El Colegio Chicano Del Pueblo: Decolonizing Chicano Education and the Search for Self-Determination

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Colegio Chicano del Pueblo (Chicano People College) launched on September 16, 2020. The program was originally conceived as an asynchronous education project by Drs. Jerry Garcia and Ernesto Mireles. The Colegio and courses grew out of conversations that had begun directly before and immediately after the world's education system went online after the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in March 2020 and eventual pandemic later the same year. Both of us had been teaching Chicano Studies since the early 2000s and understood that part of the working-class community was unable to afford attending university for two primary reasons.

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First, a significant portion of working-class individuals simply cannot afford to attend university, and second, because of their economic status, many cannot afford to take time off from work, which means lost wages, even for a few hours. Thus, a significant part of the community CCP attempted to reach is shackled by economic necessity to put food on the table, first, with education a secondary consideration. The development and launch of CCP emerged in fall 2020 to address these concerns. Just as important was the understanding that Chicana/o Studies was created with this constituency in mind to empower the Chicano working-class to make impactful structural change in their daily lives.

There have been numerous attempts since the 1960s by groups and organizations to create stand-alone independent Black, Tribal, and Chicano educational systems to include primary–secondary education, as well as colleges and universities. Three of the most well-known entities from the Chicano community include *Escuela Tlatelolco* founded by the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado, *Colegio Cesar Chavez* in Mt. Angel, Oregon, and *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* originally out of Mercedes, Texas. These are a handful of the many entities that attempted to challenge the status quo regarding K-12 and beyond education for Chicanos. This essay will provide a brief overview of the Chicano educational experience since their forced incorporation following the US invasion and conquest of Mexico's northern territories in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Following this historical overview, we examine, briefly, a few independent Chicano educational institutions in K-12, college, and university levels that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This will provide the reader some context how the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s inspired educational reform and the impetus for these independent entities.

It is important to understand that long before the advent of the 1960s–1970s Chicano Movement, that parents, organizations, and students had been addressing the educational inequality of Mexican students in the United States since the nineteenth century. During these earlier periods, the most obvious form of inequality was the segregation of students of Mexican ancestry. This practice, like those of African Americans, Native Americans, and Asians, was not only rampant and widespread throughout the US Southwest and Midwest, but one of the many barriers faced by students of Mexican ancestry that made it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve educational parity with the white students. It is this arena that the Mexican American community begins to protest and mobilize against this egregious form of discrimination.

The Mexican American Movement, 1900–1950: Education, Segregation, and Community Mobilization

Desegregation, educational reform, and general civil rights are often seen from the perspective of the post-World War II period. Although space-constraints have limited our discussion to educational issues prior to the 1950s, the Mexican American community through the first half of the twentieth century were engaged with numerous issues that severely impacted their communities above and beyond educational equality. Certainly, educational reform and desegregation were top priorities for the Mexican American community, but so were issues revolving around labor such as the dual-wage system, racism and discrimination in the workplace, and Mexican American women either were prohibited from working in certain industries or paid a lower wage based on their gender. History records a robust labor movement during the first half of the twentieth century with Mexican Americans demanding reform, seeking economic, social, and political justice. Due to these efforts, we have coined the first half of the twentieth century as the Mexican American Movement. In general, much what was achieved in the 1960s and 1970s Chicano Movement can be traced to these earlier efforts. Indeed, the efforts by the Mexican American community from 1900 to 1950 bear all the markers of the movement from the 1960s.

According to the 1900 US Census, there were roughly 500,000 individuals of Spanish-speaking ancestry in five designated states of the Southwest, Texas (1845) *California (1850), Arizona (1912), New Mexico (1912), and Colorado (1876) in what had been Mexico's northern territory (Reynolds, 1933).[1] By 1930, the Mexican population in the same area had reached over 13 million. Many areas of the Southwest remained heavily Mexican in population, but the area's culture and customs had been supplanted by a dominant European American system at all levels that valued white supremacy and the near subordination of communities of color, especially Mexicans, African Americans, and Native Americans.

Many scholars from the fields of education and history have concluded that early twentieth century Mexican American education consisted of a program known as Americanization for both children and adults. The

[1] The * designates the year each became a state.

prime objective of such programs was to maintain the political and economic subordination of the Mexican community. As Gilbert G. Gonzalez has illustrated:

> In the first half of the twentieth century, when the Mexican community was more rural, separate, and identifiable than it is today, the schooling system constructed a cultural demarcation between a superior and an inferior culture. Assimilation, then, involved not just the elimination of linguistic and cultural differences, but of an entire culture that assimilation advocates deemed undesirable. (Gonzales, 1997, p. 158, 163)

Even those Mexican Americans that did assimilate, their education was thwarted by racism and discrimination. Yet, this is one of the many contradictions and conundrums that faced the Mexican American community for, on the one hand, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo conferred US citizenship and simultaneously the concept of whiteness on those Mexicans considered white and living in the conquered territories, but on the other, Mexicans seen as dark skinned and those who were Black remained under indentured servitude or enslavement.[2] Thus, according to Martha Menchaca (1999, p. 19), began the racialization process for people of Mexican ancestry in the United States. Most important, the Mexican American population witnessed the gradual erosion of their rights under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with their civil rights violated well into the twentieth century, with some arguing it continues into the contemporary period.

To illustrate the resistance against school segregation emanating from the Mexican American community, we begin with what is considered one of the earliest, if not the first, desegregation cases in the United States, *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shore et al.* (1914). This case was filed against the Alamosa School District Superintendent and Board of Education 1913 in Alamosa, Colorado. One of the distinctive hallmarks of this case is the deliberate strategy by the Mexican families to deny their official standing as White and to argue that the Colorado Constitution forbade the separation of school children based on color or race (Donato

[2] Based on the 1790 US Naturalization Law, only free whites could become US citizens. Thus, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo conferred "whiteness" on the Mexican population and well into the twentieth century the Mexican population struggled with this designation as well as faced challenges from whites who attempted to redefine Mexicans as Indians and in this manner, remove their citizenship.

& Hanson, 2021, p. 17). This is an important distinction since the two cases that will succeed *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shore et al.*, namely, *Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra* (Texas 1930) and *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (California 1931), each used, in some fashion, the idea of whiteness regarding the Mexican community in their respective locations, therefore arguing that because of their whiteness, Mexican school children could not be segregated (Donato & Hanson, 2021, pp. 15–17). According to Donato and Hanson, *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shore* argued, "…that Mexican American were racially distinct, and used the Colorado Constitution to challenge segregation" (2021, p. 17).

It should also be understood that many schools that segregated Mexican American school children from white children used language as a basis for segregation arguing that the Mexican American children did not speak English or speak it well enough to be in the same school as white monolingual English speakers. By separating the Mexican children from whites, argued school officials, alleviated the possibility of delaying the scholastic achievement of white students. However, many of the cases that went to court in the first half of the twentieth century showed that nearly all the Mexican American school children spoke English and that language was used as an excuse and disguise for racial segregation.

When Mexican families appealed to all levels of Colorado state government and were denied help, the families organized, boycotted the school, and filed a lawsuit. This case further illustrates the tactics used by school boards and districts throughout the Southwest and California, who were somewhat familiar with the "racial" categorization of Mexican Americans and understood that race alone would not be sufficient to separate Mexican children. Thus, in desegregation cases from California, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas, language and scholastic achievement became the common denominator when Mexican American school children were segregated. In *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shore et al.*, the judge ruled in favor of the Mexican American families basing his decision primarily by rejecting the School's argument that Mexican children were deficient with the English language.

This case is not well known within and without the field of Chicana/o Studies, but should be remembered in the same light as the 1931 case *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove*. With the Lemon Grove case, the presiding Judge also ruled in favor of the Mexican families but used their "whiteness" as a form of protection from segregation and determined that the Mexican American school children needed the forces of assimilation they received

from "American" school children to fit in and understand the American way of life. Although desegregation was ordered in the case of *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove*, it was of limited value because it remained a local decision confined to the Lemon Grove School District, amplified the whiteness of Mexicans, thus, making Mexicans culpable with white privilege, and most important, ignored the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which at this point in history had not been used to challenge Plessy v. Ferguson.[3] Nevertheless, *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shore et al. and Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* illustrate the resistance to oppression and the importance of community mobilization of the Mexican community during the early twentieth century.

By the 1940s, the segregation of Mexican school children was widespread throughout the Southwest, California, Kansas, and even in non-traditional locations such as Arkansas. According to the US Census, the population of Latinos in the US during this period was approximately two million. Before moving on to the second half of the twentieth century, one other desegregation case warrants a brief discussion from the 1940s. Like the earlier cases discussed, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) from California, school districts used similar methodology to segregate Mexican children, namely, the lack of English proficiency in the classroom and were considered intellectually inferior to white children. However, the *Mendez* case diverted dramatically from previous cases in that it used the US Constitution, specifically the 14th Amendment, stating that the segregation of Mexican children was in violation of the Constitution, specifically, the equal access clause. The following is the general complaint submitted by the plaintiffs,

> The complaint grounded upon the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States…allege a concerted policy and design of class discrimination against persons of Mexican or Latin descent or extraction of elementary school age by the defendant school agencies…resulting in the

[3] The 1896 Separate but Equal Law, Plessy v. Ferguson, was overturned in a 1954 US Supreme Court decision stating "Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment—even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors of white and Negro schools may be equal." https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/brown-v-board-of-education#:~:text=On%20May%2017%2C%201954%2C%20U.S.,amendment%20and%20was%20therefore%20unconstitutional. Accessed March 14, 2023.

> denial of the equal protection of the laws to such class of persons among which are the petitioning school children. (Sanchez, 1951, p. 10)

The use of the Fourteenth Amendment by the Mexican American families marked a major turning point regarding strategy and legal approach. Although the 1914 Alamosa, Colorado case attempted to diverge from the perspective of whiteness, it was still grounded in racial theory by trying to make the case that Mexicans were a distinct race, thereby, not included with the non-white category. An examination of the various cases that emerged before Mendez, indicates that Mexicans and Mexican children were categorized from various perspectives regarding their "racial" designation, from whiteness to color to somewhere in between. In some instances, Mexicans attended school with white children and in other cases, they were segregated into different schools. Thus, the approach in *Mendez v. Westminster* jettisoned the idea of whiteness in favor of an approach arguing that the constitutional rights of Mexican American children were in violation by their segregation, and not because of their so-called whiteness, but rather, the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The judge presiding over the case agreed with the families and their lawyers, stating:

> We conclude by holding that the allegations of the complaint have been established sufficiently to justify injunctive relief against all defendants, restraining further discriminatory practices against the pupils of Mexican descent in the public schools of defendant school districts. (Sanchez, 1951)

As George I. Sanchez (1951) stated, "The school systems involved in the Mendez case appealed this decision of the United States District Court to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco." The appeal was heard on April 14, 1947, with the court unanimously affirming the decision of the District Court and bringing an end to legal segregation in California. With this victory, the courts began to address the larger issue of segregation at the national level. Indeed, the *Mendez* case remains one of the major contributions Chicanos have made to the dismantling of segregation throughout the US and as Gilbert Gonzalez notes, "probably…the first stage in the process of overturning the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) doctrine of 'separate but equal' (as cited in Ramos, 2007). Very few outside Chicano scholars understand the importance of these early cases and the role they played in moving the needle forward toward a

more equitable United States. The emergence of the 1960s brought additional change throughout US society and notably, the Chicano/a community.

The Chicano Movement: The Continued Quest for Educational Equality and Self-Determination

> *The Chicano Movement is a race struggle that is starving for Freedom to live Free—to control the conditions around us. So far, we have begged, protested, and have demanded our rights, and the Anglo establishment refuses to listen. Because of this, we now know that we will never be free until we free ourselves. And we will never have control of our barrios, until WE TAKE CONTROL.* (David Sanchez, Prime Minister, Brown Berets (Sanchez))

"We Will Never Be Free Until We Free Ourselves." A powerful and insightful statement by Brown Berets co-founder David Sanchez and reminiscent of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) where Freire argues the oppressed must free themselves or they too, will become an oppressor. As the second half of the twentieth century emerged, the Mexican American community faced many challenges with education reform central to their goals, but in the end, also altering the identity and history of the community. The 1950 US census counted nearly 3.2 million Spanish-speaking individuals in five southwestern states. Perhaps the most distinguishing difference between Mexican American Movement and Chicano Movement is the coalescing of various groups in the 1960s that pushed a national agenda whether that be for farm workers led by the United Farm Workers, education and civil rights with the Crusade for Justice, political reform in the vein of La Raza Unida Party, a national student movement and access to education at all levels represented by the student walkouts, the National Youth Liberation Conference and the Plan de Santa Barbara. Historically, both periods, the earlier Mexican American Movement, and the 1960s Chicano Movement, share a collective experience and memory of racism, exploitation, but also continued insertion, as marginalized people, into the dominant mainstream structure of the US. The commonalities between the two periods were clear. People of Mexican ancestry remained "disenfranchised, poor, badly educated, and excluded from the national dialogue" (Vargas, 2011, p. 335). Further, the two periods shared a common cultural thread that helped to bridge the two periods. These cultural threads included language, religiosity, music,

art, and numerous other manifestations of customs and traditions. This section on Chicano Movement, will primarily focus on educational issues, but, when necessary, will address broader concerns of the Chicano community.

The 1960s was a complex watershed decade and for many, a defining moment with hope and despair battling it out for the hearts and minds of Chicanas/os. The US Census counted roughly 5.8 million individuals of Spanish-speaking ancestry in the US. Many agree that what transpired in the 1960s within the Chicano community, was only possible because of the previous decades and this rings true for the Chicano Movement. Like many people in the 1960s, a significant portion of the Chicano community were enamored with the Kennedys because of youth, hope, and cultural traits they shared with the community such as immigrant background, Catholicism, and Jacqueline Kennedy's ability to connect via her linguistic abilities with Spanish. With the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, the torch was passed to Lyndon B. Johnson, who introduced the "war on poverty" programs via his vision known as the Great Society whereby poverty was to be eliminated. The founding of the National Farm Workers Association in 1962 by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta brought hope to farm laborers and sparked other movements throughout Chicano communities. However, the US's involvement and escalation in Vietnam shifted priorities away from the war on poverty of programs to funding the war in Vietnam.

Simultaneously, Chicanos experienced high levels of despair for a variety of reasons. One was the escalation of the Vietnam War and the high numbers of Chicanos conscripted for that conflict. Since the average educational attainment for Chicanos in the 1960s was eight years of schooling, most did not qualify for college, which in turn meant that the overwhelming number of Chicanos did not benefit from a college education and deferments from conscription. As a result, the devastation to the Chicano community is apparent via the casualty rate which reached nearly 20%, while Chicanos represented approximately 6% of the US population. The 1970 US Census put the Spanish-speaking population at nine million. Yet, under these conditions, the Chicano community found itself at the proverbial crossroads, to maintain the status quo, except minor concessions meted out by the white dominant system, or embark on a radical course correction that had been 120 years in the making. Many Chicanas/os chose the latter and we have an abundance of historical documents that sheds light on this course correction and radical change espoused by the

1960s Chicano generation. For example, in a document titled "Los Chicanos: Toward a New Humanism," Eliu Carranza, speaks of a decades-long struggle for the Chicano community seeking change to survive beyond its current state that included racism, dehumanization, and general unequal treatment throughout US society. Simultaneously the author speaks of a new destiny and humanism for Chicanos that can be achieved via the following path:

> …the decolonization and liberation of the Mexican American mind by an examination of our relation to our history, tradition, and culture. (Carranza, c. 1969)

> The establishment of free universities, Chicano Institutes, and autonomous Schools of Mexican American Studies to research, articulate, publish and disseminate knowledge of Mexican American culture and traditions…. (Carranza, c. 1969)

In this manner, the Chicano generation articulated a new direction for the community that differentiated itself from previous generations. Based on these concepts, Chicano liberation could only be achieved by breaking away from mainstream concepts of education and the adoption of a Chicano-centered curriculum in addition to seeking out alternative institutions. These alternatives will be discussed later in this article, but the Chicano generation took a multiprong approach toward education reform and change.

As the second half of the twentieth century grinded its way into the early 1970s, educational equality and general civil rights for Chicanos remained elusive and out of touch with civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s and gains achieved with desegregation of schools in the US. More important, it seemed all the educational struggles and achievements gained by the Mexican American community prior to the 1960s had evaporated. As the 1960s and 1970s emerged, it was as if the Chicano/a community had made no efforts in the realm of educational equity. Mexican American communities challenged the prevailing white supremacy ethos regarding Mexicans in the US for nearly a century by the 1960s. Dolores Delgado Bernal put it nicely when she stated:

> The struggle for Chicanas/os for educational equity and the right to include their culture, history, and language in K-12 and higher education curricula predates the civil rights movement of the 1960s by decades. (1999)

Nevertheless, the Chicano community remained in an eternal struggle for educational rights. The integration of schools was set in motion by the early twentieth century Mexican American victories regarding the segregation and desegregation of their children and with the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954 covering the nation. Yet, toward the last quarter of the twentieth century, communities of color remained set apart from white communities in the US. De facto segregation of Chicana/o school children remained highly visible. Additionally, many scholars argue that the "white social belief system about Mexicans helped support the many political and economic reasons for their continued segregation" (Bernal, 1999, p. 78). Further, images and theories that viewed whites as superior and Mexicans as unintelligent, inferior to Whites, unambitious, dirty, and disease-ridden were common racial characteristics held about Mexicans (Bernal, 1999).

Economically and socially, White educators often viewed Mexican school children through the lens of the labor of the Mexican parents. For example, my own education (Jerry Garcia) reflects this view. My K-12 education took place in a small rural agricultural community in Washington State where my parents were agricultural workers, as were most Mexican parents in this small community during the 1970s and 1980s. And this is how the white educators viewed us as children, not as potential college students or professionals, but the future backbone of the agricultural labor in this community. In my primary and secondary education, I do not recall any school official asking if I desired to attend university. In this manner, if you were of Mexican ancestry, you were tracked into farm labor, or in my experience, tracked into the military. Much of the literature on Chicano/a education illustrates this pattern of neglect that dates back decades, thus, my experience was and is common amongst Chicano/a school children and not an aberration or isolated incident.

In 1970, Ysidro Ramon Garcia said it pointedly regarding the need for educational reform that conformed with other elements of the Chicano Movement:

> The Chicano Movement seeks to play educational roles in three areas: educating the people (Chicanos) regarding their political and economic status; educating Chicanos in their heritage, history, and customs, thereby increasing their self-awareness, pride, and effectiveness as individuals; and promoting institutionalized education within the communities, where little enthusiasm for education existed before (Macias, 1971). Put simply, the

> state of Chicano/a education in the 1960s and 1970s was abysmal with multiple issues needing attention simultaneously. For example, one study indicated that of the total elementary and secondary student population in the Southwest, 17 percent were Chicanos, but only 4 percent of the teachers were Chicanos. The same study stated, there were approximately 20 Anglo students for every Anglo teacher in the Southwest and 120 Chicano students for every Chicano teacher (The struggle for Chicano liberation, 1971). During the 1970s, the dropout rate for Chicano students remained extremely high with one scholar citing that in 1974–1975, the percentage of Chicanos who had dropped out of high school was 38.7 percent and in 1977–1978, it rose to 44.1 percent. (Acuna, 2000, p. 413)

The Chicana/o Movement developed a widespread, diverse, national movement with activism and direction action paramount to success. There is no better place to see this activism emanating from the issues pertaining to education. Whether you were a student in K-12 or the university in California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, or Washington, a sense of common cause emerged due to the similar egregious nature and circumstances that existed for Chicano youth within the education system. Many of these youth were also encouraged and motivated by other movements emerging such as the modern civil rights movement exemplified by Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers. However, closer to home, the farm labor movement with Filipino, Punjab Indians, and Chicanos fighting for workers' rights in California provided awareness and a sense of urgency to address educational issues.

By the 1960s, a small number of Chicana/o students had made it into the university with many creating organizations aimed at addressing both K-12 and higher education issues. These organizations had names such as United Mexican-American Students (UMAS), Mexican American Student Association (MASA), and Mexican-American Youth Organization (Bernal, 1999). Goals for these student organizations included "Mexican American history courses, increase in the number of Mexican American instructors and administrators, and student involvement in decision making within the schools" (Vargas, 2011, p. 322). All these issues came to a breaking point in 1968 when over 10,000 students walked out of their classrooms in East Los Angeles in protest to the poor conditions in their schools. Additional walkouts would occur in 1969 and 1970 throughout the US, including in places such as Michigan, Texas, Colorado, and Arizona. According to Carlos S. Maldonado in his book, *Colegio Cesar Chavez,*

1973–1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination (2000), many of the concerns by Chicana/o students were affirmed with a series of studies produced by the United States Commission on Civil Rights between 1971 and 1973, that "highlighted the failure of public schools in meeting the fundamental educational needs of Chicanos" (p. 11). Beginning in the 1960s, Chicana/o students, communities, and organizations began to demand educational equality and used any means necessary to achieve that goal.

Decolonizing Education and the Search for Reform and Alternatives

> *The Schools, as in history have taken our children from the families to insert the qualities of a good American. But the problem with being a good American is that it was created to strip people of their cultural identity for the purpose of assimilation into a rat race of competition. If you refuse to race, your status is lowered for the purpose of cheap labor.* (David Sanchez, Prime Minister, Brown Berets (Sanchez))

There were at least two approaches used by Chicanas/os to increase educational equality. One was to reform the current system that for decades had neglected the needs of Chicana/o students. This meant working within an apparatus that viewed Chicanas/os with disdain and through the lens of white supremacy. For the dominant white population, this signaled a radical departure from their everyday social norms practiced that had for decades denigrated communities of color and the potential capitulation of an educational system they controlled and considered their exclusive domain. However, from the Chicana/o perspective, this represented demand for educational equality and community control of education, which had always been their right. Thus, by the late 1960s, we see the emergence of student radicalization unlike the previous decades. The development of student organizations (previously mentioned), community entities such as the Crusade for Justice, the Brown Berets, and student-led youth conferences that provided the foundational momentum for educational reform for the Chicana/o community.

The First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference that occurred in Denver, Colorado in 1969 and hosted by the Crusade for Justice is considered a pivotal point regarding Chicana/o education reform and use of alternative structures to address education issues that impacted the

community. From this conference emerged what is considered one of the foundational documents of the Chicano Movement that provided a blueprint for Chicano national liberation and self-determination as conceived by *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* (Spiritual Plan of Aztlan). Of importance to this discussion are key elements relating to education. *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* made adamant that education must be relative to the experience and history of Chicanas/os, infused with culture, including bilingual education, the contributions Chicanos have made to the development of the US and the hemisphere.

The other conference that occurred the same year (1969) was held at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Out of this conference emerged *El Plan de Santa Barbara* (The Plan of Santa Barbara) and was envisioned by a cadre of university students, faculty, staff, and community members under the banner of The Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education. Some have argued that this conference and emergent plan was an extension of The First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference discussed above (see Soladatenko, 2009, p. 28). In general, *El Plan de Santa Barbara* set out to restructure the Chicana/o experience at the university by mapping the direct participation and institutionalization of Chicanos and Chicano Studies at all levels of the university. *El Plan de Santa Barbara* provided a map for the development of Chicano Studies. *El Plan* also provided for the "development of the recruitment and admission of Chicano students, support programs to aid in the retention of Chicano students, and the organization of Chicano Studies curricula and departments" (Bernal, 1999, p. 84).[4] Both plans espoused the need for national liberation and self-determination and advocated the use of the educational system as a vehicle to make changes from within.

The Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s created the environment where notions of self-determination, anti-colonial structures, and educational freedom not only rang loud, but many felt a sense of hope that educational alternatives for communities of color could be a reality. Thus, the second approach taken up by the Chicano Movement meant working outside mainstream educational and institutional construct. It should be noted that two of three alternative institutions discussed below aligned themselves with institutions that were, on the one hand, part of

[4] As noted by numerous scholars, including Bernal (1999), both El Plan Espiritual and El Plan de Santa Barbara had their limitations, especially regarding the exclusion of Chicanas and direct mention of Chicana liberation.

the mainstream structure, but, on the other, were not due to their educational philosophy and approach. More important, the Chicano alternative schools did this primarily to gain access to accreditation. Indeed, beginning in the 1960s, independent Chicano educational institutions began to emerge with the 1970s and 1980s, the golden era. Space constraints prevent a full detailed analysis, but a brief, discussion on a few schools provides a basic understanding of their development, philosophy, and eventual demise. One of the first to emerge was the Crusade for Justice's *Escuela and Colegio Tlatelolco*, which evolved from a summer Freedom School started in 1968. According to Carlos S. Maldonado, "the initiative offered an educational experience enriched with Chicano culture and history." Due to its summer Freedom success, in 1970, the Escuela and *Colegio Tlatelolco* was founded. Founder, Corky Gonzales, expressed his vision in this manner, "We are a living image of what we say we are doing. Our school is not a factory for granting degrees and providing tinkertoy children. We are in the process of nation-building" (Maldonado, 2000, pp. 14–15). When it functioned both as a K-12 institution and a Colegio, Tlatelolco was accredited through Goddard College (Maldonado, 2000, p. 17). The school went through several reorganizations with the most pronounced being the elimination of its Colegio, but maintaining the Escuela for K-12. For 46 years, Escuela Tlatelolco was considered the beacon of the Chicano Movement when it finally had to close its doors in 2017 due to low scores in the district's yearly School Performance Framework in student achievement and lack of progress over time. In its final year, the Escuela served 145 students from K-12 (Fine, 2017).

Another prominent, but short-lived independent effort, was *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* established in the winter of 1969–1970 in Mission, Texas by members of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). The name Jacinto Trevino was chosen as a tribute to a Chicano folk hero who resisted Anglo oppression in south Texas. Resistance as a symbol from the Colegio's namesake was important during the period of the Chicano Movement as it represented elements of national liberation and an effort not to reform, but to completely break away from educational institutions that had prevented Chicanas/os from achieving their educational dreams and giving back to their community. Indeed, in 1970, *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* became the "nation's first all Chicano graduate program to produce teachers" (Maldonado, 2000, p. 17). An initial planning group of 15 set to establish the college, whose declared mission was "to develop a Chicano with conscience and skills, [to give] the barrios a global view,

[and] to provide positive answers to racism, exploitation, and oppression." According to Aurelio M. Montemayor, the Colegio was established within the context of militant struggles for community control, growing discontent with Anglo-controlled institutions, and the formation of Chicana/o nationalist ideology, the founders created *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* as a viable institution to serve as an alternative to traditional colleges and universities. The school leaders established the school as a teacher's college with the plan to develop a culturally relevant curriculum for primary and secondary education, and produce educators concerned with promoting the social and economic welfare of Chicana/o students (Montemayor, 1995). In 1971, *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* moved its base from Mission, Texas to Mercedes where it had a brick-and-mortar location for the first time. Like Colegio Tlatelolco out of Denver, *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* associated itself for accreditation with Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

The life of *Colegio Jacinto Trevino* was short-lived due to a variety of factors. According to Maldonado (2000, p. 17), "The financial stress associated with establishing and operating an independent school led Colegio Jacinto Trevino to close its doors in 1976." Another sign of trouble was related to internal disagreements between founding members. Montemayor indicates, "difficulties arose in the structure and governance of the college, criteria for selection of students and requirements for degrees… The board's internal dynamics were political, intense, and eventually polarized in two identifiable camps. By the summer of 1971 irreducible tension resulted in the pulling away of one camp, with some of those members establishing another institution known as Juarez-Lincoln University" (Montemayor, 1995).

Former associates of *Jacinto Trevino College*, Leonard Mestas and Andre Guerrero, were two of the individuals that left due to political differences and founded Juarez-Lincoln University in Fort Worth, Texas. It moved in 1972 to Austin, Texas. Originally it was located on the campus of St. Edward's university, but it then moved to its own campus in 1975 when it had about 200 students and it also became affiliated with Antioch College. The institution had three master of Education programs: the master of education program, as part of the Antioch Graduate School of Education; the bachelor of arts program, in conjunction with Antioch College; and the National Farmworker Information Clearinghouse, a national resource center collecting data on migrant farm workers and migrant programs (Garcia, 1995). Juarez-Lincoln curricula emphasized the bilingual and bicultural environment in which its students lived and

worked and encouraged them to invest their skills in the local community. The school followed the "university-without-walls" model, in which students designed their own projects with the assistance of faculty advisors. Juarez-Lincoln University closed in 1979, when Antioch University withdrew its support (Garcia, 1995).

Most of the alternative institutions that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s were primarily located in regions with the highest concentration of Chicanas/os, the southwest and California. However, the exception to this demographic trend was *Colegio Cesar Chavez*, located in the Pacific Northwest, specifically Mt. Angel, Oregon south of Portland in the Willamette Valley. Like the other institutions discussed, very little has been published on *Colegio Cesar Chavez*. The exception is Carlos S. Maldonado's book, *Colegio Cesar Chavez, 1973–1983: A Chicano Struggle for Educational Self-Determination* (2000), which is quoted extensively in this section. Also used is a catalog published by *Colegio Cesar Chavez* during the academic year 1975–1976. This catalog provides insight to the philosophy and structure of the Colegio.

On December 12, 1973, what was formerly Mt. Angel College became *Colegio Cesar Chavez*. It is no coincidence that the new College emerged on the religious feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the bronze skinned patron saint of the Americas. Since its inception, *Colegio Cesar Chavez* focused on several educational and cultural activities. The Colegio operated an Adult Basic Education program; A G.E.D. component; a childcare center; a College Without Walls program; a migrant summer school; and numerous community functions. Although *Colegio* was the successor of a small liberal arts school called Mt. Angel College, its founders stated that the idea of an institution focused on the needs of Chicana/o students had resonated with many due to the ongoing Chicano Movement when an independent Chicano institution seemed possible.

The overwhelming number of Chicano students, staff, faculty, and administrators of the Colegio came from farm worker backgrounds, which in many ways explains the name of the Colegio. However, it is interesting to note that the community considered other names as well. For example, Colegio Che Guevara, after the Cuban revolutionary hero, was considered. So was Colegio Ho Chi Minh, after the North Vietnamese leader, and Colegio Guadalupe, after Virgen de Guadalupe. Members of the Colegio were looking for a name that represented not only their ideals, but a name that evoked national liberation and self-determination. In the end, *Colegio Cesar Chavez* was chosen to honor the farm worker labor

leader for the work the union had been doing on behalf of farm laborers and fighting for their dignity in the fields. It should also be noted that "the majority of Northwest Chicanos came to the Northwest as part of the migrant farmworker stream during the post WWII decades (Garcia, 1995).

Out of the handful of private initiatives discussed thus far, *Colegio Cesar Chavez*, was perhaps the most robust and had the strongest potential for longevity. Yet, it started off on shaky ground due to its predecessors' financial instability and loss of accreditation, which the Colegio inherited. When Mt. Angel College folded in 1973 the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) held a one-million-dollar mortgage loan that it provided to the College in 1966 for construction purposes. According to HUD, Mt. Angel College had not made a payment in the previous three years (Maldonado, 2000, p. 29). Nevertheless, the founders of the Colegio moved forward attempting to negotiate a deal with HUD. Maldonado credits a handful of individuals for the development of Colegio Cesar Chavez that range from Chicano student activists, the last President of Mt. Angel College, to several Chicano faculty and administrators who hammered together a vision for the College. The financial challenges, along with the recruitment of students, staff, faculty, in addition to developing the curriculum would have taxed even the most experienced institutions. Nevertheless, within two years, *Colegio Cesar Chavez* was able to secure accreditation candidacy status in June 1975 from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (Maldonado, 2000, p. 42).

As part of the Chicano Movement, these independent institutions shared many traits such as their desire to reverse decades of segregation, discrimination, and an unequal education. They were also at the forefront of decolonizing the educational curriculum. The Chicano activists who either spearheaded educational reform or fought for alternative institutions represented a period of radical change. Indeed, one area that the institutions mentioned above shared was the College Without Walls Model (*Colegio Sin Paredes*). According to Maldonado, the College Without Walls is an alternative form of higher education created by the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities (UECU) in 1970. Most College Without Walls institutions attempted to adhere to a common set of principles. For example, recruit a broad range of students, especially in regards to age, active participation of students, faculty, and administrators in developing and implementing a College Without Walls program; orientation seminars on the philosophy and processes of the model; academic programs individually tailored to time, space, and content, the use of

alternative evaluation procedures, including the student's participation; and the instructor's role redefined to act as facilitators (Maldonado, 2000, p. 38). From Colegio's catalog, it is clear that they adhered to many, if not all, of the principles relating to this model.

Based on Maldonado's study, in its ten-year history, it does not appear that *Colegio Cesar Chavez* ever enjoyed any sense of financial stability, which had a cascading effect on the institution. The administrators of the Colegio spent most of their time fighting HUD over the one-million-dollar loan and Northwest Association for Schools and Colleges regarding accreditation. These two issues hampered efforts to solidify the Colegio's foundation, and impacted the recruitment of students, faculty, and staff. After receiving accreditation candidacy status in 1975, Colegio was never able to follow up with its financial stability report to the Association. This situation escalated with NWASC removing candidacy status from the Colegio in 1977, which was reinstated by court order when Colegio challenged the rescinding of candidacy status, which gave the Colegio until 1981 to become fully accredited. These struggles eventually manifested into internal strife at the Colegio, which was another contributing factor to its demise. Maldonado argues that these two struggles contributed to the eventual folding of *Colegio Cesar Chavez* in 1983 or as the Colegio's last President, Irma Gonzales, stated regarding its demise, "…The critics are right when they say it is the longest running death in history" (Maldonado, 2000, p. 5).

As we segue into a discussion on the development and implementation of *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo*, we must ask ourselves, "what have we learned from these earlier attempts to create independent institutions of Chicano education?" Will *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* meet with a similar fate? It is too early to tell, but many lessons can be learned from these previous attempts, and we certainly understand and see the financial viability of these institutions' as paramount to success. In many ways, the dreams and aspirations of *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* are like earlier attempts, but differences also exist, mainly that nearly 50 years separate these earlier efforts from our contemporary alternative. *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* currently exists online only, a platform that did not exist in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, we have been able to launch and implement without any cost other than our labor, which we do out of the appreciation we have for the community we serve and the field of Chicana/o Studies. Yet, we also share many commonalities, especially bringing Chicano education to the community, which has always been the goal, whether it be 1970 or 2020, when *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* launched.

El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo: Laying the Foundation

In November 2019, a group of Chicano/a activists from around the country met in San Antonio, TX., to discuss the formation of a new non-profit organization they named Mexicanos 2070. The name is a homage to the 52-year cycle that is an integral part of the Mexica count of days. The fundamental question for the gathering was, “where will the Chicana/o community be in 50 years?” The attendees in San Antonio in the late fall 2019 asked similar questions and positioned the organization to respond to where the Chicano/a community wants to be in 50 years (2070)? Simultaneously, the group questioned what had been accomplished in the 50 years since the launch of the Chicano Movement in 1970.

Armando Rendon, the author of the seminal Chicano Movement book *The Chicano Manifesto* (1971) and one of the main organizers behind the San Antonio meeting, started the conversation by writing and publishing a document he titled “The Blueprint for the next 50 years” in part wrote

> Fifty years ago, at the height of the Chicano Movement, would have been the ideal period to look ahead to the next 50 years and to establish an oversight committee, so to speak, to lay a framework for addressing issues then current and what might lie ahead. Diverse interests, limited financial and communications resources, and geographic distances among the various parts of the movement made it virtually impossible to organize and develop long-term plans in the 1970s. (Rendon, 2019)

In that document, Rendon listed what he terms general areas of concern: Education, Stewardship of the Earth, Keeping Alive The Chicano Movement and Chicanismo, Self-Governance, full political participation, international relations and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, alliance with all American Indian tribes. According to Rendon, these are important areas where the Chicano community must focus to survive as a distinct grouping of people.

At that meeting, it was decided that among other things, Mexicanos 2070 would create a community organizing course based on curriculum work already completed by Ernesto Mireles at Prescott College, and that those workshops would be offered in person to grass roots organizations. The course would be a combination of community organizing skills and more advanced strategy building, which, in the opinion of those

assembled in San Antonio, was an important next step in re-engaging and reconnecting crucial Chicano movement elements scattered across the country in their respective communities.[5]

By June 2020, it was clear the United States was in the grip of an epidemic that would soon cross a threshold to become a global pandemic, and that no one would be returning to in-person classes in the foreseeable future. Although I have been teaching (Mireles) at the university level since 2007, I had zero online teaching experience, and little desire to do so. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, I viewed online teaching as a lesser mode of delivery, not to be taken too seriously and a threat to the traditional livelihood of professors. What I began to realize over the summer of 2020 was the massive outreach taking place across the globe. I was no stranger to online teaching platforms like Moodle, and Blackboard—I wasn't really a fan—and saw them mostly as an annoyance, something I was required to do by the administration. However, the Covid pandemic taught me the importance of these digital spaces as sites of knowledge collection and dispersal.

I reached out to Dr. Jerry Garcia, whom I've known since he was a faculty member at Michigan State University (MSU), and I was a PhD student. We both had worked together along with other students, faculty, and community members to establish a PhD program in Chicano/Latino Studies at MSU in 2007. However, by 2020 we had each left MSU, and I was a faculty member at Prescott College and Dr. Garcia with Sea Mar Community Health Centers as their Vice President for Educational Programs. As a trained historian, I viewed Dr. Garcia as a natural fit to help establish our first two courses, which were community organizing and

[5] I (Ernesto) had been teaching at Prescott College in Prescott, AZ., since 2013, when I was hired to help build a new master's program in social justice and community organizing. Since the early 1990s, I had been working as an organizer in different capacities around the Midwest. My work had primarily focused on the Xicano/Latino community, but I did work for several unions and on electoral campaigns for democratic candidates. It was during that time in the early 2000s I decided to return to school where I got a master's in social work and then decided to go directly into an American Studies PhD program at Michigan State University, where I specialized in Xicano Studies. It was this unusual combination of skills that positioned me for the Prescott College job. Jerry Garcia has been teaching in Chicano/Latino Studies since 1999 with appointments at Iowa State University, Michigan State University, Director of Chicano Studies at Eastern Washington University. When this project was conceived, he was in the private non-profit sector in Seattle working with Chicano-founded Sea Mar Community Health Centers as their Vice President of Educational Programs.

Chicano/a History. In the end, we settled on Google Classroom as our online classroom space. It is free and the platform was used by public school districts across the country, including my daughter's school in Prescott, AZ. As a result of working with her, I was able to see firsthand how Google Classroom works and reasoned that a good number of people who might take courses were probably familiar with the program through helping their children with their own online schooling. There was a learning curve for google classroom, but I found it to be intuitive and straightforward.

In the late summer of 2020, Dr. Garcia and I began shaping our courses, which we originally conceived as asynchronous. Our plan was to post the course content and let students go through it at their leisure. We deliberately settled on September 16, 2020 (Mexican Independence Day) as our launch date. In our conversations about how we might measure success with enrollment, we both agreed that 50 people signing up would be a real success. We wrote one press notice (which to date is the only promotion) that was released online the week of September 16, 2020. Two weeks later we had approximately 400 people sign up to be a part of the Colegio. We were not prepared for such a high number and although we were excited, simultaneously we felt overwhelmed because it was just the two of us at this period. Yet, we saw the potential and the need for community-based Chicana/o Studies, not just based on the sheer numbers, but also *testimonios* we received from students from throughout the United States.

The First Courses

> *I am a Mexican American with a bachelor's degree. I studied Latin American History and Literature, but the university did not offer Chicano Studies.* (Monica Carpenter, Tennessee)

Originally, we designed the Colegio courses to run asynchronously. Our goal was to emulate the MOC (Massive Online Courses) that had gained such popularity in the years immediately preceding the creation of the Colegio. What we quickly realized was that it wasn't going to work the way we had hoped. I think this is true for several reasons, but the main one being a general lack of experience in the Chicana/o/x community with self-directed learning. It was also clear that a significant number of students who signed up for these initial offerings were also individuals who

did not have much experience with post-secondary education. From our goals and perspective, these were exactly the type of students we wanted, but with only two people driving these efforts in addition to full-time positions, it was a challenge. Dr. Garcia and I were deluged with email requests for help and explanations of how to both use the platform and explanations of the readings. The response from students was overwhelming and it became clear to us by the end of 2020, just a few short months after launching, that to accomplish what we originally envisioned in terms of bringing this information to a broad swath of our community, the Colegio courses would need to meet via online synchronization. The asynchronous pedagogy we started with was not suitable for most students who signed up. Many needed guidance, face-to-face via zoom learning platform, and the motivation that they were learning from trained Chicano Studies professionals. This approach has had better outcomes and it is the path we will continue to deploy.

Making that switch was easy enough, and we decided to continue offering the courses for free. Everyone involved, from Dr. Garcia and me to the board of Mexicanos 2070, felt this was the most crucial aspect of the project. We see it, however small it may be, that a no-fee tuition as a pushback against the growing commodification of knowledge and education. The commitment to free knowledge is a critical aspect of this project. More than one student has expressed this sentiment,

> *I have always wanted to take Xicano (studies) courses, but the cost was always in the way of this. This is appealing because it's at no cost. That's huge for me.* (Jorge Bautista, California. Colegio student)

As Chicano studies scholars, we are acutely aware of the price that is paid for this knowledge. We are also very concerned about the lack of real access Chicana/o/x community members have to higher education that includes the opportunity to take Chicano Studies courses. This decision has presented problems with recruiting qualified professors, but has not stopped the work. As of this writing, the 6–8 faculty teaching courses do this for no compensation and out of the sheer desire to teach, share knowledge with the community, and their devotion to the community. The Colegio has yet to do any serious grant writing or development, but our current model will eventually require the Colegio to begin compensating faculty for their work, even though all would continue to do it for free. In the current system we live in (capitalistic), someone's labor of love has

intrinsic value on multiple levels, and for too long, communities of color have been asked to labor for free, while others profit from it. The Colegio does not want to perpetuate this cycle. Additionally, future faculty recruitment efforts will focus on reaching out to Chicano Studies professors for sabbatical courses. We believe from anecdotal evidence there are a significant number of professors who would like to teach in the Colegio, but are heavily taxed by their professional responsibilities at other locations. Part of Colegio's philosophy remains imbued with the origins of Chicanos Studies that our work needs to benefit the community directly and especially the ideals of the alternative institutions of the past. For example, we see elements of *Colegio Cesar Chavez's* philosophy guiding our project when they stated

> At the Colegio [Cesar Chavez], the past and present learning, Chicano values, and ideas, as well as culture and feelings converge. This leads to the reaffirmation of, and in some instances, the formulation and development of Chicano philosophy in all aspects of the Chicano experience. (Colegio Cesar Chavez Catalog, 1975–1976, pp. 6–7)

We also remain cognizant of the history we shared regarding the trajectory and unfortunate demise of the alternative institutions briefly discussed. The common denominator that caused the untimely end for many 1960s and 1970s alternative institutions revolved around financial instability. Although there were other issues as well, most institutions can weather disagreements if there is financial stability. In our opinion, we remain in the early stages of development and even though we are currently an online platform with no overhead or "real" costs, we also understand that not only must we eventually compensate our faculty, but we may have to begin to charge a nominal fee to take one of our courses. A financial model for *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* remains a work in progress. We are optimistic as we move forward that there is a demographic in the US and beyond that we can serve. This can be seen from the surveys we have conducted. First, we survey students who have taken or wish to take courses with El Colegio.

For El Colegio, a demographic breakdown shows that students herald from 49 states, and Puerto Rico, with 3.8% identifying as non-binary, 65% as female, 30.2% as male, 1.8 % declined to answer. Also interesting is the fact that 70.8% have never taken a Xicano studies course, and 59.1% would like to receive college credit. During a time when large-scale cultural

battles are taking place over history and the right to tell history, what we see in the response to the Colegio Chicano is a solid desire on the part of the largest minority group in the country to know their history, culture, and place politically. While Xicanos and other Latinos may not become the numerically dominant group in the nation, they will become the largest portion of the demographic plurality in the country within a few decades. And although the field of Chicano/Latino Studies has expanded to nearly every region of the country since the 1970s, there remains part of our community that continues to not have access to this level of knowledge and education. More important, this type of knowledge and understanding of history and experience is crucial for Chicano/Latino communities to mobilize and either to continue to maintain control of their communities or learn how, especially in this polarizing era. Further, as our course offerings become more diverse, the Colegio feels confident our institution can play a vital role in this endeavor.

Since the Fall of 2020, we have consistently offered free courses in Chicano Studies to our registered students and the public. Currently our portfolio of courses include Xicano Art—Exploring your post-Xicanismo; Introduction to Mexican American Studies; Bringing Chicano History to the Present; Organizing in Diverse Communities; Community Journalism for Social Movements; Digital Aztlan—Chicano Storytelling in the age of digital media; Música Chicana: The Commodification of a Chicano/a art form (1960 to the Present); Building Chicano Political Power; and Introduction to the Corrido. In its current configuration, *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* follows an open admission policy. Anyone can take one of our courses regardless of educational background by simply enrolling via our website. For the long term, El Colegio is developing a curriculum that will allow students to earn a certificate, minor and eventually an undergraduate degree in Chicano/a Studies. To some degree, El Colegio already incorporates elements of the *Colegio Sin Paredes* model (College Without Walls Model). For example, Colegio attempts to stay away from just lecture-type classrooms and have students spending much of their time involved in community activities and in small group study activities. As we build out the Colegio, many students will be involved with community work, field placements, and jobs.

The Colegio has 8-week sessions for each course. Instructors are responsible for selecting, with their students, a time for the class to meet that accommodates as many as possible. We have used the record function

in google classroom to accommodate students who cannot make that time but still want the information and the discussion. Each course is run like a graduate seminar with reading and discussion being the focus of the work. In the beginning, we debated whether to give grades, but ultimately decided grading was counterproductive to the popular education ideology we espouse and reified the power dynamic of the professor/student binary we were working to disrupt. As stated in the foundational document written to explain the working of the colegio:

> Each CCP course is designed to incorporate community-based work outside the digital classroom. Participants and instructors will work together to lift and expand upon their collective knowledge of their immediate Xicana/o/x community and the political-cultural skills gained through years of direct experience living in and serving the Xicana/o/x communities in their professional and personal work experience.

Efforts like the Colegio are important to the political development of the Xicana/o/x community. They create and imagine a future where the teaching of subaltern history is not being constantly reframed as alternative or adversarial to settler colonial hegemony. The current pushback against so-called critical race theory is just the latest example of the success of ethnic studies programs. As noted above, these classes have made significant inroads into the everyday Xicana/o/x community.

Xicano Studies and the Twenty-First Century

> *I am a Mexican American woman who grew up "white-washed." I know nothing about the history of my culture or where to even begin to look. I think it is unfortunate that for at least 12 years of our lives in school we learn the history of America without getting the full picture. Once we decide to pursue higher education is when we are given the opportunity to delve into these types of studies and work. I appreciate that the Colegio is offering this online course so that anyone anywhere in their academic life can have a place to acquire this knowledge and begin to have these conversations about what our history really is.* (Angelina Vasquez, New York. Colegio student)

Xicana/o/x people stand on a precipice. Below us an endless chasm of knowledge reclamation both in terms of national identity and international emergence as a sovereign group of people. As a community we

simply must step forward into the uncertain future by embracing the plunge, or we can step back to the relative safety of the flatlands of our conquered past. It is clear from the overwhelming response El Colegio received, a hunger for knowledge remains, but not just any knowledge, but one that speaks to the needs of the Chicana/o community and its experience. A level of knowledge that will help this community take back their self-determination by controlling their destiny, rather than follow someone else's. There is a population of Chicanos and Latinos that for a variety of reasons that includes a level of forced assimilation, K-12 and even university neglect of providing appropriate instruction regarding the Chicano/Latino experience, and a lack of access to traditional modes of instruction, that has prevented this community from learning and understanding their own experience. El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo hopes to fill this void.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the Chicano community has a long history of seeking educational achievement and attainment, contrary to popular belief. Since 1848, Chicanos have sought and fought for educational parity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indigenous education curriculum created by those who have lived history, not Indigenous education provided by the settler colonial system is a key feature in understanding how an institution like the Colegio vehicles of resistance to settler colonial domination are. Resistance has always been one of key ingredients of Chicano alternative forms of education, even within the traditional university setting. Ethnic and Chicano Studies have strived for a pedagogy that challenges the master narrative, that brings research, teaching, and knowledge to the community and not imply for the sake of the institution. The question of the precipice is one of space, time, and will. Where can Chicanos in the United States find the space to build these movements, at the very least introduce concepts of resistance to colonial domination. The time, which is truly the question as the work and sacrifices we make for work speed up within late capitalism.

As we pushed forward with the Colegio courses, several questions began to arise that spoke directly to the Blueprint document written by Rendon: how can we as a community expect full participation culturally, socially, economically, and politically from a group of people who feel they have been purposely misled about their history and presence? What role do programs like the *Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* play in education and political development outside of the traditional structures of academia?

Given the ongoing nature of the current immigration crisis, attacks on organized labor, higher education, and the long-term political issues facing the Xicana/o/x community, the need to expand exponentially access to history, literature, and political education in the Xicanx community is dire. The promise of Xicano Studies from its earliest inception in the Plan de Santa Barbara was to bring political organization and knowledge directly to the community. This has not happened for a variety of reasons; however, we at CCP believe the democratization of technology has finally provided an arena to fulfill that promise.

> *I want to be able to learn more about my own culture. Living in Los Angeles and being born of 2 immigrants; 1 of which I do not know (father), my mother remarried a white man who knew no better but took my first language away from me (Spanish). I have always felt that there is a piece of me missing (my language, my sense of belonging) and I have been searching for those pieces of me that I know are a part of me and my past. I also want to be able to pass my knowledge to my offspring which my mother was unable to teach me.* (Angelica Perez-Johnston, Pennsylvania)

As a discipline, Xicano studies predates the struggles for Ethnic Studies historically centered on the San Francisco State University student strike of 1969. While Xicana/o studies as a discipline is often regarded as a foundational part of the Ethnic Studies curriculum, there are important distinctions that must be made and kept in mind. For example, Ethnic Studies at its base is an investigation into power differentials that exist in our society. This is important because of the primary role race has played in America over the past 500 years. Xicano studies (as a part of ethnic studies) is not simply an objective field of sociological or anthropological study, nor is Xicano Studies founded in an investigation of power differences in the United States. It is not a path to racial reconciliation between the colonizer and the colonized. The potential of Xicano Studies is that as a field it is first and foremost a foundational academic discipline within anti-colonial thought and social action. A decolonization project that foreshadows a sense of national identity, pride, and cooperation. Chicano Studies is first and foremost a way of realizing Amilcar Cabral's "return to history," the re-emergence of Chicanos as a national grouping (Cabral, 1966). Chicano Studies does not belong to the university. Chicano Studies belongd to the people; it is a heritage of humanity.

The Future of Education in the Xicana/o/x Community

> *I am most interested in learning about my indigenous roots, the history of my ancestors, and would like to challenge myself to embrace the opportunity to benefit from a program like this one that does not discriminate and does not present a Euro-centric view of the materials covered. I would also like to fortify my own Latinx identity, which I feel has been discouraged ever since my family came here from Mexico. Lastly, I think my late father, who was a professor, would have loved this program and even volunteered to offer a course.* (Catherine Luz Schwieg, Virginia. Colegio student)

El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo is not a new idea. It is an idea that has moved into the digital era of the twenty-first century. Many of the arguments happening in key states like Texas and California about the inclusion of ethnic studies into K-12 classrooms centers on how to make the proposed curriculum fit the requirements of the state for inclusion. We argue that this makes the inclusion of Chicano and Ethnic Studies into mainstream curriculum vulnerable to co-optation later.

The arguments over identity continue to rage within the Xicana/o/x community. It is not surprising considering the unique position Xicanos occupy in the United States as the largest indigenous population. The ongoing reconnection (or emergence) of indigenous identity is deeply rooted in the epistemological survival of native knowledge systems despite the best efforts of settler colonialism to eradicate that knowledge. The role of the Colegio and similar grassroots educational programs is one of preservation and reinvention. We have tremendous respect and admiration for the alternative institutions that not only preceded us, but in many ways, including their struggles, have provided a road map to create and implement Chicano education with purpose. After studying the 1960s and 1970s attempts, we must ask, just like Maldonado regarding *Colegio Cesar Chavez*, are "Colegios doomed to fail?" Financial stability remained a constant issue in the 1960s and 1970s because of the "brick-n-mortar" model prevalent in that era. As a startup, we are fortunate that technology has allowed us the flexibility to not be shackled by such considerations and we are also fortuitous to have a cadre of instructors who have a similar philosophy and vision for Mexicanos 2070 and El Colegio.

We are also realistic that the road ahead will require serious and sometimes uncomfortable conversation regarding the direction of El Colegio,

but we also feel confident that such conversation will lead us down the right path. Further, we remain aware that if El Colegio can maintain its growth, we will need to develop and expand to include such things as strengthening the academic model, developing additional academic programs that the community has shown interest with such as the medical field, health sciences, and the business fields. El Colegio will need to eventually provide a network of student services and establish fiscal and management systems. As previously mentioned, El Colegio remains in its early phase as we continue to build out, especially from the course offering perspective. However, we feel confident we have found an "educational niche" that will drive our growth by maintaining a tuition free institution, while simultaneously securing funding sources to strengthen our foundation. One area that remains important is whether EL Colegio will seek a partner with established accreditation as did the earlier alternative institutions. El Colegio also has the option to go at it alone and create the environment for self-sufficiency. There is also the case to be made that perhaps El Colegio can become the first Historically Chicano College in a similar vein to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Yet, some of these alternatives and options invite institutions that historically have not been friendly to the Chicano community, that is, the federal government or other state entities.

Through this article, we hope the reader has a better understanding of the struggles, challenges, and triumphs the Chicano community has had over the past 170 plus years. There is no doubt that education has been important and paramount to Chicano community development over the decades and that education plays multiple roles within the community. For those of us involved with this Colegio, education is empowerment, education represents self-determination, and education represents the future direction of the Chicano community, and education is something that is difficult to eradicate after it has been learned. *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* follows in the footsteps of the individuals, organizations, and communities that have valiantly fought for our educational rights under the most intense forms of racism, white supremacy, and state sponsored terrorism. *El Colegio Chicano del Pueblo* is honored to continue this struggle to eradicate settler colonialism in all its forms, but also "liberate our oppressor" as Paulo Freire (1970) so eloquently stated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

> *Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.* (Cesar Chavez, 1984)

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