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**Viva la Raza: Revisiting Chicana/o Identity Formations and Cultural  
Understandings**

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**Viva la Raza: Revisiting Chicana/o Identity Formations and Cultural  
Understandings**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the activists, scholars, and public intellectuals writing and theorizing from the messy spaces of identity productions. It is my hope that we can find ways to artfully engage in the tensions, crossings, and environments of the past to move towards a liberatory future.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

# **Viva la Raza: Revisiting Chicana/o Identity Formations and Cultural Understandings**

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This project investigates and critically engages the legacies of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o identity productions and interrogates the limitations, complexities, and subjectivities emerging out of these constructions. I am interested in discussing how *mestizaje* as a repurposed racial ideology among the Chicana/o movement appropriated and incorporated indigeneity while simultaneously erasing and obscuring Black historical and cultural influences. Through a textual analysis of pinnacle Chicana/o movement newspapers *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I discuss the multiple ways the discourses of *mestizaje*, Chicana/o identity, cultural and historical formations within these newspapers become intertwined with and informed by larger political, historical, and cultural systems, such as colonialism, White supremacy, and nationalism.

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## Introduction

*“Aztlán-de los campos y los barrios  
Aztlán-de las flores de hambre  
Aztlán-con corridas de necesidad  
Aztlán.  
Abajo del sol esta la Raza de Bronce. We wait.”  
(El Grito del Norte, 5)*

*“Mujer, piel canela, ojos negros  
Mujer que eres México  
Mujer Chicana, eres tu la espina de nuestra Raza  
Despierta mujer y lucha por tu libertad”  
(Hernández, 7)*

The reflective, romantic, and futuristic poems above find themselves among the hundreds of dedications to Aztlán, Mexico, and *La Raza* characteristic of the 1960s and 70s Chicana/o movement. These overarching themes became central to narratives of cultural resistance, self-pride, and racial understandings that pin point the ways many Chicana/os viewed their collective constructions of identity as a euphoric moment of self-recognition and resurgence. During a time of violent racism, political disenfranchisement, and social displacement, Chicana/os looked to frameworks and ideologies within Mexican culture and history as models that informed ideas of ancestry, collective marginalization, and ethnic and racial formations. Through various forms of communication, such as poems, plays, literature, manifestos, and newspapers, Chicana/os crafted and broadcasted multiple discourses attending to cultural, racial, political, and social aspects of Chicana/o identity. An unmistakably popularized rhetoric abounding

within these dialogues centered around ideologies of *mestizaje*<sup>1</sup>, that conjoined Chicana/o subjectivities with Mexican indigenist and post-revolutionary histories copiously produced decades before. This racial ideology became manifested in notorious concepts such as Aztlán<sup>2</sup>, *La Raza Cósmica*, and *mestiza/o*. As Alberto argues, the resurrection of *mestizaje* among Chicana/o identity productions gave way to formations of Chicano indigenism: stylistic appropriations of Indigenous cultural forms and traditions by non-Indigenous artists and intellectuals (Alberto, 19). This project investigates and critically engages the legacies of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o identity productions and interrogates the limitations, complexities, and subjectivities emerging out of these constructions. In order to guide my analysis and framework I ask: “What kind of identity politics does the construction of a Chicana/o identity engender?” and “How do discourses of Mexican national racial formations correlate to the production of a collective Chicana/o identity?” I am interested in discussing how *mestizaje* as a repurposed racial ideology among the Chicana/o movement appropriated and incorporated indigeneity while simultaneously erasing and obscuring Black<sup>3</sup> historical and cultural influences. I propose that *mestizaje* as a legacy of colonial violence, race neutral legislation, and theory of racial absorption, should be reckoned with as a harmful social dialogue and identified as a punitive cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Simply defined, *mestizaje* signals to the mixing of one or more races, ethnicities, and or cultures. I discuss the uses, definitions, and history of *mestizaje* at length within this introduction.

<sup>2</sup> The function of Aztlán within Chicana/o discourse embodies multiple definitions and contexts. According to Leal, Aztlán represents the mythical homeland of the Aztecs before migrating to central Mexico. Secondly, Aztlán refers to the geographic region known as the Southwestern part of the United States, composed of the territory ceded in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Thirdly, Aztlán also symbolizes the perceived spiritual unity of Chicana/os primarily within the Southwest (8).

<sup>3</sup> Following Katerí Hernández, the capitalization of Black, Brown or White is done throughout this project when describing race to denote “the political dimensions of race and the social significance of being racialized as something more than just skin color” (1537).

concept continuing to inform contemporary racial formations and nationalisms in the twentieth century. By bringing forth a critical analysis unsettling hegemonic narratives that hold root in colonial and oppressive discourses, I attend to the complexities implicated in Chicana/o identity productions centered around topics of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, politics, and history. Most importantly, by focusing on the productions of collective Chicana/os identities, I discuss the multiple ways these practices become intertwined with and informed by larger political, historical, and cultural systems, such as colonialism, White supremacy, and nationalism.

From the onset, Chicana/o veneration of *mestizaje* become implicated in the legacies of Mexican *mestizaje* as a nation building project during the early twentieth century. The history of *mestizaje* in Mexico begins with the colonial racial stratifications that reinforced subordination of Indigenous<sup>4</sup> and African peoples living in Mexico. In its most famous depictions, *mestizaje* became enhanced through *casta* paintings that portrayed a complex process of racial mixing among the three major racialized groups that inhabited the colonies: Spanish, Indian, and African (Banks, 208). The depiction of numerous Mexican racial designations, such as *zambo*, *coyote*, *mulatto*, *mestizo*, among others, centered on an idealized racial hierarchy that promoted *mestizaje* and White superiority as the desired outcomes of racial mixing (Banks, 209). As Mexico continued into the nineteenth century and began its fight for independence, the usage of racial classifications began to largely separate itself from *casta* designations. Menchaca notes

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<sup>4</sup> Taking lead from Indigenous scholars and peoples, I capitalize Indigenous to acknowledge the racial and historical dimension of this term. As the *Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology* handbook states, “always capitalize Indigenous as a sign of respect the same way that English, French, and Spanish etc. are capitalized” (15).

this historical shift as an effort on behalf of the newly independent Mexican nation to suspend collections of statistical racial enumerations as they were thought to be used to unnecessarily distinguish races for discriminatory purposes (166). As this racially liberal period symbolically declared the Mexican people as citizens with equal rights and obligations, it also elided an accurate analysis of the Mexican racial landscape where Indigenous people were reduced to the cultural classification of *gente de razón* and *afromestizos* where nearly invisibilized among the colorblind society (Menchaca, 166). The race neutral ideologies of nineteenth century Mexico were again transformed through the period of the Mexican revolution which fervently reiterated the image of Mexico as a racially mixed nation. Elite and pro-eugenics intellectuals, such as José Vasconcelos, advanced a racial philosophy with the central goal of homogenizing all ethnicities in post-revolution Mexico under the guise of *mestizaje* (Hernández Cuevas, 2). The theoretical foundations of *mestizaje* were culturally, politically, and socially institutionalized in 1925 through Vasconcelos's concept of *La Raza Cósmica*. Claiming *mestizaje* as a viable method for the creation of the Mexican national, Vasconcelos argued for constructive miscegenation based on the mixing of Whites and Indians while fostering the idea that the "negro" race would vanish from the Mexican social body (Lewis, 903). While acknowledging the presence of African and Indigenous populations in Mexico, Vasconcelos publicly situated these populations as inferior and posited Whiteness as their only salvation into the Mexican nation. *La Raza Cósmica*, as a theoretical framework for the Mexican nation and a method of racial ordering, catapulted *mestizaje* into the social imaginary of the Mexican citizenry and re-wrote formative

Mexican periods as mestiza/o-centric, situating them among discourses of development and modernity (Saldaña-Portillo, 14). Thus, the biologized terms of *mestizaje* not only minimized Indigenous subjectivities as an ancestral past used for the advancement of the nation (Saldaña-Portillo, 413), but also created a marginalized Black identity that is unimagined and erased from social and cultural contributions to popular Mexican culture and racializations (Vaugh, 118).

### **Contemporary Relevance and Importance**

My analysis addressing *mestizaje* as an enduring ideology present within Chicana/o identity productions, informed by Mexican racial discourses, builds upon and is also influenced by contemporary dialogues tackling the various dimensions of this correlation. Activist and public scholars like Alan Pelaez López and Ariana Brown who speak on the precarious intersections of anti-Blackness, Mexican nationalism, *mestizaje*, Latinidad, and Chicana/o identity provide a productive framework for this analysis. Other public intellectuals such as Cassandra (Xicanisma) and Ruben (Queer Xicano Chisme)<sup>5</sup>, notable online Xicana/o activists also provide a helpful lens on topics such as Chicana/o Indigenous appropriations, Aztlán, and Mexican mestiza/o nationalism. Ariana Brown, who self identifies as Black and Mexican, points out the way concepts such as mestiza/o *indigenismo* (indigenism) and *mestizaje* build off anti-Black attitudes. She further notes that *mestizaje* positions Black people as the most inferior race that should become extinct through intermarriage with mestizos and fails to acknowledge that Black people exist in

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<sup>5</sup> Xicanisma and Queer Chicano Chisme are the monikers of Cassandra and Ruben, social media intellectuals and figures who discuss a wide arrange of social justice issue pertaining to the Latinx/Chicanx community and other communities of color. They are also known for their open critiques of Chicana/o nationalism, Indigenous appropriations, and cultural exclusions.

Mexico (Brown, 1). Similarly, Pelaez López, an Afro Indigenous person from Oaxaca, Mexico, theorizes the epistemological and cultural erasure of Black populations stating that Blackness has been internalized and silenced in Mexico. As an example, they signal to the fact that only until recently (2015) has the Mexican government recognized Afro Mexicans, who remain one of the least represented and the most oppressed of all of Mexico's ethnic groups (Pelaez López, 1). As an internal critic of the Chicana/o movement, Cassandra argues that within the movement there is a narrative pushed to reclaim Indigenous roots and to decolonize, which often times means appropriating Indigenous identities and histories that Chicana/os don't explore, unpack, or understand (Bitter Brown Femmes podcast, 1:00:06-1:00:47). Similarly, Ruben posits that Chicana/os should reflect and resituate claims to indigeneity without contributing to the violence faced among visibly Indigenous communities. He additionally argues that Chicana/o claims to indigeneity or Indigenous racial oppression often don't allow Chicana/os to "see how much space were taking up" in racial and political conversations (Bitter Brown Femmes podcast, 58:40-58:59). The theorizations and intellectual discourses put forth by Brown, Pelaez López, Cassandra, and Ruben are important to highlight as they represent contemporary dialogues centered within domains such as online forums, social media, and grassroots activism that exist outside of academic institutions. The positionality and contemporary presence of these public figures also demonstrate the relevance of conversations about *mestizaje*, Chicana/o identity productions, and Mexican racializations, and the lived realities that become implicated in these dialogues.

The impetus for this project also emerges from the necessity to continue interrogating the complicated legacies of the *mestizaje* within fields such as Chicana/o and Latina/o studies that continue to manifest today. Decades after the 1960s and 70s Chicana/o movement, monolithic and traditional views of Chicanisma/o,<sup>6</sup> and cultural nationalism continue to abound among literature and political discourses. A survey of recent texts historicizing the Chicana/o movement's influence among the contemporary cultural and political landscape, such as *Documents of the Chicano Movement (Eyewitness to History)* (Bruns, 2017), *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century* (García, 2014), and *Chicana Tributes: Activist Women of the Civil Rights Movement - Stories for the New Generation* (Sánchez and López, 2017), remain centered around resistance narratives of Chicana/o movement politics, culture, and identity. While the importance and impact of the Chicana/o movement is discussed at length, critical conversations and interrogations about Chicana/o racial and cultural productions are often minimized or unattended. As a graduate of Chicana/o studies, and familiar with Chicana/o studies curriculum across the Southwest, I can also attest to the lack of critical engagement among university curricula that continues reproducing limited and uncritical discourses around Chicanisma/o, cultural nationalism, and Mexican statist histories. I vividly remember sitting in Chicana/o studies classes learning about the “Aztec” temples, La Malinche, Pancho Villa, Rodolfo “Corky” González, and the Brown Berets, as some of the pinnacle histories and figures of Chicana/o history. Yet,

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<sup>6</sup> According to Gomez-Quñones and Vásquez, Chicanismo represented a “composite of politicized identity, ethnic pride, and civil rights articulations promulgated as components of a community identity” (69). Chicanismo is also identified as an “affirmative consciousness and loosely expressed concept by individuals” that became “translated as a radical political and ethnic populism” (70).

conversations about *mestizaje*, *indigenismo*,<sup>7</sup> anti-Blackness, anti-indigeneity, and colonial racial stratifications were starkly absent or undertheorized.

More importantly, this project follows in the footsteps of Chicana/o activists who throughout the decades have enacted critiques and assessments of the limitations of Chicana/o politics and rhetoric. In the 1960s and 70s, Chicana feminist began taking to task the androcentric politics of the Chicana/o movement that excluded the experiences of women and restricted them to antiquated cultural gender roles. Following this move, in the 1980s and 90s queer Chicana/os, mostly Chicanas, published multiple texts that deconstructed the cultural narratives that upheld heteronormativity and denied queerness as an important component of Chicana/o politics and ideology. As Blackwell, Cotera, and Espinoza argue, attempting to analyze traditional modes of history and culture within the Chicana/o movement requires “generating our own strategies for reading beyond the usual suspects, spaces, events, and organizational narratives that have shaped our understanding of the past” (4). Given these historical realities and genealogies, my examination of the limitation, exclusions, and erasures emerging from Chicana/o identity and nationalist discourses takes after this feminist call to question and unsettle traditional modes of knowledge production and understandings. Therefore, through this project, I hope to continue exploring, interrogating, and unpacking normalized racial hierarchies, hegemonic cultural narratives, and popularized Chicana/o discourses to “read beyond” existing historic and contemporary formations.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Alberto, *indigenismo* refers to the post-revolutionary governmental policy and cultural production that facilitated the formation of a modern Mexican nation. *Indigenismo* created a myth of origin through the selective incorporation of Indigenous history, while simultaneously excluding actual Indigenous peoples through assimilation programs and land disposition (108).

## Theoretical Frameworks

My discussion of *mestizaje*, Mexican nationalism, and Chicana/o identity borrows from various interdisciplinary academic fields. In examining the multiple functions of *mestizaje* as a colonial and contentious discourse marginalizing and essentializing Indigenous and Black subjectivities and histories, the work of scholarship in Indigenous studies, Latin American studies, Critical Latina/o/x studies, Afro Latina/o/x studies, and Chicana/o/x studies offer constructive theoretical frameworks. My review and incorporation of multiple disciplines is also indicative of the academic boundaries and scopes often limiting conversation and collaboration between these intellectual fields. As an example, scholarship addressing the appropriations, misrepresentations, and essentializations of *mestizaje* and indigeneity within Chicana/o culture (Alberto, 107; Palacios, 416; Saldaña-Portillo, 195, Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera, 549) minimally bridges a critical analysis with bodies of scholarship examining absences of Black histories and influences within Mexican and Chicana/o culture, racial strife between Brown and Black identities, and creations of racially exclusionary Chicana/o identities (Dorr, 13; Haney López, 212; Katerí Hernández, 1537; Morales, 499). Nonetheless, I inform my argument through the multiple conversations in these scholarly fields. Borrowing from recent articulations of Critical Latinx Indigeneity theory, that expose complex intersectional nuances, inter-group oppression, and enduring colonialist power dynamics within Whiteness, Blackness, Latinidad, and American Indian politics of identity (Blackwell, et al., 133), my analysis discusses the legacies and formative functions of Chicana/o nationalism on contemporary politicized Chicana/o discourses of culture and identity. My

contention with *mestizaje* as a colonial legacy corroborates critiques positioning Chicana/os as inheritors of an imported and reimagined racial history evident in Mexican nationalist rhetoric of the 1920s (Alberto, 109) and enabled through a mestizo mourning (Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera, 556) from where Chicana/os make universal claims to indigeneity. Furthermore, my discussion of *mestizaje* as a bedrock for incomplete and limited Chicana/o identity formations is informed by what Katerí Hernández outlines as a “cultural silence and derision” that continues to negate the role Blackness has had on Chicana/o racial identity and Mexican cultural and political formations. My project contributes to these respective bodies of scholarship as I complicate histories, racializations, and normative ideologies present within formative Chicana/o discourses of collective culture and historical recoveries.

### **Constructing Chicana/o Identities: *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc***

I situate my examination of the correlation between *mestizaje* and Chicana/o identity production within a textual and content analysis of two formative Chicana/o movement periodicals: *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. At the height of their existence, both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* featured self-reflective opinion pieces and essays attempting to make sense of popularized rhetoric pertaining to Chicana/o cultural politics. Salient themes such as Chicana/o nationalism, the adoption of Aztlán, Mexican political narratives, and *mestizaje* became central discussions within issues of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that grappled with underpinnings of Chicana/o culture, nationalism, and history. As two publications providing a space for

the exploration of Chicana/o history, Mexican culture, and racial politics, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* served as influential publications during the apex of the Chicana/o movement (Blackwell, 59; López, 537).

### *El Grito del Norte*

As a watchdog of New Mexican politics and Chicana/o activism, *El Grito del Norte* lauded itself as an “independent newspaper serving northern New Mexico” whose purpose was “to advance justice for poor people and preserve the rich cultural heritage of La Raza” (*El Grito del Norte*, 1). Based in Española, New Mexico, *El Grito del Norte* was first published on August 24, 1967 and quickly grew over the years, reporting on contemporary political issues ranging from the war in Vietnam, welfare rights, the Mexican student movement, police brutality, Chicano walkouts, and the Cuban revolution. *El Grito del Norte* also remained heavily centered on rural New Mexican politics, frequently reporting on behalf of constituents in town such as Taos, Chama, and San Cristobal. The newspaper was sustained through its dedicated founding activists, Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez and Beverley Axelrod (López, 538) who voluntarily ran the newspaper headquarters and publishing operations from 1967-1973. Despite its regional specificity, *El Grito del Norte* also situated itself among greater Southwestern Chicana/o politics, eventually forming an integral part of the Chicano Press Association (CPA) founded in the 1960s. Weekly editors and columnists included Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez, Cleofilas Vigil and Fernanda Martínez who published on a wide range of Chicana/o issues, both locally and nationally. Articles, artwork, poems, and opinion pieces, often authored by Longeaux, Vigil, and Martínez, contributed to Chicana/o

political and cultural formations that widely circulated among *El Grito del Norte*'s readership. Longeaux y Vásquez became a central figure within *El Grito del Norte* through her reoccurring column *Despierten Hermanos!*, which addressed issues of social justice, ethnic pride, environmental wellbeing, a skewed economy, poverty, and feminism (Vásquez, ix). More importantly, writing during the apex of the Chicana/o movement, Longeaux y Vásquez spoke heavily on themes of cultural nationalism, racial and ethnic Chicana/o origins, and transnational Mexican solidarity that were often informed through ideas of *mestizaje*, Mexican statist discourses, and colonial histories. While Longeaux y Vásquez emerged as a notable contributor to early formations of Chicana/o identity, the various contributors and authors of *El Grito del Norte*, who offered the presentation of Chicana/o history and culture through forms of poetry, stories, and art, also conveyed these themes as primary discussions.

Unfortunately, after a successful six-year span, *El Grito del Norte* released its last publication in August 1973. According to its founding editor Elizabeth Martínez, *El Grito del Norte*'s abrupt suspension operated as a political strategy meant to expand New Mexican Chicana/o movement politics beyond the monthly newspaper (82). Many New Mexican activists, including Martínez, moved to Albuquerque and established the Chicano Communication Center (CCC) which served as a multimedia educational barrio project (Martínez, 82). *El Grito del Norte*'s legacy as a radical newspaper remained impactful among several Chicana/o newspapers as "it succeeded in recasting the local and ethno-national politics of the Chicana/o movement as a crucial part of the international struggle for revolutionary change" (López, 538).

### *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*

Originating out of California State University (CSU) in Long Beach, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was first published in 1971 and tasked itself with highlighting the experiences of Chicanas within the Chicana/o movement, focusing on espousing critical gender analyses of androcentric nationalism. As Blackwell writes, before establishing themselves as *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, the founding membership operated under names such as *las mujeres de Longo* and *las Chicanas de Aztlán* and were primarily invested in mentoring incoming Chicana students who joined the local Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán (MEChA) chapter (62). Lack of respect, sexist attitudes, and stifled political participation led to the eventual formation of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as its own independent organization and Chicana publication. Authored by several Chicana student activists, such as Anna NietoGomez, Leticia Hernández, Martha López, among others, the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* newspaper “became among the first in the nation to publicly vocalize a Chicana feminist vision” (Blackwell, 73). Together, Chicana founders of the newspaper were able to publish three issues and circulate *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* among local and national spheres of Chicana feminists, as evidenced by their readership among other prominent Chicana figures such as Martha Cotera in Texas and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez in New Mexico. Its content spoke to various audiences and aimed to bring voice to a multitude of issues within the Chicana/o movement. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* primarily directed itself to discontented Chicana activists, as exemplified in article such as “Chicana Identify,” which advocated for the adoption of a Chicana identity as a response to sexist Chicano politics (*Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, 4). *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*

unapologetically called out Chicano men who did not see their sexism and chauvinism as a problem hindering the Chicana/o movement. Aside from its necessary intervention among unequal gender relations, the feminist intervention of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also refused the confining masculinist codes of the Chicano national imaginary (Blackwell, 68) and expanded male centered Indigenous idealizations to service a Chicana cultural nationalist vision. Most importantly, the publications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* “provided a forum for Chicanas to dialogue across regions and social sectors” (Blackwell, 142).

### **Chicana/o Print Culture Formations**

As newspapers invested in discussions of the political and social status of Chicana/os, as well as historical and cultural trajectories, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* contributed to the formation and popularization of Chicana/o print cultures. The nature of these conversations was facilitated through forms of Chicana/o print media emerging throughout various cities and towns across the US. In his analysis on the United Farm Workers newspaper *El Malcriado*, Gunkel notes how the alternative Chicana/o press was premised on accessibility at multiple levels. Developments in printing technologies and the relatively inexpensive cost of film meant that newspapers could often be produced cheaply and distributed widely (Gunkel, 32). As Chicana/o movement newspapers engaged in dialogues with one another, the organic character of print media became “crucial to the ideological development of Chicana/o political community and the constitution of a shared political imaginary” (Blackwell, 137). The proliferation and popularity of Chicana/o newspapers across the country during the height of the Chicana/o

movement reveals their importance as conduits of knowledge, organic discourse, and ideological exchange.

Both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* received attention as localized and national publications that spoke to the multifarious conversations occurring among Chicana/o organizations and activist circles. As I demonstrate in my analysis, perspectives on Chicana/o identity, cultural history, and political disenfranchisement printed in both these newspapers frequently centered around problematic articulations of indigeneity, cultural nationalism, and racial identities tied to *mestizaje* and colonial narratives. Given the fluidity and circulation of Chicana/o print culture texts such as *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* among various public spheres, Chicana/o identity constructions informed by these ideologies became easily distributed, popularized, and promoted. Therefore, the dynamic nature and accessibility of Chicana/o print culture becomes a fruitful space for examining the deployment of *mestizaje* as a Chicana/o racial project, the strategic uses of Mexican histories in Chicana/o culture, and the construction of a quintessential, and as I argue, restrictive Chicana/o identity.

### **Project Structure and Organization**

This project is organized in four chapters. In my first chapter, I explore bodies of scholarship concerned with *mestizaje* discourses, and how these emerge in Chicana/o identity constructions and ideologies, as well as scholarship examining the racial boundaries and exclusion of Chicana/o cultural and historical imaginaries. In the second chapter, I continue with an explanation of the methodology used to textually analyze and categorize discourses within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* relating to

Chicana/o racializations, *mestizaje*, Mexican national histories, and cultural productions. Chapter three is an in-depth analysis of both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* in where I discuss selected texts, themes, and rhetoric pertinent to the scope of this project. I also discuss and connect the texts to scholarship and frameworks previously discussed in the literature review. In the fourth chapter, I end with a conclusion addressing foreseen, as well as unexpected, limitations relating to this project. I also outline the contributions of my analysis among various academic and public spaces dedicated at probing the limits of ethnic cultural nationalism and identity formations and offer a discussion on the relevance and future implications of this work.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

Traditional scholarship addressing the political insurgencies of the 1960s and 70s Chicana/o movement have theorized the creation of cultural and ethnic identities during this time period as direct responses and rejections of hegemonic White institutions and social norms. Chicana/o identity became theorized as a rediscovery of mestiza/o histories that advocated the development of Indian humanist concepts over and against European values (Vásquez, 91). The clamoring of historical and cultural resistances on behalf of the Chicana/o movement turned a spotlight onto ideas of *mestizaje* emerging from adaptations of Mexican nationalism. As a discursive practice *mestizaje* framed Chicana/os as a “mestiza/o Raza; a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood” (*El Grito del Norte*, 2) and privileged the role played by mestiza/o bodies (Pérez-Torres, 3), creating a normative subject within Chicana/o identity and cultural productions.

Scholarship addressing the limitations of incorporating *mestizaje* and Indigenous histories into Chicana/o racial formations bring attention to the willful misreadings, strategic deployment, and instrumentalization of these racial practices (Guidotti-Hernández, 17; Marez, 267; Palacios, 416; Saldaña-Portillo, 196; Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera, 549). Similarly, scholarly discussions of Chicana/o Indigenous constructions and uses of *mestizaje* also largely grapple with the popular Chicana/o cultural concept of Aztlán, which has become a multifocal point of interest given its materialization as a geographic, spiritual, and historical boundary (Cooper Alarcón, 4; Saldaña-Portillo, 402). While these interventions bring forth a staunch analysis that unravel the ideological frameworks behind productions of Chicana/o identity and culture, the discussions of

Chicana/o *mestizaje* remained heavily situated within critiques that only consider the precariousness of Indigenous subjectivities and their historical appropriations without fully theorizing a correlation between Chicana/o identity, exclusions of Black histories and greater diasporic Black communities.

To further tease out the mechanisms of these exclusions, it becomes important to highlight academic discourses that account for these cultural and historical omissions. The little scholarship that explores the relationship between *mestizaje*, Chicana/o identity and Blackness does so through an analysis of legal racial categorizations, critiques of Black Mexican absences in Chicana/o culture, and lack of shared history between Chicana/os and Black communities (López-Haney, 205; Katerí Hernández, 1539, Banks, 204). These discussions also centralize on the discourse of “Brown” as a racial signifier that obfuscates an honest conversation about anti-Black attitudes during and after the Chicana/o movement (Banks, 205). While this scholarship contributes to nuanced understandings of traditional Chicana/o identity constructions that exclude Blackness, the theoretical scope of these academic discourses does not directly consider a relationship between appropriations of Indigenous histories and absences of Black Mexican histories. In other words, while indigeneity and Blackness are considered separately in deconstructions of *mestizaje*, as they are not conflated experiences, this separation obscures a holistic understanding of all the operationalizations of *mestizaje* within formulations of Chicana/o history and culture. It is important to note that general scholarship addressing the anti-Black attitudes emerging from *mestizaje* ideologies speak primarily to the umbrella identifier of “Latina/o” to show how these perceptions affect

racial relationship in the US (Torres-Salliant, 124; Jiménez Román, 325). Yet, these informative discussions about Pan-ethnic Latina/o racializations and *mestizaje* become too broad to account for how Chicana/os have instrumentalized racial mixture ideologies through specific cultural constructions and geographic histories. Building upon the above interventions on Latina/o anti-Blackness, this project focuses the conversation of racial exclusions in the Chicana/o community, looking specifically at the Chicana/o movement as a period that proliferated, institutionalized, and instrumented a discursive “Brownology” (Morales, 503).

My analysis presented in this literature review will contribute to areas of research concerning Chicana/o cultural formations, uses of *mestizaje* ideologies, appropriations of indigeneity, and exclusions of Black subjectivities. To further situate my argument, I will also provide an overview of literature concerning the Chicana/o movement newspapers, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as formative texts engaging with the aforementioned areas of research. In the subsequent sections, I discuss existent literature addressing uses of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o identity productions, appropriation of Indigenous histories within Chicana/o culture, and exclusion of Black histories within Mexican cultural formations. I follow these discussions with a brief review of existing interpretations and scholarship on *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that outline their significance as paramount Chicana/o movement texts continuing to influence Chicana/o studies and research. My interest in these periodicals comes from further examining the role of print culture in propagating Chicana/o identity production and communicating narratives of cultural and political cohesion. By putting these scholarly

topics into conversation, discursive space is built to allow for an intersectional dialogic understanding of nuanced cohesions and divergences among studies of Chicana/o movement politics, Black identity formations, and racialized cultural productions. Moreover, putting histories of Black Mexicans, Indigenous populations, Mexican Americans/Chicana/os, and colonization into conversation helps uncover the multiple ethnic and racial roots of Chicana/o stratifications (Menchaca, 11).

### ***Mestizaje* Discourses: Chicana/o Translations of Mexican Racializations**

The relationships between Chicana/o identity, *mestizaje*, and adaptations of Mexican culture can be identified in multiple conversations within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. The usage of words like Raza and mestiza/o, continual references to pre-Columbian histories such as Aztlán, and celebrations of Mexican nationalist histories (*El Grito del Norte*, 9, 12; *Estrella*, 7) clearly outline the ways *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* utilize *mestizaje* to construct a paradisaic Mexican space (Cooper Alarcón, xvii, xx). The construction of this geographic utopia is facilitated through discourses that position Chicana/o culture as a correlative to the racial condition of *mestizaje* and Mexican histories (Pérez-Torres, xi). Therefore, the concept of *mestizaje* exhibited in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* becomes naturalized and further informed by the racial discourses of Mexican culture and history. To attentively grapple with the historical operationalizations of *mestizaje* within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I now turn to a closer examination of literature discussing the multiple components of *mestizaje* as a racial and cultural ideology.

Within recent years the scholarly conversation on *mestizaje* has theorized various arguments ranging from its consideration as a useful cultural understanding to its detrimental operationalization as a racial fallacy. Calls for a critical *mestizaje* “that roots cultural production and change in the physical memory of injustice and inhuman exploitation” (Pérez-Torres, 4), revendicate this racial ideology as a productive multicultural framework. Pérez-Torres argues that while the term *mestizaje* originates from a contentious past, “its deployment within a resistant Chicana/o context transfigures its significance, even as it evokes this conflictual past” (6). In a similar fashion, arguments for a cultural *mestizaje*, famously exemplified in Gloria Anzaldúa’s book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, reworks *mestizaje* to represent more of a “metaphor for cultural strife than an act of biological reproduction” (Amado, 449). Positioned as an “inclusive perspective and pluralistic outlook on the world” (Amado, 451), the framework of a cultural *mestizaje* is utilized as a progressive trope where the new Chicana/o mestiza/o can negotiate their ambiguous social and cultural location (Amado, 450). Therefore, in this context *mestizaje* signifies possibility and Chicana/o futurity as it is used to encompass the precarious racial and cultural situations of Chicana/os who reside within conflicting identity paradoxes.

These positive outlooks of *mestizaje* are contrasted and challenged by scholarship that deeply theorizes *mestizaje* as inseparable from its colonial, racist, and violent origins. Referring to historical violence along the US-Mexico border, Guidotti-Hernández writes, “*mestizaje* fetishizes a residual, abstract, dehistoricized Indian identity that obscures Mexican, Mexican Indian, and American Indian participation in genocide and violence”

(Guidotti-Hernández, 17). Further interventions of celebratory Chicana/o *mestizaje* assert that “*mestizaje* is incapable of suturing together the heterogenous positionalities of Mexican, Indian, Chicana/o that coexist in the United States” (Saldaña-Portillo, 413). Saldaña-Portillo further argues that *mestizaje* in Chicana/o literary works serves to maintain a discourse that employs indigeneity at will and simultaneously marginalizes contemporary Indigenous communities supposedly celebrated by this discourse (413). The critiques of an idealized *mestizaje* are advanced through calls for a total rejection of this terminology. Lovell Banks asserts that “Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) scholars should replace their uncritical celebration of *mestizaje* with a focus on colonialism and capitalism, the twin “isms” that influenced ideological theories and racial formation from the late fifteenth through the twentieth century in the Americas” (Banks, 204). Additionally, Rodriguez and Cuevas propose that much work is needed to understand indigeneity separate from *mestizaje* and denounce toxic aspects of Chicanismo, such as problematic claims to land, practices, and knowledges that “were not ours to begin with” (232).

The conflicting and varied interpretations of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o scholarship become an imperative dialogue to this project. Because *mestizaje* signals the embodiment of history (Pérez-Torres, 3) across multiple geographies, histories, political projects, and cultural productions, it becomes a malleable concept within Chicana/o identity productions. Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera emphasize that although “Chicana/o scholars and writers have long deployed the term as a symbolic register, *mestizaje* has deep historical roots in Mexico as well as in what is today the U.S. Southwest” (554).

Therefore, these conversations become necessary components to my analysis that examines the strategic and selective uses of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o recoveries of Mexican history and (re)construction of indigeneity that simultaneously do not grapple with the racial exclusions and essentializations operating out of these actions. To further examine *mestizaje*'s materialization as a historical and cultural epistemology, I now turn to a focused discussion of Aztlán and *La Raza* as two significant components within Chicana/o racial discourses.

#### *Aztlán and uses of pre-Columbian histories*

The discourse of *mestizaje* becomes extended among multiple lines of Chicana/o consciousness and cultural politics. As emphasized earlier, adaptations of quintessential Mexican histories represent essential components of Chicana/o cultural productions. In all these narratives, *mestizaje* becomes an overarching framework tying Chicana/o identity to these popular Mexican statist discourses. Alberto labels these practices as “Chicano and Chicana indigenism” and describes them as “the selective elevation and celebration of indigenous ancestries that forge a Chicana/o history, culture, and identity steeped in pre-Columbian aesthetics” (Alberto, 107). She further argues that the creation of an Indigenous Chicana/o identity was achieved through importing and reimagining Mexican *indigenismo* as a means of solidifying a Chicana/o national culture (109). Similarly, Marez identifies these racial and cultural projects as an “*indigenismo* of the antique, that singles out in particular the fall of the Aztec empire as the primal scene of Chicana/o identity and as a paradigm for the subsequent conquest of the territory now known as the U.S. Southwest” (267). He further notes that Chicana/os engage in an

ideological archeology reconstructing genealogical relationships between the present and a distant pre-Columbian past (Marez, 267) as a method of cultural and historical revival. The reconstruction of this harmonious past is most recognizable in the mythological figure of Aztlán which is symbolically and physically mapped onto constructions of mestiza/o histories and culture. Saldaña-Portillo points out that “Chicanos appropriated the discourse of *mestizaje* in the early 1970s when we claimed Aztlán as an Indigenous nation historically anterior to the founding of the United States” (413). Aztlán as the mythological and territorial origin of Chicana/o identity “lent a moral and historical legitimacy to claims for economic and civil rights” (Saldaña-Portillo, 413), and consequently informed the creation of a Chicana/o nationalism dependent on a presumed access to Indigenous subalternity.

In his theorizations of Aztlán and Chicana/o nationalism, Cooper Alarcón situates the myth of Aztlán, which “emerged from Chicano nationalist discourses of an imaginary Mexican space,” as a shared Mexican and Chicana/o cultural concept that “proved useful to the architects of Chicano nationalism” (Cooper Alarcón, xvii). The usefulness of Aztlán, as Cooper Alarcón notes, becomes a primary vehicle linking Mexican origin stories to Chicana/o histories of ancestry, place, and cultural memories. However, the simplified adoption of Aztlán as rightful cultural inheritance “obscures and elides important issues surrounding Chicana/o identity, such as the significance of intracultural differences” (Cooper Alarcón, 8). Overlooking the multiple cultural significances within Chicana/o identity advances “the disturbing tendency to focus only on the relationship between Chicano communities and the dominant Anglo culture, at the expense of any

discussion of the complex, diverse character of Chicanos and their relationship with other ethnic groups” (Cooper Alarcón, 8). This important intervention outlines the shortcoming of a monolithic Chicana/o identity that reductively incorporates Mexican cultural and historical narratives as central elements.

Saldaña-Portillo expands on the racial geographies mapped onto Aztlán through invocations of Aztec indigeneity and the racial ideology of *mestizaje*. She describes racial geographies as “a technology of power and a theory of spatial production used to produce space in racial terms,” (17) and theorizes Aztlán as the starkest example of this definition asserting that “Aztlán is copiously produced from the grief suffered at the legislative loss of indigeneity” (197). Aztlán is outlined as a vehicle of Chicana/o resistance that mapped a “physical and psychic landscape of liberation” (Saldaña-Portillo, 199) where Chicana/os spatially produced their senses of belonging and identity. The geographic necessity of Aztlán is theorized as a melancholic and manic incorporation of lost indigeneity and Indigenous territory (Saldaña-Portillo, 197) that fulfills Chicana/o desires of recovering ancient cultures and subalternities. Because of its pliable utility among Chicana/o identity productions and its instrumentalization as a conduit of ancient Mexican history, Aztlán becomes an important component to my overall analysis. Most importantly, Aztlán represents a transnational narrative between Mexico and Chicana/o origin stories as it presently forms “part of Mexico’s official national folklore and indigenous history” (Menchaca, 22). As Cooper Alarcón proposes the metaphorical concept of an Aztec palimpsest “to move forward a more complicated and ultimately more valuable notion of Mesoamerica, Mexican, and Chicano history” (7), my project

builds upon this call by going beyond a scrutiny of Aztlán and Aztec-centric mythologies in Chicana/o culture. I will examine how Mexican culture, both pre-Columbian and contemporary, informs and affects production of a collective Chicana/o identity based on cultural pride and historical origins.

*Interpreting Mexican Racializations: La Raza*

As a driving force behind Chicana/o nationalism Aztlán also became intertwined into Chicana/o ideologies that borrowed from Mexican racial discourses. Saldaña-Portillo identifies a Chicana/o racial calculus that remade Chicana/o communities into '*La Raza*'; a marginalized population "deserving of their own racial classification" (201) under the law. The archetypal slogan of *La Raza* reflected an effort to move Chicana/o identity away from Whiteness, but strongly mirrored an appropriation of Mexican racial ideologies through an interpretation of Jose Vasconcelos's "*La Raza Cósmica*" (202). Saldaña-Portillo argues that "when Chicana/o activists and writers adopted the term '*La Raza*' from Vasconcelos, they adopted his utopic hierarchy" (203), including the colonial representations of Indigenous and Black subjectivities. Although Chicana/os embraced the Indigenous half of the "Hispano-Indio" link and utilized it as a means of "establishing a political identity and imaginative control of the Southwest" (204), the figure of the "indio" is nonetheless subverted and relegated to a "tangential role" of the simplistic Spanish/Indian dyad" (203). *Mestizaje* becomes a foundational theory present in both Aztlán and Chicana/o recuperations of indigeneity under the banner of *La Raza*.

Palacios extends the relationship between *mestizaje*, *La Raza Cósmica*, and Chicana/o appropriations of both. Much like Saldaña-Portillo, Palacios examines how

*mestizaje* has been repurposed for the formation of political identities and describes *mestizaje* as a “malleable ideology historically appropriated to meet diverse ideological and political needs” (417). Yet, he maintains that while Chicana/os utilized *mestizaje* as a primary ideology explaining their disenfranchised racial status in the US, their expression was not a direct translation of the Eurocentric and elitist structure first espoused by José Vasconcelos in 1925. In the Chicana/o imaginary *mestizaje*, and *La Raza Cósmica* as an extension, were originally taken up to signal a working-class and anti-racist struggle for Chicana/o justice, veering away from its intended colonial origins. The attempted subversion and regeneration of *La Raza Cósmica* can then be attributed to a “willful misreading” of Vasconcelos’s racial theory, minimalizing its historical usage as a “*mestizaje* premised on racial hierarchy” (Palacios, 417). Palacios attempts to answer this complex historical trajectory by arguing that this transition was not originated by Chicana/o scholarship but instead by Euro-American intellectuals who transitioned *la Raza Cósmica* and *mestizaje* from an exclusive racial ideology to a theory of multiculturalism (416). As a theory that crossed the US-Mexico border and ushered in a Mexican mestizo nationalism (Palacios, 428), *La Raza Cósmica* advances a harmonious view of *mestizaje* tactically invoked by Chicana/o activists as a way of redefining a historical trajectory in the US that denied them racial lineages, national belonging, and cultural empowerment.

The normalization of Chicana/os as mestiza/os, part of *la Raza Cósmica*, and proponents of a *mestizaje* ideology signals to the proliferation of Chicana/o knowledge productions that assembled an archetypical Chicana/o subject and situated uniform

narratives of cultural and racial origins. The entanglements between indigeneity, Mexican statist discourses, and Chicana/o identity that normalize *mestizaje* as an anti-hegemonic discourse warrants closer attention. As Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera argue, “any understanding of the uses of “Chicano indigeneity” must take into account a centuries long process of colonization that has resulted in the formation of subjects who have historically occupied a complex position somewhere between “settlers” and “Indians” (Saldaña-Portillo and Cotera, 553-54). Recognizing that the idea of *mestizaje* continually functions in Latin America as a mechanism to erase cultural and racial diversity (418), Palacios argues that intellectual fields such as Latina/o and Chicana/o studies should imperatively “interrogate the history of the idea of *mestizaje* and *la raza cósmica* to examine how these interwoven ideologies have at times been complicit with racism and the erasure of indigenous peoples and Afro mestizos” (418). While Palacios’s call for popular racial relations to contend with these silences begins a necessary dialogue on relationships between Blackness and *mestizaje*, it minimally bridges an analysis between these two racial formations. Additional work is needed to account for the way Chicana/o adoptions of *mestizaje* and *La Raza Cósmica* perpetuate the Spanish/Indian archetype and position Black Mexicans as unimaginable in Chicana/o history and identities. My analysis builds upon these interventions by going beyond a critique of the classical Spanish/Indian dyad to show how *mestizaje*, *La Raza Cósmica*, and Mexican statist discourses invisibilize Black communities both within popular Mexican culture and in the production of Chicana/o identities.

### **Chicana/o Racial Boundaries and Cultural Exclusions**

The prolific understanding of Chicana/o subjects as descendants from Spanish and Indigenous racial formations dismisses any understanding of the importance of Black histories and contributions among the Mexican and Chicana/o racial landscape. The use of a Spanish/Indigenous *mestizaje* within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtemoc* contributes to these historical and cultural silences. The construction of a brown, *india*, and mestiza/o subject (Estrella, 7) in both these newspapers contribute to a “Brownologist” perspective that obscures the fact that Latina/os come in the full spectrum of racial hues, including Black (Morales, 503). As I later argue, these racial constructions emerge from cultural and historical practices of *mestizaje* in where Blackness is consistently placed outside of Mexicanness (Thompson-Hernández, 122), contributing to the undertheorized erasure and mistreatment of Black subjectivities. The conversation of Mexican *mestizaje* becomes central in examining the racial legacies exhibited throughout *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as it provides the theoretical foundation for racial narratives within both these publications. Therefore, to situate my argument of the limitations and racial exclusions emerging from *mestizaje* discourses within *El Grito de Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I provide a deeper overview of literature addressing negations of Blackness in Chicana/o racial and cultural productions.

Despite its celebration as a harmonious racial ideology that equally accounts for diverse cultures and racializations, *mestizaje* sutures over intra-racial inequities and social differences within Chicana/o culture. The operationalization of *mestizaje* as a conceptual panacea fails to address tensions in *de facto* assumptions about US Latina/o and

Chicana/o populations as one differentiated group (Torres-Saillant, 138). These normative presuppositions are further perpetuated through practices of identity productions that strategically formulate a cohesive, and often monolithic, group subjectivity. Chabram-Dernersesian calls for a reconsideration of homogenized metanarratives produced within Chicana/o discourses and firmly urges scholars to begin deconstructing state generated Mexican identities to voice other intersected ethnic pluralities and underrepresented multiethnic communities (271). Chabram-Dernersesian also interrogates the usages of “native” multiculturalism, or *mestizaje*, and states that “far from rejecting these ideas around *mestizaje*, many Chicana/o writers have privileged these ideas within essentialist discourses” (268), contributing to the production of a singular Chicana/o identity that “contains ethnic pluralities within selected brown masculinities” (267). While *mestizaje* supposedly highlighted the multiple races and origins present within Chicana/o culture, its contradictory nature obscures heterogenous identities within the Chicana/o community. The “already-made notions of Chicana/os” (Chabram-Dernersesian, 269) as Brown and mestiza/os creates rigid modes of identification that don’t account for the struggles of individuals existing “well out of the limits proscribed by early Chicana/o discourse and its traditional notions of *mestizaje*” (Chabram-Dernersesian, 271). Therefore, the racial narratives of Chicana/o identity production illustrate how Blackness becomes unregistered in the Brown and mestiza/o identity constructed during the Chicana/o movement, eventually engendering exclusionary identity politics.

Katerí Hernández references pre-Chicana/o movement racial discourses as the historical context that harmfully distanced Blackness from the identities of Mexican Americans, arguing that the assumption of a “Mexican American generation that saw themselves as a white group” (155) had severe implications for the future generation of Chicana/os who transformed themselves from White to Brown. As “Mexican American” symbolically and racially transitioned to an insurgent “Chicana/o” identity, Katerí Hernández notes that “even the non-white identity that emerged focused upon Chicanos’ Indigenous ancestry and completely submerged the African ancestry that also exists” (155). The calculative discourses of race employed by Chicana/os demonstrate how popular Chicana/o identities became correlated with an exclusionary *mestizaje* narrative that dismisses Blackness to instead instrumentalize indigeneity as a racial foundation. The construction of an Indigenous centric Chicana/o identity is further parceled out by Haney López who argues that while “Chicana/os initially drew strong parallels between Brown and Black identities, lingering prejudice and emergent ideas linking Mexican identity to Indigenous ancestry stemmed Chicana/o assertions of a functionally black identity” (Haney López, 211). The political necessity of creating a separate racial category from Black ushered in the celebrated discourse of *mestizaje*, allowing Chicana/os to formulate the beginnings of an exclusive Brown identity contingent on mixture and racial binaries. In the case of Chicana/os, the recognition of Black Mexican roots and contemporary Black Mexicans would have complicated the construction of a Brown identity that sought to separate itself from both White and Black. Yet, while Blackness failed to be considered as part of a Chicana/o identity, it was also needed to

construct a non-Black idea of race and culture. *Mestizaje* then aids as a racial discourse allowing Chicana/os to simultaneously stress their ties to indigeneity and create an identifiable racial distance from Black oppression in the US (Haney López, 212). Conceptualizing Brown as an identity dismissing and unimagining Blackness not only surfaced as a tactic of the Chicana/o movement that contributed to anti-Black attitudes, but it also meant that Chicana/os were drawing upon a racial common sense understanding of Mexican racial identity (Haney López, 229). While Chicana/os inherited and constructed their identity from an already anti-Black Mexican culture, history, and political imaginary, Haney López reiterates that Chicana/os also consciously decided to construct their own identities around a Spanish and Indigenous binary as a way of ostracizing themselves from the detrimental treatment of Black people in the US (Haney López, 212). As a previously mentioned example, Chicana/os who revamped and channeled *La Raza Cósmica* as a foundational characteristic of their new mestiza/o identities also inherited the already troublesome discourses accompanying *mestizaje* and Mexican racial stratifications.

Expanding upon Haney López's theory of "common sense understanding of race" (Haney López, 110), Kateri Hernández calls for a nuanced intersectional and historical understanding of the roles Black Mexicans played in Chicana/o movement formations and emerging political identities. She argues that Black Mexicans became obscured from their own Mexican histories because of a hegemonic understanding of Mexican race relations. The absence of Blackness from Mexican racial discourses becomes a "racial script that operates on an unconscious level" and acts as the principle factor "contributing

to the lack of data about Afro Mexican Chicanos” (1539). Interplays between Chicana/o and Mexican racial formations become significant in assessing the degree to which Chicanos are ignorant of their own Afro Mexican history (1539) as a result of already discriminant Mexican cultural formations. Kateri Hernández recognizes the racial lineages and translations interwoven between Chicana/o and Mexican identity productions and posits that Chicana/o erasure of Afro Mexicans emerged from a “strong incentive to continue the Mexican tradition of treating Afro Mexicans as distinct, while denying the significance of their existence in the creation of a group-based identity” (1548). Monolithic narratives of Chicana/o identity based upon a singular *mestizaje* archetype not only constructed racial boundaries and delineated a normative Chicana figure, they also contributed to an absence of data genuinely assessing the influences of Afro Mexican ancestry on the development of a Chicano racial identity (1538). The reliance upon a Spanish and Indigenous racial binary prevents an accurate recognition of Black Mexican positionalities during formations of the 1960s Chicana/o movement and contemporary Chicana/o politics. As Katerí Hernández argues, the scant literature regarding the Chicana/o movement frequently fails to mention the existence of Black Mexicans in the US, or even in Mexico for that matter, creating a deficit in knowledge of their experiences and influences upon Mexican and Chicana/o culture (1544). Examining how intricate aspects of Latina/o and Chicana/o identity are formulated through exclusionary racial politics also serves to discursively deconstruct traditional Spanish/Indian/Mestizo racial analyses that ignore how *mestizaje* also interacts (or doesn’t) with Blackness in the Mexican and Chicana/o community.

Indeed, a contemporary analysis of anti-Black bias in Mexico as a vestige of Spanish colonialism and nationalism is continually unacknowledged in the uncritical celebration of Chicana/o *mestizaje* (Banks, 2003). As Chicana/os locate their heritage in various aspects of Mexican culture, the role of *mestizaje* as a hegemonic purchase on the national imaginary, producing a racial-national incommensurability between Blackness and mexicanidad, (Dorr, 25) is largely ignored. The investment of post-revolutionary Mexico in constituting “a decisive terrain of national formation,” (Dorr, 25) which includes the articulation of a collective identity and the production of ideal citizen subjects, largely contributes to the popularity of *mestizaje* as a tool of state formation. Through ideologies of *mestizaje* and nationalism, Mexican statist discourses become invested in cementing and reproducing a uniform understanding of Mexican histories and racial imaginaries. The selective construction of *mestizaje*, while it excludes Blackness from its discursive and cultural function, nonetheless racializes Black Mexican bodies existing at the periphery of the nation. Among the Mexican mestiza/o nation, “Afro Mexicans are rendered hypervisible at the scale of the racially marked body, yet remain socially and politically invisible at the national scale” (Dorr, 25). Anti-Blackness therefore becomes foundational in the Mexican ideology of *mestizaje*, and as a transplanted discourse into Chicana/o identity productions, also implicates Chicana/os within this contentious racial dialogue.

The convergence between Chicana/o identity, Blackness, and exclusionary racial hierarchies presented in this body of literature contributes to a broader understanding of the damaging operatives of *mestizaje*. The call to admit or address evidence of anti-Black

bias in contemporary Mexico and within Mexican American communities (Banks, 204) resounds among these scholarly interventions that place Blackness as central to discussions of Chicana/o identity and cultural productions. As the traditional Chicana/o subject is theorized as emerging from problematic and exclusionary origins, the possibilities for critical readings of Chicana/o culture and identity formations become available and necessary. Moreover, the acknowledgement of Mexican statist discourses and its influence upon unexamined uses of *mestizaje* within Chicana/o discourses are helpful in delineating the discursive foundations of *mestizaje* as a popular racial ideology. Building off these interventions, my project joins conversations of anti-Blackness with an analysis of Indigenous appropriations. The joint discussion of both these Chicana/o identity processes allows for a holistic understanding of the multiple operatives of *mestizaje* as a popularized discourse. I now turn to scholarship addressing the histories of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as a way of threading together the multiple convergences between *mestizaje*, appropriations of Indigenous histories, and neglect of Black contributions within Chicana/o identity production.

### **Building Chicana/o Politics: *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc***

Writings about *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* have largely focused on the histories of these publications as gendered, classed, and racialized discourses within the Chicana/o movement. One of the most salient themes and points of emphasis threaded throughout literature on *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* centers around mythologies of *mestizaje*, renewals of Mexican cultural pride, and Chicana/o nationalism that position Chicana/o identity as products of these social formations

(Martínez, 82; Blackwell, 66; López, 559). As two influential texts, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* espoused and deconstructed popular ideas circulated and implemented through various facets of the Chicana/o movement. However, scholarship dedicated at documenting, theorizing, and venerating Chicana/o movement texts, including *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, have shied away from engaging with problematic discourses of *mestizaje*, Chicana/o racial formations, and Mexican culture, resulting in an ambiguous “mestiza/o” Chicana/o archetype that continues to be deployed throughout Chicana/o and Latina/o literature.

#### *El Grito del Norte*

*El Grito del Norte* is highlighted as a discursive influence among Chicana/o politics and culture speaking “to all the issues of social justice, ethnic pride, environmental wellbeing, a skewed economy, poverty, and feminist issues important within La Raza” (Vásquez, ix). López remarks that *El Grito del Norte* adopted “a much more internationalist and left leaning political framework than routinely seen in other Chicano movement publications” (539), positioning the Chicana/o struggle within an anti-imperialist framework and global political analysis. López also describes *El Grito del Norte* as an active participant in recalcitrant political factions by publishing newspaper sections such as *La Raza en Las Americas* and *¡Despierten Hermanos!* that advanced an internationalist leftist framework connecting the Chicana/o struggle to social movements outside of the US, such as struggles in Mexico, Cuba, and Vietnam. López contends that *El Grito del Norte*’s radicalism and leftist politics helped bridge “connections between “La Causa” in Chicana/o communities and militant campaigns for

internationalist solidarity” (538). Aside from its preoccupation with national and international politics, López argues that *El Grito del Norte* contributed to larger formations of Chicana scholarship and credits *El Grito del Norte* with “publishing some of the most important early Chicana feminist writings from the Movement years” (538). As a self-defined political and educational resource for the Chicana/o community, *El Grito del Norte* also encouraged nationalist consciousness and self-respect among Chicana/os (Martínez, 81) through its articulations of Chicana/o cultural and political belonging.

*El Grito del Norte* also defined the principles of Chicanismo and the Chicana/o movement through conversations around race, culture, and history. Vásquez notes that *El Grito del Norte* grappled with the political implications of Chicana/o cultural belongings that advocated for “pride in the complicated racial inheritance of Latin America” (xlvii). The understandings of “the complicated racial inheritance of Latin America” as described above by Vásquez signals to a Chicana/o awareness of the complex narratives attached to Latin American (Mexican) racializations. Yet, Vásquez does not explicitly state *mestizaje* as the central component attached to the “complicated racial inheritances” that Chicana/os must contend and eventually accept (xlvii). Given the precarious terrain Chicana/os navigated in search for their own identity and cultural roots, *El Grito del Norte* also offered a directive to Chicana/o identity productions with formative essays such as “La Historia del Mestizo,” “¡Somos Aztlán!,” and “A New Nation is Born” (*El Grito del Norte*, 12, 9, 5). The invocation of Raza, *mestizaje*, and Aztlán, among the writing of *El Grito del Norte* conceptualize indigeneity as a unifying idea meant to situate

Chicana/os within a nation other than the US and instill Mexican cultural pride as a “strategy of struggle for raza liberation and self-determination” (208). Therefore, *El Grito del Norte* links together “oppression, strategies for social change, group identity, coalition, solidarity, and separate spaces” (226) with Mexican Indigenous histories to form a cohesive bedrock to Chicana/o identity.

Within the scope of celebratory and positive reviews of *El Grito del Norte*, little room is left for a critique of *El Grito del Norte* as a Chicana/o movement publication that advanced problematic *mestizaje* discourses and exclusionary Chicana/o identity politics. The understanding of *El Grito del Norte* as an influential political and social tool of the Chicana/o movement becomes a popularized narrative that overlooks uses of Aztec-centric histories appropriating Mexican mestiza/o nationalism (Trujillo, 98), uncritical acceptances of problematic racial identities, and insistence on political and racial separation. The venerations of Aztlán and Mexican cultural pride as formations of Chicana/o identity become clear indicators of *El Grito del Norte*’s efforts to centralize a cohesive political consciousness that engages with both *mestizaje* and exclusionary Chicana/o identity productions in implicit and explicit ways. As an example, *El Grito del Norte*’s coverage and unapologetic support of *Alianza Federal de Mercedes*<sup>8</sup> land grant battles played a formative role in the production of Chicana/o movement imaginaries, historiographies of Aztlán, and internal colonization (Trujillo, 97). The *Alianza* land grant movement argued that nineteenth and twentieth century Mexican and Spanish land grants

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<sup>8</sup> La Alianza Federal de Mercedes, led by López Tijerina, challenged US sovereignty by utilizing Spanish and Mexican land grants as basis for the repatriation of communal land rights on behalf of New Mexico’s “Spanish” and “Indo-Hispano” populations. Tensions between the Alianza movement and law enforcement led to an armed raid on the Tierra Amarilla courthouse where Tijerina, his daughter Rosita, and twenty other aliancistas attempted a citizen’s arrest of New Mexico district attorney Alfonso Sánchez (Trujillo, 96-97).

authorized Chicana/os as land holders of the Southwest. The *Alianza* instrumentalized a rhetoric of *genizaro mestizaje* and colonial law to challenge US sovereignty and insurrect Chicana/o cultural nationalist concepts such as Aztlán. The popularization of Aztlán through *El Grito del Norte* coincided with its reformation of mestiza/o genealogies, as exhibited through the continued usage of “Indo-Hispano” as a representation of Southwestern *mestizaje* and colonial histories (Trujillo, 98). Aside from its investment in the infamous land grant movement, *El Grito del Norte* also concerned itself with offering a corrective to the polarization of discourses that suggested the Chicano movement was the Mexican American version of the African American civil rights movement (Vásquez, xlv). The preoccupation with clarifying a difference between Chicana/o and Black political movement signals a lack of understanding of the racial and historical overlaps between the two groups. More importantly, discussions of “corrective representations” points to a racial practice employed during the Chicana/o movement that necessitated distinction between “Mexican American and African American” to starkly mark limits of brown and Black identities.

### *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*

Scholarship examining *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* credits its political and cultural existence as a pivotal Chicana feminist publication that subverted chauvinist Chicano attitudes and built discursive space for the proliferation of Chicana feminism. As a leading Chicana feminist publication, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* served a multifunctional role in the development of gender equity and visibility among Chicanas. Editors of *Encuentro Femenil*, the Chicana journal evolving out of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, describe *Hijas de*

*Cuauhtémoc* as a vehicle helping make Chicanas aware of their leadership potential in addressing pertinent issues such as Chicana college dropout rates, lack of educational resources, gendered expectations, and unequal familial dynamics (Del Castillo, 1). As an emerging political and gendered newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* set out to inform Chicanas about themselves by reporting on Chicanas' political activities in the communities and by educating Chicanas about the socioeconomic condition that they must deal with as women in a minority culture of an oppressive society (García, 279). Blackwell notes the precise influence of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as producing a pivotal shift in the discussion of Chicana/o cultural nationalism that "articulated concepts of gender mediated through masculinity, brotherhood, familism, and carnalismo" (65). As a Chicana feminist publication, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* looked to expand androcentric Chicana/o narratives to include the historical contributions of Chicanas within multiple political and cultural factions of the Chicana/o movement. Describing the first publications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as a "watershed moment in the articulation of a Chicana feminist political, poetic, and historical vision" (Blackwell, 67), Blackwell highlights the monumental role *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* played in structuring and developing Chicana feminist thought invested in the livelihoods, histories, and experiences of Chicanas in the Chicana/o struggle. The content found within *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* advocates for "[multiplying] the critical dialogues between constituencies of the imagined community of Aztlán" (Blackwell, 67) as a way of inserting gender within narratives of Chicana/o cultural nationalism.

The central critique of gender exclusions within the publications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* offered Chicanas tools to re-envision their liberation while also emphasizing their cultural and political inheritances. Articles and poems such as “Soy Chicana de Aztlán” and “Hijas de Cuauhtémoc” (Estrella 7; Hernández, 1) encompassed these nationalistic efforts as they utilized pre-Columbian iconographies and cultural narratives to build an understanding of Chicana cultural and political inheritances. The new modes of Chicana theorizations re-envisioned through *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* can be starkly identified through the name of the newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. Blackwell argues that the purposeful title of the newspaper meant to take on the anticolonial struggle that Cuauhtémoc symbolized and to pay homage to the histories of the Mexican women’s group *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* who fought against the Mexican state during the revolution (68). Through this decolonial and revolutionary Chicana imaginary, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* attached and linked their self-made decolonial and radicalized identities to community struggles over “incarceration, education, poverty, and social justice,” (Blackwell, 68) demonstrating the forged connection between formations of cultural understandings and political Chicana/o movement actions.

During the height of its popularity among emerging Chicana feminist circles *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* began "marking a gendered shift in the print culture of the Chicano movement and signaling the growth of Chicana feminist communities locally and translocally" (Blackwell, 133). Aside from concerning itself as a corrective to misguided and sexist images of *La Chicana*, Blackwell notes how the intricate feminist space of Chicana print culture “functioned as a mediating space where new ideas, theories, and

political claims were constructed, negotiated and contested” (134) further positioning *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* publications as important texts showcasing Chicana/o identity discourses. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also formed part of a larger body of Chicana political literature, demonstrating an ability to transmit Chicana feminist thoughts “in diverse locations, legitimating women’s ideas translocally and helping build cross-regional coalitions” (Blackwell, 134). As proof of the geographical reach of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, Blackwell highlights a connection to *El Grito del Norte* noting that the first issue of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* included a reprinted analysis of the 1969 Chicana caucus proclamation originally published by Enriqueta Vásquez y Longeaux two years prior in *El Grito del Norte* (140). As a member of a larger national Chicana print culture, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* constructed theoretical Chicana ideologies aimed at creating “new spaces for women within masculinist registers of nationalism” (Blackwell, 159) that reworked the parameters of the Chicana/o movement to benefit Chicana activists asserting themselves along Chicana/o liberation and justice.

The extent of scholarship addressing the cultural and political implications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* minimally ventures beyond the introductory pages of *Encuentro Femenil* and the work of Blackwell, who remains the main scholar theorizing *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and its impact among Chicana feminist thought. Within this limited scholarship, an emphasis is placed upon *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as an important publication that destabilized sexist perceptions of Chicanas within political movement and Chicana/o nationalism. However, the veneration of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as a radical intervention among sexist Chicano politics overlooks the ways *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also

employed appropriations of Indigenous iconographies and formulated a Chicana identity based on narratives of *mestizaje* and Mexican nationalism. Returning to the physical name of the newspaper, the veneration of the male figure of Cuauhtémoc continues a Chicana/o tradition of utilizing Indigenous symbolism and pre-Columbian histories to become a rallying point of Chicana feminist identities based on a decolonial imagination. Additionally, as *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* advocated for their own independent inclusion within the “imagined community of Aztlán” (Blackwell, 67), the problematic origins and function of Aztlán is left intact as a cultural truth. The construction of a monolithic Chicana identity within publications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also becomes a significant shortcoming unaddressed within this line of scholarship. While *mestizaje* isn’t named as a central concept, a deeper critique reveals that homages to Mexican nationalist histories and perceived Indigenous cultures borders the use of *mestizaje* as an important component of the content within *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*.

My engagement with both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as representations of larger Chicana/o discourses deviates from a traditional analysis that position these texts as unproblematic contributions to Chicana/o identity productions. My project instead shows how Chicana/o adaptations of Mexican histories, *mestizaje*, racial formations, and Indigenous iconographies, found within both these publications, create sites of exclusions and marginalizations. In doing so, I also counter singular narratives of resistance that are frequently attributed to the era of the Chicana/o movement that do not allow for a fruitful discussion of cultural and ethno-racial nuances. Through a critical analysis of both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I discuss how scholarship

theorizing Chicana/o identity should strive to interrogate normalized Chicana/o narratives of community, social justice, cultural pride, and national belong centered around *mestizaje* to account for the damaging limitations and cultural exclusions of this racial ideology.

An attempt to bridge together selected academic discussions of *El Grito del Norte*, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, Chicana/o conceptualizations of Mexican racial ideologies, exclusionary Chicana/o racializations, and Afro Mexican erasure emerges from an intellectual need to create comprehensive and holistic analyses addressing intersectional oppressions. Consequently, the lack of engagement among these areas of research has contributed to an academic deficit neglecting how mechanisms associated with Chicana/o identity, Mexican national narratives, and absences of Black histories, diverge, and often collide. It is from these scholarly discrepancies that the impetus for this project has been formulated and will guide methodological and critical textual analyses of Chicana/a movement texts *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. As classical Chicana/o analysis on race, identity, and culture continue to operate in the field of Chicana/o studies, this review also seeks to expand and effectively inform the ways in which works in Chicana/o studies can create discourses attending to the multiple positionalities that contributed to Chicana/o identity and cultural productions.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

The primary subjects of this project are the representations, theorizations, and relevance of Chicana/o movement newspapers, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, and their relationship to greater understandings of Chicana/o identity production. As texts from a specific historical era, both newspapers serve as snapshots of broad Chicana/o movement discourses and understandings that help inform contemporary scholarship and epistemologies within academic fields such as Chicana/o Studies. The significance of both texts is exemplified in their circulation and adaptation by Chicana/o activist communities, working class populations, and Chicana/o student groups. Both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* received attention as localized and national publications that spoke to the multifarious conversations occurring among Chicana/o organizations and activist circles. As Chicana/o movement newspapers engaged in dialogues with one another, the organic character of print media became “crucial to the ideological development of Chicana/o political community and the constitution of a shared political imaginary” (Blackwell, 137). The Chicana/o perspectives circulating among activist communities and people outside of the movement also point to the centrality of identity production and understanding as a hallmark of the Chicana/o movement. The thematic and contextual overlaps between *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* validates their influence in popularizing Chicana/o cultural nationalism and political consciousness.

### Geographical Influences and Readerships

The influence and recognition of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* cemented itself among various audiences, localities, and Chicana/o spaces. As a widely circulated newspaper, *El Grito del Norte* achieved a notable reputation among the Southwestern Chicana/o political landscape. As previously stated, *El Grito del Norte* became a popular newspaper member of the CPA due to its political, cultural, and social coverage of national Chicana/o movement. The primary function of the CPA was to establish communication among Chicana/o movement newspapers, allowing different Chicana/o periodicals to exchange and share resources, such as articles, photos, artwork, and distribution facilities while remaining completely independent. As a member of the CPA, *El Grito del Norte* shared membership and communication with newspapers ranging from Wautoma, Wisconsin to Pacoima, California who also reported on Chicana/o economic and political issues. *El Grito del Norte*'s readership also remained relatively diverse, as evidenced in the "letter to the editor" sections printed at the end of almost every issue. Readers who submitted letters requesting subscription or sharing praise did so from all over the Southwest. Some examples of their readership include a professor from the University of California, Berkeley (*Grito del Norte*, 8) and Chicana/o Studies groups in both Arizona and Colorado state penitentiaries (*Grito del Norte*, 15). As the official newspaper for *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes* land grant movement, *El Grito del Norte* also found a loyal audience among *Alianza* members and supporters (López, 539). Additionally, *El Grito del Norte* principally appealed to Chicana/o activist through articles such as "El Gran Robo de Nuestras Tierras" and "La Voz de Nuestra Cultura" that called upon Chicana/os to recognize the necessity for a shared cultural

formation and historical narratives. As a multifocal newspaper, *El Grito del Norte* weaved together Chicana/o movement identity and cultural nationalism with pertinent social and economic issues, further showing how the contents within *El Grito del Norte* spoke to larger ideological tenets and conversations within the 1960 and 70s Chicana/o movement.

The influence of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also reached across local and national activist spaces, most notably among radical Chicana feminist circles existing within and outside Chicano centered politics. This interaction can be seen within the content of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that continually featured reprinted material from Chicanas in other states who also spoke on the topic of gender inequities and Chicana feminist issues such as education, community organizing, and identity politics. An example of this cross regional dialogue includes a reprinted article titled “La Mujer Todavía Impotente” authored by Rosita Morales, a Chicana from Houston, Texas (*Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, 4). As Chicanas across the Southwest expressed a dire need to establish a national means of communication that would strengthen a new feeling of “Hermanidad” (sisterhood) among Chicanas (“Introduction,” 5), *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* became an important newspaper establishing regional and local connections between Chicana activists. Through pieces such as “The Adelita’s Role in El Movimiento” and “Mujer,” that addressed the role of Chicanas within broader perimeters of Chicana/o nationalism, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* served as a discursive space where the physical, political, and ideological purpose of Chicana identity could be negotiated and theorized. The significance of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as a pioneering Chicana feminist publication during the 1970s was further

cemented when Chicana participants of the 1971 *Mujeres por la Raza* conference passed a resolution naming *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as the national paper for Chicana activists (Blackwell, 145). Efforts at creating a Chicana feminist counterpublic (Blackwell, 134) continued after the last official publication of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* in 1971 as various editors began writing for other Chicana journals and periodicals. The veneration of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as one of the first Chicana feminist publications serves as a critical perspective “to understand the development of Chicana feminist ideology, discourse, and political praxis” (Blackwell, 134) that originated out of these modes of production.

### **Longevity, Sustainability, and Internal Politics**

As both *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and *El Grito del Norte* participated in the greater construction of Chicana/o print culture, the sustainability and duration of both these newspapers warrants significant attention. Throughout its existence, *El Grito del Norte* obtained great status as a periodical known for “documenting a radical vision and practice of the Chicana/o movement” (López, 552). For example, *El Grito del Norte* published six volumes, sponsored consistent travels to Cuba, Vietnam, and China (López, 542-546), and maintained communication with international revolutionaries who would send in letters of support and communiques (*Grito del Norte*, 1). The labor and capacity of the editorial staff of *El Grito del Norte* also contributed to the expansion and longevity of the newspaper across New Mexico and the Southwest. *El Grito del Norte* was run by full-time volunteer staff and operated out of its headquarters in Española, New Mexico, giving the staff a space to work and consistently publish. Activists like Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, and Beverly Axelrod, who was a civil rights

lawyer, became dedicated to *El Grito del Norte* and secured a variety of resources to help the newspaper run. *El Grito del Norte*'s fame also came through its first account coverage of the renown *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes* land grant movement, which continues to be a staple of Chicana/o movement history. Most importantly, *El Grito del Norte*'s membership in the CPA ensured a wide reach across the national Chicana/o movement platform and positively contributed to their popularity among various other Chicana/o newspapers across the Southwest.

The Chicana feminist newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* began as a student run newspaper operating within the university setting and Chicana/o movement politics. The student editorial staff that worked diligently on the publications of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* were also concerned with various other community projects and did not have the capacity to run a full-time operation. Yet, founders of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* sustained their commitment and “drew from their experiences writing for other Chicana/o student movement newspapers” (Blackwell, 138) in order to publish the first issues. As García notes, Chicanas devised several strategies to build up their platforms and document their experiences within the Chicana/o movement. Chicanas developed critical ways of intervening among male dominated publications because many believed that these early publications did not provide adequate coverage of feminist issues and did not have a representative number of women on their editorial boards. (García, 51). García notes that Chicanas would strategically submit their works to male dominated Chicano newspapers and put pressure on their editorial boards to publish their writings (García, 51). While many popular newspapers, such as *Con Safos*, *De Colores*, and *El Grito*, published works

by Chicana feminists, this practice was not the norm among the larger Chicana/o print culture. Another tactic for increasing Chicana representation was through the formation of independent Chicana newspapers that dedicated space to the development of Chicana thought and identity. The existence of Chicana run publications such as *La Mujer en Pie de Lucha*, *La Razón Mestiza*, *Regeneracion*, and *Comision Femenil Mexicana*, proved that Chicanas had a vested interest in communicating with one another to increase visibility, respect, and political consciousness. García discusses male resistance, internal sexism, and oppressive nationalism, as major factors contributing to the belittlement of Chicana thought and collective action (46, 49).

*Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* emerged as a central feminist publication that fought against chauvinistic attitudes belittling the burgeoning Chicana feminist movement and identity of the 1960s and 70s. With funding help from a Norwalk Mutualista society in California, the inaugural issue of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was published in March 1971 (Blackwell, 69; “Introduction,” 3). The first issue concerned itself with topics such as Chicana history, Chicana education, Chicanas in the pinta [prison], Chicana activists in the community, Chicana poetry, and socio-sexual problems in Chicano organizations and in the family (“Introduction,” 5). Through art, poetry, and historical narratives, the first issue also spoke on the relationship between pertinent Chicana/o movement ideas, such as cultural nationalism, Aztlán, and Mexican histories, and Chicana feminism. Both the second and third issue featured conference summaries and workshop report-backs that documented Chicanas’ attitudes towards religion, the feelings about the men’s role in the Chicano movement and changing ideas towards the value of sex (“Introduction,” 5).

Overall, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was read as an overtly political stance against machismo, gendered cultural exclusions, and the oppressive conditions of working-class Chicana women. The success of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was not well received among the male Chicano leadership at CSU, Long Beach who showed their abhorrence by having the women leaders hung in effigy outside of a MEChA trailer and enacting a mock burial where the names of founding *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* members were inscribed onto tombstones (Blackwell, 64). The violent response from Chicano leaders proved the importance of newspaper such as *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that denounced sexist Chicano attitudes and exclusions among the Chicana/o movement. While its feminist interventions and analyses were influential enough for *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* to be adopted as the national paper of the 1971 Mujeres por la Raza conference, the newspaper never fulfilled the expectation of becoming a national paper and no further issues were published after the 1971 conference (Blackwell, 76).

After a brief hiatus, the originating authors of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* transitioned their Chicana feminist politics and in 1973 founded the first Chicana journal titled *Encuentro Femenil* that continued publishing writings about the burgeoning Chicana movement. This transition is explained in the introduction of *Encuentro Femenil* stating that:

“The women of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* newspaper realized the demand to develop more in-depth means of writing and developing information concerning Chicanas. As a result, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* created a Chicana publishing organization

dedicated to the Chicana feminist experience that respects and acknowledges the need for the self-realization of the worth and potentials of all women.”

The intellectual labor and dedication on behalf of Chicanas publishing *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and *Encuentro Femeníl* also sought to bring attention to the way special editions of Chicano press newspapers, magazines, and radio programs only dealt with the Chicana question sporadically (“Introduction,” 3). Despite its growing popularity among Chicana activists and community members *Encuentro Femeníl* only published up until 1974. When positioned within the hostile environments Chicana feminists navigated and the lack of general Chicana/o support, we can see how an explicitly unapologetic Chicana newspaper like *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, and its extension *Encuentro Femeníl*, did not reach the national acclamations characteristic of broader Chicano movement newspapers. The paucity of publications could also be attributed to many factors, including lack of support among mainstream male leadership, scarce funding, low capacity, and lack of a physical office or location. The brief existence of the newspaper *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* then becomes a significant marker of the gendered politics present within the 1960s and 70s Chicana/o print culture and the oppressive forces of cultural nationalism.

### **Textual Crossings and Historical Relationships**

At first glance the discursive and geographical differences between *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* do not signal an overt commonality. *El Grito del Norte* became known for its heavy focus on economic and military oppression given their abundant critiques of imperialism, state enforcement, and economic deprivation. Simultaneously, it also kept a focused critique on local events of brutality, land

dispossession, and racist injustices. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, as a Chicana publication, talked specifically about Chicana issues surrounding education, labor, and Chicana/o internal politics. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also published analyses addressing issues of Chicana incarceration, militarism, and economic suppression. They worked together with Chicana prison organizations such as MARA (Mexican American Research Association) to create visibility about the issues facing imprisoned Chicanas, such as exclusion from welfare, civic society, and the Chicana/o political movement (*Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, 7).

Despite the specific and intentional focus of each newspaper, a closer examination reveals an active communication and overlap between these two publications. *El Grito del Norte* was also known for publishing special sections on issues of gender inequity and Chicana political thought. Co-founder Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez notes that “with a predominantly female set of regular columnists, writers, artists, and production workers, [*El Grito del Norte*] made its feminism clear” (Martínez, 82). Featured columnist Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez became a main force behind the visibility of Chicanas among *El Grito del Norte*, continually theorizing popular Chicana/o issues through a Chicana feminist lens and framework. A special June 1971 issue titled “La Chicana” features a fifteen-page section on the histories, political campaigns, and feminist critiques of Chicanas within the Chicana/o movement. Therefore, *El Grito del Norte* can be credited as publishing important early Chicana feminist writings and contributing to formations of Chicana feminism.

The relationship between these two newspapers is further solidified through the practice of reprinting and circulation. In a 1971 special edition issue on la Chicana, *El*

*Grito del Norte* includes a reprinted summary of an *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* article titled “Chicanas in La Pinta” as well as an announcement celebrating the first issue of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and encouraging members to subscribe to the newly formed Chicana periodical. In the first issue of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, an article titled “Mexican American Women” is in actuality a condensed version of the article “The Woman of La Raza” authored by Enriqueta Longeux y Vásquez and originally printed in *El Grito del Norte*. The overlapping and inter-dialogic discussions of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and *El Grito del Norte* not only reveals a direct dialogue between the two newspapers, but also emphasizes the important role of Chicana/o print culture in facilitating the formation of Chicana/o identity and consciousness. It is the historiography, complexity, and compelling discourses of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that guides my interest in this project. For this reason, my positionality became a contributing factor to my analysis and discussion of *mestizaje*, Chicana/o self-perceptions, and constructed histories.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Throughout the research and analysis process, my own positionality became highly relevant. As a Chicana born into a Mexican immigrant family and raised on ideologies of Chicana/o and Mexican nationalism, my connection to this project was informed through personal engagements with Chicana/o histories and cultural constructions. As Elizabeth St. Pierre and Alecia Y. Jackson note, conventional objectivity naively implies the existence of an object separate from and independent of the collecting subject (716). I did not necessarily see myself totally removed from these

texts and did not intend to read them as an impartial outsider. There would be instances in which I would immediately recognize historical narratives and terminologies present within the texts and identify them to moments in my personal life. For example, the celebratory discourses of Mexican national histories such as the 16<sup>th</sup> of September were extremely familiar as I had grown up celebrating this holiday, both at home and in my formative education. My own subjectivity became reflected in this process as I revisited my own epistemological understandings and affects towards discussions surrounding Chicana/o national pride, cultural revivals, and self-determination. Engaging in what Charmaz and Belgrave call methodological self-consciousness, which involves a searching self-scrutiny beyond common qualitative research (8), I also felt a need to become critical of the ways I had been immersed in Chicana/o and Mexican culture. Through this self-reflective process I was able to better acclimate to my analysis and articulate intellectual critiques of *mestizaje*, cultural nationalism, and Chicana/o identity that felt authentic and relevant. The insider status that I held during the research process also allowed for a deeply reflexive examination of my own values, standpoints, and research actions relevant to this project (Charmaz and Belgrave, 8), thus enriching the overall impetus and analysis of this project.

## **Methods**

In order to aptly examine the various issues of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I employed textual analysis to interpret the meanings of discourses in which members of groups articulate a sense of who they are and how they fit into the world in which they live (McKee, 8). My examination of these texts also borrowed from inductive

analytical methodologies which encourage the process of “working up” from data to create small analytical units of meaning to then identify salient patterns within and across categories (Bhattacharya, 150). I employed a constructivist grounded theoretical approach to analyze the collected data and think through themes. Constructivist grounded theory proved appropriate for this project as it acknowledges “nuanced interpretations of the observer’s values, priorities, positions, and actions that affects their views of data” (Charmaz and Belgrave, 8). Moreover, constructivist grounded theory proposes that “data is not straightforward, unproblematic, and separate from us and is instead problematic, relativistic, situational, and partial” (Charmaz and Belgrave, 8).

Although I engaged in seemingly traditional qualitative data coding and management, I did so with the understanding that the texts that I chose to study were situated within constructed discourses and did not represent an absolute truth about Chicana/o movement politics or identity formations. My usage of categories does not follow a positivistic or formulaic method of interpreting data, but instead is instrumentalized to account for strong correlations, intersections, and conversations occurring across the spectrum of data analyzed. While themes, categories, and coding methods were utilized to observe and theorize both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, these groupings nonetheless informed and often overlapped with each other. For example, while I talk about Mexican revolutionary histories as a major political narrative of Chicana/o movement identities, I also recognize how this theme merges together with ideas of *mestizaje*, racial exclusions, and Chicana/o claims to geographic histories. Recognizing the nuanced and often complicated dialogues present

within the texts, and interpreting them as such, allowed me to interact with the data in a genuine way that did not force rigid classifications or separations. The various textual pieces present in my final analysis discursively built off one another and frequently intersected, representing the fluid nature of discourse and ideological constructions evident in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*.

### **Archival Implications**

Both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* can be constituted as part of Chicana/o movement archives. They are housed within an archived microfilm collection and are categorized according to their content and historical existence. Throughout my engagement with these research materials, I was aware of the nature of “archival data” and the subjective forms through which archives are formulated. As David Lynch notes, archives can function as “local materializations of history, or, rather, historical materializations of the records from which histories are (re) constructed” (67).

Considering *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as constructed texts, it is important to recognize these periodicals as discursive spaces where Chicana/o history itself is being (re)made, selected, and established. While *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* exist as seemingly fixed historical representation of 1960s and 70s Chicana/o insurgencies, the original publications and distribution of these newspapers are embedded in processes of historical reconstructions. The historical and political references present throughout both newspapers build off already manipulated discourses of race, ethnicity, and culture. For example, the practice of taking up Aztlán as a popular source of ethnic pride and belonging becomes implicated in histories of conquest, nation

building, and imperial nostalgias. In other words, the content printed within both newspapers is already selective and a product of a persuasive Chicana/o movement project. Because *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* serve as documentations of racialized, classed, and gendered insurgencies, scholarly interpretations continually position these texts as narratives of anti-hegemony, political resistances, and rebellious action. While it is not the purpose of this project to discredit the important function of these archives as political discourses against White supremacy, imperialism, and state sanctioned violence, my analysis does look to move beyond a singular resistance narrative and instead engage with these archives as texts and discursive spaces to map problematic constructions of race, culture, and ethnic histories. To further engage in a reading of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as complicated narratives of identity and cultural formations, I turn to my discussion of data collection and interpretation.

### **Data Collection and Interpretation**

The data collection for this project consisted of viewing reprinted *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* issues on microfilm, converting microfilm stills into images, and then organizing the obtained images according to volume number, issue date, and year of publication. After developing a system of data organization, I then began to look at each issue individually to familiarize myself with the content and formality of both publications. As I read through each individual newspaper issue, I simultaneously developed memos with preliminary interpretations and descriptive analysis of content that I found relevant to the central inquiries of this project. Each memo followed the same

structure; I included newspaper title, article name, volume, issue number, year, and page number to create accessible and direct entries. Memos varied in length and depth.

Depending on the scope and content of the text, the memos created captured main ideas, themes, and conversations that I would then connect to the larger themes of *mestizaje*, Chicana/o identity, Mexican racializations, and cultural formations. Before beginning to look through both newspapers and write down memos to help write my analysis of this project, I looked through a few microfilm issues to think through keywords, phrases, and concepts that I could reference when I eventually returned to these texts. I was prompted to create a memo for a specific section, article, opinion piece or any other form of content whenever the author or editors would mention words like Raza, Aztlán, Chicano, mestizo, Spanish, Indian, Mexico, Mexicanas, Brown, bronze, Chicana, *mestizaje*. The usage of these words was saturated among both newspapers, further indicating the emphasis placed upon discussions of race, nationalism, ethnic and culture pride, and Chicana/o historical origins.

After completing the memos for both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I began coding and developing overall themes to break down the high volume of memos I had written. My coding consisted of open coding: I looked through the data collected and noted which themes emerged or could help in my overall analysis. The process of open coding allowed interaction with the memos and data collected in an engaging manner as I carefully read through each one, allowing the content to guide my understanding and make connections. The initial themes I developed were “Aztlán and land,” “perceived cultural roots,” “Mexican national histories,” and “Chicana/o

nationalism.” The categorization of my data into these themes was not definitive as I tried to remain open to all possible theoretical understandings of the data (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2). As mentioned earlier, the content from which I choose to develop memos fit into multiple categories and spoke to several of the themes that I had obtained from the data. From these preliminary categories, I took careful consideration of what content would generate productive analyses and complex conversations in order to best address my research questions. As I finished the categorization of the memos, I began a second round of coding where I narrowed down and decided which specific piece of content was most appropriate for the analysis section of this project. In the following section, I discuss the contents from *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that I choose and why these proved the most productive for my research questions and overall project.

#### *El Grito del Norte*

Going through all the volumes of *El Grito del Norte* proved to be a tedious task; each volume averaged 10 issues, and each issue was an average of 12 pages. I compiled dozens of memos from the content of *El Grito del Norte*, which made the final selection of content difficult to organize. As I read through each individual issue and made memos from relevant content, several patterns and prominent discussions began to form. Many issues had similar tones, styles, and running ideologies that connected various issues of *El Grito del Norte* together. I noted the exclusive and repeated uses of terms such as Raza, mestizo, and Chicano that operated as flexible and purposeful discourses. As an example, the documentation of Reies López Tijerina’s trial was frequently described as an attack on Raza communities and land rights, which conveyed the disenfranchisement

of landless Chicana/os. Similarly, mestizo was deployed when addressing culture or history, and recovered as a synonym for Chicana/o. Finally, definitions of Chicana/o were contextualized around the historicity of both Raza and mestizo to show how these terms were interchangeable and parallel discourses.

The pieces of text chosen from *El Grito del Norte* spoke to all the initial themes relevant to my research questions and scope. They were chosen because they provided enough context for me to cross reference them with each other. One of my intentions was to show how articles within *El Grito del Norte* spoke to each other and created a strong thread throughout the newspaper. I chose pieces that would allow me to identify the evolution and progression of Chicana/o ideology, as well as tropes utilized throughout *El Grito del Norte* that constructed archetypical Chicana/o subjectivities. The articles that I selected were also useful as they demonstrated how topics such as Aztlán, Chicana/o identity, *mestizaje*, Mexican history, and cultural formations were not isolated discussions, but could be instead theorized from multiple points of view. Articles such as “Somos Aztlán” and “Our New Nation is Born” that took up Aztlán as a key intervention, also incorporated ideologies of *mestizaje*, Aztec iconographies, and cultural constructions into their arguments. Another example of these intersections can be seen in the articles “16<sup>th</sup> of September,” and “El Grito de La Raza” that primarily discussed the importance of Mexican independence as a Chicana/o holiday, but still relied on concepts such as *La Raza* and *mestizaje* to solidify their persuasive claims. While I highlighted articles that supported my argument about *El Grito del Norte* as a celebratory narrative of Chicana/o culture, I also decided to include pieces that complicated this view. The articles “An

Indian asks Chicano some Questions” and “La Lucha en Mexico” were departures and responses to the common tropes that venerated Mexican nationalism, Aztlán, and popular Chicana/o ideologies. Their inclusion served to add a richer dimension to my overall analysis and revealed moments of critical intervention among Chicana/o cultural politics. The pieces I selected from *El Grito del Norte* also allowed me to understand how topics relating to culture, nationalism, race, and identity evolved or stayed static throughout the length of *El Grito del Norte*’s publication. In other words, the articles that I deemed most useful for my analysis exemplified persistent ideologies and discourses seen throughout the existence of *El Grito del Norte*. These pieces became representative of popular Chicana/o movement ideas and self-explorations, which were the topics of interest to my project and analysis.

#### *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*

My engagement with the contents of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was highly deliberate given its complicated existence as an archive. My procurement of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* proved challenging because of discrepancies in university repositories outside of my institution; repeated attempts to obtain additional materials about *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* proved futile. Nevertheless, I decided to give attention to the two issues of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that I successfully acquired. I wrote memos noting the discourses within *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* that engaged with my analysis of Chicana/o identity, appropriations of Mexican culture, and uses of *mestizaje*. Similar to my findings with *El Grito del Norte*, the content chosen from *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* often defied singular categories and instead weaved together narratives of culture, race, politics, and geography. Several

pieces, such as “Soy Chicana de Aztlán” and “Hijas de Cuauhtémoc,” supported this observation as multiple themes emerged during my interaction with these works. Because of the fluid nature of discourse within these pieces, I decided to highlight the strongest theme that would also support my argument. Yet, as I highlighted one aspect of these pieces, I recognized their influence among other components of my analysis. The poem “Soy Chicana de Aztlán” helped me understand the convergence of Chicana feminism with aspects of Chicana/o nationalism and informed my theorization of *El Grito del Norte* pieces such as “Las Mexicanas de la Revolución.”

As I looked through the issues of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I began making note of its contextual commonalities with *El Grito del Norte*. For example, the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*’s article “La Mexicana” and *El Grito del Norte*’s article “Las Mexicanas de la Revolución” were alike in context and in style; both positioned the revolutionary plight of Mexican women as essential Chicana feminist histories. Moreover, both articles instrumentalized narratives of rebellious Mexican women as inspirations for Chicana grievances against the state and repressive Chicana/o politics. Curiously enough, both “La Mexicana” and “Las Mexicanas de la Revolución” donned the same image of a Mexican Adelita holding a rifle and wearing the classic sarape. Because of these paramount similarities, the pieces of text that I chose from *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* were also meant to bring about a textual dialogue with Chicana ideologies from *El Grito del Norte*. Given the small number of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* issues, it was difficult to analyze *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as a continual and coherent archive. While I found relevant content within the first half of the inaugural *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* issue, the second half of this

issue featured multiple discussions and articles that didn't spark an immediate correlation to my preliminary themes. Half of the first issue featured conference updates, meeting reports, and interviews that did not provide much direct engagement with the scope of my project. The second issue followed a similar pattern, its contents discussed conference workshops from a Chicana Regional Conference held in Los Angeles the month prior. The short workshop descriptions and analysis were also a departure from the poems, artwork, and feature articles mostly found in the first issue which spoke to Chicana/o racializations, culture, and nationalism. This is not to suggest that the valuable content of the second issue was incommensurable with my interested analysis of *mestizaje* and Chicana/o identity, but the indirect connection to my project would not have provided the most appropriate analysis and discussion. For this reason, I chose to focus on the articles and poems found within the first issue of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as these made the most sense to incorporate.

Further discussion of the *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* pieces that directly correlated with my proposed research questions is shown in my analysis. The textual data is organized through two overall themes: *interpretations of Mexican national histories* and *Chicana/o ethnic boundaries*. The *interpretations of Mexican national histories* section includes three subsections: Aztec mythologies and Aztlán, reinscribing the Mexican Independence and Revolution, and de-romanticizing Mexican nationalism. Within the *Chicana/o ethnic boundaries* section I include three subsections: popularizing mestiza/o identity, legacies of *mestizaje*, and defining the Brown Chicana/o. The division of these sections is based on my own understanding of the contents and their relevance to

each other as discourses of *mestizaje*, Chicana/o identity production, and materializations of Mexican statist discourses.

### **Chapter 3: Analysis**

Through a content and textual reading of selected articles, poems, and community dialogues from *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I examine the political, cultural, and historical discourses of these texts as a way of centralizing the scope of this project. My analysis examines threads of Chicana/o mythology, origin, and history that are weaved through Chicana/o movement discourses pertaining to Mexican statist discourses and *mestizaje* frameworks of race and culture. By focusing on the influence of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* and their discussions of classic Chicana/o themes such as Aztlán, celebratory Mexican histories, geographical and cultural belongings, racial and ethnic formations, and political resistances I show how ethnic movements that challenge negative hegemonic images and institutions do so through redefining the meanings of ethnicity in appealing ways (Nagel, 166). More specifically, by taking up the precise redefinitions and productions of Chicana/o identity, as exemplified in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, my analysis discusses how Indigenous histories become appropriated and used in the construction of a collective Chicana/o identity, while simultaneously creating an ethno-racial political and cultural identity that obscures social, cultural, and historical contributions of Black history and subjectivities in formations of Mexican and Chicana/o culture.

#### **Interpreting Mexican National Histories**

Themes relating to Mexican national histories-ranging from Aztec mythology, Mexican independence, and the Mexican revolution-became central to 1960s Chicana/o movement ideologies and platforms. As ideologies of Chicana/o nationalism during the

1960s and 70s surfaced across the Southwest, a conglomerate of Chicana/o organizations strived to create a viable Chicana/o identity. Alberto refers to this nationwide effort as a Chicana/o cultural renaissance that was instrumental in engendering the political ideologies and cultural identities of the Chicana/o movement (Alberto, 107). As newspapers that developed under the purview of the Chicana/o cultural renaissance (Alberto, 107), *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* formed part of the larger project of Chicana/o nationalism documenting the multiple dialogues that spoke to complex narratives of creation, resistance, and oppression within Chicana/o identity productions. By focusing on these themes, both newspapers adopted iconographies and political depictions of famed figures such as Cuauhtémoc, Moctezuma, Miguel Hidalgo, Emiliano Zapata, and Pancho Villa, characterizing them as notable ancestors of the emergent Chicana/o *movimiento* insurgencies of the 1960s and 70s. The reverential treatment of these renown Mexican heroes elucidates the manner in which Mexican nationalist histories, specifically Mexican indigeneity and revolutionary rhetoric, were imported and reimagined by Chicano intellectuals to engender a Chicana/o national culture (Alberto, 109). In forging a historical and often direct lineage to these monumental historiographies, both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* strategically tied cultural, political, and identity formations as derivatives of these quintessential Mexican political and cultural periods. Mexican national histories, specifically pre-Columbian and revolutionary histories, became influential components allowing *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* to emulate ideologies of cultural nationalism and Chicana/o identity. Through a veneration of Aztec mythologies, both

newspapers historicized Chicana/os as direct descendants of elite pre-Hispanic rulers, and rebuilt Chicana/os as mestiza/o subjects racially composed of Spanish and Indigenous ancestries. The selected histories utilized to construct the quintessential Chicana/o subject became a purposeful project during the Chicana/o movement that served to assemble a unified political consensus in the face of multiple injustices and violence. Through an analysis of selected pieces from *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I show how these appropriations, practices, and discourses become central components to both publications and advance a limited understanding of indigeneity, Blackness, *mestizaje*, and Chicana/o racial fixations.

#### *Aztec Mythologies and Aztlán*

In the front cover of its first published issue in 1971, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* offer a poetic ode to the history of Cuauhtémoc and the Mexican political organization *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*.<sup>9</sup> Weaving between Aztec historical references, the Spanish invasion of Mexico, and Mexican revolutionary personae such as las Adelitas, the poem offers a classical rendition of popularized Mexican history as the antecedent of Chicana liberatory struggle and political resistance. As the poem ends by giving thanks to “our mothers for giving us the sacred privilege of also being Hijas de Cuauhtémoc,” a genealogy of Chicana feminism is asserted as the poem depicts Chicanas as inheritors of the fighting spirit to achieve liberation “not just for their Raza but for themselves as the maternal stewardesses of their nation” (Hernández, 2). In this idealization of Aztec centric

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<sup>9</sup> *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was a feminist anti-Porfiriato regime newspaper founded during the Mexican revolution by Juana Gutiérrez, Dolores Jiménez y Muro, Elisa Acuña y Rosette, and Ines Malvárez. Their objectives linked the Mexican revolutionary struggle with feminist social demands such as equal pay for equal work, equal access to education, equal rights within the family, agrarian rights for women, judicial and economic rights for women and the abolition of domestic labor (Towner, 97-98).

histories, the authors of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* participate in a cultural trend that unproblematically takes up female Aztec indigeneity as the starting point of insurgent Chicana history and identity. In doing so, “Hijas de Cuauhtémoc” naturalizes the racialized sexual violence that produces the venerated Chicana/o “Raza” and conspicuously upholds colonial registers of gender. Alberto refers to this gendered cultural construction as a Chicana indigenism where feminist revisions and practices recraft theories of *mestizaje* and Chicano indigenism (108) to expand the realm of Chicana/o cultural nationalism and make gender one of its central components. Conceptualizations of Chicana indigenism become useful in delineating a Chicana feminist genesis rooted in Indigenous Aztec cultures and figures. In this case, the piece “Hijas de Cuauhtémoc” subverts the masculinist discourses attached to figures such as Cuauhtémoc and insert a Chicana feminist narrative as a way of advancing a gendered form of indigeneity. However, as Rosaura Sánchez writes, references to Aztec goddesses prove absolutely nothing and in fact have been used to idealize that status of Aztec women in pre-Hispanic society, both in creative and historical projects (13). Similarly, Nicole Guidotti-Hernández argues that revisionist histories that make Chicana/os the direct descendants of La Malinche or Coyolxauhqui (12) serve a nationalistic function as Chicana/os align their cultural nationalism with that of Aztec mythologies that serve to highlight *indigenismo* as a common identity that unites all Chicana/os, in this case Chicanas, politically (17). In this poetic veneration, a gendered discourse of nationhood in the figure of Cuauhtémoc and his daughters is instrumentalized to demonstrate a political, historical, and cultural lineage. While the editors of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*

idealize Cuauhtémoc and not a female Aztec figure, their recuperation of Cuauhtémoc as rightful ancestor demonstrates how a sense of ethnic history is constructed out of the material of language, culture, appearance, and ancestry (Nagel, 153). Additionally, the newspaper's homage to Mexican pro-revolutionary organizations like *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also shows how histories of Mexican resistance are utilized to inform present-day political ideologies. Chicanas active in the 1970s newspaper *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* see themselves as political and historical extensions of the early Mexican feminist group and utilize this past as a guiding framework for their work within the Chicana/o movement and ultimately for Chicana/o nationalism.

The heavy influence and adaptation of Aztec iconographies, histories, and figures are also present throughout various *El Grito del Norte* issues, as exemplified in its July 1969 reprint of *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. Originally drafted during the 1969 Chicano Youth Liberation Conference by several Chicano poets and activists including Alberto Blatazar Urista "Alurista" and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez (Cooper Alarcon, 22), *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* became a blueprint for the Chicana/o movement and an efficient organizing metaphor for Chicana/o activists, allowing them to unite heterogeneous elements under one political and social ethos of self-identity and community empowerment (Watts, 306). The reprinted version features a summary of the document preamble originally presented with a translation note reading "Aztlán, in the Nahuatl tongue of ancient Mexico means *the lands to the north*. Thus, Aztlán refers to what is now known as the Southwestern states of this country" (*El Grito del Norte*, 5). The interpretation of Aztlán is followed by a brief introduction announcing *El Plan Espiritual*

*de Aztlán* as setting an “emergent theme for Chicana/os (La Raza de Bronce) to use their nationalism as the key for mass mobilization and organization” (*El Grito del Norte*, 5). Formulating a sense of cultural belonging and a pre-westernized racial history became an important matter for the thousands of Chicana/os who lived throughout the US, specifically the Southwest, and *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* imagined Chicana/os as rightful inheritors of a pre-Columbian Indigenous past (Watts, 306). The excerpt and summary of *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* is then followed by a three-point plan outlining the implementation of the document as an organizing tactic in “every meeting, demonstration, courthouse, school, and place of human existence,” allowing *El Grito del Norte* and its Chicana/o audience to rewrite and reimagine a political future of Brown liberation.

Longtime *El Grito del Norte* columnist and pioneering Chicana feminist Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez provided her own interpretations and opinions of Indigenous Aztlán as a Chicana/o concept and ideology. Writing for her recurring column *Despierten Hermanos!*, Longeaux y Vásquez became a staunch supporter of Chicana/o indigeneity and utilized her writings to speak to Chicana/os about their cultural roots, historical lineages, and racial subjectivities. She strongly identified with the Chicana/o movement, and as an outspoken Chicana feminist “sought to reconcile women’s liberation with Chicano cultural nationalism” (Vásquez, xxxiv). As a resident of New Mexico, Longeaux y Vásquez situated emerging Chicana/o concepts, such as Aztlán and mestiza/o identity, among the geographical perimeters of the Southwest, with which she was familiar and politically active in. In her article titled “Somos Aztlán,” the concept of Aztlán is

magnified and analyzed through the reiteration of Aztec migratory histories and Mexican racial formations as she interprets the newly published and distributed *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* as an urgent Chicana/o nationalist manifesto that must be taken seriously to move towards the political revival of Chicana/o insurgent politics. Amidst her encouragement to “understand the strong significance of this document to La Raza,” Longeaux y Vásquez moves into a brief rendition of Mexican history beginning with the etymology of the name “Mexico” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 9). Gathering her information from the Encyclopedia Americana she informs the reader that “the name and national emblem of Mexico are derived from the Aztecs, who according to tradition departed from Aztlán.” She then seamlessly joins together Mexican and US history by asserting that “we learn that Aztlán is the name of the northern section of Mexico which is now considered the southwestern US. That’s us!” (9). As Longeaux y Vásquez theorizes the cultural histories tied to the Aztecs and their homeland Aztlán, she offers Aztlán as a potential tool for Chicana/o cultural revival and anti-assimilation. To further highlight her point, she writes:

“Let us awaken to the fact that many of La Raza are lost and confused when trying to become Anglo and relate to the European way of life. And let us ask why is this? Our ancestors have given us a cultural heritage too deep to be transformed or forgotten. When we understand this, we can realize why we can and should relate to the Bronze continent. It is a matter of this being a continent *de la gente de bronce* with a bronze culture” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 9)

Longeaux y Vásquez removes Chicana/o culture from any association with a “European way of life” and instead re-inscribes it into a deep cultural heritage that rightfully belongs to the venerated bronze continent. Aztlán as the bronze continent that Chicana/os can rightfully claim serves as a political tactic of Chicana/o unification and self-preservation that rejects US hegemony and assimilation. Through this imagery, Chicana/os are intentionally reconfigured as outsiders to US national histories and encouraged to reject any semblance of an Americanized lifestyle that denies their ancestral roots. The function of Aztlán, as a geographic and cultural Chicana/o marker, is also utilized to associate Chicana/o history and culture with Mexican, and generally Latin American, racial identities that effectively join Mexicans and Chicana/os together through a common ancient Indigenous ancestry (Saldaña-Portillo, 414). Therefore, “Somos Aztlán” interprets Mexican histories of geographical Aztec origins to formulate Chicana/os as bronze citizens dislocated from their bronze continent and situates cultural alliances to Mexico instead of the gringo European way of life.

Professing the nation of Aztlán as an always already counterhegemonic discourse to Anglo repression remained a primary preoccupation throughout subsequent volumes of *El Grito del Norte*. In its April 1970 issue, an article titled “Our new nation is born” and authored by Longeaux y Vásquez, continues the ideological conversation of a newly emergent Chicana/o consciousness under Aztlán. The two-page spread, written in both English and Spanish, displays a hand drawn announcement reading “SOMOS AZTLÁN” and features an extended analysis of the second annual Chicano Youth Liberation conference held in Denver, Colorado. Proudly declaring “the homeland of Aztlán for La

Raza” as an uncovered historical fact and no longer existing as a mythological concept, Aztlán is recovered as a unifying Chicana/o philosophy able to transcend geographic borders and spatial localities (Longeaux y Vásquez, 5). Aside from demarcating Aztlán’s physical relationship to Chicana/o nationalism, Longeaux y Vásquez reiterates Aztlán’s political and cultural possibilities for Chicana/o liberation announcing Aztlán as a “grito de independencia for the rebuilding of a homeland that has been oppressed and exploited but never really conquered” (5). Through a familiar reference to the 1810 Mexican independence movement, Longeaux y Vásquez channels the “grito de independencia” through Aztlán and continues to tie Chicana/os to popular Mexican national histories of political resistance against imposed state powers. The “never really conquered” homeland of Aztlán then becomes a metaphysical space for Chicana/os as “La Raza de Aztlán” to revendicate lost, stolen, and marginalized histories in an attempt to reverse the national colonial project of the US. In a sense, the appropriation of Aztlán forms a foundation for an identity before domination and subjugation and a voyage back to pre-Columbian times (Watts, 205) that would render Chicana/os as the predecessors to an ancient and valorized culture. Therefore, Aztlán becomes a malleable ideological concept that Chicana/os must learn to implement in all aspects of their quotidian and public lives, or else risk creating political and cultural disunity among the Chicana/o nation.

While these highlighted articles in *El Grito del Norte* celebrate the renewal of Aztlán as both ancient Chicana/o history and a new national liberatory philosophy, one significant opinion piece titled “An Indian asks Chicano some questions” disrupts revolutionary discourses of an Indigenous Aztlán and instead intervenes on behalf of

Native American communities inhabiting the Southwest. The article is featured in a 1971 *El Grito del Norte* issue and is the first piece to openly challenge the validity of Aztlán and Chicana/o ancestral claims to Southwestern territories. The author articulates their purpose for the letter as being motivated by personal questions about the Chicana/o movement that they “must have an answer to” (*El Grito del Norte*, 12). They begin inquiring about the rhetoric and technical aspects of Aztlán and starkly ask: “by what legal-moral claim right did Mexico lay claim to the land?” The author then questions how the Chicana/o reconquering of the Southwest will affect the lives of Native Americans and further elaborates concerns of an invasive Chicana/o nation:

“let us suppose that this land reclamation takes place. It seems that our kinsmen will be expected to exchange the gringo boss for a Chicano boss. Does this seem logical to you? What of the tribal rights of the various bands, tribes, and nations? I have seen nothing in the Chicano document that even mentions these exclusive ancestral rights” (*El Grito del Norte*, 12)

In this interrogation, the problematic coordinates of Aztlán are analyzed as potential infringements on current Native American lands and likened to traditions of white land seizures that ignore the sovereignty of Native American co-inhabitants (Saldaña-Portillo, 197). By questioning the “legal-moral” authority of the Mexican state over Indigenous lands, the author also disrupts central components of the Chicana/o land grant movement that relied on the legal and cultural status of Spanish and Mexican land grants under US law (Trujillo, 96) to argue for Chicana/o sovereignty and land repatriation. The author continues contesting Aztlán as a viable doctrine and openly questions Chicana/o

complacency in Indigenous appropriation by concluding that Chicana/os are “the ones who claim to be Native and wish to take over Native lands” (*El Grito del Norte*, 12). Through the political critique of the article, the validity of a radical Chicana/o land reclamation and indigeneity is severed from its celebratory nature and instead positioned as a misguided racial doctrine replicating problematic colonial practices and appropriations. As the author continues their grievance against Aztlán and Chicana/o indigeneity, they acknowledge these ideologies as “all words” yet warn that the power of discourse “causes impressions and creates thoughts” (*El Grito del Norte*, 12). While brief, the opinion piece departs from *El Grito del Norte*’s revered discourse of Aztlán and Chicana/o Indigenous claims to instead allow for a dissenting view on a venerated topic that complicates Chicana/o identity and geographic belongings.

The productions of an ideological archeology within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* attempted to reconstruct genealogical relationships between Chicana/os and a distant pre-Columbian past, further highlighting how Mexican narratives of Indigenous histories were used as guidelines for the cultural construction of a Chicana/o sense of belonging (Marez, 267). The allegiance to elite Aztec rulers, such as Cuauhtémoc, reveals the ways that both newspapers engaged with Mexican renditions of pre-Columbian time periods historically deployed to serve statist projects of modernity painting the Indian as a heroic past to the mestizo present (Saldaña-Portillo, 408). As a counterpart to the veneration of Aztec indigeneity, *El Grito del Norte* presents Aztlán as the geographical and spiritual legacy of an Aztec past to be recovered in the Chicana/o present. The cultural revival of Aztlán, a concept originating in Mexico (Menchaca, 21), represents a

quintessential example of the ways an ancient Aztec past is romanticized, interpreted, and manipulated to inform Chicana/o identities. As a durable political symbol of Chicana/o cultural nationalism (Cooper Alarcon, 7), the calculated usage of Aztlán is politically and culturally tailored to represent a space outside and prior to the US nation from which to launch a critique of hegemonic and racist systems of representation (Saldaña-Portillo, 413). However, as Aztlán and Aztec iconographies become pivotal concepts in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* they become attached to geographical subjectivities that create competing claims to the Southwest, which Aztlán is often intended to be synonymous with, by Native Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans (Cooper Alarcon, 8). As seen in the response “An Indian asks Chicano some questions,” a dangerous discourse of neo-colonization and appropriation becomes attached to calls for Chicana/o territorial ownership and land reclamation through their ancient Aztec ties.

It is important to recognize these calls for Southwest Chicana/o revindications as heavily situated in the history of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Mexican racialization within the Southwest. The heavy association between Mexicans, Chicana/os, and the Southwest caused by revivals of claims against the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, also signal to the partially recovered histories that functioned to legitimize a Chicana/o ownership of the Southwest. In her in-depth study of Mexican-American legal racializations, Menchaca notes that after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo “Mexicans who were white were given full citizenship, while mestizos, Christianized Indians, and *afromestizos* came under different racial laws” (217). Further elaborating on the shared histories between Mexican mestizo, *afromestizos*, and Native Americans after the

Mexican American War, Menchaca reiterates that California's constitution, drafted a year after the Mexican American War of 1848, made "Indians, mestizos, and people of Black descent ineligible to vote and gradually stripped of most political rights" (220). As *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* utilized the mistreatment and land dispossession of Mexicans after the Mexican American War as basis for racial and political mobilization, their depiction of an exclusively Mexican mestiza/o as victim of colonial violence elides a true history of racial relations before and after this formative time period. As Guidotti-Hernández points out, scholarship attending to Chicana/o histories often neglect the histories of legal violence against Southwestern Native American populations (Guidotti-Hernández, 20) that occurred at the hands of mestiza/o communities before and after 19<sup>th</sup> century Southwestern land dispossessions.

This incomplete discourse is advanced within *El Grito del Norte* through the writings of Chicana/o leaders, such as Reies López Tijerina, who characterized the Southwest land grant movement and struggle as a response to internal colonization. The formulation of land grant heirs as Spanish and Indo-Hispanos (Trujillo, 97) effectively constructed a fixed racial history that was not aware of the ways "certain Black people in the Southwest lost their Mexican land grants" (Menchaca, 233). The omission of afrodescendants and Black people residing within the Southwest during this time period unimagines a shared history between Chicana/os and Black communities and furthers a constrained Chicana/o racial identity. On the contrary, the conversations of land grant claims and restitutions within *El Grito del Norte* often conflated Chicana/o and Native American histories and heavily drew parallels between these two communities. This can be seen in a published

piece titled “Alcatraz-Indians of All Tribes” where the author connects Chicana/o and Native American political identity formations stating that “we are glad to see our Indian brothers unite in their Indianness, as Raza also make the effort to unite in its mestizohood” (*Grito del Norte*, 4). Indianness and mestizohood are placed as simultaneous cultural projects where “the two identities can unite in brotherhood and with their strength make a free life in Aztlán” (*Grito del Norte*, 4). The discursive comparisons between Native American and Chicana/os evidences the function of *mestizaje* ideologies that entitled Chicana/os to claim ethnoracial solidarity and similarities between the two groups. Because Chicana/os positioned themselves as indigenized subjects through *mestizaje*, a consideration for Native American history becomes easily normalized. Given these differential theorizations of history, race, and geography, the Chicana/o cultural and historical constructions evident in the excerpts from *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* serve to validate a Chicana/o and mestiza/o identity and claim to land and identity that omits heterogenous Southwestern histories of *afromestizos* and Native American populations.

*Chicana/o Lineages of Resistance: Reimagining the Mexican Independence and Revolution*

The influence of Mexican mestizo nationalism (Trujillo, 97) did not stop at the Aztecs and the mythical land of Aztlán. Chicana/os sought political and cultural solace away from the disempowering systems of US oppression by looking to the 1810 Mexican independence movement and 1910 Mexican revolution as historical inspirations against the US imperialism of the 1960s and 70s. Nagel notes that in the formation of ethnic

mobilizations, cultural renewal and transformations become important aspects of ethnic movements, informing the impetus behind the practices of recovery attached to political movements (165). The cultural renewals and transformations discussed within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* not only utilized images of Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Miguel Hidalgo, among other well-known Mexican historical figures, but it also strived to recover lesser known histories, such as those of revolutionary women and children. As Pérez argues, the historical studies of the Chicano/a movement curiously emulated ideological stances prominent during the Mexican Revolution (Pérez, 9) and were utilized as guidance for burgeoning Chicana/o politics. The Mexican historical figures celebrated among both newspapers reflected a conscious hero-heroine construction (Pérez, 9) that placed Chicana/o politics in a genealogy of Mexican state resistance and activism. In order to advance a formative cultural and political history, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also galvanized these histories to construct ideological cohesions among Chicana/os that invoked a sense of cultural pride and political origins. Additionally, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* developed a strong association and familiarity with Mexico nationalism as an imagined matrix of cultural identity useful in informing and validating the racial paradox experienced by Chicana/os in the US (Padilla, 126).

As the cover of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* depicted the importance of recovering Aztec histories, its first featured article titled “La Mexicana” talked about women’s involvement during the Mexican revolution of 1910 and their contributions to the national Mexican political landscape. The author of the article, Martha López, discusses a

history of Mexican revolutionary women that moves away from the typical soldadera figure and considers the stories of unknown Mexican women who serviced the Mexican national cause, such as Margarita Neri, Hermilla Galindo de Topete, Gertrudis Bocanegra de Lazo, among others. López provides a historical rendition of the various ways Mexican women destabilized traditional gender roles to join the Mexican revolution, noting their labor and domestic participation assisting men and other women in the political upheavals before and after the revolutionary period. She describes the revolutionary women removed from their traditional roles in Mexican society as “able to view Mexico and all her different people, [learning] to appreciate her Raza and the land she was fighting for” (López, 2). Special focus is then given to the political activities of the 1910 women’s revolutionary collective *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* who are celebrated for their “tremendous ability to organize the women of Mexico behind full emancipation” and for authoring a “manifesto calling for all women to recognize their rights and obligations to go much further than the home” (López, 2). The article ends by reminding the Chicana reader that “Chicanas have much to be proud of today; there is much work ahead of her, she must continue in the tradition of commitment to the betterment of La Raza” (López, 2). Within this brief excerpt, the recovery of Mexican revolutionary women as actors in the survival of their country is lauded as an important characteristic of Chicana history that Chicanas must understand and emulate. Noting the pride Chicanas must feel as descendants of these Mexican feminist histories, this article refashions masculinist narratives to show the political possibilities afforded to women during the Mexican revolution. In doing so, the political imaginary of the Mexican revolution is

reconfigured onto a gendered landscape that Chicanas can utilize to trace a historical feminist lineage. The celebratory attention given to the feminist collective *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* constructs a Chicana feminism rooted in the past and understood as an enunciation in the present (Pérez, xvii). Instrumentalizing this political genealogy ensures that Chicanas are written and identified within Mexican national histories as people “who can appreciate their Raza and the land they are fighting for.”

A similar article in *El Grito del Norte*'s July and September 1969 issues chronicles unfamiliar stories of Mexican women in the revolution. The two-part article titled “Las Mexicanas de la Revolución” lists the stories of Chenita Cardenas, Juana Belen Gutiérrez, Petra Ruíz, and Carmen Parra to highlight their courageous commitments and sacrifices contesting the regimes of Porfirio Díaz and the corrupt Mexican state. All women are interpreted as formidable figures that took up leadership roles either in the absence of men or through their experiences of oppression and economic disparities. As the article concludes with a celebration of Carmen Parra's achievement as a Villa soldier, a large “Tierra o Muerte!” slogan is imprinted at the end to remind readers that the Mexican revolutionary land struggle, enacted by Zapata, can also be transplanted onto the Chicana/o battle for Southwest land ownership. Here, the infamous “Tierra o Muerte!” slogan is utilized as an intentional political parallel meant to reflect a vision of the past now imaged for contemporary Chicano leaders (Perez, 72).

Much like the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* piece “La Mexicana,” the stories of Mexican revolutionaries in this *El Grito del Norte* article are meant to instill a sense of pride and appreciation for stories of resistance and revolution. These histories are then meant to

draw parallels to the 1960s Chicana struggles against statist gender oppression and visualize the aforementioned Mexican women as role models to emulate given the tumultuous political climate of the late 1960s. The histories of Mexican women as willful revolutionary subjects measuring up to the political competence of Mexican men contributes to a sexing of the decolonial imaginary (Pérez, 7) meant to inscribe gender among renditions of historical Mexican political struggles. Pérez theorizes the insurgency of a sexualized decolonial imaginary as “a theoretical tool for uncovering the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences and to passivity” (Pérez, xvi). While the women re-inscribed into an imaginary of Mexican revolutionary history destabilize a gendered time period, these reverential perspectives contribute to a feminized cultural nationalism that borrows from Mexican statist discourse to inform Chicana identities and political histories.

The period of Mexican independence also materialized an important political and cultural influence for the Chicana/o movement. In a special Chicano Press Association issue printed on September 16, 1970, the front cover of *El Grito del Norte* includes an image of a Father Miguel Hidalgo mural done by David Alfaro Siqueiros with the Chicana/o slogans “Huelga!, Tierra o Muerte!, and Raza Si, Guerra No!” on the side of the image. The feature article, written in Spanish, announces the 160-year anniversary of the *Grito de Dolores* and the Mexican independence movement, and states that similar cries of independence and political sovereignty are heard today within the Chicana/o movement. The editors of *El Grito del Norte* reference the lettuce boycott in Salinas, California as well as the hops boycott and Native American land struggle in Tacoma,

Washington as examples to validate their transhistorical argument. Another reference is also made to the 1970 Chicano moratorium murders of the previous month<sup>10</sup>, noting that “just like the bell of Father Miguel Hidalgo, it served to wake up all those who had been asleep” (*El Grito del Norte*, 1), drawing another political parallel between the contemporary Chicana/o movement for justice and the centuries old Mexican independence movement against Spanish imperialism. Among these compounded histories of political struggle, Mexico becomes foregrounded as the principal ideological model able to express Chicana/o dissatisfaction and discrimination. As *El Grito del Norte* sought to cultivate revolutionary motives and ideologies, figures such as Miguel Hidalgo and accompanying narratives of Mexican Independence became inspirational discourses transplanted onto contemporary Chicana/o political movements. In aligning Chicana/o struggles with national Mexican histories, *El Grito del Norte* selectively situates Chicana/o identity among popularized revolutionary rhetoric, further delineating a relationship between Chicana/o and Mexican nationalism.

The use of Mexican nationalism as a historical anchor for the Chicana/o movement is thematically sustained throughout the issue as a viable antecedent to the Chicana/o fight for liberation. In her renown column *Despierten Hermanos!*, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez writes about the importance of celebrating the Mexican

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<sup>10</sup> The 1970s national Chicano Moratorium was a political protest that contested the disproportionately high numbers of Mexican-American casualties in the Vietnam War. Between twenty and thirty thousand people marched down Whittier Boulevard to call attention to the ongoing international conflict and domestic economic deprivations (Escobar, 1483). The protest resulted in police abuse as the Los Angeles Police department violently broke up the march. According to Escobar, “sheriff’s deputies charged the crowd, shooting tear gas and beating demonstrators with nightsticks” and “by the end of the day police had arrested over one hundred people, forty people were injured, and three lay dead” (1484). One of the most notable victims of the Chicano moratorium was journalist Ruben Salazar who became famous for his coverage of Chicano political actiobloon within the Los Angeles areas.

independence holiday and what this signifies for the political mobilization of Chicana/os. Opening up her article “16<sup>th</sup> of September” with the cries of “VIVA MEXICO! VIVA LAS AMERICAS! VIVA AZTLÁN!,” she cross-pollinates hemispheric nationalistic resistance movements to formulate a resounding sense of cultural and national pride. Longeaux y Vásquez asserts the 16<sup>th</sup> of September as an honorable date meant to cause “every member of La Familia de La Raza to feel the call of our ancient blood, the call of our ancestry, the call of our history, the call of over 25,000 years on this mysterious and beautiful land we again call Aztlán” (2). She continues proclaiming the 16<sup>th</sup> of September as an important moment of independence in the “history of Raza everywhere; Raza in Mexico and Raza in the Southwest” and visualizes Chicana/o history as an extension of Mexican nationalist narratives of colonial and state resistance (2). Historicizing the Southwest as originating 25,000 years ago, she centers on the importance of recognizing Aztlán as the transgeographical unifier validating a Mexican and Chicana/o claim to territory and Indigenous subjectivities. The historical rendition of Aztlán is accompanied by a brief interpretation of Spanish colonialism and its effects on the racial and cultural landscape of precolonial Mexico, stating that during this period the “conquistador conquered and was conquered” because of miscegenation with Indigenous populations that formed the “Mestizo-Raza; a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 2). This *mestizaje* narrative functions as a claim to Spanish and Indian blood and strengthens the racial logics of a Chicana/o subject descendants of conquistadores and Indigenous peoples.

The article serves as an overview of Mexican national history by depicting the independence movement as the successful overthrow of colonial imposition that “took up the struggle of the Indigenous, the poor, and the oppressed peoples of Mexico” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 2). The historical analysis then shifts over to talk about the loss of land via the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo arguing that the Mexican land theft not only weakened Mexican political power, but established a racial composition making “the people of the Southwest all of Mexican descent and heritage” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 6). A racial longing of indigeneity is newly articulated as Longeaux y Vásquez boldly asserts that the Mexican loss of the Southwest could not “drain the Indian blood from within us, whether it be just a drop or whether it be pure” (6). Indeed, the mixed/pure Indigenous ancestry reiterated by Chicana/os shows how centuries of treaties, legislation, and litigation cast a formative shadow over the geography of the Southwest and Mexico (Saldaña-Portillo, 196). Moving forward, the article clarifies that the honoring of Mexican national holidays is not meant to signal a political complacency with Mexican bureaucracy, but it is instead a symbol of solidarity with “the people of Mexico who are our brothers and sisters, in culture and in blood” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 6). In this instance, the recognition of biological and cultural ties with the people of Mexico and their struggles attempts to reject nationalistic celebration of Mexican diplomacy to instead uplift politically marginalized Mexican population who, like Chicana/os, have become oppressed within their own nation and government.

As previously noted, the racist and classist disenfranchisements of Chicana/os were interpreted in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* as parallel to the

struggles of the Mexican underclass during the independence and revolution periods. This is starkly noted in the final argument of the article which reminds Chicana/os that “the 16<sup>th</sup> of September now has a new meaning to the Mestizo because of what happened in Los Angeles” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 6), referring to the deaths at the peaceful Chicana/o moratorium on August 29, 1970. The most recent state sanctioned brutality against Chicana/os is likened to the spirit of struggle associated with the Mexican independence movement as the article concludes this comparison by noting that “the struggle which began on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1810 is still going on” (Longeaux y Vásquez, 6). The lineage established between Chicana/os and Mexican political histories by Longeaux y Vásquez effectively serves as an analysis aiming to bridge US minorities and Latin American subaltern subjects together on the terrain of resistance (Saldaña-Portillo, 15) to promote a transnational comradery among the two populations.

While *El Grito del Norte* retained a highly venerated view of Mexican culture and politics during its nearly six-year run, a March 1973 issue features a strong critique of Mexican nationalism and culture. Published in the last *El Grito del Norte* volume, the article departs from the usual celebratory tone dedicated to Mexican national histories and figures in early *El Grito del Norte* volumes and challenges uncritical discourses about the grandeur of the Mexican nation. The article “La Lucha en Mexico” by Lita Luna Lujan begins by lamenting an unfulfilled revolutionary potential:

“Mexico is the birthplace of the Mestizo, La Raza. It was first colonized by Spanish imperialism, and only after many long years of struggle was that Spanish rule broken. But though the war of independence was technically won, power never

passed into the hands of the masses of Mexicanos- the workers and campesinos.

The Mexican revolution also failed to put power in the hands of the people permanently. Today, U.S imperialism has replaced Spanish imperialism, and Mexico remains a colonized, exploited land with a government dominated by the rich” (Lujan, A)

In this passage, the narratives of an honorable Mexico become displaced through the bold critiques of the Mexican state’s failure to provide for its citizenry despite a revolution and national independence. The favorable limelight placed upon the periods of Mexican revolution and independence now becomes a point of scrutiny that disrupts a romanticized view of the power struggles emerging from these political upheavals. Through a class analysis, Lujan positions Mexico as a failed democratic country because of its past inability to distribute power, and its present status as a colonized and exploited land. A critical tone continues throughout as Mexico is further assessed as a country suffering from “cultural penetration” where brands like Coca-Cola, Alka Zelter [*sic*], and Ford clutter popular advertisements and public spaces. The mecca of Mexican life, Mexico City, is also portrayed as imperfect and considered as “a place of many contradictions” because of the social incongruities ushered in by national and historical politics (Lujan, A). Socialist themed Diego Rivera murals inside the national palace and Indigenous artifacts found inside the National Museum of Anthropology are offered as stark examples of contradictions existing among Mexican patrimony. The existence of revolutionary murals inside the national palace where “the repressive government has its offices” and the veneration of Indigenous cultures inside the museum while “Indians

outside are discriminated and treated very badly” demonstrates a critical analysis willing to deconstruct idealized notions of cultural heritages that are manipulated in service of the state (Lujan, A). In the article, the Mexican revolution is referred to as the “frozen revolution” given that “the efforts of Villa and Zapata were frozen when the bourgeoisie took over again” to utilize revolution narratives and legacies for their own elite purposes. The class analysis of Mexican society is also accompanied by a commentary on unequal gender relations among Mexican society, particularly among race. A recognition of intersecting oppressions is presented as the article explains “in any capitalist country, it is the women who suffer the most; such is the situation of the Mexican woman. Not only are they oppressed by society but by men as well” (Lujan, A). The analysis is sharpened via race as Indigenous women are noted as occupying a lower position on the Mexican economic hierarchy, one that pushes them into unstable and often demeaning jobs. The presence of unequal gender relations among this community is then attributed to their invisibility in the public sphere and their lack of incorporation into the contemporary struggle against Mexican capitalism and hegemony.

The closing statements offer another intervention into celebratory Mexican depictions by stating that “Mexico lindo y querido is in many ways a continuation of the United States; a colony of gringo invasion” (Lujan, B). This statement refutes earlier *El Grito del Norte* attitudes that vehemently looked to Mexico as a social and political response to US hegemony and racism. By placing US and Mexican politics in a parallel analysis of class, race, and gender the image of a pristine Mexico is momentarily likened to US expansionism and interrogated for its lack of social equity. However, among this

critique the traditional views of *mestizaje* and Mexican race relations are left intact. The opening description of Mexico as “the birthplace of the Mestizo, La Raza” preserves previous discourses of Mexican *mestizaje* that fail to be historicized and critiqued within the article. While Mexico can be recognized for its manipulation of revolutionary figures and marginalized Indigenous subjectivities, its usage of *mestizaje* as another state discourse is not assessed as a factor heavily influencing both these realities. In this way, the critical analysis of the Mexican government and elite class within this *El Grito del Norte* article mars a genuine engagement with Mexican racial stratification and restages an erasure of marginalized Mexican identities.

#### *De-Romanticizing Mexican Nationalism*

Chicana/os found political validation and cultural affinities in the Mexican independence and revolution movements where the US offered and nurtured none. Within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, locating Chicana/o struggles in the heroic tales of Mexican nationals and rebels allowed both publications to visualize Chicana/o activists as descendants confronting similar struggles of economic and political state oppression. The remembrance of Zapata, Villa, and Hidalgo as archetypical Mexican nationals who waged fights against hegemonic state and colonial powers also reveals the success of the Mexican racial project of *mestizaje* after the revolution. The revolutionary subjects, first constructed within Mexico, then recovered amongst Chicana/os, are continually reclaimed as mestizo subaltern figures. As Careaga Coleman notes, notable revolutionary figures, such as Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa, became the archetype of the valiant Mexican man and cemented the image of the rural

*charro mestizo* in the Mexican imaginary, further validating popularized notions of *mestizaje* and the amalgamated Mexican (144). The racial project of Mexican *mestizaje* not only privileged mixture and Whiteness, but also remade the histories of notable Black Mexican patriot figures such as General Vicente Guerrero and José María Morelos y Pavón, who were noted as mulattoes during their time. Both men fought alongside mestizos and criollos for independence from Spain and most importantly served successfully in persuading the Black Mexican population to support the insurgency against the Spanish crown (Dill and Greathouse Amador, 91). However, a whitening of both Guerrero and Morelos took place as their Black origins were tacitly erased to conform to the mestizo identity of the Mexican nation. Guerrero, who went on to become president, was frequently depicted as lighter skinned and rarely had his Black Mexican identity acknowledged, and much of the same racist tactics were employed on Morelos as well, who today appears on the Mexican fifty pesos bill. The celebration of both revolutionary figures does not include a celebration of their Black Mexican identities, further evidencing Mexico's efforts to exclude these marginalized histories and populations (Careaga Coleman, 25). While the Mexican state expounded the discourse of *mestizaje* to interact with depictions of the Mexican independence and revolution, Chicana/os enacted a similar project that crafted *mestizaje* as their rightful claim to Mexican nationalist figures, allowing them to portray them as predecessors to their current fight against US racism and classism. In the narratives of mestiza/o resistance crafted in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, their connection to indigeneity is attenuated by a Mexican national project that sought to recover the "Indian" as a symbolic structure, rather than a

lived reality (Cotera and Saldaña-Portillo, 553). In these uncoverings and rediscoveries of Mexican histories, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* inadvertently privilege a mestiza/o political archetype and only highlight ambiguous Indigenous histories and further obscuring the contributions of Black populations to both formative Mexican periods. As Menchaca points out, narrow interpretations of race and identity productions have largely ignored the relationship between these populations and consequently create narratives that devalue accomplishments of Black people in Mexico and the US Southwest, creating an erasure of shared histories and heritages (Menchaca, 11) within Chicana/o cultural formations.

Suggesting that texts such as *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, along with their Chicana/o readers, have participated in a complex veneration of *mestizaje* through essentialized illustrations of Mexican national histories, is not only meant to put an onus on Chicana/o movement discourses for perpetuating these harmful racializations, but it is also meant to recognize the effectiveness of Mexican nationalism in preserving exclusionary statist discourses of race and culture. In other words, Chicana/o recoveries of histories from the Mexican independence and revolution become implicated in the harmful ways that these histories are constructed within the scope of Mexican politics and culture. And while articles such as “La Lucha en Mexico” make a concerted effort to separate themselves from the Mexican state apparatus to instead find solidarity with disenfranchised Mexicans, the use of Mexican nationalist histories as fundamental identity formations brings with itself the inheritance of *mestizaje*, anti-blackness, and anti-indigeneity characteristic of the Mexican state. As important as it is to honor the

ways Chicana/os proudly used Mexican culture as a means of self-preservation against White supremacy in the US, it is equally imperative to also grapple with continually unexamined uses of *mestizaje* that ignore or trivialize the colonial baggage that accompanies the term (Banks, 204).

### ***La Raza Mestiza: Creating Chicana/o Ethnic Boundaries***

The nineteenth and early twentieth century Mexican histories celebrated in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* also intersected with the formations of identity and sense of racial belonging during the 1960s and 70s Chicana/o movement. Beginning in the early 1960s, Chicana/os challenged the postwar commitments to assimilation that were characteristic of middle-class Mexican Americans during the 1940s and 50s (Haney López, 76). The ardent legal and social battles to establish a White identity for Mexican Americans, such as *Hernández v. Texas* in 1954, did not result in social mobility for working class or darker skinned Mexican Americans living in both urban and rural settings (Haney López, 80). As Whiteness was not an afforded category to Mexican Americans experiencing poverty, educational disenfranchisement, labor exploitation, among other social injustices, many sought restitutions through the formation of ethnic based civic and student organizations. Heavily influenced by, and often times resentful of the successes of the Black civil rights movement<sup>11</sup>, Chicana/os began theorizing their own lived experiences, historical perceptions, and cultural formations in an effort to create a unified political identity. As Katerí Hernández aptly notes, it was only after

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<sup>11</sup> An article published in February 20, 1970 by famed journalist Ruben Salazar titled “Chicanos Would Find Identity Before Coalition with Black”, speaks to these resentments and rifts. In an analysis of these racial tensions Salazar writes that “Chicanos complain that blacks get most of the government help in the fight against racism, while Negroes scoff that Mexican-Americans have not carried their share of the burden in the civil rights movement.”

wide-scale police brutality and judicial mistreatment experienced in the wake of the Black civil rights movement that Chicana/os began to stress a non-White Chicana/o identity and articulate themselves as a unique racial group (155). With the blowouts of 1968 in East Los Angeles and the subsequent violence against Chicana/o students, the term Chicano became popularized in the imaginaries of thousands of working-class communities as an expression encompassing an ethnic and political consciousness speaking back to US hegemony and White supremacy (Haney López, 206). The adoption of Chicana/o terminology also came with the complicated territory of determining historical origins and cultural ties to help define the contours of a positive Mexican identity (Haney López, 208). It is during these consequential years that Chicana/o ideology became a central discussion in activist circles, specifically Chicana/o movement publications, across the Southwest that strategically undertook the question of Chicana/o racial identity formation. During this formative period of Chicana/o history, *mestizaje* and the figure of the mestiza/o took center stage as the answer to the decades old problem of Chicana/o identity. The self-conception of Chicana/os as mestizos formulated itself into social and legal ramifications constructing a generational consciousness and racial unconscious of a mixed Brown ideology (Saldaña-Portillo, 196). Haney López and Saldaña-Portillo theorize the usage of a Brown identity not just as a reactionary measure to US discrimination, but also as a zealous effort to racially calculate Chicana/os as both non-White and non-Black, drawing distinct divergences between Brown and Black identities. As a result, many Chicana/os stressed their native ties in order to distance themselves from the Black experience in the US and cement an unambiguous racial

category (Haney López, 212; Saldaña-Portillo, 202). This racializations was spurred on by Chicana/o, and Mexican, *mestizaje* ideologies that retold cultural histories as the exclusive consolidation of Spanish and Indigenous subjectivities. Therefore, while Chicana/o identity served to materialize *mestizaje* as a continued narrative of ethnic struggle against the state and the foundational basis of the Chicana/o movement, it harmfully created a narrow racial identity that neglected Blackness and treated Indigenous bodies as melancholic incorporations (Saldaña-Portillo, 195).

#### *Defining Brown and Mestiza/o Identities*

As notable Chicana/o movement publications, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* contributed to the complex discussion of identity, historical origins, and political mobilizations. The continuous rhetoric of *mestizaje* within both these publications served to delineate the parameters of Chicana/o racialization as mestiza/o and Brown bodies that descended from colonial relationships between Spanish and Indigenous subjects. In a January 1970 issue, a brief discussion about Chicana/o identity and history was published in *El Grito del Norte* alongside an interview with an Indigenous Alcatraz island occupier and activist. The preface speaks directly to the dilemma of Chicana/o identity politics asserting that because “Raza in the Southwest has had to face the problem of identity” their attempt to remedy this problem has led Chicana/os to “develop the concept of the Mestizo” (*El Grito del Norte*, 4). In this instance, the figure of the mestiza/o, and *mestizaje* by extension, becomes a guiding concept meant to combat “the problem of identity” within the Chicana/o community, and is ultimately borrowed and repackaged to serve movement ends (Nagel, 166). This

pedagogical move is then explained as timely and necessary given that the Chicana/o community is obscured by Eurocentric institutions denying Chicana/os educational opportunities to know their true place within history. The article harkens back to the time period of colonial conquest to outline the genealogy of the mestiza/o identity Chicana/os have taken on. A simplistic rendition of *mestizaje* is again brought forth noting that “mestizos are a people of mixed blood, of Spanish and Indian blood” further showing the racial logic present among Chicana/o productions of ethnic histories. Through this depiction, the article conceptualizes the Spanish/Indian racial binary as a conflicting paradox where Chicana/os inherit the “thinking of the Western man” from the Spanish half and a “strong culture” from the Indian half, further arguing that a Chicana/o Indigenous heritage serves to combat “the superficial dreams of a competitive Western world” (*El Grito del Norte*, 4). Saldaña-Portillo notes that the heavy task of anti-modernism that Chicana/os place upon indigeneity represents an attempt to attach recuperative decolonial meanings to the colonized condition of Chicana/os as subjects of overlapping imperialisms (563). In this instance, the Indigenous body is recovered as a past intellectual aesthetic guiding Chicana/os in their rejection of a colonized mentality. As the article encourages its Chicana/o readers to recognize their ancient Indigenous culture as a contentious response to their unavoidable Eurocentric history, Chicana/o identity is then constructed as involuntarily conflicted and seen as the product of an undisputed mestiza/o history.

The “concept of the mestiza/o” that the article claims Chicana/os developed in order to “know our history and our culture” (*El Grito del Norte*, 4) also relies on an

incomplete narrative of colonial and contemporary Mexican racial relations. Through proclamations of a “mixed Spanish and Indian blood,” the mestiza/o identity constructed in this article does not go beyond this simplified racial binary, and in turn obscures the presence of Black populations within the colonial time period referenced and among the greater Mexican racial landscape. While this textual observation can seem hasty, given that it is unclear if the author and editor know about the history of Black populations in Mexico, my intention is to signify how the recovery of a mestiza/o identity within this discourse borrows from legacies of racial denial, assimilation, and erasure. Vaugh argues that this lacking racial history emerges from “discourses of race in Mexico that have focused exclusively on Indigenous people, Spaniards, and their mixed-race prodigy, the mestizos, to the exclusion of other minority groups” (118). Within these exclusionary narratives of Mexican racializations, a rightful “acknowledgement of both the contemporary experience and historical legacy of Mexicans of African descent, as well as the significance of African slavery in Mexican history” (Vaugh, 118), becomes glaringly absent. Within this *El Grito del Norte* piece, advocating for a mestiza/o identity that is intended to signify a recovery of true Chicana/o culture advances a problematic colonial discourse that only accounts for the influences of Spanish and Indigenous histories. Most importantly, as Boyce-Davies notes, social and cultural uses of mestiza/o can be also be used as oppressive separations in Latin American communities in order to distance one from darker-skinned peoples and others who identify as “African,” “Afro-” or “Black” (11). While the seemingly inconsequential recovery and repurposing of an Indigenous/Spanish racial mixture aided Chicana/os in developing ethnic and historical

pride, the deployment of a mestiza/o identity also placed Chicana/os in a racial legacy that distanced and negated Black histories and influences in both Mexican and Chicana/o culture.

The self-perception of Chicana/os as racial amalgamations of Spanish and Indigenous peoples grew considerably into a variety of cultural, political, and intellectual projects during the apex of the Chicana/o movement (Saldaña-Portillo, 563). As a concept gaining popularity and acceptance, *mestizaje* served as the perfect explanation for the racialization of Chicana/os that could not be properly addressed through the dichotomous Black/White racial binary of the US (Haney López, 212). Through the conventional reprisals of Mexican origin stories, both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* built a racial ideology that redefined the meanings of ethnicity to create an internal solidarity amongst Chicana/os (Nagel, 166). The definition of a mestiza/o identity is exhibited in a March 1971 *Despierten Hermanos!* piece titled “La Historia del Mestizo” where *mestizaje* is utilized as a historiographical concept useful in deconstructing the origins of Chicana/os (Vásquez, 68). The beginning sentences of the article rhetorically question terms such as *el Chicano*, *La Raza*, *el nuevo Chicano*, and *La Raza Cósmica* to acknowledge how Chicana/os unfamiliar with these phrases do not recognize the historical context behind them. Asserting Chicana/o roots to begin with “the history of the mestizo” and that “we [Chicana/os] need to start by erasing the boundaries and the cobwebs that exist in our minds and think solely of our people” (Vásquez, 12), a long-winded historical analysis of *mestizaje* is given to validate a nationalistic mestiza/o ideology. As the article moves through a canonical timeline of

Chicana/o history, such as the Aztec empire, Spanish colonization, and the 1848 loss of Mexican land, the Indigenous subject is deployed as the subaltern actor of each era and theorized as the nexus of Chicana/o cultural politics and identity. Histories of colonial and sexual violence are retold in the article and vehemently used as proof of “the birth of the mestizo” archetype that is recovered as the point of departure for Chicana/o identity and culture. The article concludes by explicitly situating Chicana/o racial components as a “history of nationality that is very Spanish, Mexican, and of mestizo blood” (*Grito del Norte*, 12), problematically constructing a Chicana/o ethnic boundary through individual identification and group formation (Nagel, 161). Similar to the above passage, proclaiming the “birth of the mestizo” follows a traditional depiction of Chicana/o identity formations reliant upon racial dimensions that perpetuate existing colonial racial hierarchies and exclude bodies illegible to the Mexican or mestizo archetype.

While much dialogue around *mestizaje* stemmed from Chicano men and their own interpretation of a mestizo history, Chicanas seeking to intervene in masculinist discourses of race and class also viewed the topic of Chicana/o identity vitally important to discussions of Chicana feminism and gendered histories. As a pinnacle Chicana print publication, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* conceptually tackled the formations of a Chicana identity to build a genealogy of race, culture, and gender. This precise dialogue is emphasized in a short poem titled “Soy Chicana de Aztlán” where the intersections of race and gender are explored through the ethnic construction of Chicana/o identity. The poem crafts together a history of Chicana self-identification contingent upon Mexican histories and colonial racial classifications by declaring “Soy India, soy Morena, soy la

mestiza, soy Chicana de Aztlán,” (Estrella, 7) effectively constructing an ethnic history and racial certainty for Chicanas. This racial triad also outlines the historical periods from which Chicanas borrow their self-identification to craft a palatable ethno-cultural identity. The declaration of *india* starkly aligns Chicanas with Indigenous racializations while the use of *mestiza* negates the racial purity of *india* to instead crystalize Chicana identity as the mixture of *india* lineages and cultures. Identifying with *india*, *morena*, and *mestiza* subjectivities borrows heavily from the colonial registers of Indian subalternization under Spanish colonialism (Saldaña-Portillo, 15) that accounts for the mixture of Chicanas and reflect the creative choices used to define themselves in ethnic ways (Nagel, 152). Moreover, the equalization of the racial categories *india*, *Morena*, and *mestiza*, which all carry vastly different connotation within Mexico and Latin America, interprets mixture as a social panacea (Jiménez Róman, 325) and presents *mestizaje* as a harmonious ahistorical process. The racial boundaries calculated in being a “Chicana de Aztlán” speak to the racial formations occurring within the overall Chicana/o movement that hail mixture as a benchmark for Chicana/o identity production. Chicana/o discourses of *mestizaje*, while meant to signal a purposeful racialization combating White supremacy, also simultaneously represent an ideology of racial democracy (Jiménez Róman, 333) that, in this example, uncritically looks to past histories of subjugation as accepted cultural origins. Most importantly, the recuperation of *india*, *Morena*, and *mestiza* perpetuates a Brown (Morena) identity that does not consider Blackness as a component of Chicana/o identity and instead formulates a racially exclusive paradigm for bodies who do not fit the definition of mestiza/o identity (Kateri Hernández, 1548). As

Vaughn notes, “Blackness is not considered a topic germane to most discussions of culture, ethnic development, or ethnicity in general” (118).

Unimagining Blackness from Chicana/o recuperations of Mexican racializations also surfaced through racial narratives that positioned Black populations as distant histories and cultures. As *mestizaje* also relegated Indigenous populations as distant pasts, the recovery of Indigenous customs and histories became a common practice within Chicana/o culture, inadvertently minimizing and neglecting recognition of Black influences and cultures. An example of this practice can be seen in a 1973 *El Grito del Norte* article titled “Mexico: The Roots of our People,” written by Jorge González, that discusses Mexican national histories such as the Aztec conquest, the Mexican independence movement, and Mexican revolution. The overall impetus of the article centers on offering a truthful view of Mexican history and its relationship to Chicana/o political formations. The article begins by offering questions such as “is it important for Chicana/os to know Mexican history?” and “is it enough to be proud of a few names like Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo, Morelos, Juarez, Villa, and Zapata or do we need to look deeper?” as a way of analyzing the inherent relationship constructed between Mexican and Chicana/o political struggles. After outlining the inquiries driving the content of the article, González declares that “this article is based on the belief that in order to understand our present and shape our future, we must understand our past history as people” quickly adding that “our goal is to present a true picture not a romantic one” (González, B). Like other *El Grito del Norte* articles, González locates the genesis of Mexican history within the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán-Mexico and the subjugation

of numerous Indigenous tribes such as the Toltec, Olmecs and Mayans. As a way of de-romanticizing the Aztecs and Mexicas, González explains how the Mexicas imposed taxes, forceful sacrifices, and “were despised by all for their barbaric ways” (B). After critiquing the Mexica empire as a violent structure against smaller Indigenous groups, González jumps forward to the period of violence under Spanish colonization that nearly terminated enslaved Indigenous populations. He notes that “this situation compounded by Indian revolts and defections led the colonists to import African slaves; it is estimated that 250,000 Black slaves were brought to Mexico-more than the number of Spaniards who came.” González continues his analysis and points out how both “the Indians and Blacks were used as common laborers for the benefit of the Spanish empire” causing “the native people [to lose] many of their artistic and technical skills and fall into underdevelopment and dependency” (B). González continues his overview of Mexican politics by delving into the independence movement and colonial relationships between Indigenous populations and suppressive Spanish and Criollo leaders. He ends by offering an analysis of the Mexican political failures and successes that derived from both these social upheavals and outlines the ways Mexican culture and society have remained subordinate in the face of the US and European imperial powers.

In comparison to the numerous *El Grito del Norte* articles that also discuss Mexican history and cultural formations at length, this article stands as the only piece to reference the presence of Black people within any period of Mexican history. By momentarily alluding to a shared oppressive history between Indigenous and Black laborers, this article opens us space to recognize the actualities of Mexican race relations

during colonialism. However, while the article brings to light the colonial racial hierarchy that operated to subjugate both enslaved Black and Indigenous peoples, only a few sentences are dedicated to acknowledging the presence of Black people within Mexican history as it goes right back to only referencing Indigenous peoples struggles. The passing mention of enslaved Black populations within the article only incorporates Black subjectivities as part of a distant and forgotten history. As mentioned earlier, the Mexican racial project of *mestizaje* sought to simultaneously neglect, absorb and appropriate Black populations and histories into a national mestiza/o identity. Katerí Hernández argues that within renditions of Mexican history and culture, the Black body becomes a foreigner in the Mexican imaginary because by design, Black ancestry and people were to be forgotten and absorbed into the mestizo nation (154). She further explains that recognizing Blackness as a component of identity would implode the notion of racial harmony and mixed-raced heritage (154), and further complicate the Eurocentric objectives of Mexican *mestizaje*. As the article attempts to lay out a historical analysis meant to “understand our past history as people” and to “present a true picture not a romantic one,” the only histories that are truly examined and discussed are those of Indigenous and Spanish populations. The article critiques the Mexica for their imperial and feudalist governance, critically analyses the complicated relationship between Spanish, mestiza/o, and Indigenous peoples, and positions Mexico as a failing revolutionary nation, as a way of de-romanticizing Chicana/o cultural and political imaginaries. Yet, the historical fact of the “250,000 black slaves [who] were brought to Mexico” remains isolated and unattended. Most importantly, the brief mention of

enslaved Africans as an official part of Mexican colonial history can also be read as mirroring *mestizaje* practices that only recognize Black populations as a past peoples dutifully absorbed into the Mexican mestiza/o nation. Therefore, this *El Grito del Norte* article remains as another example of the limitations of *mestizaje* ideologies that obscure Black histories as forgotten and uneventful contributions to Mexican history and culture.

#### *Normalized Racial Limitations*

As seen in various contextual examples within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, words like Brown, bronze, Indian, and *Raza* denoted a racial construction that set the boundaries for collective identity, established group membership, generated a shared symbolic vocabulary, and defined a common purpose (Nagel, 163). One of the most notable phrases, “*La Raza*,” became a popular quotidian expression instrumentalized as a vehicle for solidified ethnic consensus and cultural unity. The visibility of the “*La Raza*” as a cultural and political slogan, the construction of the mestiza/o archetype, and the formulation of a Brown Chicana/o identity all became dominant narratives weaved throughout *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. Throughout their publications, *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* promoted *La Raza* as an ethnic community, tying this racialized ideology to Chicana/o struggles, victories, and histories. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* used *La Raza* as a signifier of their Chicana feminist visions of liberation, and through poems, art, and featured articles, created an archetypical Chicana subject contained within the ethnic markers of *mestizaje*. Its endorsement of *La Raza* presented a commitment to gender inclusive Chicana/o nationalist ideologies. This commitment is reiterated in the article “*La mujer todavía*

impotente” which calls upon Chicanas to act in favor of their communities and utilize their political fervor to serve the ultimate goals of nation building among the peoples of *La Raza* (Morales, 4). As *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* propelled timely and necessary critiques of Chicano patriarchy, *mestizaje* as another restrictive discourse was left intact and instead perpetuated as the ethnoracial norm acceptable for the political, cultural, and educational advancement of Chicanas. Similarly, several issues of *El Grito del Norte* incorporated *La Raza* into headlines and articles as a way of cultivating political and ethnic unity among Chicana/os. Segments such as “Noticias de la Raza” (*El Grito del Norte*, 18) and “La Raza en las Americas” (*El Grito del Norte*, 3) represented the normalization of *La Raza* as an identity marker for Chicana/os. Additionally, the term Indo Hispano was also initially utilized in *El Grito del Norte* to serve the campaign of La Alianza Federal de Mercedes and to localize land grant *mestizaje* ideologies within the geographic imaginaries of New Mexico (Trujillo, 97). As a precursor to *La Raza* and *mestiza/o*, Indo Hispano was also defined in *El Grito del Norte* as a mixture of Indigenous subjects and Spanish settlers. However, Indo Hispano instead borrowed from the *genizaro mestizaje* of detribalized Plains and Pueblo peoples of New Mexico who were granted land and cultural rights through the colonial Laws of the Indies (Trujillo, 97). Over time, *El Grito del Norte* rendered Indo Hispano interchangeable with Chicana/o (BeBout, 100), and became another marker of identity added to the *mestiza/o* lexicon that visualized Chicana/os as descendants of the unfortunate violent union between Indigenous and Spanish histories.

In all these examples, the understandings of *mestizaje* as a radical and pro-racial ideology normalized *mestiza/o*, *La Raza*, and Indo Hispano as concepts that would help Chicana/os subvert initial perceptions of Whiteness and anti-indigenism espoused by the previous Mexican American generation. More importantly, the racial calculus divulged through cursory incorporations of *mestizaje* and *La Raza* in both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* fail to critically engage with the problematic legacies that accompanied both these racial concepts recovered as benign historical facts and cultural formations of Chicana/o identity. As Palacios points out, when *mestizaje* and *La Raza Cómica* are taken as historical facts, and not as ideologically charged nationalistic constructs that have been used to impose a common identity and culture on racially and culturally diverse populations, Chicana/os risk contributing to an erasure of Indigenous and Black resistance to assimilation and exclusion (435). In constructing a Brown, bronze, and mixed identity, *El Grito del Norte*, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, and the broader Chicana/o community negatively contribute to an epistemological erasure of Black subjectivities in Mexican culture, history, and contemporary Mexican society, and advance a Mexican *mestiza/o* project that marginalizes Blackness as a national identity.

#### *Deconstructing Idyllic Mestizaje*

Considering the vastly different racial contexts of Mexico and the US, one could argue that the Mexican concept of an enduring race is one thing, while Chicana/o self-identification is another (Gonzalez, 375). Yet, while it is not my intent to conflate Mexican and Chicana/o histories of race and *mestizaje*, the convergences and correlations between these two ideologies warrant a closer examination. Given the detrimental

heritage of *mestizaje* as an enduring racial theory, it also becomes important to identify how Chicana/o movement texts like *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, as representations of popular Chicana/o rhetoric, contributed to uncritical Chicana/o interpretations of Mexican racial histories. The expansive analysis of both these newspapers within this project starkly shows how popular Chicana/o themes such as Aztlán, celebratory Mexican histories, geographical and cultural belongings, racial and ethnic formations, and political resistances become permeated throughout Chicana/o movement ideologies. The uncritical appropriation of Mexican national histories, such as pre-Columbian mythologies, and revolutionary narratives and figures, utilized to imagine and expand Chicana/o nationalism become evident in articles and essays such as “Somos Aztlán,” “Hijas de Cuauhtémoc,” “Las Mexicanas de la Revolución,” and “16<sup>th</sup> of September.” Additionally, the ethnic containments and (un)intentional racial exclusions emerging from Chicana/o identity productions become apparent in various writings such as “La Historia del Mestizo,” “Soy Chicana de Aztlán,” and “Raza in the Southwest” that uncritically deploy concepts such as *La Raza* and *mestiza/o*, excluding Black subjectivities and simultaneously creating conditions for Indigenous essentialism. Through a critical approach to these discourses, considering power structures, racial hierarchies, and colonial identity categorizations, *mestizaje* becomes unraveled as a sanctioned and venerated philosophy upheld throughout *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. By identifying *mestizaje* as the paramount ideology present among both *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, we can see how this racial ideology becomes diffused throughout Chicana/o identity productions. By recognizing how racial hybridity

as a model of oppositional consciousness does not in it of itself constitute liberation, nor does it invariably escape exclusionary developmentalism (Saldaña-Portillo, 278), we can also see how *mestizaje* manifests itself as a constrained radical and anti-hegemonic Chicana/o concept in need of further interrogation and unsettling. The next section discusses the scholarly need for complications of identity formations tied to cultural nationalism, colonial imaginaries, and legacies of violence to show how these reckonings can constitute productive disruptions of problematic epistemic and theoretical frameworks.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The influence of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* over the Chicana/o movement and its subsequent constructions of identity further cements the importance of these two texts as genuine representations of Chicana/o rhetoric and consciousness. Through an extensive textual and thematic analysis of selected pieces from *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, I have demonstrated the fluid, contradictory, and nuanced identity politics engendered through Chicana/o identity constructions. I have also identified several ways in which discourses of Mexican national racial formations, such as *mestizaje*, correlate to the production of a collective Chicana/o identity. Within the selected articles, poems, and essays in *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* I show how Chicana/o adaptations and instrumentalization of *mestizaje* occurred in two major ways—through Chicana/o interpretations of Mexican histories and the creation of Chicana/o ethnic boundaries. Chicana/o interpretations of Mexican histories ushered in uncritical and celebratory adoptions of *mestizaje* situated within Aztec mythologies and repurposed histories of the Mexican independence and revolutionary movements. These historical narratives adopted by Chicana/os positioned Indigenous subalternity as ancient histories in need of recovery, and simultaneously continued an erasure of Black histories from Mexican racial imaginaries. Chicana/o ethnic boundaries, created through the construction of a Chicana/o mestiza/o subject, propelled *mestizaje* and *La Raza Cósmica* as authentic racial theories that concurrently romanticized the Spanish/Indigenous racial dyad and perpetuated harmful colonial cultural formations. More importantly, the exclusionary racial construction of mestiza/o identities placed Black subjectivities outside

of Mexican and Chicana/o racial formations and created an incommensurability between Chicana/o and Black identities (Kateri Hernández, 1551).-

### **Study Limitations**

One of the major limitations to this project was the inability to properly and chronologically locate all the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* issues. Aside from year of publication, the available issues of *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* were not originally dated or numbered and only offered a vague timeline. This proved difficult both for logistical and analytical reasons as my engagement with these materials was incomplete. Unlike my analysis of the full volumes of *El Grito del Norte*, I could not apply a chronological analysis to *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* because of the discrepancies in archival and scholarly information. Because of the incomplete *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* archive, the contents for *El Grito del Norte* often primarily shaped my argument; ten *El Grito del Norte* pieces were included in my final analysis versus three pieces from *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. I did not anticipate the hardship in locating the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* issues and at times found it difficult to incorporate limited material into my analysis.

### **Re-Working and Re-Formulating Chicana/o Identity Formations**

This project contributes and expands literature on Chicana/o identity formations, political histories, and cultural productions. Through my analysis, I acknowledge yet look beyond the vast celebratory scholarship interpreting the Chicana/o political movements, social resistances, and cultural admirations. As mentioned throughout this project, I do not set out to minimize or fallaciously ignore the plight of oppressed Chicana/os communities and the social impact of their contributions to contemporary society. In

discussing the interpretations, productions, understandings, and consciousness building within the publications of *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, and within the Chicana/o community at large, my intention has been to address the instrumentalizations of selective historical narratives to consider the relationship between racial formations, state making, and cultural constructions. Contending with the nuanced understandings of identity, ethnicity, race, cultural origins, and historical interpretations present within *El Grito del Norte* and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* represents an opportunity to disrupt and complicate discourses in Chicana/o cultural productions that contribute to harmful social and racial stratifications. Moreover, dislocating *mestizaje* as a celebratory discourse in Chicana/o constructions of identity, culture, and history is also meant to engender a fruitful discussion about the nature of collective histories and what silenced subjectivities and normalized narratives become situated in discourses of race and ethnicity. As Palacios argues in his own critique of *mestizaje*, theories that uphold this colonial concept as historical fact, and not as an ideologically charged nationalist concept, continue an erasure of Indigenous and Black resistance and instead become complicit in assimilation and political exclusions (435).

Moreover, focusing on the historical, cultural, and social dynamic of Mexican nationalist discourses, and its influence upon Chicana/o history and culture, is meant to acknowledge the transnational and migratory nature of *mestizaje* as an ideology, framework, and contemporary political reality. As Torres-Saillant points out, Latina/os are historically poised to exercise their civil intervention in the US and in their Latin American country of origin given that most Latina/s continue to retain meaningful ties to

their ancestral homelands (281). Therefore, considering Mexican nationalism and its dialogic relationship with Chicana/o cultural nationalism, it becomes important to understand the multiple ways Chicana/os uphold underpinnings of Mexican racial, cultural, political, and social disenfranchisements. Through this project, I have outlined multiple ways in which this relationship manifests and proliferates within narratives and selective recoveries of Chicana/o discourses and histories. Attempting to render a critique of a state co-opted romanticized indigeneity and racist cultural productions is done with the intention of producing identities that can be productive in uniting all marginalized peoples against hegemonic orders and simultaneously create an intellectual and communal space to continue questioning identities that are embedded in state power, nationalist exclusions, and harmful cultural reproductions. In this sense, I hope to contribute to the existent conversations put forth by subaltern communities that have already identified the misgivings, limitations, and violence of *mestizaje*, cultural racism, and ethno-racial boundaries.

### **Future Research Directions**

Grappling with silences, exclusions, and hegemonic discourses attached to the production of Chicana/o identity is done with the intention of probing at the seams that bind the intricacies of self-making in the attempt to produce new ways of self-representation and knowledge. I am concerned with understanding the complex layers situated within deconstructions of accepted Chicana/o histories and social narratives. A larger takeaway of this project also reckons with how Chicana/o communities might also commit themselves to the equally necessary struggle against racial and ethnic prejudice in

Latin America and the Caribbean (Torres-Saillant, 282). I wonder about the responsibilities and accountabilities scholars within the Chicana/o community have to not just scrutinize and understand multiple oppressive systems within the US, but to also internally examine the foundations and structures of our own racial heritages and cultural formations. Continuing to rely on *mestizaje* risks a complacency and corroboration with violent and suppressive nationalist discourses taking place today. As Saldaña-Portillo notes, Chicana/o re-appropriations of the biologized terms of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* run the risk of harmfully recuperating the “Indian” as an ancestral past rather than recognizing Indigenous peoples as co-inhabitants and contemporary populations within Mexico and the US (413). Alberto also points to *mestizaje*’s contemporary role in fueling Mexican indigenist ideologies responsible for dismantling Indigenous culture and society through assimilationist policies and nationalist rhetoric (Alberto, 108). Moreover, Katerí Hernández reminds us that Black populations within Mexico are not just figures of past histories but actual existent communities. She writes that “not only do people of identifiable African descent continue to live in Mexico, but they are also voicing their concerns about the persistent bias and discrimination they face” (1541). Similarly, Careaga Coleman argues that the Mexican state continues to run arduous efforts at defacing, minimizing, and stalling institutional recognitions of Black populations and their humanitarian needs (217-72).

The present realities and oppressions enacted through *mestizaje*, and similar discourses, requires a genuine and comprehensive understanding of current scholarship, public conversations, and established critiques. Through my analysis, I have put into

conversation numerous discourses also analyzing *mestizaje* as a refutable and inconsistent framework, ideology, and racial project. It is the hope that the critiques, conversations, and questions within this project continue informing current dialogues around this topic and open space to explore what we as Chicana/os gain, lose, unsettle, and maintain from being critical of our own visions, racial identities, and collective unities. Lastly, I hope to contribute to scholarship that considers the heterogeneities and multiple perspectives existing under the banner of “Chicana/o” to further construct and move towards a holistic vision of ethnic, racial, gender, class, and social liberation.

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