensuing years the alliance worked to “throw out” ordinances around Southern California through litigation and organizing—a charge that gave life and provided ample recognition to the participation of the maturing immigrant worker organization, NDLON.

CHIRLA has certainly been one of the closest immigrant rights allies to the LA Labor Movement, and Alvarado has been key to also engaging NDLON with the AFL-CIO. Both organizations recently advocated amnesty for all undocumented workers, a position that CHIRLA has never openly embraced. In fact, CHIRLA leaders and staff have typically sided with moderate national nongovernmental organizations with which it has collaborated for numerous years on issues of immigration. For this reason, this organization is considered to be politically moderate, and like its national counterparts, openly calls for a “pathway to citizenship” so as not to disturb the politically proverbial “hornet’s nest.” Nevertheless, the organization has worked on other immigrant-related struggles that are quite impressive.

These efforts are exhibited in CHIRLA’s “Wise Up,” immigrant youth leadership campaign to prepare them to become the next generation of leaders in the Immigrant Rights Movement that will seek justice and social change for immigrant Angelinos. The group cites its first campaign and victory as the passage of Assembly Bill 540, which allows for undocumented students to pursue a college education. Since then, it has committed itself to educating immigrant youth to outreach and to educate the community

with workshops, presentations, forums, trainings, and leadership development in specific areas of “...higher education justice, advocacy, direct action, and in-school organizing” (California Dream Network, 2009). More specifically, because they are “leaders of today, not tomorrow,” Wise Up currently teaches critical thinking, “...strategic planning, power analysis, public speaking, how to talk to a legislator, how to speak to the media, and about electoral power” (California Dream Network, 2009). This is work that is not only vital but also necessary to the future growth and development of immigrant rights organizers in Los Angeles.

Coalitions against California Proposition 187 (1994)

The coalitions that came together and worked against California Proposition 187 in the early 1990s built on the work already of the aforementioned organizations. While there has been no lack of organizations coming together in times of crises in Los Angeles, only a handful of individuals actually saw the importance of mobilizing against the impending legislative attack on immigrants’ rights by the right wing in California.⁹⁴ One of those individuals widely cited for his leadership during this period was Alvaro Maldonado, who worked collectively within a grassroots network of immigrant rights activists in Los Angeles, which included the Brown Berets. His work bridged across two factions, The National Coordinating Committee for Citizenship and Civic Participation, and the Los Angeles Organizing Committee. These were both distinct from the moderate faction’s coalition, Taxpayers Against 187, headed by Gloria Molina, which included MALDEF, CHIRLA, CARECEN, teachers, medical professionals, union activists, and

⁹⁴ Led by Orange County-based Barbara Coe, and the California Coalition for Immigration Reform.

others, took the position that mass mobilizations against 187 would “turn off” white voters (Acuña, 1996).

The Los Angeles Latino Establishment (1994)

While Miguel Contreras is celebrated for uniting the fractured progressive community in Los Angeles at the turn of the 21st century, where immigrant and labor rights were concerned, that unity clearly could not have been possible without the influence and ties to Latino politicians, now better known as the “Children of 187.” Senator Gilbert Cedillo, Assemblyman Kevin De Leon, former State Speaker Fabian Nuñez, Senator Gloria Romero, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and various other politicians were channeled into politics through the trajectory of the Chicano Movement, Immigrant Rights Movement, and the Labor Movement, then into the electoral arena. Most have remained allied with the moderate sector of the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles. But some like Maywood Protem Felipe Aguirre, did not take the route via the LACFL, working shoulder to shoulder with this unique group. Some Latino politicians have also been able to straddle the divide, working effectively with both the moderate and grassroots sectors of the Movement. Yet others, such as US Representatives Xavier Becerra, Linda and Loretta Sánchez, and now Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, did not come from the Movement and are still part of the Latino Establishment.

Arguably, these individuals have been able to influence statewide politics on issues of immigration such as the creation of a statewide task force on immigration by Gilbert Cedillo during the height of the struggle for immigrants’ rights to drivers’

licenses that he legislatively championed during the early 21st century. He was cautiously backed by both the moderate and grassroots sectors of the immigrant rights struggle in LA. José Calderón, former CASA member, longtime immigrant rights activist and cofounder of the Latin@ Roundtable in the Inland Empire's Westend, and Nuñez' adviser at Pitzer College, analyzed the stance taken by moderate organizations. He noted, "Their experience was that the unions have power and...still fight for immigrant rights...[then] how do we position [ourselves] in electoral positions and then fight for the *inmigrantes* and try and pass policies."⁹⁵

Calderón's personal experience mirrors Nuñez' because both had undocumented parents and their activism was based on their commitment to them, "So there's that combination of you know your life experience and then where your parents were and that sentiment. And that sentiment stays there, and now you're using a political arena to [advocate for immigrants]."⁹⁶ But it does not come without its price, "And so, you know I just see what they've done with the whole generation of Fabian Nuñez who has gotten attacked quite a bit and so has Antonio Villaraigosa, and even Gil [Cedillo] gets attacked, but there's a frontline that hasn't been done before."⁹⁷ For other progressives in Los Angeles he further stated,

...we've got to learn some lessons from that, and I think they [have] learned some lessons; you can get lost up there by lobbyists and all these other pressure groups. If you don't watch it, the interest that you have, and the sentiment can

⁹⁵ Interviewee José Calderón, former CASA member, longtime immigrant rights activist and cofounder of the Latin@ Roundtable in the Inland Empire's Westend, Pitzer College Sociology and Chicano Studies professor, and like Fabian Nunez, Jose is my initial mentor in the immigrant rights struggle.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

just be eaten up, but certainly we should learn from what they have done. And consistently pretty much I respect those particular individuals because they were always out there, whether it was in the demonstrations, or they were the ones in the frontlines trying to pass that drivers' license bill, trying to get the Dream Act through, trying to do what was the best for our immigrant community even though the larger community was against them.⁹⁸

In no other occasion would Calderón's words ring truer than when former Speaker Nuñez inexplicably called on Governor Schwarzenegger to arm the México-US border with the California National Guard, after having spoken at the *Gran Marcha* on March 25th, 2006. He then marched with Gloria Saucedo, Alicia Flóres, I, and a large *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* contingency on May 1st, 2006. This reversal left many of us in the Movement, including many of his close friends and supporters pensively shaking their heads in utter amazement. Calderón, his mentor and friend reflected on Nuñez' waywardness:

He was in México when he did that, and it surprised everybody and... I'm not sure, I really don't know... Maybe some deals were being made. That's the way some things are done in Sacramento. If you agree to pass a certain bill, then you'll come out supporting this other way. I mean, I was unhappy with him and the deal he made with the casinos you know, and our community has to make them accountable. But I think that's where they're getting lost, and [if] you lose your principles, and you lose...the reason why you went there in the first place. That's why we need the mass organizations to remind them that it was the people that got him in there, not just their own individual qualifications.⁹⁹

Another organizer, Alvaro Maldonado, a friend of Nuñez, was not as forgiving, "The day that Fabian came out declaring a state of emergency on the border that was a betrayal."¹⁰⁰ He further admonished Nuñez directly, "Fabian, it was a betrayal, you

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Interviewee Alvaro Maldonado, longtime Los Angeles antiwar and immigrant rights activist, member of the International Socialist Organization, and main organizer of the anti187 mobilizations in the early 1990s.

should come up, and you should apologize and admit it.”¹⁰¹ Maldonado harbored no ill feelings despite the controversial decision, “I don’t hold grudges, but what he did was opportunism of the worst kind. And who pays for it? Anyone who died on the border after that, he has a part in that.”¹⁰² After the state senate voted the proposal to rush the National Guard to the border, Maldonado questioned, “Why didn’t they do it then? What was going on? There is stuff that I don’t know, but they talk, they deal. It’s something you’ve got to count on. But you move independently, you move the masses and you let that power be expressed because these dudes are going to sell you out.”¹⁰³

Regardless of the positions and or actions of these immigrant and labor rights activists turned politicians, it is clear that their political careers were launched by their work in the Immigrant Rights Movement, and they were latter supported by organized labor and the LACFL. They all to some degree stay connected with the immigrant rights struggle in LA and nationally as well. Gilbert Cedillo is highly respected amongst some organizers for his struggle to return the privilege to drive legally to undocumented citizens. Yet, others also chastise him for not fighting hard enough for this right. One thing is clear. Their dedication to the struggle is unwavering with the exception of the current mayor of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa.

Mayor Villaraigosa was championed in by the many organizers in the progressive sector in Los Angeles that knew him well before his electoral victory. He took a very

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

conservative stand on legalization in his speech during the *Gran Marcha*, calling for a “pathway to citizenship,” which was at that time the line of the Democratic Party and not the line taken by the organizers of that event, who were instead calling for amnesty for immigrants. This followed his call against the *Gran Paro Americano* and student walkouts in 2006, his failure to act more aggressively against the police department in 2007 when it attacked peaceful immigrant rights demonstrators on May 1st, 2007. Those actions led many of his former friends and Angelinos to reconsider their support for Villaraigosa because of his failure to fully support the Latino community, namely his lack of commitment to the immigrant community.

Despite his organizational past in the leftist sector of the Immigrant Rights Movement in CASA, he has since then allied himself with the more conservative sectors of the progressive community, to the dismay not only of most immigrant rights organizers but more broadly the progressive community of Los Angeles. It still has yet to be seen how this, and or his philandering behavior will affect his future political career in local, statewide, or even national politics. To his benefit, Mayor Villaraigosa has still maintained enormous support from Angelinos, and remains well respected among many individuals in and outside of the Latino community. However, his push to counter the student walkouts and the *Gran Paro Americano 2006* will always be etched in the minds of IRM organizers, but most corrosive for him and future politicians willing to take unpopular positions like his, in the minds of those student participants and future community leaders.

In contrast, we will never forget that former *Casista* and California Democratic Senator, and majority leader, Gloria Romero walked to the Los Angeles City Hall alongside students during the 2006 walkouts and even had her staff bring over speakers and a microphone from her office for the students at the rally. Then a few weeks later, she stunned the immigrant rights community and the public by leading a group of statewide politicians to introduce a formal proposal to close down the California State Capitol in recognition of the *Great American Boycott*. On April 18th, 2006 Senators Gloria Romero, Gilbert Cedillo, and Nell Soto introduced Senate Resolution SCR 113, titled “The Great American Boycott 2006.” Its principal coauthors were Assembly Member Joe Coto, and Senator Liz Figueroa, who signed it along with other Assembly Members Rudy Bermudez, Charles Calderón, Jenny Oropeza, Miriam Calderón Saldaña, and Alberto Torrico. The resolution stated, “This measure would recognize May 1st, 2006, as “The Great American Boycott 2006,” to educate people in California and the United States about the contributions of immigrants in California.”¹⁰⁴ The resolution passed through the California Senate by a 24-14 margin, essentially down the party line; it read:

WHEREAS, May 1st, 2006, is declared “The Great American Boycott 2006,” and

WHEREAS, The United States has a tradition of historic boycotts, including the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott that galvanized the African-American community and resulted in the landmark 1956 United States Supreme Court ruling against segregation; and

WHEREAS, The Great American Boycott 2006 observes that tradition and is intended to draw attention to the contributions of immigrants to the nation's economy, including \$4.5 billion in state taxes in California each year, and more

¹⁰⁴ Email Communication: Sen. Gloria Romero Resolution on The Great American Boycott 2006. From dorindamoreno to jdiaz001 and nohr4437 listserv. Sent April 26th, 2006.

than \$30 billion in federal taxes; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants and their children comprise nearly half of the population in this state and live in virtually all 58 counties in California. More than one-quarter of all California residents are foreign born, a rate higher than any other state in the country; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants participate in the workforce at rates higher than the national average. Ninety percent of Latino and Asian male immigrants are employed; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants comprise approximately one-third of the labor force in California and figure prominently in key economic sectors in California, including agriculture, manufacturing, and services; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants provide leadership and labor for the expansion of California's growing economic sectors, from agriculture, telecommunications, and information technology to health services and housing construction; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants are among California's most productive entrepreneurs and have created jobs for tens of thousands of Californians. In San Jose alone, immigrant owners of technology companies created more than 58,000 jobs and generated more than \$17 billion in sales during the late 1990s; and

WHEREAS, The average immigrant-headed household in California contributes over \$2,600 annually to federal Social Security, \$539 more than the national average; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 40 percent of California's foreign-born residents are United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, There are currently 2.7 million immigrants in this state who are eligible for naturalization, 3.3 million are legal permanent residents, and millions more will soon be eligible for naturalization; and

WHEREAS, California elected an immigrant to the highest post in the State of California, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, in the most recent gubernatorial election; and

WHEREAS, The Senate of the State of California recognizes that The Great American Boycott 2006 is to educate people in California and across the United States about the tremendous contribution immigrants make on a daily basis to our society and economy; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That May 1st, 2006, be recognized as "The Great American Boycott 2006," and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for distribution.

This effort embodied the relationship that has been established over the years between the IRM and the Californian Latino Establishment, namely the “Children of 187.”

Coalition against the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996)

To oppose the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) enacted on April 1st, 1997, which tightened immigration laws extensively, a coalition was created that was comprised of more moderate groups than those that represented the grassroots sector. Although it was formed in the aftermath of the federal legislation, it lasted early into the next century. As a member of the American Immigrant Lawyers Association, an organization that lobbies people about progressive immigration legislation, Carlos Vellanoweth reflected on the events leading up to the passage of IIRAIRA, “Let me tell you what happened in 1996. In 1996, nobody knew that IIRAIRA was going to be enacted. It was brought to committee, voted, and nothing was ever debated. It was given to President [Bill] Clinton to sign, and he signed it like the welfare legislation a year earlier.”¹⁰⁵ Vellanoweth claimed that Clinton signed the Bill and by doing so signed the most “anti-Mexican law he could give an example of.” He explains:

I can give you many examples of how immigrants, or Mexicans are being treated by this law, how we are becoming more “illegal” in this country, how our rights are being taken away, how we are being prevented from unifying our families, how we are forced to go to our home countries to get our greencard, nowadays we are forced to go to our home countries, even people who have been living here for years after years, and raising children here.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Interviewee Carlos Vellanoweth, former CASA member and legal adviser, and now immigration lawyer in Los Angeles.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Vellanoweth further claimed that the events leading up to the passage of the anti-immigrant law were "...done so secretly, that there was no discussion, there was no political public debate about it," and had there been the response of the people would have been much different. Nonetheless, by October 23rd, 1996, a march on Washington DC had been organized. Juan José Gutierrez an immigrant rights organizer from Los Angeles and coorganizer for the event, in an interview that day pointed out the growing power of Latinos in the US. He posited, "Latinos finally are emerging as a coherent political force, more so every day. In the future we can already envision the day when politicians are going to have to understand that their political calculus can no longer assume that there will be no political consequences if they are going to continue to practice the simplistic politics of scapegoating those least able to protect themselves, namely the immigrants."¹⁰⁷

Somos America Coalition (2006)

The "We Are America Coalition," also known as "*Somos America*," was formed in April 2006, and named at a meeting at the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. According to longtime activist Tony Herrera in Phoenix, AZ, "Its mission was to counter the new grassroots leadership that had come into being in its own right without the assistance nor need for millions of dollars in non-profit money, paid staff and organizers and had taken the leadership of the struggle...It was a true 'from the bottom up' movement that could not be contained."¹⁰⁸ *Somos America's* strategy was simple. It

¹⁰⁷ Interviewee Juan Jose Gutierrez, former *Casista*, Legal Consultant in East LA, and head of Latino Movement USA,

sought to smother the traditional immigrant rights organizations, and the organic leadership that had been surfacing in recent years, all the while making it appear that it had the community's best interest at heart, and pushing half-baked and potentially damaging immigration reform proposals that would only be detrimental to the immigrant community.

In an admonishing response to a statement written by Javier Rodríguez arguing that the final stage was set for reform in December 2009, Tony Herrera from Arizona's community based organization, *Unidos en Arizona*, concluded that *Somos America* was a "top-down" effort that "...sideswiped a genuine grassroots movement that was boiling over all across the country." At the time, "The full impact of this move could not be fully appreciated until all the dust had settled and one could see the strategy being employed."¹⁰⁹ What was that strategy? According to Herrera, it was "Simple!"

Launch a massive short term organizing campaign and set into motion all the Democratic Party front groups and people. Send your 'best' organizers in all the 'hot spots' to wrestle control and create 'coalitions' whose primary function was to engage in massive voter registration including massive citizenship campaigns aimed at that segment of the immigrant community ready to join the voting population.¹¹⁰

Somos America was nationally composed of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE HERE,¹¹¹ United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW),

¹⁰⁸Herrera, Tony. (2010). Email communication from therrera155 to jessediazjr. [NetworkAztlan_Action] My two cents on the Javier analysis debate---Wake up people!! February 23rd, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Comprised of mostly laundry and hotel workers

National Council of *La Raza*, the Change to Win federation,¹¹² and the Catholic Church. In Los Angeles, it included the Latino political establishment, CARECEN, CHIRLA, and the LA County Federation of Labor all of which worked under its backbone, the New American Organizing Campaign (NAOC). According to Herrera, the NAOC "...was the umbrella under which all these *Somos America* groups operated, even though most of their membership never actually knew this. The orders were coming from Washington [DC]. That's where the orders for the April 10th, 2006 marches across the country came from."¹¹³ Herrera, an Arizonian who witnessed the 2006 developments in Phoenix firsthand further reported,

In fact, in the first days of their treachery, their website listed one of the 'leaders' of the local *Somos America* group as their contact person for Arizona. That "*Somos*" leader was a paid SEIU organizer brought in for that purpose. Their website claimed that they (NAOC) were the organizers of the April 24th, 2006 march here in Arizona. They later cleaned it up when the National *Somos* group got their own website up.¹¹⁴

In 2007, the NAOC changed its name to Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR), and it had as its board of directors: Deepak Bhargava (Center for Community Change), Cecilia Muñoz (National Council of *La Raza*), Frank Sharry (National Immigration Forum), Chung-Wha Hong (New York Immigration Coalition), Eliseo Medina (SEIU), and Tom Snyder (UNITE HERE). Coincidentally, these are almost the same groups that composed *Somos America*. Herrera again pointed

¹¹² A breakaway of unions from the AFL-CIO led by SEIU

¹¹³ Herrera, Tony. (2010). Email communication from therrera155 to jessediazjr. [NetworkAztlan_Action] My two cents on the Javier analysis debate---Wake up people!! February 23rd, 2010.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

out that, “These were the same people who for the most part were trying to ram “Kennedy/McCain,” “Hagel/Martínez,” “Gutierrez/Flake,” and so on down our throats. Their mouthpieces constantly extolled the benefit of rallying around these bills. At every turn, the Movement resisted.”¹¹⁵ Herrera pointed out that it does not take a fortuneteller to deduce that all of this was done for the Democratic Party,

The first exploit of *Somos America* was to:

Wrestle the leadership of the INDEPENDENT mass movement that was on the rise...By seeming to join it in order to gain credibility with the grassroots leadership forces while actually undermining them with the objective of setting up “NEW” coalitions that “represented” the community...It was a good opportunity to observe the power and resourcefulness that the Democratic Party could muster when it felt threatened. High paid organizers, big money marketing and publicity campaigns, drawing in the unions under their control to devote organizers, time and resources, moving them around the country as the situation demanded it, etc.¹¹⁶

This motivation could really be demonstrated in a communication to March 25th Coalition member Guillermo Bejarano, from Juan Carlos Ruiz, the coordinator of the National Capital Immigration Coalition, a front organization for the Democratic Party’s *Somos America* DC faction. This group served to bring out heavy-hitting Democrats Senators Edward Kennedy and Hillary Clinton at the April 10th, 2006, march in DC. Ruiz insisted that the M25C contact him; he wrote:

I would like to respectfully request a call from your organization. We must coordinate the events that are happening all over the country with a message that unified us in an immigrant movement that still needs to be

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

solidif[ied] and move to the next level of organizing whatever that means (needs to be develop[ed] by local grassroots)—In solidarity.¹¹⁷

In a number of calls Nativo López, Javier, Jorge, and Jaime Rodríguez, and myself engaged with Ruiz, Jaime Contreras from SEIU in DC, and Gustavo Torres from Casa Maryland—all of which were in the NCIC—to find some common ground. During those calls we explained to the trio that our position in the March 25th Coalition was immediate, unconditional, and universal amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, and no guestworker program; they soon chose not to work with us at all. It then became obvious to us in the M25C that they were all serving as lackeys for the *Somos America* DC faction, which was commissioned to coopt and or undermine ours and other national grassroots efforts.

There was no doubt that the ultimate motivation of *Somos America* was to channel “street power” to “voting power” under the mantra “Today we march, tomorrow we vote.” It was clear to all of us in the M25C that the Democratic Party was behind this anxious agenda, which on the short end sought to elect Democrats as the Congressional majority, and the president. This could be seen by the voter registration drives this coalition organized through summer 2006 beginning when its

...civic action campaign [was] launched on May 9th [2006] by the Coalition [which] aim[ed] to engage the millions who marched and millions more with the political process that is determining the future of their lives. Perhaps this gusto for connecting to politics through civic action, a gusto that seems to be lacking in many US-born citizens will be one more contribution that immigrants have made to this country (CARECEN, 2006).

¹¹⁷ Ruiz, Juan Carlos. (2006). Email communication from juancarlos to aztlannet. Communicate please. Saturday April 1st, 2006.

It was a perfect storm for this group, it just needed to get over the hump and lead the American public to realize its objective, Democratic Party votes, despite the opposition of many community-based organizers in the Movement who realized the limits of this strategy.¹¹⁸

For various organizers in the Movement it was obvious that *Somos America* would not be a good ally. Its main agenda was to control the message and direction of the Movement. According to Herrera, “It wasn’t to organize and empower our community. It wasn’t to identify and train new leadership to ensure the future of our movement. It was pure and simple, a maneuver to control the political power in this country, end of story. Our community was the convenient pawn that was used to make this possible.”¹¹⁹ He added that it was “...a betrayal to the American people and our community for now...Look around and see what was left in the wake of this strategic move. Nothing! Absolutely nothing! WE are actually in worse shape at the grassroots and organizational level than before the betrayal.”¹²⁰

Had the *Somos America* project been a genuine effort to empower immigrants, the longtime grassroots leadership from the traditional wing of the Movement would have been asked to participate in its decision-making efforts from the beginning. Furthermore, there would have been longterm measures put in place to maintain its momentum. Most of the organizations would not have been left to fend for themselves, and according to

¹¹⁸ Herrera, Tony. (2010). Email communication from therrera155 to jessediazjr. [NetworkAztlan_Action] My two cents on the Javier analysis debate---Wake up people!! February 23rd, 2010.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Herrera, to reduce themselves into “...mere shadows of what they were. [And] now that they were no longer needed, they were put out to dry and flounder...the Democratic Party quickly abandoned them once they had fulfilled their mission.”¹²¹ Herrera’s observations quite frankly hit the nail on the head. The immigrant rights struggle coming out of the November 2006 elections was by that time in complete disarray and without direction, especially by March 2007 when Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), introduced the ghastly Strive Act of which only a handful of the moderate organizations affiliated with *Somos America* supported.

The Democratic Party was behind the *Somos America* faction, pushing for a guestworker program as part of a negotiating tool for immigration reform, thus following one contention that “...a strong alliance with a political party may push a social movement organization to greater structuration” (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 156). However, this organization underestimated the opposition to that goal that they would find from the longstanding IRM community-based leadership and its constituencies who fought hard against any legislation that would have led to a guestworker program similar to the one that had been fought against by the IRM, along with César Chavez, in the mid1960s. Considering this earlier struggle to end the *Bracero Program* and Chavez’ leadership within it, it was almost sacrilegious for *Somos America* to accept and even advocate for a guestworker program. This was especially true because SEIU’s immigrant rights cadre which included Roberto De La Cruz in LA, Eliseo Medina in DC, Ben

¹²¹ Ibid.

Monterroso in San Diego during this time, along with others in the union's leadership had all worked in the UFW, shoulder to shoulder with Chávez.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides evidence that the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles is homogenous where formal organizations and coalitions are concerned. It also shows that organizations are not simply vehicles through which insurgency is possible, there is a wide range of ideological foci among immigrant rights organizations in Los Angeles, and in the IRM in general. Despite the wide range of political persuasions between the factions in general, and the organizers in particular, Latino politicians have also played a vital in the *Movimiento*, especially after the mid 1990s. For example, Gloria Romero, the majority leader, who has a history in the immigrant rights struggle in LA, introduced the proposal that shut down the State Capitol for the “*Gran Paro Americano 2006*.” Fortunately, for the immigrant community across the state she has continued advocating for it legislatively and even shoulder-to-shoulder with its participants during various demonstrations.

There are certainly varieties of organizations that have participated in the IRM. The social movement literature points to organizations as the receptors of resources for the *Movimiento*. This research shows that restrictive antiimmigrant legislative attacks have consistently propelled the IRM to action and immediately shared resources between individuals, groups and or factions. This is especially evident in the manner in which the longstanding traditional immigrant-serving organizations like *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*, *La Placita Olvera Church* and its clergy, and other longstanding

moderate-oriented organizations like CARECEN and CHIRLA in Los Angeles, collectively have histories that intersect. This chapter has specifically shown that despite divisions there is also much respect amongst the leadership in LA and that at times it can gel and work together despite organizational political differences and ideologies.

There are incidents when these organizations have not worked together, however. Historically, CARECEN and CHIRLA have resisted working with radical groups in the Los Angeles IRM. These divisions are more profound and ideological. When the leftist faction came together in late 2005, and began working against the antiimmigrant forces, the moderate organizations were struggling for immigration reform, but had become tactically complacent and tied to the status quo in DC politics. During 2005, these organizations thought it was better not to give any attention to the antiimmigrant movement, for they believed that if ignored it would disband on its own. However, the traditional and radical sectors merged to militantly confront the antiimmigrant movement and when in early 2006 the struggle against HR4437 was launched, the moderate wing was taken aback. The leftist sector was absolutely prepared for the legislation marked by the DC-backed legitimization in which the antiimmigrant movement was basking. By the time the moderate wing jumped into action, the leftist sector now operating as La Placita Olvera Proimmigrant Working Group, had begun mobilizing independently against the draconian bill. In that process however, CARECEN's leadership worked the leftist faction, briefly. This history is discussed and expanded upon in depth in the following chapter.

The common thread throughout these organizations is their being affected by some of the moderate influences in the political landscape of LA such as the 1970s national coalition led by individuals in Los Angeles, and tied to emerging national organizations, which still had the ability to communicate directly with federal legislators. By the 1990s, moderate Latino politicians had emerged and moved away from embracing the traditional street mobilizations that were part of the 1970s and 80s leading up to the passage of IRCA. The moderate faction in the 1990s that was against 187, but not for street mobilizations clearly began to define the two major trends in the *Movimiento*. By the 21st century, there were radical and traditional organizations in the IRM, but they were mostly working within the tactical parameters of the moderate faction, which included pursuing letter writing and lobbying for federal immigration reform. After 9.11 however, the struggle for the licenses in California, and the nativist attacks that began to plague the immigrant community opened the door for the radical and traditional sectors of the IRM to mobilize militantly outside of the nonthreatening conservative and or elitist tactics that appease the status quo, and to which they have become accustomed.

PART II: CHAPTER SIX

CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRANT RIGHTS GRASSROOTS AND RADICAL LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS

Los Angeles is a city historically rich in ethnic diversity. It is the primary destination in the US for immigrant groups from throughout the world. It also has a long and successful tradition of organizing for social justice issues that is largely tied to immigrant rights. In order to advocate for the many immigrants beyond the city and across Southern California, coalitions have emerged over the past four decades. The Latino coalitions that I examine in this chapter have typically organized as a result of like-minded organizations or individuals struggling for a common long or short term cause.

Coalitions can work together on single or multiple and complex events, issues, or campaigns, and more commonly in the Immigrant Rights Movement (IRM) in opposition to anti-immigration practices and policies. Over the years, coalitions were formed to combat specific situations such as the deportations of *Mexicanos* from the Southwest to México, immigration enforcement raids in predominately *Mexicano* neighborhoods in Los Angeles in the 1930s, 50s, 70s, 90s, and most notably the pernicious immigration enforcement-only policies that have emerged over the last five years since *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*. At this point, an estimated 1,100 undocumented immigrants on average are being repatriated daily by the Obama administration.

The Latino community and organizational universe that comprises the IRM however are not monolithic entities. Various social movement scholars suggest that a groups' capacity to mobilize is facilitated by organizational cooperation and coalition

building, which can be hampered by organizational competition and in-fighting (McAdam, 1999 [1982]; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). During moments when threat is seen as direct and imminent, organizations often put aside their differences and bridges are built. Such inter-organizational collaboration helps to make mass mobilizations such as those witnessed most poignantly during the spring of 2006 possible.

This chapter is unique because I was involved in the founding of the organizations discussed, and I am therefore acting as both observer and participant. At the risk of sounding immodest, it is necessary for me to document the role that I played in founding the various organizations and groups. To a certain degree, my participation was a common thread or denominator in all of the organizations discussed and it is difficult for me to separate my two roles as participant and observer. Also because of my role as both participant and observer, I shift to a narrative first person style to offer in more detail the events that set the stage for the mass mobilizations of 2006.

Estamos Unidos (2004)

Estamos Unidos was a network comprised of individuals with a shared objective of generating unity among the progressive forces in order to struggle for equality and social justice for all Americans, irrespective of their citizenship or immigration status.¹²² It also aimed to incorporate and galvanize the membership of other progressive organizations and like-minded individuals while at the same time recognizing the importance of retaining independent ideologies and traditions. The aim was to bring together larger segments of the country to participate in an ongoing effort of organizing,

¹²² I was commissioned to compose the *Estamos Unidos* mission statement and it was later translated to Spanish with the assistance of Magdalena Ferrer, in early 2004.

mobilizing, and educating each other about the origins of the racist attacks instigated by radical conservatives, and more importantly, how to resist and prevent them.¹²³

Estamos Unidos believed that in order to fight against and stop the anti-immigrant attacks launched by radical conservatives, actions and processes needed to be created through which all immigrant forces, coupled with other progressive allies, could join together in solidarity and fight against these racist attacks. Through coalition building, *Estamos Unidos* was poised to fight proactively for social, political, and economic justice, all the while developing and maintaining diverse avenues through which to promote national equality, peace, and unity.¹²⁴

The group of volunteers, which the author Jesse Díaz joined in late October 2003, would later morph into *Estamos Unidos*. This group of individuals volunteered at the Ontario, CA, office of *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* to support California's struggle for drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants. At that time, I did not know the participants well and had met them while struggling against police brutality in Chino, CA, with other graduate students from the University of California, Riverside, working under the Coalition for Social Justice and Action. We sought the assistance of MAPA. Although the support was not forthcoming, I did manage to start a chapter of MAPA by signing ten members up from the Chino struggle. This was important because it signaled the beginning of my crossover from focusing my organizational efforts on issues of police brutality to the immigrant rights struggle.

¹²³ *Estamos Unidos* funding-raising letter to potential sponsors for the third economic boycott on May 5th and 6th, 2004.

¹²⁴ In early 2004, I was also assigned to put together *Estamos Unidos* points of interest, and historical account.

When I went to drop off the MAPA chapter application and funds to the Ontario *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* office, I met the director Abel Medina, and membership coordinator Sarai Ferrer, who invited me to attend the volunteer meeting on Friday nights. It was at these meetings that I met other members of the group, including Ricardo Anaya, Sarai's sister Magdalena Ferrer, Olivia Kami, Jorge Reyes, José Soto, José Vásquez, and Victoria González. The group was comprised of all Mexican immigrants, with the exception of Soto, a Colombian immigrant, and I, a US-born *Mexicano*. The Inland Empire boycotts in support of immigrant rights were Soto's brainchildren and would serve as precursors to the statewide boycott in 2003, and the 2006 *Gran Paro* boycott that went international. Because Anaya and Reyes jointly owned a printing business in Ontario, CA, they were able to print newspapers, and flyers of the *Estamos Unidos* actions. Kami distributed the Latino-oriented newspapers around the Inland Empire and parts of Los Angeles County. This worked well in terms of our outreach because she would distribute the flyers at the same locations and sometimes tucked them inside the Spanish Latino-oriented newspapers themselves. Originally from México City, the Ferrer sisters, operated a book-trading business in Ontario, CA. Where possible, Victoria González helped with the coordination of the group. The group generally worked well together and was dedicated to the struggle to regain driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants in California.

In order to support the license struggle, our first action was a regional economic boycott targeting the Inland Empire on October 11th and 12th, 2003. This general boycott received limited public attention and participation but served as the impetus for

subsequent boycotts. The boycott was a typical general strike calling for Latinos and their allies to stay home from work, to not send their children to school, and not to buy or sell during those days. The target days for the strike were chosen strategically because it would end on Columbus Day, a day intended to counter the tall tale of Columbus's discovery of the Americas, and recognized by most Latinos as *Día de la Raza*. Although well intended, the group lacked resources and allies in the Movement, so we made it a point to attend immigrant rights events specifically to meet longtime organizers. We knew this networking would be crucial for our group to be able to expand and to organize effectively, support, and collaborate on events with other organizations in the struggle over licenses for undocumented persons.

Subsequently, we organized *El Paro Economico*, a statewide second economic boycott on December 12th 2003, a date selected strategically because it fell on *El Dia de la Virgen Guadalupe*, not only a religious figure but a Mexican national icon. This second boycott garnered enormous support statewide, as several other organizations helped with this effort, especially *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* and MAPA. Nativo López, MAPA president, played a key role in pushing the boycott through media sources and in conducting live on the air debates against the representation of the moderate wing of the Movement such as Angelica Salas from CHIRLA, and Angela Sanbrano from CARECEN. In some instances, Felipe Aguirre would also join in these media debates to advocate for the necessity of the boycott to demand driver licenses for undocumented immigrants.

Despite what was depicted in the media, it was José Soto and not Nativo López that had brought the *Paro* to boycott months prior. In fact, initially, Nativo López had adamantly refused to support the boycott, much less advocate for it publicly. For weeks, the group pleaded for his support until he finally agreed to support the campaign. López worked his statewide contacts and without our knowledge pledged to other immigrant rights organizers that he would organize a series of forums with the purpose of analyzing the effects and consequences of the *Paro*. At the same time, we kept working on garnering more contacts around the state, meeting new folks, and reaching out to other organizers in the Inland Empire. We also began attempting to revitalize the organizational bases of some of these organizers and worked on better integrating the media into the campaign. We felt that since we had initiated that boycott, we were obligated to carry the brunt of the effort. We hurriedly designed the flyer, solicited funds for the flyer campaign, and were very proactive in disseminating them. We also sought media outreach, as well as strategic advice and direction from Lilian de la Torre-Jiménez, a then senior reporter with *La Opinion* Newspaper before she went on to create a flourishing online Latino-oriented bridal magazine (Hispanic Entrepreneurs, 2008).

Unlike the local boycott earlier that year, the statewide boycott was very successful, despite the fact that there were only a few weeks of outreach for it. Boycott participants were asked not to buy, sell, attend school, or go to work. Although some individuals across the state lost their jobs for participating in the second boycott, most of these individuals were persistent and said that they would participate again. In an open interactive forum in Montclair, California in January 2004, after a brief analysis of the

results of the December 12th boycott, participants concluded that there should be another economic boycott as soon as possible, and that it should last for a minimum of two days.

Every Friday subsequent to the December boycott, we met weekly, analyzing and discussing at length the options and strategies in another action. Our conclusion was that there should be another economic boycott on May 5th and 6th 2004. The goals of the boycott and its demands were more refined by then,

- ✦ *El Paro Economico* is a movement dictated by the conscience of people that are tired of others devaluing the history of contributions made by Latinos.
- ✦ The proponents of the boycott, Do Not suggest for children to stay home from school, to the contrary, if this is the only way that a family can participate, however, we leave this option and the risks involved to parents and their children, to their consideration.
- ✦ After the questionnaires were handed out and reviewed during the forum following the *Paro Economico*, two results were clear: The people want another boycott, and that they want it to be for two consecutive days.
- ✦ Our long-term objective is to build an infrastructure for Latinos to have political and social power to be able to organize themselves by working and participating in community organizations, clubs, foundations, and religious groups, etc.
- ✦ That this is a people's movement, and that this call is on their behalf, and if anyone believes that this is not a viable tactic, they should make it known to us in *Estamos Unidos*.
- ✦ That we announce the *Paro Economico* with enough anticipation that where possible, employers and their employees analyze the problem of disallowing undocumented immigrants from attaining driver's licenses, then try to come to an accord on how to support the boycott without either parties becoming affected.
- ✦ No consumption if at all possible, but in the case that it was vital and necessary, to buy from Latino businesses.

The group kept working together organizing marches around the area and supporting other actions across the state. Other immigrant rights organizers were beginning to recognize us for the work we were doing in the Inland Empire, and the media also started to take notice, calling us future "leaders" in the Movement (Lerner, 2004). They took particular notice when we organized a march in Ontario demanding driver's licenses for all undocumented immigrants in California that drew approximately

300 marchers to march up Euclid, Avenue, from the 60 Freeway, through downtown, and onto then State Senator Nell Soto's office. There had never been a march in the Inland Empire that large, until we organized another one in June 2004. While Nativo López organized a series of marches in Orange, Los Angeles, Santa Rosa, and Ventura Counties, reports from other *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* offices in the counties stated that the López organized marches did not exceed 100 marchers. We soon realized that we were onto something important. The group, though diminutive when compared to other more established groups had a winning formula. It framed support for undocumented immigrants' right to have drivers' licenses, in personal terms, highlighting how this right would benefit the Ferrer sisters' desire to be able to drive and work to support their aging parents back home. The group also benefited from a newfound camaraderie, an efficient division of labor, and the vital resource of cheap printing readily at our disposal.

Among the actions undertaken by *Estamos Unidos* was the march from Ontario, to Pomona, CA, on June 4th, 2004, in response to the "roving raids" that occurred in Ontario, and Corona, CA where approximately 400 undocumented immigrants were detained. Many persons were simply walking down the street or in stores when they were detained. At the time, we believed that this could be the precursor to something much larger, and we were ultimately proven right. Because of our efforts, the expansion of Operation Return to Sender was stopped dead in its tracks by 10,000 marchers. It was and has been the largest march in the Inland Empire to date.

Before the march however, we had attempted another boycott that we had organized during spring 2004, without the assistance this time of Nativio López and others. It was at this time that we began calling our group *Estamos Unidos*, and went independent from *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana*. We traveled the state pushing the boycott, though it soon appeared that we were working against the grain. A march was already planned for *Cinco de Mayo* at the state capitol in Sacramento by Erica Ruiz. Nativio López and Senator Gilbert Cedillo had announced a concurrent march and rally in San Francisco's Market District, but never showed up, because they participated at the capitol.¹²⁵ We were also finding it difficult to garner support from other immigrant rights activists around the state. They finally informed us in Fresno, CA, that the reason they were not participating is that Nativio López had promised them statewide follow-up forums to analyze the December 12th, 2003, *Paro Economico* but failed to follow through.¹²⁶ In fact, we had to organize the forum for the Inland Empire at Montclair, CA, in early January 2004, outside of *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* because the individuals that supported it locally were pressuring us to organize the event. Nativio López participated in the event, nonetheless.

There was no doubt in our minds that Sarai and Magdalena were emerging as great leaders in the immigrant rights struggle. They were fearless, passionate, motivated, and were keenly aware of the political conditions poised to affect them. They taught me a lot in a short period. The men in the group really admired the women, and vice versa.

¹²⁵ Fieldnotes: May 8th, 2004.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Outside of the spring 2006, working in that group was perhaps the most pleasant time I have spent in the Movement, whereupon we were able to collectively keep our guard down from interpersonal attacks and to work well together.

Sarai has come and gone back to México, while Magdalena went and stayed in México City to care for her elderly mother after their father died. Ricardo Anaya and Victoria González moved to Guadalajara, México, to establish a new printing shop. It is not clear where and what Olivia Kami, José Soto, and José Vásquez have gone on to accomplish but I am confident they have gone on to become influential in whatever endeavors they have undertaken. Jorge Reyes later became a key resource for almost all of the printing work done for the grassroots sector during the spring 2006 mobilizations.

At the height of this important work, Javier Rodríguez, a longtime immigrant rights activist recognized us for our work in the Inland Empire, calling the Southern California region “...the bedrock of the historic December 12th, 2003, statewide boycott which moved hundreds of thousands, if not millions of immigrants, to protest the cancellation of the Cedillo driver’s license law, and to a certain degree, made that dream of *A Day without a Mexican* a near reality.”¹²⁷ About the work we were doing in the Inland Empire between SCHRN and *Estamos Unidos*, he wrote, “...Ontario and the University of California, Riverside, has brought us a new crop of professors, students, and community leaders that in [2004] convened the 10,000 people Ontario march against the ICE raids of 2004, which, get this, was amazingly conceived in just one

¹²⁷ Rodríguez, Javier. (2005). The Movement Against the Minutemen. Email communication. July 10th, 2005.

week.”¹²⁸ In his final summation of the march, he claimed that it was a “... wonderful show of strength [that] had immediate results. It made the ICE cowboys retreat.”¹²⁹ The group *Estamos Unidos* stopped meeting regularly during the fall of 2004 but we would later regroup with the exception of Magdalena, to organize a UC Riverside conference on May 28th, 2005, titled *La Tierra es de Todos*, which gave birth to a new militant and radical wing of the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles.

The new surge of activity during this period resulted from actions against the Minutemen, which was essentially outside of the moderate wing of the Movement in Los Angeles, which focused on the developments surrounding the Kennedy McCain Bill. Rodríguez further claimed that the radical wing of the movement that in the Inland Empire was a “...a multiethnic and multicultural effort with the vision to build a broad inclusive movement, with all activists of goodwill, where the strength lies in positions of unity, strategy and the understanding that this struggle is part of a process to move not just hundreds, but tens of thousands.”¹³⁰ He recognized that “At this point, through practical and aggressive mobilization [the radical wing of the Movement] ha[d] gained the upper hand on its opposition.”

Relative to the Baldwin Park mobilizations earlier in 2005, Rodríguez claimed “So far, since the first Baldwin Park confrontation, the anti-immigrant sectors have been outnumbered and ridiculed. In essence, they appear demoralized, unable to recruit and grow. Logically, the coalition opposition movement should continue the momentum

¹²⁸ Ibid., it was actually 5 days beginning on the Tuesday before that Sunday march.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

and its so far successful strategy. [And that] [t]enaciously it [wa]s this same generation, with Professor Jesse Díaz¹³¹ as the figurehead, which brought together the May 28th Coalition against the Minutemen in California.”¹³² I certainly cannot take credit for that entire mobilization, which was a collective effort, but I was honored to be a part of the leadership. I was privileged to work alongside individuals, too many to list here, in July 2005 that were also putting their heart and soul into organizing that dangerous confrontation with the Minutemen in that treacherous and heat-riddled corridor of the East San Diego County desert.

When I learned that the Californian Minutemen faction would set up camp in the border town of Campo, California, starting on July 16th, 2005, it became clear to me that the main battle was brewing. Because the Minutemen had been successful in Arizona, and because of the work we had been doing in terms of sending delegations of immigrant rights organizers to monitor the abuses occurring at the hands of Arizonan Ranchers shooting immigrants crossing their lands, I knew it would be difficult for this confrontation to remain “nonviolent.” In Arizona the organized proimmigrant resistance to the armed Minutemen border patrols hunting crossing immigrants was peaceful. However, I knew it would take a much more militant type of response to stop them in California. I also knew that it would take a collective effort centered on the most radically minded individuals across Southern California and that it would have to

¹³¹ I was frequently cited as a professor during this period, mainly because I was teaching at community colleges around Southern California but I was actually an adjunct professor. It certainly brought me much recognition and gave the group greater legitimacy in the eyes of the media and public.

¹³² Rodriguez, Javier. (2005). The Movement Against the Minutemen. Email communication. July 10th, 2005.

exclude the faint-hearted, and undocumented organizers because they would risk detention and deportation, given the proximity to the border.

May 28th “La Tierra es de Todos” Coalición (2005)

The May 28th “*La Tierra es de Todos*” Coalition (M28C) did what the SCHRN could not do, mobilize along with a large contingency of organizations from around Southern California at the border to confront the Minutemen Project (MMP) in Campo, California, located in the Eastern San Diego County Desert. I was the only one that would commute to meetings in Los Ángeles from the Inland Empire, and therefore in tune with the developments of the immigrant rights struggle there. It was difficult to bring in other members of the *La Tierra es de Todos* Coalition from Los Ángeles into the Movement’s activities, especially because the ultranationalist groups had become focused on the local day labor center struggles. I felt that the impact of the anti-immigrant forces, if allowed to mobilize freely, could be devastating. As Internationalist Socialist Organization (ISO) members pointed out, Hitler went unfettered and was able to embark upon the atrocities he realized claiming that “...*even Hitler asserted that his own measures would have been “smashed with utmost brutality.”*”¹³³ In general, M28C was both multinational and multicultural and sought to build a broad inclusive antivigilante movement with community members and all activists of goodwill. Its strength lay in its positions of unity and strategy.

¹³³ Media Advisory- No Minutes Allotted to the California Minutemen. The May 28th *La Tierra es de Todos* Coalition. To denounce the operations of the California Minutemen during the period of July 16th to August 7th 2005 in Campo, California, and to declare complimentary strategies planned in collaboration with our San Diego based coalition members. Placita Olvera Kiosk, Downtown, Los Ángeles. Friday July 15th, 2005 at 10AM

When I learned that the Minutemen were coming to California, I knew it was going to take a much larger effort to confront them than we were able to muster during the Arizona action in April 2005. I began communicating with everyone I could about my plans. I knew that a Southern California wide conference was necessary to realize the type and size of mobilization that was going to be necessary to shut down the Minutemen. We needed to dwarf their numbers, unlike Arizona where they outnumbered immigrant rights activists in Tombstone. Given that Armando Navarro, the “radical academic” refused to take a militant stand against the Minutemen in Tombstone and California, it would be imperative for new activists and leaders to emerge. It was clear to me that more radical and militant individuals were needed, and coming out of the Baldwin Park manifestations, it would have to be from amongst the ranks Socialist groups. With a small group of students at UCR and some organizers from *Estamos Unidos*, I garnered the financial and logistical support of Estella Acuña, Alfredo Figueroa, and the Chicano Students Program office, and then planned the conference within approximately three weeks.

It was necessary to bring in longstanding immigrant rights activists, and we did. Given the rifts in the Movement between individuals and organizations, it was critical to invite neutral types of conference presenters. This would allow audience members, who would be instrumental to the struggle in the desert, the opportunity to discuss the potential to organize in breakout groups, and meet each other on a personal level.

The conference program was designed to inform participants of the wide range of issues related to immigration and the potential for disaster that the Minutemen would

cause if allowed to “border watch” in California, specifically the high traffic corridor at Campo, CA. Some workshops included *Immigration 101* (For beginners) by Felipe Aguirre from PROUNO in Maywood, *Immigration 102* (contemporary) by Alejandro Rico from UCR-MEChA, *Immigration, Law and Policy*, by Russell Jauregui and Immigration Attorney and longtime immigrant rights activist. Sara Kozameh and Mike Chavez from UCR-SCHRN facilitated the *Immigration y Los Jornaleros* workshop, Alfonso Gonzales from UCLA and *Frente Latinoamericana Immigration*, presented *War on Terror, and Gangs*, and *La Mujer Inmigrante* by Diana Flóres from UCR-Womyn of Color Student Group. Chris Hernandez from UCR-SCHRN presented the Minutemen Project workshop, *Las Redadas-The Raids and Now* by José Calderón from the IE-SGV Latino Roundtable and Pitzer College professor, the *War on Terror, War on Immigration* by Keith Danner from ISO, and *Liberation beyond Borders* presented by Benjamin Prado from the San Diego chapter of *Union del Barrio*. Javier Rodríguez imparted the opening statement. After asking the media to identify itself, and then asking it to leave, I organized a closed plenary session in which approximately 80 persons attended and where numerous organizations signed on to the efforts to mobilize against the Minutemen in July 2005. Together, Chicano Student Programs, SCHRN, the Sociology Graduate Students Association, the Student Coalition for Peace and Human Rights, and UCR MEChA, helped to organize the conference.

During the closing plenary, participants identified a common goal of confronting the Minutemen on the border and embarking upon whatever tactics were necessary to shut them down. A variety of community organizations and student groups initially

signed on to the efforts, including *Artistas Unidos*, *Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice*, *Estamos Unidos*, *Frente Indigena de Organizaciones Binacionales*, *Frente Latinoamericana*, *LA ISO*, *MEChA de El Camino*, *MEChA de Fullerton*, *MEChA de UC Davis*, *MEChA de UCR*, *Multicultural Student Organization*, *Raza Grad Student Association de UCLA*, *Red Ciudadana Salvadorena*, *Riverside ISO*, *San Gabriel Valley Neighbors for Peace and Justice*, *Southern California Human Rights Network*, *Student Coalition for Peace and Human Rights at UCR*, *Students for Social Justice (Pasadena City College)*, *UCR Mexicanos*, *UCR Womyn of Color*, and *Union del Barrio*. We met weekly to fulfill our mission, which was organizing to mobilize the numbers needed for the confrontation in the desert.

We also chose the name for our coalition: *La Tierra es de Todos* (The Land Belongs to All of Us) Coalition. I was glad that I had chosen that name for the summit because it made a lot of sense given the anti-immigrant sentiment boiling over in the media and the novelty of the Minutemen. In addition, summit attendees agreed on a number of other related and pressing proposals and resolutions; the demands and tasks we all agreed upon adopting and working were:

- ✚ To have a targeted boycott and the creation of an indigenous day or celebration, which was a clear extension of the Baldwin Park *Danza Indigenas* struggle.
- ✚ For all the coalition organizations to endorse a prison conference in Oxnard, June 25th, 2005, which is organized yearly by *Union del Barrio*, and other groups.
- ✚ To have a June 12th coalition meeting for logistics and planning of proactive anti-Minutemen march, which would eventually occur at the UCLA Labor Center.
- ✚ To mobilize in Orange County early August or July to be proactive, not reactive, which was a demand coming from MEChA de Fullerton to counter the recent events of the Garden Grove incident during which some pro-immigrant demonstrators were hit by an anti-immigrant driver, and another round against James Gilchrist in Aliso Viejo, in the OC.

- ✚ To organize “*esquinas de resistencia*” and community flyering, that supports legislation for legalization without increase of border patrol as a conditionality, which was a tactic being employed by *Union del Barrio* in San Diego to get the word out about the Minutemen, and other pressing issues that would affect *barrio* residents.
- ✚ To evaluate Kennedy-McCain Bill, Coryn and Kyle Bill and take a stand on those bills and at the same time keep immigration organizations accountable for their actions. Some individuals at the plenary believed that some positions taken by some of the immigration-serving organizations in Los Angeles were misguided by the Kennedy-McCain immigration reform proposal, on which they needed to be called.
- ✚ To set up a committee to file charges on driver who ran over Yasser Giron and two others at Garden Grove protest on May 25th, 2005. Exploit the driver’s actions to the media; organize a press conference, flyers and information.
- ✚ And, to build and strengthen the coalition through the following tasks:
 - Form principles of unity that would make the coalition democratic and organized.
 - Create a database with communication to all communities.
 - Expand to other racial/ethnic groups and organizations, and add this to unity principles.
 - Build organizations and enjoiment and add this to unity principles.
 - Oppose all legislation that would add border patrol enforcement on the border.
 - Build and or support local coalitions that work in San Diego already, add this to Unity Principles.
 - Organize mass mobilizations on the streets.
 - Educate high schools students and get them involved in the fall, and put this on June’s meeting agenda, and add this to Unity Principles.
 - Build coalitions with Muslims and Puerto Ricans, and add this to Unity Principles.
 - Take a stand on CAFTA, Human Rights and deportees; add these to mission statement and to Unity Principles.

At the end of the meeting, we set a second meeting to be held in Downtown Los Angeles on June 12th, 2005 at the UCLA Labor Center. At that moment, it was clear that the potential for the California mobilization to be successful was enormous and that the next meeting would be a successful next step in that struggle. Among the approximately 100 attendees, almost all of the relevant groups in the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles were present. However, it also appeared difficult to keep the focus on the primary goal of confronting the Minutemen in July 2005. Some folks at the meeting wanted to concentrate only on opposing another anti-immigrant group, Save Our State, which had been convening in Baldwin Park. Others were opportunistically looking to

capture the leadership, over and above the organizing efforts. From my point of view, some of these groups just could not see the political battle brewing on the national front, which was beyond their scope.

At the meeting, the Organic Collective from San Diego, namely Ellie Igoe and Oona Beall, along with Vicente Rodríguez, were present to be a part of the efforts against the Minutemen. At my request, they shared the efforts already in motion by San Diegan pro-immigrant activists, namely the reconnaissance missions to Campo to study the terrain and locate a suitable three-week encampment. The conference, in our eyes, was a success because other groups joined the Coalition's efforts and a follow up regional meeting was set in Ontario on June 24th, 2005, at the Corona Seafood Restaurant. We all agreed that unity would be necessary to overcome the differences that were emerging in the M28C, especially because a major mobilization at the border in the following month was vitally necessary. The regional meeting in the Inland Empire went well and support appeared to be growing.

The Los Angeles regional meeting that took place in Pico Union proved to be tense and divisive, with the agenda and chairing of the meeting falling in the hands of *Union del Barrio's* Ron Gochez and Alfonso Gonzales. Divisions between the Los Angeles groups threatened to drive the new coalition into the ground if not addressed. Because I was unknown to many of the meeting participants and because I was seen as "in charge" of the Inland Empire region, I basically took a backseat in order to not further muddy the waters. Essentially, the Socialists and ultranationalist factions were at odds about the pending actions at Baldwin Park. The newly formed Coalition was not

necessarily supposed to take up that charge. We held that it would be better if the SCHRN and ISO alliance concentrated on that struggle and believed that M28C should focus more on the border mobilization because it made better tactical sense. We felt that our power would be in numbers and since SOS had never mobilized more than 10 people to their Baldwin Park protests, it made more sense to engage the new coalition, which could produce hundreds, if not thousands of individuals to the border to confront the Minutemen in July 2005. SCHRN and ISO, along with the ultranationalists, could continue to outnumber the racists in Baldwin Park with little effort. The main thrust of our efforts would be to concentrate on the border showdown.

The Harmony Keepers, a nationalist-oriented group that provided security for many of the groups represented at the meeting, believed that the Baldwin Park residents should be organized and that they should have the last say in what should be done about the SOS actions, a point upon which most everyone agreed. However, the nationalist faction wanted to have a program that included cultural, musical, and other celebratory entertainment physically away from SOS. Conversely, the broader, and more numerous, radical, socialist, anarchist, youth, and student groups, and other independent immigrant rights activists wanted to confront them face-to-face, in a more combative and militant approach. These positions and the struggle for leadership between these factions, along with the fallout of an open denunciation of Javier Rodríguez by the ultranationalist cabal at a meeting at East Los Angeles College (ELAC), together ultimately served to carve up the more radical Coalition bloc.

By the third meeting, the divisions mainly over leadership amongst Coalition participants were evident. The divisions were so petty that the question of who would take the sign-in sheets home was an issue. Despite the divisions, we started having our meetings at ELAC where Coalition member, Professor Leslie Radford, taught. ISO and the Radical Women Freedom Socialist Party joined the group. Numerous groups from all backgrounds attended the meetings, even the antiwar group Code Pink participated. Essentially, it was mostly Los Angeles' leftist groups working together.

In an obvious attempt to disband, fragment, or altogether destroy the M28C, and its drive to confront the Minutemen in the San Diegan desert, the ultranationalists, namely Rodrigo Argueta and others, targeted Javier Rodríguez with a written edict that outlined his wrongdoings against the *Comité Prodemocracia en México*. It was retribution for the takeover Rodríguez had participated in months prior that returned the *Casa del Mexicano* community center in East Los Angeles to Martha Soriano, her husband Ruben, and community members. At the heart of the edict was the speculation that Rodríguez was a Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) informant, and that he had threatened to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents against the ousted group, namely Argueta, and others in the nationalist faction.

To me, the issue between them was irrelevant. My primary aim was to protect the Coalition in order to confront effectively the Minutemen. I disagreed with the ultranationalists' position of not confronting directly SOS in Baldwin Park and I thought their decision to confront Rodríguez during the M28C meeting was misguided because they certainly could have dealt with him elsewhere. However, the group comprised of no

less than 20 individuals, some of whom I had never seen, and have not seen to this day clearly underestimated the way that I would respond to their futile antics.

As they made their demands about why they wanted Javier out, I stood up and faced what seemed to be at least a couple of dozen of them, but was probably less.

Rodríguez would not even stand up and defend himself. It was clear that their motive was to undermine the efforts of the Coalition, and despite their strong presence, which included Ron Gochez, Alfonso González, and approximately a dozen others I stood up and said:

You know what, who the fuck is going to stand up and take him out? Let's just get it on then because if you're going to take him out, you want him out, you want to start doing this *pedo*? *Pues sabes que*, take me out first. And nobody would stand up. So I started pointing people out; I said *pues tu, y tu*, and you? And nobody would stand up; they wouldn't even look at me. I was like *sabes que*, well let's get on with the meeting then.¹³⁴

They were stifled and could not react to even finish their soliloquy, and they stomped out of the room. I understood that they did not know me. In some respect, they may have felt as if I was invading their space. In their eyes, I should focus on the Inland Empire and not try to control what happened in "LA." I believe the real reason they ended up dropping out of the M28C was differences and disagreement with the confrontational tactics that ISO and SCHRN were advocating at Baldwin Park. They used and exploited the issue with Rodríguez and their contentious history with him as a smokescreen. They dropped out of the Coalition but ISO and other leftists and radical groups stayed, as did some of the *Mechistas* from Whittier College and ELAC. While the complaints against

¹³⁴ This quote is extracted from an interview I did for Chris Zepeda's Cornell University Doctoral thesis on the Immigrant Rights Movement. It is obviously a paraphrased version of what I said at the meeting.

Rodríguez may have had some merit, they certainly did not justify disbanding the Coalition.

A small group of members of *La Tierra es de Todos* Coalition went to the July 2nd, 2005 march under the banner of “No to Racist Minutemen,” to garner support from the San Diego community, and gain media attention. Approximately 300 persons marched down the main street in San Ysidro with the main goal of bringing light to the Minutemen coming to California. As part of M28C, I began attending the San Diego actions organized by the *Gente Unida Coalition* (GUC) that was also organizing against the Minutemen in California. I believed it very important to collaborate with the GUC because it represented a wide variety of organizations, especially the Organic Collective (OC), a San Diego-based Anarchist “border collective” that focused its work on the México-US border. Ellie and Oona, Mike, and Richard spearheaded the OC with allies on both sides of the border, all of whom played a pivotal role in founding and organizing GUC.

As part of the GUC, the OC worked in conjunction with San Diego’s ISO, namely Jazmin Morelos and Nohelia Ramos Patel of San Diego City College *Resistencia Estudiantil*, and their faculty advisor Professor Elva Salinas. It also included other San Diego activists such as Michaela Saucedo, Vicente Rodríguez, Enrique Morones, and Rafael Hernandez, director of the *Angeles del Desierto*, a border rescue and recovery agency that not only plants water in the desert year round for border crossers but rescues them when necessary. Hernandez recounts finding bodies of attempted border crossers year round in the sweltering summer heat or frigid winter cold. Hernandez’ organization

ultimately played a vital role in the three-week long action against the Minutemen. Danny Morales, from the Inland Empire's GI Forum who worked closely with Vicente Rodríguez along with NAHR on the Arizona ranchers struggle, also joined the efforts of GUC. In July 2005, we went with what and whom we had to in order to confront the *Minutemos* in Campo. It was an immense three-week battle with hundreds of participants that proved to be much more effective than the previous nonmilitant operation in Arizona in April 2005.

During this period, Representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO) spoke at an anti-immigrant conference claiming that he believed "...the nation [wa]s winning the war on illegal immigration...[and] called two recent events "seismic shifts" in the immigration debate, (1) the passage of Proposition 200 in Arizona, which denies social service benefits and the ability to vote to illegal immigrants, and (2) the creation of the Minuteman Project, a civilian border watch group that called attention to the flow of illegal immigration (Gazzar, 2005). According to Gazzar, the "*La Tierra es de Todos* Coalition"¹³⁵ responded outside the event by loudly chanting, "Minutemen, KKK, Nazi scum, go away." In essence, the Coalition showed its militancy and support for immigrant rights. Its antiracist overtones were much more dynamic in penetrating the psyches of the antiimmigrant forces. On August 26th, 2005, *La Tierra es de Todos* Coalition members also protested against the Minutemen conference in Beverly Hills and organized against the Minutemen every step of the way. During the summer of 2005, we confronted them at every single event they organized.

¹³⁵ The Land is Everyone's Coalition

The Coalition met weekly at ELAC through the summer of 2005, and finally stopped meeting in late October 2005, mainly because of differences between some members but mostly because of the abrasive and arrogant style that Rodríguez brought to the meetings. According to some, he was a hindrance and obstacle to the fluidity and growth of the Coalition, and brought limited resources to the table. Most detrimental was his intrusive style of communicating with others in the Coalition, which many felt was not worth enduring. I was in a position where I could not dedicate the time necessary to continue organizing and holding the group together because I was taking my doctoral field exams during the fall 2005. I also felt that the time had come for the groups in the M28C to move onto other issues, and disbanding would certainly prompt them to consider other issues. *La Hermandad Mexicana* and a handful of ISO members working on immigrant rights were now collaborating, and the ultranationalist groups in Southern California had begun organizing the mobilizations against SOS and the Minutemen in the fall of 2005. Other groups began focusing more on the federal immigration reform debate, which was heating up once again before HR4437 was initiated later that year.

Although the antiimmigrant politician James Gilchrist ran for Congress and was modestly successful in his Orange County district, the damage against the MMP had been done. The MMP goal to take over the California border had been thwarted and the group could not account for the failure they faced in Southern California when compared to their success in Arizona. While it is arguable that the flow of northbound immigrants is less in that corridor, we attributed our success to the press conferences we held on the Mexican side of the border, warning of the potentiality of being apprehended by a

cazamigrante,¹³⁶ especially after two immigrants had been shot by the MMP. We had succeeded in delegitimizing the MMP and making into a fringe group but they were also weakened by internal conflicts. While the mobilizations of M28C could have been much more effective and numerous with the initial numbers it had, in the end the Coalition served its purpose. By the end of 2005, it had set the stage for the work leading up to the 2006 mobilizations.

La Placita Olvera Proimmigrant Working Group (2005)

After the confrontations against the Minutemen in Campo a handful of members in Los Angeles' ISO, namely Alvaro Maldonado, William Figueroa, and the García brothers, Freddy and Henry, met in November with *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* directors Gloria Saucedo, Alicia Flóres, and Gaby Ramos, to continue the momentum amongst the more militant faction of the immigrant rights struggle. This group eventually evolved into the *La Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group (LPOPWG). They also brought in then director of CARECEN Angela Sanbrano into the LPOPWG, and began meeting at the *Placita Olvera* Church where Father Richard Estrada welcomed the efforts of the budding group. In late 2005, media volunteer Martha Ugarte, Rosalio Muñoz from the Communist Party USA, joined the group. Having just passed my field exams, I opted to rejoin the group as well, and was driven by the conviction that it was imperative to organize a march against HR4437 as soon as it passed. The Organic Collective border group in San Diego, other San Diegan activists, and I monitored developments along the border during the remainder of that year. Newly

¹³⁶ migrant hunter

graduated Dartmouth alumni, Victor Fressie, also joined the group in early January, so did Juan Jose Gutierrez and Raul Murillo from Latino Movement USA and *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, respectively. Also, Hector Alvarado and Andres González from *Comite Pro Uno* in Maywood, Alejandro Ahumada, Guillermo Bejarano, Javier Rodríguez, and others joined the core group in early 2006.

We met for a few weeks in December 2005 and in early 2006, with the primary focus on putting together a few actions in early January in Los Angeles with the hopes of igniting a national effort against the anti-immigrant draconian federal measure. Within LPOPWG, we had discussed organizing a large march but it immediately became apparent that most everyone in the group felt that it would be necessary to bring in and work with the other groups in Los Angeles, including more liberal organizations, in order to secure resources, outreach capacities, and participants. Alvaro Maldonado had organized the mobilizations against Proposition 187 and I believed that we should have followed his lead to some extent. These late December meetings occurred amidst other actions in which some of us participated.

One action¹³⁷ was quickly organized by a consortium of groups that had been working together for years leading up to the passage of HR4437, which included CARECEN, CHIRLA, *La Hermandad Mexicana*, Korean Resource Center (KRC), Service Employees International Union Local 1877 (representing the janitors), the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC), and UNITE-HERE. They protested the passage of HR4437 on December 22nd, in front of the

¹³⁷ Email from Leslie Radford, Tuesday December 20th, 2005. Subject: Protest Immigration Bill Thursday noon in Brea. Rally “Protesting the Passage of The Most Antiimmigrant Bill in 80 years.”

Brea, CA, office of Representative Gary Miller (R-CA), a coauthor and supporter of the bill. There was clearly a concomitant effort underway apart from the efforts by CARACEN, namely director Angela Sanbrano, staff member Elda Martínez, and Gloria Saucedo from *La Hermandad Mexicana*.

While it remains unclear why Sanbrano and Martínez began meeting apart from the other groups, Saucedo and Flóres had consistently mobilized their membership for the consortium's events and actions but for over the years they were rarely recognized for their efforts. Gloria Saucedo responded to their strategic shift stating,

After we had worked unsuccessfully to get the licenses to drive [for undocumented drivers]...I accompanied you [Jesse] and the others with groups of *La Hermandad* at Campo, California, to fight with the Minutemen... That's when I knew a different type of movement, because before I had worked with the churches, unions, I had worked with Angelica Salas, with Angela Sanbrano, that is a very different movement. But when I began to associate with other groups of youth, more rebellious, I started another type of activism, a more confrontational type, that's when we started to see those things [the Minutemen] were doing were not right.¹³⁸

During this time, there were also actions being undertaken against the Minutemen at the Costa Mesa City Council meeting on January 3rd, by the *Tonantzin Colectiva*, that demanded the “Withdrawal of the vote that will give police officers the power to enforce immigration laws, the reopening of the day labor center, and the resignation of certain city council members.”¹³⁹ On January 7th there were actions at the Glendale, Laguna Beach, Lake Forest, and Rancho Cucamonga day laborer sites. In San Bernardino the National Alliance for Human Rights on January 12th, held a meeting attended by the

¹³⁸ Interviewee Gloria Saucedo, longtime immigrant rights activist, director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* in Panorama City. Co-founder of *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, and March 25th, Coalition.

¹³⁹ Tonantzin Colectiva. Flyer: Protect Attacks on Immigrants. Costa Mesa City Council Meeting. January 3rd, 2006 at 5pm.

Minutemen, and SOS' Joseph Turner.¹⁴⁰ In general, the ultranationalist faction began to organize against the Minutemen and SOS across the Southland, while organizers from the groups that had previously led the charge against the anti-immigrant fringe groups, myself included, began to focus more on federal anti-immigrant legislation.

The most important action during this time was led by then mayor of the City of Maywood, Felipe Aguirre, who championed his city to become the first sanctuary city that would be protected from the provisions of HR4437.¹⁴¹ The *Placita* group initiated actions in early January, which included *peregrinaciones*, vigils, council meeting actions, and other types of actions in and around the *Placita Olvera*. When I brought in Siu Hin Lee from the National Immigrant Solidarity Network into the first meetings in January he immediately created a website, which garnered 10,000 signatures in approximately one week, and the actions of other group members garnered thousands more for the first action on January 13th, 2010, to petition the Los Angeles City Hall to,

Declare its opposition to HR 4437 and to request California Senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to oppose HR 4437 and to work for comprehensive immigration reform that would lead to permanent residence and citizenship; and Reaffirm its support for Special Order 40, which prohibits questioning, detaining or interrogating persons solely because of suspected undocumented immigration status.

We immediately moved to get a resolution passed against HR4437 but as a Pro tem mayor in Maywood, Felipe Aguirre beat us to the punch in early January 2006. In an

¹⁴⁰ National Alliance for Human Rights. Latinos Meet to Mobilize against Nativist Immigration legislation and Attacks Press Advisory, January 6th, 2006.

¹⁴¹ Because of his controversial station in the community bestowed upon him for essentially supporting the community at all costs, in December 2008, Maywood voters defeated Measure M, known as the Maywood Ethics in Government Hiring and Contracting Practices Initiative that would have recalled Maywood Mayor Felipe Aguirre, Vice Mayor Veronica Guardado, and Councilwoman Ana Rosa Rizo (Bloomekatz, 2008).

interview with Chris Zepeda I noted that Aguirre “passed the first citywide resolution, the first sanctuary city against HR4437, and then San Francisco did it, if I’m not mistaken, and El Monte did it next. Then it just started this movement, everybody started doing it such as La Puente, Coachella, and [then] folks around the country.”¹⁴² There is no doubt the first historic and successful resolution against HR4437 was passed at the Maywood City Council meeting, which I attended amidst a packed city council chamber audience.

During early 2006, the group supported other events that were picking up support for the immigrant rights movement. The actions planned by the *Placita* group were designed with the goal of building momentum toward a march and, for a few of us, toward a national boycott on May 1st. The line of events for the *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, and the Southern California Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform are outlined in Table 1.¹⁴³

From the beginning, there were conflicts among the membership of the *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group not only surrounding Javier Rodríguez but among other members. There was personal conflict between Alicia Flóres and Martha Ugarte, but according to Flóres, it was minor and was quickly dismissed.¹⁴⁴ At that point, I was still working closely with Javier Rodríguez but because of earlier controversies

¹⁴² This quote is extracted from an interview I did for Chris Zepeda’s Cornell University doctoral thesis on the Immigrant Rights Movement.

¹⁴³ These events were compiled by Elda Martinez, the Community Outreach & Education Coordinator at CARECEN, in a *Placita Olvera* Pro-immigrant Working Group Flyer for “Fair Immigration Reform: Make Your Voice Heard! Join Us To Denounce HR4437.” It is also not clear what groups comprised the Southern California Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

¹⁴⁴ Interviewee Alicia Flores, long-time immigrant rights activist, director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* in Oxnard, CA. and Casa de Refugio de Elvira Arellano in Tijuana, BC, México. Cofounder of *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, March 25th, Coalition, and *Casa de Refugio* de Elvira Arellano in Tijuana, BC, México.

surrounding him, I was asked whether bringing him into the fold would be beneficial or detrimental to the group. The skepticism of the *Placita* Working Group was understandable. In some activists' minds, Rodríguez had quickly divided the M28C, well before it realized its mission to confront the MMP in the San Diegan desert. There was also concern that he was not a team player because he never joined us in the summer border confrontations with the MMP, yet he proclaimed himself to be the Coalition's "strategist." This occurred again later in the March 25th Coalition and became a point of contention between Javier Rodríguez and Nativo López.¹⁴⁵

Another concern was that the Minutemen were openly armed and I understood that nonviolent activists like Rodríguez, López, and many others had never really confronted armed vigilantes before. It quickly became evident that these old timers were all anxious about confronting that type of violence. It was clear it would take a special type of person to engage in this dangerous and volatile movement. Gloria Saucedo, for example, recalled her uneasy feelings about being openly vulnerable for any violence that could instantaneously erupt at Campo during the Minutemen showdown,

I remember one day when everyone had left the camp and I stayed alone, I asked myself what I was doing there. I am over 50 years old, here alone in the night on a mountaintop. What am I doing here? How am I going to help? But you know what, the community knows that I am here, and that I am struggling for them, and they will be empowered that someone is struggling for them. That gave me more motivation to continue positively ahead. With whatever movement that we do, even diminutive ones for the community, the community appreciates it and that makes the movement stronger.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ In a series of emails sent back and forth between Lopez and Rodriguez, Lopez accused Rodriguez of self-imposing titles "media strategist," "political strategist," etc., despite never having been voted into a position that the M25C had never created.

¹⁴⁶ Interviewee Gloria Saucedo, longtime immigrant rights activist, director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* in Panorama City. Cofounder of *Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group, March 25th, Coalition.

Enrique Morones from San Diego was similarly overly cautious and reluctant to stay in Campo. In fact, Morones would not stay overnight at the border camp we set up near Campo, explaining that it was because of a “death threat” he had received. In fact, all of us were potential targets, and in a sense, we all believed that we were under a death threat and in imminent danger. Nevertheless, like Saucedo, we all fully understood that there was no way we could back down, that this was the right course of action to take for the immediate safeguarding of border crossers during those three weeks. Although Javier Rodríguez never went to the border to confront the MMP, to his credit he did march in downtown Calexico, CA, on September 16th, 2005, against the vigilante group Friends of the Border Patrol that never mobilized to the border that day. In the same vein, only under daylight would Morones escort the news media to or meet them at the encampment.

Despite these problems, the pleas from the newly established working group stirred. Because of the severity of HR4437, I had an ultimate desire for everyone in LA to work in unity, and challenged everyone else to do so as well. In fact, “I remember when Rodríguez was asked to be a part of the group by Father Estrada. I was laughing inside and almost aloud when Javier said something historical about the Movement that he had done, I forget exactly what it was, but it was about qualifying for the *grupo* it was obvious he was showboating but the *Padre* bought it.”¹⁴⁷ Moreover, “I laughed because they had probably politicked amongst each other on how to keep Rodríguez out of the

¹⁴⁷ This quote is extracted from an interview I did for Chris Zepeda’s Cornell University Doctoral thesis on the Immigrant Rights Movement.

Placita working group but someone forgot to send the memo to the *Padre*.”¹⁴⁸ I also felt that because he was a close friend of mine that if they wanted me to work with them, they would have to accept him as well.

In the end, I decided to bring Rodríguez along to the *Placita* meetings in an effort to help the group to grow. For instance, at the first meeting, Rodríguez accompanied me on January 18th, 2006, there were only 13 participants present: Jesse Díaz, Father Richard Estrada, William Figueroa, William Franco, Martha Jimenez, Alvaro Maldonado, Rosalio Muñoz, Gabriela Ramos, Nereida Ramos Javier Rodríguez, Angela Sanbrano, Gloria Saucedo, Martha Ugarte, and yours truly, Jesse Díaz.¹⁴⁹

At this point, the group lacked sufficient members to organize a mass mobilization and it was made clear when I proposed a major march against HR4437, and a national boycott on May 1st. The immediate response from the group was to bring in other groups and their resources, namely CHIRLA, Catholic Church leaders, and union activists, which to everyone was understandable and all unanimously agreed. In terms of the boycott I proposed May 1st as the date, but my proposal was pushed aside. At that time, the only other person that supported it was Alvaro Maldonado from the ISO, although the idea later gained more support. To keep unified, we decided not to push the issue and instead planned to collaborate with CHIRLA to organize their annual May 1st march in LA, which it had been doing for a handful of years along with other members of the Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network. Despite the lack of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ January 18th, 2006, meeting notes of “La Placita Pro-Immigrant Working Group.” Prepared by Elda Martinez and emailed on January 23rd and handed out at the January 25th, 2006, meeting.

membership, the group decided to move forward with a series of small actions that would grow into larger ones. This helped to inspire participants to support a major march in the coming months.

The LPOPWG met weekly through the winter and early spring at the *Placita*. Initially, it met in Father Estrada's office conference room. Once it outgrew the conference room, we went to the dining area, and then began meeting in the patio rooms until we outgrew that area as well. Then we ended up having to meet in the basement with no less than seventy-five persons attending the final meetings leading up to *La Gran Marcha*. Before the *Gran Marcha* however, LPOPWG had swelled to well over 60 core members, representing a wide variety of organizations from all over Southern California, including regular attendance from San Diego activists Vicente Rodríguez, Elva Salinas, and her students.

The common belief is that the "March 25th Coalition" organized the *Gran Marcha* but the truth is that on February 22nd, 2006 we changed the name of the *La Placita Olvera* Pro-immigrant Working Group to the "Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437,"¹⁵⁰ and it was this group that organized *La Gran Marcha*. In fact, that same evening for the upcoming March 25th march I suggested the name "*La Gran Marcha*,"¹⁵¹ which initiated the events of "*La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006 en Los Ángeles*."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Fieldnotes: February 22nd, 2006, meeting at *La Placita* Church. Also see the original flyers and placards of *La Gran Marcha*.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² The Great Epoch of Spring 2006 in Los Ángeles. The marches we organized during this period were named as a homage to the "*La Gran Marcha*." For example, after *La Gran Marcha*, we organized "*La*

The one deliberate change that occurred leading up to the passage of HR4437 was the radicalization of more moderate members, specifically Gloria Saucedo, Alicia Flóres, and Gaby Ramos of *La Hermandad Mexicana*. They felt it important to begin working more closely with the radical faction of the Los Ángeles progressive community and to work in the IRM. This was only one part of the recipe for our success. Bringing these factions together at *La Placita*, even though a short-lived, actually served as the impetus for the radical undertones of the spring mobilizations, which were counter to the moderate overtones of the Movement that up until that point were still heavily steeped in the federal legislative struggle for the Kennedy McCain Bill.

For this reason, the moderate faction of the Movement was taken by surprise by the success of these efforts. It failed to realize the need for street mobilizations, a tactical tradition widely embraced by the traditional faction of the IRM in Los Ángeles. This was clearly transmitted in the contents of our press release that we publicized in late February 2006 for a March 2nd, 2006 press conference titled, “LA Coalition to Stage Mass Protest on March 25th 2006 Against HR4437 Sensenbrenner Immigration Bill in Downtown Los Ángeles at *Placita Olvera* Kiosko,” that was designed to kickoff the *Gran Marcha* organizing campaign.¹⁵³ It also demonstrated the militant characteristic of the nascent organization and movement.

Gran Marcha Estudiantil 2006” in mid-April 2006 and then the climactic “*Gran Paro Americano 2006*,” which were all followed by “*La Gran Marcha Laboral 2006*” on Labor Day 2006.

¹⁵³ Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437 Press Release titled, “LA Coalition to Stage Mass Protest on March 25th 2006 Against HR4437 Sensenbrenner Immigration Bill in Downtown Los Ángeles at *Placita Olvera* Kiosko, to publicize a press conference on March 2nd, 2006, to announce *La Gran Marcha* 2006 against HR4437. It was the first press release that I had ever drafted, Javier Rodriguez built off it, adding the demand for the involvement for the Latino Establishment.

To be successful, it was imperative that we tie our campaign to the round of marches that had already been taking place around the country. Challenging the progressive community, we contended, “The march, expected to be the largest in the country to date, will also demand an integral, comprehensive and family-oriented immigration reform that will lead to the legalization and eventual citizenship for the 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country.”¹⁵⁴ We also posited,

The Coalition will call on all immigrants and all Californians of all colors and creeds, labor, clergy, community and political organizations, students and youth to protest, make their voices heard and galvanize the movement for humane immigration reform all the way to Washington DC. The US Senate is expected to begin debate on the Senate floor on March 27th.¹⁵⁵

It was going to take a large outreach campaign to mobilize successfully a march to supersede the 100,000-strong anti-Proposition 187 march in Downtown Los Angeles. It was also vitally important to pick strategically the date of *La Gran Marcha* and we did. Despite claims and or rumors, that the initiation of the *Gran Marcha* was the work of one certain individual or initiated from a certain event, its creation and evolution was a much more complex and collaborative effort. It was the culmination of a series of events and the work of numerous organizers in the IRM. What was clear was that we would need all of these groups to participate and more.

At that point, it was necessary to gain support of the politicians that would be instrumental in legitimizing a mass mobilization, such as State Senator Gilbert Cedillo, a key player in the anti-187 mobilizations as head of SEIU, and also Speaker Fabian

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Nuñez, and Majority Leader Gloria Romero, all of which represented our connection to the state capitol. The coalition quickly called on its city government allies such as LA Council President Eric Garcetti, and invited Mayor Antonio Villaraigoza, to join our efforts and repudiate the “wall of shame” and the criminalization of immigrants as felons proposed in the House approved “Border Protection and Antiterrorist and Illegal Immigration Control Act” on December 15th, 2005.¹⁵⁶ Coalition leaders also urged Spanish language media and progressive media to assist them in making March 25th “the largest demonstration in support of immigrant workers and their families in recent history.”¹⁵⁷

This communiqué also listed allies around the state that I had met during the *Paro Economico* campaign in 2003 and subsequent actions. Within one hour, I asked them by phone to serve as regional contacts for the March 25th mobilization. I became the contact for the Inland Empire and I gained the support of the following people to serve as the contact for other cities and regions: Polo Chavez (Fresno), Gloria Saucedo (San Fernando Valley), Ricardo López (the Imperial Valley), Angela Sanbrano (Los Ángeles), Alicia Flóres (Ventura County), Elva Salinas (San Diego), and Salinas’ former student Mali Hinesley (Bay Area, Northern California), Francisco Roman (Orange County), Felipe Aguirre (Maywood).

The press release also acknowledged the need for a broad sense of openness and unity but showed the limited scope of merely calling on “Spanish language media.”

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Coalition members had consistently asked Martha Ugarte to speak to “*El Cucuy*,” a popular Spanish disc jockey to endorse and outreach the *Gran Marcha*, but apparently, he was fighting a domestic violence charge and was understandably looking to protect his privacy. It was just bad timing, but after *El Pistolero*¹⁵⁸ in Chicago collaborated with Emma Lozano during the summer 2005 in mobilizing a 50,000 person strong march against the Minutemen, and then collaborated with her again to outreach for the March 10th, march, which drew over 300,000, we felt the urgency to also model that successful partnership. *Piolín* was nowhere on the radar at that point. While some folks in the Movement would have you believe that there was a “media strategy,” it was essentially doing what we always do in the *Movimiento*.

Press conferences have always been a part of the outreach campaigns in the Movement, and the media breakfast organized to bring in the media as a partner was essentially an idea for a plan that worked in the anti-187 campaign that forged a partnership with Spanish media and the consortium of immigrant rights coalitions. Although Javier Rodríguez guaranteed he would bring in *La Opinion* Newspaper, KPFK and other progressive media outlets, as well as the endorsements of the Latino Political Establishment, it never materialized. With the exception of the regional contacts on the press release, none of the aforementioned organizations and individuals ever integrated themselves into the organizing of the mobilizations.

The night before the first press conference was to kick off the campaign for the *Gran Marcha*, UFW organizer Diane Tellofson, and SEIU organizer Carlos Montes, and

¹⁵⁸ A Spanish radio disc jockey in Chicago

LA FED of Labor affiliate Russell Jauregui along with others tried to stack the meeting to vote to move the march to the 26th. They should to join the event with the annual *misa*¹⁵⁹ for César Chávez at the downtown Cathedral. While most of us knew, there were tensions between members of the Coalition, that night they were clarified. I had chaired all of the meetings in February, through the week after *El Gran Paro Americano* with the exception of that night's meeting.

The day before that meeting, I had received a call from Father Estrada who stated, "Jesse we got some good news, the UFW is coming in, some labor is coming in, and you know, it's great because now we have the help we need."¹⁶⁰ We had been pushing this press conference out further and further and we finally had agreed the week before we could not wait for Labor, CHIRLA, and the elite level of the Church any longer, so we had already set a date for the press conference. However, the moderates in the Coalition felt there was still a chance to have a successful event because now the resources such as money, staff, and members would be available. Anyway, I was chalking in the agenda for the meeting and Angela Sanbrano who wanted to chair the meeting interrupted me. She asked if we could put the new developments on the agenda, which was to move the *La Gran Marcha* date to the 26th.

Diane Tellofson came with this proposal to move the day of the march. Most of us were stunned but were willing to listen. I could tell folks including myself were

¹⁵⁹ Mass

¹⁶⁰ Fieldnotes: Father Richard Estrada is the pastor of the *La Placita Olvera* Church and has been very active in the struggle for immigrant rights in Los Angeles. He comes from a long line of *Placita* pastors that have struggled in the Movement, with all factions of the Movement and even if controversial or unpopular.

visibly disappointed. The agenda I had written on the chalkboard went out the window. The only item that was discussed was to move the date from the 25th to the 26th. I remember other members looking at me as if I had something to do with this development. I looked around the room and present were Carlos Montes who was working for SEIU, Tellofson working for UFW, present also was immigration lawyer Russell Jauregui with the County Federation of Labor, and now they had become emboldened. It was an obvious attempt to stack the meeting, as these folks were showing up for the first time. To counterbalance their attempt to tip the meeting, Hector Alvarado and Andres González from PROUNO showed up, three or four strong. Juan José Gutierrez also was present, after having sent another representative from his group for him, for a couple of meetings. Alejandro Ahumada, Alvaro Maldonado with other ISO members, Rosalio Muñoz, Javier Rodríguez and I represented those who were fighting to keep the march on the 25th, but the moderates with the unions, the Church, and the NGOs were against us. We debated for at least an hour and a half, perhaps even two hours.

Our position was that it was a political march against HR4437 and that we needed to keep it as such. Their position was that we should move it to the date of César's memorial, an event that they do every year at the Cathedral—it was about having a mass after a march. The organizer said that they already had 2,000 *campesinos*¹⁶¹ coming in buses, so they already had bodies to fill the Cathedral. We tried desperately to envision the event, because we were already planning on a march of at least 100,000 to hundreds of thousands. I asked Tellofson “How do you fit all these thousands of people

¹⁶¹ UFW fieldworkers

around the Cathedral?” Muñoz’ position was that if it becomes a “spiritual event” many people would not want to participate.

I also asked “Where are we going to get a *jumbotron* and who is going to pay for that major big screen?” Seriously, it was logistically, ludicrous. We were debating back and forth and Rosalio kept saying no, this was a political issue. Muñoz fought valiantly because he had proposed the 25th; he had studied which date for our march would have the maximum impact. He was keeping very close watch on the congressional debates. Anyway, Javier, Alvaro and other ISO members, Alejandro, the Pro Uno cadre, and others including myself all agreed with him. Finally, I said, “you know what? Let’s vote!

The options were to have *La Gran Marcha* moved to the 26th, or to have and support both events; that is, have the political march on the 25th and then on Sunday have the *misa*. This is somewhat important because it all relied on one vote. The count went 10 to 10. I counted them quickly and remember thinking “shit, shit, shit!” There were 20 of us at the meeting, and it was 10 and 10; even Gloria Saucedo had been convinced to move the event to the 26th beforehand, and that it would be a good move to turn the event over to the moderate faction, because that would be the ultimate result. She later redeemed herself for voting against us by buying Javier and me dinner after the *Gran Marcha*. Her justification for the vote was based on her lack of faith, fearing that we

could not pull it off without the necessary resources of “*labor, la iglesia, y con CHIRLA.*”¹⁶²

My quick response was to jump up and say “That’s it, 11 to 10, we won; we’re going to keep it all on March 25th.” Angela Sanbrano’s immediate response as chair was to counter with “OK, let’s recount. Let’s count again.” I stood up and said “No, *nah chale*, bullshit,” and I got up like a bull in a china cabinet, asserting that we had won 11 to 10. I told the others voting with me, “Lets go, this is bullshit. We can do this on our own.” I do not know what else I said but I really was serious about doing it alone outside of that group, especially because of my history of organizing large demonstrations with few resources. I stood up to walk out and I remember Javier and Alvaro started asking me to stay, they were telling me to “wait.” Finally, Sabrano reconsidered and she said, “OK, OK, so we’ll do it on March 25th.” I said “All right, I could deal with that.” We agreed that we would organize two separate events.

Immediately after that weekend, the moderate folks criticized us for not showing up to César’s mass the next day. I can only speak for myself, but having slept a handful of hours in the preceding weeks had taken its toll. I was exhausted and it had absolutely nothing to do with personalities, or resentment, or anything of the sort. It was merely my being overly fatigued. Anyway, call it what you may, think of me as you wish but had I not taken a “little white lie” approach; there never would have been a *Gran Marcha*. It would never have happened—we would have had one giant mass, encircling the Cathedral.

¹⁶² The labor movement, the Catholic Church, and CHIRLA, which make up the core of the moderate faction, minus CARECEN, who was already in the *Placita* group.

This debate went absolutely nowhere because it was clearly meant to divide our group, or more successfully grab control of the mobilization by members of the moderate faction, because by then they undoubtedly sensed mobilizations were poised to erupt. Coincidentally, there were organizers that had been directly involved in the anti187 mobilizations, namely Carlos Montes and Russell Jauregui, who for the first time showed up that night. They allowed the debate to go on for well over an hour, which nearly destroyed the LPOPWG that night and actually left behind a bitterness that would later serve to divide the Coalition between groups working with and outside of the LA County Federation of Labor.

This heated debate did not split the group that night. It was one of those rare moments in *Movimiento* history where we all realized that it was much bigger than this half-baked power grab strategy that also underestimated the many years of radical, militant, and traditional immigrant rights activism that were represented there at that meeting that night. To this day, it baffles me why on principle the proposal was not taken off the table as soon as it became apparent that it was so divisive. We also went ahead with the initial press conference the next morning as planned.

In our initial press release, there was a balanced account of the previous work that some of us in our respective organizations had carried out that led up to that point, including the work the newly formed *Placita* consortium had accomplished but it also highlighted the work that still needed to be done. The press release worked to gain successfully the attention of mostly Spanish media and its Latino audience. It also called on the Latino Establishment and other organizations in Southern California to begin the

broad tasks necessary to undertake a major mobilization. It was very successful because they had been following others and myself who had been confronting the Minutemen around the Southland. The Latino establishment was in shock. They could not believe the success of the IRM. My strategy was to exploit this situation, though for me it was not a major strategy, we were just doing what has always been done—the *Movimiento* has utilized press conferences as a tactic of education and outreach for decades.

Prior to this call, the *Placita Olvera* Pro-immigrant Working Group (later known as the Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437) waited for months for “CHIRLA, labor, and the Church” to help to organize the march. To their credit, the *Placita* Church (represented by Father Estrada) worked with us to a degree through the *Gran Marcha*. The only appearance CHIRLA made was when Antonio Barnabe attended the final meeting before *La Gran Marcha* and pledged \$1,000, which to my knowledge we never received. Nativo López from *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* also pledged \$1,000 that was also never received. David Huerta, also an SEIU organizer attended the last meeting of the *Gran Marcha* campaign to discuss the security that the LA County Federation of Labor would organize for the march, which also never materialized. During this time, these three labor organizations, the Service Employee International Union, the United Farmworkers Union, and the LA County Federation of Labor, planned aggressively against the efforts of the militant wing of the Movement. This soon morphed into a deep divide between organized labor and the radical grassroots immigrant rights coalition.

March 25th Coalition (2006)

The March 25th Coalition (M25C) became the more radical and militant coalition in Los Angeles that facilitated the opportunity at its inception for all three factions of *La Hermandad Mexicana*, previously divided, to work together. At one point or another, it also included the International Socialist Organization, a variety of Mexican *federaciones*, the Filipino organization BAYAN, *Casa del Mexicano*, ANSWER, the Socialist Workers Party, Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party, By All Means Necessary, *Frente Latinoamericana*, independent labor unions and their members, and many other community-based organizations that represented the Southern California immigrant rights community.

The March 25th Coalition was named on March 26th, 2006,¹⁶³ when I suggested we move away from the Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437, and offered the new name amidst an all-male debriefing meeting at the law office of Antonio Rodríguez to strategically set the agenda for the new group.¹⁶⁴ For me, the name paid homage to the May 28th Coalition from 2005, and was consistent with the practice in other cities of naming coalitions after their recent historic march dates, namely the March 10th Coalition in Chicago, and others. Coming to consensus on the next direction for the newly founded coalition was imperative. Most obviously, because it was clear that we had nailed the coffin shut on the draconian legislation, HR4437. Clearly, the next move

¹⁶³ This was a meeting that was not planned, but was called by a handful of members, and organized that morning. It is not known why Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flores did not attend.

¹⁶⁴ My fieldnotes of the meeting for March 26th, 2006 at Antonio Rodríguez' offices.

was to open the door, once again, for a new shot at immigration reform based on the massive upshot in community participation.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported police estimates of the size of *La Gran Marcha*: 500,000 participants. According to Siu Hin (2006), "...police estimates ha[d] been trying to minimize pro-immigrant rights demonstration for the last few weeks. [On] March 25th, in downtown Los Angeles, over 1 million people demonstrated in support of immigrant rights. This was the largest demonstration in the history of California."¹⁶⁵ He further reported that the "...march organizers announced from the stage that the crowd was over 1 million. [And that] Univision and other Spanish-language television reported that up to 2 million people marched."¹⁶⁶ The day before the march, most of us in the Coalition knew there would be over a million marchers participating the next day. However, at least one "organizer, Javier Rodríguez said he expect[ed] several hundred thousand people to attend the event, which [would] begin at 10AM at Olympic Boulevard and Broadway Avenue."¹⁶⁷ The English-speaking news media also could not believe we would have over a million marchers.

The magnitude of the march was so enormous, on that day buses could not be parked anywhere downtown and had to park away from downtown at Dodger Stadium.

Alicia Flóres from *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* reported that in the final

¹⁶⁵ Siu Hin, Lee. (2006). Los Angeles: Between half-million to one million people protest against antiimmigrant Law. March 25th, 2006. <http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/Spring2006.html>. Retrieved January 4th, 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ ABC7 News. (2006). Students walkout to protest immigration bill. Friday, March 24th, 2006. <<http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local&id=4021798>>. Retrieved January 2nd, 2010.

week leading up to the march, rentable buses had become unavailable in California and only out-of-state buses were available. Because of the blocked exits on the freeways surrounding downtown many potential participants were unable to get into downtown and there were numerous reports of people left behind at Metrolink train stations from across the Southland. In cities where churches and community organizations, etc., had rented buses, because of the lack of space many individuals were stranded behind. Although the march that put the IRM on the map started at 10AM, the program lasted approximately one hour ending about 2PM, but at 4PM marchers were still passing in front of City Hall, and Broadway was still crowded with participants at a standstill.

In the morning, the corner of Olympic and Broadway where the march was to begin was inundated with participants estimated to be around 300,000 at 8AM when Jorge Reyes, Ricardo Anaya, and I arrived with the banner for the front of the march. We lost the front of the march two hours before the beginning of the march. In fact, it soon became evident that because Broadway had already filled with marchers, that there would be no way that the organizers of the march would be able to march together in the front that morning. We put the banner down, which read, "*Residencia Permanente*," which represented a compromise between those who supported amnesty and those who were calling for a pathway to citizenship. In the spirit of unity, we felt that this would be the message under which everyone in the Coalition could collectively march.

As participants overflowed into the downtown streets, members of the Coalition that were supposed to march together at the front of the march could not find each other. Security volunteers from the Pomona Day Labor Center had arrived but could not control

the crowd enough to stretch the banner across Broadway. It was just too difficult for us. Some of us ran into each other during this time and figured we had to get to the front of the march at some point, so the folks at the front of the march in many pictures merely ran into each other along the curb, and as we ran north in the alley alongside Broadway. We ran from 9th to about 3rd street where we ran onto Broadway from the east cleared as many participants as we could from the middle of the street to the curbsides. We finally engineered a “front” with no banner and mostly comprised of men (which was clearly unrepresentative of the many female activists involved in the Coalition), but it was the only way in which it could be realized.

When security was finally able to push us from Broadway onto 1st street, I spotted Gloria Saucedo and my family in the crowd and pulled them all to the front and marched alongside them for the remainder of the march, which was approximately 1.5 blocks from Broadway on 1st, to Main Street, then north to the staging area. As we made the turn north on Main, the crowd dense and unyielding, but between the Nation of Islam security volunteers and a handful of very sizeable and tattooed unidentified *cholos* who stepped up and pushed a path through the body mass, we were able to meander through the crowd. Gloria Saucedo criticized us for excluding her at the front of the march, but in our defense, there was clearly no way to include her at that moment. There were so many people and the thunderous noise from chanting, music, drums, whistling, and yelling made it impossible to hear anything on the cell phone and Coalition members were not used to communicating to each other through text messages. Nevertheless, at the final

leg of the march, most of the March 25th Coalition marched together in a magnificent display of unified leadership and camaraderie.

From the stage during the *Gran Marcha* rally, Gloria Saucedo surprisingly jumped the gun and took it to the next level with the *pueblo* when she went to the microphone at one point during the rally and yelled, “*Ahora Marchamos, Mañana Boicoteamos,*” which means, “Today We March, Tomorrow We Boycott.” We had not yet formalized how the Coalition would make the announcement beforehand and then it was just done. This was the character of that epoch, in which activists inspired and springboarded ideas off each other. That decision however, was the impetus for some organizers to leave the M25C in the following days. It was a “radical” position and it was argued later in the media by members of the moderate wing of the Movement to have not been the “right time.” Nevertheless, the enormity of what became a worldwide action, *El Gran Paro Americano 2006* overshadowed those positions and those opposing it were drowned out by the people’s response. The Coalition for this action worldwide was hugely recognized. One of the first México states that responded to the call was *Aguascalientes*. Soon after, other states and countries across the globe began calling for an “American products boycott.”

Alvaro Maldonado supported the concept of the *Gran Paro* all along. By that time, we had defined boycott participation as “no working, no school, no buying and no selling.” High from the momentum of the march, we had little trouble selling it to the other coalition members that night.¹⁶⁸ Juan Jose Gutierrez and his close allies were

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

planning a march in late April, but he quickly dismissed that plan when the boycott plan was adopted. That night it felt like there was a sincere camaraderie amongst all of us in the group comprised of Alejandro Ahumada, Jesse Díaz, Jr., Nativo López, Alvaro Maldonado, Juan Jose Gutierrez, Raul Murillo, and the Rodríguez brothers Antonio, Jaime, Javier, and Jorge—Jaime Jr., who accompanied his father through the following months while organizing the spring demonstrations was also present. For this reason that night, I also introduced the concept and name for the next event that I had been churning in my mind for months “*El Gran Paro Americano 2006.*” I felt that for all of us this would be a natural next leap to show that immigrants were the “backbone” of the US economy and without them, there would be radical economic consequences, which would prove finally the empowerment of our community and helped achieve a just and fair immigration reform.

That evening we took hold of the reins of the Immigrant Rights Movement, having just organized the largest march in the history of the US with a bottom up community-based effort with very little financial support. We believed that we could influence the next steps it took, even nationally. After having just organized the biggest marches in the country since the Vietnam War (see Halstead, 1978), some individuals in the group that felt it was imperative to control the national struggle for immigrant rights. Others, including myself, knew it could only be possible by collaborating with the many other proimmigrant organizers that had also begun making their mark on US history.

The coalition quickly adopted principles of unity that reflected the traditional aim of the Immigrant Rights Movement: Full, unconditional, and immediate amnesty for all

undocumented immigrants, no guest worker programs, an end to the division of immigrant families, and for full labor and civil rights of immigrants regardless of immigration status. The Coalition's position was a page taken out of the old *Casista* playbook. In our first "March 25th Coalition Statement," our political line was articulated in the preamble that read, "We call for amnesty & full legalization." Our statement also claimed that "...well over one million undocumented workers, legal residents and their supporters—along with protests and walkouts throughout the US—is irrefutable evidence that a new civil rights and workers' rights movement is on the rise."¹⁶⁹ The group posited that every marcher represented millions more and demanded equality and all worker's rights, and that any of these rights could not be realized unless there was a "...comprehensive, all-encompassing process of full legalization for all immigrants."¹⁷⁰

On the issue of reform the Coalition was clear that "The schemes being debated in Congress only aim[ed] to either criminalize the undocumented and by extension all immigrants, or to provide an extremely limited possibility for undocumented workers to be able to live, work and remain in the country they have adopted as their own."¹⁷¹ It was our position that the IRM could not be "...satisfied to accept "guestworker" programs or other repressive schemes from Congress or [then] President GW Bush..." We acknowledged, "Some say that amnesty and legalization are not realistic, and that it is

¹⁶⁹ March 25th Coalition Position Statement. We Call for Amnesty and Full Legalization. Posted April 1st, 2006. <http://www.pephost.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=7689> March 25 Coalition Statement. Retrieved September 10th, 2009.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

even dangerous to raise the demand for full equality.”¹⁷² However, we countered this “dangerous” and acquiescent position by pointing out that “The lessons of history in the US provide us with great examples of how the perseverance of a people’s movement is the only way to overcome brutal discrimination and achieve full rights.”¹⁷³ As historical evidence, the collective statement exhibited the “1955-56 Montgomery, Alabama, boycott...the heroic people in that city...the domestic and hotel maids, gardeners, cooks, seamstresses...who said, enough is enough...demanded nothing less than full equality. By their persistence they were victorious and made history.”¹⁷⁴

The initial signers of the statement included, Felipe Aguirre, *Pro Uno* and Maywood City Council; Alejandro Ahumada, Joaquin Murrieta Association; Jesse Díaz, Jr., *Centro de Jornaleros*, Pomona; Juan Jose Gutierrez, Latino Movement USA; Ventura Gutierrez, Bi-National *Bracero-Proa Alianza*; Miguel López, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Nativo López, Mexican American Political Association & *Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana*; Raul Murillo, *Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*-Los Ángeles; Joel Ochoa-Perez, International Association of Machinists; Antonio Rodríguez, civil rights attorney; Jaime Rodríguez, activist; Javier Rodríguez, independent writer; Jorge Rodríguez, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Angela Sanbrano, Central American Resource Center; Gloria Saucedo, *Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*-Panorama City; Martha Soriano, Casa del *Mexicano*; and Enrique Vela,

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

political activist.¹⁷⁵ Although Angela Sanbrano left the Coalition to follow a more conservative line and even spoke out against the M25C during the *Gran Paro* campaign immediately following the *Gran Marcha*, the lion's share of us mentioned above continued to follow that traditional line for amnesty and no *bracero*-type of programs.

The March 25th Coalition collectively reiterated the position at the end of the statement, "Today this new civil and workers' rights movement demands amnesty, legalization and full equality."¹⁷⁶ This position at that time clearly drew a line in the sand between the M25C and the more moderate organizations that had been working on a "pathway to citizenship." It was an all or nothing approach that breathed new life into the Movement and attracted many organizations that had been outside of the purview of the moderate faction, some of whom felt a newfound purpose to reintegrate themselves into the Movement once again.

The initiators of the statement proclaimed that the "...movement's next major action [would] be "*El Gran Paro Americano 2006*,"¹⁷⁷ on May 1st 2006, [further claiming that it would] be a nationwide day without immigrants, [when immigrants] and their supporters [would] stay home from work and school and businesses [would be] closed. [And that] we will demand amnesty and full rights for all immigrants."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ "The Great American Boycott 2006"

¹⁷⁸ March 25th Coalition Position Statement. We Call for Amnesty and Full Legalization. Posted April 1st, 2006. <http://www.pephost.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=7689> March 25 Coalition Statement. Retrieved September 10th, 2009.

When I proposed the *Gran Paro Americano 2006* to the Coalition members on that Sunday night, the 26th of March, I felt relieved when they agreed to undertake the massive venture. Whereas in January the action was beyond the capacity of our diminutive group to undertake, it now seemed possible. To get the Immigrant Rights Movement in action I quickly finalized the call I had been writing and waiting to introduce at the appropriate time:

“El Gran Paro Americano 2006,” “The Great American Boycott 2006” May 1st, 2006, is: *“Un dia sin inmigrante,” “A day without an immigrant.”* Immigrants contribute \$7 billion in social security per year. They earn 240 billion, report 90 billion, and only are reimbursed 5 billion, “where are the 85 billion?” They also contribute to the US economy 25 billion more than they receive in healthcare, etc., etc., etc. According to the anti-immigrant politicians and hatemongers, “immigrants are a drain on society.” If this is true, then during the day on May 1st the stock market will surge, and the economy will boom. If not, we prove them wrong once and for all. We know what will happen!

Therefore, the “March 25th Coalition against HR4437 in Los Angeles,” the organizers of the mega march of almost 2 million on March 25th, has called for an emergency videoconferenced meeting on April 8th between Los Angeles and any city that wishes to join the efforts toward *“El Gran Paro Americano 2006.”* The following meeting will take place in Chicago on April 22nd, we ask that all that wish to participate and be a part of a national effort on May 1st and beyond, to attend by finding facilities in your areas that can hold the meeting, technologically.

The points of unity are: “No Work, No School, No Sales, and No Buying,” and also to have rallies around symbols of economic trade in your areas (stock exchanges, anti-immigrant corporations, etc.). Cities across the US had marched during the week, therefore, in essence observing a limited regional boycott. The March 25th Coalition against HR4437, calls for these regions to develop a national network that will “connect the dots.” We believe with numbers we have power, the power currently necessary to keep the pressure on the White House to propose provisions that are just and fair for all immigrants.

We will settle for nothing less than full amnesty and dignity for the millions of undocumented workers presently in the US. We believe that increased enforcement is a step in the wrong direction and will only serve to facilitate more tragedies along the Mexican-US border in terms of deaths and family separation.

More details to come... Keep your eye on www.nohr4437.org, and or write to granmarcha2006@hotmail.com, and any tax deductible donations should be made to *La Hermandad Mexicana*, 7915 Van Nuys Blvd. Panorama City,

CA 91402. Please organize your areas, and join this monumental event that will put our mark on US history.¹⁷⁹

The call included the information necessary to make folks at ease with embracing the event and that was of utmost importance. From the Organic Collective in San Diego a message distributed supporting the various efforts across Southern California regarding the *Gran Paro*, “The LA Times said that this is the ‘next big thing’ that Jesse Díaz and the *La Gran Marcha* organizers are working on...maybe we should setup a website or something where people can post about how they're not going to work or school, to make it more visible.”¹⁸⁰ The message of “no school or work on May 1st,” in a communication from John Díaz, was at the fore, but it also enveloped the “responsibility clause” that had been attached to the participation of the *Gran Marcha* parameters during its outreach campaign and in the media. He announced:

Tell everyone you know not to attend school, and tell your parents not to work. The movie “A Day without a Mexican” will become real. All Latinos have to work together to make this happen to prove to everyone that the US is NOTHING without us. On May 1st don't even go into the streets! Don't buy ANYTHING! Stay at home and kick it. Watch the US struggle without us. May 1st will be the day the government loses tons of money and realizes who really runs this country. Spread the word! If you are going to be involved please do it with class. Don't act stupid, because not only will you make yourself look bad, but you will make ALL OF US look bad. Represent the Latino community with pride and honor. People will expect us to riot and go nuts but show them that we are BETTER than their stereotype.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ This was the official call for the “Gran Paro Americano 2006.” I had been working on the draft since January, because I was unsure when we would finally be able to pull off the national strike. While it is not written well, the message behind the call is clear. The Minutemen and antiimmigrant politicians had for about a year arguing that immigrants were depleting the economy, and all the research I had been reading reported that immigrants were actually a benefit to the US economy.

¹⁸⁰ Organic Collective. (2006). Email communication from Lotu5 to jdiaz001. Fwd: No school or work on May 1st. March 30th, 2006.

¹⁸¹ John Díaz. (2006). Email communication from beanerboy194 to jdiaz001. No school or work on May 1st. March 30th, 2006.

Evinced by the success we had in the confrontation with the Minutemen in San Diego, it was clear that the momentum was on our side. Mutual respect was forged between those that went to the border from Los Angeles and the San Diegans that continued working with us in LA. This call was seen as an extension of the student walkouts that were brewing in San Diego, eventually erupting on April 1st, 2006 when thousands of students marched from across San Diego to Chicano Park, peacefully and without incident. The message among the youth was to be more orderly than portrayed by the reactionaries that chastised them for “walking out.” These youth were regulating their own actions and this message was pushed aside by folks in Los Angeles as well. Consequently, I began to push the idea for the Coalition to keep the momentum going by organizing a march for students to channel this energy without any regulations or rules to participate, and I suggested “*La Gran Marcha Estudiantil 2006.*”

The problem we had was that there were too few students in the Coalition. Some students were actually graduate students attending the meetings to document the mobilizations, not necessarily to participate. However, some youth in the Coalition were able to attract others and nonstudents did the organizing. Most of the organizers in the M25C were responsible for the logistics, but the actual students in the Coalition were few. The main student that organized the march, along with a handful of undocumented high schoolers from Culver City, was Sarita Kozameh. As an undergraduate student at the University of California, Riverside, Sarita had organized against the Minutemen during 2005. She had a wealth of contacts of young activists across Southern California in her work of building the Southern California Human Rights Network that had by then

been active since 2004. Most student immigrant rights activists were working on other issues across Southern California. For instance, some worked against the Costa Mesa City Council, which was the first city to “train” city police to enforcement federal anti-immigration laws, others worked on the “*No Somos Uno*” campaign against military recruitment of immigrants, and other organizers opportunistically worked to rein in the mass student walkouts because quite frankly, the students were looking for leadership.

Reaching out to other students at that moment was a challenge for the Coalition. Many students were attracted to the Coalition leading up to the *La Gran Marcha* but felt unwelcome by the manner in which they were “treated” during meetings, excluded from participating in rallies, and not recognized for their outreach efforts. They were not invited to participate in press conferences or, more importantly, in decision-making. In my mind, I thought the march would help to foster their active participation and inclusion in the Coalition. Unfortunately, this did not materialize, with the exception of a few students that bounced in and out of Coalition meetings during the spring of 2006. Unfortunately, to some degree it exhibited the unwillingness for some of these students to evoke patience and commitment in standing their ground and challenging the old timers, thus opening the door for new and refreshing debates, tactics, and long term strategies, grounded in the traditional principles of the IRM.

Meanwhile, Siu Hin thanked me for the call I had written for the *Gran Paro Americano 2006* and informed me he would have it posted on his *National Immigrant Solidarity Network* website by night’s end and that he had conferred with

“...organizations across the country and they are all very excited about it,”¹⁸² further offering me their feedback. According to Siu Hin, they all felt it was a “good declaration, but...need[ed to be] translate[d]...to Spanish, Chinese, Korean and other languages ASAP, [and]...subtitle[d] the May 1st Nationwide Day of Immigrant General Strike...include [a] youth/student component, since they will want to organize a general nationwide school walkout and we should help them with things like legal advice.”¹⁸³ Evidently, outside of the Coalition, other activist circles were well aware of the rapidly growing student movement for immigrant rights, which involved the burgeoning AB540 student struggle, and the national DREAM Act student movement, which has blossomed into a national effort, with one grassroots wing funded mostly by informal contributions, and the moderate wing funded by the corporatocracy. As a result, during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*, the student movement could be found widely on the streets in the form of massive walkouts from LA to New York City against HR4437.¹⁸⁴

Although scholars have contended that the March 25th Coalition operated a website to organize the *Gran Marcha*, this was not really the case. Siu Hin and student supporters used their own established websites, email list-serves and groups, to outreach for the *Gran Marcha*. In fact, the March 25th Coalition website was created after *La Gran Marcha*. It should be noted that given the limited technological skills of many of

¹⁸² Siu Hin, Lee. (2006). Email communication from SIUHIN to jdiaz001. Hi Jesse, thank you for your draft May 1 Declaration. March 30th, 2006

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ During a visit to New York City in April 2006 while organizing the *Gran Paro*, meeting with organizers in the International Action Center, I met one of the key students that organized the NYC walkouts against HR4437.

us in the March 25th Coalition, member Siu Hin's e-activism played a critical part in the M25C viral outreach. He posted our positions on the developments stemming from the April 11th and April 22nd, 2006, meetings in Riverside, CA, and Chicago, IL, respectively. He set up a hotline number for the media and public, and created a national calendar and shared a contact information list for *La Placita Olvera* Pro-immigrant Working Group, and then for the March 25th Coalition.¹⁸⁵

The exclusion of certain individuals, especially young activists, from the Coalition also contributed to its downfall. Past divisions between Siu Hin and the ultranationalist faction of the Los Angeles immigrant rights struggle, virtually precluded their inclusion. Unfortunately, he did not want these folks to be a part of the March 25th Coalition and he refused to set these past issues aside. His position to exclude the ultranationalists caused tension between him and me. It also divided him from Isaura Rivéra, a former *Casista* with which he shared an immigrant rights past during the years leading up to IRCA. I believed those activists should have been included because they had a large student contingency that would have boosted the M25C outreach with new technological capabilities, giving new blood and a creativity beyond the predictability of marching and boycotting but mostly because it would be a spawning ground for new leadership. That is, new leadership in the Movement that would follow the traditional line of amnesty and no guestworker programs. In retrospect, it was a lost opportunity for the Coalition that had no vision beyond organizing "mass mobilizations," though some of us did try to organize beyond marches and boycotts.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

A handful of members, including Esther Portillo, Isaura Rivéra, and myself, were beginning to organize a series of educational forums around the Southland and to have a final one that would attract some national immigrant rights leadership in a “*Gran Foro 2006*.” We also wanted to implement a “political committee,” which would focus on the legislative battles that ensued immediately following the mobilizations of 2006. It was an easy transition because it was with these members of the Coalition that I worked with on the “Kill the Bill” campaign that fought against the legislative proposal coming from the Senate soon after the HR4437 ignominy. The M25C contingency went to DC and organized press conferences in opposition to the events organized by *Somos America*, a coalition of moderate groups discussed below. While a minimum of 2,000 members of *Somos America* met in DC and lobbied extensively and with precision, roughly six of us from M25C lobbied by meeting with California Senator Dianne Feinstein’s and Nevada Senator Harry Reid’s staff members.

In a final effort to show its muscle in organizing the masses, the M25C failed miserably in September 2006 in the “*Gran March Laboral 2006*.” At this point, the exclusiveness of the group coupled with its failure to build and stay focused had taken its toll. In the final “mass” march the Coalition attempted to organize, its only hope for redeeming itself for the reform it failed to give the people, flopped! There is no other way to describe that fall day in 2006 when the Coalition estimated it would again bring out hundreds of thousands but failed to produce them. Although, the call had been made early, the media campaign had failed to get off the ground until the penultimate week. I literally had to round up a team and along with Oscar Sánchez, a media aide who had

helped with the media during the last part of the *Primavera 2006* to begin organizing press conferences that would once again bring in the Spanish media, and launch a media campaign.

Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres also bought into the media campaign leading up to the march, the SEIU organizers that were organizing the homecare workers mostly comprised of Chinese, Central American, and Mexican immigrants. The press conferences we organized in the final days leading up to the march were filled with these workers, which sent a loud and clear message that the organizers of the march were mostly women. The press conference also clarified that the upcoming march would be dedicated to Elvira Arellano. Arellano was the *Michoacána* Chicagoan immigrant that went into voluntary exile under order of deportation and was arrested in Los Ángeles and immediately deported so as not to give immigrant rights activists sufficient time to mobilize protests against her deportation. The M25C organizers dedicated the march to Arellano and in light of her struggle, it was agreed that all the participants in the march would be women and children.

Although men did participate in the march, they were not allowed to participate in the program. Personally, I felt it was a deliberate move by the committee to curb the posturing amongst certain males in the Coalition. Nevertheless, because Piolín had allowed some of the M25C members to announce the march on his show, some of the women in the organizing committee pushed for him on the spot to be allowed to speak; essentially, everyone agreed, and he did. Unfortunately, the march attracted no more than 3,000 at the final rally. It was a far cry from the thousands more the Coalition had

expected, undoubtedly because there was a lack of imminent threat against the community. The threat of HR4437 had all but vanished, we had fought valiently against legislation that would have brought about a guestworker program and would have only allowed a limited number of undocumented immigrants to adjust their citizenship status.

Overall, by the end of 2006 the media had shifted its focus to the legislative debates that were underway. By September, it was clear that the camaraderie within the M25C had subsided, as some of the “oldtimers” who had been attracted to the M25C earlier that year—mostly former *Casistas*—had stopped coming to the meetings. Only a handful of activists continued working with Javier Rodríguez such as John Parker from the International Action Center, Robin Potash from the United Teachers Los Angeles Union, Ruben Tapia, and William Torres. Only the latter two have continued working with Rodríguez as part of the March 25th Coalition.

While there was much attraction and excitement to the M25C in the early stages of organizing *La Gran Marcha*, *La Gran Marcha Estudiantil*, *El Gran Paro Americano*, the media events, the invitation to events, that excitement soon wore off for most of us. This was mainly because of the internal squabbling between certain members that were vying for “power,” whatever power that was. Some members asserted that Javier Rodríguez and his “family” were trying to retain control of the Coalition. Admittedly, at times Rodríguez would act like the *Cacique*, the Guru, and demean anyone that would challenge him, in public and private. I just felt that it was expected given the experience we all had in *La Tierra* Coalition the year before. Even those closest to him like me were unable to enter into critical debate with him and this began to drive wedges in the

relationships between all of us. Given López' articulate vernacular, he wooed newcomer activists, however. Therefore, it was inevitable that Rodríguez and López would bump heads on many issues, and they eventually did.

Although there would be some positive debate on many issues, they competed to get the most media recognition. For example, on behalf of the M25C Rodríguez would put out a press release for a press conference, then López would put one out on behalf of his organization for the same event. This created divisions within the ranks of the M25C, which soon became more and more problematic. Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres had made a strategic decision to move away from the M25C for obvious reasons but mostly to concentrate on organizing *La Hermandad* members but they did agree to support any street protests organized by the Coalition or any other organization struggling for just immigration reform.¹⁸⁶ I stopped formally associating with the M25C along with them. However, because the M25C was the only active organization that maintained the IRM position for amnesty and against guestworker programs at the time, I did try to keep working with the group.

After the M25C conference in February 2007 that changed, I quit the Coalition for good. I became overly disgruntled like other members had been with the members of the Coalition politicking before the conference and setting a prearranged agenda for the *Primero de Mayo* events that year. Folks from around the country for two days contributed to discussions, developed ideas for actions, and assigned folks to present them in the final plenary. In the plenary, the approximately fifty conferees were ignored.

¹⁸⁶ These reasons emerged in numerous conversations I had with both of them.

When it became evident to everyone that all of our work was not even being considered for further discussion and that it was all a fix, I made it known. In rare instances, I may come unglued as I did that night but it was just blatant disrespect for all of us, especially those conferees and their organizations that had literally spent thousands of dollars to attend. It was disingenuous and disrespectful. I felt disappointed and knew that nothing good would come out of that deceit, it never does. The only two activists outside of the M25C from LA that showed were disallowed to speak in any of the general workshops, including the final plenary.

I was not the only participant that noticed the stonewalling, but unfortunately it set the stage for the May Day march that year. No less than 10,000 individuals attended the march, marching up Broadway but by the time they marched turned the corner on Broadway and first, the crowd quickly dissipated, only about 1,000 individuals stayed for the rally at City Hall. Two conclusions can be drawn from this experience. It showed not only that the immigrant rights and immigrant communities were not supporting the Coalition anymore but more importantly that the immigrant community had become so disgruntled with the politicians who made huge promises the year before and were unable to deliver. There was also a sense of repression with workplace raids in full swing.

By summer 2006, the Coalition had become a mere shadow of what it once was. Organizers in Los Angeles and beyond have recently commented the March 25th Coalition has been reduced to nothing more than a press release producer, which is true to some extent. In the past year or so, the “coalition” has attached its name to the press conferences or events of other organizations as part of its strategy. With the exceptions

of joint press conferences Rodríguez organizes alongside others, the last event the M25C actually attempted to organize only attracted approximately 500-700 people, on May 1st, 2009. It was unfortunately the least attended of five marches in Los Angeles that day. It was also a travesty that the divisions in the IRM had taken their toll. This changed in 2010 when 100,000 participants marched in Downtown LA against Arizona's newest racist antiimmigrant policy, SB1070, and for amnesty for everyone.

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that along with other immigrant rights activists across the nation, it had successfully accomplished its mission, annihilating HR4437. The M25C contributed greatly to that effort by organizing the largest march ever in the US, *La Gran Marcha 2006*, and followed up with the largest anti-corporate action known to modern man, *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*, to flex immigrants' consumer and labor power. Fortunately, for Rodríguez, he got the whole *enchilada*; for, all intents and purposes, he is the M25C.

In November 2008, Saucedo and Flóres took my suggestion of bringing together the Movement in LA—invited were all factions of the immigrant rights community in Los Angeles—to discuss the benefits and challenges of the incoming Obama administration. I mainly wanted a discussion on whether or not it would continue the repressive immigration workplace and house raids despite his promises to use his executive order to terminate them. The signs that he would not change policies, which included the 287G program, Secure Communities, Operation Streamline in Arizona, and the detention center industry, emerged from the discourse in the first meeting. I mostly wanted to forge the group ahead based on that one principle, that we would have to be the

dissenting voice in Los Angeles, even if it meant countervailing the feverous Obama popularity amongst progressives couched in “Change.” He had duped even seasoned immigrant rights activists from all political persuasions, even some in the most radical wing.

Because of the history of immigrant rights struggle in LA, many refused to be “bitten by the Obama bug.” Brought up amongst the approximately sixty organizers at that first meeting more than once was the history of the most repressive immigration policies having been implemented under the watch and proposed by Democrats, which should be the scope of a necessary future investigation. For us in the Coalition, our concerns quickly crystallized when he tapped Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano to be Secretary of Homeland Security who had allowed under her watch for her state to pass legislation that made it a felony to “smuggle yourself.”

The organization morphed into the Southern California Immigration Coalition (SCIC). When we were brainstorming to name the coalition, I offered the actual name, arguing that we should keep it simple and because other regions around the country have similar names, I did not mention however that most of those represented the moderate faction in those regions. However, we needed to keep our participation broad, mainly because we have a long history of working closely with all areas of the Southland, reaching north to Ventura County and south to San Diego. I am proud of the Coalition’s membership, though ebbing and flowing over the past two years, for keeping it together, and maintaining a dissenting voice that represents the leftist faction of the *Movimiento* in

Los Angeles, even if at times staying true to the traditional and steadfast principles of the *Movimiento*, is unpopular and or controversial.

The SCIC with new and vigorous young blood has essentially taken on the function of the M25C, subsequently representing the next generation of Southern California's radical, militant and progressive immigrant rights activists—much as I had envisioned for it at the close of spring 2006.

Chapter Summary

While organizations have been important in the emergence of insurgency, so have leaders in the *Movimiento*. For instance, the contributions those individuals like Alvaro Maldonado that played a key role in bringing together the forces that were uniting that eventually passed California Proposition 187; as such, highlighted is his role in the following chapter. There were individuals who came together to form the groups, coalitions, and organizations in which I participated. The 2006 mobilizations were not a mere contemporaneous chain of events, there was a longstanding battle against antiimmigrant forces that had begun to solidify, becoming more brazen since 9.11. To some organizers in the Movement, the conditions against immigrants in the US, "...have never been this bad." Because of my involvement, working within all factions in the *Movimiento*, I can attest to the many individuals from different organizations that comprised the traditional and radical factions that came together in the years preceding the 2006 mobilizations.

While I would certainly say that I have served as "a" common denominator between the coalitions outlined above, I would argue that more than my own participation

helped build the Movement. Della Porte and Diani (1999) pointed out that individuals and organizations share interconnected relationships, and “through their multiple affiliations, activists create bridges between organizations, making it easier for information and resources to circulate” (122). The pair also contended that for core activists and leaders in a movement, affiliations also serve to expand opportunities for creating alliances, accessing information, and other relevant resources, but also render greater control and bring legitimacy to the organization.

I founded or was involved in most of the leftist coalitions across the Southland that galvanized counter mobilizations against these antiimmigrant forces, and on immigration reform began working with the moderate faction while in *Estamos Unidos*. For example, the Ferrer sisters along with Ricardo Anaya and Jorge Reyes, and me went to training seminars at the SEIU 7th street office to begin organizing around the Kennedy McCain Bill. The Ferrer sisters were not afraid of reaching out and extending their networks. We were all new to the Movement, but we met plenty of organizers from all factions in a short amount of the time.

It became obvious that these organizers from the labor movement wanted to control the developing events in 2006 without having to work with those in the *Placita Olvera* Group that was comprised of individuals representing the radical faction in general, and Javier Rodríguez, specifically. Individuals in the labor movement that had issues with other oldtimers really had no experience with me, so there was nothing negative these folks could say about me, but I certainly had my own thoughts about the old wounds that would just not go away, especially because I was very close to Javier

Rodríguez and others in the group. It was more bothersome to experience and witness the animosity individuals had grown to have toward each other inside the Coalition.

In hindsight, in some of my conversations with other former members of the March 25th Coalition, we believe that the threat we represented during 2006 needed to be “stopped dead in its tracks.” Because of the attention we were drawing from the public and media, we believe it was in the interest of the moderate faction to break up the M25C, and it turned out that it did not have to, the Coalition eventually imploded on its own. I felt like this was the greatest travesty of that period in the struggle. In my mind, it the Coalition could not survive yet another interpersonal power struggle, because after the struggle between Javier Rodríguez and Nativo López, only a handful of members remained. These personal power struggles severely weakened the IRM as well. Because of all the public attacks, and ill-feelings that had begun to plague burgeoning and rekindled relationships, I thought it would be of utmost import to begin my separation from the Coalition before I began burning bridges and undermining opportunities to continue working with certain individuals and organizations in the future. It was difficult watching an organization with such rich history deteriorate, so to save the relationships that I have with other immigrant rights activists across the Southland, I too saw no other alternative but to leave the Coalition at the end of summer 2006.

At that point, it was obvious, the Coalition was being sidetracked. It no longer was struggling effectively for the community, and internal squabbling had taken its toll on the morale of the organization. Whether or not immigrant rights activists in or outside of the M25C at the time wish to admit, it really affected us all mentally, and emotionally.

Individuals leaving the Coalition would inform me about the gossiping others were engaging in, and that took its toll. Rodríguez used to tell me, “We need therapists in the Movement carnal. We do. We all need therapy.” It was obvious that this could be one of those times where therapy would have been very helpful, but events during that spring were developing minute-to-minute in some cases, there just was no time to work things out; we all just needed to get things done.

The lingering animosity between activist leaders plays itself out during lulls in the Movement; these differences are set aside when mobilization rises in response to common threats. When the need for united struggle becomes clear to everyone in the immigrant rights community, bridges are forged between individuals and organizations. This was witnessed during the struggle for amnesty during the 1980s, and the joy when the Immigration and Reform Control Act was realized provided momentum to that unity. During the 1990s, immigrant rights activists united in opposition to California Proposition 187. Most recently, that political unity was forged in opposition to HR4437. In such moments, the Los Angeles immigrant rights organizing community pulls together with monumental success as seen during *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* when millions of Angelinos alongside the traditional grassroots and radical organizational faction voted with their feet and voices, flexed their labor and economic muscles, and won!

PART III: CHAPTER SEVEN

“ORGANIZING THE BROWN TIDE: POLITICAL THREATS AND INSURGENCY FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS IN LOS ÁNGELES”

Among sociologists there has been relatively little scholarship pertaining to the Immigrant Rights Movement (IRM) in the US, especially compared to the scholarship amassed on other social movements. Though there is a burgeoning literature on the 2006 immigrant rights mobilizations, the IRM is not a new movement yet it remains absent from two bodies of related research, thus highlighting a deficit in two fields, Social Movements and Chicano/Latino Sociology. This study aims to substantively add to both of these bodies of literature by critically examining the IRM and placing it within the context of prior scholarship on Chicano mobilization during the 1960s and 1990s (Muñoz, 1989; Navarro, 2005), while also challenging and building theoretically on existing social movement literature.

This research considers three distinct waves of immigrant rights insurgency beginning in the late 1960s. It considers how the IRM in Los Angeles has responded to statewide and federal level legislative threats, and how its grassroots oriented tactics helped compromise, eliminate, and or triumph by garnering acceptable legislative reforms, and or averting draconian antiimmigrant legislation. The first insurgency emerged in the early 1970s in response to the employer sanctions attached to the Dixon Arnett Bill in California and lasted until the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Although this legislation created sanctions for employers hiring undocumented immigrants, it represented a partial victory for immigrant rights advocates since it also

guaranteed amnesty for six million undocumented immigrants and provided them an opportunity to become US citizens.

The second insurgency began in the early 1990s in response to the passage of California Proposition 187, which threatened to deny social services to undocumented immigrants and public education to their children. This insurgency culminated in the defeat of Proposition 187 in the higher courts after its key provisions were ruled to be unconstitutional. The third and final insurgency began developing at the turn of the 21st century and came in response to the most draconian antiimmigrant legislative attack via HR4437, resulting in the largest mobilizations in the history of the US during the spring of 2006. It is clear that because of the traditional grassroots sector of the Movement collectively organized street mobilizations they have become an integral part of the tactical realm of the IRM, and have been central to the victories against these attacks.

Although Latinos have experienced political threats for decades it was not until the late 1960s when the immigrant question came to loggerheads between US-born and México-born *Mexicanos* that a decision was made to establish a new movement focusing on immigrant rights. Drawing insights from political process models of popular insurgency, I argue that in the case of the struggle of undocumented immigrants for citizenship rights, the emergence of policy threats were the key catalysts for this popular insurgency. Awareness of threats surrounding antiimmigrant policies and the importance of contesting them did not arise naturally and inevitably but depended upon the strategic efforts of organizers in the IRM and was facilitated by the presence of governmental allies. During each of the three periods, immigrants mobilized when they faced

immediate threat. Specifically, they mobilized when their already narrow opportunities “constricted” rather than when they expanded. This is most evident in the punitive components that have been associated with statewide legislative immigration reform such as employer sanctions and denial of social services, both issues that subsequently developed into federal immigration debates.

Historical Background: US Immigration Policies towards Mexicanos

Historically, *Mexicanos* in the US have dealt with the fluctuating immigration policies that have restricted their entrance or welcomed them as cheap labor. Since the annexation of the Southwest from the Mexican union and the *1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, the US government has conditionally executed immigration policies on *Mexicanos* and this tendency has ebbed and flowed mainly dependent on the US capitalist class’ insatiable desire for cheap *Mexicano* labor. Despite waves of immigration as early as the post-Mexican Revolution era, economic downturns, and even political shifts spanning across the early to mid20th century when many Mexican Americans began throwing their allegiance behind the Democratic Party despite others not fully representing them, there had been no organized insurgencies for immigrant rights.

Although Mexican and other immigrant workers protested conditions in the workplace sometimes shoulder to shoulder with their US-born counterparts, there was little evidence of a concerted effort to advocate on behalf of immigrants and against the policies that affected them. There were efforts however among Mexican Americans to organize a Movement to protect US Mexicans against the racism they experienced in the

post-World War era through the early 1960s. However, Mexican immigrants were marginalized from participating in this movement. US-born *Mexicanos* were concerned with the protection and advancement of their own individual civil rights and liberties, not those of their Mexicano counterparts, and they couched their reform movement in terms of integration, equality, and the pursuit of the “American Dream.”

By the late 1960s, *Mexicano* laborers had already endured the establishment of the border patrol in 1924 and massive raids and deportations during the Great Depression of the 1930s, known as a “decade of betrayal” for both *Mexicanos* and *Filipinos* workers (García, 1994). They also confronted implementation and termination of the exploitive and perfidious *Bracero* Program between 1942 and 1964. But perhaps the most blatant violation of civil liberties occurred during *Operation Wetback* between 1952 and 1954, which led to the deportation of an estimated one million or more *Mexicanos*, who were forced to leave their their spouses and children to fend for themselves in the aftermath.

The mid20th century “red scare” that covertly targeted the Mexican left in the US in general and in Los Angeles specifically, also made it difficult for Mexican progressives to organize undocumented workers as anticommunist (and antiimmigrant) positions were even taken not only by the dominant society but by Mexican Americans. Violence was carried out against undocumented immigrants in the 20th century by nativists with minimal impunity as it had been in the 19th century (Díaz, forthcoming). I argue that the period immediately leading up to the 1970s was a catalyst to the formalization of the contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement. This movement was born in response to the rise of antiimmigrant sentiment toward the undocumented

immigrant both within and outside of the Latino community, and legislative attacks on immigrant rights.

Cleavages emerged in the Chicano Movement during the late 1960s between the so-called radical wing that spoke out openly against the Democratic Party as part of the establishment and the moderate wing, which worked within it. The former wing ultimately faced the most exclusion from the political process. During the late 1960s, Bert Corona and his *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional* membership and countless others lobbied against antiimmigrant legislation.

Chicanos y Mexicanos: Economic Disarray and the Blame Game

The sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and demographic conditions of the US-born and foreign-born *Mexicanos* were at once similar and dissimilar. Both groups were treated disparagingly and with disdain more during some periods than others. Without a doubt, *Mexicano* immigrants have always been in worse shape and have received the brunt of an anti-Mexican attitude by employers and authorities, all of which have been justified by federal legislation. Extracted from the resolution, “The Struggle for Chicano Liberation,” Rodríguez pointed out that except for the Native Americans,

Chicano’s suffer[ed] the highest unemployment, the lowest per capita income, the worst education, the highest functional illiteracy rate, the highest death rate, occup[ied] the most dilapidated and overcrowded housing, and ha[d] less political representation in local, state, or national government than any nationality in the population of the Southwest and perhaps in the nation (1977: 32).

The President’s Commission on the other hand, pointed out that the plight and conditions faced by *Mexicano* immigrants were much graver, and their entrance into the US was driven obviously by the insatiable desire for cheap labor by the US capitalist class:

The wetback is a hungry human being. His need of food and clothing is immediate and pressing. He is a fugitive and it is as a fugitive that he lives. Under the constant threat of apprehension and deportation, he cannot protest or appeal; no matter how unjustly he is treated. Law operates against him but not for him. Those who capitalize on the legal disability of the wetbacks are numerous and their devices are many and various (Samora, 1971: 33).

Despite obvious differences, both groups have remained subordinated and targets of exploitation and discrimination throughout their history in the US, even if they faced somewhat different conditions and experiences. Early studies posited that the adverse effects on the economy would depress wages and worsen working conditions for *Chicano* workers, thereby displacing them from rural to urban areas, from border regions and into the migrant stream northward and turning poor *Chicanos* during economic recessions into a “shadow labor force” (Briggs, 1975). Although the conditions for Chicanos were dire, they have improved substantially over the years. In contrast, the conditions of *Mexicano* immigrants have remained not only substandard but on some level inhumane. The substandard conditions of the *Mexicano* immigrant are justified by their not being US citizens unlike their US-born counterparts, and by a history of antiimmigrant legislation, that has targeted those without citizenship. This chapter considers these sociopolitical threats and describes how the undocumented immigrant community and their immigrant rights advocates in Los Angeles responded to these antiimmigrant legislative attacks with substantial outcomes at the end of each period.

Mexicanos in Los Angeles: A Community Under Siege

During the late 1960s, numerous raids were occurring across the Southwest targeting *Mexicanos* in US *barrios*. Los Angeles was not spared from such actions; both

the *migra* and *placas*¹⁸⁷ were persecuting the *Mexicano* community. Carlos Montes described one particular incident that caused the community to react against the brutality. He recalled when he was in the Brown Berets during 1966-67, "...the issue of raids was going on, discrimination against immigrants, Ruben Salazar wrote a big article on a raid that was held by police [whereupon] they killed these immigrants in the wrong house. We got involved from the angle of police killing immigrant workers that were unjustly killed."¹⁸⁸ Moreover, we were "...fighting the issue that they were immigrants from Mexico; raided at the wrong house and killed. It was a dual thing, they were immigrants with the right to be here and not be killed, and of course, it was a police killing."

Juan José Gutierrez, who came to the US in 1968 during the height of these attacks on the community, claimed they are what drew him into the immigrant rights struggle and that other Chicanos were forming into a splinter movement, splintering off the Chicano Movement that disregarded the plight of their Mexican-born counterparts. According to Gutierrez, "...it was common practice for the immigration authorities to raid what was essentially at that time Mexican communities, because you really didn't have, at least in LA, Central or South Americans, or anywhere else, it was essentially Mexican. They would come down with helicopters."¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, he recalled,

You would have agents who would descend as if paratroopers into our communities bringing German Shepherds. At that time, they wouldn't even take care to come with arrest warrants or anything like that. They would be knocking

¹⁸⁷ Police

¹⁸⁸ Interviewee Carlos Montes a Chicano and Immigrant Rights Activists in Los Angeles, who worked closely with the Center for Service Organization in East Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁹ Interviewee Juan Jose Gutierrez an immigrant rights activist that was part of the young CASA leadership, former director of One Stop Immigration Center, and now a legal advisor in East Los Angeles.

down doors in plain daylight, or in the early afternoon, terrorizing the entire community and proceed to demand documents from everyone. If you couldn't produce them, they would arrest you, take you, and deport you. I couldn't believe that this was happening in the America that I was being taught in school was the beacon of democracy. I still remember those days and maybe that's what made me take the path of getting involved with immigration related politics.¹⁹⁰

It is clear that because of the recession of the early 1970s some Chicanos started pointing the finger at their Mexican-born counterparts and this further fueled antiimmigrant sentiment toward the undocumented community. Gutierrez recalled, in fact, that "...for decades before that the cultural aggression that our people had suffered in the US made most people want to hide their *Mexicanness*."¹⁹¹ However, a certain breed of immigrant rights activist were born, which led to the rise of a new movement that for the first time put the plight of the undocumented worker at its fore.

IRCA: Emergence of the Contemporary Immigrant Rights Movement and First Insurgency

In 1971, racist antiimmigrant forces were successful in pressuring the California legislature to pass the Dixon Arnett bill, a measure, which would have fined employers that willfully employed unauthorized workers. Though Dixon Arnett called for employing sanctions at the state level, the idea of sanctioning employers for knowingly hiring undocumented workers was certainly not new.

In response to this antiimmigrant legislation, according to Chole Alatorre—the matriarch of the contemporary immigrant rights struggle—the first march against employer sanctions in the Dixon Arnett bill on behalf of the undocumented community

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

“...was in the early 1970s, organized by *Casa de Acción Social Autónoma (CASA)* and *La Hermandad Mexicana*. We marched from Olympic and Broadway and the whole world told us that they would disband the march but the Jewish and other organizations, religions and sects, Christians and Protestants marched with us, the Catholic Church, and even the bishop.”¹⁹² When describing the fortitude of the people that marched that day she stated, “The people marched valiantly. I would say that our people are valiant because you could not imagine the intimidation we experienced. Back then people without documents, were similarly targeted as terrorists are today. When we marched all of the building terraces along Broadway were full of police, and the monitors in the march were telling everyone not to look up, what a responsibility for us to tackle.”¹⁹³ In terms of national solidarity, Alatorre claimed, “...people came from cities all around the US, people stayed in our homes borrowing bedrooms, or in CASA’s office, which was a large salon full of people sleeping there. In the middle of the night, the police woke them up and made them leave.”¹⁹⁴

The courts eventually held that the Dixon Arnett bill was unconstitutional on the grounds that it impeded federal powers. There is no doubt that this issue would become the pivotal point in the rise of the contemporary immigrant rights struggle. The struggle over employer sanctions went national in 1973, when US Representative Peter Rodino, a New Jersey Democrat, “...proposed a bill that made it a felony to knowingly employ

¹⁹² Interviewee Chole Allatore, Longtime labor and immigrant rights activist, Cofounder of *CASA* and *La Hermandad Mexicana General de Trabajadores*, and until 2008, the director of the San Fernando Valley *La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana* office

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

undocumented workers and placed penalties which ranged from warnings to first-time offenders to fines and jail terms for repeat offenders” (Acuña, 1988: 374).

According to Carlos Vellanoweth, another former *Casista*, and current immigrant rights lawyer and activist, CASA organized what he considered more of the pioneering immigrant rights marches in the country. He recalled one in 1974, in which “...6,000 participants marched from Atlantic and Whittier to *Placita Olvera*.”¹⁹⁵ A year later in 1975, we

... had 10,000 people at that march. It was significant; it was the biggest march after the Chicano Movement march of 20,000 people in 1970; this was the biggest march since then. The big issue was fighting against a bill in Congress, which was the Rodino Bill; the Rodino Bill would penalize employers for hiring undocumented workers. We thought that with that type of legislation it would make it doubly hard for unions and workers to organize in the factories.¹⁹⁶

The immigration debates during the 1970s and through the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) took up a tertiary approach to not only consider employer sanctions and guest workers but also for the first time the possibility of the imposition of a legalization program for the millions of undocumented workers in the US. In the 1980s, the debates remained focused on the same three components but because of the UFW and other unions influence on the debates, the guest worker programs proposed ultimately only benefited fieldworkers.

The period between 1982 to 1986, that is “...until President Ronald Reagan signed the Amnesty Law, the masses of undocumented immigrants, then an estimated 6 million in the country, organized and demonstrated militantly” (Rodríguez, 2007: 2).

¹⁹⁵ Interviewee Carlos Vellanoweth, former CASA member and immigration lawyer

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Clearly, the immigration reform proposals advancing in DC were unfolding not because the generous ruling class was seeking a way to regularize millions of immigrants overnight and move them up the socioeconomic ladder but because there was strong movement and pressure in the streets.

In 1982, Senator Alan Simpson and Representative Romano Mazzoli conjointly sponsored the 1982 Immigration Control Act,¹⁹⁷ which passed through the Senate after having been debated but was later rejected in the House. This bill would have augmented the civil and criminal penalties for businesses hiring undocumented workers, granted legal permanent residency to individuals able to prove continuous residency in the US since 1978, and would have raised the Western Hemisphere cap of incoming individuals and their immediate family members to 425,000. However, the proposed bill did not include a temporary worker program (González Baker, 1990).

Despite the developments in DC, according to Rodríguez (2007) in early 1982 the US Supreme Court ruled on the *Silva vs. INS* class action case popularly known as the “Silva Letter.” The official government document was to protect “...over 100,000 immigrants and their families from deportation, and when the case was resolved and only 20,000 immigrants were granted permanent residency, the rest went up in arms. It was the explosion that signaled the beginning of a wave of mass protest” (Rodríguez, 2007: 2). The struggle was not not only against employer sanctions, but also into one that favored amnesty; these were the demands and points of unity for CASA and *La*

¹⁹⁷ (S2222—HR6514)

Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, and have remained two of the most prominent demands today among grassroots immigrant rights activists even to the present.

In the next year, Simpson and Mazzoli reintroduced a modified bill but it was to meet the same fate in the House after passing the Senate. The new proposal would have allowed agribusiness to hire H.2 workers temporarily for a three-year transitional period, protecting them against any discrimination stemming from employer sanctions.

However, in 1984 two provisions were added that further shaped the Bill a review board to ensure no discriminatory profiling against Latino or Asian workers would arise and a guestworker program. Before failing in conference committee, the Bill passed through both the House and the Senate for the first time. The emerging grassroots movement for immigrant rights was in its nascent stage but was still able to propel itself into the national spotlight.

Rodríguez (2007) further contended that the Immigrant Rights Movement was able to integrate the struggle for amnesty into the historical 1984 Jesse Jackson for President Campaign. He claimed, “On May 19th of that year, we held the largest ever street protest for immigrant rights, 10,000 in downtown LA, and Jackson and [his] brother Antonio Rodríguez led it. It was for legalization, no raids and deportations and against the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Bill. That march agitated and galvanized the country” (2). In a radical move by Presidential Candidate Jesse Jackson, he stayed in the home of “...Carmen Lima, an undocumented immigrant female leader of the LA grassroots movement. [And] from there we catapulted to the San Francisco Democratic

National Convention where several hundred Latino delegates frenetically demanded from the leadership to kill the bill” (Rodríguez, 2007: 2).

Finally, in 1985, Senator Simpson introduced a modified version of his 1984 bill. The new bill contained a provision whereby a legalization program would only be initiated after an independent review board found that employer sanctions were effectively reducing unauthorized immigration. The final stage of these debates included the introduction of a jointly sponsored bill between Representatives Peter Rodino and Mazzoli. The Bill offered a much more generous legalization element on the one hand but on the other much more stringent employer sanctions. It also established an overhaul of the H.2 Program, creating a new branch of the Department of Justice that would protect against discrimination of potential employees by employers (Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002).

Because the various proposals were becoming increasingly punitive toward immigrant workers and their employers, the Los Angeles immigrant rights community continued putting pressure on D.C. politicians, and concomitantly on others in California. Rodríguez (2007) reported that “...what put the icing on the cake was civil disobedience [at the] offices of the top gurus of the National Democratic Party, the Law Firm of Mannat and Associates in Beverly Hills,” whereupon they were taken over for several days “...by 30 undocumented immigrants and leaders. The Simpson-Mazzoli Bill was killed and replaced by IRCA 1986, the Simpson Rodino Law” (2).

In the end, a major compromise between proimmigrant and antiimmigrant forces was negotiated. The final version of the IRCA instituted amnesty for undocumented

residents that had resided in the US before January 1st, 1982 and to fieldworkers that had labored for a minimum of 90 days. However, its shortcomings included the expansion of the border patrol, employer sanctions, and presidential power to declare a so-called immigrant emergency (Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002). President Reagan signed and enacted it into law on November 6th, 1986. Rodríguez is adamant in noting that “It was the class action law suit, then the mass upsurge, the street heat, the presidential campaign, civil disobedience, a strategy and militant tactics and a radical leadership that did it” (2007: 3). He asserted, “Although [IRCA] introduced employer sanctions and set four years of residency in the country to qualify, it was a generous amnesty. It empowered millions with a “a permit to work, a one year wait to get the green card and six total to gain citizenship and vote” (3).

Despite immigrant rights activists hailing IRCA as a perceived victory, it signaled the start of a new struggle against employer sanctions by “*Los Tres Renegados*,” which included pastors of Dolores Mission, Fathers Gregory Boyle, Michael Kennedy, and *La Placita* pastor Louis Olivares. They publicly denounced the employer sanctions provision because it was contrary to their interpretation of the Catholic Church’s teachings and essentially their own religious beliefs.¹⁹⁸ Then Archbishop Mahony admonished the trio and implored them to comply fully with the law, even if it meant recognizing IRCA’s employer sanction provision.

The most prophetic prediction came from none other than Bert Corona, where upon passage of IRCA, he claimed that IRCA in the end would do more damage than

¹⁹⁸ Interviewee Father Gregory Boyle. Former pastor of Dolores Mission and current director of Homeboys Industries.

good as it would divide newly naturalized citizens and undocumented immigrants. Gloria Saucedo recalled that Corona would give classes about the new amnesty bill, stating "...he was against the principles of the amnesty bill because it was going to retard all of the advances made by the movement in terms of our civil liberties. He said it would strip us of our civil rights—the right to have a license to drive, to have a social security number, and the right for children to petition their parents—everything that happened in the 1997."¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Saucedo stated that [IRCA], according to Corona was "...something that would alleviate, but in the end would have grave consequences for the community like we see today, we have no license to drive...he told us this was written into the amnesty bill."²⁰⁰

Anti-immigrant forces quickly mobilized in support of another round of antiimmigrant legislation. The political pressure cooker was in full swing after the enactment of IRCA on *Cinco de Mayo* 1987. By the early 1990s, the federal government was scrambling to protect the border, while misguided nativists were attempting to adopt statewide antiimmigrant initiatives. As a result, when the California voters were introduced to the antiimmigrant provisions of Proposition 187, it intensified the already heated immigration debate.

California Proposition 187: Learning from the Past

The imposition of employer sanctions, the inability to reunify scores of family members, and even the imbalance of the US and Mexican economies did little to deter the

¹⁹⁹ Interviewee Gloria Saucedo. Longtime immigrant rights activist in *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, and current director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* in Panorama City, CA.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

flow of Mexicans into the US during the late 80s and early 90s (Ong Hing, 2004). Despite an increase in the number of border patrol agents in preceding years, in 1993 the Clinton Administration commissioned Sandia National Laboratories to study new and increased border security methods. Ong Hing (2004) posited that Sandia's findings supported heightened prevention of impermissible entry at the border, over apprehension by the border patrol of unauthorized individuals already in the country. Also supported were the use of advanced electronic surveillance technology, and the installation of multiple layers of physical barriers. Though cited for the reinvigorating emergence of neoliberalism in NAFTA and CAFTA policies, it also appears that this struggle even preceding the Proposition 187 campaign served to bolster the Clinton Administration and reinvigorated the antiimmigrant Movement. As such, the struggle for immigrant rights in California, the state that has long hosted the largest number of undocumented immigrants, soon began to organize across the state against the rising tide of antiimmigrant sentiment.

During this time, the border patrol initiated "Operation Blockade" in El Paso, TX, by positioning themselves close to each other along that border corridor, a strategy that had short-term success by intimidating and discouraging would be crossers (Ong Hing, 2004). Therefore, the short-term success of this tactic coupled with Sandia's findings put undue pressure on the border patrol to favor preventative strategies over apprehension. In 1993, the government imposed "Operation Gatekeeper" in the San Diego sector under the watch of President Clinton, further encouraging the extreme conservative forces to begin implementing damaging longterm antiimmigrant legislation. Two federal laws that

targeted immigrants and the impoverished were the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (“IIRAIRA”), and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Fisher & Reese, forthcoming).

In addition to this national legislation, in the 1990s California voters were presented with three widely debated state initiatives. Proposition 209, known as the “California Civil Rights Initiative,” which sought to end affirmative action went on the 1996 ballot while Proposition 227, known as the “Unz Initiative,” which sought to end bilingual education appeared on the 1998 ballot. Progressive black and Latino communities organized statewide demonstrations against these measures on mostly on college campuses, which were dwarfed by the earlier round of 1994 marches on the streets of Los Angeles against Proposition 187, or the “Save Our State” initiative.

California Proposition 187 sought to deny access to public healthcare and education to the children of undocumented immigrants, and required local law enforcement, school administrators, and hospital staff to report suspected undocumented immigrants. California voters passed all three initiatives. After major lobbying and letter-writing efforts however, 187 was ultimately overturned in the courts, marking a significant victory for the immigrant community. These mainstream efforts were overshadowed by the street mobilizations on LA streets against Proposition 187²⁰¹ in the mid1990s, repeated exponentially again in 2005.

To capture the pulse at the heart of the antiimmigrant sentiment in the California State Capitol a brief review of the legislative proposals (see Table 1 below) that preceded

²⁰¹ Arguably the precursor to HR4437

the antiimmigrant California Proposition 187 campaign during the 1993-94 legislative assembly is necessary.²⁰² The ultimate message from this flurry of antiimmigrant proposals being proposed and or passed through the California state legislation was not only that there was an underrepresentation of Latinos in the Capitol but that the discriminatory trend of antiimmigrant sentiment had reached and heartened Sacramento politicians even before Proposition 187 was introduced to the state electorate.

On the question of underrepresentation of Latinos in the State Assembly, Gloria Saucedo recalled that in "...1988 we would go to Sacramento, and the only Latino, Spanish-speaking person would be the elevator person, the only one. From there we would go to the assembly hall and you would only see Torres, De la Torre, they were the only ones there."²⁰³ After that, however, Saucedo recalled in the early 21st century during her state capitol visits to lobby and demand back the privilege to drive for undocumented drivers, "...it was full of Latinos, they were the majority, and it looked like they were there defending us, there was Cindy Montañez, there was Fabian Nuñez, and [Marco] Firebaugh, all of them."²⁰⁴

These shifts did not happen in a vacuum, and were in fact the result of a mass-based effort that occurred in Los Angeles' streets, fighting against the antiimmigrant and antifamily provisions of 187. After defeating 187 in the courts, there was also a massive

²⁰² Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, LA Subject Files: Assorted documents on immigration 1957-1993, updated as of October 8. The New California Coalition, a member of the California Civil Rights Conference, summed up the immigration related legislation during the 1993-94 California legislative assembly.

²⁰³ Interviewee Gloria Saucedo. Longtime immigrant rights activist in *La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional*, and current director of *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* in Panorama City, CA.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

mobilization of literally hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants seeking naturalizing and citizenship in order to avoid ever experiencing an attack like 187. They sought to at least have the opportunity to vote against such a proposal in the voting booths, not with their feet on the street. More specifically, the many undocumented immigrants that had refused to regularize their status in the immediate post-IRCA period registered to adjust their status in the post-187 period in record numbers. Proposition 187 also propelled some immigrant and labor rights activists into politics and, in Los Angeles, the group that comprises the Latino Establishment core in Southern California is additionally recognized as the “Children of 187.”²⁰⁵

The coalitions that came together and worked against California Proposition 187 in the early 1990s built on the work already done by the aforementioned organizations. While there has been no lack of organizations coming together in times of crises in Los Angeles, only a handful of individuals actually saw the importance of mobilizing against the impending legislative attack on immigrants’ rights by the right wing in California.²⁰⁶ One of those individuals, widely cited for his leadership during this period, was Alvaro Maldonado, who reported that even when the antiimmigrant attacks were obvious and clearly heightening,

...in one meeting, there was a number of leaders, no one wanted to talk about Proposition 187, it was not something to focus on. In fact, some of organizations

²⁰⁵ The origin of this term for this group of Los Angeles politicians that envelope the epitome of the politicization of Latinos in the post187 period, is unknown. However, in approximately 2004 I first heard them described by this term by Javier Rodriguez, whose family is very close to this particular brand of political cadre.

²⁰⁶ Led by Orange County-based Barbara Coe, and the California Coalition for Immigration Reform.

would say, oh, it would never get on the ballot, they don't have enough signatures, but you know we were moving against the proposals that were coming out that would have had grave impacts on the community. What happened was that Proposition 187 finally qualified around I believe in November 1992.²⁰⁷

This circle of leaders that hesitated to react to the campaign for Proposition 187 congealed into the Immigrant Rights Movement's moderate faction's coalition, "Taxpayers against 187," headed by Gloria Molina. The coalition included the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Los Angeles, the Central American Resource Center, teachers, medical professionals, union activists, and others, all of which took the position that mass mobilizations against 187 would "turn off" white voters (Acuña, 1996). Ironically, Molina actively petitioned her coalition allies to not participate in the October 16th protest against 187 coorganized by Juan José Gutierrez from One Stop Immigration. Both One Stop Immigration and the moderate faction worked to dissuade students from mobilizing against 187, albeit fruitlessly.

Although not always recognized for his efforts, Alvaro Maldonado played a critical role in building the grassroots network of immigrant rights activists in Los Angeles and mobilizing it against the racist legislative attacks in the early 1990s. He worked collectively within this network of grassroots groups to organize vigilantly against Proposition 187, which comprised two factions, "The National Coordinating Committee for Citizenship and Civic Participation," and the "Los Angeles Organizing Committee," both clearly distinct from the moderate coalition.

²⁰⁷ Interviewee Alvaro Maldonado, longtime antiwar and immigrant rights activist in Los Angeles, and member of the International Socialist Organization.

The “National Coordinating Committee for Citizenship and Civic Participation,” which was popularly recognized as *La Coordinadora*, played a pivotal role in organizing the largest march against 187 on October 16th 1994. This march drew an estimated 150,000 or more *marchantes*, the largest number ever witnessed in Los Angeles up until *La Gran Marcha* on March 25th, 2006.²⁰⁸ The Los Angeles, One Stop Immigration Center, and the Brown Berets also played a key role in the foundation and maintenance of *La Coordinadora*. On the other hand, its sister coalition, the “Organizing Committee” included Local 660, the International Garment Workers Union, Justice for Janitors, and the California Immigrant Workers Association, and other organizations that comprised the coalition (Acuña, 1996). The Committee came in the final stages of the series of mobilizations that comprised the 187 insurgency.

According to Maldonado “...around late 1992 and early in winter 1993, there was a series of bad proposals coming out mainly from the Democratic Party not the Republicans. [Some focused on] cutting off immigrants from medical services...[making] it clear that the Democratic party was no friend of working people.”²⁰⁹ Coupled with the developments in Germany, neo-Nazis were burning the housing projects that housed immigrant nationals, Maldonado could begin to see the parallel between the actions abroad and at home, so he called a meeting in Los Angeles

²⁰⁸ The media, including the Los Angeles Times, estimated 100,000, but folks present estimated it to be much more than 100,000. City police offer most of the estimates, and they typically largely underestimate the actual number as evinced by their serious underestimations during the 2006 mobilizations. Nevertheless, despite the underestimations, almost all of the estimates from IRM organizers were absolutely in the 150,000 plus range. Whichever the reader wishes to believe, it was clearly the largest march ever in the history of Los Angeles, and immigrant rights for that matter.

²⁰⁹ Interviewee Alvaro Maldonado, longtime antiwar and immigrant rights activist in Los Angeles, and member of the International Socialist Organization.

of Socialists and other activists that like him “Could see the train coming.” Maldonado reported that they organized a series of protests from summer through winter 1993 at the federal building in Downtown Los Angeles.

The immigrant rights moderate groups in Los Angeles refused to acknowledge much less confront the rise of antiimmigrant sentiment developing even within the ranks of the Democratic Party and their organizational allies in LA. Maldonado and the newly formed grassroots coalition was “...reaching 40 to 50 people, and [organizing] demonstrations [that attracted] somewhere around a thousand or so [individuals] still in 1993.”²¹⁰

Another significant event for those in the Latino progressive community, including Maldonado, was a statewide conference in Sacramento where a number of individuals pushed hard for a fast political response in the streets to cultivate and show opposition against the growing anti-Latino sentiment. Maldonado noted that Latino immigrant leadership from numerous organizations such as One Stop Immigration and others were present and that National Council of *La Raza* and other nongovernmental organizations attended as well. In the end, the conferees decided to organize seven actions in seven zones from the Bay Area to San Diego. None of these actions ever developed except in Los Angeles. The three marches against 187 in Los Angeles began with the first one in February and the second in May 1994, culminating in the massive outpour of an estimated 150,000 participants marched on October 16th, 1994.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

While marching in the largest march ever witnessed by Angelinos, Maldonado recalled, "...the police's jaws were practically dragging on the ground, it was unheard of. I could see the inspiration in the community of all the most oppressed people, to see the joy, determination, inspiration, [and to know] the willingness to fight was always there, it's just there wasn't leadership."²¹¹ Maldonado's observations regarding the lack of leadership notwithstanding, it was he and a handful of others that took up the charge. His participation proved to be vital to the insurgency against the draconian antiimmigrant legislation. Maldonado modestly stated, "I don't want to claim...or even the coalition claim that it was us, who like a rabbit out of a hat, brought out the hundreds of thousands of people. I think what happens is that...first and foremost you have this internal rage, people wanted to come out and defend themselves."²¹² Moreover, he posited "...people are willing to fight and willing to move so that's why it's encouraging that first and foremost you organize, especially really independent from both parties and put forward the needs and the demands from below."²¹³

Commenting on the lack of unity amongst past leadership that became evident during the anti187 campaign, Maldonado stated "...when you have a traditional leadership not wanting to pull together, that sort of creates an opportunity for more diligent and creative ideas from below on how to struggle and move forward...then next

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

thing you know all sorts of people start stepping up.”²¹⁴ This is what he did when he saw that the conditions to do so were ripe. In my experience, it is common for people that are not directors or heads of organizations to step forward to take the reins, or assume leadership positions. Maldonado envisioned and described an army coming “...forward to defend themselves again,” claiming he and others would have to do it again if “...our so-called leaders don’t step up, hopefully new leadership will emerge and do the necessary organizing that will facilitate,” what he termed a sustainable movement couched in the will and best interest of the people.²¹⁵

Student mobilizations, as noted, exploded across the state and nothing appeared to be able to put a stop to their intensity. Acuña (1996) reported that the massive anti-187 student walkouts caught most observers by surprise. The National Guard was even put on alert when walkouts erupted across an estimated thirty-nine schools. Those schools included Huntington Park, Bell, South Gate, Los Angeles, Marshall and Fremont High Schools. In the Valley, thousands walked out of middle schools in Pacoima, Maclay, Mulholland, Fulton, Sepulveda, and Van Nuys, and thousands more walked out of high schools in Woodland Hills, Van Nuys, Grant, North Hollywood, Chatsworth, Kennedy, Monroe, San Fernando, Birmingham, and Reseda (Acuña, 1996). Unlike the Chicano organized 1960s student walkouts in East LA, the leadership this time was more inclusive and included Central Americans.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

During this period Acuña posited, “Students were also channeled into the Los Angeles County Organizing Committee to Defeat Proposition 187 and the Taxpayers’ group” (Acuña, 1996: 160). Acuña claimed, moreover, that the slogan “Californians are racist” was now engraved in these students’ memories. Although students were advised to stay in school by politicians like Gloria Molina and Richard Alatorre, as well as some October 16th *marcha* organizers like Juan José Gutierrez, the students marched militantly and with conviction. Not only was the practice by politicians and moderate activists to discourage student walkouts present in the anti 187 student mobilizations and during the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s but it was very much a part of the experience of students who walked out against HR4437 on March 24th, 2006, a series of walkouts that lasted for weeks.

In other cases, their peers admonished leaders in positions of power. This occurred to Gilbert Cedillo, then head of Service Employees International Union in Los Angeles, who for the October 16th, 1994, march brought to the table union staff, and a substantial amount of money. Maldonado noted that he appreciated the controversial decision Cedillo, and very few others, made to support “...us out in the streets, and I really tip my hat to him...But nevertheless he did in fact to his own detriment. There was a meeting of statewide Latino officials in Sacramento, and they took a photograph of the group, and there Gilbert was also in those pictures.”²¹⁶ However, he recalled, “...they suddenly disappeared from the pictures, sure enough give him a call and ask Gil. He’ll tell you they just engineered his face out of that photo. This is the kind of thing that

²¹⁶ Ibid.

people should know, and don't know.”²¹⁷ Maldonado contended that this type of exclusion occurs quite frequently among the leadership in the IRM, and that such behavior that plagued the campaign against Proposition 187. Unfortunately, this tendency also reared its ugly head a little over a decade later during the spring 2006 insurgency against HR4437.

In the eyes of longtime immigrant rights advocate and widow of the late Bert Corona, Angelina Corona, the mobilizations against Proposition 187 were successful. She believed that the mobilizations ultimately helped undocumented immigrants to become citizens. She stated, “Many immigrants became citizens because they were scared their children would be excluded from schools, or that they would no longer receive breakfast and lunch. Another impact of the mobilizations was to push people to vote.”²¹⁸ In addition, “the politicians began to take notice and support the movement for immigrant rights; they no longer had a choice to the contrary. It was also a great success because no one will ever be able to wipe this epoch from our history.”²¹⁹ To her the political threat went beyond the immediate termination of social services. In general, it was couched in the growing antiimmigrant sentiment that had crept itself into statewide politics, as, according to Corona's widow, “The people had become afraid of the

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Interviewee Angelina Corona, longtime immigrant rights activist, and director of the San Fernando Valley *La Hermandad Nacional* chapter.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

repressive politics of Governor Wilson, and this fear is what mobilized the people to the streets.”²²⁰

HR4437: The Draconian Antiimmigrant Legislation

The 2006 mobilizations were in response to growing antiimmigrant sentiment that had culminated in the most draconian and restrictive immigration reform policy to date, HR4437, which passed quickly in the House on December 16th, 2005, but stalled in the Senate in early 2006. If ratified, this bill would have immediately: Criminalized 12 million undocumented immigrants into felons, charged anyone that aided and abetted them with an aggravated felony, authorized local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws, constructed hundreds of miles of fencing along the México-US border, and would have prompted the immediate deportation of all unauthorized and deportable immigrants. It is important to review briefly how the intense antiimmigrant sentiment had such perceived pernicious consequences for Latinos during this period to understand fully why the Latino and immigrant communities responded in the substantial way they did during *La Gran Epoca Primavera in 2006*.

Since 2006, antiimmigrant sentiment, rhetoric, and actions have continued to thrive in the media and have further polarized the US population and its citizenry. Green, McFalls and Smith (2001) have argued that “the media instigate hate crime by formulating, propagating, and legitimating stereotypes about potential target populations”(486). This is particularly troubling for immigrants given their latest treatment in the media and the current rise in Ku Klux Klan membership and other

²²⁰Ibid.

nativist fringe groups, which are discussed below. Simply put, the media works to incite and inflame existing racist-oriented responses, which provide the vehicle for individuals can act out their antipathies toward the targeted group. This describes the circumstances in the early 2000s leading up to the passage of HR4437. Racialized stereotypes of Middle Eastern immigrants after 9.11 were displaced by those targeting Latinos, and specifically *Mexicano* immigrants. In this same vein, Sacco (1995) pointed out that, regardless of what is seen on the news, TV viewer's own predisposition determines their response and interpretation of what they are reading or viewing and their reaction to those images

For this reason, Bert Corona rejected the idea that the Latino community was some sort of a "sleeping giant."²²¹ In his own words, "...the *Mexicanos* in this country had never been asleep. We had always been giants, working like hell to produce to stay alive and to keep the Southwest and other areas going. So how could they call us "sleeping giant?" (García, 1994: 221). Not only having Latinos not been asleep but Latino immigrants have had to endure a host of laws and policies for over a century that has made them targets of hate and exploitation in the US. One of the most recent and memorable struggles for many Californian immigrants was the termination of their privilege to drive while licensed that lasted for the better part of two years in the early 21st century and against ICE's "roving raids" in June 2004.

In response to those roving raids in the Inland Empire, I called and suggested to Dr José Calderón that we meet and discuss organizing a demonstration. Within hours, José Calderon from the Latino Roundtable and myself met at a restaurant in Upland,

²²¹ See further discussion in introduction.

accompanying us were other members from *Estamos Unidos*, Ricardo Anaya, Magdalena and Sarai Ferrer, and Jorge Reyes, and Emilio Amaya from *Libreria de Pueblo*. In five days, we organized a seven-mile 10,000-person march from Ontario to Pomona, in the Inland Empire.

The propensity to view immigrants as criminals led to a widespread campaign and heightened vigilance to monitor immigrants' activities, restrict their movement, and ultimately remove them from the US. In the years following the 9.11, antiimmigrant-oriented hategroups spawned across the US, yet some had existed along the México-US border for decades, as ranchers, for example, had hunted down immigrants crossing their property for years (Seper 2009). In 2004, a hategroup emerged named after California Proposition 187, "Save our State" (SOS). The myopic nature of SOS precluded its moving beyond Southern California. While the group is a mere shadow of what it once was, for years it systematically hounded one of the most vulnerable immigrant group, day laborers publicly seeking informal temporary employment.

Another hategroup that was more successful in mainstreaming its cause was the Minutemen Project (MMP), a group which grew clandestinely through 2004, and publicly surfaced in the winter of 2005. Its ostensive purpose was to circumvent the entry of migrants passing through the Naco-Bisbee Arizona corridor during the month of April, under the guise of a "community watch group." The racist actions of the MMP in Arizona were praised by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, then he invited them to undertake operations in California (Sterngold & Martin 2005). Even

antiimmigrant efforts in mainstream media by “cult of personality” figures since the early 2000s like Lou Dobbs et al, have recently come to an end (Lovato 2009).

Although there was resistance to the presence of the MMP in Arizona, when the MMP chose to “patrol” the border in Eastern San Diego County, the leftist faction of the Southern California Immigrant Rights Movement mobilized to neutralize their operation and did so with considerable success. More specifically, these resistance efforts under the auspices of the “*Buenas Noches Brigades*,” allowed for only three migrants to be detained by the MMP and turned over to the *migra* and two migrants being shot by the *cazamigrantes*.²²² The bottom line during the early 2000s was that antiimmigrant sentiment and rhetoric had reached colossal proportions and was influencing congressional legislative policy and proposals.

Since the early 2000s, the immigration reform debates have also served to divide further legislators, leading to an ultimate immigration impasse on the issue of whether to legalize an estimated twelve million unauthorized immigrants in the US. Most of the bills in congress have been enforcement only bills, and have excluded the privilege for undocumented immigrants to regularize their status. In fact, after the mega-mobilizations of 2006 most of the immigration reform proposals coming from Congress have become much more punitive and inhumane, including some introduced after the spring of 2006. In 2005, Representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO) introduced the “Real Guest Act,” which integrated a guestworker program, expanded border enforcement, and employer sanctions. The flipside in the Bill however authorized the military to protect the México-

²²² Immigrant hunters

US border and like IIRAIRA, made it a felony to be in the US, disallowed any authorized person from employment in the US, and denied citizenship to US-born children.

Throughout 2005, the moderate immigrant rights groups, or the “corporatocracy,” were mobilizing in support of S1033, the Secure America and Orderly Act, introduced by Senators Edward Kennedy and John McCain in May of that year. The ostensibly more liberal bill had an expanded border security component attached, a guest worker program, a revived employer sanctions element, but for the first time featured “earned legalization,” shrouded in a “pathway to citizenship” cloth. It was similar to “putting lipstick on a pig.” Given the political climate of the time, where the congressional extreme right was working hand in hand with the border vigilantes hunting immigrants along the border. However, the S1033 Bill failed to pass the Senate.

This so-called seismic shift also caused immigrant right organizers to adjust their tactical and directional directions. For instance, Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres from *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* mobilized their membership within the framework of the moderate faction, but have essentially not been recognized for their consistency and dedication. As mentioned above, Saucedo reflected on this tactical shift by moving away from mobilizing her membership for the moderate faction, which rendered her and other *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* directors little or no recognition.

These are two stellar and beloved matriarchal figures in the IRM, Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres, who shifted their political stance and began working with the more traditional grassroots sector of the immigrant rights community in Los Angeles, and

outside of the corporatocracy and were instrumental the creation of the vehicle through which we massively mobilized against the HR4437. Nevertheless, Gloria Saucedo recalled her uneasy feelings about being openly vulnerable for any violence that could instantaneously erupt at Campo during the Minutemen showdown, because of her fortuitous and dangerous decision.

The scenario was simple, as certain forces in the antiimmigrant movement became extreme and increasingly radicalized, in response so did the forces in the proimmigrant movement. Bringing these factions together at *La Placita Olvera* in November 2005, even though short-lived and in miniscule measure, actually served as the impetus for the radical undertones of the spring mobilizations. As a result, the early actions of the newly formed *La Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group (POPWG) clearly countervailed the moderate overtones of the Movement that up until that point were still steeped heavily in the federal legislation struggle over the Kennedy McCain Bill. The moderate wing of the Movement was, therefore surprised, with this rapid turn of events. Just as it had been during the anti187 insurgency, it failed to realize the necessity of street mobilizations, a tactical and longstanding tradition widely embraced by the traditional faction of the IRM in Los Ángeles, to which Saucedo and Flóres had crossed over during the summer of 2005. Thus, the Latino leadership that helped organize the 2006 mobilizations in Los Ángeles was in place prior to the historical mobilizations. This was only one part of the recipe needed for our success and what was lacking was an ominous political threat.

On December 16th, 2005, Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) introduced HR4437, “The Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act,” an immigration Bill that only focused on enforcement in the US’ interior and on the México-US border, the construction of hundreds of miles of fencing, augmented fines for smugglers and employers who continue to hire undocumented immigrants. It did not contain either legalization or a guestworker program, but for the first time clearly authorized local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws. As aforementioned, HR4437 made being in the US undocumented a felony. It also went a step further and criminalized anyone that aided and or abetted undocumented immigrants. This was the political threat that was necessary for the community to get outraged enough to respond in mass and it did.

Contrary to popular perception, the spring 2006 mobilizations against HR4437 were neither “spontaneous” eruptions nor the sudden awakening of the proverbial “Sleeping Giant.” Rather as was abundantly demonstrated above, they formed part of the larger Immigrant Rights Movement that obviously included a cadre of Latino leaders and community members that have been organizing and mobilizing against consistent repressive antiimmigrant legislation as far back as the late 1960’s. The conveners of the POPWG initially had called on the various organizations and leaders “working” in the IRM to come together and organize on a more community-based level against the expanding focus of antiimmigrant groups targeting Latino immigrants around Southern California but it immediately turned its focus to the larger and compulsory struggle against HR4437 upon its passage.

The common belief is that the “March 25th Coalition” organized the *Gran Marcha*. However, on February 22nd, 2006 we changed the name of the *La Placita Olvera* Proimmigrant Working Group to the “Coalition against the Sensenbrenner King Bill HR4437,”²²³ which was the actual organism that organized *La Gran Marcha* and even lobbied in Washington DC against certain “half-baked” immigration legislation. In fact, that same evening for the upcoming March 25th march I suggested the name “*La Gran Marcha*,”²²⁴ which initiated the events of “*La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006 en Los Angeles*.”²²⁵ The national marches that preceded the Los Angeles marches were certainly instrumental in bringing out the large numbers on the streets of Los Angeles during this epoch.

During *La Gran Marcha* on March 25th, 2006, an estimated 1.7 to 2 million marchers participated in downtown LA, ending at City Hall where a massive rally lasted till approximately 4pm. I would argue over two million marchers and potential marchers participated because all exits to downtown closed, buses were rerouted away from Downtown, and fully packed Metrolink trains along with rented buses left thousands upon thousands of folks behind in cities around Southern California. Many marchers were still streaming in the late afternoon; and, the picture that was later digitally analyzed to estimate the crowd number was taken early in the afternoon.

²²³ Fieldnotes: February 22nd, 2006, meeting at *La Placita Church*. Also see the original flyers and placards of *La Gran Marcha*.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ The Great Epoch of Spring 2006 in Los Angeles. The marches we organized during this period were named as a homage to the “*La Gran Marcha*.” For example, after *La Gran Marcha*, we organized “*La Gran Marcha Estudiantil 2006*” in midApril 2006, and then the climactic “*Gran Paro Americano 2006*,” which were all followed by “*La Gran Marcha Laboral 2006*” on Labor Day 2006.

The Los Angeles' grassroots IRM leadership picked the date of the march in order to maximize its influence and to sway Congress away from further advancing HR4437. Rosalio Muñoz was commissioned by the *Placita* group to choose a strategic date for the *Gran Marcha*. Although there are authors that wish to pat their backs for “initiating” the *Gran Paro*, this is simply erroneous, and amusing. The truth is that the idea of a march was presented in late December 2005, about the same time the idea of a national “boycott” was also presented. Specifically, the idea of a march came weeks before the self-proclaimed “initiators” of the march were invited to the *Placita* group, and over a month before the Riverside Conference on February 11th, 2006, where the Chicago *megamarch* was born. Both proposals were met with utmost caution by the handful of *Placita* group members because we simply did not have the numbers, and resources to pull them off.

It is important to understand that these efforts in Los Angeles were not absent of controversy. The moderate faction of the IRM in Los Angeles, which later became “*Somos America*,” was focusing on a more top-down strategy by lobbying for immigration reform in the Congress, working hand in hand with the Democratic Party. That is, some organizations in Los Angeles joined with the national efforts to mobilize for April 10th, 2006, a national day of protest, but drew only a modicum of participants in relation to the other two mobilizations that occurred on March 25th and May 1st 2006. Despite much outreach, the participation of Cardinal Roger Mahoney advertised as the headliner and the participation of mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and others from the LA Latino establishment, only 8 to 10,000 people showed up to march, and when it was time

to march less than that did actually march from *Placita Olvera* to the federal building in Downtown. This Coalition pushed for a guestworker program as a negotiation tool they believed would render a “pathway to citizenship” for the nation’s undocumented residents.

The Downtown march on May 1st was again attended by well over one million individuals, but that was only in Los Angeles, millions upon millions observed the national boycott, “*El Gran Paro Americano 2006*,” around the world, making it the most massive action had ever witnessed. In essence, Empire worldwide shut down for 24 hours, although the media portrayed it as another “marching day,” it was clear that millions worldwide had observed the call to boycott schools and work, and not to buy or sell to flex our economic power. When the noon march organized by the radical faction of the IRM, namely the March 25th Coalition, was over, an estimated 500,000 participants decided to keep on marching and marched west on Wilshire Blvd where the *Somos America* event was being held, and joined the 3 to 5,000 individuals who had gathered there at 3pm, on time.

Days after the major 2006 LA march arguably the precursor to HR4437 mobilizations occurred in the Bay Area, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and many other cities around the country against the antiimmigrant legislation, the US Senate immigration debate took place on March 27th, 2006, after which virtually eliminated from all consideration the draconian provisions of HR4437. This bill was undoubtedly defeated on the streets; that is, the historic mobilizations clearly influenced the debate that put the nails in the coffin for HR4437,

and these images are still deeply embedded in the memory of citizens and noncitizens alike. No matter on what side or in what corner immigrant rights activists in Los Angeles allied themselves with, the insurgency to undermine and stop HR4437 in its tracks, was magically successful. The main objective of the M25th Coalition was to counter the draconian legislation that threatened quite brazenly the 12 million undocumented immigrants, and or those individuals with which in private or public they interacted, and it succeeded in reaching this monumental objective.

Chapter Summary

Consistent with the expanded political opportunities model research (McAdam, 1999 [1982]; McCarthy & Zald, 1977), I argue that restrictive antiimmigrant legislative attacks propelled the IRM to action. The threats that these policies such as employer sanctions against the employers of immigrant workers, the termination of social services for immigrants, and the overnight mass criminalization of 12 million, helped to crystallize closer the Latino immigrant community. Legislative attacks have been consistent throughout history but how they become mobilizing impetuses for the community partly derives from the leadership's role in calling out the community and the community's response. Thus the political process model, while pointing to institutional structures and shifting ideologies does not focus on the role of leadership identifying these opportunities, acting on them, and effectively transmitting these moments of opportunity to the community. This study fills this important void in the literature.

I also aimed to challenge the model on its ambiguous attitude towards the immigrant community. That is, when opportunities “constrict” rather than “open” for

immigrants, insurgency has shown to be more likely, even in light of the standard precursors for such conditions. This study could not necessarily account for the lack of insurgency against the threat of IIRAIRA, more study would need to flush this anomaly out however and in an interview, Carlos Vellanoweth claimed that the campaign to push IIRARA through caught all of sectors of the immigrant rights community by surprise. I would argue, moreover, that this was in fact an insurgency. At no other time in our history have so many immigrant rushed to regularize their status to respond in the future to legislative attacks like 187. Considered from this station, clearly this trend would further push the parameters of the political process model to include elite style approaches such as letter-writing campaigns, lobbying, engaging the electorate process, etc.

The Latino community and organizational universe that comprises the IRM is not monolithic. Various social movement scholars suggest that groups' capacity to mobilize is facilitated by organizational cooperation and coalition building and hampered by organizational competition and or infighting. Yet, there are moments when threat is imminent and relationships are bridged and working together is possible such as we witnessed most poignantly during the spring of 2006. I would argue that this is the very nature of how restrictive antiimmigrant legislative attacks have consistently propelled the IRM to action, drawing the Latino community closer together sometimes, but split on positions at other times.

PART III: CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPLICATIONS, PREDICTIONS, OBSERVATIONS, AND FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES

This study has sought to fill major theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature on the Immigrant Rights Movement (IRM) by critically examining grant legislative attacks. It was important to take on this daunting task by considering the contradictory reality of the distinct factions of the IRM, while paying close attention to the decision makers and the decisions that have not only the history of immigrant rights struggle but also the very fabric of US and world histories. This study has shown that legislative attacks against the Latino immigrant community have persisted since the annexation of the Southwest from México by the US.

Truly, this historic land grab would set the stage for the immigration history of the US in the sense that the so-called “illegals” who entered northern México without papers or visas would become the “natives,” and Mexicans would become “illegals” in their native land. While there have been organizations and individuals, including Social Bandits like Tiburcio Vasquez and Joaquin Murieta that fought for the rights of both US and México-born *Mexicanos* since the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, it was not until the late 1960s that a coherent and systemic endeavor arose that focused specifically on organizing the presumed “unorganizable” the undocumented worker in Los Ángeles, *La Cuna del Movimiento*.

The onset of struggle for immigrant rights has lasted into the 21st century, and its limits are being tested more than ever today by an array of antiimmigrant forces, which

include a well-established antiimmigrant movement with formal research and advocacy institutions, hate-driven and openly self-righteously racist and xenophobic high-level politicians, and increasingly negative public opinion and sentiment. This sentiment, and the need to regain congressional control in the midterm 2010 elections has pushed mostly Republican politicians in recent weeks to attack the American citizenship of US-born children of undocumented immigrants and calling for a repeal of the 14th Amendment which grants citizenship to persons born in the US. This threat has prompted organizers in the IRM to call this drive in motion a new all-time high level of racism in the US. However, there is a movement that has and will continue to respond to these attacks, and this study has highlighted its organization and work.

Outlined in this investigation, were the organizations that comprise the struggle for immigrant rights in the US. I have presented them in a manner and context, which will hopefully enhance our understanding of the positions that they have taken historically, and the major divisions based on ideological and tactical differences, which have emerged between the liberal and leftist factions of the movement. In Los Angeles this organizational division has ebbed and flowed over the years. Once established in Los Angeles the traditional faction of the Movement split into two broad factions, which in turn set the tone and course of the immigrant rights struggle in Los Angeles and beyond.

The nongovernmental organizations that represented the Mexican American community in the early 1970s and the labor movement at that time did not focus on the immigrant community. In fact, the UFW and its key leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores

Huerta fought staunchly against “greencarders” and undocumented workers. The Catholic Church was in struggle with the *Mexicano* community in general because of its lack of Mexican representation in its leadership, and because it failed to have masses and provide services in Spanish. The Chicano community was also challenging the Democratic Party for its unresponsiveness and a number of Chicanos sought to forge a third party, *La Raza Unida*.

This tendency changed quickly once the labor movement and the Catholic Church began organizing their undocumented members. The national nongovernmental organizations like MALDEF, LULAC, and NCLR, in turn, began to focus on the immigrant community, seeking to ensure its grant funding, and since they have been funded by an array of corporations, including the Democratic Party, and or by donors close to the Party, these Latino-oriented NGOs have essentially become the Party’s voter-manufacturer apparatus. The Democratic Party has become more responsive to Latinos, knowing that once Latino immigrants adjust their status, they are likely to vote Democrat. In Los Angeles, CHIRLA, CARECEN, the elite-level of the Catholic Church, the La County Federation of Labor and the majority of its affiliates, and the Democratic establishment together form what I describe as the moderate faction of the Movement in Southern California. However, it should be noted that a few independent unions, some Catholic parishioners, and individuals from the rank-and-file of the LA FED, have also worked outside of the moderate faction, with the leftist faction of the IRM.

The leftist faction of the IRM in this study has been shown to have long roots in early organizations that worked closely with the Communist Party, led by early 20th

century labor movement activists, and the Mexican Left in Los Angeles. The most notable individuals that were active during this time were Bert Corona and Chole Alatorre, a pair that was instrumental in bringing the traditional faction of the IRM together first by focusing on organizing undocumented workers in Los Angeles when other organizations refused. In the present research, these early organizations were highlighted and to this day, the only organization that has continued this progressive tradition from this early epoch is the three *La Hermandad Mexicana* sectors. Because of the influence of Bert Corona and other members of the Mexican American Political Association, since its inception the organization has consistently focused on incorporating and advocating for immigrants in the political process. At times, MAPA has worked with the liberal and or leftist factions depending on the political persuasion of its leadership, but it has continually sought to work within the political and electoral systems.

As previously noted, *Las Hermandades* on the other hand have been the oldest organizations in the *Movimiento* and though deviating slightly and occasionally, they have stayed true to the primary goals of the IRM—full, unconditional, and immediate amnesty, and strident opposition to guestworker programs. Although the three sectors of this organization have independently worked within the parameters of the leftist and moderate factions of the movement, their efforts to adjusting the status of their immigrant membership has prompted them to work shoulder-to-shoulder with organizations in the moderate faction that are trying to “get the vote out.” On the other hand, these three sectors have also worked with the radical sector of the progressive community in Los

Ángeles. At times, this changes however, as in the case of Gloria Saucedo and Alicia Flóres in 2005 when they made a conscious decision to stop working with the moderate faction for their lack of showing their appreciation for mobilizing their membership for actions organized by the moderate faction. Saucedo and Flóres began and continued working with the radical faction and this would set the stage for the mass and historic mobilizations during spring 2006.

The radical faction of immigrant rights organizing in Los Angeles is comprised mostly of the Marxist-oriented organizations such as the Socialist Workers Party, International Socialist Organization, Radical Women, the International Action Center, and ANSWER. Though the primary focus of these organizations is not immigrant rights, they have been involved since the inception of the IRM in Los Angeles, albeit controversial at times; they have mostly had representation in most of the coalitions that emerge around immigration-related issues. If CASA still existed today, it would certainly be amongst the most influential of these groups being Socialist-oriented and focusing primarily on the plight of the Mexican undocumented worker. To reiterate, the traditional faction has a unique station from which it may choose to operate, with either the radical or the moderate factions. At times, this investigation has shown that when the conditions and leadership permit, these factions become united and work together for a short period.

As demonstrated in this study, in the 1970s and 80s, the national NGOs were new, but with the exception of the UFW and AFL-CIO, and a handful of other organizations, the array of Los Angeles organizations at that time worked together to struggle for

amnesty and against guestworker programs. Some of the moderate organizations would later also fight valiantly against the employer sanctions attached to the 1986 legislation. By the 1990s in California, evidence of the breakup of CASA became evident because of the choices that some members took pursuing their individual interests. Some members went on to continue working in the community with similar ideological values, while others entered into the labor movement.

Since labor has long worked with the political establishment, the divisions within the labor movement became evident during the organizing efforts against California Proposition 187. As noted in chapter seven, there were already divisions between the political establishment and the radical wing of the IRM but despite the resistance of some politicians and organizers that did not want to agitate voters, in the end the two factions came together sufficiently to organize the largest march ever in downtown Los Angeles in October 1994.

Although 187 passed, the struggle against 187 proved significant because it brought the moderate faction, namely the unions, the Catholic Church, CHIRLA and CARECEN's leadership, and LA Latino politicians into the immigrant rights struggle, and led to the emergence of the political a cadre of politicians that has been termed the Post-187 generation. The involvement of the moderate faction in IRM was solidified in 2000 through the leadership of Miguel Contreras who brought together both factions. In the ensuing years the traditional faction worked with the moderate faction to garner an immigration reform lasting through the early 2000s and during the Bush and Fox Talks, the Freedom Rides in 2003, and lasted through the driver's license struggle in California

in 2003. However, when the Minutemen came onto the antiimmigrant scene this relationship was strained, and eventually severed as segments of the traditional faction, namely Gloria Saucedo, and Alicia Flóres, chose to work with the radical faction of Los Angeles' proimmigrant activists. Subsequent to militantly confronting the Minutemen on the California/Baja border in Campo in 2005, the relationship continued though the fall of 2005.

Upon the passage of HR4437 in late December 2005 in the lower house, and because of the work the leftist faction had undertaken during the preceding years, the stage was set for the spring 2006 mobilizations. The present research clearly has shown that because of the work that was done preceding the massive mobilizations in Los Angeles, the "Sleeping Giant" was awakened and this mobilization was effected by the work of longtime leftist activists and organizations that had been confronting the antiimmigrant forces for years.

It was not until the colossal political threat of HR4437 was conveyed by the leftist faction in early march by the Coalition against the Sensenbrenner and King Bill HR4437 on the Piolín show that the mass of the proimmigrant forces, including the immigrant community, jumped into action. One of the major conclusions of this study is that the characterization and image of the Latino community in general, and the Latino immigrant community specifically as a Sleeping Giant is challenged by the nearly a century of immigrant rights work further and the fact that the Latino community has had a long, documented history of fighting for its rights. It has never been able to sleep!

The historical mobilizations that essentially killed HR4437 are ingrained still in the minds of many individuals in America and beyond. Not only did the mobilization undermine the antiimmigrant legislation, it essentially prompted the debate for immigration reform once again. As shown above, divisions in the Immigrant Rights Movement surfaced because of the positions taken relative to either embracing “amnesty” and no guestworker program along with the leftist faction, or accepting a “pathway to citizenship,” and guestworker programs along with the moderate faction. Because of the resources made available to the moderate faction by the Democratic Party and its allies such as national NGOs, and the union consortium Change to Win, mainly SEIU, together comprised the *Somos America* coalition that wrestled away the IRM’s energy. It channeled it into the 2006 elections that garnered the majority back to the Democratic Party.

For some of us, this conflict has lasted even to this day. Because of all the work many individuals accomplished over the last five years, Congress and the current Obama administration are indebted to the IRM and its constituency. First, these politicians owe the IRM immediate ceasing of the repressive immigration enforcement and a just and fair immigration reform. Secondly, because of the distinct positions for and against “amnesty” or guestworker programs, the ruling class, which includes the Democratic and Republican Parties, along with the *corporatocracy*, have compromised the Movement and have led it into a political conundrum. The *corporatocracy* has tried on numerous occasions a top down approach to fabricate the appearance that it is and has been the

primary organizer of immigration-oriented mobilizations in the form of marches, manifestations, hunger strikes, and most recently civil disobedience.

This research has demonstrated that in Southern California, at times, the moderate faction has organized these types of events but they have been typically under-attended. This was the case in its April 10th march, and its May 1st, afternoon march whose redeeming quality was that marchers from the leftist faction midday march kept marching on in celebration, and again during the summer campaign to get out the vote in 2006. The bottom line is that when the moderate faction does organize in the community, it usually fails to draw large crowds. This is undoubtedly because of the longstanding history of immigrant rights organizing in Los Angeles and the fact that many immigrants are well aware of the political climate, the political posturing, and the motivations of the leadership and organizations; in other words, *el pueblo reconoce*.²²⁶ It recognizes that in many ways, it should adhere to the direction of the traditional faction's direction and this investigation has shown a long history that it has for many years. There is a certain respect that the *pueblo* has for the traditional faction of the IRM.

This was largely witnessed in the recent struggle against HR4437, and for immigration reform, which dwarfed preceding IRM struggles because of the stakes were much higher, involving the 12 million or so undocumented individuals currently residing in the US—and of which this analysis was primarily focused. Readily established in this study then is how antiimmigrant legislation has become a mobilizing impetus for the immigrant and immigrant rights communities, it has also brought much needed attention

²²⁶ The immigrant community recognizes

to the organizations and their leadership's role in calling out the community, and the community's response.

Theoretical Contributions

By themselves however, these policies as political threats do not transmit and or interpret how awareness of them and the importance of challenging them is not always a natural and inevitable process. The conditions that predate these legislative attacks such as the political landscape and public sentiment should also have been considered because they do play an inherent part in understanding political strategies, and how the IRM responds, but these will be addressed in depth in future analyses because of limited space in this investigation. The point expounded upon in this analysis however, was that these legislative attacks as political threats have been the key to mobilization efforts by proimmigrant forces, especially when these political threats dangerously impinge on the immigrant community's opportunities for socioeconomic upward mobilization, social mobility, and to their employers as well.

To reiterate, whereas the political opportunities model emphasizes the macro-level and resource mobilization emphasizes the meso-level, the last area of framing and cognitive liberation brings the micro level to the fore. In the current analysis, the micro-level of the political process model was excluded, but not because of its lack of theoretical importance, but simply because of spatial limitations. It is vital to understand that these framing processes are "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (Snow as cited in McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). This

perspective suggests that messages must resonate first with the community to mobilize them and then with elected officials to influence policy changes. Framing thus, focuses attention on the strategies that the leadership employs to mobilize its base and gain political allies. This study did go beyond these micro processes to examine the organizations that mobilized the immigrant community during these periods of insurgency. Because of the limited space in this investigation, I was unable to expand further on the role of the media as well, but I will undertake the task of marrying the framing concept in future projects. In fact, the media holds a major the key to the puzzle in understanding the role we played in educating the immigrant community of the danger it faced had HR4437 passed through the Senate on March 27th, 2006.

The issue of the media was unique and timely, and rested on the relationship that I had forged with radio personality Piolín prior to *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006*. I had been on the *Piolín* show to debate the Latino Minutemen and women during the later summer of 2005, sharing a DVD with him and his crew that showed the Minutemen threatening to shoot us if we got closer to their camp. In early March 2006, I reached out to *Piolín* after our first choice of DJ, *El Cucuy*, would not join our media outreach campaign. *Piolín* and his crew contacted me after a media breakfast we organized in East Los Angeles at the restaurant, *Rinconcito del Mar*, and we went immediately to meet with him and his staff. When we went on the show the following morning and were supposed to be on for only about 20 minutes but we stayed for literally 4 hours taking calls and answering questions. To his listeners, we framed the “political threats” enveloped in HR4437 successfully, and their response was extraordinary. Although *Piolín* received

much acclimation for bringing out the masses to *La Gran Marcha*, unfortunately to my knowledge, he rarely recognized us for reaching out to him and bringing him into the organizing efforts. At the end of the day, he benefited enormously by literally doubling his audience and taking on a “folk hero” image for his participation. This current research failed to delve fully into the participation of the media but again this researcher will undertake that task in future research, especially surrounding Piolín’s decision to join the corporatocracy in condemning *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*, despite the heavy criticism he received for weeks from his listeners for his conformist position.

Failing to expand theoretically on the micro-level further, another limitation of the study is that it does not directly address the concept of cognitive liberation, which contends that feelings of injustice and efficacy push individuals to rebel against the status quo (McAdam, 1982). That is, cognitive liberation argues that people will not usually rebel against the status quo; no matter how dejected they deem themselves, unless they sense it to be unjust or illegitimate—as opposed to inevitable or natural—and that to improve it they believe they have the capacity to effect change. It is possible that some people discover or develop a sense of efficacy or empowerment after they have begun protesting shoulder-to-shoulder with others.

Tied closely to the framing process is cognitive liberation, which would explain the determination in which the immigrant community mobilized during the insurgencies of the IRM during the three epochs highlighted in this project. Initially, and at times for extended periods, people may be uncertain whether their protests will actually make a difference. There is no doubt that the immigrant community felt it could make a

difference, and therefore heeded the call of the immigrant rights community's leadership. In other words, activists in their strategizing are also taking into account what messages will resonate with the community to bring them out and what messages will resonate with elected officials to effect change. In this sense, cognitive liberation is sometimes a product rather than a cause of protest. Also not included in this study was a discussion on the messages that have drawn actors to the IRM.

Theoretically, this study has shown that contrary to the political process model, organizations and individuals in the IRM have had to organize against antiimmigrant legislation, specifically the features that undermine their well-being. I argued that it was the process of opportunities constricting for undocumented immigrants, not opening as prescribed by the model, which propelled them into action. However, this research has built upon the theoretical concept of resource mobilization that goes beyond the exchange of resources, describing the manner and conditions under which the IRM leadership embarks upon distinct struggles and with distinct factions.

This research also showed that these relationships could be fragile and difficult to maintain because of the resources that are at stake, all of which are compounded by the cult of personality. There are very deep scars, resentments, and assumptions and or beliefs of each other amongst the leadership that prevent the optimal level of organization in the *Movimiento* in Los Angeles, which is exemplary of other traditional immigration destinations where immigrant rights organizing is well established. As a result, as shown in this study, the factions that the leadership sometimes represents also compound the situation and the most recent attempt by the moderate faction with the assistance of

millions of dollars to garner immigration reform in the end did more damage than good. It may have put the *Movimiento* into a position from which it may take years to recover.

Future Research and Challenges

There has been relatively little scholarship on the Immigrant Rights Movement in the US among sociologists, especially compared to scholarship focusing on other social movements. There is no doubt that the largest mass mobilizations ever witnessed in this country occurred during a period I recognize as *La Gran Epoca Primavera 2006* in Los Angeles and that stamping out HR4437 was an epical victory for the IRM. Rather than being the result of the sudden awakening of the proverbial Sleeping Giant, this was the culmination of a longstanding movement against a history of antiimmigrant legislative attacks on both statewide and federal levels that has been largely ignored by social movement researchers. Then, after having been ignored for decades some recent studies concluded with contradictory and or misguided interpretations of the *Movimiento*; across the country in recent years, these mobilizations did nonetheless bring about major attention to it amongst researchers.

Some academics studying social movements, labor, race and ethnicity, political incorporation, and public policy have attempted to explain the 2006 mobilizations from their respective perspectives relying mostly on journalists as their primary sources or interviewing only organizers from one faction and treating the *Movimiento* as a monolithic entity. Other scholars jumped into action during and after *La Gran Epoca Primavera*, claiming that the insurgencies were “spontaneous” and or “contemporaneous,” and that the “Sleeping Giant” had finally awoken, and some went so

far as to suggest that the media organized the marches. We should learn from these studies.

Future studies of the IRM should include an analysis of the immigrant community's response and perceptions of the many facets of the Immigrant Rights Movement, some of which may include how and why it has responded to some calls made by IRM organizations, and not to others. Others examinations should include an analysis of the immigrant community's perceptions of the Movement's leadership, and why it responds to some leader's call over others. Indeed, most social movement researchers focus only on visible leaders, thereby muting the voices of the organization members and other participants. Examining community members' experiences in the IRM can tell us much about how effective organizations are in reaching out to immigrants and might also point to new areas of research not yet explored in social movement literature. Much can be learned from immigrants on why and when they find it necessary to heed the call of the *Movimiento*'s leadership.

The same is true for literature focusing on the women of the *Chicano Movement* that were relegated to subservient positions in organizations that were frequently led by their male Chicano counterparts (Acuña, 1996; Moraga, 1994; Rodríguez, 1977). Future research should focus on how in contrast to the Chicano Movement when women were victims of *machismo*, today in the Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles, women dominate the leadership positions of immigrant rights and labor organizations. Further analyses such as the present are also necessary to understand the developments occurring around the country in terms of the expanded enforcement against immigrants, especially

in Arizona in the current battle against the “show me your papers” anti-Latino legislation, SB1070.

Arizona and the New Political Threat

Though the latest victory against HR4437 was captivating, it is still unclear about what the tradeoff will be legislatively because the backlash from the public and statewide legislators has been explosively repressive because there has been no legislative immigration reform. In no state has the embodiment of this antiimmigrant trend been more evident than in Arizona by way of a series of legislative attacks against immigrants in general and Latinos in particular. This struggle has grasped the attention of the nation. On April 23rd, 2010, Arizonan Governor Jan Brewer signed SB1070 into law. The statewide Bill SB1070 has essentially brought the immigration debate across the country to a boil, once again. Similar to the antiimmigrant Proposition 187 campaign whereupon mobilizations mounted against the legislation, so too have forces organized against the Arizonan anti-Latino legislation, which allows law enforcement the right to stop any “foreign-looking” individual to check his or her “papers.”

Like Proposition 187, the recent lawsuit filed by the federal government challenging SB1070 has also made its fate uncertain in the courts. The reaction of the IRM quickly became evident in recent months but it remains unclear how it would react if SB1070 stands in the courts in late 2010. Given the historical patterns of the IRM, a grand mobilization as a collective response against that repressive legislation was in order, and it occurred on May 29th, 2010, when over 100,000 people marched in Phoenix against SB1070. Coming out of the march was that the current state of affairs of the

Immigrant Rights Movement became clear—the immigrant community is ready to battle—they respond in times of despair and to prescribed attacks. This response against this political threat was the culmination of series of anti-SB1070 protests during which acts of civil disobedience occurred and many individuals were arrested.

Coupled with other anti-SB1070 protests, there is also a boycott underway not only against the state of Arizona as a whole but also against the Arizona Diamondbacks team owners for funding the Republican Party in Arizona’s state legislature. The Arizona boycott has grown since I initiated it along with other immigrant rights activists from around the country days before Governor Brewer signed the bill (See the boycott call I authored in Appendix I). In future research, I will expound on the boycott developments further. Gloria Saucedo believes that “This struggle against SB1070 has taken the focus off struggling for progressive immigration reform for organizers in the IRM for the moment.” It is clear that the struggle for immigration reform has not only taken a backseat, it has also been coopted by the moderate faction. Despite the latest round of “fabricated” mobilizations, that has divided the IRM even further, and despite the exorbitant amount of funding behind this recent campaign, it failed to produce immigration reform. I briefly outline how the factional divisions in the IRM are still in place.

Recent Immigrant Rights Movement Developments

In December 2009, Javier Rodríguez’ asserted that immigration reform was imminent because the Movement now had a congressional spokesperson and that the “mass movement” for immigrant rights was coming together, which signaled the “final

stage” of the current struggle for immigration reform. The assertion surprised a few of us in Los Angeles and elsewhere because up until then he had distinctly identified with the leftist faction, and he had openly warned of the phase in which it would have to struggle with the moderate faction over the incorporation of a guestworker program component, and its acquiescing to a “pathway to citizenship.” This claim at the time was convenient because of the developments in DC and in the Movement in general that were occurring.

Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) had become to Rodríguez and the moderate faction the “champion for immigrant rights” needed to push through an immigration reform in this next phase. However, I felt it was premature, and that more attention needed to be given to the trend of criminalizing immigrants that has spread across the country, the Immigration Industrial Complex (Díaz, forthcoming). The truth is, politicians are benefitting from this industry by “tackling the immigration problem” in the eyes of their constituency, and financially.

I stated first, “We have to remember, movements are against the state! Once the state begins controlling the movement as Rodríguez posited Representative Gutierrez has done, we might as well give up.” Clearly the Democratic Party is a capitalist party, it serves the capitalist class, and we saw the manifestations of this in the political debacle they called the Strive Act introduced by Gutierrez in early 2007, which was almost all enforcement-ridden, which should have been a red flag for everyone in the IRM. Since then however, the IRM has clearly fallen into the hands of the corporatocracy, and for this reason millions of dollars was allotted to form a prototype of the *Somos America* coalition, and to finally win immigration reform. For this reason, I also argued that

Rodríguez was way off the mark on the immigrant rights struggle being unified because it is more fragmented now than ever. We were heading into a very dangerous time if the grassroots leftist sector did not once again grab hold of the Movement and organize to clarify its own demands and positions. The “national effort” that Rodríguez purported to was demanding a “comprehensive immigration reform,” and that campaign was funded with millions of dollars to pass the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America’s Security and Prosperity Act (CIRASAP) proposed by Representative Gutierrez. It was eerily devoid of a guestworker program, but demanded the adjustment of citizenship for millions, even if they had committed a misdemeanor.

It certainly brought on board to the campaign many IRM organizers who had put their full support behind ushering in the Obama administration, and then became inactive in disgust for being duped by his promise to cease the raids, deportations, and detentions within his first 100 days in office. He promised the Latino community during his campaign he would use his executive order power to do so but he failed to follow through on the promise. Essentially, it appeared that Rodríguez was one of many other seasoned activists in the *Movimiento* as discussed above; nevertheless, CIRASAP was the bait, and I warned the immigrant rights community about this strategy. The Gutierrez proposal was supposed to garner everyone’s support and get the tide flowing in its direction, by early 2010 the Schumer Graham proposal, which was enforcement heavy, was supposed to be introduced, and by that time if anyone had figured out its horrid components it would have been too late to resist. It was strategic, and to bring to life the findings of this

dissertation in terms of the distinct factions, I briefly outline the strategy I called a “political conundrum,” which began in mid2009.

Instead of galvanizing the rank-and-file of SEIU like the corporatocracy did in 2006’s *Somos America* Coalition, this time began mobilizing the membership of the Catholic Church. The Hispanic Congressional Caucus began a round of prefixed forums whereupon screened speakers were allowed to speak without any public input, as was the case in *La Placita Olvera* Church.²²⁷ This new effort was named Reform Immigration For America (RIFA). A series of conferences were organized, and Church leadership along with the moderate faction’s leadership began using the Church’s membership as media fodder, busing members to and from these conferences to fabricate a mass mobilization, which culminated in a March 21st, 2010, march on the capitol in DC. The agenda was set through 2009, and this included the introduction of CIRASAP, and then there was to be the introduction of Schumer and Graham’s proposal in April 2010, which was supposed to be supported by a national day of action on April 10th, 2010, to pay homage to the day of action the moderate faction organized in 2006.

I believed that it would be political suicide for Obama and the Democrats to push CIRASAP in the midst of the healthcare reform debate; it would endanger their chances of losing their positions in the upcoming 2010 midterm elections. It was only a ploy by the “now” unified congressional caucuses to sign on, which included the Latino, Congressional Asian, black, and progressive Caucuses. Prior to the CIRASAP campaign, they were absent. The point I made was that they had been since 2006, and December

²²⁷ In one conversation, I had with another organizer he told me that the public was allowed to speak, but he was uncertain if this was a forum that was part of this specific campaign.

2008 when they took the majority, but have not been able to deliver, “remember today we march and tomorrow we vote?” I asked if I were the only person that heard Rahm Emmanuel state that, we would not see reform until a second term.

The organizations that began pushing for CIRASAP with pocketfuls of money, have really been dogged by the administration that appeased the Latino community; even the labor movement was duped. These folks were apparently not on the ground working with our people listening to their demands and positions, in fact they have sold them out over and over again in the enforcement-driven legislative proposals they have pushed over the last 5 years, namely LULAC pushing the Strive Act. The position they took was to “secure America first,” a throwback position of the extreme Right, who for some unknown reason can still influence the debate given their minority position in DC. Democrats knew that they could not get a reform during this campaign, even when Napolitano declared its “readiness.” In December 2005, she argued the border was now more secure than ever—and apprehensions were down.

House Speaker Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) also would not call for the immigration debate, even after Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano’s declaration that the border had been secured. Democrats in Congress have their back up against the wall in light of the upcoming midterm elections, and against them, the odds are stacking daily. The truth was that CIRASAP was “Dead on Arrival.” Again, to be passed this was not supposed to be the legislation; it was the awaited proposal of Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) that was supposed to be passed in April 2010, before the leftist May Day marches. Glimpses into this proposal revealed

that it was perhaps more punitive than most other proposals in recent years. It for the first time since 2005 called for the digital fingerprinting of all undocumented workers, disallowed many undocumented immigrants to qualify for their citizenship to be adjusted, and for the expansion of enforcement policies. Like the national ID proposals of the past, the IRM quickly rebuked the proposal.

When the leftist faction finally realized what was in the proposal it resisted it but surprisingly not in the capacity it should have so the moderate faction in this midst moved the April 10th marches, to May 1st, 2010, to coopt the May Day marches planned around the country. In some cities, RIFA stepped in and attempted to control the message for “comprehensive immigration reform” without defining it, and many individuals in the leftist faction, along with the immigrant community, went along with this message.

In the Los Angeles march that drew over 100,000 participants, RIFA was admonished and exposed for attempting to coopt the march. In particular, CHIRLA was later admonished because of its lack of unity for excluding some leftist and traditional faction organizations in the organizing efforts leading up to the May 1st, march. After the assertions of Rodríguez, the developments that have unfolded thus far have clearly displayed the control the moderate faction had in terms of financial resources, the ability to mobilize even fabricated populations, and that it indeed had a spokesperson in Washington. However, what is in question then is why it no longer had the influence it once had.

In Los Angeles on August 16th, 2010, just days before this composition was to be submitted, the CHIRLA, the Korean Resource Center, and *La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* all protested at a Hancock Park home where President Obama appeared for a fundraiser that evening. Gloria Saucedo, Alicia Flóres, and myself, along with over a dozen LHMT members marched alongside dozens of Latino and Asian youth and adult members of the other organizations. Pointed out in some of the conversations however, was that the leadership of the other organizations was thoughtfully absent. While it is only circumspect, it reminded us that although it is long overdue to challenge this administration, there might be individuals in the IRM that are still wary about openly manifesting against the president because of potential repercussions in the future.

It also pointed out that the criminalization of immigrants is going to be something with which we will have to deal with for years if the president does not terminate the repressive policies such as 287G, and Secure Communities that expanded under his watch. This administration's challenge to SB1070 may be only a façade for the more sinister motivations that have stalled the immigration reform process. As exhibited in the chapter four discussion, we were also reminded that Latino politicians and the moderate faction had stayed quiet on the enforcement issue for so long, and only after the introduction of the Secure Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy Act in 2007 did "enforcement first" policies become a "talking point" for it and the DC corporatocracy. There is much at stake because the "elitist sector" of the Movement failed to produce a reform; it now appears the trend to criminalize further undocumented immigrants in general, and Latinos in particular, has taken root.

The problem began when the moderate faction of the Movement failed to admonish the Latino politicians that stood silent as the Republicans cheered on more enforcement, along the border and in the interior, and then it shifted its rhetoric to include “Every nation has the right to enforce the law and protect its borders.” In fact, after Representative Gutierrez introduced the almost enforcement-only legislation he called the Strive Act, and this sector rallied to its support, this sector has now shifted its rhetoric to include “enforcement first, then immigration reform is possible.” This has now become the consistent line of the closet Republican, President Obama, and the rest of the *Republicrats*.

This rhetoric of “immigration reform” grew from within this sector during the Bush and Fox talks in the early 2000s, along with “guestworkers, earned citizenship, and enforcement.” For this reason, it is important to ask why is the conservative trend of the Movement, namely RIFA and all the rest of the organizations, coalitions, groups, and individuals that have held the “pathway to citizenship and enforcement first” positions now complaining about the draconian measures of SB1070. Some IRM organizers in Arizona and abroad felt it was about RIFA opportunistically using the political threat as a mobilizing instrument because it was running low on its millions of dollars and it had failed to garner a comprehensive immigration reform before *Primero de Mayo* 2010.

By sitting on the sidelines and their hands for years, and now acquiescing to the “enforcement first” position of the Republicans, the moderate faction has allowed local antiimmigrant policies to burgeon. Nationally, these antiimmigrant policies such as 287G and Secure Communities were implemented under the Bush Administration, and

the Obama Administration has vehemently supported them, and even expanded them prompting even CHIRLA to protest Janet Napolitano at two recent Southern California appearances. On a statewide level, SB1070 has been put on the table and with outcry from the Latino community. Frankly, this is what “enforcement first” looks like! It is now hypocritical for the corporatocracy that pandered to the Republicans, and after having been duped by the Democrats, abandoned, and demoralized by the lack of response from both, to now complain about SB1070. These organizations brought this onto the immigrant community; however, they do not hold sole responsibility because there are three other issues that further complicate the matter.

The first issue is the lack of response from the radical faction of the IRM, the traditional faction has responded, as obviously has the moderates. There needs to be a unified response to clarify and push the demands of “amnesty” and “no guestworker programs” by the leftist faction, but the few attempts have been futile. Secondly, the Immigration Industrial Complex is not institutionalized fully, needing more time with which to establish itself. Thirdly, the political threat is diluted in the sense that it is spread across the country in new destinations where the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has mostly conducted workplace raids with minimal response by the IRM. As such, the political threat is not so ominous; nevertheless, detentions have expanded under the Obama Administration. This detention for profit industry is growing and recent research has attempted to explain its role and expansion (Díaz, forthcoming; Golash-Boza, 2009; Fernandes, 2007; Saenz & Douglas, forthcoming). I briefly outline the relationship between it and politicians even in light of Janet Napolitano’s claim in

December that “enforcement is done; now we can look for reform...” According to the federal government the stage for immigration reform has been set in terms of “enforcement first,” so why has it not transpired.

Enforcement Trends in the Movement and Its New Trends

The connection exists between the Republicans, Democrats, and the upper echelon of the Immigration Industrial Complex. I argue that because this industry is now contributing money to the Democratic Party, it could be why they turned the tide on the issue of enforcement. A “smoking gun” connects New México Governor Bill Richardson to the industry. According to Terrell (2008), GEO the current name of the former Wackenhut private prison corporation, gave \$43,750 to him in his second run for governor in 2006, yet Charlie Crist of Florida was only donated \$1,500. In Governor Richardson’s bid for the presidency, he again received money.

Another Democratic candidate named Senator Barak Obama (D-IL) received \$2,000 after Richardson dropped out of the race. Terrell also claimed that Hillary Clinton and a bevy of other Democrats have received donations from this industry. In 2006, GEO donated \$30,000 to the Democratic Governor’s Association while headed by Governor Richardson, while at the same time the private prison corporation contributed \$95,000 to the Republican Governors Association (Terrell, 2006). Talvi (2006) also reported that Governor Bill Richardson has already received more contributions from a private prison company than any politician campaigning for state office in the US has. The New Mexican private prison industry is thriving, and so is California’s political economy.

In yet another example, Pordum (2009) reported that Louise Grant, vice president of communications at Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) stated, “We are politically active and make contributions to Democrats and Republicans alike all over the country, as do all companies of our size and reach.” In total, CCA donated \$234,500 in 2007-08, and \$38,900 in 2009 to several members of the California Legislature and the state Democratic and Republican parties, according to its filings with the Secretary of State. The firm has also reported spending about \$45,000 for each of the last three quarters on lobbyists in California.

Evidence exists then that Democrats increasingly becoming tied to this industry. Economically benefitting from these detentions is Sheriff Joe Arpaio from Maricopa County in Arizona with the immigrants that have fallen prey to antiimmigrant policies in his state. On average from the federal government, about \$140 is paid for every immigrant in detention. It makes sense that because Democrats are getting more money from this industry they are now too pushing heavy enforcement components attached to immigration reform, and have changed to “enforcement first” positions in recent years like their Republican counterparts. There is an unfolding trend comprised of a multi-tiered attack on immigrants in the US by Homeland Security, which funds programs to find “criminal aliens,” and the “DUI checkpoints” that are supposed to circumvent drunk drivers but essentially target undocumented immigrant drivers without driver’s licenses. These undocumented immigrants’ vehicles are impounded thus rendering impound fees for towing companies, and exorbitant fines for the city in which they are detained, and for tow truck drivers and police officers overtime hours. Because of the citation these

drivers receive, when they appear in court they quickly become vulnerable for detainment and or deportation. For these reasons, we seriously have to consider the criminalization component that the Democrats have allowed to seep into and crystallize itself into the debate. Just struggling for legalization is no longer sufficient.

Lack of Leadership and New Challenges for Leftists in the Immigrant Rights Movement

The distinct goals of the moderate and leftist factions should now be clear. As such, the next phase of the immigrant rights struggle against the enforcement gone wild policies, and for “progressive immigration reform” should be a united one. Clearly, there needs to be a homegrown effort to serve as a catalyst for the new round of actions against the repressive enforcement only policies that have plagued the immigrant community for years. If it was possible during *El Gran Paro Americano 2006*, it is possible to mobilize the immigrant and immigrant rights communities in the present. The notion of a “diluted” political threat would serve only as a hindrance to this type of organizing effort. As a result, there needs to be unity now more than ever between all factions of the IRM, and ideally cross-movement unity would maximize this effort. This effort has to occur outside of the two-party system, and has to have at the fore a demand against all guestworker programs, and against all detentions.

In the 1970s, there were great rebellions against the detention center industry during which time the Immigration and Naturalization Service oversaw. We can learn from this history, especially because there is evidently no rhyme or reason for detentions, other than for profit. There needs to be a concerted effort, between all factions, for a short and longterm strategy, that would challenge this industry and to fight for a generous

immigration reform. The resources needed for this bottom up strategy should come from the elite level of the IRM, especially since the Catholic Church and other religious institutions, the labor movement and Latino-oriented NGOs all have a stake in the IRM. While these entities provide an array of resources, the leftist and traditional factions would provide volunteers, membership, and community-based leadership. There are many qualified grassroots organizers in the immigrant community that could lead this charge. They understand their own plight, and if heard out they hold a set of strategies and tactics outside of the traditional ones used by the IRM. They are equipped to provide an educational campaign within their own communities that would reach and draw other immigrants into the struggle for a fair and just immigration reform.

A grounded approach with the immigrant community at the fore is necessary, especially because for it millions of its members' lives and livelihoods are at stake. This would necessitate the corporatocracy to utilize its own funds outside of the Democratic Party; its own resources would give it the independence it once experienced in the late 1960s, before capitulating to the ruling class during the 1970s. It is obvious that the Democratic Party has not followed through with its promises to debate and or pass an immigration reform. The compromise between factions in the struggle ahead would be to push for a "full legalization component," "no guestworker program," and a moratorium on enforcement policies that are dividing families daily. For once in the history of Latinos in the US, this historic effort should swiftly occur in the coming months. These components should be defined and discussed, and finally struggle for the "whole enchilada," not mere mediocrity.

In the next phase of the struggle for immigration reform, students who are themselves also struggling for access to a college education and employment immediately upon graduation should be incorporated. Every actor in the IRM has talents that are quite frequently overlooked. Essentially, the IRM needs national leadership with new radical blood and a radical vision. In this vein, there is dire need for a national meeting that attempts to bring together all factions of the Movement because there are issues amongst the leadership in the Movement that need addressing. The proverbial question “Why are we always being attacked?” should be at the core of any discussion amongst Movement organizers. In the US, this has been the experience for folks of color for years, and very relevant to Latinos in Arizona in the recent past. Purportedly, Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, “Racism is like a Cadillac; there is a new model every year!” This saying should resonate in immigrants’ minds that are struggling for immigration reform and against enforcement policies. The history of the IRM is one of struggle against legislative attacks, and therefore it appears that for immigrants this is just the order of the day. How can the “giant sleep?”

An important implication of this study is that there should be little doubt about the effectiveness of street protest. Let us remember that the grassroots sector annihilated the HR4437 attack and buried it without “connections in DC.” Researchers should consider the political pressure the mobilizations had on the Senate debate on March 27th, 2006, which virtually eliminated from all consideration the draconian provisions of HR4437. Although law enforcement with the blessings of the past three presidential administrations has grown, and at the highest rates under the current Obama

administration, which has increased its antiimmigrant campaign, focusing solely mostly on deporting mostly Latino immigrants at 1000 per day, struggle is imminent. This dynamic would take much more research to capture, which is beyond the scope of this study.

In closing, as exhibited in this investigation many facets of the IRM are ripe for investigation. Other students of the social movements and Latino Studies should be encouraged to embark upon this research from an insider approach, not as a parachuted cross-sectional study. The immigrant rights struggle in the US is longstanding and has a rich history, therefore it deserves to be studied from the inside out, and not from the outside in; this is my challenge to the academy. This is vital because there appears to be discontentment brewing amongst the leadership in the Movement; ironically, many Latino organizers believed that the first president of color would understand the expediency of pushing through a palatable immigration reform, to no avail. This again opens up new lines of research for research from many distinct fields. There is no doubt that the tide is changing and may have grave consequences for Latino voter turnout in the coming midterm, and presidential elections in 2010, and 2012 and beyond.

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Table 1. 2006 Events Coordinated by La Placita Pro-immigrant Working Group

DATE	TIME	PLACE	EVENT
January 25	6:00 PM	<i>La Placita Olvera Church</i>	Meeting of the “La Placita Pro-Immigrant Working Group.” Meeting will begin with a candlelight vigil. Please bring all signed petitions.
January 31	5:30 PM	Federal Building 300 Los Angeles St.	Bush’s State Of The Union Address. Protest immigration policy.
February 2	8:30 AM 9:30 AM 10:30 AM 11:00 AM	<i>La Placita Olvera Church</i> March to Federal Building March to City Council City Council	Meet for prayer and vigil. Continue vigil at Federal Building Deliver petitions. Press Conference with City Council members (TBA) receiving the petitions
February 3	6:00 PM	<i>La Placita Olvera Church</i>	Welcome the San Diego Caravan to stop HR4437 (Caravan to DC)
February 4	10:00 AM	<i>La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional</i> 7915 Van Nuys Blvd. Panorama City, CA 91402	Gathering/send off of San Diego Caravan
Events with the Southern California Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform			
February 9	12 – 5:00 PM	DNC and RNC Headquarters in LA area	Activities to oppose HR4437
February 15	10:00 AM	Senator Feinstein LA District Office	Event to oppose HR4437
TBA	TBA	TBA	Community forum on HR4437

Table 2. California Proposition Pre-187 Legislative Developments

BILL	AUTHOR	SUMMARY	STATUS
AB 150	Richard Mountjoy	Aliens MediCal Services - which would have prohibited MediCal reimbursement of state funds for emergency or pregnancy related services provided to undocumented patients unless the MediCal provider report his or her patients to INS.	Failed
AB 151	Richard Mountjoy	Workers Compensation -which would have denied any employment benefits including workman's compensation, to be provided to undocumented workers.	Failed
AB 263	Gil Ferguson	Aid to family with dependent children benefits aliens - would have limited the amount of AFDC to aliens residing less than 12 months in CA., specifically limiting the amount of aid a family could receive to not exceed national average which is \$396 per month for a mother and her two children.	Failed
AB 299	Bill Hoge	Dept. of Housing and Community Development Aliens - which require the housing providers determined a potential renter's eligibility for housing programs based on proof of citizenship or legal status, the housing sponsor would be required to show proof of documentation to the Dept. of Housing and Community Dev. for verification with the INS.	Passed Two Yr. Bill
SB 406	Hill	Worker Compensation: Psychiatric Injuries - which sought to prohibit workers compensation for psychiatric injuries for undocumented employees	Failed
SB 284	Russell	Personal Information Alien Status - which ordered the release of medical forms to the INS if any applicants seeking benefits was suspected of being undocumented.	Passed Two Yr. Bill
SB 1131	Tim Leslie	Crime: Medical Eligibility - which made it a crime for any person to provide fraudulent eligibility information on MediCal benefits forms.	Passed
SB 733	Russell Knopp	Employment: Unemployment Insurance – requiring agencies providing employment and job training services to verify the legal status of individuals seeking these services. It also requires these agencies to post in prominent location that only citizens and only persons authorized to work in the US may utilize the offered service	Passed

AB 2404	Tom Umberg Polanco	Crimes: employment of unauthorized aliens. - the imposition of penalties against employers who knowingly hired undocumented employees. Employers will be subjected to fines and forfeiture of property and or asset for subsequent offenses.	Passed Two Yr. Bill
AB 983	Doris Allen	Drivers Licenses: Identification cards: citizenship or legal residence. - which would have prohibited the DMV from issuing or renewing drivers' licenses or identification cards to individuals that could not establish proof of citizenship or legal status.	Failed
AB 2171	Richard Mountjoy	Drivers Licenses: Identification cards: citizenship or legal residence. - which went beyond Allen's version by including persons authorized to be in the US for a limited period, whose license or ID card would require at the end of their authorized stay.	Failed
SB 976	Elaine Alquist	Drivers Licenses: Identification cards: citizenship or legal residence. - which prohibited the DMV from issuing an original driver's license until the individual showed proof of citizenship or legal status, and also, made it a misdemeanor for assisting an undocumented person in obtaining a DL and or ID card.	Passed
AB 149	Richard Mountjoy	Education funding Undocumented aliens - which would have prohibited allocation of state funds to school districts and public postsecondary institutions for the education of "undocumented alien" students.	Failed
AB 1968	Bill Morrow	School District: Report on Undocumented Alien Pupils - that would require the Dept. of Education to require school districts to report to INS the number of public school pupils who could not provide proof of citizenship or legal status.	Failed
AB 2228 AB 1801	Mickey Conroy Richard Mountjoy	Postsecondary Education Postsecondary Education - both of which bill prohibiting student which is not "lawfully residing in the United States" from enrolling in any public postsecondary education institution.	Passed

AB 1043	Doris Allen	Undocumented Aliens - requiring the Dept. of Corrections and the Dept. of Justice Bureau of Criminal statistics to identify and refer undocumented felons to the INS.	Failed
AB 1525	Todd Nolan	National Guard: Border Patrol - sought to authorize the Governor to call into service the National Guard for the purposes of patrolling the Mexico-US border and for its troops to detain and arrest persons suspected of violating immigration laws.	Failed
SB 1258	An Torres	Undocumented alien: Convicted felon: Deportation - the Dept. of Correction must make a determination regarding an inmate's deportability, and within 48 hrs. of finding an inmate to be deportable. He or she must be handed over to the INS for "appropriate action".	Failed
AB 2402	Julie Bornstein	Crimes: Harboring, transporting, and smuggling. - which would impose criminal penalties for smuggling, transporting, concealing and harboring undocumented immigrants for profit.	Amended
AB 86	Mickey Conroy	Illegal Aliens Deportation - this made any "alien" residing in California guilty of a misdemeanor, upon a second or subsequent conviction the person will be considered guilty of a felony, subject to immediate deportation.	Passed Two Yr. Bill
AB 87	Mickey Conroy	Illegal Aliens: Encarceration in other countries - required the Dept. of Correction to embark on a study that would determine the cost to construct and maintain a men's prison in Baja, CA. for convicted felons.	Passed Two Yr. Bill
SB 345	Hill	Undocumented Aliens - to require that the Dept. of Correction provides prison facilities for the INS to conduct deportation hearings of undocumented felons in state prison.	Passed
SB 691	Knopp	Law Enforcement: Immigration matters - which prohibited local ordinances that sought to deter or prohibit cooperation between local law enforcement and the INS pertaining to arrestees in custody for felonies.	Chaptered

*This compilation of legislative proposals debate, passed, and or failed in the California legislature was extracted from the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, LA Subject Files: Assorted documents on immigration 1957-1993, updated as of October 8. The New California Coalition, a member of the California Civil Rights Conference, summed up the immigration related legislation during the 1993-94 California legislative assembly.

Appendix I: Call to Boycott the Arizona Diamondbacks Major League Baseball Team

Arizona Diamondbacks:

Chase Field, 401 E. Jefferson Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004, dbacks.com.

National Press Contacts:

Arizona [Phoenix] Contact, Tony Herrera

Arizona [Tucson] Contact, Isabel García

California Contact, Gloria Saucedo

Indiana Contact, Felipe Vargas

Illinois Contact, Carlos Perez

Texas Contact, Jesse Díaz, Jr.

AMERICA, there is no doubt about it; the Arizona Diamondbacks are one of the top contributors to the Republican machine in Arizona that have unanimously voted for the draconian Arizona State Proposition SB1070. This bill will encourage the open racial profiling of “brown people” in a state that has already been racially profiling immigrants for years beginning in the early 2000s when Sheriff Dever and his wife allowed and oftentimes encouraged Arizonan ranchers to “hunt down” border crossers in Cochise County. Sheriff Arpaio the most dastardly and venomous law enforcer that state has perhaps ever employed has done nothing short than terrorize the Latino community across Maricopa County, with the support of former governor, Janet Napolitano, who worked alongside him during her tenure. She was, according to the testimony of Sheriff Dever, contemplating calling in the National Guard early last year, months into her new position.²²⁸ She has, under the leadership of President Obama, expanded the 287G Program that has been used as another instrument of terror on our community.

SB1070, voted into law on Monday, April 19th, 2010, has yet to be signed into effect by Arizona Governor, Jan Brewer, but everyone around the country is clear that she will. The law will not only allow for law enforcement officers to randomly stop “brown people,” it will also give them the authority to fine undocumented immigrants \$500, and if a citizen witnesses any officer fail to stop, harass, probe, or approach anyone that does look “undocumented,” that person could sue the police officer for failing to carry out his or her duty per the law. And, according to others, there will be an Arizona identification card which, if you look like an immigrant, you better be able to produce one and if unable, you will be in jeopardy of being imprisoned until you can prove you are a US citizen. So, outsiders beware!

According to some researchers, finding meaningful solutions to immigration issues is not easy; there are some efforts that may unintentionally have a negative impact on public safety. Such is the case with SB 1070. Under SB 1070, all local police officers would be required to investigate the immigration status of anyone with whom they make “legitimate contact” and have a “reasonable suspicion” that they may be present in the country unlawfully. Under such a policy, victims of crimes and witnesses are much less likely to report crimes because of a legitimate fear

²²⁸ . Sheriff Dever. Senate Homeland Security Committee. US-Mexico Border Security Hearing. CSPAN2. <hsgac.senate.gov>. April 20th, 2010.

that they will be deported. Other areas of concern with SB 1070 include language that may compel law enforcement agencies to ignore more pressing criminal matters in favor of doing a much larger amount of immigration enforcement. Local police are facing potential budget cuts and need discretion as to how to best focus their efforts in protecting the public. Finally, it is worth noting that SB 1070 creates a crime of trespass for all undocumented immigrants. A second trespass offense is then elevated to a felony. Many undocumented immigrants were brought to this country at a very early age and are here through no fault of their own. SB 1070 will treat these people as criminals, even if they have committed no other crime.²²⁹

Since the Monday vote, 9 students from around the state have been arrested at the state capitol in protest. Organizers from around the state have mobilized in solidarity of the immigrant community in Arizona, some from as far as New Jersey. Clearly, there will be immigrant rights organizers from around the country mobilizing to AZ in the coming days to monitor the targeted discrimination and further repression of the immigrant community there once the bill is signed. It is clear our community understands the gravity of this bill and the consequences it has for other communities around the country. It will naturally be challenged in the court system, but who listens to the courts and Department of Justice in Arizona anyway? Even organizers in Arizona are leery of this process. In the meantime, if a neighbor that has had problems with a “brown brother or sister,” in the past, he can call the police, and if the police does not respond, he or she can be sued, and this can happen amongst family members.

In a press conference on April 20th, 2010, Representative Raul Grijalva called for a national boycott against the state: “Do not vacation and or retire there.” Many of us rarely vacation, and will probably retire where we reside, but we do go to major league baseball games, or know friends or family that do. Therefore, we call on the Latino and immigrant communities to support a targeted boycott on corporations that have funded the campaign to further repress our community; that is a boycott that will target known contributors to the Republicans that passed this law. A targeted boycott should be launched immediately to show the economic power of our community, and we can participate right in our own communities. Boycott the Arizona Diamondbacks NOW! Our power is economic, Labor and Consumption.

We can support the boycott when the Diamondbacks come to play in our cities across the country, namely where there is a heavy concentration of Latinos and immigrants, namely Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, and New York. For those of you who attend Dodger games, the audience is always roughly 80% folks of color, and we’re sure it is the same elsewhere, so this would have huge ramifications for sales of tickets and merchandise if supported by our communities. You can view when they are coming to a town near you at http://arizona.diamondbacks.mlb.com/schedule/index.jsp?c_id=ari&m=4&y=2010. We have compiled the donations from this family to the Republican machine in Arizona, outlined next.

In 2010, the National Republican Senatorial Committee’s 3rd highest Contributor was the Arizona Diamondbacks, who gave \$121,600; furthermore, they also contributed \$129,500, which ranked as the 18th highest contribution to the Republican Party Committee; and, they gave the 20th

²²⁹ This paragraph comes from: <<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa237.html>>.

highest contribution to Senator McCain—\$9,400.²³⁰ In USA Today, Ken Kendrick, managing general partner of the Arizona Diamondbacks, said he doesn't expect anything for his donations to Arizona Senator John McCain, Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney, stating “I hope to get a good leader for our country.”²³¹ Well, he has to be held accountable for giving to a machine that has targeted immigrants in Arizona, and now the immigrant community in Arizona, and beyond must act to target them in a national boycott against their team. Senator McCain openly supported the bill on Tuesday, obviously because he is slipping in the polls to JD Hayworth, a reactionary Republican that has supported the antiimmigrant legislation since its inception- they are now neck in neck in the fight for the Arizona senate seat.

Arizona Diamondbacks Managing General Partner Ken Kendrick (AKA Earl G. Kendrick, Jr.) and his family members, EG Kendrick, Sr., and Randy Kendrick have made significant and considerable contributions to further the Republican agenda totaling \$1,023,527. Their total contributions in 2009 and 2010 have been substantial and are as follows: Earl G Kendrick, Jr. (Ken Kendrick), Diamondbacks Managing General Partner contributed \$30,400 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2009 and \$30,400 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2010; Mrs. Randy P. Kendrick contributed \$30,400 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2009 and \$30,400 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2010²³².

The Kendrick family owned business, Datatel Inc, which is affiliated with the Political Action Committee (PAC), AZ Free Enterprise Club (Formerly Freedom Club PAC), Committee #200602784, has also been a source of political contributions to the Republic agenda, such as a \$25,000 contribution to Senator and Republican Whip, John L. Kyl²³³.

To note, the top five contributors in favor of AZ Proposition 202 in 2008, another antiimmigrant proposal were heavily from the business sector in Arizona, we will keep a watch on these businesses when the list of funders to push SB1070 is released: They include Wake Up Arizona! Pro-Business Organizations \$802,634, Western Growers Association Farm Organizations or Cooperatives \$35,000, AdCorp Inc. Restaurants & Drinking Establishments \$10,000, Arizona Cattlemen’s Association Livestock \$10,000, and Pepsi-Cola of Tucson Non-Alcoholic Beverages \$10,000; TOTAL \$867,634²³⁴

²³⁰<<http://www.opensecrets.org/indivs/search.php?name=kendrick&state=AZ&zip=&employ=&cand=&all=Y&sort=N&capcode=q5nmh&submit=Submit>>.

²³¹ <http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-10-25-baseballcash_N.htm>.

²³²<<http://www.opensecrets.org/indivs/search.php?capcode=gx8nv&name=kendrick&employ=&cand=&state=AZ&zip=&all=Y&old=N&c2008=N&c2006=N&c2010=N&sort=A&page=&page=1>>.

²³³<<http://www.opensecrets.org/indivs/search.php?capcode=gx8nv&name=kendrick&employ=&cand=&state=AZ&zip=&all=Y&old=N&c2008=N&c2006=N&c2010=N&sort=A&page=&page=1>>.

²³⁴<<http://www.nascd.org/news/files/6fad0d37471492bfe537a21f7a8b354e-206.html06.htmlalert>>.

Let's Keep a Close Eye on Who Funded the SB1070 Legislative Attack!

Also Sign our Petition at <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/BoycottArizona2010/>

And Visit Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Boycott-Arizona-2010/115210035168488?ref=mf>

Initial National Endorsement List

Felipe Aguirre- Comite Pro Uno- Maywood, CA
Lalo Alcares- Community Activist and Cartoonist- Los Angeles, CA
Dr Jake Alimahomed-Wilson - Professor of Sociology, CSU Long Beach
Sabrina Alimahomed - Graduate Student, University of California, Riverside
Artemio Arrealo- Casa Michoacan- Chicago, IL
Maria Janice Bernal- Community Activist, Riverside, CA
Aaron Caminos- Community Activist, Graduate Student, University of California, Riverside
Consuelo "Connie" Cardenas- Community Activist, Riverside, CA
Lazaro Cardenas- Community Activist, Riverside, CA
Michelle Cardenas- Community Activist, Los Angeles, CA
Gloria Cervantes- No Manches Su Imagen- Dallas, TX
Lillian Chavez- Graduate Student- Arizona State University
Mike Chavez- Graduate Student University of California, Riverside
Ray Chavez- Community Activist, University of California, Riverside
Noam Chomsky- Emeritus Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Flor Crisostomo- La Red Xicana Indigena/Colectivo Media Flóresiste- Chicago, IL
Isabel García- Coalición de Derechos Humanos- Tucson, AZ
San Juanita García- Graduate Student- Texas A&M University
Brienne Davila- Graduate Student- University of California, Santa Barbara
Jesse Díaz, Jr- La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional - Dallas, TX
Nina Díaz- Graduate Student- University of Southern California
Virginia Díaz- Student University of Laverne
Dr David Embrick- Professor of Sociology- Loyola University at Chicago
Alicia Flóres- La Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional- Ventura County, CA
Hector Flóres- League of United Latin American Citizens- Dallas, TX
Jose Luis Flóres- Alianza Por Una Reforma Migratoria- Dallas, TX
Eric Gamboa- Graduate Student- Texas A&M University
Mary Ann "Maria Anna" Gonzales- National Alliance for Human Rights, Riverside, CA
Hank González- Socialist Alternative- Chicago, IL
Nita González- Escuela Tlatelolco- Denver, CO
Laura Hernandez- Graduate Student- University of Chicago
Tony Herrera- Unidos en Arizona- Phoenix, AZ
Russell Jauregui- Immigration Lawyer- Los Angeles, CA
Dr Tony S. Juge, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Pasadena City College
Emma Lozana- Familia Unida Sin Fronteras- Chicago, IL
Alicia Lujano- Community Activist, Riverside, CA
José Luis Lujano- Community Activist, Riverside, CA
Miguel "Mike" Lujano, Community Activist, Riverside, CA
Verónica Montes de Oca- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Paulina Lujano- Community Activist, Riverside, CA

Alvaro Maldonado- San Gabriel Valley Neighbors for Peace and Justice- San Gabriel, CA
 Raul Madrid- Graduate Student- California Polytechnic University, Pomona
 Dr Christina Morales- Professor of Sociology- University of Texas, El Paso
 Jose “Pepe Jacks” Medina- Revolutionary Democratic Party de Mexico- Mexico City, MX
 Danny Morales- GI Forum and National Alliance for Human Rights- Riverside, CA
 Nativo López- La Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana- Orange County, CA
 Roberto Nerey, Political Organizer and Community Activist, Reno, NV
 Alicia Nieves- Student- University of Indiana at Bloomington
 Homero Ocon- Comité De Defensa Del Pueblo- Denver, CO
 Carlos Perez- Mayan Calendar News- Chicago, IL
 Doris Ramírez- March 10th Coalition- Chicago, IL
 Fernando Ramírez- Southern California Immigration Coalition- Los Angeles, CA
 Dr Ellen Reese- Professor of Sociology- University of California, Riverside
 Wendy Reyes- Graduate Student- University of California, Irvine
 Isaura Rivéra-Anagnos- Mundo Farabundista: FMLN- Los Angeles, CA
 Dr William I Robinson- Professor of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara
 Estella Rios- Center for Social Advocacy- San Diego, CA
 Isabel Rodríguez- Civil Rights Attorney- Los Angeles, CA
 Jorge Rodríguez- Unionist and Immigrant Rights Activist- Los Angeles, CA
 Dr Rogelio Saenz- Professor of Sociology-Texas A&M University
 San Gabriel Valley Neighbors for Peace and Justice- San Gabriel, CA
 Angelica Salas- Coalition for Humane and Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles, CA
 Elva Salinas- Professor of English and Chicano Studies- San Diego City College
 Alex Sánchez- Homies Unidos- Los Angeles, CA
 Xuan Santos- Graduate Student- University of California, Santa Barbara
 Gloria Saucedo La Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, San Fernando Valley, CA
 Orlando Sepulveda- March 10th Coalition- Chicago, IL
 William Torres- March 25th Coalition, Los Angeles, CA
 Felipe Vargas- Trail of Dreams and Latino Youth Collective- Indianapolis, IN
 Victoria Vasquez- Graduate Student- Northwestern University
 Christine Vega- Graduate Student and Community Activist, Sylmar, CA
 Carlos Vellanoweth- Immigration Lawyer, Los Angeles, CA
 Gary Wagner- Community Activist- Reno, NV
 Dr Simón Weffer-Elizondo- Professor of Sociology- University of California, Merced
 Dr Devra Weber- Professor of History- University of California, Riverside
 Chris Zepeda- Graduate Student- Cornell University