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Research Paper

### La lucha del movimiento Xicano

Born and raised in southern Oregon, I never felt comfortable in my own skin. Everyone around me was an anglo-saxon, especially in the six years of me being enrolled in elementary, where I was the only brown kid in all of my classrooms. With that being said, I never truly identified with being Mexican or even Latino, probably because no one around me encouraged me to embrace those cultures. I was always scared to speak Spanish, being traumatized by the looks I would get whenever I was in public talking to my parents in our native tongue. I forced myself to forget Spanish when I was younger, wanting to be accepted by the white kids who I don't even keep in contact with anymore. I am paying for it now, though, as my Spanish is a lot more clunky and not as fluent as my parents or siblings' pronunciations of certain words. If you heard my Spanish, it would be hard to believe that that was my first language and that I didn't start speaking English until I was in the first grade. I'm what many people in Mexico call a "Pocho", meaning a United States born Mexican who speaks predominantly English and who isn't in touch with the Mexican culture. In other words, "whitewashed". This is a term that has been labeled on me by many of my family members.

Now that I'm older, and understand all of the microaggressions that I have faced growing up, I'm a lot more confident in who I am. However, while I'm a lot more vocal about my cultural

roots and proudly proclaiming myself as Mexican, I still see a divide whenever I'm with family. The same family that still calls me "Pocho", even though my Spanish has gotten a lot better over the past couple years. Everytime I'm with relatives, be it uncles, aunts, or cousins, it always seems like I have to prove my "Mexicanness" to them. My accent, skin, and literal Mexican blood which consists of an Indigenous and Spanish mixture is not enough to prove my race to them. All because I was born in Oregon, while everyone else came from the Mexican state of Jalisco. Being Chicano, like myself, there is this constant fight and search for our identity. We're either too white for the brown kids, or too brown for the white kids. For some, it's easier to identify with one side more than the other, but for some, they're just left in the middle with no sense of belonging. In the 1960s, during a civil rights uprising in the United States, the word Chicano received a new and fired up life because of the individuals who felt like there was no place for them, these individuals being Chicanos, who created a group dedicated to Mexican/Chicano empowerment in the U.S. called "The Chicano Movement". This movement was especially visible in southern California, specifically in Los Angeles, where a majority of the population labeled themselves as "Chicano".

With the activism emerging from civil rights issues groups in the 1960s from the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement, another politically charged organization was born with the Chicano Movement. The movement was created with three goals in mind; the restoration of land, rights for farm workers, and education reforms.<sup>1</sup> While not fully organized just yet, the Chicano Movement first started to emerge in the 1940s with the Zoot Suit Riots that

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<sup>1</sup> Nittle, Nadra K. "Understanding the History and Goals of the Chicano Movement." ThoughtCo. Last modified July 22, 2009. <https://www.thoughtco.com/chicano-movement-brown-and-proud-2834583>.

were made in response to the murder of a Mexican young man and the detainment of seventeen innocent Mexican men who were thought to be suspects. The name “Chicano” is a term that refers to a person who was born in the United States, but has parents who were born in Mexico. “Chicano” was originally a derogatory or offensive label given to children of Mexican immigrants, but was later proclaimed by those same children who took pride in the label. As said by Ian F. Haney López in his article “Protest, Repression, and Race: Legal Violence and the Chicano Movement”, “‘Chicano’ became a common identification during the late 1960s, especially among those who rejected the prior assimilationist orientation of the Mexican community”.<sup>2</sup> Some Chicanos spell the name “Xicano”, which is a tribute to the Indigenous roots of the Mexican people who were colonized by the Spanish. The letter “X” is in reference to the Indigenous dialect of Nahuatl, which would make the “ch” sound in the pronunciations of certain words in the language.

The Chicano Movement first made headlines when Chicano radicals from the group began to question the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, an 1848 agreement between the United States and Mexico that ended the Mexican-American War, which resulted in the United States stealing territory from Mexico that currently comprises the southwestern United States. As quoted by famous playwright and Chicano activist Luis Valdéz, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us”. Chicano student activists began to demand the land back, claiming that it “constituted their ancestral homeland, also known as Aztlán.”<sup>3</sup> In 1966, Reies López Tijerina, a Chicano activist, led a three-day march in New Mexico from the city of Albuquerque to the state

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<sup>2</sup> López, Ian F. "Protest, Repression, and Race: Legal Violence and the Chicano Movement." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 150, no. 1 (2001), 28. doi:10.2307/3312916..

<sup>3</sup> Nittle, Nadra K. "Understanding the History and Goals of the Chicano Movement."

capital of Santa Fe, where he gave the governor a petition calling for the investigation of Mexican land grants, arguing that the United States annexation of Mexican land in the 1800s was illegal.<sup>4</sup> The Chicano Movement's most famous and recognized fight was the struggle to gain rights for farm workers. The United Farm Workers, launched by César Chavez and Dolores Huerta, the two unofficial faces of the Chicano Movement, was a union created in Delano, California, that attempted to sway grape growers to recognize the harsh working conditions and unfair pay of the Mexican workers who worked in the fields by creating a national boycott of grapes, beginning in 1965. In 1970, the grape growers recognized the fight of the field workers and agreed to sign agreements, recognizing the United Farm Workers as a union.<sup>5</sup> What really got the attention of the public, was when the Chicano Movement responded to the unfair education system that they were receiving in Los Angeles. This is where the suppression of dissent is more visible when looking at the Chicano Movement.

Throughout history, many of the most recognized civil rights movements and heavily active dissent organizations have come across many obstacles. With that being said, here is an examination of five different models of suppression that activists and organizations should be aware of whenever they go out and advocate for the change that they are seeking. The first model that I want to examine is from the book *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States* by Jules Boykoff where he explains the twelve modes of suppression that many activists and organizations face. The twelve modes of suppression are: (1) Direct Violence, (2) Harassment or Harassment Arrests, (3) Public Prosecutions and Hearings, (4) Employment Deprivation, (5) Surveillance, (6) Infiltration, "Badjacketing", and Agent Provocateurs, (7)

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<sup>4</sup> Nittle, Nadra K. "Understanding the History and Goals of the Chicano Movement."

<sup>5</sup> Nittle, Nadra K. "Understanding the History and Goals of the Chicano Movement."

“Black Propaganda”, (8) Extraordinary Laws or Rules, (9) Mass Media Manipulation, (10) Bi-level Demonization, (11) Mass Media Deprecation, and (12) Mass Media Underestimation, False Balance, and Disregard.<sup>6</sup> A couple of these modes of suppression have some overlap with the next model of suppression towards dissidents.

In the article by Patrick F. Gillham, Bob Edwards, and John A. Noakes titled “Strategic incapacitation and the policing of Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City, 2011”, the authors reveal three forms of suppression, or repertoires, that were being used on the activists protesting against Wall Street. The modes of suppression that were used on the activists were escalated force, this mode overlaps with the mode of “Direct Violence” that is brought up by Jules Boykoff as one of his twelve modes of suppression, negotiated management, and strategic incapacitation.<sup>7</sup> In the article “Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression” by Jennifer Earl, the author gives us an additional three types of suppression. The author introduces us to the “three key theoretical dimensions of repression”, which consists of identity of the repressive agent, the character of the repressive action, and whether the repressive action is observable.<sup>8</sup> In “A Typology of COINTELPRO Actions” by David Cunningham, the author introduces us to two models of suppression that the FBI would often use, being form and function.<sup>9</sup> And finally, in Michael Carley’s article titled “Defining Forms of Successful State Repression of Social Movement Organization: A Case Study of the FBI’s COINTELPRO and

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<sup>6</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. A K PressDistribution, 2007., 36.

<sup>7</sup> Gillham, Patrick F., Bob Edwards, and John A. Noakes. "Strategic incapacitation and the policing of Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City, 2011." August 2012., 2.

<sup>8</sup> Earl, Jennifer. "Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression." *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 1 (2003), 47. doi:10.1111/1467-9558.00175.

<sup>9</sup> Cunningham, David. "A Typology of COINTELPRO Actions." *There's Something Happening Here*, 2004, 234. doi:10.1525/california/9780520239975.003.0007.

the American Indian Movement”, the author gives three forms of repression that was being used towards the American Indian Movement. The three forms were direct assault, internal infiltration, and opinion control.<sup>10</sup>

From these five models of suppression, the theory that I will focus on the most with my analysis of the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles will be the twelve modes of suppression from Jules Boykoff’s *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. I am choosing this theory because a majority of the suppressions that the dissidents who were in the Chicano Movement faced are categorized in the twelve modes, ranging from the modes of direct violence, harassment or harassment arrests, employment deprivation, among others. With that being said, I want to further analyze the East Los Angeles school walkouts, where the Chicano Movement faced a significant amount of suppression.

In the Los Angeles County where East Los Angeles resided, where the largest population of Latinos residing in the United States called home, thousands of students from different high schools in the county held a walkout in response to the poor education system that was being put on to the Mexican students. As stated in the website United Way; “Mexican-American students went on to have a college graduation rate of ~0.1%, often due to lack of access to college-readiness courses and lack of support from teachers and administrators who encouraged the students to not even try for college.”<sup>11</sup> Sal Castro, a Mexican teacher at Lincoln High School in East Los Angeles, who worked to instill pride in his students’ Chicano heritage, supported and

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<sup>10</sup> Carley, Michael. "Defining Forms of Successful State Repression of Social Movement Organizations: A Case Study of the FBI’s COINTELPRO and the American Indian Movement." *Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* 20 (1997), 165-168.

<sup>11</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)." United Way of Greater Los Angeles. Last modified July 16, 2019. <https://www.unitedwayla.org/en/news-resources/blog/1968Walkouts/>.

encouraged the students in the region to organize a walkout in response to the lack of support for the Chicano Students.<sup>12</sup> This protest was later named the “Chicano Blowout”, as multiple high schools in the region, including Woodrow Wilson High School, Garfield High School, Abraham Lincoln High School, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Belmont High School, Venice High School, and Jefferson High School held walkouts consisting of an estimated 15,000 students partaking in the event.<sup>13</sup>

With the walkouts of the East Los Angeles high schools, the students, as well as other activists who joined the blowout, made clear what their demands were. According to Edward J. Escobar in his article titled; “The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971”, “the students demanded the same facilities, textbooks, and supplies as students in predominantly white schools; curriculum changes to include Chicano history and culture; more Mexican-American teachers, counselors, and administrators; and amnesty for students and teachers who participated in the walkouts.”<sup>14</sup> With six months of planning, coordinating the walkouts after school and on weekends between their school work and jobs, the students set an official date for the walkouts, being March 6th, 1968 at ten in the morning.<sup>15</sup> With the walkouts, two sub groups were born within the Chicano Movement; the Brown Berets, a group modeled after the Black Panthers, and the United Mexican American Students.<sup>16</sup> However, after the cancellation of a student-produced play, the students at Abraham

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<sup>12</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>13</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>14</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (1993), 1495. doi:10.2307/2080213.

<sup>15</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>16</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." 1495.

Lincoln High School created an impromptu walkout five days before the official date on March 1st.<sup>17</sup> Police officers took notice, where they responded with a negotiative management tactic, and escorted the activists onto a nearby park where they held rallies.<sup>18</sup> On the official day of the East Los Angeles walkouts, starting with the Theodore Roosevelt High School, police officers were not as kind. On the day of the walkouts, administrators barred the doors shut locked the gates of the schools in order to prevent the students from leaving the school grounds. The Los Angeles Police Department even had multiple cop cars parked around the school to make sure everyone stayed inside. The students retaliated by climbing over the gates and forcefully walking off the school grounds. Also, with the presence of the police officers and them trying to barricade them back into the school, the students were provoked to throw bottles at the passing police cars. The police retaliated by “attacking the demonstrators, peaceful or not, and arresting anyone who came to their aid.”<sup>19</sup> This was an obvious account of direct violence, which consists of beatings, bombings, shootings, and other forms of violence carried out by the state against dissident citizens.<sup>20</sup> At the time, there were two cases of police brutality against the students, both being at the Theodore Roosevelt High School. After the walkouts, tensions between the police officers of Los Angeles and the Chicano community got very high. Chicano newspapers and organizations became very aware of the police brutality and harassment that was being done to the Mexican people.

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<sup>17</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>18</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." 1495.

<sup>19</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." 1496.

<sup>20</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 37.

On March 28, 1968, more than 1,200 community members came together in front of the Los Angeles Board of Education to support the students as they presented their demands, but the board discredited them. Three days after the demands were denied, thirteen of the student walkout organizers, including the teacher, Sal Castro, were arrested for "conspiracy to disturb the peace."<sup>21</sup> They were later labeled the "East L.A. 13" after their arrests. This was an example of the mode of public prosecutions and hearings, which is when the state can land dissidents in jail or engulf them in legal hijinks that sidetrack their activism.<sup>22</sup> During their detainment in jail, multiple activists would protest outside of the Hall of Justice in Downtown Los Angeles, demanding the release of the activists. Eventually, twelve of the thirteen organizers were released. The only activist who was not released was Sal Castro.<sup>23</sup> He later lost his teaching position at Abraham Lincoln High School, due to his heavy involvement in the walkouts and for encouraging the students in the region to rebel against their schools, making that an example of employment deprivation, which is the threat or actual loss of employment due to one's political beliefs or activities.<sup>24</sup> However, thanks to "round-the-clock sit-ins at the L.A. School Board office"<sup>25</sup>, Castro was given his job back as a teacher.

The years following the walkouts, change was incredibly slow. There was little to nothing when it came to media coverage of the walkouts or of the aftermath following the events. With that being said, it was almost as if there was no issue at all concerning institutional biases in the eastern Los Angeles school systems. Slowly, throughout the 1970s and 80s, the

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<sup>21</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>22</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 61.

<sup>23</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

<sup>24</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 78.

<sup>25</sup> "The Walkout: How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)."

Chicano Blowout did bring awareness to the school boards in some way, being that the Los Angeles schools started to bring in more teachers of Mexican descent and more bi-lingual administrators and superintendents. However, dropout rates continued to increase throughout the schools in the region, with many of the Latinx students being “‘tracked’ into low-ability, remedial classes.”<sup>26</sup> Many of the students would be disqualified to attend or enroll in colleges due to the high failure of schools not being able to teach higher level skills that were essential to the students. A lot of the teachers and counselors even gave up on the students, telling them that they will only be working in not so glamorous jobs after high school. Katherine Trejo, the leader of United Way of Greater Los Angeles’ Young Civic Leaders Program (YCLP), experienced many of the negative profiling towards the students from the teachers, saying; “A lot of the kids at that time were being pushed to do just vocational work, being plumbers, carpenters, secretaries...not jobs that required them to go off and get a college education.”<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, the issues were not being improved with the media totally ignoring the existence of the protests all together.

While the school board rejected the demands of the students for a better education system and for more academic support to help them succeed in their futures, the Los Angeles Latino community also rejected the demands of the students. This was especially apparent when the newspaper *La Opinión* would portray the students as violent using the mode of mass media deprecation, which is when the mass media portray dissidents as ridiculous, bizarre, dangerous,

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<sup>26</sup> "40 Years After ‘The Walkout: A Turning Point in LAUSD Education Reform (Part 2 of 3).” United Way of Greater Los Angeles. Last modified March 27, 2018.

<https://www.unitedwayla.org/en/news-resources/blog/1968walkoutspart2/>.

<sup>27</sup> "40 Years After ‘The Walkout: A Turning Point in LAUSD Education Reform (Part 2 of 3).”

or otherwise out-of-step with mainstream USAmerica.<sup>28</sup> The newspaper, which at the time was a Spanish, independent newspaper, only highlighted the use of violence coming from the students towards the police officers. As said in the article “The Walkouts of 1968 and the Press” by Gabriel Lerner; “*La Opinión* demonstrated its rejection by ignoring the motives of the movement, focusing instead on a perceived element of violence allegedly exercised by high school students against the Los Angeles Police.”<sup>29</sup> With the mode of mass media underestimation, false balance, and disregard, which is when activists and the state come up with discrepant estimates of crowd sizes for protests, marches, and other activities, the mass media tend to accept the state’s lower numbers,<sup>30</sup> activism from the students was ignored completely. With such news outlets being present at the walkouts like CBS, NBC, and the L.A. Times, their news coverage was never focused on the police brutality, instead making the walkouts a one column story with no images of the police harassment.<sup>31</sup>

With harassment, being one of the modes of suppression, being when the state arrests activist for minor charges that are often false and sometimes based on obscure statutes that have remained on the books, buried, and dormant, but nevertheless vessels for legal persecution,<sup>32</sup> the Brown Berets would be under constant watch from the higher officials. One month after the walkouts, a reported sixty-five Brown Berets members were arrested "on trumped-up charges, anything to get them off the streets."<sup>33</sup> The LAPD further continued their harassment tactics by

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<sup>28</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 216.

<sup>29</sup> "The Walkouts of 1968 and the Press." Minutario | By Gabriel Lerner. Accessed January 17, 2020. <http://www.minutario.com/the-walkouts-of-1968-and-the-press-192>.

<sup>30</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 248.

<sup>31</sup> "The Walkouts of 1968 and the Press."

<sup>32</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 140.

<sup>33</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." 1497.

having multiple police officers report to Chicano heavy communities in order to make sure they were controlled. The Brown Berets became a favorite target for the LAPD after the walkouts, even having infiltrators within the group. In the mode of infiltration, where a person, usually a higher official, goes undercover, disguising himself as a member of an organization so that they can get the inside scoop on what is happening and being planned in the organization,<sup>34</sup> the LAPD sent officer Fernando Sumaya to infiltrate the Brown Berets, where he testified before a grand jury claiming that “Brown Berets had started fires at the Biltmore Hotel during a May 1969 speech by Gov. Ronald Reagan.”<sup>35</sup> The harassment towards the Brown Berets continued months after the walkouts, making them be constantly taunted by the LAPD.

In doing the research for the East Los Angeles walkouts, or Chicano Blowout, I read multiple online sources and academic articles that directly centered on the different forms and examples of suppression that the Chicano Movement and its sub-groups had to face in order to achieve their desired goals. I also looked back on the other readings that I have done involving the other civil rights movements that were going on in the 1960s, particularly with the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party.

In conclusion, the Chicano Movement has been such an influential part to many people. When going back to the suppressions that activists had to face in the city of Los Angeles, one cannot help to think how a city full of Chicano representation, be it the people, art, or businesses, once tried its best to suppress the people who were residing in the city way before it was even considered United States territory. With the Chicano Movement, the word “Chicano” became a

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<sup>34</sup> Boykoff, Jules. *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States*. 109.

<sup>35</sup> Escobar, Edward J. "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971." 1498.

label full of pride, the same way other Latinos hold pride with the names Bouricuan, Nuyorican, Charro, or maybe even Pocho, now that some are flipping the derogatory term as a positive label just like what they did with “Chicano”. While there is heavy suppression still towards the Chicano and Mexican people, take for example DACA and comments made by the current presidential administration, the pride of the people who identify as Mexican living in the United States still goes on.

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