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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

KCOR-AM: Radio and the Politics of Transnational Identity Formation in San Antonio, Texas,
1946-1955

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

in

Latin American Studies

by

Damian Valenzuela

Committee in charge:

Professor Anthony J. Harb, Chair
Professor Luis Martín-Cabrera,
Professor Matthew Vitz

2026

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University of California San Diego

2026

DEDICATION

For my parents, María de Jesús Hernández y Raúl Valenzuela.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SAPL	San Antonio Public Library
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens
SCOP	<i>Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas</i>
UT	University of Texas
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
PRI	<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional</i>

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

**KCOR-AM: Radio and the Politics of Transnational Identity Formation in San Antonio, Texas,
1946-1955**

by

Damian Valenzuela

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California San Diego, 2026

Professor Anthony J. Harb, Chair

This thesis seeks to analyze the role that U.S. based Spanish-language radio station KCOR-AM had in sustaining transnational Mexican identities in San Antonio, Texas, from 1946 to 1955. Founded in 1946, KCOR-AM was the first full-time Spanish-language radio station established in the continental U.S. and legally recognized via license by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Due to the scarcity of audio archives during this period, this project will rely extensively on archival data found in San Antonio, Texas i.e. newspaper articles, city council meeting minutes, secondary sources, and UT San Antonio library special collections. In utilizing a borderlands paradigm of Mexican and U.S. history, I attempt to answer the question of the role that broadcasting radio station KCOR had in creating and sustaining transnational Mexican and Mexican American identities in San Antonio, Texas.

Introduction

Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the people of Mexico was left with a fragmented, divided nation- both politically and socially. With the promulgation of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and the ascension of Álvaro Obregón to the presidency in 1920, a series of post-revolutionary social and cultural transformations were set in motion - also referred to as Mexico's "cultural revolution."¹ These reforms affected Mexico and its population in diverse ways, including but not limited to the negotiation of radio broadcasting regulations. This period following the Mexican revolution also saw a rise in emigration from Mexico into the U.S., as well as an effort by the Mexican government to promote the image of a prosperous, cultured nation. In doing so, the Mexican government, and the Calles presidency more specifically, made focused efforts to reach a Mexican immigrant community in the United States through radio broadcasts, as noted by historian Sonia Robles.² The policies and institutions that came forth from the postrevolutionary period were designed with the intention of unifying a heterogeneous Mexican nation. Nevertheless, historians of Mexico (Knight 1994; Hayes 2000; Vaughn 2006; Rubenstein 2010; Castro 2016; Robles 2019) have noted the utilization of broadcasting radio as a tool "for integrating the general population across the national territory by means of generating consent,"³ a tool of which is utilized for state control.

Broadcast radio played an important role at the forefront of cultural projects both in Mexico and in the U.S. during this time. With lax broadcasting regulations at the advent of

¹ Mary Kay Vaughn, and Stephen E. Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

² Sonia Robles, *Mexican Waves: Radio Broadcasting along Mexico's Northern Border, 1930-1950*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019), 25.

³ Joseph Justin Castro, *Radio in Revolution: Wireless Technology and State Power in Mexico, 1897–1938*, 1st ed., (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska, 2016), 3.

commercial broadcasting in the early 1920s from both the United States and Mexico respectively, radio broadcasts often travelled across the international boundary line freely. As noted by historian Sonia Robles, Mexican broadcasts along the northern border during this time successfully reached a Mexican immigrant audience in the U.S.⁴ Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Southwest often tuned into radio broadcast from Mexico at a time when only a handful of English-language stations allowed “block programming” or short segments of Spanish-language broadcasts on their stations.

It is not until after World War II that the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the U.S. would be established in San Antonio, Texas, setting forth the groundwork for Spanish-language media in the United States for decades to come. Founded by Raoul A. Cortez in 1946, former writer for the influential Spanish-language newspaper *La Prensa* as well as part time broker on English-language radio stations- KCOR-AM would become the first full-time Spanish-language radio station granted a license to operate legally in the continental United States. Donning the first three letters of Cortez’s last name with the letter K at the forefront, noting its place west of the Mississippi river per FCC regulation, KCOR-AM could be found on dial number 1350 in San Antonio, Texas in 1946. Mexican communities in San Antonio, Texas, found in KCOR-AM what scholar Jaqueline Urla calls a “counter-public”⁵ space for political mobilization and resistance to United States hegemony during a time of racial hostilities, discrimination, and violence toward Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest.

⁴ Robles, *Mexican Waves*, 43-44.

⁵ Jacqueline Urla, “Outlaw Language: Creating Alternative Public Spheres in Basque Free Radio,” in *Pragmatics* 5:2, (International Pragmatics Association, 1997), 245.

In noting the significance of Raoul Cortez and KCOR- it is also worth mentioning his position within the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which was created as a result of racial discrimination toward Mexican Americans in the United States in 1929. The end of WWII saw a resurgence of dormant LULAC councils when Mexican American GIs returned from overseas only to face the very same discrimination that was being fought externally, leading to the inception of the American GI Forum in Texas. Cortez, while venturing in radio, engaged consistently through and with LULAC, as this thesis will show.

For this reason, KCOR-AM offers critical insight into the development of Spanish-language radio in the United States as a tool for political advocacy by and for marginalized Mexican immigrant and Mexican American communities in the United States. More specifically, the Texas borderlands offer insight into the development of these cross-border relations with Mexico.

This thesis is organized as follows: First, I outline the literature on broadcast radio as a technology of both the state and the public. Then, I highlight key themes in empirical work on Spanish language radio in the U.S. – Mexico borderlands. Building on that work, my analysis is guided by the following research questions: what role did radio station KCOR have in creating and sustaining transnational Mexican and Mexican American identities? To what extent was KCOR both a tool of subversion and a tool of state power within the context of the United States? What role did Raoul A. Cortez – as an essential figure in the history of Spanish-language radio in the U.S. – have in reproducing racial hierarchies through assimilationist initiatives? My analysis is organized around two primary themes: (1) the politics of KCOR and (2) cross-border relations. I argue that although radio station KCOR operated as an apparatus for the public and subversive to U.S. hegemony, Raoul Cortez as a leader of an institution such as LULAC

reproduced racial hierarchies through his assimilationist initiatives via adoption of English-language education of Mexican Americans, for example.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: RADIO AS TECHNOLOGY OF THE NATION & THE PUBLIC

Scholars have long engaged with the notion of nation and identity- Benedict Anderson's seminal work titled *Imagined Communities* is a crucial point of departure for this study in conceptualizing identity and nation. Anderson attempts to "offer some tentative suggestions for a more satisfactory interpretation of the 'anomaly' of nationalism."⁶ More importantly, Anderson attributed the crossing of historical forces, such as the novel and the newspaper that developed in Europe in the late 18th century, as forms that "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation."⁷ Anderson does so to "reorient" Marxist and liberal theory that often interpreted this "anomaly" [of nationalism] as a phenomenon in need of saving. More specifically, Anderson argues that:

The creation of these artifacts [nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism as cultural artifacts] towards the end of the eighteenth century' was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they become 'modular,' capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.⁸

This is a useful framework to illustrate how the introduction of a new technological form, such as broadcast radio as a form of media in the early 20th century, can help us understand the process of meaning making and nationalism(s) achieved by station owners and receivers of said

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), 4.

⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 40-41.

⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

media. Furthermore, Anderson offers his definition on nation which is this: “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁹ Anderson proposes that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it... with the large cultural systems that preceded it.”¹⁰

Radio technology as an apparatus of nation-state formation by state officials in both the United States and Mexico has long been engaged with by scholars of media, for example. As an emerging technology in the early 20th century, not only was broadcasting radio in the 1920s and 30s quickly utilized as a mass-mediating tool by state officials in both the United States and Mexico, it also merged the public and private spheres within their respective nations. Loviglio’s *Radio’s Intimate Public* engages with this phenomenon in describing how public and private spheres temporarily merge to “form a national community” or what he describes as, “an *intimate public*.”¹¹ More specifically, Loviglio notes how radio in the 1930s and 40s, in producing the intimate public, offered listeners of radio “a fantasy of social mobility, even as it reminded them of the importance of social hierarchies in protecting their own relative privilege.”¹² This is best described in his discussion of Roosevelt’s famed Fireside Chat’s- radio broadcasts that penetrated the private sphere (automobiles, homes) and allowed the public to listen (via open windows, communal gatherings) thus enabling the merging of both public and private spheres. Loviglio asserts that radio’s “insistent and ambivalent voices ushered in an era in which privacy and publicity became flexible modes of performance and the electronic mass media became central

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jason Loviglio, *Radio’s Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, NED-New edition, (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv.

¹² Loviglio, *Radio’s Intimate Public*, xxvii.

discursive institutions in shaping cultural identities.”¹³ Radio then redefines the boundaries of both the public and private spheres of everyday people within the nation.

In the face of oppressive structures, marginalized communities assert their agency through the creation of these counter-publics. Jacqueline Urla’s *Outlaw Language* details the intersection of “free radio” and its use as a tool for devising the Basque radical youth heterogeneous conception of a counter-public. Building off the work of Jürgen Habermas, along with feminist and social historians (Nancy Fraser, 1993; Joan Landes, 1988; and Geoff Eley, 1992), Urla attempts to rethink this work completed on public spheres. In her discussion of the use of radio by Basque radical youth via the production of subaltern forms of popular culture following Francos death in 1975, Urla suggests that “linguistic minorities or other marginalized groups,” who create “numerous counter-publics [proliferate in the interstices of the bourgeois public] ... give lie to the presumed homogeneity of the imaginary public.”¹⁴ In doing so, Urla argues how “one finds among Basque radical nationalist youth a self-conscious attempt to make use of intentionally marginal or ‘outlaw’ publicity... to give voice to their minoritized language.”¹⁵

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is foundational in understanding power relations between the state and private spheres; and most importantly useful in conceptualizing Spanish-language broadcasting radio as counter-hegemonic within the context of the United States. In his famous *Prison Notebooks*, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci details and conceptualizes “the formation of the intellectuals” in relation to structures of power he witnessed during Mussolini’s

¹³ Loviglio, *Radio’s Intimate Public*, xxvii.

¹⁴ Jacqueline Urla, “Outlaw Language: Creating Alternative Public Spheres in Basque Free Radio,” in *Pragmatics* 5:2. (International Pragmatics Association, 1997), 245.

¹⁵ Urla, *Outlaw Language*, 246.

fascist takeover of Italy. Gramsci notes how “civil society” (or the “private”) and “political society” (or “the state”) work in relation to one another via hegemony. He suggests that these two work together as follows:

These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of “hegemony” which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of “direct domination” or command exercised through the State and “juridical” government. The functions in question are precisely organizational and connective.¹⁶

Here, Gramsci describes the process by which coercion and consent work hand in hand to the production of hegemony. Gramsci notes how coercion -- enforced actively or passively institutionally via the state-- and consent-- provided by the general masses as common sense norms-- work together toward the “general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.”¹⁷ While Anderson’s *Imagined Community* homogenizes the nation via hegemony regarded as the standard, using Gramsci’s concept of hegemony helps illustrate the ways in which figures such as Cortez adhere to dominant social norms, and how gaining access to institutional resources can lead to the imposition and maintenance of hegemonic ideals. Nevertheless, KCOR operates as counter-hegemonic within the media-sphere in a country such as the United States, where English is the de facto national language.

Anthropological work on radio has emphasized the ways in which its meaning is produced in relation to particular social contexts. Bessire and Fisher’s *Radio Fields* explain how radio is constituted by social relations. Bessire and Fisher assert that one particular technological form [radio] “animates the political, linguistic, strategic, or emotional registers of lived

¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Hoare, Quintin, et al. (Lawrence and Wishart, 2005),12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

experience in concrete ways.”¹⁸ Furthermore, Bessire and Fisher describe how a careful study of radio can help us understand how meaning and power are shaped- by whom and for whom. Bessire and Fisher assert that “radio’s boundaries thus cannot easily be assumed a priori; its objectness is always potentially unsettled by shifting social practices, institutions, and technological innovations and by the broader domains within which it finds shape, meaning and power.”¹⁹ Because radio is strictly an audio medium, Kira Kosnick’s chapter in this volume for example, suggests that “language has to play a central role in signaling ethnic otherness.”²⁰ More specifically, Bessire and Fisher assert that “radio and culture [must be taken] as ideal forms and ethnographic questions rather than a priori contexts.”²¹

Not only are communities imagined through radio, but so are alliances, especially in the meaning-making process of radio. Ian Baucom’s *Franz Fanon’s Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening* delves into the concept of radio as an aural meeting place of diaspora. Beginning first with a review and analysis of Fanon’s *Black Skin White Mask*. Baucom states how “It is as if he [Fanon]... is gathering these scattered voices for our belated acts of listening... the aural meeting places of diaspora.”²² Radio scholar Dolores Inés Casillas makes a similar claim, in that Spanish-language radio served as an “acoustic ally” to immigrant communities that “aired advocacy-oriented announcements, popular music, and sounds of Latin

¹⁸ Lucas Bessire and Daniel Fisher, “Introduction,” In *Radio Fields: Anthropology and Wireless Sound in the 21st Century*, ed. Lucas Bessire and Daniel Fisher (New York; London: NYU Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁹ Bessire and Fisher, “Introduction,” 3.

²⁰ Kira Kosnick, “Foreign Voices: Multicultural Broadcasting and Immigrant Representation at Germany’s Radio MultiKulti,” In *Radio Fields: Anthropology and Wireless Sound in the 21st Century*, ed. Lucas Bessire and Daniel Fisher (New York; London: NYU Press, 2012), 182.

²¹ Bessire and Fisher, “Introduction,” 5.

²² Ian Baucom, “Frantz Fanon’s Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening,” *Contemporary Literature* 42:1, University of Wisconsin Press: (Spring 2001,) 17.

America to Spanish-dominant listeners,” during a time of hostilities toward Mexican Americans in the early 20th century.²³ Just as important and useful for this project, Baucom further analyzes Fanon’s *A Dying Colonialism*- showcasing how listeners of subversive broadcasting station *The Fighting Voice of Alger* act as agents who “reproduce what they hear.”²⁴ Baucom reinforces Fanon’s argument in suggesting that diasporic listeners of radio, either in colonial or post-colonial societies, aren’t simply “passive” but also agents of their own in their shared “commonality of experience” where “listeners resist homogenization” in preserving their differences.²⁵

The above-mentioned theorists help conceptualize the multiple ways in which radio is utilized as a tool by the state and by the public. Spanish-language radio such as KCOR complicates this understanding, serving a Spanish-language listenership in San Antonio, Texas- challenging English-dominant airwaves of the mid-1940s during a time when foreign language broadcasting was heavily regulated. KCOR can be viewed as representative of an institution whereby Cortez is an influential figure with social capital. The following section offers an overview of the scholarship focused on Spanish-language radio as both a tool of consolidation of power in Mexico while also subversive within the context of U.S. hegemony.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SPANISH LANGUAGE RADIO IN THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS

Radio scholars have written about radio as an apparatus for the consolidation of power throughout different historical time periods, on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Joseph

²³ Dolores Inés Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish Language Radio and Public Advocacy*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 24.

²⁴ Baucom, “Frantz Fanon’s Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening,” 24.

²⁵ Ibid.

Justin Castro's *Radio in Revolution*, for example, highlights the role that radio broadcasting had in state control, governance, and resistance during the Mexican Revolution. Castro's contributions "places a much stronger emphasis on the role of Revolution and subsequent violence on state broadcasting policies than previous studies," to trace continuity and change in both political and technological advancements.²⁶ Much like Marvin Alisky, who conducted one of the first studies on broadcast radio in Mexico (1954),²⁷ Castro too defines and demarcates the difference between radiotelegraphy (point-to-point communication) and radio broadcasting (mass medium), albeit while placing them together in constructing this argument about continuity and change with state control via broadcast radio. Moreover, as historian Alan Knight and Claudio Lomnitz suggest in their work regarding Mexico's cultural revolution and nation-building projects,²⁸ Castro describes how Porfirian era tendencies of state control persisted through and after the Mexican Revolution: beginning with Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship and eventually the single-party rule of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), which dominated Mexican politics for nearly seven decades after the fact.

Similarly, Rubenstein's (2010) chapter on *Mass Media and Popular Culture* in Mexico traces popular culture in the postrevolutionary era and beyond, where she describes the diverse cultural productions from radio, cinema, comic books, T.V. programming and soap operas, lucha libre, and sports among others that were shaped by negotiations between state actors and the

²⁶ Joseph Justin Castro, *Radio in Revolution: Wireless Technology and State Power in Mexico, 1897–1938*, 1st ed., (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska, 2016), 7.

²⁷ Marvin Alisky, "Early Mexican Broadcasting," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 34, no. 4 (1954): 513–26.

²⁸ See Alan Knight's "Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910-1940," in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (August 1994), 393-444; Claudio Lomnitz, "Final Reflections: What Was Mexico's Cultural Revolution?" in Mary Kay Vaughn's *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 335-349.

public sphere. This is most notable in Rubenstein's analysis of conservative, middle-class protestors of new media technologies (like radio and cinema) in Mexico- and the eventual negotiation met by President Avila Camacho and the church, announced through a radio broadcast in 1940.²⁹ On the other hand, Joseph Justin Castro argues that "the relationship forged between commercial radio leaders... and the government officials during the 1920s and 1930s, established a mutually beneficial partnership that helped solidify single-party rule."³⁰ Raoul Cortez -- the radio leader around which this thesis is centered -- can be placed within this framework, in that Cortez gained influence as a figure in an institutional role in the U.S. and also to an extent, while also garnering attention of Mexican officials as well- owning a radio station that would much later merge with Mexico's Emilio Azcárraga's media ventures, Televisa.³¹ Not only is this work important to scholars of the Mexican Revolution and Mexican Media alike, but it highlights the role the mutual relationship and importance of media, nation-building and political projects.

Historian Joy E. Hayes notes the significance of broadcasting radio in consolidating state power through nation-building projects following the Mexican Revolution in *Radio Nation*. The rise of media moguls such as Emilio Azcárraga and his Azcárraga Group worked alongside the Mexican government to preserve cultural and political hegemony in Mexico in the late 1940s and early 1950s, for example. The Azcárraga Group went as far as to establish relations with U.S.

²⁹ Anne Rubenstein, "Mass Media and Popular Culture in the Postrevolutionary Era." in *The Oxford History of Mexico*. Ed. William H. Beezley and Michael C Meyer, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 621.

³⁰ Castro, *Radio in Revolution*, 11.

³¹ Norman Rozeff, "Tichenor, McHenry," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 07, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/tichenor-mchenry>.

based radio networks during this time.³² According to Hayes, similar trends regarding the consolidation of power through media continued into the postwar period with the advent of television as well. Hayes asserts that broadcasting radio laid the groundwork for television's role "as the primary broadcasting medium and central site for the articulation of national culture."³³ Although this thesis is primarily focused on radio from 1946-1955, this is reflected in KCOR-AM's trajectory, which ultimately transitions to being the first full-time Spanish-language television network in the United States, KCOR-TV. Hayes's work is essential in understanding the role of the state and radio programming in Mexico. This research is achieved through Hayes' extensive use of evidence from print media³⁴

Cross-border radio interactions between the United States and Mexico were evident and influential to the creation of the radioscape. Culture historian Sonia Robles's work in *Mexican Waves* is an example of more recent historiography regarding broadcasting radio with an emphasis on Mexico's northern border. In contrast to the work completed by Hayes who places Mexico City and early media moguls such as Emilio Azcárraga at center stage for example, Robles focuses her attention to Mexico's northern countryside. In taking a borderlands history approach, Robles provides a more nuanced approach to a media history narrative concerning Mexico in particular. Robles' monograph examines the role that radio played during this time as an instrument of asserting one's agency (consumer and entrepreneur) and national identity across the Mexican diaspora both in Mexico and the U.S. Southwest. Robles argues:

Mexico's radio broadcasting system was a national and international project in which the international boundary was beneficial for the commercial radio

³² Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture and Nationalism in Mexico*, (Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 2000), 116.

³³ Hayes, *Radio Nation*, 117.

³⁴ Hayes, *Radio Nation*, 19-20.

broadcasting industry's development, and that commercial radio stations along Mexico's northern border had a direct role in shaping Mexican immigrant communities, their consumption practices, and the growth of their small business in the United States.³⁵

Using archival records from *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas* (SCOP), along with transcribed interactions between listeners to broadcasters, Robles showcases how “low power” radio broadcasting entrepreneurs transmitted and promoted businesses on both sides of *la frontera* both within and beyond the scope of Mexican broadcasting policy during this time. Building off the works of borderland historians such as Rachel St. John and Joseph Castro, Robles too recognizes the borderlands as a central point of negotiation, especially in the development of Mexico's northern border through commercial broadcasting. In addition, Robles notes her contribution to the scholarship regarding the history of mass media in Mexico when she states, “for decades the established radio history narrative has privileged the account of radio in Mexico City over radio development in other parts of the country.”³⁶ Moreover, Robles concludes by recognizing the gaps within borderlands scholarship and media histories that often ignore the role of broadcasting media, asserting that “Mexican broadcast media played a crucial role in defining Mexico's border with the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.”³⁷ Lastly, Robles reemphasizes the importance of Mexican commercial broadcast media in Mexico's northern border in relation to continuing trends in consumption of Spanish language TV, media and the internet today.

Scholarship on Spanish-language radio within the context of the U.S., however, is dominated by its subversive qualities for immigrant-origin communities. Dolores Inés Casillas's

³⁵ Sonia Robles, *Mexican Waves: Radio Broadcasting along Mexico's Northern Border, 1930-1950*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019), 12.

³⁶ Robles, *Mexican Waves*, 6.

³⁷ Robles, *Mexican Waves*, 144.

2014 monograph, *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish-Language Radio and Public Advocacy*, the most comprehensive study of Spanish-language radio since Gutiérrez and Schement's 1979 work, details the use of Spanish-language radio as a tool for public advocacy amidst intensifying anti-immigrant sentiments in the U.S. Writing in dialogue with radio scholars and historians such as Jorge Reina Schement, Joy Hayes and Sonia Robles, among others, Casillas argues that "radio's accessibility to working-class U.S. Latinos, coupled with its assertion of Spanish within an English-only, anti-immigrant environment, merits equal recognition to smartphones, the Internet, and the coveted DVR."³⁸ Although radio has since become less-relevant to the mainstream media-scape with the advent of the internet, T.V., etc., Casillas reminds us that radio is still very much relevant to Spanish-speaking immigrant communities in the face of increased criminalization and surveillance systems at play. As these systems rely increasingly on facial recognition technologies, radio presents an opportunity for protection and anonymity for vulnerable immigrant communities.

Furthermore, in drawing connections to the contemporary moment, Casillas historicizes Spanish-Language radio through the reliance and use of print media, journal articles, archival work and focus group interviews among other methods. In doing so, Casillas produces a unique cultural history of Spanish-language radio in the U.S. that "disrupts" the English-language focused radio historiographies. Moreover, Casillas not only notes the importance of Mexican and Mexican American listenership in the United States that tuned into Spanish-language radio but also radio waves that stemmed from the Mexican side of the border. Casillas details how Mexicans navigated their place in the United States as "legal, cultural and consumer" citizens who were marginalized from "mass culture" and then eventually valued as a potential market.

³⁸ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 9.

Building off Rudolph Arnheim and Martha Collins' work on foreign language radio reception during the 1940s,³⁹ Casillas further notes the shift in negotiations between the U.S. government and foreign language broadcasting radio. Casillas states, "whereas early broadcastings in a foreign language were viewed as educational, once the target audience shifted to ethnic communities, radio shows' motives were deemed suspect and unproductive."⁴⁰ This is referenced in the context of early Spanish-language broadcasters who were deemed suspect for their subversive nature of immigrant advocacy toward Mexican American and Mexican immigrant communities in the United States. Casillas work has been critical in interrogating the role of Spanish-language radio as a tool of public advocacy from broadcasting radio's start in the 1920s to the contemporary 21st century.

One of the founding works on Spanish language radio, Schement and Flores (1977) is useful in noting the cross-border ties and beginnings of Spanish-language radio in the U.S. Southwest. Schement and Flores propose the purpose of their study is to:

Examine the development and early growth of one Spanish-language radio station [KCOR]... and in doing, to partially describe some of the unique factors contributing to the growth of Spanish-language radio in the United States.⁴¹

This case study was conducted via interviews with [KCOR] public relations director Frank Cortez and [KCOR] vice president and general manager Nathan Safir. Through their analysis, Schement and Flores attempt to show the problems and solutions of early Spanish-language radio and its continued growth thereafter. Schement and Flores note how Raoul Cortez began his

³⁹ Rudolph Arnheim and Martha Collins, "Foreign Language Broadcasts Over Local Stations: A Study of a Special Program," In *Radio Research*, edited by Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton, 3-63 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce), 1941.

⁴⁰ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 48.

⁴¹ Jorge Reina Schement and Ricardo Flores, *The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio: The Case of San Antonio, Texas*, *Journalism History*, 4:2, (Summer, 1977): 56.

start as a broker—the process by which foreign language broadcasts were available on English-language stations during the “undesirable” early morning hours-- through broker arrangements on block schedules and actively hired announcers from Mexico. As I develop further in my analysis of the role of cross-border relations for Spanish-language radio, Schement and Flores note how members of the Cortez family fled the armed struggle of the Mexican Revolution and “continued their media enterprises on the U.S. side of the border.”⁴² In addition to describing advertising practices, audience reports, and the types of programming (such as Mexican artists and announcers from Mexico proper), Schement and Flores assert in the late 1970s that “Spanish-language radio is a growing force in American broadcasting.”⁴³ The work completed by Schement and Flores is foundational in historicizing Spanish-language radio in the U.S. Southwest following the postwar era of the 1940s and 1950s.

This master’s thesis builds on this work conducted by historians of Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands whose work also intersects with radio and mass media by drawing connections between San Antonio, TX radio station KCOR, Raoul A. Cortez, and cross-border relations between the United States and Mexico in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The analysis that follows is guided by the following research questions: what role did radio station KCOR have in creating and sustaining transnational Mexican and Mexican American identities? What role did Raoul A. Cortez have in reproducing racial hierarchies via assimilation initiatives? Through a case study of KCOR, I argue that while Cortez made strides in community activism, political mobilization and counter-hegemonic resistance through his leadership of KCOR against the Anglo-dominant United States, he also participated in the reproduction of racial hierarchies

⁴² Schement and Flores, *The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio*, 56.

⁴³ Schement and Flores, *The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio*, 61.

and assimilationist ideals of hegemonic “white” culture via English language initiatives and support for border regulation policies.

METHODS

Although there are limited access to audio archives from the 1940s and 50s, I was able to collect a wide range of data during an archival research trip to San Antonio in December 2025.

The data corpus was made up of materials from the following archival collections:

- San Antonio Public Library (SAPL, Central branch)
- University of Texas, San Antonio Library Special Collections
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) website
- City of San Antonio Municipal Archives and Records

Given the scarce audio data, this project relied heavily on print-media of the 1940s and 1950s in San Antonio, Texas. While the initial goal was to conduct a study of listenership and reception of Spanish-language broadcasts radio by a largely Mexican diaspora in Texas, the constraint in travel time and data available pushed me to pivot this project into an analysis of the politics of KCOR and its cross-border relations with Mexico. Given KCOR’s influence on the history of Spanish-language radio, and Raoul Cortez’s role as the first Chicano to own and operate the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the United States specifically, this thesis presents a case study that aims to deepen our understanding of the complex role of Spanish-language radio and its leaders in the 1940s and 50s.

The San Antonio Public Library (SAPL or the *enchilada* building, as locals call it) offered years’ worth of news publications local to and only accessible in San Antonio, Texas. Ironically, the SAPL branch named after Raoul A. Cortez (KCOR founder) had no information

directly pertinent to Cortez or KCOR. Nevertheless, they did have a collection of scanned newspaper documents (not including microfilm) from the early to mid-20th century that detailed broadcasting radio schedules, reports of cultural events, news, and quotes by Cortez and workers of the station themselves. In addition, due to the months-long renovations that were occurring at the SAPL I was unable to access some of the archived papers that detailed San Antonio's cultural events such as that of the "Tomás Ybarra-Frausto Research Material" located at SAPL. Nevertheless, I am indebted to the rich archival material provided by the SAPL genealogy/texana department and librarians.

I also consulted the archival material housed at UT San Antonio, mainly images and newspaper clippings of the San Antonio Mexican Chamber of Commerce' "goodwill trip," sometimes referred to as "friendship caravan" that took place in September of 1949; Cortez was among the participants. These data are instrumental in placing Cortez in dialogue with Bracero Program (1942-1964) policies and its relation to Texas, which was a state that was, for some time, blacklisted by Mexico for participating in this farm labor program for Mexican nationals to fill gaps in agriculture work in the U.S. The material from the San Antonio Municipal Archives and Records, which included city council meeting minutes and agendas pertinent to Cortez and KCOR, were instrumental in contextualizing Cortez within local San Antonio politics in relation to KCOR specifically.

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) website also offered scanned monthly newsletters from the period as well as correspondence between Cortez and his affiliates, which detailed the political consciousness and messaging of LULAC members. As President of LULAC from 1948-1950, these newsletters allowed me to contextualize Cortez's aims and

political ambitions in respect to desegregation efforts of the time, as well as his attempts to foster U.S.-Mexico relations in Texas in the late 1940s.

Across these archival collections, I consulted over 250 scanned documents that included reports, broadcasting schedules, interviews, and other forms of press on KCOR and Cortez. I employed a qualitative coding methodology in search of patterns in the material that extends or complicates previous work on the station. Through the process, two primary trends that anchor my analysis below emerged: 1. How KCOR managed its political role within the anti-immigrant, English-dominant, white public sphere of the U.S. and 2. How the program and its leadership navigated its cross-border relations with Mexico. Together, these themes build my argument that, although KCOR had been involved in important forms of community organizing and political mobilization for the rights of Mexican Americans, its negotiation of U.S. and Mexican politics on both sides of the border ultimately reproduced racial hierarchies and assimilationist discourses that position immigrants as perpetual racialized Others in the U.S.

DATA ANALYSIS

The following analysis is not only informed by primary source material but also in dialogue with scholars of media history, U.S.-Mexico borderlands history, Mexican history and communications studies. Placing KCOR within the context of U.S. and Mexican politics is central to this analysis. It is within this framework of cross-border relations in which I will analyze radio as a tool of transnational identity formation in San Antonio, Texas in the mid-twentieth century. In this section, I analyze two themes that emerged in my corpus: KCOR's political power and mobilization, and Cortez's role in Bracero Program agreements. Through each, I argue that although radio station KCOR and its founder, Raoul Cortez, were instrumental in fostering a transnational community of Spanish-language listeners in San Antonio, Texas at a time when said community were deemed second class citizens, the data show that Cortez ultimately also reproduced racist racial hierarchies against undocumented Mexican immigrants via assimilation initiatives and criticism(s) of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program.

Theme 1: Politics of KCOR

First on the air in February of 1946, KCOR-AM is notable for being the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the continental United States owned by a Mexican American. This is significant because this comes at a time when the United States deemed foreign language broadcasting as undermining American ideals, due to wartime anxieties during the second World War. Although Mexican Americans (Tejanos) were legally categorized as "white" during this time, they were still deemed second class citizens. Mexican Americans in Texas faced racial discrimination, political disenfranchisement, and experienced what Kelly Lytle Hernández calls "Juan Crow," where "Mexican labor migrants... confronted low wages, dangerous working

conditions, segregation, and a racially-biased immigration enforcement regime.”⁴⁴ Within this context, KCOR founder and general manager Raoul A. Cortez is celebrated as a Civil Rights hero for his subsequent political activism, radio programming and hiring practices in the mid-1940s and early 1950s.

Born in Veracruz, Mexico in 1905, Cortez and his family (like many Mexicans) fled the violence of the Mexican Revolution to find refuge in San Antonio, Texas, in the mid-1910s. As noted by Jorge Reina Schement and Ricardo Flores, Cortez came from a lineage of media entrepreneurs. Schement and Flores note how the Cortez family “owned a radio station in Laredo, Mexico, and had been involved in early Mexican radio.”⁴⁵ In the 1930s, Cortez began his career in media as a journalist for *La Prensa*, one of the most popular and significant Spanish-language newspapers of the time.⁴⁶ Although there is no official language in the United States, English is still the hegemonic language that holds cultural capital and power. Spanish-language media in this context can therefore be viewed as counter-hegemonic in that it challenges dominant English language social structures (such as Anglo-owned radio stations) in the United States. For this reason, KCOR was instrumental in creating space for transnational identities within the radioscope that resists the dominant Anglo-centered cultures and space via language.

When station founder Raoul A. Cortez filed his petition with the FCC for this station in 1943, Cortez named the reason being for the mobilization of Mexican Americans in support of

⁴⁴ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire & Revolution in The Borderlands*, First edition, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 9.

⁴⁵ Jorge Reina Schement & Ricardo Flores, “The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio: The Case of San Antonio, Texas,” in *Journalism History*, 4:2, (Summer, 1977), 56.

⁴⁶ Nicole Lopez, “Cortez, Raoul Alfonso,” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 28, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/cortez-raoul-alfonso>.

the war effort.⁴⁷ Since KCOR's inception, Cortez's role in politically mobilizing Mexican Americans via station programming and political activity is a trend notable throughout his career as station owner, as well as during his tenure as President of both League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and later the Mexican Chamber of Commerce. The historical record shows that Cortez was constantly at the forefront of political issues affecting Mexican Americans.

But Cortez wasn't only concerned with supporting spaces for just Mexican Americans. As KCOR's programming schedules between 1946 and 1955 attest KCOR consistently broadcasted Black jazz musicians through Jimmy Smith's popular show *Tippin In* as well as regularly scheduled church hour on Sundays at 11:30am, where the New Light Baptist Church would preach to San Antonio communities over the airwaves.⁴⁸ This can be viewed as a precursor to the [broadcasting] reform efforts of religious African American groups in the 1960s, as discussed by Casillas.⁴⁹ In addition to scheduled sermons by the New Light Baptist Church, the Greater Mount Olive Baptist church choir regularly performed from KCOR's studios Sunday mornings at 9:30am as well.⁵⁰ In fact, the church choir was KCOR's first broadcast on Sunday, February 17 of 1946 at 9:30am, as reported by the *San Antonio Register*.⁵¹ Through KCOR, Cortez fostered a community in San Antonio where marginalized communities could share a "counter-public"⁵² space in defiance of segregated physical spaces in South Texas. Nevertheless, the consistency of programs such as *Tippin In* and the Sunday church hour, show us the

⁴⁷ Felix F. Gutierrez and Jorge Reina Schement, *Spanish-Language Radio in the Southwestern United States*, (Austin: The University of Texas at Austin, 1979), 9.

⁴⁸ "Jimmy Smith to Announce KCOR Programs," *San Antonio Register*, (February 8, 1946), 7.

⁴⁹ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Great Mt. Olive in First KCOR Broadcast," *San Antonio Register*, (February 15, 1946), 2.

⁵² Urla, "Outlaw Language: Creating Alternative Public Spheres in Basque Free Radio," 245.

popularity found in these programs both by Spanish-language receivers of radio broadcasting and surrounding communities alike.

Politics of Spanish on the Air

Apart from the above-mentioned church and musical programs- the majority of KCOR's programming was in Spanish. Although KCOR was the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the U.S., it was not the first Spanish-language broadcast in the U.S. more broadly. As noted by scholars such as Casillas (2014) and Gutierrez and Reina Schement (1979), previous Spanish-language broadcasting was done through the leasing of "unfavorable early morning hours to foreign and ethnic programming" by Anglo-owned English language stations.⁵³ This proved favorable for brokers who targeted an early morning agricultural labor force, largely Spanish speaking. In fact, in 1940, Cortez began his career prior to KCOR in Spanish language programming this way as a station broker, mainly to sell his theater productions from Mexico, as he was an entertainment promoter in addition to being a salesperson for Pearl Brewing Co. in San Antonio.⁵⁴

This trend of early morning broadcasting is consistent with KCOR. A broadcasting schedule in June of 1946 in the *San Antonio Light* shows "farm news" scheduled for 6:30am, for example.⁵⁵ It is important to note the presence of migrant Mexican workers in the agricultural sector during this time, as the joint U.S.-Mexico Bracero program (1942-1964) was in full effect. Nevertheless, Cortez captured the needs of the Spanish-speaking population in San Antonio, Texas, through the establishment of KCOR-AM in 1946.

⁵³ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 36.

⁵⁴ Schement and Flores, *The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio*, 56.

The reception of Spanish-speaking populations to KCOR was measured in various ways. Initially, the station would ask listeners to send box tops and containers of products to convince advertisers of profitable airtime on KCOR. This method of measuring audience reception via box tops was short-lived however, as later methods (such as nationally recognized surveys) were implemented after 1956, according to interviews conducted with KCOR station manager, Nathan Safir.⁵⁶ The local reach should not be underestimated, however. Sonia Robles *Mexican Waves* details a letter sent to Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations by Gustavo Ortiz on January 23, 1946, stating:

Station KCOR, the consul general wrote, would air 'Mexican American' programming in an effort to breach the divide between the two nations. In the memo to his superiors, Ortiz included the following proposition: What if the Mexican president and the SRE minister recorded a congratulatory message in Mexico City and sent it to San Antonio?⁵⁷

This was not the last time KCOR's Raoul Cortez garnered the attention of a president from Mexico, as Cortez would later frequent "goodwill trips" and "friendship caravans" to the Mexican government during his career as president of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

LULAC is influential for the story of KCOR and Cortez—founded in 1929 amidst a conscious approach in Mexican American activism for equal rights. Cortez would serve as LULAC president in the late 1940s amidst a resurgence of LULAC members following the end of WWII. Nevertheless, what Robles depicts here is the reach and cultural significance of a full-time Spanish-Language radio station such as KCOR for both the United States and Mexico.

⁵⁶ Schement and Flores, *The Origins of Spanish Language Radio*, 57.

⁵⁷ Robles, *Mexican Waves*, 139.

Furthermore, KCOR's musical programming-- primarily music from Mexico and across Latin America-- in and of itself challenged the English-dominant airwaves, while simultaneously fostered a transnational identity and transnational community of listeners. A program schedule published by the *San Antonio Light* in December of 1946 reports "Mexican Music" at 10:45am in addition to Cuban regional "Rumbas" at 11:30pm respectfully.⁵⁸ In an interview with Schement and Flores (1977), manager Nathin Safir said, "we were stressing mariachi music, ballads, cumbias, polkas and that kind of stuff. But mostly music from Mexico," for the purpose of identifying with Mexico.⁵⁹ Between 1946 and 1955, Cortez time and time again promoted the broadcasting of Spanish-language music from Mexico (and a larger Latin American sphere) such as Rancheras, Mariachi, Rumbas, Polkas, Cuban, Mambos, Musica Tex., *Guitarras*, *Serenata*, *Romanticas*, to name a few. Reflective of Cortez's time as an entertainment promoter, Cortez intentionally hired acts (musicians, radio announcers, radionovela writers) from Mexico, building a network of cross-border entrepreneurs in the process.

In addition to radio being English-dominant-- it was also male dominated during this time. Despite this, women were also involved in KCOR's development in the late 1940s and early 1950s. One such occasion in 1947, a year into KCOR's programming beginnings, celebrated KCOR's Ruth Burleson role as treasurer in the Association of Women Broadcasters. One *San Antonio Light* column read "Women Radio Unit Picks Officers," noting how "the San Antonio chapter is the first local organization of radio women in Texas."⁶⁰ The *San Antonio Light* only the following month reported and celebrated the victory of Gloria Soto and Dora Sanchez (note the Spanish surnames) in "coming out as the champs in that KCOR radio station

⁵⁸ "KCOR, 1350 K. - THURSDAY," *San Antonio Light*, (December 25, 1946), 23.

⁵⁹ Schement and, *The Origins of Spanish-Language Radio*, 58.

⁶⁰ "Women Radio Unit Picks Officers," *San Antonio Light*, (January 16, 1947), 21.

amateur show last week.”⁶¹ Although these two examples were the only two instances found relevant to women in radio in the public digitized Newspaper Archives database at the San Antonio Public Library between 1946-1955, they are significant signals of how subversive KCOR was for the time period. Additionally, although the above-mentioned case notes one such case of women in radio, radio was and continues to be a male-dominated field. Radio scholar Inés Casillas notes this in her discussion of early 2000s southern California radio host *El Cucuy*, whereby immigrant men in the United States “sustain and perpetuate patriarchal ideals through radio programming.”⁶² Although beyond the scope of this thesis, the presence of women in radio during this time in San Antonio, Texas merits further investigation and research.

Community Outreach



Figure 1. Raoul Cortez (left) donating a check raised by KCOR to victims struck by Polio, 1947. “MORE FOR POLIO,” San Antonio Express, February 19, 1947.

Cortez’s role in community advocacy is also reflective in KCOR’s fundraising campaigns. Well before polio vaccines became widely accessible, San Antonio’s historically

⁶¹ “AROUND the PLAZA,” *San Antonio Light*, (February 2, 1947), 29.

⁶² Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 107.

segregated “west-side” Mexican communities suffered immensely. One article by the *San Antonio Express* featured Cortez handing over a check for “\$2,581.50, contributed by the Latin-American audience of KCOR,” to Ben Smith, chairman of the Bexar County March of Dimes drive in support for polio vaccines.⁶³ Not only does this show audience reception of KCOR, but more importantly, shows the power of Spanish-speaking audiences in San Antonio that tuned into KCOR as agents in their own self-advocacy.

Cortez’s community health activism didn’t stop with polio. KCOR was influential in programming awareness for tuberculosis in collaboration with the Bexar County Tuberculosis association. On June 15, 1947, the *San Antonio Light* reported of a new radio program titled *The Constant Invader* that was “sponsored by the Bexar County Tuberculosis association” to “begin June 15 at 9:30 a.m. over station KCOR... based on true experiences... will be heard every Sunday at the same hour.”⁶⁴ Not only does this show community advocacy through awareness, but it also shows the uniqueness of radio communications technology for health awareness via broadcasting radio. The merging of public and private spheres through a medium such as radio and more specifically, in the form of a *novela*, shows the utilization of radio for the public in reaching the masses more accessibly. The popularity of health awareness in the form of radionovelas, with the influence from Mexican *radionovelas* in particular, made the decimation of information and health awareness more accessible especially for folks that may have had a limited education. This can also be paralleled with Mexico’s state-led post-revolutionary hygiene initiatives that aimed to reach Mexico’s countryside, as part of Mexico’s cultural projects to

⁶³ “MORE FOR POLIO,” *San Antonio Express*, (February 19, 1947), 8.

⁶⁴ “TB Group to Put On Radio Program,” *San Antonio Light*, (June 15, 1947), 15.

rebuild the nation,⁶⁵ in that KCOR here is used an apparatus of the state (albeit locally, in San Antonio). The report stating “based on true experiences” adds a degree of credibility to the *radionovela* in programming awareness. In addition to programming in KCOR, Cortez continued to advocate for Mexican American communities in San Antonio, Texas, through his influencing of public policy.

One heated altercation between Cortez and San Antonio’s Parks and Sanitation Commissioner, Henry F. Hein, which occurred on Friday, May 21, 1948, is exemplary of the extent to which Cortez fought for the rights of Mexican American communities in San Antonio. Making front page news, the *San Antonio Express* reported on Cortez’s criticisms the following day, stating:

Cortez had been criticizing the alleged failure of Hein’s garbage department to make collections on schedule when Hein, in replying to the charge, said: ‘It’s people of your type that collect the garbage.’ ‘Don’t call me a garbage collector!’ Cortez shouted... Cortez declared: ‘Even if certain sections of the population are supposed to be immune to epidemic, we should not leave trash and filth on the streets. I’m in favor of educating my people- they need a lot of it- but we should have garbage collections as scheduled.’⁶⁶

First and foremost: the “people of your type” comment made by Hein regarding the collection of garbage showcases the racist attitudes of the time in relegating and reducing immigrant-origin communities of Mexican descent down to their labor. Secondly, Cortez’s response in noting that he is in favor of “educating [his] people,” who “need a lot of it,” evokes an assumption that Mexican Americans are incomplete in their process of Americanization in the United States. Casillas also discusses this sentiment in her discussion of radio broadcasts that advised

⁶⁵ Alan Knight, “Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 74, No. 3, (Aug. 1994), 395.

⁶⁶ “City-wide Fight on Disease Urged Civic Organizations Join In Demand for Cleanup Against Polio and Diarrhea,” *San Antonio Express*, (May 22, 1948), 1.

immigrant communities on how to “behave as ‘good’ Americans by way of getting an education,” while the same institutions “courted [listeners] with nationalist codes of language and identity.”⁶⁷ This is more clearly reflected in Cortez’s tenure as LULAC president, where LULAC advocated for education and English-language learning initiatives for people of Latin American descent. Not long after the altercation mentioned above, a “Citizens Cleanup committee” was formed to combat these challenges, on which Cortez served as a committee



Figure 2. Station manager Nathan Safir (center) collecting donations for KCOR Rio Grande Flood Relief. “San Antonians Give Food, Clothes to Help Victims,” *San Antonio Express*, July 2, 1954.

member. As Mrs. Eugene H. Mitchell a fellow cleanup committee member said in a statement in the *San Antonio Light*: “We have asked the co-operation of the city and county officials, but we also need the help of every citizen,”⁶⁸ reflecting the emphasis on community driven action led by figures such as Cortez.

⁶⁷ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 48.

⁶⁸ “City Cleanup Group Formed,” *San Antonio Light*, (May 26, 1948), 25.

Cortez continued to advocate for communities of Latin American descent- not only in San Antonio- but across Texas and the United States as eventual president of LULAC. Even so, with Cortez' back-to-back terms as LULAC president having been completed after 1948 and 1949- he continued to commit his time and resources toward community relief. Cortez not only went as far as to raise funds toward a Rio Grande flood relief in July of 1954 (Figure 2), donating funds by KCOR listeners to the local Red Cross chapter, but he also turned the stations' auditorium for use as a warehouse for supplies, food and clothing to be trucked to disaster cities in TX.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, his time as LULAC president in conjunction with his strong influence, ownership and involvement in KCOR is worth examining further.

Cortez and LULAC

Only one month after the garbage clean-up altercation, Cortez was elected president of LULAC in June of 1948. Of course, this didn't happen overnight. While Cortez commenced his radio endeavors, he also managed to remain heavily involved with LULAC and work his way up the ranks from usher; officer; regional governor; and eventually to president of LULAC. As early as December 1947, Cortez stressed the importance of "an educated citizen." Cortez, most especially through LULAC, stressed the importance of assimilation to the United States via English language education. One report by the *Galveston Daily News* on December 30, 1947, states:

Speakers emphasized that the purpose of the league is to aid people of Latin extraction to learn how to be better citizens, and respect one's citizenship... Mr. Cortez, regional governor of Texas Lulacs, emphasized the importance of education among Latin Americans. 'An educated person is a good citizen, and it is the purpose of our organization to give all our people an opportunity to learn so that we can serve our adopted country more. As loyal citizens of the United

⁶⁹ "San Antonians Give Food, Clothes to Help Victims," *San Antonio Express*, (July 2, 1954), 6.

States, we believe in the democratic principle of individual political and religious freedom.’⁷⁰

Although Cortez was only a regional governor at the time of this statement, this trend in striving for an educated citizenry would continue into his time as LULAC president between 1948-1949. Given his leadership position, Cortez’s involvement with LULAC grew exponentially during this time, while continuing radio endeavors with KCOR. It is also important to note that Cortez’s colleagues at the same event reminded the audience of the participation of Mexicans during the Texas revolution, going as far as recalling that “Latin Americans fought against the Mexican dictator, Santa Anna, alongside Texans at the Alamo,” in reminding LULAC colleagues that “we must learn to fulfill our obligations as citizens [before we demand our rights].”⁷¹ Evident in the political consciousness of organizations like LULAC, Cortez pushed forward political advocacy for the mobilization of Mexican Americans in San Antonio, Texas through his radio broadcasts on station KCOR along with his community advocacy, and as I will continue to show, his involvement with LULAC. While Cortez profits off a Spanish-speaking community, support and listenership via KCOR, Cortez also attempts to obtain equal treatment for Mexicans in the United States through assimilationist frameworks at the cost of excluding those who might not fit his “good citizen” criteria: undocumented migrants.

One LULAC newsletter dated May 1948, just before Cortez’s election in June 1948, reiterates this sentiment and efforts concerted by Cortez. Stated by then president general of LULAC, Dr. Jose Maldonado commends Cortez’s efforts in mobilizing political activity in San Antonio, Texas, stating:

⁷⁰ “Latin American Dignitaries Attend Citizenship League Reorganization at Texas City,” *Galveston Daily News*, (Dec 30, 1947), 5.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Brother John Herrera of Houston and Brother Raoul Cortez of San Antonio deserve much credit for the activation of new councils or renewal of dormant councils in Texas... Congratulations to these councils and to John and Raoul for their fine work. Let's have more of the same.⁷²

Further, inherited and championed by Cortez- this LULAC newsletter in particular reminds LULAC members of their aims and purposes. Two points (amongst twenty total) in their "LULAC aims and purposes" column states the following:

1. To develop within the members of our race the best, purest, and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States of America.
5. To define with absolute and unmistakable loyalty to the ideals, principles and citizenship of the United States of America.
7. By all lawful means at our command, we shall assist in the education and guidance of Latin-Americans, and we shall protect and defend their lives and interests whenever necessary. We shall oppose any tendency to separate our children in the schools of this Country.
15. We shall diffuse our ideals by means of the press, lectures and pamphlets.⁷³

⁷² Jose Maldonado, "Message From the President General," *Lulac News: The Illustrated Hispanic Monthly Magazine* 14, no.7, (May 1948), 1.

⁷³ "LULAC AIMS AND PURPOSES" *Lulac News: The Illustrated Hispanic Monthly Magazine* 14, no.7, (May 1948), 2.

Again, this further corroborates earlier sentiments shared by Cortez as early as 1947 as reflective of the political consciousness by members of LULAC, for example, that not only prioritized assimilation of Latin Americans into the United States but viewed this as a solution to racial discrimination.



Figure 3. Raoul Cortez at KCOR studios, 1948. “LAUNCHES CANDIDACY FOR LULAC PRESIDENCY,” in *Lulac News: The Illustrated Hispanic Monthly Magazine* 14, no.7, (May 1948), 12.

Cortez’s candidacy for LULAC presidency is also announced within the above-mentioned newsletter. The image used in this announcement (Figure 3) depicts Cortez in what is presumed to be KCOR’s radio studio in front of a broadcasting microphone with “KCOR, 1350 KC” signage right below a “LULAC” sign, further showcasing Cortez’s increased involvement with both LULAC and KCOR respectively.

Further showcasing the extent to which LULAC favored assimilation at the cusp of and during Cortez’s tenure, in June 1948 there was an attempt to change LULACs name to admit

Anglo Americans. Reported by the *San Antonio Light* on June 11, 1948, on the forthcoming LULAC national convention, the column titled “Lulacs Seek Name Change” states:

According to Joe Castanuela, president of the local [San Antonio, Texas] organization, the first resolution will favor changing the name from League of United Latin-American Citizens to Lulac, inc., standing for Liberty, Union, Leadership, Americanism and Constitution... Support of the Bender bill abolishing the poll tax will be recommended, together with a resolution admitting membership to persons of other racial origin.⁷⁴

Not once, but twice, was this attempt to admit Anglos and change LULACs name proposed (again in April of 1949 in anticipation of the 1949 LULAC national convention).⁷⁵ The name change, however, did not come to fruition. Although this depicts an increased effort in supporting assimilation to the dominant Anglo culture, the LULAC councils ultimately rejected this amendment at their national convention meeting on Friday, June 18, 1948, and again in 1949. This is important to note because, as discussed by scholars of LULAC (Márquez, 1993; Johnson, 2011), there appeared to be debate within the Mexican American community, supporters, and members of LULAC regarding the extent to which assimilation was enabled. As to not homogenize the political consciousness of Mexican Americans and members of LULAC, it is necessary to make this distinction.

Theme 2: Cross-border Relations

Cortez’s ascension to the LULAC presidency comes at a time as Cortez, LULAC officials and activists’ leaders are riding the coattails of a recent desegregation victory for Mexican Americans and schools in Texas; the famed Delgado vs. Bastrop Independent School District (ISD) case led by lawyer Gus Garcia, Cortez and LULAC more broadly. On June 18, 1948, the *San Antonio Light* describes the atmosphere in stating:

⁷⁴ “Lulacs Seek Name Change,” *San Antonio Light*, (June 11, 1948), 14.

⁷⁵ “Lulacs May admit Anglos,” *San Antonio Light*, (April 10, 1949), 20.

More than 500 citizens gathered on W. Houston st. before the Casa Blanca restaurant Wednesday night and loudly applauded the leaders whose long fight reached its end in a federal district court upholding constitutional rights of Latin-American children.⁷⁶

Cortez is quoted in praising said social structures of the time within the same article in stating that “the court order reaffirmed the democratic process of American life and justice,”⁷⁷ further emphasizing a commitment to work within the confines of the American judicial system. This was an outstanding victory for activists in support of desegregation efforts, Mexican Americans, and Spanish-speaking populations during a time of racial hostilities. Such a victory this was, that it garnered the attention of government officials in Mexico.

Cultural Connections: Hegemonic English and Hegemonic Spanish

Radio is especially unique for its ability to travel forward through space-time and more specifically- transcend borders constructed by their respective nation-state. Historian Sonia Robles engages with this in noting how Mexican nationals, Mexican immigrants in the United States and radio entrepreneurs who inhabit space along Mexico’s northern border between 1930-1950 “tested and reconfigured Benedict Anderson’s theory of imagined communities,”⁷⁸ via business ventures amidst a growing consumer culture in the United States. This wasn’t always the case however, for English-language Anglo-dominant communities in south Texas that may have protested the “interference” of such broadcasts in the late 1930s and early 1940s. One such example is noted by the *San Antonio Light* in 1935, whereby the FCC protest that “the station [XEPN, Piedras Negras, Mexico] interfered with broadcasts from KTSA in San Antonio and stations in Omaha, Kalamazoo, Boston and Spokane.”⁷⁹ This shows the reach and influence of

⁷⁶ “Court Fight Leaders Get Ovation,” *San Antonio Light*, (June 17, 1948), 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Robles, *Mexican Waves*, 143.

⁷⁹ “Border Radio Protest Aired,” *San Antonio Light*, (March 15, 1935), 20.

what early scholarship deemed “border blasters”-- radio entrepreneurs from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border with powerful transmitters to broadcast signals across the international boundary line in the early days of lax broadcasting regulations. But this also depicts the contestation of opposing cultures on the air, and more specifically, what is deemed “interference” by the United States is what Fanon describes as “the aural meeting place of diaspora.”⁸⁰

As stated earlier, Cortez’ civic engagement via organizations such as LULAC comes at a time when radio station KCOR is also exponentially growing in reach and popularity. According to one report by the *San Antonio Light* in August 1948-- shortly after Cortez’ win as LULAC national president-- the FCC granted KCOR a license “to operate on a full-time basis and to step up its power from 1000 to 5000 watts.”⁸¹ The same report goes further in quoting Charles F. Harris, vice president of KCOR at the time, in stating that such an increase in wattage would allow KCOR to “broadcast 18 hours a day, of which 12 will be in Spanish... the new schedule... will enable the station to broadcast many cultural programs from Spanish-speaking organizations and theaters.”⁸² KCOR would continue to serve communities in and around San Antonio, Texas through the increase in broadcasting wattage- particularly the Spanish-speaking populations.

Cortez was intentional with Latin American programming since the inception of KCOR. More specifically, Cortez sought shows with programs based off Mexican radionovelas as early as 1946. According to a report by *The Daily Texan*, Cortez suggested that Radio House create a series of Latin-American programs to be broadcasted by KCOR.⁸³ Furthermore, auditions were

⁸⁰ Baucom, “Frantz Fanon’s Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening,” 17.

⁸¹ “KCOR Ups Power, Time,” *San Antonio Light*, (August 4, 1948), 10.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “Radio House Goes Latin,” *Austin Daily Texan*, (Austin, TX, November 17, 1946), 11.

advertised to be open to “any Latin-American student on campus [UT Austin] who has special talents as an announcer, narrator, singer, or musician.”⁸⁴ The advertised program was to be based on “Mexico as our next-door neighbor” featuring what appear to be romanticized titles such as “Mexico as the Land of Byways and Skyways... Mexico as the land of Education and Social Progress,” noting what Inés Casillas refers to as the reaffirming of nationalist sentiments through the invoking of nostalgia in Mexico.⁸⁵ Still, Cortez fostered a community of cross-border entrepreneurship, and more specifically, labor sought from Mexico.

This is most clear through Cortez’ hiring practices of Mexican announcers, musicians, and writers. What differed from other Spanish-language radio stations in the late 1940s and early 1950s in San Antonio, Texas, was that Cortez hired announcers who spoke “proper Spanish.” That is, announcers from Mexico. This further exemplifies the appealing of hegemonic class within the Spanish language in Mexico (and a Mexican immigrant audience in the United States more specifically), by redefining what “proper” Spanish in aligning with elite linguistic practices. Cortez can be seen balancing the two languages here—while he found success in “proper Spanish” radio announcers from Mexico, reinscribing Mexican hegemony through linguistic representations of what is deemed proper, he at the same time pushed fourth English-language assimilation initiatives through LULACs aims and goals, reproducing U.S. hegemony. One of the most prominent examples is that of the hiring of Sergio “Checo” Rodarte among others.

Rodarte began his radio career in Mexico in 1951 at the age of 19. According to an interview with Rodarte conducted by Karen Kennedy of the *San Antonio Express* in April 1982-

⁸⁴ “Radio House Goes Latin,” *Austin Daily Texan*, (Austin, TX, November 17, 1946), 11.

⁸⁵ Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 46.

Rodarte then migrated to the United States to Corpus Christi, Texas and eventually, San Antonio.

Rodarte claims that much of KCOR's success is owed to the speaking of "proper Spanish."

Rodarte states:

One reason San Antonians listen to Spanish-language radio is because, over half the population is of Spanish heritage... the feedback we get from listeners indicates one reason they listen to us is the fact that we speak proper Spanish. That gives us a lot of credibility.⁸⁶

This credibility sought by listeners or at the very least, propagated by KCOR via "proper Spanish" language is yet another example of the reproduction of hegemonic systems at play.

While the Spanish-language is counter-hegemonic toward English-dominant airwaves during this time- the debates over "proper" Spanish depict linguistic hierarches present in Mexico and throughout diasporic populations in the United States.

Another example of the hiring of Mexican talk show announcers is that of Cesar Camacho. According to an interview conducted by *The San Antonio Light* in 1979- Camacho states that he began his radio career at XET in Monterrey, Mexico, in 1948.⁸⁷ He later launched a successful career with San Antonio's KCOR beginning in 1954, after he dropped by one day to help with the production of a radionovela or "soap" as they called them. In addition to the community work already noted, Camacho asserts that "'I Need Help' was a show that created tremendous response long before public service programs became important on English language stations."⁸⁸ This not only exemplifies the public service completed by station KCOR but also the continued cross-border entrepreneur relations in hiring practices of individuals such as Rodarte

⁸⁶ "Morning drive time: KCOR's Checo says love of talk big asset," *San Antonio Express*, (April 21, 1982), 19A.

⁸⁷ Jack Newman, "Meet KCOR's Unruffled Caballero," *The San Antonio Light*, (June 10, 1979), 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

and Camacho. This trend in hiring labor from Mexico stretched into the introduction of KCOR-TV in 1955-- a landmark in itself for being the first full-time Spanish-language television network in the United States, Univision's precursor-- with the hiring of Lalo Astol for example, "a veteran actor who comes from one of Mexico's well known theatrical families."⁸⁹

It is evident that Cortez had appealed to both hegemonic class in the U.S. as well as hegemonic class in Mexico via "proper Spanish," through station KCOR. On one hand, Cortez was intentional in his hiring practices of "proper" Spanish speaking announcers from Mexico, for he saw remarkable success in the station programming and listenership as a result. On the other hand, Cortez, as previously stated, consistently "urged" *his* people to obtain an English language education—acknowledging the presumed social mobility (and in turn, social capital) that lies within assimilation to U.S. hegemony during a time of racial hostilities toward marginalized communities such as Mexican Americans. Cortez, through LULACs aims and purposes, went as far as supporting that "the acquisition of the English language, which is the official language of our country, being necessary for the enjoyment of our rights and privileges, we deserve it to be official language of this organization, and we pledge ourselves to learn, and speak, and teach the same to our children."⁹⁰ While he favored the labor provided from Mexican announcers, Cortez felt differently for *braceros*—contracted (most especially non-contracted) agricultural laborers-- from Mexico during this time, in that Cortez believed braceros to be taking the jobs of naturalized Mexican American citizens.

Goodwill Trips: Good for whom?

⁸⁹ Renwicke Cary, "Around the Plaza," *San Antonio Light*, (August 21, 1955), 29.

⁹⁰ "LULAC AIMS AND PURPOSES" *Lulac News: The Illustrated Hispanic Monthly Magazine* 14, no.7, (May, 1948), 2.

Cortez made it a point to meet with Mexican officials for the purpose of establishing goodwill relations between the United States and Mexico. Mexican officials quickly caught wind of the recent desegregation victory of schools in Texas, for example. One report by the *San Antonio Light* dated July 8, 1948, describes the following:

A full-page picture of judge Ben H. Rice appears on the front page of the Mexico City news magazine, 'La Hispano,' for the week of July 2... The story notes: 'This is a step toward good neighbor policy.' San Antonians Raoul A. Cortez, president general of Lulacs, and Gus Garcia, lawyer in the case, also were named in the story.⁹¹

This comes at a time of increased anti-immigrant sentiment toward Mexican nationals, mass deportation efforts of undocumented migrants, and Cold War anxieties perpetuated by McCarthy-era skepticism of “subversive” ideals. In her cross-border examination of “Operation Wetback” of 1954, Kelly Lytle Hernández not only suggests that this event be viewed within a larger historical lens that acknowledges the increased operations of border enforcement dating to as early as 1943, but she also challenges the long-standing narrative that previously confined this to an event perpetuated only by the U.S.. Lytle Hernández instead offers a re-examination that notes the collaborative efforts of both the United States and Mexican border officials (without denying leading initiatives by the U.S.) in their mass deportation efforts of undocumented Mexican nationals leading up to 1954.⁹² Benjamin Márquez too, in his work *LULAC*, describes the political ideologies that members of LULAC such as Cortez may have aligned with during this time and why. Márquez explains how both incentive and survival were key to understanding LULACs alignment to U.S. ideals suggesting that “its patriotic stance not only helped the league

⁹¹ “Judge Rice Is Cover Man,” *San Antonio Light*, (July 8, 1948), 3.

⁹² Kelly Lytle Hernández, “The Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross-Border Examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 to 1954,” in *Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (Winter 2006), 422-423.

avoid the worst effects of the anti-communist hysteria of the 1950s, it was able to adopt its themes to its own political agenda,” in an effort to justify the elimination of racism against Mexican-Americans.⁹³ In doing so, Márquez explains why LULAC offered their support of mass-deportation efforts against undocumented Mexican migrant laborers in 1954. Through the conduction of interviews, Márquez finds that a middle-class conservative LULAC argued that “competition from both [undocumented] immigrants and contract laborers from Mexico (*braceros*) robbed the Mexican American farmworker of a living wage,”⁹⁴ a sentiment echoed by Cortez in numerous statements reported by the press.

This sentiment is evident in a telegram sent to President Truman in November of 1948 by Cortez. Making front page news, *El Paso Herald Post* reported Cortez’ demand to President Truman to “eliminate the Mexican farm labor program because of alleged discrimination and a sufficient supply of farm labor in the United States,” emphasizing that, “recruiting of farm laborers from Mexico retards American citizens of Latin descent socially, economically and educationally.”⁹⁵ Cortez then scheduled a meeting with then attorney general Tom Clark, after having had “a similar conference with President Aleman of Mexico in March.”⁹⁶ Reflective of LULAC and most especially evidenced in Cortez’ ambitions to solve the “problem” caused by an influx of migrant laborers- contracted and/or especially undocumented- Cortez showcases a desire to support documented, naturalized citizens of the United States of Latin-descent in large

⁹³ Benjamin Márquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization*, 1st ed., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 45.

⁹⁴ Márquez, *LULAC*, 49.

⁹⁵ “LULAC Would Bar Mexican Labor,” *El Paso Herald Post*, (November 8, 1948), 1.

⁹⁶ “LULAC Would Bar Mexican Labor,” *El Paso Herald Post*, (November 8, 1948), 2.

part due to the scapegoating of (racially discriminatory) lower-wages paid to Mexican Americans being blamed on undocumented labor being exploited by farmers in south Texas.

Although Cortez acknowledges the racially motivated exploitation of labor and wages by farmers toward undocumented migrants, he doubles down on the insistence of undocumented migrants “stealing” the jobs of Mexican Americans. The same article goes on to state that Cortez has an interest in protecting American farm workers “because they are U.S. citizens... We [Cortez and LULAC] think the [undocumented migrant] program should be discontinued except in cases of emergencies,” emergencies where labor is needed. Nicholas P. de Genova delves into this phenomenon in asserting that “undocumented migrations are preeminently labor migrations,” noting how “undocumented migrations would be inconceivable were it not for the value they produce through the diverse services they supply to citizens.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, De Genova reiterates that said labor migrations are not “self-generating and random; they are produced and patterned.”⁹⁸

Cortez would go on to win a second term as national president of LULAC in June of 1949. It is at this moment that talks of a “friendship caravan” or “goodwill trip” was in the works; scheduled to travel from San Antonio, Texas to Mexico City on the 8th of September for ten days; endorsed by LULAC and sponsored by the Mexican Chamber of Commerce (an organization that Cortez would later hold a position in as well). Scheduled for September of 1949 to participate in celebrations of Mexican Independence, the *Fort Stockton Pioneer* reported that “[The goodwill trip is] expected to be one of the largest goodwill visits ever made to

⁹⁷ Nicholas P. De Genova, “Migrant ‘Illegality’ and Deportability in Everyday Life,” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 31 (2002), 422.

⁹⁸ De Genova, “Migrant ‘illegality’ and Deportability in Everyday Life,” 424.

Mexico...Raoul Cortez, president general of LULAC, is chairman of the 'Caravan' committee."⁹⁹ Mexican Independence festivities aside, Cortez attempts to solve the "[undocumented migrant] problem" in this trip.

The problem involving Braceros was presented in a report to Cortez and LULAC by Professor Lytle Saunders of the University of Texas. As reported by the *San Antonio Light*, the report alleges that:

The bracero situation is detrimental to the welfare of residents as they are willing to work for as little as 15 to 25 cents an hour... In the El Paso area some Latin Americans residing in that city crossed into Mexico and then waded back across the river to get jobs as [undocumented migrant], as that was the only way they could obtain employment, according to Saunders. He called for better education as the best solution of problems involved and praised the leadership of the Lulacs and Pan American Progressive association.¹⁰⁰

Not only is the recurring theme of education initiatives presented as a solution to the exploitation of labor and wages affecting Mexican American citizens presented here, but so are the motives presented by which Mexican Americans are willing to find employment, further justifying the need to halt bracero program policies.

Additionally, a LULAC committee also called for a resolution in "laws regulating employment agencies and establishing responsibilities of labor contractors, including sanitation and resting places for checking stations along routes," as reported by the *San Antonio Light* the following day.¹⁰¹ The process of othering in full display in relation to the support of "sanitation and resting places," and more importantly, a copy of the above mentioned resolution was urged

⁹⁹ "Goodwill Trip to Mexico City Being Planned in September," *Fort Stockton Pioneer*, (July 22, 1949), 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Lulac to Hear Report by Cortez," *San Antonio Light*, (June 12, 1949), 17.

¹⁰¹ "Lulac Group To Probe Child Abuses," in *San Antonio Light*, (June 13, 1949), 11.

and forwarded to the then-present “secretary of state, attorney general, director of immigration, the presidents of the U.S. and Mexico and governors of Texas.”¹⁰²

One month after Cortez’s re-election and the above mentioned report, the Federal Broadcast Information Service (FBIS or “the ears of Uncle Sam”) reported and transcribed a radio broadcast from XEWW (*La Voz De Tamaulipas*) in July, 1949 stating that the border patrol increased to 5,000 guards to prevent braceros from entering the United States.¹⁰³ This comes after an FCC press release that confirmed the dissolution of the FBIS in December of 1945, stating that “[The FBIS] will cease monitoring foreign broadcast stations Wednesday, December 5,” due to (alleged) reduced national defense funds.¹⁰⁴

The interwoven relationships between LULAC, KCOR and at times, the Mexican government, continue to be evident. At the cusp Cortez’s first telecast on KCOR-T.V. in 1955, the *San Antonio Light* reports that “a stage show consisting of top Latin-American acts, ‘International Cavalcade of Stars,’ is scheduled to open Friday at municipal auditorium.”¹⁰⁵ This show in particular, is not only exemplary of the “type of live shows we [KCOR-T.V.] will carry” according to Cortez in bridging cultural connections, but it was also sponsored by *Excelsior*, the famed Mexico City newspaper.¹⁰⁶ The article would go on to state that part of the proceeds “will be donated to the San Antonio LULAC scholarship fund,” further showcasing Cortez

¹⁰² “Lulac Group To Probe Child Abuses,” in *San Antonio Light*, (June 13, 1949), 11.

¹⁰³ *XEWW Mexico, D.F.*, July 25, 1949. Translated in *DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS*, no. FBIS-FRB-49-141, July 25, 1949: N1.

¹⁰⁴ Federal Communications Commission, “86949 News Release,” in *Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service of the FCC ceases monitoring of foreign broadcast stations on December 5, 1945*, (Washington, D.C.: December 4, 1945). <https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/radio-history-documents>

¹⁰⁵ “Latin Acts Set for Show,” *San Antonio Light*, (June 7, 1955), 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

commitment to civic duty while expanding his media ventures. Nevertheless, KCOR's trends in public engagement and community advocacy would set the groundwork for talk radio and T.V. programming in the 1950s and beyond.

CONCLUSION

Guided by the above-mentioned research questions, my findings yield the following results. First, radio station KCOR was yet another example of its utilization as a tool for political mobilization and longing for "home" in the creation of cross-border relations via music, *radio novela* programming, public service announcements, community advocacy, and international news that served a Spanish-language listenership and in the case of San Antonio, Mexican and Mexican American communities. Secondly, while the first point is true, Cortez at the same time utilized his own social mobility to inaugurate his views of "good citizen" within the context of U.S. assimilation via English language education initiatives and assimilation to U.S. customs and culture- while profiting off a Spanish-language listenership. This is most evident in his numerous trips made to meet with U.S. and Mexican officials regarding the "[undocumented migrant] problem," in turn making strong division between the Mexican national and Mexican American, complicating the production of transnational identities in this regard.

Nevertheless, Cortez made strides in civil rights activism, most notably in his involvement of the Delgado vs. Bastrop ISD desegregation case of public schools in Texas in 1948. However, Cortez at the same time made just as much an impact in cross-border policy negotiations evident in his consistent attempts to meet with government officials in relation to his views on the citizenship and assimilation status of Mexican immigrants and more specifically, the call to end the U.S.-Mexico Bracero program.

Future Directions

Cortez, with his son-in-law Emilio Nicolas Sr. would go on to establish KCOR-TV in 1955, the first full-time Spanish-language television network in the United States. One can imagine—as previous scholars have noted the influence of radio as laying the foundation for television—that a similar trend may have continued with KCOR-TV regarding the profiting of culturally resonating broadcast programs in San Antonio, Texas. Although this research does not engage with the advent of T.V., it's worth noting that a case study of KCOR-T.V. prompts further questions—especially as it is the direct precursor to widely consumed (and at times, controversial for advertising of Immigration and Customs Enforcement campaigns) contemporary Spanish-language television network, Univision.

Further research in the project might look at this analysis through a listenership perspective. Because this project relied heavily on secondary sources and print media, this was not achievable for myself. An oral historical approach with interviews of listeners (or descendants thereof) may be able to provide a full picture of the reciprocal relationship between KCOR and its audience—as opposed to an analysis that views this from the top down. A listenership perspective may provide a more detailed picture of the type of musical programming provided for example, as various scholarship engage with the receiving of music in creating a transnational identity, for example (Paredes, 1958; Ragland, 2009).

Additionally, a cross-border analysis of both KCOR and a radio station from northern Mexico, may yield different results regarding the construction of a potential borderland identity in considering the perspectives of listeners from both sides of the state constructed border. Additionally, a cross-border analysis in this way may depict international solidarities via print media or radio. It is known that Mexican Revolutionary political elite (Francisco Madero,

Venustiano Carranza) owned mansions in San Antonio and had various connections to media publications such as *La Prensa*. In other words, these relationships do not exist without precedent.

This research engages with U.S. and Mexican media history, as the above analysis details the cross-border relations between the U.S. and Mexico via KCOR programming, hiring practices, community advocacy, as well as Cortez's efforts to negotiate both broadcasting policy and immigration policy such as that of the Bracero Program. More specifically, this study contributes to piecing together a narrative of Spanish-language radio in the U.S., given the absence of audio archives in this period. Cortez's media enterprises would continue to grow in the creating and selling of KCOR-AM and KCOR-T.V. Nevertheless, like many historical figures, Cortez is presented with nuance here in showcasing the complex negotiations Cortez came to terms with as an immigrant from Mexico who gained social mobility in the United States. Consciously or not, Cortez redefined the multiple (and complex) ways in which transnational identities are created, challenged and sustained through this analysis.

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