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**Mainline Protestants, *La Raza* Protestors: Jorge Lara-Braud and the
Hispanic-American Institute, 1965-1969**

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Abstract

Mainline Protestants, *La Raza* Protestors: Jorge Lara-Braud and the Hispanic-American Institute, 1965-1969

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The Hispanic-American Institute (HAI) was an ecumenical Protestant agency operated out of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary between 1965 and 1976. Under its first director, Jorge Lara-Braud, HAI became closely involved with the “Raza Unida” mass meetings and other early expressions of the Chicano Movement. This study examines the development of HAI during its first three years, focusing on how it became involved with radical activism, and how Lara-Braud defended that decision to Anglo Protestant leaders. It points to the way in which Lara-Braud linked Civil Rights concepts of integration accepted by liberal “mainline” Protestants to newer, more radical racial politics by invoking the mixed racial heritage of Hispanic peoples – *la raza* – as an example of the possibility of racial reconciliation in a Christian society.

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I. Introduction

On January 6, 1968, 36-year-old Jorge Lara-Braud took the stage to address some 1,500 persons gathered in the auditorium of the John F. Kennedy High School in San Antonio. His audience were attendees of the second Raza Unida conference, a meeting of Hispanic activists from San Antonio and across the Southwest with the goal of raising consciousness, forming political networks, and producing actionable resolutions on issues of social and racial justice that faced “the united race” – *la raza unida*.¹ The conference was itself the result of a joint effort among several of the newest and most radical Hispanic political activist organizations active in what would become known as the Chicano Movement. But the group Lara-Braud represented was different: he was the director and principle employee of the Hispanic-American Institute (HAI), a Protestant religious think-tank operation out of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

The San Antonio conference was a turning point for HAI. Active between 1965 and 1976, the Institute had been established by the two main Presbyterian denominations in the U.S. - the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) – as an ecumenical project to help the liberal “mainline” Protestant denominations better integrate Hispanic members and congregations, through improved ministerial training and the “interpretation” of Hispanic issues to Anglos.² But as Lara-Braud reflected years later, “we soon learned that it was not possible to be educational or interpretive without getting ourselves involved in the pent-up hopes of marginal peoples who were seeing Biblical

1 . During HAI's period of activity there was great variance in the terms used for the population with whom it was concerned – Spanish-American, Latin-American, Hispanic, Chicano, and others. This study uses “Hispanic” because it is the term that was used most commonly used within and around HAI itself.

2 . “Anglo” is used here as a shorthand for white Americans, as they are most commonly contrasted against Latino peoples in the text; “white” is used when a more general contrast with minority groups is discussed.

visions for the first times in their lives.”³ Along with other members and outside affiliates of HAI, Lara-Braud believed that the place of Hispanics in the church was inextricably linked to the place of Hispanics in U.S. society. From 1967 onwards he threw both HAI's resources and his own rhetorical platform behind the Chicano Movement, and this choice decisively shaped HAI's history of operations.

The Presbyterian denominational historians R. Douglas Brackenridge and Francisco García-Treto noted the significance HAI's work in 1974, crediting the Institute with shaping Presbyterian policy and playing an “important mediatorial role in a number of crises affecting Mexican-Americans during the 1960s.”⁴ This study examines how HAI assumed that role, focusing on the early phase of HAI's activity and the significance of early Chicano Movement activism during that time. In service of his social and religious aims, Lara-Braud worked to link established Protestant social understanding to new, radical activist visions. Key to this process was Lara-Braud's rhetorical articulation of *la raza*, through which he connected Hispanic activism and racial identity to the causes of integration and racial equality that the church had embraced; this rhetoric helped HAI to maintain its “mediatorial” position through internal and external controversy.

HAI was operational during a period of profound uncertainty for the mainline Protestant denominations that had wielded great cultural influence in the early and mid-Twentieth Century. In his history of the National Council of Churches, James Findlay concludes that the end of the 1960s marked the “ending of the *kairos*,” the “opportune time” for mainline support for Civil Rights, as the churches began to withdraw the support for activism that they had offered earlier in the decade.⁵ Scholars generally

3 . Jorge Lara-Braud, “The Hispanic American Institute: A Retrospective,” (paper presented to the 19th Meeting of the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest, Austin, Texas, March 9, 1996), 29.

4 . R. Douglas Brackenridge and Francisco García-Treto, *Iglesia Presbiteriana: A History of Presbyterians and Mexican-Americans in the Southwest* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 204.

5 . James Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 224.

concur that this withdrawal as the result of white Protestant unwillingness to accept the claims for socioeconomic justice and emphasis on racial identity among Civil Rights activists after 1965; this produced a backlash that weakened not only Protestant activism, but the mainline churches fundamentally, leading to the rise of Conservative Evangelicalism during the 1970s.⁶ The timing of the Protestant withdrawal has had a particular effect on the study of religion in the Chicano Movement. Historians have only recently begun to consider the religious aspects of the Chicano movement in general, and most of their studies focus on the popular Catholicism or Indigenous-inflected religiosity of figures like Cesar Chavez; Protestants are presumed to have been primarily conservative and/or apolitical.⁷ Serious examination of a socially progressive Hispanic Protestantism has focused instead on the “mestizo theology” or “latino theology” developed in the 1980s and early 1990s, but these have not been considered in direct conjunction with Civil Rights politics.⁸

6 . There are two main approaches to the decline of Protestant support for Civil Rights. Racial theorists argue that it resulted from the fundamental weakness of a “colorblind” approach to integration, which could not disrupt white hegemony over U.S. society; this view is articulated most clearly in Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd Edition (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 162-170. Religious historians focus more closely on the tactical “errors” of activists. Elitism and failure to “convert” the majority of Protestants is the main critique of Findlay, 223. 110. Robert Wuthnow argues rather that Protestant activists were too willing to embrace narrow identity politics, what he calls “special purpose groups; see Robert Wuthnow *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 130, 180; David Swartz is harsher, dubbing this an “epidemic of splits” in “Identity Politics and the Fragmenting of the 1970s Evangelical Left,” *Religion and American Culture* 21 (2011), 103; David Hollinger describes splits moving Protestant activism into secular organizations in *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Liberal Protestantism in American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 42-46.

7 . Espinosa, Gastón, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda. “Introduction: U.S. Latino Religions and Faith-Based Political, Civic, and Social Action.” In *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, edited by Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-5.

8 . Theologians in the tradition include Virgilio Elizondo, Andrés Guerrero, Roberto S. Gozuieta, Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, and Miguel de la Torre; for overview of their work, see Nestor Medina, *Mestizaje: Remapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009) and Jorge A. Aquino, “Mestizaje: The Latina/o Religious Imaginary in the North American Racial Crucible, in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latina/o Theology*, edited by Orlando O. Espín, 283–312. (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2015).

This study follows the work of a number of scholars who have tried to complicate the narrative of Protestant withdrawal and failure from activism. Examining ecumenical religious activists in Texas, Brian Behnken argues that these activists combined concepts of interracial solidarity and nonviolence, articulated by earlier civil rights advocates, with a willingness to embrace the socioeconomic change sought by newer activist groups; they thus functioned as a “bridge between the days of nonviolence and the days of Black Power and Brown Power.”⁹ Paul Barton and Felipe Hinojosa make a similar argument, but take it further conceptually and chronologically. Hinojosa argues that even when Hispanic Protestant activists were failed by the Anglo churches – and they were – they succeeded in producing space in which distinctly Hispanic articulations of Protestantism could develop; in this way, identity was not a liability, but central to allowing Hispanics to “move from the margins of their churches to become central players advocating for a place at the religious table.”¹⁰

The trajectory of HAI between 1966 and 1969 provides a clear example of the work of “bridging” in all specifics. In purely institutional terms, HAI was an agency derived from an earlier history of Presbyterian Hispanic ministry and the mainline Protestant embrace of ecumenism and Civil Rights; it brought the influence of this background into its involvement with the Chicano Movement, and grew that connection during a period in which Protestant engagement with Civil Rights was beginning to decline. And in rhetorical and theological terms, Lara-Braud's approach to *la raza* demonstrates a synthesis of ecumenical Protestantism, contemporary Liberation

⁹ . Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 130-131.

¹⁰ . Felipe Hinojosa, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 200; see also Paul Barton, “¡Ya Basta! Latina/o Activism in the Chicana/o and Farmworkers Movements, in *Latino Religions and Civil Activism in the United States*, Espinosa et. al., eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Theology, and emergent Hispanic identity in the same tradition that would be taken up by later theologians.

This study focuses on Jorge Lara-Braud's writings and pronouncements as HAI director, the minutes and documents associated with HAI's biannual board meetings, and relevant correspondence between Lara-Braud, board members, and others. This is only a small fraction of the material within HAI's institutional records, held by Austin Seminary; the extensive documentation of HAI's educational activities, HAI's Latin American activities, and the post-1969 work of Lara-Braud and second HAI director Ruben Armendáriz fall mainly outside the scope of this project. At the same time, like any archive, and especially an institutional archive, HAI's records present a limited, but still expansive picture of the Institute's activity. Much further research can and should be done on this archive and this subject.

The history of HAI presented in this study begins with an overview of the social and theological factors that informed the creation of HAI. The activity of HAI itself unfolds over three sections. The first section covers the original development of HAI in 1964-65, and its shift towards Hispanic activism in the U.S. Southwest during 1966. The second section deals with Lara-Braud's initial involvement with the Chicano Movement during 1967-68, and explores the institutional and rhetorical means he used to promote his understanding of *la raza* to Protestant audiences. The third section examines the more complicated question of reorienting HAI as an organization during 1968-69, and the challenges Lara-Braud faced leading up to the pivotal 1969 UPCUSA General Assembly. The epilogue briefly traces the remainder of HAI's history and considers its significance to later expressions of Hispanic religiosity.

II. Protestants and Hispanics before 1965

From its inception, Hispanic Protestantism and Presbyterian Hispanic ministry was deeply concerned with the place of Hispanic peoples in U.S. society.¹¹ The earliest Protestant mission work among Hispanics in the Southwest, which began in the 1870s, was heavily oriented toward “Americanizing” the local Mexican-American population in order to limit the political influence of Catholicism. In the words of key PCUS evangelist Walter B. Scott, their goal was to uplift Mexicans “hygenically, socially, civically, morally, and spiritually” into passable American citizens through modern education and religious instruction.¹² Most Protestant denominations considered Hispanic evangelism in the U.S. to be a more minor field, but mission work gradually produced approximately 5600 Hispanic Protestant congregants by 1900.¹³ This growth, followed by the influx of Mexican migrants and refugees from the Mexican Revolution in 1910, led Protestants to develop larger, more formalized institutions for Hispanic ministry. Many were organized through existing missionary and Protestant women's networks; these included the Council on Spanish-American Work (COSAW), founded in 1912 as the first agency to coordinate Hispanic missions interdenominationally, and the original Migrant Ministry founded in California in 1920.¹⁴

11 . This history focuses on the Presbyterian experience, drawn primarily from Brackenridge and García-Treto's *Iglesia Presbiteriana*, but other Protestant denominations followed a similar trajectory in their outreach to Hispanics; general histories of Mexican-American and Hispanic Protestantism used here include Paul Barton, *Hispanic Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) and Juan Francisco Martínez, *Sea la Luz: the Making of Mexican-American Protestantism in the Southwest, 1829-1900* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2006).

12 . Brackenridge and García-Treto, 12-13.

13 . Hispanic congregants split almost entirely between the ~2000 Presbyterians (1464 UPCUSA and 567 PCUS) and ~3000 Methodists; counts are drawn from denominational records surveyed in J. F. Martínez, 150.

14 . For a discussion of this shift and Protestant women's organizations, see chapter 6 of Susan M. Yohn *A Contest of Faiths: Missionary Women and Pluralism in the American Southwest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

One issue the Presbyterian denominations confronted in their turn-of-the-century restructuring was the question of Hispanic participation in the church, and especially in the clergy. Juan Francisco Martínez observes that opportunities for social and civil participation were a major motivator for Hispanic Protestant converts, including access to education, but also the greater “spiritual vitality and prospects for religious leadership” that some Hispanics saw in Protestantism, relative to the more restricted Catholic hierarchy.¹⁵ These Hispanic converts served as missionary “helpers,” elders, and deacons, but Anglo Presbyterian leaders considered most Hispanics candidates to be too undereducated and spiritually “unreliable” for the ministry. Hispanics were largely denied ordination to the ministry outright, or were ordained to a “lesser” standard and considered subordinate to Anglo clergy, with both practices contributing to a lack of qualified clergy for Hispanic congregations by 1900.¹⁶

The Presbyterian denominations approached the question of Hispanic participation in two distinct ways. The PCUS, with its membership concentrated in Texas, established the Texas-Mexican Presbytery (TMP) in 1907, which included all Hispanic congregations in the state. Devised in part by the only four Hispanic ministers in the PCUS at the time, the TMP was meant to coordinate both continued missionary work among Hispanics, and to improve the “self-sufficiency” of existing congregations and the educational level of their ministers. This latter goal involved the creation and administration of a new boys' school, the Texas Mexican Industrial Institute in Kingville, and a Spanish program at Austin Seminary.¹⁷ The UPCUSA considered creating similar ethnic presbyteries, but this strategy was a poor fit for its less concentrated Hispanic

15 . J.F. Martínez, 106-107. Some Hispanic disaffection with Catholicism was the consequence of the “Romanizing” reforms carried out in the Southwest by the Catholic Church in the mid-late nineteenth century. These restricted traditional local practices such as the *penitente* lay brotherhoods, many of whose members became Presbyterians; see Tomás Atencio, “The First Hispano Presbyterians in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado,” in Maldonado, 45-50.

16 . Brackenridge and García-Treto,

17 . Ibid., 101-109.

membership spread across the Southwest. Instead, the UPCUSA created a national Spanish-speaking department that would manage multiple local social welfare and ministry programs. Distributing these programs ¹⁸

The new programs of both Presbyterian denominations enjoyed real success in maintaining and growing their membership, but they also suffered from several drawbacks. In creating separate institutional structures for Hispanic congregations and clergy, both programs were *de facto* segregated. This was not primarily a rigid segregation or one motivated by overt bias, but it did generate criticism. When the TMP was founded, for example, a small number of congregations broke away to form their own, short-lived, church, viewing the TMP as a means of isolating and excluding them from the church proper.¹⁹ Separate institutional structures, where present, tended to intensify differences between Anglo and Hispanic Presbyterians in worship style, community organization, and sense of denominational identity. These divisions meant that even when attempts were made to integrate religious services, as the UPCUSA attempted on several occasions, they had only brief success.²⁰

In both denominations, Hispanic programs also fell short of their stated goals. The TMP was never able to meet its goal of developing “self-sufficient” congregations, and funds from the national PCUS organization were often insufficient to fund the Presbytery's mandated programming.²¹ In addition, even when Mexican-Americans in both denominations were successful in increasing their participation in institutional activities, they remained subject to Anglo paternalism and control. This was most clear in the treatment of Mexican-American clergy, whose numbers increased over the first half of the twentieth century. TMP ministers were classified as “evangelists” rather than

18 . Ibid., 141-143, 164-168.

19 . Teresa Chávez Saucedo, “Race, Religion, and La Raza: An Exploration of the Racialization of Hispanics in the United States and the Role of the Protestant Church,” in Maldonado, 189.

20 . Brackenridge and García-Treto, 138-139.

21 . Ibid., 92-93.

formally installed “pastors,” and were appointed rather than called to their positions by a congregation; the UPCUSA Spanish-Speaking Department often exerted similar direct control over the appointment of pastors.²²

Despite their shortcomings, the TMP and the Spanish-Speaking Department endured through middle of the twentieth century, but over their lifespan their fundamentally paternalistic underpinnings were increasingly challenged. The primary such challenge came from Hispanic Protestants themselves, who actively claimed the right to full participation in U.S. society. Cynthia Orozco observes that there was considerable, almost disproportionate Protestant involvement in the Hispanic political organizing that developed in the 1920s and 1930s.²³ This organizing began with the *mutualista* aid societies established in the 1910s and 1920s, bolstered by immigration from Revolutionary and Post-revolutionary Mexico and the influx of politically-minded Hispanic WWI veterans. These organizations grew and produced larger, national-level advocacy organizations, most notably the League of United Latin-American Citizens (LULAC), founded in 1929; a similar surge of veteran involvement after WWII produced the American G.I. Forum in 1948. LULAC notably featured devout Protestants as well as Catholics among its earliest and most influential members, making the organization and those like it one of the few religiously mixed institutions among Hispanics in the U.S.²⁴

The midcentury Hispanic activist organizations would be heavily critiqued by later Chicano Movement activists for their assimilationism, as demonstrated by their relative conservatism during the Civil Rights Movement; they were often hostile to black activism and opposed political protest.²⁵ But Benjamin Johnson observes that even as

22 . Ibid., 170-171.

23 . See Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 91-94.

24 . See Orozco, chapter 4, for biographies of many LULAC founders.

25 . Juan Gómez-Quíñones attributes much of this conservatism to the pressure of “dogmatic neopatriotism, and procapitalism, anticommunism, and antiunorthodoxy” during the McCarthy era; Behnken and Benjamin Marquez also note that, beyond their own antiblack racism, many Hispanics seem

midcentury activists supported Hispanic assimilation into Anglo political and social institutions, they retained a strong sense of Hispanic distinctiveness: the founders of LULAC, for example, were among the first to publicly use the language of *la raza* to describe Hispanic identity during the 1930s. Many Hispanic activists in the U.S. were heavily influenced by the rise of nationalist ideologies in Mexico, including the nationalist education system developed by Mexican revolutionary educators José Vasconcelos and Moisés Sáenz, who sought to shape a unified, modernized Mexican identity grounded in the *mestizaje* of its population. The broad influence of these educational reforms also helped to popularize Vasconcelos' teleological vision, expressed in his 1925 essay *La Raza Cósmica*, of the mestizo peoples of Latin America as the ideal future of human society.²⁶ This vision was adopted by Hispanic activists adopted and repurposed to argue that they were fit for participation in modern, liberal U.S. society.

Anglo Presbyterians also changed their approach to Hispanics during the first half of the twentieth century, in part because of developments in Latin America, where missionary work had enjoyed significant success, particularly in Cuba. As early as 1916, Latin American Protestants had confronted their U.S. counterparts over paternalism and the unequal nature of the missionary relationship, and many Protestants had taken the issue to heart.²⁷ One was John Mackay, a UPCUSA missionary to Peru who served as dean of Princeton Theological Seminary from 1926 to 1960. With his institutional platform, Mackay acted as major interpreter of Latin America to U.S. Protestants, notably

to have viewed African-American Civil Rights as either competition, or as a “futile” cause that would drag down their own movement; José Gómez-Quíñonez, 51; see also Behnken, 26-28, 62-66, and Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: Evolution of a Mexican-American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) 31-33.

²⁶ . Ilan Stavans warns against overstating Vasconcelos' direct influence, noting that he had almost no supporters by the 1930s; Vasconcelos himself was remarkably Eurocentric in his understanding of *la raza cósmica*, hence the act of repurposing. See Ilan Stavans, *Jose Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 40, 43-44.

²⁷ . Specifically, the 1916 Panama Conference on missions; see John H. Sinclair and Arturo Piedra Solano. “The Dawn of Ecumenism in Latin America: Robert E. Speer, Presbyterians, and the Panama Conference of 1916.” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 77 (1999) , 5-8.

encouraging Anglos towards greater sensitivity to social issues in Latin America, and towards a greater willingness to support revolutionary political change in Latin America when it appeared.²⁸ He cultivated relationships both with other former missionaries and Latin America specialists, including Richard Shaull and James Iley McCord, President of Austin Seminary and Mackay's eventual replacement at Princeton; their shared views would gradually reshape Anglo Presbyterian understandings of both Latin America and Hispanics.

Mackay was also an active participant in the Theological Discussion Group at Columbia Divinity School, associating with Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, who articulated a theology of ecumenical Christian socialism. This theology would become dominant among liberal Protestants during the 1940s and following WWII. The rise of the U.S. to superpower status, the start of the Cold War, and the beginning of decolonization were critical factors in the era's concerns: U.S. Protestants perceived a dramatic new urgency for international missions as necessary to the fight against spreading communism. Racial injustice became a liability to Christian society, and Protestants increasingly embraced integrationism and racial equality.²⁹ While the Black Civil Rights Movement under Martin Luther King, jr. would bring Protestant support for integration to its peak in the early 1960s, Hispanics in the Southwest began to have success in their push for desegregation and political inclusion as early as the late 1940s.

Through the confluence of ecumenical theology and Civil Rights activism, Presbyterian leaders came to reevaluate the existing state of their Hispanic programming in the postwar period, which they now recognized as ineffective and morally untenable due to segregation. In practice, their new stance involved the dismantling of many of the

²⁸ . Karla Ann Koll, "The Theology of John A. Mackay as Praeparatio Liberationis," *Theology Today* 73 (2016), 109-114, 115-116.

²⁹ . Findlay, 13-16; Hinojosa describes the specific experience of the process in the historically quiescent Mennonite churches; see Hinojosa, 92-93.

Hispanic-specific programs developed over the previous century. Between 1948 and 1954, for example, the UPCUSA dissolved many of its schools, camps, neighborhood programs, and ultimately the Spanish-Speaking Department itself, as the denomination redirected Hispanic ministry into existing Anglo church structures.³⁰ The PCUS also began to reconsider the value of the TMP, with the Synod of Texas appointing inquiry committees in 1942-44, 1949, and 1951 to suggest how it might be restructured.³¹ When the 1951 study of the Presbytery suggested closing the TMP, several presbytery members argued to the Synod that its financial woes and low growth were due to the Synod's failure to provide proper funding or support, not any problem of congregational culture; they blasted integration proposals as contravening their right to self-determination.³² There were, however, deep divisions among TMP members over the management of the presbytery, with many having supported its dissolution since the 1940s. Ultimately, the Synod closed the TMP in 1954, along with most of the educational programs funded alongside it.

Anglo Presbyterians did not assume, however, that simply eliminating old programs would be sufficient change; events through the late 1950s and early 1960s would not let them. The dramatic growth of the Black Civil Rights movement and the crisis of the Cuban Revolution were the most obvious and significant developments in the nation during this period, but Hispanics in the U.S. Southwest also exhibited signs of unrest and incipient change. During the 1960 Presidential election, a number of newly founded organizations—the Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO), founded in 1961—turned Hispanics into a major national voting constituency for the first time.

30 . Brackenridge and García-Treto, 184-186, 189, 195.

31 . Ibid., 110-114, 116.

32 . Ibid., 122-124.

III. Forming an Institute, 1965-1967

As they considered a renewed approach to Hispanic ministries during the early 1960s, leaders in both Presbyterian denominations recognized that the dearth of Hispanic clergy remained a major shortcoming of their programs, and for the first time they began to incorporate the input of existing Hispanic clergy into their planning. The most significant early example of this incorporation came in 1962, when the UPCUSA appointed Cuban theologian Alfonso Rodríguez as the associate director of the Departamento Hispano-Americano, a new section of the denomination's Board of National Missions meant to coordinate Hispanic programs on a hemispheric scale. Rodríguez had been director of the joint Presbyterian-Methodist Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas prior to leaving Cuba in 1961, and had long-established connections throughout Latin America. His educational background informed his work for the UPCUSA; in his research and consulting work between 1963 and 1965, he emphasized the need for better Spanish-language ministerial education, particularly in terms of the quality and accessibility of materials.³³

Rodríguez' work also drew attention from PCUS officials, who were actively pursuing cooperation with their sister denomination. While a push for denominational reunification between the UPCUSA and PCUS in the late 1950s had failed, both denominations had become increasingly interested in joint work with each other and in ecumenical engagement on a wider scale. In April 1964, Rodríguez was invited to provide input to the PCUS' Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary on the development of new Spanish-language educational programs that would replace those closed with the dissolution of the TMP. Rodríguez impressed upon the Seminary's

³³ .Brackenridge and García-Treto, 199-200; Theron Corse notes that Rodríguez had been an anticommunist moderate who tried to balance between revolutionaries and conservatives at the seminary before he felt forced to leave Cuba; see Corse, *Protestants, Revolution, and the Cuba-U.S. Bond*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007), 99; 103.

Program of Study Committee the need for “all kinds of facilities for training Christian leaders of the Spanish-American communities in Texas in particular; and perhaps also of the other areas in the United States in general.”³⁴ This initial conversation led to a second, more formal “consultation on a joint strategy for Spanish-American work” held on December 7, attended by over forty representatives from both major Presbyterian denominations.

The December consultation was forward thinking, especially on the issue of ecumenism, but it continued to reflect much of the paternalistic understanding of “Spanish-American work” as a mission of Anglo Presbyterians to Hispanic outsiders. Discussion among attendees referred to the “Latin Church” as a source of difficulty, almost as an adversary: a “third party [that] doesn't take too readily to Presbyterianism.”³⁵ The policy suggestions made did acknowledge the need to better serve Hispanic ministerial students, but still prioritized the training of Anglo students for missionary work. This policy position was notably expressed in the “Proposal for Creating Fresh Leadership in Latin American Work” made by Austin Seminary professor Henry Quinius, which suggested the creation of a new training program at the Seminary:

Ministers preparing for mission work in any of the Latin-American countries could well spend a year in Austin and have a joint study program between the Seminary and the University [of Texas]. Equal opportunity would be given for preparing Anglo ministers to offer a ministry in their community to Latin-American people. Candidates of Latin-American descent would find their total seminary program enriched by studying at Austin seminary with these broad resources.³⁶

Latino students were not absent from Quinius' proposal, but they were a secondary concern compared to Anglo students. When Quinius suggested a partnership

³⁴ . “Hispanic-American Institute: Summary of Planning up to the Present,” June 12, 1965) Box F099, HAI.

³⁵ . “Consultation on a Joint Strategy for Spanish-American Work,” December 8, 1964, Box F099, HAI.

³⁶ . Henry Quinius, “A Proposal for Creating Fresh Leadership in Latin American Work”, c. 1964, Box F099, HAI.

between the Presbyterian Pan-American School, with its primarily Latino student body, the goal remained to facilitate intensive language training for Anglos and “an opportunity to absorb the feeling of the Latin-American culture of the Rio Grande Valley.”³⁷

Nevertheless, Quinius recognized the need for greater Anglo awareness of and engagement with Latino communities, and when consultation attendees resolved to adopt his proposal, they called for the inclusion of “Latin specialists” on the planning committee.³⁸ This committee met in Austin on February 9, 1965, and was made up of Quinius, Austin Seminary president David L. Stitt, professor John F. Jansen, and two “experts” on Latino issues. One was Sherwood Reisner, who had led the 1951 study of the TMP and was subsequently appointed head of the newly reorganized Presbyterian Pan-American School in 1956. The other was Jorge Lara-Braud, an assistant professor of missions at Austin Seminary.³⁹

Lara-Braud's background was important to his selection for this duty, because he was in many ways one of the first products of the period of transition. Born in Mexico City in 1931, Lara-Braud had travelled to Texas in his late teens to attend the Texas Mexican Industrial Institute, converting to Presbyterianism either before or during his matriculation. After graduating in 1950, he attended Presbyterian-affiliated Austin College, and then entered ministerial training at Austin Seminary in 1954 or 1955, where he was one of the only Latino students, and one of the first to study for the complete Bachelor of Divinity degree. Lara-Braud subsequently returned to Mexico and took an educational position with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, but he also intermittently pursued doctoral education at Princeton Theological Seminary that brought him into close contact with ecumenical scholars, among whom were John Mackay, Richard Shaull, and James Iley McCord. This ecumenical training had an unforeseen

37 . Ibid.

38 . “Consultation on a Joint Strategy,” Box F099, HAI.

39 . On Reisner, see Brackenridge and García-Treto, 117-118.

impact on Lara-Braud's career: in 1964 he was accused, tried, and acquitted of heresy by the Mexican church, almost certainly for promoting Catholic-Protestant ecumenism, still taboo among many Latin American Protestants.⁴⁰ It was this incident that brought Lara-Braud back to the U.S., to Austin, and to the new Presbyterian project.

The “Special Committee on the Hispanic Program” produced a list of eight objectives, beginning with a call to “awaken the whole church to the missionary opportunity and responsibility of the church in the southwestern United States to the present situation in which increasingly there is a merging of Anglo and Hispanic cultures.” The committee identified several means by which the future institute could help address this situation: leadership training for clergy working in a “bi-racial and bi-lingual environment,” alongside the creation of exchange programs for clergy and students between Latin American churches and the U.S., enhanced missionary training, and new Spanish language and Latin American studies course offerings at Austin Seminary. The committee also suggested that the institute should help to organize dialogue with both presbytery leadership, individual Anglo and Latino congregations, and other Protestant denominations, to better maintain awareness of the needs of the Latino community. These duties would “involve both research and interpretation,” giving the institute a social-advisory as well as a religious-educational role.⁴¹

Further discussions introduced several key organizational features into what was now dubbed the Hispanic-American Institute. At a June 4, 1965, meeting, John Sinclair, Secretary of Latin America for the UPCUSA Commission on Ecumenical Missions and Relations (COEMAR), called for HAI to be “independent of ecclesiastical alignment” or

⁴⁰ . At the time of this writing, Lara-Braud's personal papers have not been made public, so while the details of his educational career prior to the establishment of HAI are easily attested, personal details such as the nature of his religious history remain uncertain. This absence of information also extends to his heresy trial; Lara-Braud appears to have avoided discussing the specifics of this trial during much of his career, and it is not clear to what degree details were made known even within Presbyterian ecclesiastical circles. In his 1997 retrospective on HAI he

⁴¹ . “Special Committee on Hispanic Program” (February 6, 1965), Box F099, HAI.

the control of any one agency, in order to give HAI's leadership freedom in determining the Institute's activities and the nature of its policy recommendations. Sinclair also argued for an expansive ecumenical approach to participation in HAI, opening the Institute to all interested Protestant groups, and potentially also to Catholics. Meeting attendees agreed to adopt these suggestions, though they resolved to open HAI to non-Presbyterian members only after the Institute had officially opened; the 16-member board-in-information established at the meeting included representatives from Austin Seminary, the Presbyterian Pan-American School, the PCUS's Board of World Missions, the UPCUSA's Board of National Missions and COEMAR.⁴²

By the next HAI planning meeting on October 28, the only major administrative task remaining was the selection of a director for the Institute. Alfonso Rodríguez may have been the preferred candidate, but in 1965 he had taken administrative positions with both COSAW and the NCC's Section on Hispanic-American Ministries (SOHAM), leaving him practically unavailable. The board then offered the position to Lara-Braud, who, besides having been involved in the entire planning process for HAI, was already based at Austin Seminary. Lara-Braud accepted the nomination and was subsequently confirmed to the position on May 6, 1966, at HAI's first regular board meeting. At that time, he and assistant Angelina Guerrero were the only permanent full-time staff of HAI; John Mackay accepted a two-year appointment as a consultant and researcher for the Institute, but he remained based in Maryland.

Because of the institutional independence afforded his position, Lara-Braud was immediately able to articulate an understanding of HAI's purpose that modified and developed some points of the Institute's charter. In his first official communication, a May 1966 press release on his appointment as HAI director, Lara-Braud summarized HAI's

42 . "Consultation on the Proposed Hispanic-American Institute" (June 4, 1965), Box F099, HAI.

objectives as threefold: “To upgrade the lay and clerical leadership in Spanish-speaking churches,” “to provide a place of encounter for church and secular leaders of the two Americas,” and “to serve as a clearing house of information, especially to publicize the most significant experiments in bi-cultural ministries.”⁴³ Borrowing a phrase from another HAI board member, Cuban-American Herbert Meza, Lara-Braud framed HAI's concerns as “Christian witness” to Latino populations, rather than “missionary” work, with its connotation of ministry to non-Christian outsiders. He also made a pointed statement about the relationship he wished to cultivate with churches in Latin America:

There is no attempt on the part of this institute to plan for the future of the churches of Latin America, even though we shall be quite happy and willing to make the Institute's resources available to them upon request. We must do everything in our power to allay the fear by the people of Latin America that we presume to know their history, their reality, and their destiny better than they do themselves.⁴⁴

Lara-Braud's statement was an attempt to head off the perception among U.S. Latino and Latin American congregations that HAI was an Anglo imposition, one that would continue to employ the same paternalistic approach and fail to bring about meaningful change. A positive Latino perception of HAI would be critical to the Institute's planned work, meant first and foremost to be the development of a better-trained and more integrated Latino clergy. But it was also important that Anglo congregations and church leaders understand and accept this anti-paternalistic stance. Because HAI's educational work would require considerable research and the cultivation of institutional partnerships, much of Lara-Braud's public work as HAI director during 1966 and 1967 consisted of further articulating his position to Anglo audiences.

One of Lara-Braud's aims was to break the connection between social welfare and paternalism, encouraging the expansion of the former and the rejection of the latter. He

⁴³ . Hispanic-American Institute, “Press Release on the Appointment of Jorge Lara-Braud as the Director of the Hispanic American Institute” (May 17, 1966), Box F053, HAI.

⁴⁴ . Ibid.

made this point in his most high-profile early presentation as HAI director, to the August 1, 1966, World Mission Conference held at Montreat, North Carolina. “The Universal Demands of Christian Pro-Existence” called on Protestants to prioritize what Lara-Braud called “pro-existence—the “being of ourselves for others, beginning with their most elemental necessities.”⁴⁵ This meant attending to people's material needs, something Protestants in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, both missionaries and locals, had failed to do. Improving this situation, Lara-Braud argued, would require change on the part of Protestants both locally and globally, and he put a special locus of responsibility on the Church in the U.S. The failure of Anglo-American missionaries to live up to their Christian obligations, and the failure of the U.S. itself to prioritize aid to the “Third World,” had contributed to the difficult circumstances of the Church globally. To solve this problem would thus require Protestants not simply to engage in charity and outreach, but to “reconvert a whole nation to the vision of justice that brought her into being for the sake of the least among Christ's brethren.”⁴⁶

This call for Protestants to pay greater attention to the “worldly” issues of social justice was closely connected to the views that had ended his career in Mexico: his support for Catholic-Protestant ecumenism. Lara-Braud was one of many Protestants who looked favorably on the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, and on the contemporary development of Liberation Theology from Catholic social teaching.⁴⁷ He valued not only the social justice orientation of Liberation theology, but also what he saw as its potential to build a unified Christian consciousness in Latin America that would be able to engage the U.S. church on equal footing, winning real acknowledgement of Latin American

45 . Jorge Lara-Braud, “The Universal Demands of Christian Pro-Existence” (August 1, 1966), Box F053, HAI.

46 . Ibid.

47 . For a thorough treatment of the development process of Liberation Theology that Lara-Braud was witness too, see Eddy José Muskus, *The Origins and Early Development of Liberation Theology in Latin America* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1990), 84-112, 126-131.

needs. In a 1966 essay, “Latin America's Challenge to the Church,” Lara-Braud encouraged both U.S. and Latin American Protestants to realize that “God's action in the world has always been indigenous and secular,” and that this realization was already galvanizing Christians in Latin America. He predicted that Latin American Protestants would “turn to reform-minded Roman Catholic sectors for fellowship and common action” if the Protestant churches did not work quickly to become partners with Catholics in the new theological movement.⁴⁸

TOWARDS “MARKED STRESS AND CONFLICT” IN THE U.S.

That the issues Lara-Braud dealt with in his early interpretive work as HAI director primarily involved Latin America reflected the balance of mainline Protestant concerns over Latino ministry through the mid-1960s. U.S. Protestant denominations were still grappling with the fallout of the Cuban Revolution, as well as unrest in Guatemala and elsewhere, both of which affected the Presbyterian denominations particularly strongly.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, domestic events in 1966 would demand their own attention. In June 1966, members of the NFW and local labor advocates organized a farm workers' strike in Texas' lower Rio Grande Valley that would continue for over a year. While ultimately unsuccessful, the strike drew great political attention across Texas, especially when the strikers organized a protest march to Austin that lasted through July and August and forced acknowledgement by the governor and state legislators.⁵⁰ During the same period, land rights activist Reies Tijerina and his Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Land Grant Alliance] began to draw national attention with a number of

48 . Lara-Braud, “Latin America's Challenge to the Church—Issues We Face” (c. 1966-67), Box F098, HAI. Lara-Braud's contemporary, Protestant liberation theologian José Míguez Bonino described this kind of unifying project as part of the “Liberal Face” Latin American Protestantism; José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 18-20.

49 . On Cuba, see Corse, 130-133. In a historical irony, Presbyterians in Guatemala introduced ethnic Maya presbyteries in 1959 and 1965; see Virginia Garrard, *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 107.

50 . For detailed description of the Valley strike, see Watt, 138-145

dramatic actions beyond even the level of protest: the occupation of part of Kit Carson National Forest in October 1966, and an armed raid on the Tierra Amarilla courthouse in June 1967.

The mainline Protestant denominations and their associated local and national organizations took notice of the growth of a Latino protest movement, a circumstance reflected in the changing nature of HAI's interpretive work. In late 1966 and 1967, Lara-Braud frequently dealt with “activist” and “revolutionary” subjects in his presentations, in the U.S. as well as in Latin America.⁵¹ The HAI director began to develop a platform on Latino Civil Rights issues, one that drew on the same principles he articulated regarding Latin American, and one that related to HAI's institutional and educational mission of improving the training of Latino clergy. By linking these issues, he would have a greater chance of convincing Anglo Protestant audiences to support both Latino social causes and Latino ministry.

Lara-Braud's first major opportunity to articulate his approach to Latino Civil Rights activism came in a May 19, 1967, presentation to the NCC, “Protestant Missionary Obligation to Hispanic Americans in the U.S.A.” The HAI director offered a critique of Protestant approaches to Latinos similar to his broader critique of Protestant Third World policy. If Latinos appeared unreceptive or hostile to Protestantism, he argued, it was because Protestants had repeatedly failed in their most basic obligations to Latinos. “The appalling spiritual underdevelopment of the Hispanic-American is ultimately related to all other dimensions of his destitution,” he asserted, and this underdevelopment, in turn, was the result of the “totally inadequate way” in which

⁵¹ . For example, on “Revolutionary Ferment in Latin America,” delivered to a PCUS Synod of South Carolina committee on May 22, 1967, or on “The Response of the Church to Current Social Movements,” to the NCC Migrant Ministry on September 18, 1967; both noted in Jorge Lara-Braud, “Director's Report, Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, October 13-14, 1967, Box F099, HAI.

Anglos treated Latinos—the paternalistic approach to providing aid, and the willingness to countenance both legal and social discrimination.⁵²

Given this sordid history, Lara-Braud argued that churches *needed* a positive relationship with the new Latino protest movement “for the sake of its own salvation as the Church of Jesus Christ.” The religious leadership modeled by Cesar Chavez provided an opportunity to build this relationship, and Lara-Braud thought that Protestant support would, in turn, help to sustain the religious character of Chavez's movement and to protect it from “charges of subversion, radicalism, communism, and un-American activities.” For this mutual relationship to be successful, however, would require a “truly responsible” Protestant approach to Latinos based on respect for their self-determination and leadership: approaching the community “in terms consonant with its distinctiveness,” abandoning past efforts at assimilation to Anglo norms, and empowering Latino clergy and members of Protestant denominations “at the local, regional, and national level” to shape church policy towards their communities.⁵³ In effect, by helping HAI's project of developing and empowering Latino clergy, Protestants would in turn help both U.S. society and their fundamental religious cause.

While Lara-Braud developed rhetorical connections between HAI and U.S. Latino activism, more concrete changes within HAI itself brought the Institute closer to Latino issues. At its start, HAI had only three Latino board members, Lara-Braud, Herbert Meza, and Texas pastor Jesse Leos. In late 1966, the UCPUSA gave one of its HAI seats to Roger Granados, a former San Francisco pastor then serving as a consultant for the denomination's presbyteries in Texas and New Mexico. With Lara-Braud's support, Granados became the head of HAI's Program Committee, which would manage the Institute's educational projects as they were developed. Shortly thereafter, at the end of

⁵² . Lara-Braud, “Protestant Missionary Obligation to Hispanic-Americans in the U.S.A.,” (1967), Box F098, HAI.

⁵³ . Ibid.

1966, the HAI board underwent its first ecumenical expansion, taking on Episcopal and Methodist churches as sponsors. One of the new Methodist board members was pastor Leo D. Nieto, himself already one of the leaders of the Texas Council of Churches' Migrant Ministry, which was actively involved with the Valley strike.⁵⁴ The addition of two board members working on Latino social concerns in the Southwest helped to open the door for HAI to become increasingly involved in the region.

The shifts in current events and denominational demands, and in HAI's board makeup, prompted an important early change in the Institute's mission. When Lara-Braud and the HAI Program Committee first met in January 1967 in order to develop a plan of action, they also adopted an amendment to the Institute's statement of purpose. "In times of marked stress and conflict," the addition read, HAI would "seek to initiate or reinforce actions leading to an analysis of facts, a suggestion of correctives, and an appeal to all concerned to act in accordance with the demands for justice."⁵⁵ Though nonspecific, this statement clearly referred to contemporary Civil Rights issues, and it refined HAI's aims with regard to its role in these issues—not a passive outside interpreter, but instead a moral advisor to the church that might take a more "hands-on" role in questions of social justice.

As 1967 progressed, issues surrounding the Valley strike would give Lara-Braud the opportunity to engage in such "hands-on" activity. In July, shortly after the strike's end, he was part of a "fact-finding expedition" to the Lower Rio Grande Valley organized by the TCC and UPCUSA to investigate the causes of the strike and to explore the possibility of mediation between farm workers and growers. The situation was especially sensitive for the TCC, which was at the time supporting a lawsuit brought by one of its staffers, Ed Krueger, against the Texas Rangers; a staunch supporter of the strikers,

⁵⁴ . For an overview of Nieto's Migrant Ministry work, see Watt, 148-150.

⁵⁵ . Program Committee Report, January 6-7, 1967, Box F052, HAI.

Krueger alleged that he and several strikers had been unlawfully detained and beaten by Rangers in May.⁵⁶ The mission was ultimately unable to make much progress towards mediation, but Lara-Braud noted in his report to the HAI board meeting on October 13 that he had helped advise local presbytery officials in McAllen on responses to the social issues surrounding the strike. He also mentioned, very briefly, that in September he had urged, unsuccessfully, two Anglo Presbyterian pastors in New Braunfels to try and mediate a labor dispute between Latino workers and the U.S. Gypsum Corporation.⁵⁷ This marked the first of many times in which Lara-Braud engaged with social justice issues on his own initiative as HAI director.

⁵⁶ . See Watt, 152-155.

⁵⁷ . “Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, October 13-14, 1967”, Box F099, HAI.

IV. Engaging La Raza, 1967-1968

Lara-Braud was not the only Hispanic political actor to draw closer to radical civil-rights activism in 1966 and 1967. In fact, those years brought to fruition a widespread sense of disappointment with the U.S. government that had grown among many politically engaged Hispanics during the 1960s. Much like black civil-rights activists, who had grown frustrated with the slow implementation or outright stonewalling of civil-rights legislation after 1965, Hispanics perceived that their mass support for the Democratic Party since 1960 had resulted in little meaningful change to their socioeconomic circumstances. Frustration with the government had grown widespread even within more older, more conservative organizations, as demonstrated when leading members of LULAC, the GI Forum, and MAPA walked out of a March 1966 meeting of the newly established Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Albuquerque. In a short statement, the walkout participants criticized the EEOC's lack of progress in investigating workplace discrimination against Mexican-Americans, as well as the lack of Mexican-American members on the Commission.⁵⁸

Discontent with Federal progress, combined with burgeoning anti-Vietnam War sentiment and the influence of existing Hispanic protest activism, sparked the creation of new Hispanic political organizations. Two of the earliest and most influential were the Crusade for Justice, founded in Denver in 1966 by former boxer and local Democratic Party organizer Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, and the Mexican-American Youth Organization (MAYO), established in 1967 by a group of San Antonio students to support the Valley strike. These organizations rejected the assimilationist orientation of established Hispanic activist groups; they embraced instead what Juan Gómez-Quiñones

⁵⁸ . Behnken, 107-109, 110-111.

calls the “radically political and ethnic populism” symbolized by the terms “chicano” and “chicanismo,” terms of derision for Mexican-Americans that they began to reclaim.⁵⁹ The new organizations also embraced tactics that LULAC and the GI Forum had opposed. Following the model of contemporary black activists such as Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, they favored protest, the use of confrontational language and demonstrations, and the willingness to use violence in community self-defense.⁶⁰

Amid their political radicalism, however, the new activist groups maintained and developed wide-ranging connections to different Anglo and Hispanic organizations. This was especially true of the work of MAYO co-founder Willie Velasquez, a former staffer for Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez. Velasquez helped MAYO receive support from the Ford Foundation in 1967, and through the Foundation he interacted with longtime California labor organizer Ernesto Galarza, who had taken on a research project for the Foundation and who would go on to use its funds to help establish the National Council of La Raza later that year.⁶¹ Vasquez, a practicing Catholic, was employed as a staffer for the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish-Speaking (BCSS) of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, an early religious advocacy agency for Hispanics, although he was ultimately fired from that position due to his MAYO work.⁶²

Because of their religious connections, Velasquez and Lara-Braud may have known of each other in 1966 or early 1967, or they may have met through Galarza; the initial connection between the three men is unclear in HAI's records. What is clear, however, is that on October 28, 1967, Lara-Braud was among the attendees of a meeting

59 . Gómez-Quiñones, 103-104.

60 . Ibid., 105-114; for a discussion of the response of LULAC leadership, see Marquez, 64-68.

61 . For more discussion of the role of the Ford Foundation in Chicano activism, see Victoria-María MacDonald and Benjamin Polk Hoffman, “Compromising La Causa? The Ford Foundation and Chicano Intellectual Nationalism in the Creation of Chicano History, 1963-1977,” *History of Education Quarterly* 52 (2012), 252-259. Velasquez' biographer Juan Sepúlveda describes his work with the Foundation and Galarza at length; see Juan Sepúlveda, *The Life and Times of Willie Velasquez: su Voto es su Voz* (Houston: Arté Publico Press, 2014), 58-61.

62 . Velasquez' biographer Juan Sepulveda asserts that Velasquez was himself “obsessed” with Vasconcelos' *raza cosmica*, interpreting it in Catholic religious terms; see Sepulveda, 65-67.

dubbed the “Conferencia de la Raza Unida,” held at El Paso's Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The conference was actually a counter-meeting, organized to protest the major hearings being held in the city, at President Lyndon Johnson's behest, by the Committee on Mexican-American Affairs. These hearings included the testimony of Anglo and Hispanic specialists, but excluded representatives of protest groups like Chavez' UFW and Tijerina's Alianza, as well as the Crusade for Justice and MAYO. Tijerina, Gonzalez, and the MAYO leaders planned their own conference as a protest, and they were joined by Galarza and a walkout of several hundred attendees of the government hearings. Lara-Braud may well have been in the walkout group; his notes suggest that he was present at a planning discussion of the walkout between Galarza and Gonzales.⁶³

The most immediate product of the El Paso conference was the creation of a document, the El Paso Declaration of La Raza Unida or Plan de la Raza Unida, which proclaimed that “the time of subjugation, exploitation, and abuse of human rights of *la raza* in the United States is hereby ended forever.” The Declaration called for housing and employment equality, the restoration of land rights, Hispanic control of government programs relevant to their communities, and finally, “the right to be members of *la raza unida* anywhere, anytime, and in any job.”⁶⁴ Much as it had been used by early LULAC leaders, the label *la raza* served to indicate and defend Hispanic distinctiveness from the Anglo majority. The term also had special significance in light of the recent history of the black Civil-Rights Movement—by using a cognate of “race,” the participants at the El Paso conference argued that they were a population of equivalent distinctiveness and equivalent marginalization to blacks in the U.S.

Despite his apparent proximity to Galarza, Lara-Braud appears to have been at the El Paso conference primarily as an observer and supporter. In the weeks and months

63 . Handwritten notes (c. October 27, 1967), Box F099, HAI; for comprehensive descriptions of the El Paso meeting, see Gómez-Quiñones, 109-111, and Montejano, 58-60.

64 . “The El Paso Declaration of La Raza Unida” (October 28, 1967), Box F099, HAI.

following, however, he began to take on the duties of an organizer. Just after the events in El Paso, Lara-Braud received a request from Leo Nieto to participate as a moderator at a “Mexican-American Leadership Seminar” being held in Wimberly, Texas. The seminar was funded by a number of religious organizations that included the Texas Council of Churches, the Texas Catholic Conference, and the American Jewish Committee's Southwestern office. Among the attendees were the founders of MAYO, along with many others who either had participated in the El Paso protest or were enthusiastic about its potential impact. Among their most common concerns was organization: “how to meet the task of organizing the undeveloped (and powerless) Mexican-American communities of Texas?”⁶⁵ The strength of this response led seminar attendees, primarily Galarza and Velasquez and very likely Lara-Braud, to plan a second conference that would ultimately be held in San Antonio on January 6, 1968.

Lara-Braud was appointed as the main moderator and one of the main logistical planners of the San Antonio meeting, and he tapped into his discretionary funding as HAI director to do so. HAI provided considerable material assistance to the San Antonio conference, printing materials for the attendees, who worked together in discussion groups throughout the day. More visibly, Lara-Braud took on the role of reading the resolutions that the discussion groups offered at the closing presentation of the conference, and it would be here that Lara-Braud, the conference's chief moderator and presenter, fully embraced the position of a mass-movement organizer, even while acting in his role as HAI director. While he served in this case only to repeat others' writing, he did so in the context of openly supporting the resolutions involved. The physical context itself was politically charged — as Lara-Braud read a list of complaints against Humble Oil corporation for discriminatory in hiring discrimination, a large

⁶⁵ . Leo D. Nieto, “Report of the Mexican-American Leadership Seminar: November 3-5, 1967, Wimberly, Texas” (Austin: Texas Council of Churches, 1967), 24-25.

number of attendees mad a show of discarding their Humble Oil loyalty cards in front of the stage.⁶⁶

Lara-Braud's direct involvement with the Raza Unida meetings declined after the San Antonio conference, though he participated in subsequent, smaller conferences in Laredo on March 25 and Houston on April 20. Lara-Braud also assisted a group of activists who began a boycott of Humble Oil after the San Antonio conference; he served as a mediator, communicating the boycott's demands to Humble Employee Relations Manager George McCollough on HAI's letterhead.⁶⁷ In the long run, the most important change brought about by Lara-Braud's work with the Raza Unida meetings was the expansion of his and HAI's network of connections. The Institute was now associated publicly with the nascent Chicano movement, and all of Lara-Braud's subsequent activity would proceed in light of this association.

INTERPRETING *LA RAZA*

From the beginning of his involvement with the initial Raza Unida meeting in 1967, Lara-Braud had engaged HAI's interpretive mandate to try and promote his newfound activist engagement to Anglo Protestants. He understood that the Movement could serve as a watershed in how the Protestant churches understood their work with Hispanic communities and congregations, but he also understood that it would not be an easy sell. The heightened sense of racial and political radicalism and limited, or non-Protestant, religious elements was a barrier to Protestant support. Lara-Braud's goal became to present the Movement as a cause that would enhance, not damage, the activist goals that the mainline Churches had thus far embraced.

⁶⁶ . "Resumen de resúmenes," Conferencia de la Raza Unida, January 6, 1968, Box F099, HAI; the same incident is described in Sepúlveda, 64.

⁶⁷ . Letter to George McCollough, February 4, 1968, Box F079, HAI.

Lara-Braud's first appeal to Protestant leaders for support of the Movement came not long after the El Paso conference, in a report he prepared for Programming Committee of the PCUS Synod of Texas in November 1967. "The Church's Partnership with Mexican-Americans" was significant primarily as a formal statement of the arguments Lara-Braud had made in his earlier speeches. The report synthesized a variety of demographic data and professional observations to illustrate social marginalization of Mexican-Americans, as well the shortcomings in the Synod's treatment of its Mexican-American clergy and congregations. Lara-Braud reiterated the need to treat these two issues together, since "the provision of a variety of human services, through the combined labors of [Anglo and Mexican-American] clergy and laity" would be fastest and most powerful statement of a commitment to partnership with Mexican-American congregations. He also made the specific suggestion to provide bilingual Synod materials and fund bilingual education for Anglo Synod clergy—part of HAI's educational mission—as a first step in closing the gap between Anglo and Mexican-American members.⁶⁸

While the Synod report's contents were not new, the impact of the first Raza Unida meeting was apparent throughout its text. Reiterating his sentiment that "no matter how genuine our new dedication to Mexican-Americans may be, we cannot assume in advance to know what is best for them," Lara-Braud called for the church to partner not only with religious organizations, but also with "civil and political groups" including LULAC, the GI Forum, MAPA, and PASO, but also MAYO, the UFW, and "La Raza Unida."⁶⁹ The HAI director also strengthened and formalized his argument that the church must abandon assimilationism and embrace Hispanic culture and identity. He reiterated his earlier position that assimilation was unlikely and impractical, and that the

⁶⁸ . While first presented in 1967, this report was not formally published until the 1969 Session of the PCUS Synod of Texas. Excerpts here are taken from "The Church's Partnership with Mexican Americans," in the *Reports of the 114th Session* (May 20-22, 1969), 61, in the Synod of Texas (PCUS) Collection, 1851-1972, 1995-1998, APTS.

⁶⁹ . *Ibid.*, 63-64.

Anglo church could benefit from internalizing Hispanic “attitudes of openness, generosity, hospitality, pride, individuality, tenacity, chivalry, and honor” at the institutional levels of church leadership and policy. Here, however, he also cast the embrace of Hispanic identity as a *theological obligation*, grounded in the “incarnational principle” that the church must follow Christ's example by coming to people as they are; it was fundamentally wrong to impose the “strange ways of New England and the Bible Belt” onto a people with their own identity.⁷⁰

The Synod paper was widely disseminated among Protestant agencies concerned with Hispanic ministry, in no small part thanks to Lara-Braud's involvement with many such agencies and their members.⁷¹ He also leveraged this involvement more directly. In January 1968, for example, COSAW addressed Raza Unida at its meeting in Los Angeles, and both Lara-Braud and Alfonso Rodriguez promoted the Movement. Ultimately, COSAW adopted a resolution calling for “all [COSAW's] members and all concerned Christians to become involved at all levels in the movement of LA RAZA UNIDA in order to help abolish all injustice and oppression against the Hispanic-American and Mexican-American in Spanish-Speaking communities in the U.S.” Another statement released by COSAW's Strategy committee, of which Lara-Braud was the head, called for COSAW's member churches to “reflect in their planning and policies, from the national to the local level, that the civil rights struggle is as urgent for Mexican-Americans as it is for Negroes,” and that “adequate vehicles of interpretation be developed to sensitize their constituencies” to the realities of racial discrimination. Lara-Braud and Rodriguez subsequently spoke in support of these resolutions at the NCC General Board meeting held that February in San Diego; although the Board held no

⁷⁰ . Ibid., 69.

⁷¹ . The impact of the report is discussed in Brackenridge and García-Treto, 205-208.

vote, it did enter the resolutions and the commentary surrounding them into the organization's official record.⁷²

Lara-Braud also made the case for engagement with the Movement to his own organization, at HAI's May 1968 board meeting. While he was able to act with great independence as HAI director, Lara-Braud's ability to meaningfully work in support of Raza Unida depended on the backing of HAI's sponsor organizations and their representatives on the Institute's board, and their support was uncertain. In a March 28 letter to John Mackay, Lara-Braud confided that he hoped the meeting would be a “turning point in the young history of the Hispanic-American Institute,” but noted that already “a number of my fellow Presbyterians of Texas are being quite outspoken in their criticism of my own participation in this movement.”⁷³ Other board members agreed on the critical nature of the May meeting; Gaspar Langella, representative of the UPCUSA's Advisory Council on Inter-American Affairs (ADCOIA) described the “Raza Unida issue” as “the touchstone of whether "they" want a dynamic institute that would tackle with the real issues, even when they are controversial.”⁷⁴

Lara-Braud went to great lengths at the meeting itself to convince the board to support his work with Raza Unida. He dedicated the bulk of his report to the board to a detailed explanation of the Raza Unida meetings, the degree to which he had involved HAI in their organization, and his current activities. Ernesto Galarza also attended the meeting as a guest, and described his experience of organizing the Raza Unida meetings. Lara-Braud acknowledged that the new movement was a complex and controversial, with an uncertain future trajectory, but presented engagement as a morally-necessary risk that HAI must take: “HAI's freedom to operate as an independent ecumenical agency, and as

⁷² . As reproduced in the “Director's Report, Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, May 6-7, 1968,.) Box F099, HAI.

⁷³ . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to John A. Mackay, March 15, 1968, Box F099, HAI.

⁷⁴ . Letter of Gaspar Langella to Jorge Lara-Braud,

the situation demands, has placed it squarely in the center of the most significant movement of Mexican-American solidarity. Only the future will test the wisdom or unwisdom of our role.”⁷⁵ The response of the HAI board was unambiguously positive. Referencing the clause added to HAI's charter in 1967—the need to act “in times of marked stress and conflict”—the board made a statement resolving to “continue making available at the discretion of La Raza Unida the resources at command of the Institute.” They also issued a second statement similar to the second statement made by COSAW in January, calling on HAI's organizational backers, and other Protestant groups, to acknowledge that “the Civil Rights struggle is as urgent to the Hispanic-Americans as it is for Negroes and every other disadvantaged minority.”⁷⁶

Lara-Braud did not, however, enjoy unanimous support from the HAI board. Before and after the May 1968 meeting, Sherwood Reisner exchanged letters with Lara-Braud and COEMAR head John Sinclair, expressing vehement opposition to their support of Raza Unida. Reisner told Lara-Braud that he had been “highly disappointed in your naïve support of this front group” with only “limited appeal.”⁷⁷ In a later part of the exchange, Reisner expanded on this argument, singling out not only MAYO but also the earlier PASO as disruptive and inauthentic “front groups.” In contrast, Reisner argued, the “indigenous” LULAC and GI Forum made no “strong assertion of race or peculiarity,” but instead saw “their citizenship and identity in larger human and national terms.”⁷⁸

Reisner's opposition to Raza Unida reflected an Anglo Texan's anxiety over Hispanic political mobilization, and a fear of communism suggested by his mention of “front groups.” But his criticism of the movement's specifically racial language

75 . Meeting HAI Board of Trustees, May 6-7, 1968, Director's Report.

76 . Meeting HAI Board of Trustees, May 6-7, 1968, Minutes.

77 . Letter of Sherwood Reisner to Jorge Lara-Braud, April 27, 1968, Box F064, HAI.

78 . Letter of Sherwood Reisner to John Sinclair, May 17, 1968, Box F064, HAI.

demonstrated the more fundamental limitations of the colorblind racial vision adopted by most white mainline Protestants. White Protestants had embraced the cause of integrationism, but they understood integration as an incorporation of minority groups into the existing social structure—a structure developed by white actors to protect their own interests—after which racial difference would cease to have significance; this vision effectively rejected activism that claimed the continued relevance of racial or ethnic identity and difference.⁷⁹ A movement that identified itself in terms of *la raza* would be extremely difficult to integrate into this worldview. Lara-Braud had recognized this difficulty even before his exchange with Reisner, and in the spring and summer of 1968, he began to develop a defense of *la raza* meant to reconcile the concept to mainline Protestant racial intuitions.

Lara-Braud's first purposeful defense of *la raza* to a Protestant audience was an article in the April 1968 issue of the *Texas Presbyterian*, “La Raza Unida and the Church.” Presented in an eight-part “question and answer” format, the article provided a short background history of the factors that had produced Raza Unida: the “need deeply felt among Mexican-Americans to dramatize their plight as a disadvantaged minority”; the frank socioeconomic conditions of this disadvantage; and the earlier history of Mexican-American activism, and disappointment, that had led up to the “sudden awakening” in 1967.”⁸⁰ The article tried to allay Anglo fears about the more controversial aspects of the movement. Answering the question “are members of La Raza Unida nonviolent,” Lara-Braud wrote that “the vast majority abhor violence,” notwithstanding militant rhetoric and symbolism that “many of us deeply regret.” But he chided his readers that militant rhetoric was simply a last resort to “the only language that

79 . This argument is developed in Jennifer Harvey, “Which Way to Justice? Reconciliation, Reparations, and the Problem of Whiteness in U.S. Protestantism”, *Journal of the Society for Christian Ethics* 31 (2011), 59-61.

80 . Jorge Lara-Braud, “Raza Unida and the Church,” reprinted from *Texas Presbyterian*, April 1968, Box F098, HAI.

apparently present-day society is able to understand”; the primary responsibility lay with Anglos to change that state of affairs.⁸¹

By characterizing political violence as rare and regrettable, and a response to untenable conditions that might be rectified through moral action, Lara-Braud sought to turn a liability of the movement into a potential strength. He took a somewhat similar approach to the accusation that Raza Unida was itself racist. The HAI director urged his readers to understand that in its Latin American context, *la raza* was inherently positive: the “blending of a new family of man,” represented in the very existence of Hispanic *mestizaje*. As a result, *la raza* in fact contained an implicit *rejection* of racism, fully compatible with the cause of anti-racism and integrationism:

La raza, as a universalistic term points to a number of precious human values. Among them one finds respect for the person, loyalty to the friend, devotion to the family, deference to the aged, giving of self for the country, and love for the fraternity of all peoples. When members of LA RAZA denounce the “gringo” or the “Anglo system,” they are doing no more than joining their voices to the multitude of Anglos who also deplore the current illness of the national way of life.⁸²

Invoking a “multitude of Anglos” was also an appeal to the self-image of Lara-Braud's Anglo audience, religiously active Presbyterians whom he could reasonably assume supported integration and the resolution of racial strife. Anglo Protestants could help make Raza Unida a vehicle to fulfill these goals, if they would lend their support to Mexican-Americans, and particularly to Mexican-American clergy. Lara-Braud also repeated the warning, made in his 1967 NCC presentation, that while Mexican-Americans had “never before” been more appreciative of the help of the Church, “what direction the movement will take depends on what continuing guidance the Church may be able to give it from within.”⁸³

81 . Ibid.

82 . Ibid.

83 . Ibid.

Describing Raza Unida and the church as mutually beneficial to each other was a bold position in itself, but Lara-Braud argued for an even stronger synergy in which *la raza* became the living manifestation of Christian hopes. In the same month as his *Texas Presbyterian* article, Lara-Braud also wrote a short piece for the student newspaper of APTS, the *Austin Seminary Bulletin*. “By Means of the Cross He United Both Nations” took as its starting point the biblical passage Ephesians 2:11, on the reconciliation of “insider” Jew and “outsider” Gentiles among early Christians. Tracing the history of contemporary Mexican-American activism, he linked the biblical narrative to the relationship between “insider” Anglo-Americans, but also to the origins of *la raza* from the opposing and oppressive relationship of colonizers and colonized in the Americas. What these relationships had in common, and what the biblical text presented, was the potential for “creative conflict,” out of which a new, better community could emerge.

If Ephesians has taught us anything, it is that peace and oneness among the alienated are achieved only through the resolution of conflict, and not by ignoring it, by-passing it, or stifling it. The cross of Christ stands as the eternal reality of reconciliation at the expense of suffering, not only his, but also that of everyone else intent on putting an end to alienation. The former enmity of Jews and Gentiles is transmuted into the oneness of a true Raza Unida.⁸⁴

Though an extended metaphor rather than a straightforward prescriptive argument, Lara-Braud effectively conflated the *mestizaje* of *la raza* with the ideal, racially harmonious society desired by his Protestant audience: the two were not merely mutually supportive, but one and the same. In doing so, he presented a critical alternative to the prevailing vision that racial identity would cease to exist. Instead, Lara-Braud argued, racial identities would be combined, and this combination would come about only through frank engagement and labor that did not shy away from fraught racial conflict or the concrete steps needed to address it.

⁸⁴ . Jorge Lara-Braud, “By Means of the Cross he United Both Races,” reprinted from *Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Bulletin*, April 1968, Box F099, HAI.

Lara-Braud's promotion of Raza Unida and *la raza* was not limited to strategic appeals to Anglo Protestant audiences. In his official capacity he wrote or spoke in a variety of nonsectarian venues, addressing both Anglos and Hispanics. In a complementary move to defending *la raza* before Anglo audiences, he set about convincing Hispanic audiences to embrace the term in public life. Whatever theological significance Lara-Braud might attach to the term, *la raza* was a term of identity for Hispanic people, and it had to be in use for it have meaningful significance in social discourse. Promoting the use of *la raza* was complicated by the mistrust of the new Chicano Activism by moderate and conservative Hispanics, including many potentially influential middle-class professionals who—like Lara-Braud himself—had come of age during the heyday of LULAC and the GI Forum.

Lara-Braud's work in this vein was by necessity more secular. In April 1968, HAI sent out an open letter, addressed to Mexican-Americans “of professional or managerial status,” and signed by Lara-Braud, Leo Nieto, and University of Texan professors Claudio Arenas and Sergio Elizondo. The letter promoted Raza Unida as a vehicle of both internal and external solidarity, through which “the street-sweeper and the college PhD [united] their words and deeds for the advancement of the Mexican-American, and consequently for the advancement of our society as a whole.” As to Mexican-American criticisms of the movement's language and politics, the letter gently suggested that such feeling in fact reflected the “racist environment which we did not create, but which has colored so much of the life of our communities.” The invocation of a universal value to be derived from the advancement of *la raza*, articulated here in patriotic rather than religious terms, was an appeal tailored to more conservative Hispanics of the WWII generation.⁸⁵

85 . “Dear Fellow Mexican-Americans,” April 3, 1968, Box F099, HAI.

In other contexts, however, Lara-Braud was more open with his religious language, albeit tailoring it to a wider Hispanic audience than only Protestants. Speaking at the Southwest Texas Conference on Mass Media and the Mexican-American held at St. Mary's University on January 18, 1969, he again encouraged the use of the terms “chicano” and “la raza,” not despite but rather because these terms were frequently interpreted negatively in the English-language press. Only if Mexican-Americans embraced such terms in public life would their positive meaning become widely known: a “biological miracle” of cultural mixture that encompassed “the Black Peruvian San Martín de Porres, the Indian Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Blond European Madonnas.”⁸⁶ Here Lara-Braud coupled his emphasis on the religious value of *mestizaje* with distinctively Catholic imagery. He valued this imagery himself as a proponent of ecumenism, but also knew it would be more likely to resonate with a majority-Catholic Hispanic audience.

The writings and speeches made by Lara-Braud in 1967 and 1968 and preserved by HAI likely represent only a portion of his thought on Christian social activism and Hispanic identity during this time. But the consistency of their content makes it possible to sketch the fundamental outline of Lara-Braud's theology of *la raza*, in which the embrace of mestizo Hispanic peoples will help to end racial strife in a way consistent with an idealized Christian society. This connection between Hispanic racial identity and liberal Protestant theology was distinctive and perhaps unique in in the late 1960s. But in a more general sense, Lara-Braud's work fit squarely within what George Mariscal has called “Chicano Humanism:” an intellectual trend within the Chicano movement, growing out of José Vasconcelos' *raza cosmica*, that emphasized the spiritual and moral dimension of *la raza*, and how it might effect the transformation of society at large.

⁸⁶ . Jorge Lara-Braud, “Response of the Mexican-American,” Southwest Texas Conference on Mass Media and the Mexican-American, St. Mary's University (January 18, 1969), Box F099, HAI.

Critically, Mariscal argues that this Chicano Humanism represented a particular stream of movement thought that was in dialogue, and sometimes conflict, with both the more assimilationist earlier forms of Hispanic political activism and with the more radical, nationalistic elements of the Chicano movement.⁸⁷ This intermediate, constantly mediated position also characterized Lara-Braud's work and its place within Presbyterian and mainline Protestant circles, and dealing with these circumstances would come to preoccupy Lara-Braud in late 1968 and 1969.

⁸⁷ . See George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1976* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 57-59; 79-80.

V. Uncertainty and Transformation, 1968-1969

Lara-Braud was able to pursue both activist engagements and other HAI projects freely through most of 1967 and 1968, thanks to the operational independence he enjoyed as HAI director and the vote of confidence he received from the HAI board in May 1968. But as HAI drew towards its third year, Lara-Braud and HAI's backers faced the question of how, or even if, the Institute should continue in the long term. In seeking to address this question, Lara-Braud faced the first significant institutional pushback against his direction of HAI, as well as the limitations of his theology of *la raza* in both activist and mainline Protestant denominational contexts. These difficulties would ultimately push HAI towards a variation of the renewed and reoriented Institute Lara-Braud sought, but not before a period of significant uncertainty in late 1968 and early 1969.

Much of the uncertainty that HAI faced stemmed from a debate over restructuring and reorienting the Institute that took place at HAI's October 1968 board meeting. In his report to the board, Lara-Braud highlighted HAI's exceptional activity apart from engagement with the Chicano Movement: consultations with Hispanic Protestants in the Rio Grande Valley on behalf of COSAW; the development of Spanish-language training seminars with Princeton Seminary; and the planning, with Friendship Press, for a 1970 symposium on Latin American perceptions of current socioreligious issues.⁸⁸ Yet, he observed, HAI still faced critics who “feel we have not been sufficiently church-research oriented,” or who “regret either the slowness with which [HAI] entered the field of social action, or the suddenness with which we have.”⁸⁹ In response to these critics — who

⁸⁸ . The symposium, ultimately published in 1970 as *Our Claim on the Future: A Controversial Collection from Latin America*, included contributions from Brazilian Protestant liberation theologian Rubem Alves and Catholic philosopher Ivan Illich, among others; the original manuscripts may be found in Box F098, HAI.

⁸⁹ . “Director's Report,” Minutes of the Meeting of the Hispanic-American Institute Board of Trustees, October 21-22, 1968, Box F099, HAI.

certainly included Sherwood Reisner, and may have included other board members or significant denominational backers—Lara-Braud urged the HAI board to consider “whether we are responding adequately to the aspirations for justice, equality and self-determination among awakened Hispanic-Americans *within* and without the church.”⁹⁰

Lara-Braud's proposal to restructure HAI likely reflected what must have seemed like a critical, or *kairos*, moment for the church on social issues. 1968 had already seen the dramatic increase in visibility of the Chicano Movement through the school walkouts/“blowouts” that began in March, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Poor People's Campaign that proceeded in its wake, and the second Episcopal Conference of Latin American in Medellín that championed the Preferential Option for the poor. In light of these developments, a reorientation of HAI into an explicitly pro-activist role was a moral obligation, though Lara-Braud also reminded the Board that such a move was compatible with HAI's existing mission, and even strategic: “A more determined solidarity with those who suffer misunderstandings or injustice would not preclude carrying out our present commitments; indeed, because of such solidarity, our research, leadership training, and interpretive services would be more credible.”⁹¹ Credibility that could convince both Hispanic and Anglo Protestants and Chicano Movement activists was essential to promoting Lara-Braud's vision of *la raza*.

To expand HAI's operations, and to achieve truly “ecumenical” credibility in racial terms, would require specific changes to the structure of the Institute; with Lara-Braud's prompting, the HAI board discussed such measures at length during the October 1968 meeting. The simplest change would be to add permanent staff. New staff members, preferably Hispanic, would both increase HAI's operational capacity and help it develop an identity as an organization separate from Lara-Braud. A greater potential change

90 . Ibid.

91 . Ibid.

would be to expand and diversify the HAI board to feature a Hispanic majority among board members, and possibly to include Hispanic organizations as sponsors. The board also considered changes to the scope and scale of HAI's operations by delimiting its focus specifically to the U.S. Southwest, to make clear that the Institute prioritized urgent domestic concerns. They even considered moving into a larger office away from Austin Seminary — “to lend an image of greater HAI autonomy,” in Lara-Braud's words — and to facilitate future staff expansion.⁹²

Overall, the HAI board members appeared markedly willing to consider significant changes to the Institute; no opposition is recorded in the meeting minutes, and the board made tentative resolutions in favor of establishing HAI's domestic focus and moving to new offices. Instead, it was the concrete question of hiring more staff that provoked a major disagreement between board members and Lara-Braud. As early as May 1968, he had pushed for at least an assistant director to be assigned to HAI to help handle the workload. By the fall, he had found a preferred candidate in 25-year-old Ernesto Cortés, Jr., a former volunteer staffer for NFW during the Valley strike who was currently employed in a community-outreach position by a United Church of Christ congregation in Beaumont, Texas. Lara-Braud presented his nomination of Cortés to the board at the October meeting, and an interview was set up, but Cortés' candidacy was ultimately turned down by the board; the position of assistant director went unrealized.⁹³

The minutes of the October meeting did not record what debate might have occurred over Cortés. An October 25 letter from Lara-Braud to Roger Granados, however, suggests that Cortés' candidacy was denied because of doubts over his personal Christian commitment or denominational affiliation — a move Lara-Braud saw as disguising a more fundamental dispute over HAI's direction:

⁹² . Ibid.

⁹³ . Cortés would become one of the major leaders in the West/Southwest branch of the Industrial Areas Foundation.

Also, I think I don't have to spell out in so many words to you my disappointment in not having come to more basic decisions concerning the membership and the re-orientation of the Hispanic-American Institute. I had to do everything in my power to restrain myself when the [Program] committee brought in its remarks concerning Ernie Cortés. I could hardly believe my ears that both the committee as well as most of the board felt it was not possible for us to hire him unless we ascertain that he is a "Christian" in the rigorous sense of church membership. That is a deplorable mentality.⁹⁴

The refusal to confirm Cortés was only one negative decision among the general, if tentative, approval of Lara-Braud's suggestions for HAI. But Lara-Braud clearly perceived the decision as a serious challenge, “one more reflection of the unfortunate division that still prevails” among the HAI board, presumably over engagement in activism. This division involved direct opposition, such as that expressed by Sherwood Reisner, but its development wasn't assured. For example, Korie L. Edwards observes in her study of interracial Christian congregations that majority whites have such thoroughgoing influence, or “racial hegemony,” that the simple fact of following their “neutral” preferences can force the exclusion of minority interests.⁹⁵ In HAI's case, it mattered only that a majority of Anglo board members prioritized the consideration of Cortés religious credentials; his politics may never have been an open issue. Regardless, the result deeply frustrated Lara-Braud, and he confided to Granados that “unless we make of this Institute a real instrument of service, I cannot see myself continuing to work for it beyond 1969.”⁹⁶

Lara-Braud's difficulties were compounded by two events that occurred in late 1968 and early 1969. In November 1968, the trustees of the Presbyterian Pan-American School voted to withdraw their support from HAI. In correspondence with Reisner at the time, Lara-Braud described the decision as an understandable response to the

94 . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to Roger Granados, October 25, 1968.

95 . Edwards links this function of racial hegemony to the “transparency” of white racial identity, its capacity to go unmarked and unremarked on in most social contexts; see Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11, 124-130.; on racial hegemony, see Omi and Winant,

96 . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to Roger Granados, October 25, 1968.

“consensus” among the HAI board to shift towards “regional and national” funding from larger denominational bodies, but personally, he appears to have seen the decision as a political reaction to his work with Raza Unida.⁹⁷ Politics were also at work in the late January 1969 firing of pro-farmworker Migrant Ministry staffer Ed Krueger by the TCC. The firing brought an end to TCC support for Krueger's lawsuit against the Texas Rangers, and for local chapters he had promoted of the Minority Mobilization Program, an initiative of the newly formed Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) that employed minority volunteers to support civic and social welfare causes. Krueger and his supporters viewed the move as an attempt by the TCC to divest itself of controversy in the Valley region, as well as evidence of anti-Hispanic and anti-labor sentiment.⁹⁸ Each case was a blow: the departure of the Pan-American School hurt HAI's educational work; the TCC's about-face robbed HAI of an influential backer in the Valley region; and both demonstrated the degree to which support for minority needs remained contingent on the preferences of Anglo denominational leaders.

These setbacks did not, however, deter Lara-Braud from continuing to support Hispanic activism. At the same time as Krueger's firing, Lara-Braud became involved in another controversy over the VISTA program, further west in Del Rio, where in February 1969 local officials, acting with state support, closed the local VISTA office after learning that its volunteers were also involved with MAYO activities.⁹⁹ MAYO immediately organized demonstrations in Del Rio, and Lara-Braud was again closely involved as an organizer: he anonymously composed the public statement for a major protest organized by MAYO and its allies in Del Rio on March 30, Palm Sunday. The

97 . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to Sherwood Reisner, January 3, 1969, Box F ; in his 1996 retrospective, Lara-Braud noted that one HAI backer had “left in disgust over our radicalism” at the end of 1968, almost certainly the Pan-American School; see Lara-Braud, “Retrospective,” 29.

98 . Krueger's firing also precipitated Leo Nieto's resignation from the TCC; for a more complete discussion of this incident, see Watt, 156-160.

99 . For a full description of the Del Rio controversy, see Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 72-79.

“Del Rio Mexican-American Manifesto to the Nation” issued a condemnation the closure of the VISTA programs and gravely warned Anglo politicians that they invited “serious unrest” by impeding the work of activists and volunteers. It also included an extensive affirmation of *la raza*, combined with a condemnation of racism and white supremacy:

However we define [*la raza*], it is a treasure house of spirituality, decency, and sanity. *La raza* is the affirmation of the most basic ingredient of our personality, the brownhood of our Indian ancestors wedded to all the other skin colors of mankind ...

... But in a color-mad society, the sin of our coloration can be expiated only by exceptional achievement and successful imitation of the white man who controls every institution of society. *La raza* condemns such a system as racist, pagan, and ultimately self-destructive. We can neither tolerate it nor be a part of it. As children of *la raza*, we are heirs of a spiritual and biological miracle where in one family blood ties unite the darkest and the fairest. It is no accident that the objects of our veneration include the black Peruvian Saint Martin de Porres, the brown Indian Virgin of Guadalupe, the blond European madonnas, and a Jewish Christ of Indian and Spanish features.¹⁰⁰

Lara-Braud's contribution to the Del Rio Manifesto represented a particular high point in his rhetorical support for the Chicano Movement. Writing for the purposes of a protest and without the imprimatur of HAI, Lara-Braud demonstrated his willingness to employ more forceful political language, and particularly to acknowledge race and racism to greater degree of than he did in “official” writing. At the same time, he was able to incorporate a high degree of religious language into the Manifesto, reflecting his vision of the movement's purpose and possibility. The resulting document was Lara-Braud's distinctive contribution to the intellectual corpus of the Chicano Movement.

Yet while the Del Rio Manifesto was an apparent success, its very distinctiveness was itself a sign of HAI's uncertain position relative to activism and the overall way in which *la raza* was being understood. In fact, the Manifesto was almost entirely overshadowed by another statement, the “Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” presented by Corky

100 . The Manifesto is sometimes credited to MAYO member Juan Patlan, who appears as the principle contact listed in the form of the document that was printed for mass distribution; “The Del Rio Mexican-American Manifesto to the Nation,” March 30, 1968, Box F098, HAI.

Gonzales and the poet Alurista at the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver just three days before the Del Rio protest. A far more culturally nationalist document, and far more typical of “Chicano Humanism,” the “spiritual” content of the Plan de Aztlán refers to culture, indigenous heritage, attachment to the land, and the values of “love and *carnalismo* [brotherhood], contrasted against U.S. materialism. The absence of even the acknowledgement of Hispanic religiosity in this and other well-known statements from this period indicates that though Lara-Braud had made HAI a key contributor to activist causes, he had been less successful in influencing activist philosophy.

“RADICAL CHANGE” AND THE 1969 UPCUSA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The disputes over Ernie Cortés, the withdrawal of the Pan-American School, and disputes within the TCC put Lara-Braud and HAI under strain, but did not directly or immediately threaten the Institute's operations or continued existence. Such a threat did emerge, however, at exactly the point that Lara-Braud was enjoying the qualified success of the Del Rio Manifesto. At some point in late March or April 1969, some representatives of COEMAR and UPCUSA Board of National Missions on the HAI board contacted Lara-Braud and other Board members with the indication that they might withdraw from the Institute. These two agencies controlled the flow of UPCUSA funding to HAI, over a third of HAI's budget in 1968. Their withdrawal would be tantamount to a complete UPCUSA withdrawal from HAI. While the proposed withdrawal did not proceed—owing, according to Lara-Braud, to the “outcry” of other board members—it was the closest HAI had come to facing serious reduction or even closure.¹⁰¹

The primary reasoning for the proposed UPCUSA withdrawal from HAI was detailed in a March 20, 1969, report “concerning the Hispanic-American Institute”

101 . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to Herbert Meza, April 29, 1969, Box F063, HAI.

prepared by a committee of the UPCUSA Council of Church Strategy and Development. The committee included several HAI Board members, including Lara-Braud's supporters Roger Granados and John Sinclair, as well as Donald Harris and Richard Cowling. In their report, the committee commended Lara-Braud's work since HAI's establishment, but observed that compared to 1966, "the situation in 1969 has radically changed in that today the Hispanic Americans are setting out to find their own solutions to issues affecting their life and destiny."¹⁰² HAI, as a project developed primarily by Anglo Church leadership and overseen by primarily Anglo denominations, was outdated and ill suited to engagement with the unfolding Hispanic social movement, despite the best efforts of the director and board members. The committee argued that HAI should therefore be dissolved, its operations folded into "existing denominational and ecumenical structures," and its resources used to "facilitate Spanish Americans to be completely free to study and develop their own structures, policies, and action centers."¹⁰³

Failed or not, the proposed withdrawal of the UPCUSA agencies dominated HAI's May 5, 1968, board meeting. Lara-Braud felt constrained to defend his work, offering a retrospective of the Institute's operations that emphasized his rhetoric in support of Raza Unida and *la raza*: "practically every substantive articulation of the elusive, galvanizing, and anti-racist concept *La Raza* in Texas has come from the HAI office."¹⁰⁴ The board also engaged in a protracted discussion of the UPCUSA report that revealed much of its underlying context. Those who had served on the UPCUSA committee made clear that they agreed with Lara-Braud's political aims and intentions for HAI restructuring, and were instead reacting to a lack of support for HAI already present among some UPCUSA administrators. Their comments indicate that the use of funding

102 . Spanish Committee, UPCUSA Board of National Missions, "Report to the Council on Church Strategy and Development Concerning the Hispanic-American Institute," Box F053, HAI.

103 . Ibid.

104 . Lara-Braud, "Director's Report, Minutes of the Meeting of the Hispanic-American Institute Board of Trustees, May 5, 1969," Box F099, HAI.

was the primary issue, with Richard Cowling observing that the Board of National Missions felt there was “not [*sic*] possibility of investment” in HAI “in terms of priority.” Austin Seminary President David Stitt acknowledged the nature of the problem: much of HAI’s funding had been granted for the specific purposes of “training men for ministry and continuing education of clergy.” Even if HAI’s sponsors accepted the necessity of activist work in principle, it did not necessarily represent their intended use of funds collected from members and congregations for missionary and educational purposes.¹⁰⁵

Underlying the problem of funding was the sense, not directly expressed in the UCPUSA report but discussed at the HAI meeting, that Anglo-dominated institutions would only ever hinder the full development of Hispanic activism and community. This sense was expressed most forcefully by Roger Granados, who described his goal as “putting myself at [the] disposition of *la raza nueva*,” with “no preconceived ideas as a person.” This absence of “preconceived ideas” reflected the report’s call for the complete freedom of Hispanics to develop their own programs and institutions, a rejection not only of Anglo paternalism but also of any attempt to direct Hispanic sociopolitical action through any means other than direct grassroots participation. This meant the absence of any kind of leadership imposed by an outside body, regardless of politics: when Donald Neel asked if there was “a JLB on the horizon” for any other agency, Granados replied that this would be “*the* difference—we [denominational staff] will not outline structure in advance.”¹⁰⁶ Despite personal appeals from Lara-Braud and Leo Nieto, who had expressed hope that the cohort of Hispanic HAI members could “stay together” despite

105 . Jorge Lara-Braud, Handwritten Notes on the Meeting of the Hispanic-American Institute Board of Trustees (c. May 5-6, 1969), Box F053, HAI. These notes taken by Lara-Braud are the only documentation of this discussion, and one of the only examples of direct documentation of any HAI meeting.

106 . Ibid.

disagreement “for the sake of *la causa*,” Granados ended the meeting by announcing his resignation from HAI.¹⁰⁷

The dispute over the proposed UPCUSA withdrawal represented the worst possible existential threat to HAI. Even without the loss of funding, the departure of Roger Granados was a significant blow to the Institute's credibility: it had lost the confidence of one of the more radical board members and one of the only Hispanic board members, one of the clergy members HAI was meant to help. At the same time, however, the motivations behind the withdrawal also demonstrated that some in the UPCUSA denominational hierarchy were also paying attention to the concerns of Hispanic activists and Hispanic communities, and were willing to push for radical changes in the relationship between Hispanics and the Church. While these denominational voices had, at the moment, called for HAI's dissolution, their presence offered a degree of support for the work Lara-Braud wanted to pursue and the possibility of defending the value of that work to denominational leaders.

Events were already unfolding that would provide an opportunity to reassert HAI's value. In late April 1969, attendees of the National Black Economic Development Conference meeting in Detroit voted to endorse former SNCC leader James Forman's Black Manifesto, which called for majority white Christian denominations and Jewish groups to provide Black activist organizations with \$500 million in reparations for the wealth white denominations had gained from slavery. Forman and his supporters were frustrated, in much the same terms as Roger Granados, with the lack of Black input within Protestant-funded initiatives, and the failure of those initiatives to live up to their claims. The Manifesto was quickly taken up by others, including Hispanic groups and mainline seminarians disappointed in their churches' failure to live up to their own

107 . Letter of Leo Nieto to Roger Granados, April 28, 1969, Box F062, HAI.

rhetoric. These supporters, and Forman himself, launched a months-long campaign demanding a response from the churches: staging disruptions of worship at wealthy congregations, sit-ins and takeovers of seminaries and denominational offices, and speeches and demonstrations in support of their aims.¹⁰⁸

The Black Manifesto received a complicated reception from mainline Protestants; many condemned the document, and its demands were never remotely met, but Elaine Allen Lechtreck notes that many Protestant leaders were open to engagement with the Manifesto, and some endorsed it outright.¹⁰⁹ This characterizes the response of the UPCUSA when that denomination was challenged by protests on the eve of its May 1969 General Assembly in San Antonio. Just prior to the meeting, demonstrators occupied the offices of the denomination's Board of National Missions in New York; simultaneously, members of the Puerto Rican Young Lords organization and sympathetic students occupied McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, demanding that it provide more funding and infrastructure for the surrounding neighborhoods. A group of mostly black Presbyterian supporters of the manifesto led by Gayraud Wilmore, director of the UPCUS Council on Religion and Race (CORAR), convinced denominational leadership that it would be best to engage Forman, and to extend him a last-minute invitation to address the General Assembly. This group was joined by a “La Raza” group that included Roger Granados, Californian Eliezar Risco, and Chicago organizer Obed Lopez.¹¹⁰

108 . For the development of the Black Manifesto, see Findlay, 199-202; see also Elaine Allen Lechtreck, “‘We are Demanding \$500 Million for Reparations’: The Black Manifesto, Mainline Religious Denominations, and Black Economic Development.” *The Journal of African American History* 97 (2012), 40-46.

109 . Findlay takes the Black Manifesto as the key example of the breaking point in Protestant relations with Black Civil Rights activists; Findlay, 206-207, 212; see also Harvey, “White Protestants,” 133-138; Lechtreck, 46.

110 . For Wilmore's description of his experience, see Gayraud Wilmore, “Recollections: The Black Revolt and the United Presbyterian Church, 1963-1973,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 85 (2007), 65-66.

The message of these “black and brown caucuses” occupied much of the General Assembly on May 15, with the La Raza group presenting both during the morning, and early afternoon as part of the Black Manifesto discussion headlined by Forman and Joseph Metz Rollins. Granados, speaking in the morning, repeated the message he had articulated before the HAI board and included several effective critiques of HAI. Hispanic Presbyterians had for too long been “objects of someone else's mission,” and no number of “schools and agencies” could make up for the lack of meaningful self-determination; what was required was respect for Hispanic self-determination and the “expertise” offered by *la raza*, which could not occur under Anglo control or through Anglo institutions.¹¹¹ Speaking later before Foreman's presentation, Eliezar Risco linked this concern for self-determination to a broader “Third World” focus, one that would unite Blacks and Hispanics in the U.S. with decolonization and social justice efforts worldwide. For this reason, he emphasized that the La Raza participants at the General Assembly fully supported any and all of demands made by the Black Manifesto group.¹¹²

Lara-Braud was in the audience for the complete presentations of both the La Raza group and the Black Manifesto platform—he took copious notes on each. The HAI director was also present to support his own contribution to the official discussions, a report written for ADCOIA titled “Hispanic Americans and the Crisis in the Nation.”¹¹³ In correspondence with John Mackay, Lara-Braud noted that he had composed the report in the summer and fall of 1968, but that its real importance would come the following year. While only a synthesis of earlier research and writing, the report's presentation at

111 . This account again comes from Lara-Braud's notes; Jorge Lara-Braud, Handwritten Notes on Presentation of the UPCUSA General Assembly, May 15, 1969, Box F093, HAI.

112 . Eliezar Risco, et al., “Black Manifesto Presentation, May 15, 1969,” Tape 1178, National Archives of the PCUSA, Presbyterian Historical Society.

113 . The “Crisis in the Nation” framing was a standardized phrase used by the NCC for research on Civil Rights issues, and was adopted by many participant denominations; Lara-Braud's report was later published in *Theology Today* 26 (1969), 334-338.

General Assembly would be the first time his work was directly considered by the one of the Presbyterian denominations at the highest level.¹¹⁴

It is unclear if Lara-Braud was able to revise the report in any way prior to the General Assembly, or if he had any knowledge of how supporters of the Black Manifesto would proceed prior to May 1969. But the “Crisis” report included two points that proved extremely trenchant to discussion of the Manifesto. First, the report contained the strongest argument Lara-Braud had yet made for *la raza's* importance to racial reconciliation. Lara-Braud argued that Mexican-Americans were “constitutionally disinclined” to racial prejudice. Their own *mestizaje* (whether physical or psychological) had richly endowed them with antibodies against the virus of racism. All Americans, and especially the Church, should thus look to those activists who emphasize Hispanic “self-determination,” such as Chavez, Tijerina, and Corky Gonzales, for guidance in how to address larger social problems.¹¹⁵ This was a somewhat incredible argument, and one that Lara-Braud knew was overstated—he was certainly aware of Hispanic anti-black racism. But in the context of a difficult discussion on the relationship between whites and minority groups in the church, Lara-Braud's words offered a source of hope.

The other key element of the “Crisis” report was a frank acknowledgement of the increasing radicalism of civil rights activism, and the difficulties this posed to white mainline Protestants. Lara-Braud noted: “What is likely to confuse even [black and Hispanic activists'] most well-disposed monolingual and monocultural fellow Americans is the marked *compensatory* emphasis” at work in their activism—the demand for concrete change that would end white socioeconomic and institutional racial hegemony. Lara-Braud urged his audience to understand this critique from minorities as a “stern but loving rebuke to the church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, for failing to stand with

114 . Letter of Jorge Lara-Braud to John A. Mackay, November 18, 1968.

115 . Lara-Braud, “Hispanic Americans and the Crisis in the Nation,” May 15, 1969, Box F098, HAI.

them in their struggles.” Again, this line of argument offered hope, and the possibility of a definite way forward on racial issues, if white Protestants were able to have faith in their coreligionists and fellow Americans.¹¹⁶

The ultimate result of the 1969 General Assembly was mixed for the supporters of the Black Manifesto, but still one of the most positive responses the document received from a mainline Protestant denomination. The Assembly approved a report that disavowed the most radical aspects of the Black Manifesto's political background. Rejecting “the concept of two societies within our nation,” the UPCUSA would instead recommit itself “to work for one society with many diverse parts functioning as one people under God” through nonviolent and non-coercive means.¹¹⁷ But the Assembly added that it would “accelerate existing programs and take new steps” towards the kinds of land reform, lending reform, and monetary grants to minority organizations that the Manifesto had called for; while vague, this commitment effectively acknowledged the fundamental validity of the Manifesto's aims. The pro-Manifesto statement had come about through a push by Wilmore and other CORAR members, and they had employed Lara-Braud's “Crisis” paper to bolster their arguments, and to help extend an olive branch to more trepidatious white members of the denominational leadership.¹¹⁸

The positive reception and influence of Lara-Braud's “Crisis” paper did not instantly quell institutional doubts about HAI's function as a church agency, nor did it solve the serious questions raised by Granados and others about the validity of any institutional approach to Hispanic issues, but it did secure HAI's position for the immediate future. The events at the General Assembly helped to disseminate Lara-Braud's arguments, developed over the previous three years, to a wide denominational audience. The Assembly and its wider effects also positioned Lara-Braud, and thus HAI,

116 . Ibid.

117 . The text of these resolutions is reproduced here from Brackenridge and García-Treto, 214.

118 . Ibid.

at the nexus of of the dialogue between Presbyterian denominational leadership and more radical minority activists. As the Presbyterian denominations and other mainline Protestants began to seriously grapple with their direct obligations to minority groups, this positioning assured that HAI would be first among the agencies to which denominational leaders would turn in the coming years.

VI. Epilogue

For HAI, the aftermath of the Black Manifesto debate brought a resurgence of interest from Protestant groups who felt a new urgency to respond to social upheavals. The changes in HAI's finances demonstrate the significance of this new interest. In 1969, coming off the disturbances of the previous year, HAI experienced its first significant budget shortfall, projecting a budget of \$40,272 but taking in only \$33,850. In 1970, by contrast, the Institute was able to project a budget of \$75,000, and ultimately received \$75,961. Most of these funds came from a deal Lara-Braud reached with the UPCUSA Board of National Missions and the PCUS Board of National Ministries: he would make one-sixth of his operational time as HAI director available to each board, in exchange for \$17,000 in annual funding from each through 1972. A significant portion also came from the increased support of HAI's other supporting denominations, as well as new backing from the Southern district of the American Lutheran Church and the Texas-Louisiana Synod of the Lutheran Church in America.¹¹⁹

Along with this intensified attention and funding came many of changes that Lara-Braud had sought in 1968. In October 1969, the HAI board approved as HAI's assistant director Benjamin Canales, a Presbyterian lawyer who had helped organize the Raza Unida conference and several other activist projects in Houston. HAI also gained its first, and only, Catholic sponsor when members of PADRES, a newly established organization of politically active Catholic priests, attended HAI's May 1970 board meeting and formally joined the board that November. PADRES was similar in many ways to HAI, sharing the aims of developing Hispanic clergy and social justice programs in Hispanic

¹¹⁹ . Figures and financial details discussed in "Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, May 15-16, 1970," Box F099, HAI.

communities.¹²⁰ Adding an assistant director and a new Hispanic sponsor to HAI also helped the effort to reach a Hispanic majority on the HAI board, which was achieved gradually between 1968 and 1970.

By far the most important effect of HAI's newfound funding was to enhance HAI's activist engagement. Lara-Braud and Canales both maintained contacts with MAYO and other Chicano Movement organizations, though their support for this body of activism was limited by MAYO's creation of the Raza Unida Party in 1971; as a religious nonprofit, HAI could not directly support a political party.¹²¹ Nevertheless, both HAI directors helped Willie Velasquez organize new Raza Unida conferences in 1970 and 1971, perpetuating the mass-meeting aspect of the movement. HAI also explored new projects, including the creation of legal defense and scholarship funds, and took on mediatorial roles, including between PCUS officials and MAYO members who occupied Houston's Juan Marcos Presbyterian Church in February 1970.¹²² In his report to the HAI board at their November 1970 meeting, Lara-Braud described the environment generated by this activism in poetic terms:

The Institute continues to function at the convergence of powerful social forces. Massive changes are in the making. Conflict and confidence are the stuff of daily life. We share them both with countless other protagonists. Amidst the tumult, there is much seeking. The motives may be patently ambiguous, but the seeking is pervasively real. By inner choice and outer mandate, HAI has increasingly identified itself with those who seek for the establishment of a more fraternal state of affairs at the point of interaction between Hispanic Americans and other Americans.¹²³

This peak period of HAI's activity began to wane at the end of 1970, when COEMAR scaled back much of the missions-related funding it had provided HAI. The year 1972 would bring an even greater reduction when Lara-Braud's time-sharing

120 . A comprehensive history of PADRES is provided by Richard Edward Martinez, *PADRES: the National Chicano Priest Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

121 . "Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, May 15-16, 1970," Box F099, HAI.

122 . Ibid.

123 . Lara-Braud, "Director's Report, Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, November 13-14 1970," Box F099, HAI.

agreement with the Presbyterian boards came to an end. In both of its annual meetings in 1971, the HAI board debated possible ways to address the impending funding cutback, including major recruitment of new backers, reduction of work to focus solely on ministerial training, or simply closing the Institute; both Lara-Braud and Canales offered to resign to save money, and were for the time being rejected.¹²⁴ During 1971 and early 1972, however, Lara-Braud suffered a number of personal and professional blows, related to his health and to the failure and dissolution of a side project, the National Planning Committee on the Spanish-American Crisis in the Nation, on which he, Leo Nieto, and several others had been working since 1968.¹²⁵ He also found himself increasingly pessimistic about the degree to which Anglo Protestant denominations would actually change to support Hispanic members. When Lara-Braud did formally resign from HAI in July 1972, followed by Canales, he gave as his reason “fatigue compounded by embarrassment” at the “tragically meager” progress he had made.¹²⁶

HAI contracted in size and activity significantly after 1972, but it did not abandon the activist engagement Lara-Braud had begun. Under Houston pastor Ruben Armendáriz, the Institute continued to research and interpret Chicano Movement activism and related developments, and continued to urge participant denominations to action on these issues.¹²⁷ By 1975, however, most of these participant denominations had either withdrawn or no longer participated in HAI's governance or funding, leaving only the

124 . “Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, October 22, 1971”. Box F099, HAI.

125 . The National Planning Committee project was a major undertaking that cannot be treated in detail by this study. It was effectively an attempt to replicate HAI's functions under the official auspices of NCC's SOHAM division, and to bring in a wider range of religious and secular partners. The project suffered from management problems, however, and the initial research project it sponsored in 1970 was poorly organized. The project did produce a policy platform based on Hispanic community economic development, but this ultimately failed at the September 1971 SOHAM meeting in Puerto Rico, at which SOHAM itself was dissolved. Considerable records of the project are held in Boxes F080, F081, and F099, HAI.

126 . Lara-Braud, “Memo to friends and other inquirers,” July 14, 1972, Box F052, HAI.

127 . For example, under Armendáriz, Presbyterian volunteer Lidia Serrata produced HAI's first report on Chicana women's activism, also the first time women's issues were raised by the Institute; see Lidia Serrata, “Report on the Conferencia de Mujeres, Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, May 25, 1973, Box F099, HAI.

founding Presbyterian denominations and the more recent Lutherans as significant backers. At what would be HAI's final board meeting on January 30, 1976, Armendáriz observed that a major factor in HAI's decline was the expansion, by “other agencies and denominations,” of their own local and national Hispanic programs in the same vein, following lessons learned during the late 1960s.¹²⁸

The proliferation of Hispanic programs among Protestant denominations was one of HAI's significant contributions. As Paul Barton observes, while the goals of Hispanic Protestant activists were not always fulfilled during the late 1960s and early 1970s, they laid institutional groundwork through social service agencies, seminary programs, and other church organs that would help support “many of their goals and ideals” in subsequent decades.¹²⁹ HAI also had a theological impact following its closure. After leaving HAI, Lara-Braud served from 1972 to 1980 as Assistant Secretary for the Faith and Order section of the National Council of Churches, an office dedicated to promoting dialogue and ecumenical relationships among Christians. In this capacity he helped promoted the embrace of Liberation Theology and opposition to U.S. intervention in Latin America, becoming a friend of Salvadorean Archbishop Oscar Romero shortly before the latter's death in 1980. Lara-Braud's theology of *la raza* also had a lasting influence on other members of HAI. When Catholic theologian Andrés Guerrero conducted interviews for his 1987 *A Chicano Theology*, Leo Nieto and Ruben Armendáriz were among those he included in his discussions of chicano identity, *mestizaje*, and *la raza cosmica*.¹³⁰

This study has sought to examine, in a very preliminary way, the formative influences and dynamics at work in HAI during its first three years of activity and the impact of this activity on the interactions between Chicano activism and mainline

128 . “Minutes of the Meeting of the HAI Board of Trustees, January 30, 1976,” Box F099, HAI.

129 . Barton, *!Ya Basta!*, 138-139.

130 . Andrés Guerrero, *A Chicano Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 128-129, 133-134.

Protestant denominations. The exploration here of HAI's institutional and theological positioning, only one portion of HAI's activities, suggests directions for further inquiry into this subject. The most obvious area for future research is into HAI's educational work during its tenure: how did Jorge Lara-Braud's theological vision of la raza shape his advisory work in Protestant ministerial education? How was this work received by educators and students, before and after 1969? These questions relate to the broader question of how HAI related to the general population of Hispanic Protestants, a group who, as Roger Granados' arguments suggested, remained remarkably absent from the institutional discussions surrounding HAI and other Hispanic programs. Also in need of greater examination are HAI's interactions with Black organizations, as well as with women's and other gender and sexuality issues that were emergent during the Institute's period of activity; these subjects are only hinted at in HAI's institutional files, but a larger project of research into personal and institutional records may provide a fuller picture of HAI's theological and social positioning. Exploration into these areas will be an important contribution to both the histories of mainline Protestant social activism and Hispanic Protestantism in the U.S.

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