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Chicano Revolt and Political Response: Grassroots Change in the South Texas Town of Pharr After the 1971 Riot

David Robles

University of Texas at El Paso, drobles8302@gmail.com

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CHICANO REVOLT AND POLITICAL RESPONSE: GRASSROOTS CHANGE
IN THE SOUTH TEXAS TOWN OF PHARR AFTER THE 1971 RIOT

DAVID ROBLES

Doctoral Program in Borderlands History

APPROVED:

Yolanda Chávez Leyva, Ph.D., Chair

Jeffrey Shepherd, Ph.D.

Charles Martin, Ph.D.

Guillermina Gina Núñez-Mchiri, Ph.D.

Albert Rodriguez, Ph.D.

Charles Ambler, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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2018

Dedication

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the love and support of my wife Maria, the emotional support from my father Juan and brother Abram, and the memory of my mother Andrea (1940-2011)—a strong woman who taught me to never give up.

CHICANO REVOLT AND POLITICAL RESPONSE: GRASSROOTS CHANGE
IN THE SOUTH TEXAS TOWN OF PHARR AFTER THE 1971 RIOT

by

DAVID ROBLES, A.A., B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

“Chicano Revolt and Political Response: Grassroots Change in the South Texas Town of Pharr After the 1971 Riot,” is a study that focuses on the history of Pharr and how one event in the early 1970s, the riot, prompted change for citizens living in the city. Since the city’s founding in the early twentieth century, Anglos and ethnic Mexicans were segregated from one another, and those in power used the railroad tracks as the physical color line to keep both groups separated. Months before the riot, ethnic Mexicans living in the *barrios* located on the north side of the city attempted to bring attention to their horrid living conditions as well as allegations of police brutality by petitioning the mayor and city commissioners to act. However, the inaction of the local leaders strained relations between them and the people of in the barrios. This inaction, along with the death of an innocent bystander, had a role on why the riot occurred and the changes that followed in the weeks, months, and years after.

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Introduction

Born and raised in McAllen Texas, a city located in the Southern region known as the Rio Grande Valley, I spent most of my childhood hanging out with the kids from my *barrio*, playing football, and attending underfunded schools in the south side of the city during the late 1980s and 1990s. I was aware that my family's economic situation was not the best to say the least, but my parents provided us with what they could. Regardless of the situation, I was a happy kid who did not really care about the "us versus them" mentality because all my friends and their families were like mine—poor, struggling, and working for a living. It was not until the late 1990s that I saw and experienced racism and everything that goes with it when our *barrio* middle school traveled to the north side of town to participate in sports events. Upper- and middle-class parents would belittle our parents because of the vehicles they drove, the clothes they wore, and their ability, or lack thereof, to speak English. Their children would call us all criminals, wetbacks, and other unsavory names that I choose not to repeat. We responded to their insults with actions on the field and the court, but it would always end the same way by them saying, "Well, at least we are not poor."

These experiences only intensified as I transitioned from middle school to high school. The school district lines in McAllen were redrawn a few years prior and forced many *barrio* kids from the south side to attend the "rich" high school where students had better and expensive cars than the teachers. One obvious indicator that students were separated by social class was the school's cafeterias. This particular high school had two, one located on the bottom of the stairs and another on top the stairs divided by the main hallway. The top cafeteria was explicitly for students whose parents were well off and the bottom was for students whose parents weren't well off and who received free lunch. At times, the Anglo teachers and administrators also

enforced these divisions during the lunch break by questioning those of us from the bottom cafeteria attempting to go to the top one to join friends or simply buy a slice of pizza that was being sold in that cafeteria. There were other instances of overt racism, but many of us focused on graduating just to get out.

These experiences demonstrate the injustices many of us from the barrios faced in our everyday lives at the turn of the millennium. After three years of community college and finally transferring to the local university, I decided to major in Mexican-American Heritage because my experiences in high school. All the courses I took to complete my degree addressed, in some form or fashion, most of my experiences from high school. These courses also focused on Chicano history and activism, social work, and cultural histories.

My scholarly research is grounded on my lived experiences that have influenced me to pursue topics regarding racial, social, political, and economic inequality in the Valley. Unknown to me at the time, these experiences shaped me not only as a Chicano historian from the Texas-Mexico borderlands, but also as an academic whose teaching methods revolve around local histories and incorporates them into the larger U.S. History narrative. Regarding the idea that one's environment influences historians, scholar and author of "What is History?," Edward Hallet Carr, said it best:

the historian, then, is an individual human being. Like other individuals, he is also a social phenomenon, both the product and the conscious or unconscious spokesman of the society to which he belongs; it is this capacity that he approaches the facts of the historical past.¹

It is because of these experiences that I immersed myself in studying the Chicano movement in the Rio Grande Valley and the most dramatic incident in their history—the Pharr Riot. Though I am not personally tied to the event itself, I must note that my experiences, though very different,

¹Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1961), 42.

illustrates how the railroad was used to divide Anglos and well of ethnic Mexicans from lower class ethnic Mexicans. Unlike Pharr, McAllen was opposite since lower class ethnic Mexicans live in the barrios located on the south side and Anglos and well of ethnic Mexicans live on the north side. These divisions are still notable today and I believe that the social, political, and economic issues that led to riot are still relevant today across the Rio Grande Valley.

The Pharr Riot occurred on Saturday night, February 6, 1971. Prior to the incident, the ethnic Mexican² community living on the north side of the city was ostracized by Anglos and the Anglo-run city government since the city's founding in the early twentieth century. For over half a century, ethnic Mexicans in Pharr, Texas and the entire South Texas region were denied social, political, and racial equality. It was not until the rise of the farm worker movement and Chicano movement of the 1960s that influenced the ideas for change and social justice in the Rio Grande Valley. With the Mellon Strike in Starr County, the student walkouts at Edcouch-Elsa High School, the rise of Chicano activism at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, and the establishment of the first Chicano College, *Jacinto Treviño*, in Mercedes that Chicano ideology gained a foothold in the region.

By the late 1960s, one activist involved in Chicano organizing as a member of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in Kingsville had moved to Pharr after being ostracized by the Anglos in his community. Efraín Fernández moved to the city since he gained employment with the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) organization, and in conjunction with local MAYO chapter he began to organize voting drives in the ethnic Mexican

²I use the term "ethnic Mexican" to encompass Mexicanos, México Tejanos, and Mexican Americans. There are a few times in the second chapter that I use the term "Mexican-American" to illustrate how ethnic Mexicans born in the United States labeled themselves after the creation of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) after 1929. In addition, I only use the terms "Latin/Latino," and "Hispanic" when quoting individuals who use those terms to describe people of Mexican descent. Finally, I use the term "Chicano/Chicana/o" to describe those involved in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and self-identify as so.

community. Within the year, he began to receive various complaints from the citizens living in north Pharr about their horrid living conditions and the city's reluctance to address them.

Fernández took it upon himself to organize the local people and confronted city officials about living inequalities that people living on the north side of the city were experiencing. By late 1970, Fernández had become aware of various allegations of police brutality that were occurring in the city of Pharr. Along with local activists, Fernández called for the resignations of the police chief, one sergeant, and one patrol officer as well as the mayor. For months, their petitions fell on deaf ears, so Fernández and local activists decided to stage a day long picket. This picket started at city hall in the morning and then continued outside the police station in the afternoon. What would happen next would change the history of Pharr, Texas.

After a day of peaceful protests by two dozen citizens, customers from nearby taverns joined the protests in the early evening. The crowd size grew into the hundreds, and violence between the police and these two groups ensued right after sunset. As the crowd grew in size, so did the tensions. By this point, accounts on how the riot started are blurred as protesters accused the police of starting it while the police blamed the people. With the growing rowdiness of the crowd, police chief Alfredo Ramirez requested the assistance of the Pharr Fire Department, and two fire trucks were sent to the police department. Claiming that the protesters threw rocks first, chief Ramirez ordered that the fire department to use its hoses on the crowd. Negating the accusation, many protesters affirmed that it was the use of the water hoses that prompted the rock throwing response by the people. For four hours, violence filled the main street of Pharr as police officers and protesters fought. The situation became so dire and out of control that the Pharr Police Department requested assistance from state, county, and the neighboring cities' law-enforcement officers.

As described in the *The Monitor* on Sunday February 7, 1971, the streets were filled with rocks, broken glass bottles, and tear gas canisters as the smoke filled the street. There were also accounts of police officers firing their weapons up in the air. It was in that moment that one innocent bystander was struck in the head by a bullet that ricocheted off a storm gutter. By midnight, police officers were able to regain order on the streets, and as the calm began to settle, news of the death of this innocent bystander began to circulate.

My dissertation is not the first study of the Pharr Riot, since two previous master theses have been written about it. “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement,” by Edward Francis Wallace Jr., and “Finally Heard: A Rhetorical Look at the 1971 Pharr Riot,” by Christina Garza, were defended and submitted in 2008 at the University of Texas Pan-American in Edinburg.³ Both of these master theses detail why and how the Pharr Riot started by incorporating various oral histories, newspaper articles, and other primary sources. While my study also focuses on the reasons why and how the riot started, I go beyond the time frame of these two theses by illustrating how the city’s founding in the early twentieth century imposed a racially segregated community that led to the Pharr Riot and events that ensued afterwards. Furthermore, my dissertation also focuses on the events that happened after the riot that created social, political, and economic change that occurred years after.

I argue in my dissertation that the death of this innocent bystander, Alfonso Loredó “Poncho” Flores, was the catalyst for social, political, and economic change that occurred in Pharr, Texas in the months and years after the riot. I propose four questions in my research and

³See Edward Francis Wallace Jr., “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement” (master’s thesis, the University of Texas Pan American, 2008); Christina Garza, “Finally Heard: A Rhetorical Look at the 1971 Pharr Riot.” master’s thesis, University of Texas Pan-American, 2008. The University of Texas Pan-American was combined with the University of Texas at Brownsville in 2013 to create the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, “the first major public university of the 21st century” according to the school’s webpage.

the answers provided will aide in proving my argument. First, what social, political, and economic factors led to the uprising of poor ethnic Mexicans in the City of Pharr? Second, how did previous Chicano and labor movements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley influence (or not) the movement in Pharr and were they connected? Third, what were the effects of the grassroots movement that occurred prior to the riot and during A.C. Jaime's bid for mayor and his tenure in office? Finally, what were the changes that the ethnic community in the city of Pharr experienced in the months, years, and decade after the riot positive or negative?

In chapter one, I give a brief history of the Rio Grande Valley and how it was developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Anglo investors, land speculators, and farmers. Though this South Texas region became part of the United States in 1848 after the U.S.'s war of aggression against Mexico, it maintained its Mexican cultural identity for several decades after the war according to historian Omar S. Valerio-Jimenez. In the latter chapters of his book, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands*, Valerio-Jimenez illustrates that there were Anglo attempts to Americanize the region after 1848.⁴ However, this attempt was resisted by ethnic Mexicans as the dominant language was still Spanish, the peso was the currency of choice, Mexican cultural practices were maintained (even though Anglos placed restrictions), and ethnic Mexicans still had control of politics and the economy. It was not until the turn of the century and construction of the railroad that Anglos gained a foothold in the region.

As soon as the railroad was established in 1904, various land and irrigation companies were formed by Anglo investors from the South and the Midwestern part of the United States and promoted the area as a region full of opportunities for commercial farming. The economy

⁴See Chapter four, "Bandidos or Citizens? Everyday Forms of Resistance to Political and Legal Changes" in Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

soon changed from a ranching to a commercial farming and led to the displacement of ethnic Mexicans from power. It is during the early twentieth century that Anglos created a society in which ethnic Mexicans and other non-whites became second class citizens. In the latter part of this chapter, I focus on the founding of the city of Pharr and how Anglos segregated themselves from non-whites by using the railroad tracks as a physical color line. The main objective of this chapter is to illustrate how Anglos gained control of the region in the early twentieth century and how social, political and economic inequalities that were established set the stage for the social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s in *el Valle*—mainly Pharr.⁵

In my second chapter, I present the idea that attempts for social, political and economic equality before the riot in Pharr did not occur in a vacuum. Instead, I make the case that Chicano and labor movements that occurred in the late 1960s in South Texas were interconnected with one another and influenced the fight for equality in Pharr. Prior to the arrival of Chicano activism in South Texas, farm laborers in Starr County went on strike against local growers in 1966. Known as the Melon Strike that occurred in Rio Grande City, this farmworker's movement did more than just fight for better working conditions and pay. The Mellon Strike and its outcomes also influenced social activists in the region and created a new notion of consciousness for the ethnic Mexican community. Yet the 1966 Melon Strike and farmworker march to Austin was plagued with turmoil as farmworker activist Tony Orendain was sent to Rio Grande City by Cesar Chávez to take over the movement and replace the original organizer, Eugene Nelson. Ideas of social and political equality became rampant in the local schools as

⁵Though there were middle class ethnic Mexicans living in the city, mainly in the south side of the railroad tracks, I did not find many sources detailing their influence or involvement in the city prior to the riot. At times, some are referenced as being part of the city commission or owning businesses. It is not until after the riot that we see the influence of middle class ethnic Mexicans to some extent, but there is insufficient evidence to properly illustrate how much influence they had before the riot.

organizations such MAYO gained a foothold in the South Texas area in the late 1960s and contributed to demonstrations such as the Edcouch-Elsa Student Walkouts of 1968.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Texas Chicano leaders such as Carlos Guerra, José Ángel Gutiérrez, and Ramsey Muñiz organized recruitment efforts at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, which is located 110 miles north of Pharr. These three individuals met with various Chicano students at the campus to discuss various issues regarding social and political inequality on their campus, city, region, and state. These new recruits then became effective leaders themselves as they organized at the university and the city of Kingsville to fight for social justice. Inspired by the 1966 Mellon Strike and the 1968 student walkout in Edcouch-Elsa, these new organizers staged their own walkouts in Kingsville and protested decades-old beliefs of racial and political segregation in the city. These Chicano activists, many whom were sociology majors, were made aware of these injustices not only by prominent Chicano leaders, but also by liberal Anglo professors who made them conscious of the struggles occurring in South Texas because of the 1966 Mellon march. After their efforts in Kingsville, these new activists left the city and headed to border towns along the Texas-Mexico border to continue their work.

In chapter three, I present how Efraín Fernández's arrival in the city of Pharr to work for VISTA prompted new hope for ethnic Mexicans living in the north side of town. By the turn of the decade (1969-1970), Pharr was still a small city with an estimated population of 15,829.⁶ I illustrate how his involvement in the fight for social justice in the city began a year before the riot as he attempted to make the local government in Pharr aware and accountable for the lack of city services in the barrios and allegations of police brutality. This is crucial because it demonstrates that there were deeper issues that were occurring and culminated into the riot. The

⁶*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed September 11, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

latter part of the chapter illustrates how the riot started, how it was quelled, and the unfortunate realization of the death of an innocent bystander. I use various primary sources to detail the timeline of events of the night of February 6, 1971, including oral histories, newspapers, personal written accounts, and various published and unpublished documents. Together, these primary sources allow for an in-depth description from and to the riot.

The fourth chapter of my dissertation focuses on the events that occurred in Pharr weeks and months after the riot. I illustrate in this chapter how the events on the night of February 6, 1971, had unintended consequences as Anglo and ethnic Mexican business owners came into the fray when they questioned the mayor's tactics in addressing the demands of local activists and their response to protests prior to the riot. These business owners were formed into two community groups that facilitated communication between local activists and local government officials and sided with former most of the times. Maria Magallan created an all-women group called "Women United" which focused on picketing in front of the police station and at the mayor and police chief's homes, asking for their resignations. For that entire year, local activists, the Women United group, and both citizen groups focused on correcting the issues that led to the riot. Fernández was still involved but took a smaller role for unknown reasons. While this was occurring, officials went on the offensive and pursued legal action against the leaders of the movement and others who were arrested the night of the riot. Mayor Bowe attempted to gain control of the situation, but by the early months of 1972, the city leadership crumbled as the mayor, and his commissioners resigned due to internal and external pressures.

In chapter five, I present to the reader how the mayor and his commissioners' resignations presented local activists and community organizations the opportunity to elect a mayor that would adhere to their agenda. These resignations left these city offices open and

created a power struggle between activists and long-time city employee, Joe Pettita, in Pharr's 1972 special election. The individual that was chosen by local activists and community organizations to run for mayor against Pettita was a local CPA by the name of A.C. Jaime. This individual applied grassroots campaigning to challenge boss politics culture that had been in place in Pharr since the early twentieth century. Historian Evan Anders explains that boss politics (or a political boss) centralizes government authority by "filling city offices with men willing to follow his orders."⁷ I give importance to this election because of the mere fact that Jaime's use of a grassroots platform not only changed the form of campaigning for office in Pharr, but it also gave a voice to many individuals in the barrios who had been ignored for decades. Going house to house, neighborhood by neighborhood, Jaime created a new campaigning system that had not been seen in the city before. Displaying a tenacity and willingness to not give up even when he was told he was going to lose, Jaime eventually won the election because of his campaign tactics, making him the first Mexican-American mayor in Pharr's history.

In the final chapter, I continue my discussion on Jaime and his importance in Pharr's history after the riot. This time, however, I focus on the political, social, and economic changes that he proposed and carried out during his tenure as mayor from 1972 to 1978. Even though he had achieved a great feat in becoming the first Mexican-American mayor in Pharr by overcoming the dirty tactics of boss politics, Jaime still had to struggle against this political ideology as he tried to clean up and improve the city. He established a city-manager form of government, provided and updated city services in the north side of town, closed various *cantinas* that contributed to the crime in the area, and closed theatres that were owned by the

⁷Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), vii.

criminal element. Not only did he address these issues during his tenure as mayor, Jaime also brought in economic opportunity to the city and bridged the gap between the city government and the ethnic Mexican community. Overall, the new mayor achieved many great things as mayor of Pharr during the 1970s. He, along with other local activists who convinced him to run for office, are the unsung heroes of the changes that occurred after the riot. Many of the political, social, and economic changes that were enacted during his tenure of mayor can still be seen today.

Overall, this study is a narrative about a local history that is interconnected with regional, state, and national movements occurring at the time. Geographically, the scope of this study is largely limited to the city of Pharr and the surrounding areas, but the concepts of social and political change during the mid-1960s to 1970s are relatively the same throughout the Southwest.⁸ Historian David Montejano explains in *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981*, that San Antonio, compared to other urban areas in the United States of the same size and “complex race-class order” at the time, experienced similar political and social changes. If one was to change the “accents and skin color” of the political actors in these urban areas, then “the following history becomes one of the many movement narratives of social change that shook nearly all the major urban areas of the country during the time.”⁹ Moreover, the movements that occurred in the South and Southwest during this era “took down the last legal-political vestiges of Jim Crow segregation,” and like Montejano’s local study (with

⁸David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 1. Read introduction for a more detailed overview.

⁹*Ibid.* Pharr was not the same size and did not have the same population as San Antonio and other “mid-size” urban areas during this era. In fact, Pharr had a population of 15,829 while San Antonio had a population of 654,153 in 1970.

a few differences of course), my dissertation also elucidates how it was part of the larger national political transformation.¹⁰

As I stated earlier in the introduction, my dissertation over the Pharr Riot is not the first of its kind as two theses were writing about the event in 2008. However, unlike Wallace's "The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement," and Garza's "Finally Heard: A Rhetorical Look at the 1971 Pharr Riot," my dissertation expands our understanding of why the riot occurred, what social, political, and economic changes occurred years after, and historical importance of it. Unlike the two previous authors, my main goal as a Chicana/o historian was to go beyond the parameters of Chicana/o History periodization in my work. What I mean by Chicana/o History periodization is that many Chicana/o histories usually focus on a Chicana/o event from the 1960s and 1970s, and do not go beyond 1975—the year Chicana/o activism "ended." Originally, I envisioned my study of the effects of the Pharr riot to end in the year 2000, but unfortunately, time and the lack of primary sources did not allow me to do so. Instead, I end my study in 1980 and acknowledge that there is still room for further research on this topic.

Chicana/o historiography is still a relatively new field, as it was only formally recognized by the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians in the 1990s.¹¹ Regardless of this acceptance, many historians still question the field's legitimacy since it is primarily regional and focused on the Southwest.¹² So why is Chicana/o historiography still not fully recognized even though ethnic Mexicans have one of the oldest histories in the United States? According to historian Antonio Ríos-Bustamante from the University of Wyoming, this

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹ Antonio Ríos-Bustamante, "A General Survey of Chicano(a) Historiography," *Julian Samora Research Institute*, Occasional Paper No. 25 (January 2000): 1.

¹²*Ibid.*

was due in part because society at large, including scholars, viewed Mexican-Americans as an immigrant group with no history prior to the twentieth century. In addition, the perpetuation of the “Spanish Myth” that negated the ethnic Mexican presence in the Southwest prior to 1848 was also a factor.¹³ The creation of the Spanish Borderlands field in the early twentieth century by historian Henry E. Bolton exemplified the idea of the Spanish Myth. Bolton’s school of study, Old Mission History, perpetuated the notion that the Spanish and the mission institution were “benevolent” and only wanted to convert the natives to Christianity and “civilize” them.¹⁴ This school of thought clearly denied the existence and contributions of mestizo peoples in the Southwest and only focused on a top-bottom approach of Spain’s rule in the Americas.

By the mid-twentieth century, Bolton’s historical Spanish frontier vision “bumped up against alternative border approaches.”¹⁵ In the 1930s, Carlos E. Castañeda and George I. Sánchez, Bolton’s contemporaries, wrote histories of ethnic Mexican culture and identity along the borderland.¹⁶ Historians Samuel Truett and Elliot Young explain that these histories took place in the borderlands and referenced the Spanish frontier, but they focused less on the frontier process and more on the ethnic Mexican communities in the U.S. side of the border. By the 1950s, scholars such as Carey McWilliams and Paredes followed in the steps of Castañeda and Sánchez.

McWilliams’ 1949 book, *North from Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States*, illustrates the Mexican-American experience in the U.S. Southwest and how Spanish speaking people acquired a political space. He explains that Spanish speaking people in the

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Herbert E. Bolton, “The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish-American Colonies,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol 23, no. 1, 44.

¹⁵Samuel Truett and Elliot Young, “Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands” in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliot Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Southwest were a heterogeneous group, but no matter the differences between them, “the sense of cleavage or opposition to the Anglos has always been an important factor in their lives and it is this feeling which gives cohesion to the group.”¹⁷ This cohesion along with similar history and experience created their group identity.¹⁸ McWilliams’ *North from Mexico* is a major contribution to not only to borderlands historiography but also Chicana/o historiography is the incorporation of Spanish-speaking people to the U.S. narrative and the documentation that they are not “interlopers or immigrants but indigenous people” of the Southwest.¹⁹ He also asserts that because of the U.S. conquest of the Southwest, ethnic Mexicans “resent and will always resent, any designation which implies a hyphenated relationship to their native environment,” especially if it is applied by Anglo Americans who are the interlopers and immigrants.²⁰

Paredes’ 1958 *“With His Pistol in his Hand,” a Border Ballad and its Hero* is another work that influenced and marked a major turning point for borderland and Chicana/o studies. Paredes’ folklore study of Mexican border ballads influenced borderland scholars to use cultural materials, such as these border ballads, to reevaluate, recover, and reinterpret the history of ethnic Mexicans in the Rio Grande Valley. The use of folklore, especially border ballads, to retell the history of the region became an important development in the scholarship as these ballads created a form of oral histories for ethnic Mexicans. These border ballads preserved the history of the region as well as told of violence that occurred in the region after the Texas Revolution, the annexation of Texas, the incorporation of the Nueces-Rio Grande portion of

¹⁷Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1968), 8.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰*Ibid.*

South Texas and the creation of border.²¹ Paredes explains that the end result of the American conquest of South Texas was bitterness, and oppression which residents dealt with through song.²² The influence of "*With His Pistol in his Hand*" had was that it promoted using folklore and other cultural artifacts to understand the history of ethnic Mexicans along the border and directed attention to the violence, oppression, and discrimination they faced after 1848 at the hands of Anglos. In short, this book's contribution to borderlands history allowed Chicano historians to reconstruct the history of the South Texas borderlands through social history.

By the 1960s and 1970s, a new cohort of Chicano scholars shifted the borderlands scholarship "onto a new political ground."²³ Scholars such as Rodolfo Acuña, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, Albert Camarillo, and others focused "on the historical foundations of racism, discrimination, and exploitation, while underscoring the processes of identity and community formation."²⁴ According to Camarillo, the foundations of early Chicana/o historiography were based on new approaches borrowed from other "new histories such as labor, women, western, urban, immigration, and social as well as social science theories."²⁵ Chicana/o literature at the time was focused on "bottom-up approaches, working-class formations, racialized urban experiences, and group identities shaped by race, ethnic/cultural, and class factors."²⁶

Acuña's 1972 book, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle toward Liberation*, fills in the gaps in the traditional U.S. historical narrative. He presents the history of the Southwest as the story of native people who were exploited by conquest rather than the history of a foreign

²¹ Américo Paredes, *With his Pistol in his Hand": A Border Ballad and its Hero* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1958), 243.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Truett and Young, "Making Transnational History," 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁵ Albert M. Camarillo, "Looking Back on Chicano History: A Generational Perspective," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Nov. 2013), 500, accessed 12/18/2017 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr.2013.82.4.496>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

territory. As part of the new cohort of Chicano scholars in the 1970s, Acuña illustrates how Anglo Americans and U.S. institutions exploited labor, stole land from ethnic Mexicans, and became the dominating force in the Southwest by using law enforcement, the courts, and by playing off minorities against one another. *Occupied America* was one of the first Chicano history books written during *el movimiento* and addressed various issues that were pertinent during the time period.

Like Acuña's *Occupied America*, Camarillo's 1979 book, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*, focuses on the process of identity and community formation in southern California and also illustrates the historical foundations of racism, discrimination, and exploitation. He argues that the introduction of American capitalism in Southern California after the U.S.-Mexico War "locked" ethnic Mexicans into a status of unskilled/semiskilled working class that was at the bottom of the occupational structure.²⁷ Yet, the most important contribution made by *Chicanos in a Changing Society* is that it traces the development of socioeconomic and political relations between ethnic Mexicans and Anglos in the latter part of the nineteenth century that established racial, discriminatory, and exploitative institutions that affected *Mexicanos* well into the twentieth century. Camarillo provides a Chicano study of the *barrios* in southern California from the bottom up perspective.²⁸

Another scholar whose work also illustrates how American capitalism affected the borderland, specifically the city of El Paso, Texas, and its sister city on the Mexican side, Ciudad Juárez, is Oscar J. Martinez. In his 1978 book, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848*, Martinez looks at the historical development of borderlands region and border cities. Focusing

²⁷Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in A Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 4.

²⁸*Ibid.*

on Ciudad Juárez, he focuses on “the dynamics of trade in the context of an international boundary, with emphasis on the transborder commercial forces that have shaped the growth and development” of the city.²⁹ Furthermore, Martinez illustrates that Juárez’s proximity to the “highly industrialized” country to the north and its remoteness from Mexico’s centers of production have led the city to become vulnerable to external conditions, “which brought alternating cycles of prosperity and depression since the town became an international port in 1848.”³⁰

Chicana/o scholars embraced “a historiographical legacy” that had nothing to do with Bolton and the Spanish borderlands and created their own historical narratives that rejected the institutionalized “white” stories of Spanish colonists.³¹ Instead, Chicana/o scholars focused on the long-neglected past of the *mestizo*. Truett and Young explain that Chicana/o scholars took little to no interest in Bolton and his Spanish frontier work, since his narrative ended before the creation of actual border.³² “It was this later borderlands, mapped by force of conquest over Mexican homelands, that Chicano scholars took as their relevant tradition.”³³ Chicanos in the 1970s stayed away from writing about the “Spanish-American” culture and wrote more about radical stories centered on the political, economic, and social subordination that ethnic Mexicans lived under since 1848.³⁴

Truett and Young explain that by the 1980s Chicana/o scholars and other non-Chicano scholars leavened their stories through the concept of social history. This placed the ethnic Mexican populations in the Southwest “within a broader history of ethnic, race, class, gender,

²⁹Oscar J. Martinez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1975), 7.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Truett and Young, “Making Transnational History,” 4.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

and power relations.”³⁵ Mario T. García’s 1981 book *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* illustrates that Mexican immigration into El Paso in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was rooted in American economic development associated with the growth and development of American capitalism in El Paso.³⁶ Contributing to the concept of social history, García illuminates the inferior housing, school segregation, and the exploitation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans by Anglos that shaped their experience in the city. Overall, García asserts that “class, racial, and cultural divisions are rooted in the particular economic development of El Paso and the surrounding country.”³⁷ The racial oppression ethnic Mexicans experienced due to economics in the borderlands, especially in Texas, was expanded on by David Montejano in the late 1980s. His 1987 book, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, illustrates how American capitalism and economy replaced the Mexican economy after the Texas Revolution, the U.S.-Mexico War, and at the turn of the century. Montejano argues that the economic development in Texas from a “precapitalist” agrarian society into “modern” commercial orders was responsible for how the relationships between Texas Anglos, Tejanos, and Mexicans came to be.³⁸

Chicano scholars interconnected identity and community formation in ethnic Mexican society with the incorporation of U.S. capitalism and economy in the borderlands after the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. However, by the late 1980s feminist scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa conceptualized how gender construction and patriarchy impacted the political, social and cultural aspect of society. Anzaldúa’s 1987 *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* examines how

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 2.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), 5.

Mexican women in the borderlands shared the inequality of their male counterparts but faced more degradation and exploitation. Anzaldúa developed Borderlands Theory, which is an expansion of W.E.B. Dubois' idea of double consciousness, and used the experiences of Chicanas from South Texas to further her theorizing.³⁹ Anzaldúa views the border between Mexico and the United States as a metaphor “for all types of crossings—between geopolitical boundaries, sexual transgressions, social dislocations, and the crossings necessary to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts.”⁴⁰ Also, she also sees the border as a geographical area where there is a mixture of two cultures, or hybridity as she calls it, which is neither fully American nor Mexican. Anzaldúa argues “that living in the borderlands creates a third space between cultures and social systems,” and the mixing (hybridity) that she explains is central to life along the U.S.-Mexico border expresses “the actual construction of *Borderlands*.”⁴¹ Through poetry Anzaldúa develops a new identity for Mexican women based on hybridity, multiplicity and contradictions, calling it the New Mestiza. She constructs a history beyond colonialism to develop a narrative based on people's conceptions of themselves, imaginary understanding, and how people construct who they are.

In the late 1980s, many Chicanas began to write women-centered histories influenced by anthropologist Adelaida Del Castillo's article, “Malintzín Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into A New Perspective.” Historian Ernesto Chávez explains that Del Castillo recast La Malinche/Doña Marina as the “proto-Chicana” and showed that, rather than a traitor, she was an inspiration and role model for Chicanas. Del Castillo asserts that Doña Marina was the reason for the existence

³⁹Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 5.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 6

⁴¹*Ibid.*

of the mestizo nation and that any attacks against her defamed Chicanas.⁴² New Chicana historians such as Cynthia Orozco followed this trajectory in her work, *La Red/The Net*, and argued that Chicano historians needed to ask new questions that looked at women's experiences.⁴³ Other Chicana historians who emerged in the late 1980s that examined the past through the lenses of race and gender were Deena González, Emma Pérez, Antonia Castañeda, and Vicki Ruiz—all who developed this field in Chicana/o historiography.⁴⁴ Chávez states that with the publication of Ruiz's book, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, Chicana history "came into its own." Her book legitimized Chicana history as it originated from the changes that occurred in women's history and female labor activism in the 1970s.⁴⁵

The work of Chicana historians in the late 1980s ushered in a postmodern Mexican-American history as they shattered "the universal male subject" and fractured the notions of community well into the 1990s.⁴⁶ Authors such as Ramón Gutiérrez, George J. Sánchez, David G. Gutiérrez and others presented histories that "decentered the working-class subject and used cultural theory to understand the past."⁴⁷ For example, Ramón Gutiérrez explains that his book, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*, is a history of the "complex web of interactions between men and women, young and old, rich and poor, slave and free, Spaniard and Indian, all of whom fundamentally

⁴²Adelaida Del Castillo, "Malitzin Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective," in *Latina Issues: Fragments of Historia(ella) (Herstory)*, ed. Antoinette Sedillo López (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 125.

⁴³Ernesto Chávez, "Chicano/a History: Its Origins, Purpose, and Future," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Nov. 2013) 511, accessed 12/18/2017 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr.2013.82.4.505>

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 512.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

depended on the other for their own self-determination.”⁴⁸ By focusing his work on the Spanish’s attack on Pueblo Indian sexual practices, and bodily regulations, Gutiérrez places these two issues within Chicana/o history.⁴⁹

While he focused his research on the unequal marriage structure in New Mexico that negatively affected the Pueblo Indians, Gutiérrez also hints at how the detribalization of Native peoples allows us to rethink the origins of ethnic Mexicans.⁵⁰ Instead of looking at Mexico as the originating place of the Mexican-Americans/Chicana/os, “Gutiérrez turned our gaze toward the Southwest and brought complexity to Chicanos’ relationship with their indigenous heritage, suggesting that perhaps Mexican Americans were better viewed as descendants of *genízaros*, thus bringing a new nuance to Latino identity.”⁵¹

George J. Sánchez’s *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, is another book that examines identity, but in Southern California. Sánchez does not focus on the structures of oppression in his study, but instead he concentrates on ethnic Mexican’s agency and pursuit to acculturate in Los Angeles.⁵² His research presented Chicana/os as “quintessential postmodern subjects” who existed in two worlds.⁵³ The city of Los Angeles itself, according to Sánchez, was the force that influenced the transformation of Mexicans into Mexican-Americans and not the political or legal system, workplace, or patriarchy.⁵⁴

⁴⁸Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), xvii-xviii.

⁴⁹Chávez, “Chicano/a History,” 512.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 513.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*, 514.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

Chávez states that literature published since 2000 still continue to focus on the culture theory aspect of Chicana/o historiography, but these new authors started focusing on the forces that racialized ethnic Mexicans and the spaces they occurred since the United States' war of aggression against Mexico. The development of the study of whiteness in the late 1990s and early 2000s such as Neil Foley's *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, and Ian Haney-López's *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, influenced Chicana/o historians to focus on the issue of ethnic Mexicans as a race.⁵⁵ Foley discusses the concepts of race, culture, and ethnicity that were brought together in the "tri-racial borderlands" of cotton country in central Texas.⁵⁶ By doing so, Foley is able to present that the scourge of the South and the nation was the concept of whiteness itself. Haney-López argues that the law constructs race at every level in the United States by "changing the physical features borne by the people in the country, shaping the social meanings that define races, and rendering concrete the privileges and disadvantages justified by racial ideology."⁵⁷ In short, *White by Law* addresses the formal legal construction of race since the law directly engages racial definitions through legislation or adjudication.⁵⁸

Influenced by the study of whiteness, scholars such as Laura Gómez, and Kelly Lytle Hernández examine the racialization of Mexicans through law. Gómez's *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* is a legal study of the racialization of Mexican Americans in New Mexico after the U.S.'s war of aggression against Mexico. By doing so,

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Alicia Cruz, review of Neil Foley's "The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 2000), 115, accessed 12-19-2017 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27502559>; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997)

⁵⁷Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), xv.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

Gómez presents the history of Mexican Americans as a racialized group in the United States that was situated as “off-white” in the late nineteenth century as the country’s racial order evolved.⁵⁹ Focusing on the issue of racializing ethnic Mexicans in the twentieth century, Lytle Hernández’s *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* illustrates how Mexican immigrant workers became the primary targets of the U.S. Border Patrol. During this process, the Border Patrol “shaped the story of race in the United States.”⁶⁰

While there are many other authors who follow the trend of using the idea of whiteness to study the racialization of Mexican Americans, there were numerous studies that emerged in the 2000s focusing on Chicano leaders such as Cesar Chávez and his contributions to the farm workers movement, and Reies López Tijerina. In addition, various books from José Ángel Gutiérrez were also released that focused on the Chicano movement and activism. This plethora of literature detailed the various movements that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s and their importance to the Chicana/o movement. It was not until after 2010 that a new trend in Chicana/o historiography emerged as scholars are now gaining new perspectives of lesser known activists and movements that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶¹

⁵⁹Laura Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York, NY: University Press, 2007), 2.

⁶⁰Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

⁶¹This historiography, while brief, illustrates how Chicano history (and its historiography) emerged and from the larger field of Borderlands History in the middle of the twentieth century. Though I mention a few works about the Chicano historiography in this section, there are many works that detail this field. Please see the following texts for a more detailed account of this historiography and note that there are many more. *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, eds. Rudolfo Anaya, Francisco A. Lomelí, and Enrique R. Lamadrid (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2017); *The Chicano Studies Reader: An Anthology of Aztlán, 1970-2015*, eds. Chon A. Noriega, Eric Avila, Karen Mary Davalos, Chela Sandoval, and Rafael Pérez-Torres (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2016); Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 2005); Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona, 1989); Ignacio M. García, *Chicano While Mormon: Activism, War, and Keeping the Faith* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015); Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-*

The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century, an edited collection by Mario T. García, provides various essays that focus on these lesser known activists and movements. By doing so, the contributors demonstrate that Chicana/o historiography, especially literature about activism, leaders, and movements, has been stagnant for too long when there are a number of people, incidents, and movements that have yet to be studied. Chicana/o historians are aware that the key years of the movement were between 1965 and 1975, but the new scholars and historiography are “pushing the movement further into the late 1970s and 1980s.”⁶² This new push, as illustrated by Rosie C. Bermúdez’s “Alicia Escalante, The Chicana Welfare Rights Organization, and the Chicano Movement,” Jose G. Moreno’s “Chicana/o Movement Grassroots Leftist and Radical Electoral Politics in Los Angeles, 1970-1980,” Nora Salas’ “We Are a Distinct People’: Defending Difference in Schools Through the Chicano Movement in Michigan, 1966-1980,” and many others whose work in *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century* are paving the way for new Chicana/o scholars. This dissertation can be considered as being part of this new shift in Chicana/o History because I focus on the after effects Chicana/o activism and the riot had on the

1960 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Mario T. García and Sal Castro, *Blowout! Sal Castro & the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Mario T. García, *The Chicano Generation: Testimonios of the Movement* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Matthew García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012); David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); José Angel Gutiérrez, *The Making of A Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995); Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle Cesar Chavez’s Farm Worker Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2010); Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez, *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966-1977* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2014); Maggie Rives-Rodriguez, *Texas Mexican Americans & Postwar Civil Rights* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015); and Reies López Tijerina and José Angel Gutiérrez, ed. *They Called Me “King Tiger”; My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2000).

⁶²*The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mario T. García (New, York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 1.

city of Pharr. Originally, my goal was to finish my research at the turn of the millennia, but because of time constraints and the lack of primary sources, it ends in 1980. Regardless of the end date for my dissertation, my research clearly illustrates the various social, political, and economic changes that occurred after the event in question.

For the past seven years, I have collected various sources and networked with community members living in Pharr to write a history of the Pharr Riot and its after effects. This dissertation uses various primary sources such as oral histories, personal letters, newspapers, local, regional, and state government documents, photographs, and video to write the bulk of my research. In addition, various oral history interviews from Texas Christian University's *Civil Rights in Black and Brown* project contributed greatly to my research and aided in the writing of this dissertation. In short, this study encompasses a wide variety of primary sources that enabled me to present the work that I do.

Gaining access to many of the documents involved travelling to various local and regional archives in South Texas. From winter 2013 to fall 2017, I visited the Pharr Memorial Archives, the Special Collections and Archives at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives located in the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg, and the South Texas Archives located at Texas A&M-Kingsville (formerly Texas A&I University) in Kingsville. With the notion that there is not much scholarship about the South Texas region's history other than what has been written in the last five years, many of the archives I visited have substantial primary source material that has not been fully mined or used. The secondary sources that are used in my dissertation include Chicano literature, dissertations, master theses, and journal articles. In short, the research undertaken for this dissertation was regionally focused, but extensive, and allowed me to write the following study.

Though I illustrate the broader themes and trends that influenced Chicana/o historiography since the mid-twentieth century, the literature regarding Chicana/o activism is due for much needed expansion. Agreeing with García, there is a new emerging historiography that pushes the movement further into the 1980s and possibly the 1990s, and it is magnificent. For too long the literature has been stagnant, and it is my goal that my research is part of this new trend. I hope that my dissertation, “A Chicano Revolt and Political Response: Grassroots Change in the South Texas Town of Pharr After the 1971 Riot,” contributes to this new emerging historiography and hopefully inspire other South Texas Chicana/o scholars to do the same.

Chapter 1: Into the Brush Country: The Creation of the “Magic Valley” and Early Days of Pharr, Texas, 1900-1930

The arrival of the railroads in the early twentieth century marked the initial process of Anglo migration, politics, economy, and currency into the Deep South Texas region. By the early 1900s little had changed in South Texas since the region’s incorporation into the United States after the U.S. war of aggression against Mexico. Spanish was still the main language, the currency used was still the Mexican peso, and ethnic Mexicans controlled cattle ranches as well as local politics.⁶³ The influx of Anglos into the Rio Grande Valley during the early twentieth century led to the modernization of the region as boosters and land developers promoted it as a “utopia” for farming and for easy living.⁶⁴ Land and irrigation companies as well as boosters used a range of methods to attract farmers, investors, and tourists from the northern, southern, and Midwest regions of the United States into the Valley in the early twentieth century. These companies used agents to entice Anglos into the area and used various tactics to explain the benefits of living and doing business in the region.

The rise of political bosses or *jefe politicos* started well before the turn of the century after the United States’ war of aggression against Mexico in 1848 and emerged as a “pervasive pattern of politics” in many cities across the United States decades after the Civil War.⁶⁵ In the Rio Grande Valley, this was no different as James B. Wells Jr. became a political boss when he settled in Brownsville in 1878.⁶⁶ By 1882, Wells consolidated his control over the Cameron County Blue Club and extended his sphere of influence over the Democratic organizations of

⁶³Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941,” *Geographical Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 126. Also see J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, Privately Printed, 1931 and J.L. Allhands, *Rails to the Rio*, Salado, TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1960.

⁶⁴From this point on, I will refer to the Rio Grande Valley as “the Valley” or “*el Valle*.”

⁶⁵Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, vii.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 5-6.

Hidalgo, Starr, and Duval counties.⁶⁷ From the 1880s to the 1920s, the “Wells machine” provided various services to “powerful” ranchers, merchants in Brownsville, and the ethnic Mexican majority—which in turn, Wells received their support.⁶⁸ The King and Kendey ranches (each held over 300,000 acres) were some of the powerful ranches that backed Wells during this era.⁶⁹

For ethnic Mexicans, laborers or those who were “well off,” the Wells’ Machine created various opportunities for them to influence local politics and society until the first decade of the twentieth century. Wells understood that his power rested on the votes of “lower-class Mexican Americans,” and offered his assistance to them when they faced problems with the law.⁷⁰ Historian Evan Anders notes that Wells “touched the lives of his constituents” in a paternalistic way and defended those who helped him. Ethnic Mexicans laborers who supported Wells viewed it as a personal obligation because they felt indebted due to the various favors and assistance they received from Wells and his political machine.⁷¹ Anders also states that “elite” ethnic Mexicans were the ones who exercised political power due to their businesses and ranching interests. These families did not relate or identify with their “lower-class” counterparts and instead aligned themselves and their interests with Anglo land owners and businessmen.⁷² Even though elite ethnic Mexican families retained the lands and political influence in the late nineteenth century, “the economic balance had clearly shifted to the Anglo side by the 1870s,” and would continue to do so rapidly by the first decade of the twentieth century.⁷³

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 14.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 15.

⁷³*Ibid.*

This chapter provides a condensed narrative of how “the Valley” or “*el Valle*,” was transformed into an agribusiness utopia by American investors, land and irrigation companies, and farmers in first few decades of the twentieth century.⁷⁴ This chapter also provides the history of the city of Pharr, Texas from its founding in 1910-1911 to the 1930s.⁷⁵ By focusing and interweaving these two histories together, this chapter illustrates how the opening of the Valley set up not only the plotting of new towns and industries, but also introduced the practice of segregation between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans.

These segregation policies that were implemented in various new towns in the region influenced how land and irrigation companies plotted their land to keep Anglos and ethnic Mexicans apart. The origins of such policies not only created separate facilities, but they also contributed to Anglos’ idea of racial superiority that affected the lives of ethnic Mexicans in the Valley. The creation and promotion of the “Magic Valley,” a term coined by Anglo investors to advertise and encourage colonization efforts by company agents attracted Anglos from the Midwest and southern United States as well as many Mexicans who fled their homes during the Mexican Revolution.

Within the first two decades of the twentieth century, the number of ethnic Mexican

⁷⁴For this study, I define the Valley as being comprised of Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties, and the cities within them. For example, cities such as Roma, Rio Grande City, La Joya, Mission, Sharyland, McAllen, Hidalgo, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Donna, Weslaco, Mercedes, Edcouch, Elsa, La Feria, Harlingen, Raymondville, San Benito, Los Fresnos, Brownsville, and Port Isabel are located within these counties. There are many other smaller towns in the region and will be noted as being part of the Rio Grande Valley if and when mentioned. The city of Laredo is also considered part of “the Valley,” but is located within Webb County just north-west of Starr County and only mentioned in this dissertation a few times. Also, the term “South Texas” is used to define the area South of San Antonio which includes the counties of Maverick, Zavala, Frio, Atascosa, Wilson, Karnes, Dewitt, Victoria, Jackson, Calhoun, Goliad, Bee, Refugio, Aransas, San Patricio, Live Oak, McMullen, La Salle, Dimmit, Webb, Duval, Jim Wells, Nueces, Kleberg, Kenedy, Brooks, Jim Hogg, Zapata and the counties in the Rio Grande Valley.

⁷⁵ My condensed version of the city’s history during the first three decades of the early twentieth stemmed from the lack of primary sources and the city’s inability to provide documents that were asked for. In addition, ethnic Mexican voices and experiences of this time period in the region are not presented because I was not able to find any documents that illustrated them. This has plagued many South Texas historians who have attempted to present the ethnic Mexican side of the Anglo takeover in the early twentieth century.

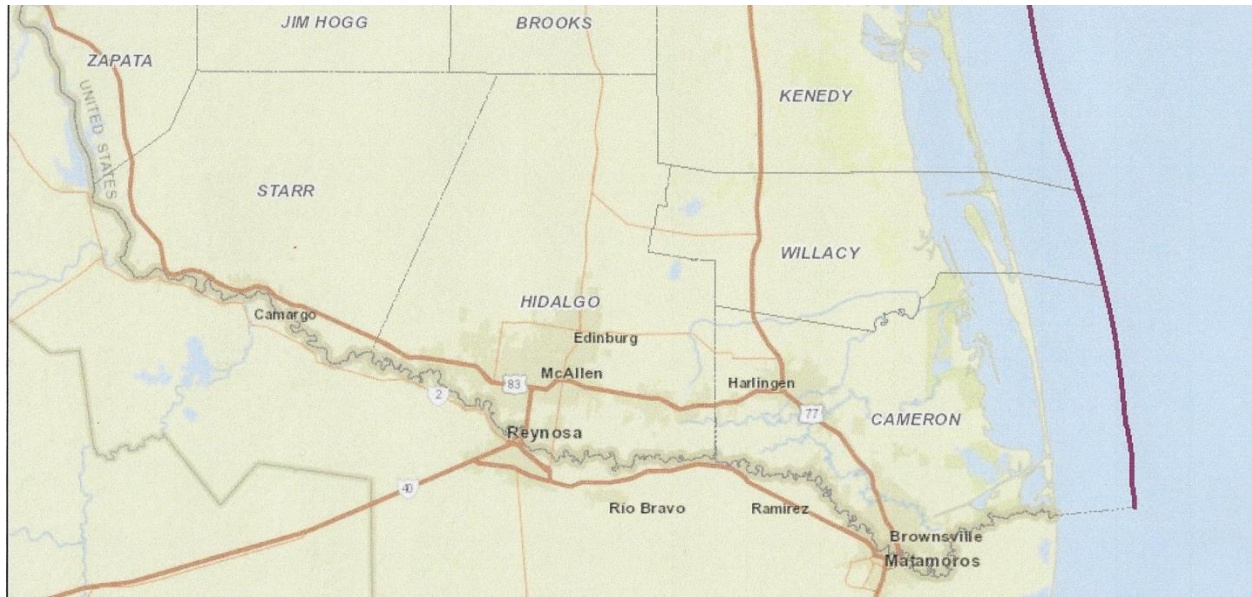


Illustration 1.1: Map of the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas

landholders in South Texas who owned land was drastically reduced, as many were displaced from their land due to adjudication, sheriff sales, fraud, rising taxes, and other illicit means. Ethnic Mexicans who were able to keep their land did so because they owned small ranchos.⁷⁶ In addition, from 1920 to 1930, the Valley experienced a population boom as various towns and cities in the Valley were modernized to accommodate newly arrived Anglos in the region with the latest amenities.⁷⁷ From 1930-1960, the small agribusinesses failed during the middle of the Great Depression, Anglo migration into the Valley decreased but Mexican immigration continued, and various natural disasters negatively affect agribusiness.⁷⁸ In short, all these factors set the stage for what was to come in the late 1960s and early 1970s as ethnic Mexicans fought against the living conditions and second-class citizenship they were given in the early

⁷⁶Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 280.

⁷⁷ See "The Rio Grande Valley Garden Spot of the South," John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 8, Shelf 143, Folder 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX for more information regarding the modernization of cities in the Valley during the 1920s.

⁷⁸Timothy Paul Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2016), 164-165.

years of “colonialism” in the Valley.⁷⁹ Historian Timothy Paul Bowman asserts that the colonization the Valley was a typical story of colonialism in which “Western nations colonize spaces inhabited by racial or cultural Others and subsequently marginalize those groups within their own homelands” did take place, but within the borders of the United States.⁸⁰

By 1900 the population in the Valley had grown to ninety thousand people while four decades earlier, the population of the area had been about ten thousand.⁸¹ The population grew even more with the introduction of the railroad in the region. At the time, the building of the railroad to the Valley did not occur overnight and was a long-complicated process that began in the mid-nineteenth century. In the condense version, those living in the sparse settlements in the region wanted a railroad for better economic opportunities, and during the era from 1852 to 1890s there were many attempts to connect the “Rio Grande country” with Corpus Christi.⁸² In the late-nineteenth century, Colonel E.H. Ropes from Corpus Christi had hopes in constructing a railroad project to South America under his Pan-American Construction Company but ceased because of the Panic of 1893.⁸³

The idea of building a railroad in South Texas to “open the Rio Grande Country” did not resurfaced until 1899 when Uriah Lott took it upon himself to single handily promote the venture. By 1902 Lott met with a former colleague, B.F. Yoakum, to discuss this idea, and he (Yoakum), became interested.⁸⁴ Yoakum had visions of grandeur as he planned to not only

⁷⁹Historian Timothy Paul Bowman uses the term “colonialism” in his 2016 book, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands* and in his 2011 Ph.D. dissertation, “Blood Oranges: Citriculture, Colonialism, and the Making of Anglo-American Identity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Borderlands During the Twentieth Century,” to describe Anglo immigration, investment, and construction in the Valley after the arrival of the railroad.

⁸⁰Timothy Paul Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press), 3.

⁸¹Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy*, 265.

⁸²J.L. Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio* (Salado: TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1960), 16.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 48.

connect *el Valle* with the rest of Texas by train, but also connecting to Mexico, and building a railroad through Central America to the Panama Canal.⁸⁵ Though he had secured cooperation with then Mexican President Porfirio Diaz at the time, the latter part of his plan did not come to fruition because of the political changes that occurred south of the border in the early twentieth century.⁸⁶ This was not the only setback for Lott, Yoakum, and their St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company.

In 1903, the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPR), Texas' oldest and "strongest" railroad, threaten to stop the competitors' progress after they were issued a charter by the Texas Railroad Commission (TRC).⁸⁷ According to contractor and writer J.L. Allhands, the SPR had "stood guarding the door to that lower country" for many years and were ready to challenge the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company for access to the region.⁸⁸ Fortunately for Lott and Yoakum, the TRC and the Texas Attorney General threatened to forfeit the SPR's charter if they did not stand down.⁸⁹ Also, the *Brownsville Herald's* editor, Jesse O. Wheeler, came to Lott's rescue by printing denunciatory editorials against the Southern Pacific Railroad.⁹⁰ Allhands explains that in these editorials, Wheeler reminded the people of the region that for latter part of the nineteenth century SPR refused to build in the Valley because the owners believed they had a monopoly in the region and could "hold out indefinitely." Along with threats from the TRC and the Attorney General, the people of the region also demonstrated their

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 49. These political changes that affected Yoakum's vision was the exile of Porfirio Diaz and the Mexican Revolution.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸See George O. Coalson's article of James L. (J.L.) Allhands in the *Handbook of Texas Online* for more information about who this individual was. *Handbook of Texas Online*, George O. Coalson, "Allhands, James L.," accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fal60>.

⁸⁹Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio*, 50.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

disdain for the SPC. It can be argued that because of these three reasons, the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway was able to succeed.

In 1904, the St. Louis, Brownsville, & Mexico Railway linked the city of Brownsville with a terminal of the Missouri-Pacific railroad system that was located in Corpus Christi, Texas.⁹¹ The arrival of the railroad to Brownsville and the Valley was a transformative event that forever changed the economy, politics, and social aspect of the region. Allhands described the opening of the Valley as “a romance of railroading, for until the coming of the Iron Horse, it was mostly a jungle, peopled only by a few ranchers.”⁹² The building of the Hidalgo branch allowed for the clearing of the “wilderness” and establishment of various townsites along this railroad branch that was parallel to U.S. Highway 83.⁹³ Towns such as La Feria, Mercedes, Weslaco, Donna, San Juan, Pharr, McAllen, Mission, and Harlingen were the product of railroad building. This section, along with the Hidalgo branch/line that went up the river, was the first of three sections to be built because the company wanted to have control of the region’s development.⁹⁴ According to historian Camilo Amado Martínez Jr., prior to the construction of the railroad in the Valley, the most common means of transporting goods to and from the area was by using wagons pulled by horses, mules, or oxen.⁹⁵ For this reason, many ethnic Mexicans

⁹¹David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), 107.

⁹²Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio*, 48.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 50. The second section that was built was the line from Robstown to Bay City, and the last was the line from Bay City to Houston. In addition, Allhands does not make it clear if the Hidalgo branch/line was named after the county or after the city.

⁹⁵Camilo Amado Martinez Jr., *The Mexican and Mexican-American Laborers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, 1870-1930* (PhD diss., Texas A&M University, 1987) 7, accessed September 15, 2016, Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303653641). Retrieved from <http://0-search.proquest.com.lib.utep.edu/docview/303653641?accountid=7121>, 7.

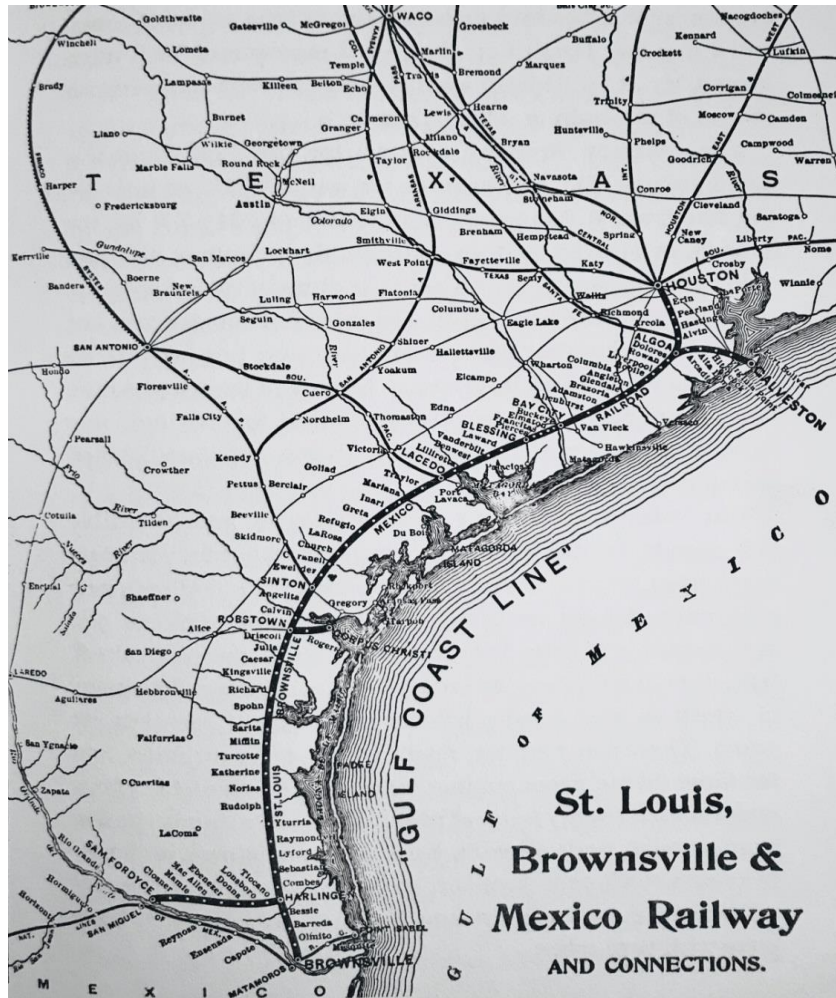


Illustration 1.2: Map of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway line and connections in South Texas. From J.L. Allhands' *Railroads to the Rio*, Chapter Two "St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co."

in the region were hired to maintain the roads they used as well as load, haul, unload, drive, and construct wagons.⁹⁶ The arrival of the railroad in the Valley signaled its rapid transformation from an underdeveloped region to the booming economic "Magic Valley."

As Maria G. Vallejo explains in her thesis, "The Llano Grande Grant: The Transformation of Land Ownership in the Rio Grande Valley, 1749-1910," the construction of the railroad brought business entrepreneurship that led to the expansion of irrigation and land

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

companies. With the construction of irrigation pumps and the ability to irrigate farm lands, many farms throughout the Valley secured the economic potential for full-scale development, and land prices increased to \$15 to \$20 an acre.⁹⁷ As historian David Montejano states in *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, the state of Texas entered “modern economic life” in the first years of the twentieth century. The development of industry and commerce in Texas, especially along the borderlands, led the “growth and dominance of regional specialization in farm production” which illustrated the strides toward commercialized agriculture.⁹⁸ He explains that this transformation was the cause of the demise of “cattle *hacendados* and *vaqueros*” and the rise of commercial farmers and migrant laborers. Many Anglos in the late nineteenth century had labeled the region an unruly wilderness, but by the turn of the century newly arrived Anglo farmers and land companies used ethnic Mexican laborers to clear the brush and mesquite and built a new society which displaced ethnic Mexican ranchers.⁹⁹

The creation of irrigation and land companies in the early 1900s led various local political leaders to become land agents who linked outside investors with local landowners.¹⁰⁰ A passage taken from “The Creation of a Magic Valley: Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley,” illustrates such courtship by land agents.

Special excursion trains from the Midwest brought potential buyers of land, primarily Midwestern farmers, to the Valley to purchase the newly irrigated lands. Land companies established model farms to dazzle the potential buyers with the lush potential of the fertile lands of the delta. Buyers would be met at train stations with a caravan of automobiles and the potential investors would be carefully monitored so agents from another real estate company would not steal them. Clubhouses had to be constructed to house

⁹⁷Lila Knight, “The Creation of a Magic Valley: Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1904-1965,” *A Field Guide to Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, (Historical Studies Report No. 2009-01), Buda, TX: Texas Department of Transportation, 2009, 25.

⁹⁸Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, 159.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰Knight, “The Creation of a Magic Valley,” 26.

the visitors, as the Valley had no such infrastructure for an onslaught of overnight visitors. Buyers would be entertained with visits to Mexico and special activities for the wives.¹⁰¹

In the early 1900s, land companies went to great lengths to attract investors from the Midwest, North Texas, and southern states such as Louisiana into the region. John Shary, an Omaha, Nebraska, businessman and his land company were among the many who invited various farmers from the Midwest to the Valley. Shary focused on bringing investors and farmers to the upper valley and held various expeditions to do so. One excursion took place on November 13, 1913 and was comprised of Anglo men, a few women, and five children. This group was shown commercial farmland that Shary and his land company were promoting as well as members of the Mexican labor force who would work it.

On the issue of labor, Shary explained that there were many “native Mexicans” who were willing to work and preferred to live by themselves and did not try to mix with Anglos.¹⁰² It is interesting to note the context in which Shary placed native Mexicans within his view of the Valley.¹⁰³ Shary explained that native Mexicans born and raised in the United States were “above average” and “fine” and their counterparts fleeing from the Mexican revolution also preferred to live in peace and secure steady work. He defended the immigration of many Mexicanos into South Texas by explaining that they wanted to send their children to “superior schools.” According to him, Mexicanos saw the advantages of the “American methods and education” and were not slow to assimilate.¹⁰⁴ Other than working in commercial farming,

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² “The Treasure Land of the Lower Rio Grande,” John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 8, Shelf 143, Folder 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁰³ John Shary uses the term “native Mexicans” to describe ethnic Mexicans from the Valley in his brochure, “The Treasure Land of the Lower Rio Grande.” I only use this term to illustrate how Shary called this group during that era.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Mexicanos would focus on manual labor such as clearing the land of trees and brush and taking care of livestock. *Mexicana*'s were also described by Shary as making good domestic servants.



Illustration 1.3: Portrait of John H. Shary, Date Unknown, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley.

Shary was not the only American who illustrated a docile, hardworking, fast learning and happy image of ethnic Mexicans while describing life in the Valley in the early twentieth century. Another promotional print, “The Rio Grande Valley Garden Spot of the South,” illustrated the prosperity many farmer who had come from the northern, southern, and Midwestern United States experienced while “the Mexican performs all the hard work.”¹⁰⁵ Ethnic Mexicans were portrayed as naturals at driving trucks and fruit farming and described as happy people content to have steady wages.¹⁰⁶ This promotional print claimed that ethnic

¹⁰⁵“The Rio Grande Valley Garden Spot of the South,” John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 8, Shelf 143, Folder 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

Mexicans learned fast when presented wage labor opportunities and adopted American ideals that resulted in better homes for them.

Boosters that promoted land in the Rio Grande Valley, including John Shary, portrayed the region as a transformed landscape that was sustained by ethnic Mexican labor.¹⁰⁷ The narrative produced by these Anglo promoters illustrated ethnic Mexican labor as “cheap and plentiful” and argued to investors that farms were always productive throughout the year because of the mild climate.¹⁰⁸ Overall, the cheap labor that was needed to develop “this new country” was readily available in the region, as it was “composed of swarthy poverty-stricken and half-starved Mexican *peons*, not one of whom could read, write, or speak a single word of English.”¹⁰⁹ In short, “cheap Mexican labor” combined with the agricultural demand from the North allowed for big profits now available because of the coming of the railroads.

Newly purchased land by Anglo farmers from the Midwest had to be cleared from brush, trees, and grubbing, and the task fell onto ethnic Mexican laborers who were employed to do so in large numbers.¹¹⁰ Some newly arrived growers in the region cleared their own lands and once they realized they could hire inexpensive Mexican labor to perform this task they did so immediately.¹¹¹ Soon after, many Anglo land-clearing contractors appeared in the region and provided these new landowners with Mexican crews. According to historian Camilo Amado Martinez Jr:

Land-clearing costs depended on the density of brush and the number of workers needed (normally averaging \$20 per acre). A laborer who used his own team of horses on the job averaged \$1 to

¹⁰⁷Christian Brannstrom and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the ‘Magic Valley’ of South Texas, 1905-1941,” *Geographical Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 126.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹J.L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders*. (Joplin, MO: Privately Printed, 1931), 165.

¹¹⁰Martinez, *The Mexican and Mexican-American Laborers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, 1870-1930*, 25.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 85.

\$1.50 per day, while others averaged \$.50 to \$.75. This type of business became very profitable, and one which was used throughout the period. An employer with a large crew (20-25 men) could clear as many as five acres a day. Since most Mexicans used in this work were already familiar with it, the task came to be classified as a Mexican's job. Consequently, the demand for land-grubbers increased with the demand for more agricultural land.¹¹²

There were also Anglo "grubbers," (workers who cleared the land) but they demanded higher wages than Mexican laborers.¹¹³ This led various land clearing companies to only seek cheap Mexican labor to develop the "new country," and according to J.L. Allhands, there was an abundance in the region. It was not uncommon that many of these clearing companies' recruitment posters specifically asked for Mexican applicants only, rather than Anglo laborers.¹¹⁴ Other than clearing land, ethnic Mexican laborers were also hired in the construction of irrigation projects in the first decade of the 1900s. Anxious for employment, the ethnic Mexican labor force found themselves exploited by land clearing and irrigation companies and other Anglo employers.¹¹⁵

Printed material from newly established land and irrigation companies also helped in promoting the new growth region was experiencing during this era. Describing the Valley as undergoing a "rapid development" in the early twentieth century, Shary explained in his pamphlet "The Treasure Land of the Lower Rio Grande: Where Nature's Smiles are Brightest," that the population was estimated at 60,000 and that fifteen to sixteen new towns had replaced the brush and wilderness in the seven years since the arrival of the railroad. He also described that by the 1920s, 200,000 acres of land in the region were under "a fine state of cultivation" and

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 86. Also see Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press) and John Weber, *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press) for more information.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 25.

\$100,000,000 (he did not mention who invested this amount) had been invested for “permanent” improvements like churches of popular denominations, “excellent” grade and high schools (with competent instructors), telephone lines, electricity, ice factories, and “first class” roads.¹¹⁶



Illustration 1.4: J.C. Murff. John H. Shary excursion, photograph, March 2, 1915, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley.

Shary’s description of a modernizing valley was sure to arouse the curiosity of many potential land buyers because the region presented economic opportunities. In his opinion, the weather in South Texas was delightful the entire year. The advantages of such weather allowed for the production of agriculture year-round and were great for one’s health, since no malignant disease or serious epidemic was ever present in the region.¹¹⁷ In addition, Shary promoted his subdivision as the best compared to the offerings of other land companies because its irrigation prices were reasonable, it was above sea level, and it had natural drainage which made it best for agriculture.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Ladd-Barron Land Company, John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 4, Shelf 333, Folder 12, Ladd-Barron Land Company, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

Since the opening of the Valley to land and irrigation companies, investors, and farmers, water was crucial for the development and irrigation of the region. There were various irrigation companies that built plants that pumped water directly from the river, and all but one was powered by steam.¹¹⁹ According to first-hand accounts, every one of these irrigation companies were inadequately financed but ahead of their time.¹²⁰ All of these companies were established in the first decade of the 1900s, and other than building water pumps along the river, they also constructed various canals that facilitated irrigation.

Table 1: List of Irrigation and Canal Companies in the Lower Rio Grande Valley from 1900-10

Company	Date Founded	Owners
The Hidalgo Canal Company	1902	William Briggs, H.W. Lanz, and F.B. Coffal
(absorbed by the Hidalgo Irrigation Company)	(1907)	(owners of Hidalgo Irrigation Co.-William Briggs, O.E. Jones, and P.A. Blalack)
American, Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company	1903	Thomas W. Carter, S.P. Silver, Thomas W. West, Edwards Whitaker, S.W. Fordyce, E.C. Eliot, and B.F. Yoakum
Arroyo Canal Company	1905	J.B Hooks, J.B. Roberts, and W.H. Turner
(later became The Donna Plantation Company)	(1908)	(J.C. McDowell, L.H. Hallum, Alonzo M. Snyder, L.A. Smartt, and James B. Wells.)
The San Benito Land & Water Company	1907	Sam A. Robertson, Alba Heywood, O.W. Heywood and W. Scott Heywod, E.F. Rowson, W.H. Stenger and R.L. Batts.
Harlingen Land and Water Company	1907	Lon C. Hill, John D. Hill, Miss Paul Hill, Doctor S. H. Bell, and P.E. Blalack
Indiana Co-Operative Canal Company	1907	E.F. Rowson, A.C. Swanson, J.C. Phillips, E.C. Shireman, and J.C. McNutt

¹¹⁹Allhands, *Gringo Builders*, 166.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

The Lomita Co-operative Irrigation Company	1908	John Conway (principal owner), James W. Hoit, E.V. Peterson, D.C. Lorimer, and E.S. Lucas
Louisiana & Rio Grande Canal Company (Incorporated into Hidalgo County Water Control and Improvement District Number 2)	1909 (1920)	H.N. Pharr (principle owner), J.M. Burgieres, D.C. Caffery, J.J. Conway, C. Mix, Dr. A.W. Roth, and J.C. Kelly
Robertson's Rio Grande City Projects	1909 (abandoned that same year)	

Source: *Gringo Builders* by J.L. Allhands, Chapter 15 "The First Big Water Projects," pgs. 173-183

One irrigation company that strived and hoped to accomplish great things in the Valley by building the largest irrigation system in the world was the American-Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (ARGLIC). ARGLIC was mostly concentrated in the region where the cities of Edcouch, Elsa, Weslaco, Mercedes and Progreso are currently located. This land and irrigation company attempted to attract individuals by describing that they could grow cotton, corn, citrus, cantaloupes, onions, and cabbage or raise poultry, hogs, and dairy cows, demonstrating to potential investors the fertile lands of the Valley.¹²¹ ARGLIC's main goal was to gain access to the river since, it was crucial for the construction of pumping plants and for water rights claims. In the early twentieth century, ARGLIC had become embroiled in a water dispute with Mexico, which was addressed by the International Boundary Commission (IBC).¹²²

In October 1906 the IBC, comprised of both Mexican and U.S. officials, received word that the American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company (ARGLIC) had illegally diverted the river for the company's benefit. This diversion occurred on the site the company selected for a

¹²¹"The American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company," John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 4, Shelf 333, Folder 42, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹²²*Ibid.*

water pump station near Horcon Ranch located in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Retired U.S. Army Brigadier General and Commissioner Anson Mills, the company and various Mexican land owners made great efforts during a three month period in 1906 to alter the river's flow and opened an artificial waterway below their pumping station.¹²³ The diversion of the Rio Grande River by ARGLIC had great consequences because it affected the ability of Mexican farmers to irrigate their crops, moved the international boundary farther south, making Mexican territory part of the United States, and violated the Banco Treaty. The Banco Treaty specified that the United States of America and the United States of Mexico would share equal distribution of the Rio Grande River for irrigation purposes in order to remove any causes of controversy between the two nations.¹²⁴ According to Brigadier General Mill's report, the Mexican Consul in Brownsville sent communications to the general manager of the company, Mr. Silver, cautioning him that such work was in violation of the treaty.¹²⁵ Once Mexican authorities were made aware of the situation they made various attempts to stop the diversion of the river.

Government officials from the United States and Mexico became involved in this local matter as engineers from both countries arrived in the area to assess the ecological damage caused by the diversion of the river. With such international attention, Commissioner Mills concluded that ARGLIC was in direct violation of the treaty. However the commission hesitated to punish the company for its violation because, according to Commissioner Mills, the

¹²³"Department of State Proceedings of the International Boundary Commission United States and Mexico: Diversion of Rio Grande By American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company near Horcon Ranch, Tamaulipas, Mexico," Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z Collection, Folder 1, American R.G. Land + Irrigation Co.-Various Documents, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, 3.

¹²⁴United States International Boundary and Water Commission, Treaties Between the U.S. and Mexico. *Convention of May 21, 1906*, "Convention between the United States and Mexico: Equitable Distribution of the Waters of the Rio Grande," U.S.-Mexico, January 16, 1907, IBWC, <http://www.ibwc.gov/Files/1906Conv.pdf>, accessed September 15, 2015.

¹²⁵"Department of State Proceedings of the International Boundary Commission United States and Mexico," Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, 3.

commission did not know what authority they had in the premises and believed that it would be fruitless to punish the company if it was not executed.¹²⁶ He explained that if the company was not punished for the actions of its owners it would only encourage other wrongdoers.¹²⁷

Accessibility to water was vitally important in the Valley during the era of commercial farming, and ARGLIC's actions threatened the livelihood of many Mexican ranchers south of the river.

Consulting engineers W.W. Follett and E. Zayas explained to Brigadier General Anson Mills that the cut-off of the river had already been made and nothing could be done to stop the water.¹²⁸

Following Follet and Zaya's report, commissions from the United States and Mexico interviewed Mexican land owners affected by ARGLIC's actions. As was explained in the 1906 commission report, "Department of State Proceedings of the International Boundary Commission United States and Mexico:"

The Commissioners are of opinion that indemnity should be made for this wrong, but they do not understand that the Treaties under which it was organized and under which this investigation was conducted confers upon it jurisdiction over the title to land, damage to property, the control of riparian rights or the enforcing of reparation for wrongs by offenders for changing the channel of the river where it constitutes the boundary.¹²⁹

The commission then advised that some example should be set, though they do not specify, and establish a precedent "in order to deter others from similar wrong."¹³⁰ Regardless of ARGLIC being found at fault for diverting the river and ruining the economic livelihood of many ranches on the Mexican side of the river, various water pumping stations began to be built as more farmers arrived in the region. The establishment of various water pumps along the river

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

facilitated irrigation methods in the late nineteenth century and gave rise to irrigation and land companies in South Texas.

In its early years, the city of Pharr began as one of the many small towns established by Anglo farmers, investors, and businessmen during the opening of the Valley after the arrival of the railroad. Like many other town sites, Pharr originated from the construction of a land and irrigation company. Located on the Missouri Pacific line and old U.S. Highway 83 (U.S. Spur 347) in south central Hidalgo County is the city of Pharr. The city's town site is within a Spanish land grant made in 1767 to Juan José Hinojosa. Family heirs sold off portions of this land grant to various groups and people in the early twentieth century.¹³¹ Originally from Waco, Texas, John C. Kelly (one of the founders of the city of Pharr) visited what is now the Pharr area in 1903 prior to the building of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. In that year, Kelly inspected the tract of land on horseback and returned to Waco. He later returned to the Valley in 1907 with his friend Charles Hammond, also from Waco, and purchased a 16,000-acre tract.¹³² According to local historian and newspaper editor, Lloyd H. Glover, this tract of land "had two miles of frontage on the Rio Grande River, and extended north 10 miles."¹³³

What interested Kelly in the land and the region was its agricultural potential. After he witnessed local sugarcane grower John Closner's stock at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904, Kelly and his partner bought land in the region and began farming sugarcane on a small scale.¹³⁴ John Closer, originally from Glarius, Wisconsin, arrived in the region in the 1880s and

¹³¹*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

¹³²"Condensed History of Pharr," Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹³³*Ibid.*

¹³⁴Norman Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the Development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*. (Edinburg, TX: New Santander Press, 2007), 129.

was the first to bring the sugarcane industry to South Texas in 1895.¹³⁵ His attempt to become “sugar king” of South Texas led him to set up and operate six roller mills that produced hundreds of thousands of pounds of sugar, leading one to assume that the sugarcane stock Kelly witnessed at the World’s Fair came from these successful mills.¹³⁶ According to Norman Rozeff, author of *Sugarcane and the Development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, Kelly was impressed by the fertility of the land and believed that the land could be adapted to the growing of sugarcane and tobacco.¹³⁷ His sugarcane venture was so successful that news of Kelly’s success reached Henry N. Pharr in Louisiana.

Henry N. Pharr arrived in the region in the early 1900s to inspect the opportunities in growing sugarcane in the Valley. Being a sugar cane grower in Louisiana, he became interested in growing sugar cane in the Valley after he and his family also witnessed Closner’s sugarcane exhibit.¹³⁸ Experts in the sugarcane culture, the Pharr family had never seen stalks as were exhibited at the fair and spent a considerable amount of time in the region. However, the Pharr family decided not to invest and start a sugarcane venture at the time because there were no railroads, roads, and most importantly, no irrigation system.¹³⁹ After the building of the railroad, the arrival of the Land and Irrigation Companies, and the establishment of irrigations systems across the Valley, Pharr and his brothers returned again in 1908.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio*, 117. Camilo Amado Martínez Jr. asserts that George Brulay, a Louisiana farmer who arrived in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in 1870, was the first to introduce sugarcane and its production on a large scale to the Valley rather than Closner. Martínez does recognize that Closner did become the “sugar king” of South Texas, but not the one who introduced sugarcane and the industry. See his 1987 dissertation, *The Mexican and Mexican-American Laborers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, 1870-1930*.

¹³⁶Allhands, *Railroads to the Rio*, 117.

¹³⁷Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 129.

¹³⁸“Condensed History of Pharr,” Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰After extensive search of all the primary sources regarding Henry Pharr and his travels to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, I could not find any information about the names of his brothers. Along with two of his brothers, and

On their second trip, a local land promoter by the name of P.E. Blalack convinced the Pharr brothers to invest in the area by painting a “rosy picture of the area as a potential sugarcane paradise and with reports that Mexican-Americans or Mexican nationals were willing to work for half the Louisiana farm worker’s wages.”¹⁴¹ Kelly and the Pharr brothers were introduced by Mr. Blalack at the old Miller Hotel in Brownsville where they (the Pharr brothers) also met Mr. Hammond.¹⁴² Hammond, who with Kelly bought 16,000 acres of land in 1907, sold half of his land interest because he founded the city of McAllen, a town just west of the location that would become the city of Pharr.¹⁴³ Learning that Mr. Hammond was anxious to sell his portion, Henry N. Pharr took the chance and bought Hammond’s half tract of 8,000 acres. His account of the purchase illustrates that the sale was made at \$30 per acre that was three times the price Hammond purchased the land for four years prior.¹⁴⁴

Kelly and Henry Pharr inspected their territory and realized the economic possibilities of the region. Soon after, a partnership formed between both investors that lead to the creation of the Louisiana-Rio Grande Sugar Company (LRGSC) in 1911.¹⁴⁵ The 16,000 acres were divided in half where Kelly’s tract was east of what is now Highway 281 and Henry Pharr’s tract to the west.¹⁴⁶ Another company that derived from the LRGSC was the Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company (LRGCC). Kelly was assigned half of the stock and the other half went to the

mother, Henry was involved in his father’s sugar cane company, J.N. Pharr and Sons, as vice president from 1903 to 1931.

¹⁴¹Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 129.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³“Condensed History of Pharr,” Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁴⁴Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 129.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁴⁶Henry Newton Pharr, *Pharrs and Farrs with Other Descendants from Five Scotch-Irish Pioneers in America: Also Some Other Farrs and Miscellaneous Data* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, INC., 1955). 598-599. For more detailed information, please see the previously mentioned book.

Louisiana stock holders of the sugar company.¹⁴⁷ The main priority of the LRGCC was to construct an irrigation system that would provide water to the land.¹⁴⁸ This new canal system not only provided irrigation to Pharr's and Kelly's lands but later became the water district for the city in the 1950s.

Like many other regions in the Valley, the area of land that would eventually become Pharr needed water for commercial farming. In 1909, in the nearby town of Hidalgo, a steam-driven pump installed to lift water into a channel that would irrigate land north of the river.¹⁴⁹ Norman Rozeff gives great detail on how water was provided to the town site. He explains that:

In 1911 the Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Co. installed an additional pump, this being a 48-inch Allis-Chalmers requiring a pit now 22' deep. Chief engineer of the canal was E.B. Gore, who came in late 1909. Soon the first canal with 17 miles of main line and 31 laterals was in place. With the capability of moving 408,000 gallons of water per minute, 71,000 acres of land could be serviced. By 1912 water demands were such that the installation of two Hamilton-Corliss engines capable of driving 60-inch Worthington centrifugal pumps was necessitated. This, in turn, required three additional boilers and another smoke stack. Eventually the wood fuel supply was exhausted and crude oil was substituted. This was stored in redwood tanks. In 1920, the already obsolete original pump house was closed and dismantled.¹⁵⁰

The establishment of additional pumps made the promoters of the town believe this was a great opportunity to not only help farmers, but also create an industry that would supply the region with jobs, increase productivity, and improve property values.¹⁵¹

Henry Pharr explains in his memoir (date unknown) that an alfalfa drying plant called the Texas Sugar Company was constructed in Pharr during the first years (1911-12) of the sugar

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

¹⁴⁹Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 131.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 133.

industry and milled close 1,000 tons of cane per day, an impressive feat.¹⁵² There were still issues with the plant since the evaporating apparatus could only handle 500 to 600 tons of sugarcane, and this led owners to install additional evaporators and more boilers.¹⁵³ The plant was in operation for only two seasons. The first crop of sugarcane grew to a good height and had good sugar content, but the sugarcane crop from the second season did not. The sugarcane industry in Pharr failed and went bust after the second crop was harvested, dashing the hopes of Henry Pharr. A freeze was believed to be the reason why the sugarcane industry failed in the region, but that was not the case. According to various documents, it was alkali in the soil that caused the second sugarcane crop to be short.¹⁵⁴ Unlike the sugarcane that Pharr witnessed at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, the second crop did not grow as tall, and the sugar content of each cane was less. Since there was a lack of good drainage and much water was needed, these two factors brought the alkali to the top of the soil and stunted the cane.¹⁵⁵ Most of the land that was owned by Henry Pharr and Kelly was not suitable for long term sugarcane growing, and this reason, among others, was the determining factor that closed and ended the sugarcane industry not only in Pharr, but in the entire Valley by the early 1920s.¹⁵⁶ Unforeseen weather events such as hard freezes, the economic and political effects of World War I, and environmental factors negatively affected the sugarcane industry in the Valley and forced the mills to close in 1921.¹⁵⁷ It would not be until the 1960s that new attempts to produce sugarcane led to the reopening of these mills.

¹⁵²There is no explanation given as to why an alfalfa drying plant was built and used to dry sugarcane in the region. Since Norman Rozeff uses Henry Pharr's memoir, he does not provide the year the memoir was written.

¹⁵³Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 133.

¹⁵⁴"Script for Video Tape-Honoring Pharr City Officials," Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.01a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶Rozeff, *Sugarcane and the development of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1875-1922*, 133.

¹⁵⁷"Our History," *Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers Inc.*, <https://www.rgvsugar.com/history> accessed December 27, 2017.

During the years of the sugarcane boom and bust (1911-1921), attempts to establish a town in the area were led by Kelly. Kelly founded the Pharr Town Site Company that he named after his partner, Henry Pharr. At first, both Kelly and Henry N. Pharr could not agree on a name and originally wanted it to have a French name since his family roots were in Louisiana.¹⁵⁸ According to Glover, Kelly took it upon himself to name this new town Pharr when Henry Pharr travelled to Louisiana on a business trip. Upon his return, Pharr was “surprised but pleased” that his business partner named the town site after him.¹⁵⁹ Establishing plans for an official layout ran into issues and delayed its formation. According to early accounts in the local newspaper *The Monitor*, a few of the original promoters of the land wanted to establish the layout of the town site in 1909. However, the majority of the promoters were hesitant and did not want to start planning because they believed that Kelly and Pharr would sell the lands and leave.¹⁶⁰

By 1911, a hotel, a headquarters for the sugar company, and the first school which was known for many years as the “Pharr Convalescent Home” were built. This school was a one-story structure, and when it was completed, nine children were students.¹⁶¹ Three years later, the school’s student population grew to 80 students with four teachers.¹⁶² Also, one important structure that housed the first bank, the post office, a confectionary, and the offices of the

¹⁵⁸“Condensed History of Pharr,” Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰“History of Pharr Dates Back to Days of Early Sugar Plantations,” F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX. Defining the terms town and city in this dissertation, a town is a place where people have settled and is larger than a village but smaller than a city while a city is a larger settlement with a sophisticated system of transport, communication, sanitation and housing. In the early years of Pharr (1909-1915), it can be considered a town and then became a city in 1916 after its incorporation since much of its infrastructure was improved.

¹⁶¹“Dedication of Texas Historical Marker for the First Pharr School,” Hidalgo County Historical Commission, September 29, 1985.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

irrigation and canal company was the “Old Pharr City Hall” building that was erected that same year (1911).¹⁶³

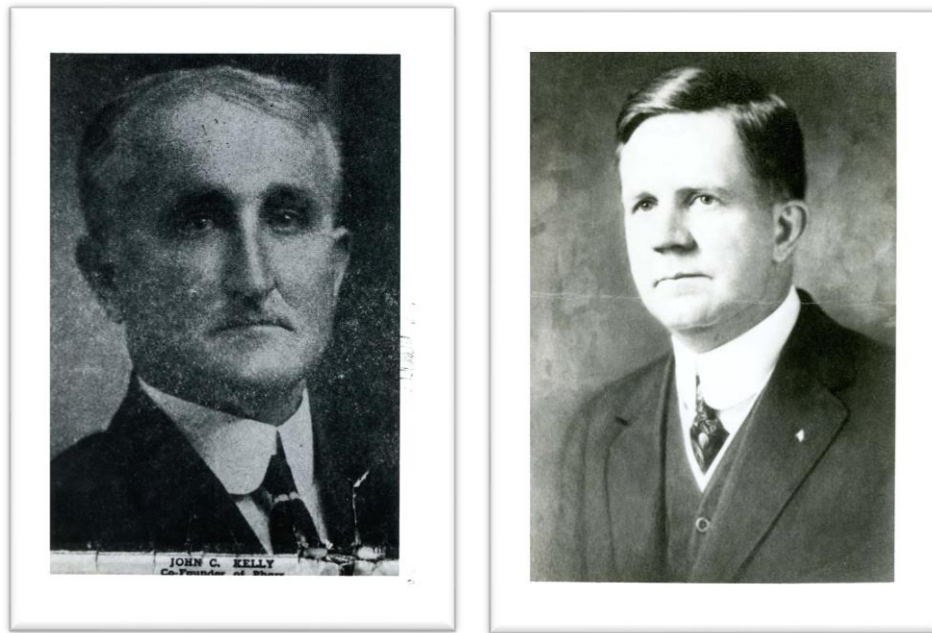


Illustration 1.5: Photographs of John C. Kelly (left), and Henry N. Pharr (right). Dates unknown. Courtesy of Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, Texas.

This building was completed by the Pharr Town site Company and became the first city hall when the town was incorporated in 1916.¹⁶⁴ Following the construction of these buildings came the planning of a 640-acre town site. Developers built the first road going south to north right through the center of the tract. This road later became the main street of Pharr and presently is known as Cage Boulevard or Highway 281. The original town site was laid around the south

¹⁶³“Dedication of Texas Historical Marker for the First City Hall Building in Pharr,” Hidalgo County Historical Commission, April 8, 1984.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.* Though Pharr was established in 1909-1910 as part of a sugar plantation, it became a small town and then mid-size town in the following years until its full incorporation as a city in 1916.

side intersection of the main road and the road going east to west (presently known as Old Highway 83) parallel to the train tracks.¹⁶⁵

Between 1910 and 1912, the first Anglo families were lured to the region and bought land from the Kelly/Pharr Land Company.¹⁶⁶ Like other land and irrigation companies in the Valley, the Kelly/Pharr Land Company used informative pamphlets and other various methods to attract investors, farmers, and businessmen to this growing town. In an undated company pamphlet, Pharr is described as “beautifully located, and being in the center of one of the finest agricultural sections of the Rio Grande Valley.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, emphasis on Pharr having “good railroad facilities” allowed for promoters to make the claim that the town would become commercially important in the future. Other selling points in the pamphlet were the climate and the access to “cheap” Mexican labor. The region’s climate was described as a “never ending summer” where farmers could grow various crops year-round. The winters were mild and dry while the summer nights were fresh and pleasant.¹⁶⁸ There was also an abundance of Mexican farm labor at a rate of \$0.50 to \$0.75 per day, which according to the pamphlet, these laborers boarded and lodged themselves at no cost to the land owner.¹⁶⁹

Overall, the Kelly/Pharr Townsite Land Company described Pharr and the Valley as “remarkable” due to five conditions not found anywhere else in the United States. These assets included a climate that rarely experienced frost, fertile soil, a supply of river water for irrigation,

¹⁶⁵“Condensed History of Pharr,” Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁶⁶“Sugar Cane Boom Lured Early Settlers,” F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁶⁷“Pharr Texas: In the Heart of the Rio Grande Valley,” Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.2e, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 1.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 2.

an abundance of Mexican labor, and proximity to “great markets.”¹⁷⁰ Due to these conditions, land and irrigation companies including the Kelly/Pharr Townsite Land Company were able to attract investors, farmers, and businessmen into the region. Known as “land excursion parties,” these gatherings mainly consisted of potential investors and buyers that were given a tour of the land that was for sale by company agents. Timothy Paul Bowman explains in his book, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*, that “the region’s history as a lawless and contested space in the nineteenth century after the US-Mexico War also gave boosters an inroad into selling the visions of colonialism to US farmers.”¹⁷¹ Moreover, he explains that this idea of “lawlessness” in the region led Anglo newcomers to “identify as part of a legacy of Anglo imperialism and adventurism in the US West,” and made colonizing efforts in South Texas a pioneering adventure.¹⁷² Thus, Anglos who arrived in the Valley during the first two decades of the twentieth century saw themselves as “pioneers,” and use the term to illuminate how they perceived themselves during their ventures in the Valley and Pharr.

The first “pioneering” families that came to Pharr included the Gores from Indiana, the Cages, the Linesetters, the Houston Jones, Danelson (or Donelson) Caffery, and the Kelsos from Carleton, Nebraska.¹⁷³ Gore was the engineer for the water district in Pharr, W.E. Cage was the editor of the local newspaper called the “Pharr Clarion,” and F.G. Linesetter ran the local hotel and later became the mayor of Pharr.¹⁷⁴ Since much of the region was brushland, Pharr’s pioneering families resided in the newly built Pharr Hotel purchased by Mr. Linesetter until each family built their own homes. Life on the “frontier” had its effects on them, especially W.E.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁷¹Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 8.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³ “Condensed History of Pharr,” Prepared by Lloyd H. Glover, Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

Cage's wife, who hated the region and would spend her hours pacing up and down the veranda on the second floor of the hotel.¹⁷⁵ This annoyed various member of the hotel's residents, but things improved as Mrs. Cage "finally got over it."¹⁷⁶

Between 1911 and 1914, the Pharr settlement became a stop on the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway, new homes were built, and new businesses were opened. Many of the buildings that were built during these years were the City Hall Building (now known as Old City Hall), the Community Church which later became the Methodist Church, the Kelly Land Office, various residencies, a shack that was used by a doctor nicknamed "Dr. String," and a general store.¹⁷⁷ In an interview for the *The Pharr Press* in 1959, Mrs. Gore recalled the construction of the first homes in Pharr.

We built the first house on West Caffery Ct., completing it in May of 1912. Mr. Gore owned two blocks in that area. We could see the roof of the J.A. Cook house to the north-west and we could see the McLendon house (then Calhoun residence) to the east. Everything else was brush. A year later, a house was built across the street north and one was built to the west. I remember going out to the house once while it was under construction and saw my first rattlesnake.¹⁷⁸

Life in this frontier town was hard and many new residents were alert when it came to the local wildlife. Testimony given for the 50th anniversary issue of *The Pharr Press* stated that:

At night one could hear a lonely coyote calling from the brush. The loneliest sound in the world. One could sound like a whole pack. Spiders and insects of all kinds kept the new residents on the alert. Scorpions, centipedes and tarantulas were seen often and

¹⁷⁵"1911 Pioneer Recalls Early Days in Pharr" *The Pharr Press*, February 13, 1959. F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷"Bandit Days of '15 Were Worst'-Mrs. Kelso Says," F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁷⁸"1911 Pioneer Recalls Early Days in Pharr" *The Pharr Press*, February 13, 1959, F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

table legs and other pieces of furniture stood in cans of water to keep the many ants away from food.¹⁷⁹

Besides the wildlife threat, there were other issues confronting residents that affected their living situation. There were no paved roads, no electric or gas lighting, ice had to be shipped in, and no fire department.¹⁸⁰ Although there were no fire department in town until the following year, the Pharr town site did have a sense of law and order. Tom Mayfield, or Mr. Tom as many knew him, was Pharr's first city Marshall, serving from 1910 to 1921.¹⁸¹

By 1915, that most of these issues were resolved. At the time, Pharr had an estimated population of 600 residents.¹⁸² Many residents celebrated as the town opened its first ice and electric plants. Once the new electric lights were turned on the first night, the entire population went out and walked through the streets.¹⁸³ Moreover, in that same year the Pharr town site, along with the settlement of San Juan located adjacent to its east, voted to create a single school district. However, it would not be until March 15, 1919, that the bill to create this new school district passed and became law.¹⁸⁴ In this same election, voters in both towns also approved the building of a central high school between them. In 1915, there were four schools in the district. One of them, named the Pharr Grammar School, was for ethnic Mexican children.¹⁸⁵ This school was located on the west side of the town's main street (present day Cage Boulevard) and south of

¹⁷⁹"1916 Fire Which Razed Entire Block of New Town Is Re-Told," The Pharr Press, February 13 1959, F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁸¹"Dean of All Peace Officers, Tom Mayfield, Has Seen History Made for 58 Years," F381, Folder: Pharr-History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁸²*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

¹⁸³"1916 Fire Which Razed Entire Block of New Town Is Re-Told," The Pharr Press, February 13, 1959, F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁸⁴"Pharr, San Juan Join In 1915 to Build H.S.," The Pharr Press, February 13th, 1959, F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁸⁵Texas Historical Commission. [Historic Marker Application: Buell School], text, 1991; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph439619/m1/5/: accessed October 6, 2016), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas Historical Commission, 5.

the railroad tracks. The Pharr Grammar School housed grades 1-6 and no upper grade level Mexican schools were built because Mexican children were not expected to go beyond grammar school.¹⁸⁶

Border violence and tragedy also affected life in the young town in 1915. Many residents who had moved to the region feared for their safety during the peak years of border violence in South Texas. Various Anglo accounts illustrate the fear they had for their safety as well as their families. Being one of the earliest families to move to Pharr, the Kelso's left Pharr in November of that year because of all the bandit trouble and fear for the safety of their children.¹⁸⁷ Mrs. Kelso recalled that three spies who were charged with collaborating with the "bandits" were hanged for doing so.¹⁸⁸ What shocked her even more was that one worked at the hotel and another at the local store, leading her and her husband to sell their drug store and leave the town for good.

Another account of these troubling times came from another "pioneer" resident, Hallie M. Maule. In her 1979 interview with *The Monitor*, Maule explained that out of all the hardships she and her family faced in those early years, the bandit troubles were still vivid in her memory. She described that many residents were afraid to go out at night, and those who lived out in the country went to town for safety.¹⁸⁹ Pharr received three regiments of National Guard soldiers from the state of New York, who encamped on the Southwest side of the town. The first

¹⁸⁶*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

¹⁸⁷"Bandit Days of '15 Were Worst' -Mrs. Kelso Says," F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹"100th Birthday Celebration Set for Mrs. Hallie M. Maule," *The Monitor*, February 25, 1979, F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

regiment arrived in November 1915 and the other two in early 1916.¹⁹⁰ Once their presence was known, the bandit raids in the area declined rapidly.¹⁹¹

At this point in time in the history of the Valley, Anglo and ethnic Mexican residents experienced various violent incidents. The rise of border violence in South Texas during the first two decades of the twentieth century had many contributing factors such as Anglo and Mexican relations, the Mexican Revolution, *el Plan de San Diego*, and raids influenced by the plan, and Pancho Villa's attack on Columbus, New Mexico in 1916.

Other groups such as political refugees and radicals escaping the violence in Mexico sought to bring about "drastic political and economic changes" in the region.¹⁹² The most radical example of this was a planned uprising against the United States that would occur on February 20, 1915 called *El Plan de San Diego* or the Plan of San Diego. The goals of this planned uprising were to "proclaim the liberty of blacks from the 'Yankee tyranny' that held them in 'iniquitous slavery since remote times' and proclaim the independence of five states (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California) that were robbed from Mexico due to "American imperialism."¹⁹³ In addition, it detailed the creation of an "independent state for Mexicans, African Americans, and Indians."¹⁹⁴ If successful, a new independent state would also be formed for African Americans as a buffer between the San Diego Republic and the United

¹⁹⁰"Condensed History of Pharr," Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁹¹"100th Birthday Celebration Set for Mrs. Hallie M. Maule," *The Monitor*, February 25, 1979, Folder F381 Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

¹⁹²*Handbook of Texas Online*, Don M. Coerver, "Plan of San Diego," accessed September 11, 2015, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ngp04>.

¹⁹³"Plan de San Diego," Translation, *Digital History*, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3692, accessed March 26, 2018.

¹⁹⁴Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley & the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 472.

States.¹⁹⁵ Also, indigenous people such as the “Apaches of Arizona” and other “Indians” within the territory would have their lands returned so they could help with the revolutionary cause.¹⁹⁶ To achieve these objectives, an army would be formed under the leadership of commanders that would be appointed by the “Supreme Revolutionary Congress of San Diego, Texas,” and would fight under a red and white banner with the inscription “*Igualda e Independencia*.”¹⁹⁷

Other than promoting unity between people of color affected by U.S. imperialism in decades prior, the Plan of San Diego also promoted anti-Anglo propaganda, violence, the murder of Anglo men over a certain age, and a “no quarter” policy. For example, the plan strictly prohibited holding civilian or military prisoners, and “the only time that should be spent in dealing with them is that which is absolutely necessary to demand funds of them.”¹⁹⁸ Regardless if these individuals provided any funds, they would be immediately shot without any hesitation.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, the plan also called for the death of every “North American over sixteen years of age,” and any armed “foreigner” who could not provide proof to his right to carry arms.²⁰⁰ In short, the Plan of San Diego called for unity amongst people of color but promoted violence against traitors and oppressors.

On the proposed date for revolution, groups of Mexicanos organized in “quasi-military” companies and raided different points in the Valley. Their actions of resistance included “train

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶“Plan de San Diego,” Translation, *Digital History*, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3692, accessed March 26, 2018.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.* “*Igualda e Independencia*” translates to “Equality & Independence.”

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰⁰*Ibid.* The plan also called for the “respecting” elderly men, women, and children, but instructed that any traitor to the ethnic Mexican race would receive none. For a more detailed account of the Plan of San Diego translated in English, please visit http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3692.

derailments, bridge burnings, and sabotage of irrigation pumping plants.”²⁰¹ Many Anglo Texans did not see these attacks as part of a unified movement, but rather “as pure and simple Mexican banditry whose origins lay in revolutionary Mexico.”²⁰² As the attacks intensified, many Anglos began to realize that these were more than just sporadic raids by Mexican bandits. Montejano explains that Anglo doubts about the intelligence of Mexicans were dismissed on August 8, 1915, when “Mexican raiders” carrying the red and white banner attacked *Las Norias* Division of the King Ranch.”²⁰³ The Anglo response came swiftly as the Texas Rangers hunted down and killed hundreds of bandits. Unfortunately, many who were killed were innocent Mexicanos who were labeled as bandits, accused of aiding and abiding, or simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Others who fled into the Valley region during the Mexican Revolution did not want to fight injustices or create any trouble. Instead, those who crossed the river into Texas only did so to flee and wait for the violence in Mexico to subside. Historian Camilo Amado Martinez Jr. explains that there were no major revolutionary battles that took place in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, but the mere presence of the military “raised havoc in Burgos and the surrounding rancherias.”²⁰⁴ Furthermore, many Burgueños were forced to leave their homes and came to the Valley in search for stability and work.²⁰⁵ Overall, many of those who fled the violence in Mexico dreamed of returning home after the revolution, but according to Martinez, many did not for various reasons. Instead many Mexicanos who chose to stay in the Valley had a major

²⁰¹Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 117.

²⁰²*Ibid.*

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 119.

²⁰⁴Martínez, *The Mexican and Mexican-American Laborers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, 1870-1930*, 8-9.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*

impact on the success of the cotton and citrus industries in the region from the late 1910s to 1930.²⁰⁶

By 1916, Pharr became officially incorporated as a town and was no longer a small frontier settlement surrounded by brush, mesquite trees, and wildlife. There were enough homes and people to form a city. Being incorporated meant that residents were able to make decisions concerning their town. Thus, on February 22, 1916, the residents of Pharr voted to incorporate the city by a vote of seventy-nine for incorporation to three against.²⁰⁷ Prior to its incorporation, Pharr was managed by Mr. Linesetter in the early years, since many of the pioneering first families stayed at his hotel. After incorporation, the city's first mayor and city commissioners were voted into office. Linesetter was the city's first mayor, while Marvin Evans and E.L. Calhoun took the two city commissioners seats.²⁰⁸ It would not be until December 6, 1949, that a new city charter would require four city commissioners instead of two.

In the summer of that year, tragedy struck the young city again as a major fire consumed and laid waste to a square block of the business district.²⁰⁹ The blaze greatly impacted Pharr as fire destroyed the Pharr Mercantile, the hardware store, pool hall, picture show, the lumber yard and small shops.²¹⁰ A few months after the massive fire Pharr's first fire department was established. The department's firefighting equipment in those early years consisted only of a hose reel on wheels obtained from the national guard when they withdrew from the region in the winter of 1919. Pharr's early fire alarm system consisted of pistol shots from ordinary citizens.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*

²⁰⁷"Condensed History of Pharr," Glover Collection, Folder 89.32.02a, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

²⁰⁸*City of Pharr City Officials*, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, Tx.

²⁰⁹"To Show City Improvements," Box F381, Folder: Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

²¹⁰"1916 Fire Which Razed Entire Block of New Town is Re-Told," Box F381, Folder: Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

Early citizens of the city recount that when a citizen saw a fire he would immediately shoot various rounds from his pistol into the air alerting the community to the danger.²¹¹ At the time, the department consisted of mainly volunteers led by Dave Simmons. Simmons always helped with pushing the hose reel to the location of the fire and was given the title of “Chief” because of his organizing and firefighting efforts. By 1918, the city acquired its first fire engine, which helped combat fires and protect the city from blazes such as the one that destroyed the business district in 1916.

As previously noted, the sugarcane industry in Pharr only lasted for two seasons due to issues with the soil, and ceased to exist by the 1920s. Historian Timothy Paul Bowman explains that there were larger issues at play that affected commercial agriculture in the Valley prior to World War I, such as problems with irrigation systems, inadequate access to water, crop failures, over-purchasing of land, and growers’ inability to make payments on the land they purchased.²¹² Bowman asserts that all these issues “marred” the Valley’s commercial agriculture. However, vast opportunities for farmers were created during and after World War I, and this period was known as the “apex of a golden age in American agriculture” that also included the Valley.²¹³ With money to spend, many farmers bought more land and improved their farming capabilities during and the years after the war.²¹⁴ This was due in part because the United States “entered a period of economic inflation after the war,” which allowed farmers to sell land at higher

²¹¹“To Show City Improvements,” Box F381, Folder: Pharr History, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

²¹²Timothy Paul Bowman, “Blood Oranges: Citriculture, Colonialism, and the Making of Anglo-American Identity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Borderlands During the Twentieth Century” (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2011), 151, accessed September 25, 2017, Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (875564855). Retrieved from <http://0-search.proquest.com.lib.utep.edu/docview/875564855?accountid=7121>.

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴*Ibid.*

prices.²¹⁵ Bowman explains that these farmers began to see themselves as businessmen investing in their new wealth.²¹⁶

With this new economic opportunity, farmers not only invested in their businesses but also influenced the need for cheap labor as they expanded their operations. Prior to 1920, Mexican immigration into the region was light but increased drastically after the start of the new decade. It was during the 1920s that cotton and citrus industries in the Valley expanded, and the rise of these industries led to the need for more Mexican labor.²¹⁷ The region itself also experienced a population boom because of commercial farming that attracted not only Mexican labor from south of the border, but also Anglo farmers from the U.S. Midwest.²¹⁸ By this point in time, the population of the Valley had grown to 85, 861 people.²¹⁹

The Valley's reputation as a vibrant region in which Anglo farmers and investors could own their own land, gain profits, and have a steady flow of Mexican labor became well-known through the United States. In the *American Globe*, published in Los Angeles, California, the city of Mercedes, Texas was praised because of the success rate of farmers in the region. This newspaper explained that many producers in the region ended up paying for their farms in full with the profits made from the various crops they sold.²²⁰ In the months of January and February farmers were able to grow citrus, beets, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, mustard, radish,

²¹⁵Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*, 94.

²¹⁶For a more detailed account of the issues mentioned in this paragraph, please see Chapter 3, sub-heading "The Orange Sunrise," in Bowman's 2016 book, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*.

²¹⁷Martínez, *The Mexican and Mexican-American Laborers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, 1870-1930*, 92.

²¹⁸Bowman, "Citriculture, Colonialism, and the Making of Anglo-American Identity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Borderlands During the Twentieth Century," 152.

²¹⁹"Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties from 1850-2010," <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf> accessed March 22, 2018.

²²⁰"Magic Valley Lauded by California Paper," Scott Cook Photocopies A-Z Collection, Folder 1, ARGLIC booklet, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

spinach, peas, and Rhodes grass.²²¹ In addition to these crops, farmers grew celery, potatoes, onions, okra, peppers, green corn, squash, and tomatoes in the months of March and April and eggplants, cane, figs, sweet potatoes, cotton, kafir, milo, broom corn, and peanuts from May to November.²²²

With the creation of land and irrigation companies in the early twentieth century, promoters and boosters from these companies hailed the Valley as a “Magic Valley” where farmers could grow various crops throughout the entire year and reap huge profits. Indeed, commercial farming in the region occurred all year, and it did bring in vast amounts of profits. Crops raised in the ARGLIC irrigation system from February to August 1923 yielded great profits when compared to the average production cost for each crop. Farmers planted 30,000 acres of cotton and averaged $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a bale per acre; the average price per bale was 25 cents.²²³ If 30,000 acres produced $\frac{1}{2}$ a bale per acre at 25 cents, the profit would be \$3,750 at an average production price of \$40.00 per acre.²²⁴

That same year and location, corn was also popular, as 4,000 acres were planted and yielded 60 bushels per acre at \$0.80 per bushel. This corn harvest totaled out to \$192,000 for that year alone. Citrus planted that same year comprised of 3,000 acres and produced 400 boxes per acre at \$2 a box.²²⁵ In total the citrus crop brought in \$2,400,000, with an average production cost of \$150 per acre. Citrus was not only grown by new farmers coming to the Valley, but numerous growers already in the region also shifted their agribusiness to planting fruits.²²⁶ Of course, these are but a few of the crops that were planted in 1923. Other crops included

²²¹*Ibid.*

²²²*Ibid.*

²²³*Ibid.*

²²⁴*Ibid.*

²²⁵*Ibid.*

²²⁶Bowman, “Blood Oranges,” 153.

Cabbage, Beets, Carrots, Sorghum Cane, and Rhodes Grass. The crops raised on the ARGLIC system demonstrated to investors and farmers that there was profit to be made selling harvested crops.

Newspapers and magazines were used as promotional tools as well. *The Missionite* from Mission, Texas noted that the region, at first sight, might seem to promise less when compared to other territories in Mexico, Canada, and the United States, but it yielded more product than other regions because of the weather. Everett Lloyd in his ten-day visit in the Valley noted that the region was one of the most prosperous areas in the United States, and that “more money was being made and spent and put into improvements than on any other area of equal size.”²²⁷

His firsthand account of the Rio Grande Valley’s prosperity was illustrated in *Lloyd’s Magazine* in 1924 gave readers an idea of how money was being made in the region.

Every bank in the Valley is overloaded with deposits and this money belongs to the farmers and growers of the respective communities. There is no better evidence of general prosperity; and the people are happy and contented. Small country banks with only \$25,000 capital have four and five hundred thousand dollars on deposit, and millions of dollars are being paid the growers for every variety of farm product. Land is being everywhere cleared, new roads being built, houses and store buildings constructed, irrigation ditches and canals criss-cross every section of the country and the general effect is a majestic panorama of productive soil and beauty.²²⁸

Accounts about the Valley, its fertile land, moderate climate, and beautiful outdoors gave valuable insight into how land and irrigation companies, agents and boosters promoted the region. Rather than just focusing on agriculture, various land promoters across the Valley attracted prospective buyers to the region by illustrating how the area had become Americanized and modernized. Numerous hotels were built in the region to attract visitors, and millions of

²²⁷“Lloyd’s Magazine,” John Shary Collection, Publications, Box 4, Shelf 333, Folder 48, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, 13.

dollars were invested into building these modern structures to offer satisfactory accommodations.²²⁹ Representing a sense of progress and modernity, new structures such as government and city buildings allowed communities in the region to pride themselves “on the rapid strides that have been made in city beautification projects.”²³⁰ More examples of modernization and progress included access to natural gas, paved roads, park improvements, sewage and water work systems, and electricity. Modernization efforts in the Valley during 1920s transformed many ranches and small towns from brush land to modern towns. These promotional attempts were successful as the region’s population size had increased exponentially after the arrival of the railroad in 1904.

With the growth of the citrus industry and population boom, “cracks in the relationship” between small and large farming ventures who competed with one another for resources and cheap labor began to appear.²³¹ Colonialism in the Valley, as Bowman terms it, functioned along the lines of race and whiteness, but it did not guarantee success for many Anglo newcomers who went into small farming ventures.²³² Competition for resources and cheap labor was prominent in the Valley during the 1920s because of the success of commercial farming, but they also worsened during the Great Depression as larger farms consolidated or pushed out smaller agribusinesses.²³³ Eventually, Anglos who struggled or lost faith in the Valley’s initial promise

²²⁹*The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas*. [U.S.]: Missouri Pacific Lines, 1930. (Reprint: McAllen Old Timers Club 1930 booklet.).

²³⁰*Ibid.*

²³¹Bowman, “Blood Oranges,” 143. “Whiteness,” according to Neil Foley, is not “simply the pinnacle of ethnoracial status but as the complex social and economic matrix wherein racial power and privilege were shared, not always equally, by those who were able to construct identities as Anglo-Saxons, Nordics, Caucasians, or simply whites.” For more information, please see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

²³²*Ibid.*

²³³*Ibid.*, 144.

of riches “sought to reinforce their excitement by emphasizing racial segregation and a triumphant Anglocentric narrative of daily life in the region.”²³⁴

Anglos who arrived in the region after 1910 did not take kindly to mixing with ethnic Mexicans like their predecessors. Though various land and irrigation companies attempted to portray ethnic Mexicans as hard-working and law-abiding people in the early years, official policies of segregation were implemented in the 1920s to ensure newcomers would not be mixed with the labor force.²³⁵ Bowman explains that various town builders in the Valley “wove segregation into the very structure of the Valley’s new communities.”²³⁶ In Hidalgo County, towns along the Missouri-Pacific Railroad designated either the north or south side of the tracks (depending on the town) as the area for lower income ethnic Mexican residences and industrial complexes.²³⁷ The opposite side of town was devoted to middle and upper-class ethnic Mexicans, and Anglo businesses and residences.²³⁸

There were clear differences between both sides of the track that illustrated the distinct social standing between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans. The Anglo side of town had all the modern amenities such as indoor plumbing, modern buildings, good roads, and access to business while the Mexican side had outdoor toilets, dirt roads, and tin-shack residences.²³⁹ Ethnic Mexicans were also expected to act “in their place” when crossing paths with Anglos in public spaces as well as obey designated times in which they (ethnic Mexicans) would be allowed to be on the Anglo side of town. Furthermore, ethnic Mexicans were allowed to shop on the Anglo side of town on Saturdays, periods of low Anglo traffic in public stores, and expected

²³⁴*Ibid.*

²³⁵*Ibid.*, 175.

²³⁶*Ibid.*

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹*Ibid.*

to be back in the “Mexican side” of town by sunset.²⁴⁰ For instance, in Pharr, the practice of letting ethnic Mexicans know to return to their part of town after a certain hour was common during the 1940s and 1950s. Interviewee Ruben Rosales recalled that his brother, Israel Reyna, told him that after a certain hour a siren would be heard letting ethnic Mexicans know that it was time to return to the north side.²⁴¹ “That meant todo el Mexicano on this side (north) and todo el Anglo on that side (south), and they better not catch you over there.”²⁴² Of course, this is just one example of these social practices of segregation that were common place in the Valley. These practices wouldn’t be fully challenged until the late 1960s and early 1970s during the Chicano Movement.

The 1920s was a period of growth for the city of Pharr, as new buildings were erected in the business district and the population grew to 1,565.²⁴³ Much of Pharr’s economic prosperity came from two sources. One, the railroad which became instrumental to the growth of the city as it became the main source of travel and transportation of cargo, equipment, and loads throughout the region, and second, the advancement of irrigation which allowed for agricultural growth that increased profits.²⁴⁴ These two factors boosted Pharr’s economy allowing for the creation of new businesses and buildings in the downtown area.

The decade of the 1920s was a time of transition for various towns in the Valley, including Pharr, because of modernization and the establishment of professional institutions. The need for a doctor in town was a must and the first city physician was Dr. Jill Devoti, who

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 176.

²⁴¹“Race Relations in Pharr,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/divisions-between-anglos-and-mexicans> accessed April 10, 2018.

²⁴²*Ibid.*

²⁴³“*Texas Almanac City Population History from 1850-2000*,” <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>

²⁴⁴Romeo Rosales Jr., *Images of America: Pharr*, (Charleston, NC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 19.

interestingly was a female doctor at a time when women's inclusion in the medical field was restricted.²⁴⁵ The fire department, which between 1916-1918 was loosely comprised of citizens who volunteered, was officially organized and formed in 1921 and by 1928 a new fire station was constructed.²⁴⁶ In regard to law enforcement, there are no records readily available that illustrate when and how the city police department was formed. However, there were instances of local lawmen (city marshals or county deputies) enforcing the Volstead Act of 1919 in Pharr as bootleggers attempted to transport alcohol from Mexico through the city.²⁴⁷

With population and economic growth, the city of Pharr, like many other cities along the railroad, segregated its ethnic Mexican population from its Anglo population. Prior to the 1920s, Mexican laborers and their children resided in the outskirts south of Pharr along the river.²⁴⁸ During the city's agribusiness boom, Mexican laborers resided in the north of Pharr just across the railroad tracks. As previously stated, the "Mexican" side of town only had shacks for housing, outdoor restrooms, and dirt roads, while lacking modern amenities. The lives of Pharr's ethnic Mexican population differed greatly from the city's Anglo residents as they lived in the poorer side of town and were regulated by segregationist social norms.

Since the establishment of the Pharr, the local government provided separate educational facilities for children of landowners and children of laborers.²⁴⁹ The first grammar school for ethnic Mexican children was built on the plots of the original town site in 1915, which was populated by Anglos homes and businesses. By the early 1920s, many ethnic Mexicans resided

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴⁷Passed in 1919, the Volstead Act prevented the sale and consumption of alcohol in the United States from 1920 to 1933 when it was repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment. This era in U.S. History was known as Prohibition.

²⁴⁸Rosales, *Images of America: Pharr*, 48.

²⁴⁹Texas Historical Commission. [Historic Marker Application: Buell School], text, 1991; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph439619/m1/5/; accessed October 6, 2016), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas Historical Commission, 5.

on the north side of the railroad tracks, and the city built a new elementary school for the children living there. The new Mexican elementary school was built on lots 5-12, in block 11 in the city.²⁵⁰ At a cost of \$625.00, the school board authorized the construction of the ethnic Mexican grammar school in August 1920, and it was completed by September.²⁵¹ Though there are no records readily available that illustrate the number of students attending the school, one can assume there were not many, since there was only one teacher and a principle by the name of Cristella Caballero. As the student enrollment increased, so did the number of teachers and the number of rooms in the building. From 1924 to 1927, the building expanded significantly as new wings were added to the original building as overcrowding plagued the school. In 1925, this overcrowding led the fifth and sixth grade students to attend class at the white high school while additions to the building were finished.²⁵²

The practice of segregation between the races and of facilities in Pharr was “prompted by language differences (Spanish vs. English), geography (north of the tracks vs. south of the tracks), ethnic preference (Northern European vs. Latin), and economics (entrepreneurs and landowners vs. hired labor).”²⁵³ The separation of facilities mainly stemmed from Anglos’ self-perceived notion of being a superior race. However, relations between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans in twentieth century Texas was based on Jim Crow segregation which “defined the proper place of Mexicans and regulated interracial contact.”²⁵⁴ Montejano explains that many newly arrived Anglos in the region viewed ethnic Mexicans as inferior “dirty” people that needed to be dominated. He also asserts that the culture of segregation in the state of Texas, especially in South Texas, not only depended on Anglo economic or political interests but on

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵¹*Ibid.*

²⁵²*Ibid.*

²⁵³*Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵⁴Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicanos*, 160.

Anglo beliefs rooted on the ideology of racial superiority.²⁵⁵ The influx of Anglos in the 1920s disempowered ethnic Mexicans as they gained control of the economic and political spheres of the region.

Other school districts in South Texas also followed this practice of segregation. The Mission school district had schools for white students and “a separate school for Mexican scholars.”²⁵⁶ Montejano explains that many school districts across Texas practiced segregation because Anglo parents did not want their children to mix with “dirty” Mexican children and would “drop dead” if anyone mentioned mixing “Mexicans with whites.”²⁵⁷ Segregation among school children was not new and would continue until the mid-twentieth century, especially in Pharr with the building of new Mexican schools in the following years. The issues of racial segregation not only plagued the educational system, but also affected everyday life for Anglos and ethnic Mexicans in the region.

By 1932 the Mexican grammar school was renamed Buell Elementary in honor of Helen W. Buell, who became the school’s principle in 1924 and remained as principle until she retired the year the school was named after her. At the time Buell Elementary had ten teachers and 400+ students.²⁵⁸ Over the next few decades, Buell Elementary became the school ethnic Mexican children who lived on the north side of the railroad tracks attended.²⁵⁹ However, animosity towards ethnic Mexican children and adults worsened in the 1930s during the Great Depression.

²⁵⁵Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 220.

²⁵⁶“The Treasure Land of the Lower Rio Grande,” John Shary Collection, Publications, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

²⁵⁷Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 225.

²⁵⁸Texas Historical Commission. [Historic Marker Application: BuellSchool], text, 1991; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth439619/m1/5/: accessed October 6, 2016), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas Historical Commission, 11.

²⁵⁹Regarding ethnic Mexican children living outside the Pharr city limits, I did not find any sources (at the moment) that inform if they also attended Buell Elementary or if they attended another school district.

According to Bowman, the depression did not hit or affect the Lower Rio Grande region immediately after the stock-market crash in October of 1929. By the time the effects of this economic crisis were felt in the region, the lives of Anglo and ethnic Mexicans alike were negatively impacted. The Depression years revealed that “not one ‘Valley’ existed, but many—one for the rich, one for the small grower, and the third, of course, for ethnic Mexicans.”²⁶⁰ For Anglos, the Depression accentuated the economic divide between the rich and the poor (the small grower) in their community.²⁶¹ Many of the small growers in the region were taken over by larger growers in the 1930s because of the economic crisis and these larger growers, according to Bowman, maintained control of the region’s agribusiness well into the late twentieth century. The number of agribusinesses in the region dropped from 14,222 in 1935 to only 7,773 in 1954.²⁶² Ethnic Mexican experiences during the Great Depression differed greatly than those of Anglos since they were blamed for the woes of many growers, especially small agribusinesses. Bowman explains that many growers released their economic frustrations and worries on their ethnic Mexican labor forces by poorly mistreating them, cutting wages, and reducing their labor force by half.

The 1930s was a difficult time for many ethnic Mexicans not only in South Texas, but across the United States, because of the Great Depression. All ethnic Mexicans regardless of citizenship faced an increase of anti-Mexican racism that led to the forced repatriation of 400,000 to one million individuals throughout the Southwest, and became known as Mexican Repatriation.²⁶³ According to Bowman, ethnic Mexicans who were not repatriated experienced

²⁶⁰Bowman, “Blood Oranges,” 188.

²⁶¹*Ibid.*

²⁶²*Ibid.*, 215.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, 232; “INS Records for 1930s Mexican Repatriation,” *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*, <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/historians-mailbox/ins-records-1930s-mexican-repatriations> accessed March 27, 2018.

“horrendous” discrimination in the Valley as they were forced to use the “colored” restrooms and sit with African Americans in public places. Many Anglo parents introduced anti-Mexican rhetoric to their children at a very young age, and they in turn would tease young ethnic Mexican children about eating “poor Mexican’s food” such as tortillas instead of bread.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, Bowman explains that the prevailing Anglo attitudes in the 1930s and 1940s was that ethnic Mexicans were “inferior” and that “their sole purpose was to work for Anglos and make their lives easier.”²⁶⁵ Combined with the ethnic Mexican repatriation and anti-Mexican sentiment in South Texas, the years of the Great Depression contributed the decline of agricultural workers and agribusiness production in not only the Pharr, but the entire South Texas region.²⁶⁶

The effects the Great Depression had on Pharr varied due to the closing and opening of many businesses. During his December 1984 interview with Robert Norton, editor and owner of the *Pharr Press*, Lloyd Glover explained his accounts on the effects the Great Depression had on the city of Pharr. Norton recounted accounts that Pharr was the produce center of the Valley for many years, and Glover explained that produce companies were a big industry in the city when he arrived in 1935.

I just don’t know how we would have survived those depression years without them. The bank failed in 1932. We did not get a bank for 9 years, 1941. There were many produce companies here then. I won’t try to name them all. There were 8 or 10.²⁶⁷

One of the main produce companies that was established in 1939 was the Valley Fruit Company (VFC). J.H. Williams and his stepson Roy Weir were the two individuals who established the

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 233.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁶⁶ Rosales *Images of American: Pharr*, 59.; Lloyd Glover interview by Robert Norton, Pharr, December 10, 1984, Transcript, Pharr Memorial Library, Pharr, Texas, 6.

²⁶⁷ Norton, interview; Glover, interview, Transcript, 7.

company 10 years after starting their business in a small garage.²⁶⁸ To accommodate their growing business, Williams purchased a 14-acre lot on North Cage and built the VFC building which in turn made them a large shipper of produce during the 1940s and 1950s in Pharr.²⁶⁹ Other produce companies in the city that shipped vegetables and fruits were the Dayton produce company, M&W Fruit Company, the Pharr produce Company, Coate-Fox-Price, and Elmore and Stahl.²⁷⁰ In short, Glover explained in his interview that both the Elmore and Stahl and Valley Fruit Company employed between 150 to 200 people—which was good back then. The wages were not very much, but Glover explains that things did not cost as much back then.²⁷¹

By 1931, the population in the city of Pharr was 3,225, and it continued to grow in the following decades. The population increased to 4,784 in the 1940s, 8,690 in 1950s, and 14,106 in the 1960s.²⁷² As the population increased, so did various businesses in area that manufactured irrigation equipment, clay products, mattresses, food harvesting and processing equipment and concrete products.²⁷³

²⁶⁸Rosales, *Images of American: Pharr*, 59.

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*; Norton, interview; Glover, interview, Transcript, 7.

²⁷⁰Norton, interview; Glover, interview, Transcript, 7.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*

²⁷²*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

²⁷³*Ibid.*



Illustration 1.6: Valley Fruit Company crate labels from the 1940s (left) and 1950s (right).

In 1970, the population increased to an estimated 15,829 people and had 212 businesses.²⁷⁴

Glover explained in his interview that Pharr grew in population and the economy boomed after World War II because of agribusiness.²⁷⁵ Despite the economic growth, ethnic Mexicans were still subjugated under Anglo rule and affected by the long-standing segregation policies in the city. Juan J. Ruiz stated in his interview with Robert Norton that growing up in Pharr during the 1960s, they (ethnic Mexicans) knew which side of the railroad tracks they had to stay on.²⁷⁶

Ruiz reaffirms the notion that the railroad divided the ethnic Mexican and Anglo communities in the city. He explained that “the Hispanic community was on the north side of the railroad tracks and the Anglo community was on the south side.”²⁷⁷ In addition, schools continued to be segregated well into the 1970s because of language differences, geography, residential patterns,

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*

²⁷⁵Norton, interview; Glover, interview, Transcript, 8.

²⁷⁶Juan J. Ruiz interview by Robert Norton, Pharr, September 8, 2003, Transcript, Pharr Memorial Library, pg. 1.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.* Juan J. Ruiz uses the term “Hispanic community” to describe poor ethnic Mexicans living in the barrios located north of the railroad tracks in Pharr.

and economics.²⁷⁸ Labor organizing and Chicano activism in the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s influenced the drastic changes to “the nature of the internal colony,” which shaped the “social politics of the South Texas borderlands.”²⁷⁹

In conclusion, the historic arrival of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad in 1904 began the “colonial” era in the history of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, as Anglos from the Midwest and American South poured into the region. Though there were previous groups of Anglos that arrived in the region after the U.S.-Mexico War and the latter part of the nineteenth century, the ones who arrived during and after the construction of the railroad had plans of grandeur, since they saw the region as “virgin land” ready to be cultivated. Thus, Anglo investors and land and irrigation companies sold land that they had acquired to incoming Anglo farmers. In turn, from the arrival of the railroad to the 1930s, the agribusiness grew exponentially, requiring cheap labor which was filled by ethnic Mexicans.

The politics of segregation were kept in mind when land and irrigation companies established new towns and plotted the land. For Anglo newcomers arriving in the region in the 1920s and 1930s, it was crucial that there be separation between them and ethnic Mexicans. From Brownsville to Rio Grande City many new towns were built along the railroad line in the first few decades of the twentieth century. The railroad track, a symbol of progress, was used to demarcate an actual color line that separated Anglo and ethnic Mexican residences. The city of Pharr was not exempt from such practices and for 55 years since its incorporation Anglos and ethnic Mexicans lived in separate worlds.

²⁷⁸*Handbook of Texas Online*, Alicia A. Garza, "Pharr, TX," accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hep05>.

²⁷⁹Timothy Paul Bowman, Timothy Paul Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*, 165 and “Blood Oranges: Citriculture, Colonialism, and the Making of Anglo-American Identity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Borderlands During the Twentieth Century,” 246.

Chapter 2: The Rise of the Chicano in South Texas and the Arrival of Chicano Ideology in Pharr

On Christmas Day 1969, MAYO members from across the state and other regions of the United States travelled to Mission to participate in the “first and only national MAYO conference” that lasted until New Year’s Day 1970.²⁸⁰ One individual, José Ángel Gutiérrez, decided to interrupt his participation in the student walkout occurring in Crystal City to attend this important meeting. He arrived late in day on December 26. MAYO chapter members and other attendees gathered at a property owned by the Catholic Order of Oblate priests locally known as *La Lomita*—the little hill.²⁸¹ Gutiérrez, Mario Compean (MAYO leader at the time), Alberto “Beto” Luera, “Tiger” Perez, Pancho Ruiz, Ramon Tijerina (brother of Reies Lopez Tijerina), Narciso Aleman and his followers, delegations from Minnesota, Wisconsin and California, and other chapter leaders were all in attendance.²⁸²

The two main objectives of conference were for chapter leaders to discuss the organization’s plan to continue the Crystal City student walkout and “to present the national MAYO plan for the building of *Aztlan*,” a new Chicano nation by attempting to expand their influence nationwide.²⁸³ During the conference there was a dispute between Gutiérrez and Aleman, which involved each of their supporters. Aleman wanted MAYO’s financial support to start his Chicano college in the Valley, but the organization’s policy called for supporting one project a year, and Gutiérrez’s “Winter Garden project” (the student walkouts) was still in process.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰José Ángel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 177.

²⁸¹*Ibid.*

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 178.

²⁸³*Ibid.*

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*

Chapter representatives met twice a year during the summer and winter months to discuss various issues. In the summer months, leaders discussed program objectives and elected leadership while in the winter they evaluated program development, discussed personnel, and targeted resources. Since the meeting at *La Lomita* was in late December, Aleman's request was out of order and the organization would not adopt a new program.²⁸⁵ In response, Aleman attacked Gutiérrez's methods of organizing and in order to avoid a split between factions, the MAYO organization supported both activities.²⁸⁶ In response to Aleman's attacks, Gutiérrez made sure that there was no official vote on the matter that way the Chicano college did not receive any funds from MAYO's state office.²⁸⁷

The meeting at La Lomita was not the first time Chicano activists and MAYO members arrived in the Valley to organize and discuss political and social issues affecting ethnic Mexicans in the region. As it will be discussed later on in this chapter, Chicano activists were involved in organizing people during the farmworkers movement in Starr County and the student walkout in the towns of Edcouch and Elsa in the late 1960s. In addition, MAYO members arrived in the Valley during time to help with register eligible voters for upcoming elections in 1970. With the voter registration campaign underway and the national MAYO meeting taking place in the Valley, Chicano activists prepared to challenge and overthrow discrimination taking place not only in the region, but in the state and national levels as well.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 179.

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*

²⁸⁷*Ibid.* For a detailed account of this incident, please see chapter nine of Jose Angel Gutierrez's book *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. Also see Narciso Aleman's opinions about his and Gutierrez's ideological differences in his oral history interviews conducted by Texas Christian University's "Civil Rights in Black and Brown" project. Look for the interviews titled "Regional Differences" <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/regional-differences>, "A Distinction Without a Difference" <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/a-distinction-without-a-difference>, and "Progressing Beyond One's Limitations" <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/progressing-beyond-one-s-limitations>.

This chapter mentions the various Chicano movements that occurred in the Valley prior to the riot in Pharr. I explain and illustrate the larger Chicano movements across the Southwest that occurred in the 1960s. This allows for an examination on whether these movements in South Texas, including the riot in Pharr, correlated with one another or simply occurred in a vacuum where different social and political needs were addressed. In short, I argue that the movements mentioned in this chapter correlated with one another because the leaders, activists, and organizations of these movements could be tied back to Texas A&I University in Kingsville. I demonstrate that Texas A&I University was the mecca of Chicano ideology in the region and produced many Chicano leaders that spread out through Texas to fight against social injustices.

For many ethnic Mexican neighborhoods and communities across the Southwest, the mid-1960s and much of the 1970s were years of social unrest.²⁸⁸ This social unrest came to be known as the Chicano Movement, “a political, social, and cultural catharsis” that created various pro and non-militant organizations that sought the betterment of the Mexican American population in the Southwest.²⁸⁹ The start of the movement or *el movimiento* in the 1960s created various opportunities in which ethnic Mexicans protested against unfair social, economic, and political practices that were put in place years and decades after the U.S. war of aggression against Mexico. The society that evolved in the Southwest was plagued by disparity between lower class ethnic Mexicans and the dominant Anglo population.²⁹⁰ These two societies existed side by side, and the inhabitants of both intermingled when it was required.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, AZ: Mexican American Studies & Research Center, The University of Arizona, 1989), xi.

²⁸⁹*Ibid.*

²⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹¹*Ibid.* Please see Appendices D, E, and F for information about the Population of Selected Valley Cities in 1960 & 1970; 1969 Income and Poverty Status of Persons Spanish Language or Spanish Surname; and the social characteristics for Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Kleberg counties in 1970.

Historian Rodolfo Acuña explains that ethnic Mexicans in the United States did not keep silent when responding to injustice and oppression after Texas and the Southwest became part of the United States after two wars of aggression against Mexico. He asserts that unlike many Chicanos who “incorrectly label the second half of the 1960s” as the beginning of *el movimiento*, the ethnic Mexican struggle began after the Texas Revolution and the U.S. war of aggression against Mexico.²⁹² In the years after the war, individuals such as Juan N. Cortina violently resisted Anglo abuse and encroachment on Mexico-Tejano lands. By the first few decades of the twentieth century, the ethnic Mexican middle class generally spoke for the community since its members had education, money, and associations with Anglo power brokers.²⁹³ From the 1930s to the 1960s, groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the American G.I. Forum, and newly formed groups such as the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and the Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations (PASO) addressed the issues of inequality.²⁹⁴

Many Chicano scholars and activists, then and now, have denounced organizations such as LULAC and the G.I Forum for their “assimilationist” policies. Chicano historians have “abhorred” the notions that the league represented middle-class interests, assimilation, and political accommodation.²⁹⁵ Chicanos promoted culture nationalism that focused on the working class, maintaining the Mexican culture within their communities and resisted against political domination and exploitation.²⁹⁶ Chicano consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s revolved around the idea of “cultural nationalism” which not only attempted to bring one people

²⁹²Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), 324.

²⁹³*Ibid.*

²⁹⁴*Ibid.*

²⁹⁵Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009), 2.

²⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 3.

together, but also created two factions during *el movimiento*. One was comprised of young adults who rejected the labels of “Mexican American” or “American” and simply identified themselves as Chicanos, while the other group was comprised of older adults who embraced the former.²⁹⁷

With the founding of LULAC in 1929 in South Texas, ethnic Mexicans born in the United States and who joined the ranks of this organization began calling themselves “Mexican Americans.” With this new-found identity, these individuals challenged their status as second-class citizens by demanding equal treatment decades prior to *el movimiento*. Historian Mario T. García argues that this generation, the Mexican American generation, was the first to organize a significant civil rights movement.²⁹⁸ Unlike Chicano historians who labeled this generation as middle class assimilationists, García explains that many of them were from the working class and that their “intraclass” positions shifted to urban industrial and service occupations in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁹⁹ With the increase of urbanization came an increase of education, which eventually led to the “limited” rise of a Mexican American middle class during these decades.

The convulsions of the Great Depression combined with new economic and political opportunities during World War II and with the historic discrimination in the Southwest against Mexicans and rising expectations among Mexican Americans to give birth to a new leadership, cognizant of its rights as U.S. citizens and determined to achieve them. This leadership was not confined to the middle class but included working-class leaders as well as a handful of intellectuals. Mostly, liberal, the Mexican-American Generation was also composed of radicals. Together, this generation forged a spirited and persistent struggle for civil rights, for first-class citizenship, and for a secure identity for Americans of Mexican descent.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*

²⁹⁸Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

²⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*

There is no question that a middle class composed of Mexican Americans existed in the first half of the twentieth century, but García's main point illustrates that Mexican Americans of every economic background participated in the group's leadership.

Historian Manuel G. Gonzales explains that the Second World War altered the life of the Mexican-American middle class as it grew and became influential. This Mexican-American generation were the children of immigrants and were eager to be accepted in American society, but on their own terms.³⁰¹ Gonzales also explains that Chicano historians in the 1960s and 1970s criticized the Mexican Generation for not being concerned for the welfare of the ethnic Mexican community. The efforts and socioeconomic gains made between the 1930s and 1950s by this Mexican-American Generation "seemed woefully inadequate" for Mexicanos in the 1960s.³⁰²

Thus, the decade of 1965 to 1975 was a period of "extraordinary ferment" in many ethnic Mexican communities in the United States.³⁰³ Following the emergence of the African American Civil Rights Movement, many ethnic Mexicans began calling themselves Chicanos and Chicanas and started their own campaign to "improve socioeconomic conditions and win full recognition of their rights as U.S. citizens."³⁰⁴ *El movimiento* as it was known consisted of various issues and organizations throughout the Southwest. These organizations stemmed from the barrios, schools, prisons, and fields, as Chicana/so became organized.³⁰⁵ As people organized, a few leaders took center stage and began to fight for social, political, and education reform. It must be stressed that even though these individuals became the face of their perspective movements (by

³⁰¹Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 164.

³⁰²*Ibid.*, 194.

³⁰³*Ibid.*

³⁰⁴*Ibid.*

³⁰⁵David Robles, "Walking Out: The Success of the Edcouch-Elsa Student Walkout of 1968 Through the Media," (master's thesis, The University of Texas Pan American, 2012), 6.

choice or not), there were other men and women who contributed to the success of these movements.

After quitting the Community Service Organization (CSO) located in California in 1961, Cesar Chavez used his life savings to create a new farm workers union that went through various name changes.³⁰⁶ The new organization began as the Farm Workers Association, then shifted to the National Farm Workers Association, and finally became the United Farm Workers (UFW) in 1962.³⁰⁷ From 1966 to 1975, Chavez and his union were active in the fight for better pay and better working conditions for agricultural workers in the United States. Though he rejected the term “Chicano,” Chavez became the “single most important representative of the movement”³⁰⁸ In New Mexico, Reies López Tijerina was another leader who emerged in the 1960s and had a profound impact on young Chicanos.³⁰⁹ Believing that all the problems “Hispanics” were experiencing originated from their loss of patrimony, Tijerina and his followers in *la Alianza Federal de las Mercedes* attempted to retake land that was lost in 1848.³¹⁰ Their efforts then led to a violent confrontation between them and law enforcement in *Tierra Amarilla*, New Mexico.

Unlike Chavez and Tijerina, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales of Colorado was adamant that the future of the Mexican-American community was with the youth in urban areas.³¹¹ Like many barrio leaders in the mid-1960s, Gonzales was disappointed by party politics and founded *La Crusada Para la Justicia* (The Crusade for Justice) to help *raza* in Denver.³¹² This organization focused on the younger generation and the issues they faced in the community and in school. Finally, one additional important leader that emerged was José Ángel Gutiérrez from Texas.

³⁰⁶Gonzales, *Mexicanos*, 200.

³⁰⁷*Ibid.*

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 199.

³⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 204-5.

³¹⁰*Ibid.*, 205.

³¹¹*Ibid.*, 204-5.

³¹²*Ibid.*, 207.

Gutiérrez has been labeled as one of the “key leaders” of the Chicano movement, as he co-founded a student organization called the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), was responsible for forming the Chicano political party *La Raza Unida* and had a role in the Crystal City student walkouts in the late 60s.³¹³ Together, Chavez, Gutiérrez, Tijerina, and Gonzalez gained national recognition for their social justice efforts between 1965 and 1975. Historian Armando Navarro best describes this era as an epoch of protest where activists sought to change the political, economic, social, and cultural fabric of the United States through reform or radical means.³¹⁴

The movement for social, economic, and political change arrived in the Valley in the mid to late 1960s and continued well into the late 1970s.³¹⁵ During this period, there were agriculture strikes, student walkouts, the creation of the first Chicano college, and protests against police brutality against poor ethnic Mexican population. On June 1, 1966, over 400 agriculture workers

³¹³*Ibid.*, 209.

³¹⁴Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control*, (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 4.

³¹⁵For more information about the Chicano Movement that was occurring in South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley, please refer to the following books, collections, and primary and other secondary sources. Books: Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona, 1989); Ignacio M. García, *Chicano While Mormon: Activism, War, and Keeping the Faith* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015); José Ángel Gutiérrez, *The Making of A Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995); Armando Navarro, and *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). Master theses: Timothy Paul Bowman, “What About Texas? The Forgotten Cause of Antonio Orendain and the Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers, 1966-1982” (master’s thesis, The University of Texas at Arlington, 2005); Edward Francis Wallace Jr., “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement” (master’s thesis, the University of Texas Pan American, 2008); Christina Garza, “Finally Heard: A Rhetorical Look at the 1971 Pharr Riot.” master’s thesis, University of Texas Pan-American, 2008; and David Robles, “Walking Out: The Success of the Edcouch-Elsa Student Walkout of 1968 Through the Media,” (master’s thesis, The University of Texas Pan American, 2012). Collections: Various oral history interviews of individuals and movements mentioned in this dissertation can be found on Texas Christian University’s “Civil Rights in Black and Brown” project website. Also, for more information regarding the 1968 Edcouch-Elsa student walkouts, please visit or contact the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development located in Elsa.

voted to go on strike against the melon growers of Starr County.³¹⁶ One of their demands was for workers to earn that state's minimum wage of \$1.25/hour rather than earn \$.40 to \$.60 an hour.³¹⁷ Workers from *La Casita*, *Los Puerto's*, and Trophy Farms immediately started their strike by either seeking work outside the strike zone, or by migrating north a month earlier than usual to protest the unfair conditions.³¹⁸ In response, the growers immediately recruited strikebreakers from Mexico by offering higher wages such as \$1 an hour.³¹⁹ That incentive still did not help the grower's situation because 80% of the work force quit that first day, and every packing shed in Starr County were forced to shut down.³²⁰

Agriculture workers in Starr County were organized by Eugene Nelson, who helped Chavez in the Delano strike, and did so without Chavez's blessing.³²¹ Not only did Nelson succeed in starting the movement, but he also nearly destroyed it.³²² Nelson's union, the Independent Workers' Association (IWA), went to war with large agribusinesses in the area such as La Casita, Los Puertos Plantation, and Sun-Texas Farms.³²³ On the first day of the strike, Nelson was arrested by law enforcement officials for disturbing the peace.³²⁴ Soon after, the workers in Rio Grande City voted to merge the IWA with the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) that was led by Chavez.³²⁵ By August 1966, the NFWA merged with the

³¹⁶"Sons of Zapata: A Brief Photographic History of the Farm Workers Strike in Texas," 6, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

³¹⁷James C. Harrington, "Heroic Farm Worker March Galvanized Texas Hispanics," *Star-Telegram* (Dallas/Ft. Worth), August 31, 2016, 1 <http://www.star-telegram.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/other-voices/article99129412.html> accessed February 2, 2018.

³¹⁸"Sons of Zapata," 6.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*

³²⁰*Ibid.*

³²¹Timothy Paul Bowman, "What About Texas? The Forgotten Cause of Antonio Orendain and the Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers, 1966-1982" (master's thesis, The University of Texas at Arlington, 2005), 16.

³²²*Ibid.*

³²³*Ibid.*, 18.

³²⁴"50th Anniversary: Melon Pickers Strike of Starr County," *La Voz de Esperanza*, Vol. 29, Issue 7, (September 2016) 3.

³²⁵*Ibid.*, 5.

Agriculture Workers Organization Committee to form a new union, “the United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO.”³²⁶

Starr County’s local politicians and their political machine, the “New Party,” as well as law-enforcement, sided with the growers.³²⁷ County Attorney Randall Nye, county judges, and many other local county officials attempted to break the strike on various occasions.³²⁸ On June 10, matters worsened when one county official ordered law enforcement to spray a group of workers who were trying to break up a meeting with insecticide.³²⁹ Another method used by the New Party to break the strike was by allowing county law enforcement to forcibly push workers back into the fields and to threaten them to make sure they did not leave.³³⁰

To publicize the struggles of the Valley farm worker, the union planned a march from Rio Grande City to Austin to gain attention from Governor John Connally and hold a rally on the steps of the state capital.³³¹ The march to Austin began on July 4, 1966, and those participating traveled through the Valley, then to Kingsville, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, and finally to Austin.³³² Recounting the march fifty years later, the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* offered a touching description of the marchers:

People put cardboard on their shoes as the soles wore down. As they marched, more and more people joined them. Some walked all the way; some, only part. But they wanted to honor and support these workers-mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers-whose backbreaking work put food on the tables of Texans, at a pittance. People along the way gave the marchers food and drink. Cowboys from the King Ranch helped out with tacos. The dignity of the farm laborers and the justice of their

³²⁶*Ibid.*

³²⁷“Sons of Zapata,” 8.

³²⁸*Ibid.*

³²⁹Bowman, “What About Texas?,” 19.

³³⁰“Sons of Zapata,” 8. It is unknown at the time to the author what type of threats were issued against these farmworkers by county law enforcement.

³³¹Bowman, “What About Texas?,” 19.

³³²Harrington, “Heroic Farm Worker March Galvanized Texas Hispanics,” 1.

cause moved their supporters. These were people marching for a better life for their kids and grandkids and for their community.³³³

Those leading the way were Nelson, Chavez, one Catholic priest who was carrying a cross, and one Methodist priest who had a Bible in hand.³³⁴ By the time the marchers arrived in New Braunfels, they were unexpectedly met by Governor Connally, Attorney General Waggoner Carr, and Speaker Ben Barnes, who were travelling to go white-wing dove hunting.³³⁵ Governor Connally informed the marchers that they should just turn back since he was not going to be at the capital when they arrived and was not going to call for a special session to discuss the establishment of a Texas minimum wage for farm workers.³³⁶ The governor's visit and lack of support failed to discourage the marchers. Through the "blistering summer sun and in torrents of rain," they arrived in Austin on September 5, 1966 and were joined by 15,000 supporters from across the state.³³⁷ Though they failed to achieve their main objective, the march unified Mexican-American farm workers and gained support from some of the Texas clergy.³³⁸

After returning to Starr County from Austin, the strikers continued to experience horrific brutality from the Texas Rangers and have their movement undermined by strikebreakers coming from Mexico. To salvage the movement, Chavez, sent Antonio Orendain to Starr County on September 27, 1966 to replace Nelson. Bowman asserted that Chávez thought that the farmworkers and the movement were "poorly organized" and that it would be better if an ethnic Mexican were in charge rather than an Anglo. "A new organizer with new tactics was

³³³*Ibid.*

³³⁴"Arriving to Texas Following March to Austin," from Antonio Orendain oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 22, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/arriving-to-texas-following-march-to-austin>, accessed March 05, 2017.

³³⁵"50th Anniversary," *La Voz de Esperanza*, 4; Harrington, "Heroic Farm Worker March Galvanized Texas Hispanics," 1.

³³⁶Harrington, "Heroic Farm Worker March Galvanized Texas Hispanics," 1.

³³⁷*Ibid.*

³³⁸Bowman, "What About Texas?," 19-20.

necessary.”³³⁹ Chavez’s decision to do so only created animosity towards Orendain from Nelson and his followers.³⁴⁰ As Bowman explained:

Not everyone was happy to see Orendain. When he arrived in Rio Grande City, there was immediate tension between him and Nelson. Nelson disliked the idea of Orendain taking over, claiming he wanted assistance but not to lose his position as chief organizer.³⁴¹

Orendain offered Nelson and another member, Bill Chandler, the opportunity to be the “Cesar Chavez of Texas,” but they refused, and Orendain “reluctantly became union leader.”³⁴² Though the movement experienced many ups and downs in the latter part of 1966, it declined in the summer of 1967. Subsequently Orendain was ordered by Chavez to leave the Valley and the boycott was eventually defeated.³⁴³ It would not be until 1969 that Orendain would return once again to the Valley to continue his work. The farmworkers movement in Starr County and their march to Austin not only brought attention to the various inequalities they experienced, but also influenced individuals in the Rio Grande Valley and in other towns in South Texas to demand social, political and economic justice.

Seventy miles east of Rio Grande City are the small towns of Edcouch and Elsa, Texas. Located in Hidalgo County, these twin towns collectively represented small rural farming community with a population of less than 10,000 people.³⁴⁴ Unlike the movement in Starr County, the main issue plaguing the residents of these small towns was not agriculture work but education. The 1968 student walkout at the combined Edcouch-Elsa High School not only spearheaded the student movement in South Texas but also helped legitimize the Mexican

³³⁹*Ibid.*, 20.

³⁴⁰*Ibid.*

³⁴¹*Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴²*Ibid.*

³⁴³*Ibid.*, 50.

³⁴⁴Robles, “Walking Out,” 1.

American Youth Organization (MAYO). This organization was formed during a time when Chicano youths joined other youths across the United States in the 1960s to create “an unprecedented epoch of protest, militancy, and extralegal radical activism.”³⁴⁵ MAYO was “brought to life in the fertile ground of Texas” as students and barrio youth focused their efforts on “education, political empowerment, and various community social problems.”³⁴⁶ It was the groups’ first major boycott and it helped MAYO successfully gain a foothold in the Rio Grande Valley.³⁴⁷

In early November 1968, MAYO members from Texas A&I, Pan American University in Edinburg, and other schools in South Texas organized the local junior and high school students who also became members of the organization.³⁴⁸ Then they contacted the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District (EEISD) board president to present him with student demands and recommendations.³⁴⁹ MAYO accused the EEISD of having racist policies aimed at Chicana/o students.³⁵⁰ Many ethnic Mexican students experienced various forms of racism including not being able to speak Spanish in school, physical punishments such as swatting, discouragement from attending college, being forced to quit school or “pushed out,” and being forced to take classes that placed them in typical gender and racial roles.³⁵¹ José Ángel Gutiérrez, one of the founding members of MAYO and *La Raza Unida* and a 1966 graduate from Texas A&I, also became involved in organizing these students. He stated to the local media that Chicanos needed

³⁴⁵Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 118-119.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 119; “MAYO Gets Valley Foothold, *The Monitor* (McAllen), November, 24, 1968.

³⁴⁹“Mexican-American Youth Group Drafts 15 Demands on School,” *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), November 13, 1968, 1. See Appendix for full list of the demands MAYO presented to the school board president and the board itself.

³⁵⁰Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 119.

³⁵¹Robles, “Walking Out,” 23-24. There were vocational classes that focused on cooking, sewing, child care, and mechanics, etc.

to unify in order to fight against the establishment, and this unification can only occur “as soon as Mexican Americans stop trying to become gringos.”³⁵²

When the school board refused to listen to the students’ fifteen demands and two recommendations, 140 students initiated a walkout on Thursday November 14, 1968.³⁵³ Students congregated across the road from the campus with posters and banners as one student hoisted the red-and-black-strike flag of the UFWOC.³⁵⁴ During the protest, principle Marvin Pipkin, an assistant principle, and two teachers attempted to persuade students to return to their classes but to no avail. Many of the students protesting informed the local newspaper that the walkout would “hit the school where it hurts,” since they were cutting down the average daily attendance.³⁵⁵ That afternoon, Principal Pipkin met with student leaders and refused to ‘yield one iota’ as long as he was in charge and threatened that any student not in school would be suspended for an entire semester.³⁵⁶ On Friday, November 15, six students (presumably the leaders of the walkout) were arrested by local police officials on misdemeanor charges and were taken to the Hidalgo County jail. That night, many in the community gathered outside the jail and held a mass rally until the last student was released at 1:00am. Deputy Tom Wingert estimated the crowd to be about 250 people while Assistant District Attorney Jim Skelton believed the crowd was over 300.³⁵⁷ On the following Monday, students continued to protest despite of the previous Friday’s arrests.

Organizations such as the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations (PASO), the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF), and representatives from

³⁵²“MAYO Gets Valley Foothold, *The Monitor* (McAllen), November 24, 1968.

³⁵³“140 Students Boycott Classes at Edcouch-Elsa High School,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), November 14, 1968, 1.

³⁵⁴Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*,” 121.

³⁵⁵“140 Students Boycott Classes at Edcouch-Elsa High School,” *The Monitor*, 1; Robles, “Walking Out,” 43.

³⁵⁶“140 Students Boycott Classes at Edcouch-Elsa High School,” *The Monitor*, 1.

³⁵⁷“E-E Campus Quiet Saturday after Six Arrested,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), November 17, 1968.

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) all joined with MAYO to help defend the students.³⁵⁸

There were also reactions from various Chicano groups in the state and across the Southwest that encouraged these young students in their efforts for a better education. The MAYO chapter from San Antonio sent them a telegram stating, “Los MAYO’s de San Antonio are with you all the way for the better education for *la raza*. Viva Edcouch-Elsa.”³⁵⁹ Miguel Barragan, who at the time was the consultant of *La Raza Unida* in Phoenix, Arizona, gave his praise to the Edcouch-Elsa Chicano student movement by stating:

We are proud of young Mexican Americans like you who are willing to make the sacrifice to organize and lead the community in its efforts to rectify the educational policy that hurt *la raza* in Texas. We commend you for your courage and fully endorse your list of demands to the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District officials. *Viva la causa*.³⁶⁰

Tony Medina, chairman of the Brown Berets chapter in San Francisco, California, also sent a telegram saying, “Congratulations for your most courageous attitude on the blow-out (walkout) for it takes heroic *carnales* like you to ascend up for *la causa*.”³⁶¹ Regardless of the support these students received from some of their peers, their community, and other Chicano organizations, it did not shield them from the punishment they were about to receive.

In late November 1968, students who participated in the walkout were suspended until they met with the EEISD school board.³⁶² Accompanied by their parents, many students had to go before the school board and show reason why he or she should not be expelled for the spring semester. Out of 140 students, only 31 were expelled indefinitely from attending school in

³⁵⁸Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*,” 121-122.

³⁵⁹James Baldemar Barrera, “The 1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout: Chicano Student Activism in a South Texas Community” (master’s thesis, The University of Texas at El Paso, 2005), 60.

³⁶⁰*Ibid.*

³⁶¹*Ibid.*

³⁶²Robles, “Walking Out,” 29.

spring 1969.³⁶³ The parents of these students sought to enroll them in nearby districts in order for them to continue their education. The Edinburg, Weslaco, Donna, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, and McAllen school districts refused to admit these students due to the fear that they would stage similar protests at their campuses.³⁶⁴

Some parents wanted their suspended children to attend classes in the Edinburg school district because it was relatively close to the towns of Edcouch and Elsa. Unfortunately, they only “explored” the idea, since the school district refused to admit any student involved in the walkout.³⁶⁵ Fortunately, the La Joya School District located forty-four miles southwest of Edcouch-Elsa, allowed expelled students to enroll in the district. In late 1968, La Joya superintended Arthur Medina confirmed that 20 students had enrolled in his district and explained that the expelled students “deserved a chance to get an education without and publicity.”³⁶⁶ Of course, parents of these students experienced hardships in transporting them to and from La Joya every day. To remedy the situation, two parents purchased an old bus that was used to transport *braceros*, from a man in Elsa and the rest of the parents provided money for fuel.³⁶⁷

Out of the six students who were arrested, five of them, along with their parents, eventually filed suit against EEISD for \$50,000 in damages in the U.S. District Court in Brownsville, Texas in December 1968.³⁶⁸ Judge Reynaldo Garza ruled in their favor, stating that the school’s attempt to prohibit demonstrations was unconstitutional, and he ordered EEISD to

³⁶³*Ibid.*

³⁶⁴Barrera, “The 1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout,” 53.

³⁶⁵Robles, “Walking Out,” 30. It is unknown to the author if any students who participated in the walkout were actually admitted to the Edinburg school district.

³⁶⁶Robles, “Walking Out,” 31; “Ousted Students Now in La Joya School Classes,” *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), December 1, 1968.

³⁶⁷Barrera, “The 1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout,” 58-59.

³⁶⁸Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 124.

readmit expelled students, expunge expulsions from students' records, and pay for damages.³⁶⁹

Some historians like Armando Navarro believe that the walkouts were not successful because the district did not approve of MAYO's demands but it did demonstrate that educational reform can be achieved through the legal system. I on the other hand believe that the walkouts were successful because it brought local, regional, and national attention to the inequalities students were experiencing in Edcouch-Elsa. Furthermore, regardless if the district failed to approve of MAYO's demands, students, parents, and other members in the community in favor of the walkout became conscious of the inequalities in their community. Today, people living in the towns of Edcouch-Elsa celebrate the walkouts and preserve the memory of the event.

Local activists and former editor for MAYO's newspaper at the time, Jesus Ramirez, stated in an oral history interview that the Edcouch-Elsa student walkout was a very small development when compared to the student walkouts in Los Angeles, California that same year. He explained that "Edcouch-Elsa was very very small, it was very awkward, it was off the cuff, it was very painful to see the people who got hurt by that."³⁷⁰ In his opinion, students who participated in the walkout had no mentoring, no coordination with a localized leader, and was nothing more than an emotional reaction against the EEISD school policies and they suffered for it.³⁷¹

A year after the Edcouch-Elsa walkouts, Texas A&I University and the city of Kingsville would also be thrown into the national spotlight as members of MAYO and other Chicano activists converged to address issues of racial discrimination. Located in Kingsville, some ninety-seven miles north of Edcouch-Elsa, Texas A&I University (now known as Texas A&M

³⁶⁹*Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ "The Edcouch Walkout," from Jesus Ramirez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/the-edcouch-walkout>, accessed March 10, 2017.

³⁷¹*Ibid.*

Kingsville) became a Mecca for Chicano activism and ideology in South Texas in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Testimonies given by ex-alumni who lived in the city and attended the university in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrate that this university in South Texas was the hub for the development of a Chicano identity amongst young ethnic Mexicans. The city of Kingsville was named after Richard King, a land speculator who acquired (legally and illegally) 825,000 acres of land and formed the famous King Ranch. His son-in-law, Robert J. Kleberg, founded and developed the city in 1903-1904.³⁷² With Kleberg's influence, two railroads were built to the city. As was the case in many other growing South Texas towns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railroad tracks were used as a boundary to segregate Anglo settlers from ethnic Mexican residents.

Ethnic Mexicans who lived in Kingsville and attended Texas A&I in the late 1960s experienced various forms of racial discrimination.³⁷³ In short, the city and the university at that time were "anti-Latino."³⁷⁴ Former Texas A&I alumni and community organizer, Efraín Fernández, recalled that as a child he heard stories from the elders of his community detailing the way Richard King stole land from the original Mexican landowners; which then led to the establishment of the *patron* system in Kingsville.³⁷⁵ Of course, the King family refuted these

³⁷²Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas 1836-1986*, 64; *Handbook of Texas Online*, George O. Coalsen, "Kingsville, TX," accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdk02>. The acreage of the ranch provided in the text was obtained from the King Ranch's website.

³⁷³For a more detailed account about the experiences ethnic Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano students at Texas A&I during the 1960s, please see chapter five of José Ángel Gutiérrez's *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. Since the author attendant and graduated from the university as well was a social activist in the mid-1960s, his first-hand account collaborates many of the experiences shared by ex-students who also attended from the 1964 to the 1970s.

³⁷⁴"Finding His Bearings Away from Home," from Oscar Martinez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez, David Robles, and Max Krochmal, July 07, 2015, Laredo, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/finding-his-bearings-away-from-home>, accessed March 10, 2017.

³⁷⁵Efraín Fernández, interview by Ned Wallace, San Juan, January 14, 2001, Tape 1.

allegations and maintained that the lands were legally obtained.³⁷⁶ The indignation of having their land taken away, their history challenged, and their subjugation to second class citizenship stayed with the ethnic Mexican community.

The construction of the railroad also contributed to the segregation of Anglos and non-Anglos in the city as it was used as a boundary between the races just like in the Valley. There were incidents in which “Hispanic” students set to graduate needed to cross the railroad tracks to the Anglo side of town to attend their ceremony.³⁷⁷ They had to be accompanied by younger children for them not to be physically harmed by Anglos for crossing the physical color line of the city.³⁷⁸ In his oral history interview, Fernández explained that the separation between whites and non-whites in the city and public schools stemmed from what he calls “self-re-enforced discrimination.” In brief, what he meant by this term is that city and school authorities never put a stop to this segregation between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans, and members of both groups would not sit or intermingle with one another.³⁷⁹ For example, students at Henrietta N. King High School would self-segregate themselves during pep rallies. Fernández personally witnessed this as he noticed that Anglos sat at one side of the gym while Mexican Americans sat on the other.³⁸⁰ This idea of “self-re-enforced discrimination” continued well into the start of the Chicano movement because neither side broke this taboo.³⁸¹

At Texas A&I, many students of Mexican descent experienced various forms of discrimination, whether they were undergraduates or graduate students. According to Carlos Guerra, one of the founders of MAYO, “Latinos” attending the university during the 1960s

³⁷⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷⁷*Ibid.*

³⁷⁸*Ibid.*

³⁷⁹*Ibid.*

³⁸⁰*Ibid.*

³⁸¹*Ibid.*

constituted less than ten percent of the student population, and there was only one “Latino” faculty member, Dr. Espinoza from the Engineering Department.³⁸² José Ángel Gutiérrez on the other hand recalled that the number of “Chicano” students was close to 1,030 or twenty-five percent and came from many towns across South Texas in 1964.³⁸³

Many ethnic Mexican students experienced covert racism, as only a few of them gained a teaching assistant position. Alumni Manuel Medrano recalled that the university needed to fix the curriculum, student orientations, and access to T.A.-ships. In his own words, “I don’t remember ever seeing a Mexicano teaching assistant. I mean I’m sure there were some, but I didn’t see any in the history department. And I don’t know if I was the first one, but I know that when I was there I was the only one.”³⁸⁴

Undergraduate students faced a more overt style of racism at the campus. There were instances when students experienced discrimination based on the color of their skin. For example, Fernández’s sister, Grace, who attended Texas A&I a few years prior to him, was accepted into a sorority. Afterwards, the Dean of Women, Carrie Lee Bishop, stepped in and told Grace that she did not want her to “upset the apple cart.”³⁸⁵ This intimidated Grace and she

³⁸²Carlos Guerra, “Activists Day at Texas A&I in the 1960s,” email to Daniel López, November 20, 1997, 5, A1997-47, Box: University Ref., Activists-Cardell, Univeristy Archives, Chicanismo, South Texas Archives, James C. Jernigan Library, Texas A&M-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX. Note: “Carlos Guerra was born (1947) and raised in Robstown, Texas and attended public school in the city. He graduated from Robstown High in 1965 and then enrolled at Texas A&I in Kingsville where he concentrated on the hard sciences. Guerra became a political organizer while in college and worked as an organizer for the Democratic Party, and various community groups such as the United Farm Workers and MAYO. He graduated from Texas A&I with a diversified transcript that included extensive studies in the hard sciences, the social sciences, languages, and literature.” All information can be found in the location cited. Also, Charles Martin, Professor of History from the University of Texas at El Paso and Texas A&I alumni informed me that there were also a couple of professors from Spain and Cuba at the time.

³⁸³José Ángel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 79.

³⁸⁴“Discri[m]ination at Texas A&I University and as an Educator,” from Manuel Medrano oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 18, 2015, Brownsville, Texas, CRBB, http://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/discriination-at-texas-a-i-university-and-as-an-educator_ accessed March 09, 2017.

³⁸⁵Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

refused to join the sorority.³⁸⁶ Another ex-alumnus, Oscar Martinez, recounts that many “Latino” students who attended the university were placed in living quarters that resemble “little shacks.” Martinez and his two roommates only had three folding beds, a little kitchen, and a bathroom next to it.³⁸⁷ He summarizes his living experience in Kingsville as “we were poor.”³⁸⁸ Students of Mexican descent who could afford to pay for a dormitory were also not allowed to reside in the dorms “in any integrated fashion,” and those who could not afford to live on campus lived in off campus housing.³⁸⁹ Gutiérrez recalled that many students lived in boarding houses or apartments near campus that were owned by Mexican Americans or others like him would rent houses in the *barrios* located about twenty blocks away from the university.³⁹⁰

Another form of discrimination that existed on campus was that of institutional racism that affected many ethnic Mexican students. There were no support services or access to information that would enable “Chicano” students to excel in academics.³⁹¹ According to Gutiérrez, they did not have tutorial services, subject matter in the classroom focused on topics of “white interests,” barriers existed in the class room as ethnic Mexican students sat in the back, they were not invited to join clubs or organizations, they did not intermingle with Anglos at the student union, and campus student life focused mainly on Greek activity such as fraternities and

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*

³⁸⁷“Finding His Bearings Away from Home,” from Oscar Martinez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez, David Robles, and Max Krochmal, July 07, 2015, Laredo, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/finding-his-bearings-away-from-home>, accessed March 10, 2017.

³⁸⁸*Ibid.*

³⁸⁹Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant*, 85-86.

³⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 86.

³⁹¹*Ibid.*

sororities.³⁹² Since there was not a significant presence of ethnic Mexican students at the university, they “only paid tuition and occupied classroom space.”³⁹³

Those who were able to join student groups or organizations at the university were not immune to discrimination. One Political Science professor, Wayne E. Johnson, also noticed that there were two student bodies at Texas A&I—one Anglo and one “Hispanic.”³⁹⁴ On a bus ride back to Kingsville from a student government meeting at Texas A&M, the Anglo Texas A&I student government representatives negatively talked about their ethnic Mexican peers and their “inferior nature.”³⁹⁵ Overall, these few examples give an insight of the experiences ethnic Mexican students had at the university and did not stop there since many were not informed about scholarships, financial aid, loans, or grants.³⁹⁶

The institutional oppression that ethnic Mexican students experienced at Texas A&I was guided by three individuals—Dean J.E. Turner, Dean Carrie Lee Bishop, and the university president, Dr. James C. Jernigan. These three individuals were committed to “maintaining the King Ranch version of apartheid” at the university where social fraternities and sororities, dorms, and off-campus housing were all segregated, and ethnic Mexicans were pressured to assimilate.³⁹⁷ When Guerra attended his first semester in 1965, he joined with José Ángel Gutiérrez and other “Chicanos” to challenge the oppressive system. According to Guerra:

We volunteered to participate in student government, then doing a re-write of its constitution. We restructured student government

³⁹²*Ibid.*

³⁹³*Ibid.*, 87.

³⁹⁴Wayne E. Johnson, “Political Activism in Kingsville, Texas: 1964-1967,” May 1998, 10, Box: Univ. Ref. Activists, Crandall, University Archives, South Texas Archives, James C. Jernigan Library, Texas A&M-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX. Professor Wayne E. Johnson will be discussed in detail later on in the chapter.

³⁹⁵*Ibid.*

³⁹⁶Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant*, 86.

³⁹⁷Carlos Guerra, “Activists Day at Texas A&I in the 1960s,” email to Daniel López, November 20, 1997, 5, A1997-47, Box: University Ref., Activists-Cardell, University Archives, Chicanismo, South Texas Archives, James C. Jernigan Library, Texas A&M-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX.

and made most offices winnable by pluralities. Then, we organized a coalition of Mexican-Americans, African-Americans and liberal Anglos into the Campus Action Party and took over the whole goddam thing.³⁹⁸

By the late 1960s, Texas A&I teemed with Chicano ideology and activism, as regional leaders such as Carlos Guerra and José Ángel Gutiérrez returned to the university not only to recruit activists, but to gain followers for the Chicano movement in Texas. The majority of the leaders of both MAYO and *La Raza Unida* Party were Texas A&I alumni.³⁹⁹ At the height of the Chicano movement, social activists concentrated their efforts in problem areas where ethnic Mexicans faced discrimination, and South Texas towns such as Crystal City, San Antonio, Robstown, Laredo, and those in the Rio Grande Valley became focal points. Other alumni in the late 1960s became leaders in their own right during and after their years at Texas A&I.

Jesus Ramirez reaffirms that Texas A&I was a hub for the development of Chicano activists and ideology. He explains that local and regional MAYO members along with activists from the university developed a great relationship with one another and would travel south to the Lower Rio Grande Valley to organize and participate in activism.⁴⁰⁰ By early 1969, he and Narciso Aleman (co-founder of *Colegio Jacinto Treviño* and instructor) traveled to Texas A&I to represent the Lower Rio Grande Valley and hold conferences with local activists at the university.⁴⁰¹ In April of that year, Ramirez would travel back and forth from the Valley to Kingsville to participate in various forms of activism that led to a student boycott.

³⁹⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹⁹“Attending Texas A&I University and Teacher Corps,” from Rafael Torres oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez, David Robles, and Max Krochmal, July 07, 2015, Laredo, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-texas-a-i-university-and-teacher-corps>, accessed March 05, 2015.

⁴⁰⁰“Texas A&I Activism,” from Jesus Ramirez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, San Juan, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/texas-a-i-activism>, accessed March 05, 2015.

⁴⁰¹*Ibid.* From this point on, author will address Colegio Jacinto Treviño as, “*el colegio*,” or Jacinto Treviño.

Influenced and motivated by the Edcouch-Elsa student walkout that occurred in November 1968, MAYO members focused on their struggle for educational reform.⁴⁰² MAYO chapters from all over the state converged at Kingsville to participate and support the local chapter's efforts to mobilize and organize a student walkout. Unlike the student walkout in Edcouch-Elsa, the walkout in Kingsville involved the direct participation of state MAYO leadership such as José Ángel Gutiérrez, Mario Compean, and Carlos Guerra.⁴⁰³

On April 14, 1969, students from John S. Gillet Junior High walked out from classes and issued seven demands to school officials, all of which were ignored.⁴⁰⁴ This "boycott" began when school officials refuse to call a special meeting to address the Chicano students' demands.⁴⁰⁵ The seven demands that students presented were:

One: no punishment for students who demonstrated for a better education; two, no punishment for speaking Spanish; three, books about the Chicano heritage in school libraries; four, more bilingual and bicultural programs; five, teachers to stop taking political sides and preaching them to their students; six, an end to the racist literature that erased the contributions of the Chicano from the pages of history; and seven, more Chicano teachers, administrators, and especially counselors.⁴⁰⁶

At the start of the walkout, seventy-five students and MAYO members protested in front of the junior high, and by that afternoon the number of students protesting increased to over 200.⁴⁰⁷ The following night on Tuesday April 15, the Kingsville school board informed boycotting students that they had until Thursday "to return to classes or face the possibility of suspension or

⁴⁰²Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 125.

⁴⁰³*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 125-126

expulsion from school.”⁴⁰⁸ On April 16, the boycott intensified as students from Memorial Junior High and King High School joined students from Gillet in protest. In the afternoon, students moved their protest to two locations, the administration office and then Memorial Junior High.⁴⁰⁹ During the walk to the junior high, students marched down the street through the business district where they were met by the police officers and arrested.⁴¹⁰

Like in Edouch-Elsa, parents, students, and sympathizers gathered outside the jail to support the incarcerated students but in this case, the number of people present were over 500.⁴¹¹ Navarro explains that by the evening of April 17, all the underage students were released except for those who were over seventeen years of age and considered adults.⁴¹² Students who were considered adults waited for the help of MALDEF representatives from San Antonio and were eventually released by either paying a fifty-dollar cash bond or on personal recognizance.⁴¹³ According to Navarro, students and their parents had many meetings with school officials during the two weeks of the walkouts and ended with a protest march on Sunday April 27 without any incident.

The student walkout in Kingsville ended in failure because Chicano students’ demands were not met and student activism “lost steam” as leaders of the movement graduated high school that May.⁴¹⁴ Navarro explains that negotiations were set to continue into May, but they

⁴⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁰⁹Navarro does not provide a detailed number of how many students protested in front of the administration building prior to walking through the business district. He does inform that there were forty demonstrators at Gillet, thirty at Memorial, and forty-five at King High school, and those numbers were consolidated for the protest at the administration office.

⁴¹⁰*Ibid.* Navarro does not provide the number of students who were arrested.

⁴¹¹*Ibid.*, 127.

⁴¹²On page 128, Navarro gives the number of students arrested. Fifty-six juveniles (under the age of seventeen) and fifty-four adults (over the age of seventeen)—totaling to 110 students.

⁴¹³*Ibid.*, 128

⁴¹⁴*Ibid.*, 131.

never took place and all the demands went into committees to be studied—eventually stalling in the process. Other factors that contributed to the failure of the walkout were errors committed by MAYO, the negative press, organizing issues, and lack of financial and personnel support from other Chicano organizations.⁴¹⁵ Regardless of the outcome of Kingsville student walkout, it helped MAYO’s image, reputation, and organizational efforts that allowed them to instigate more walkouts and activism in many *barrios* in Texas—especially in Crystal City in the fall of 1969.⁴¹⁶

Five months after the student walkouts in Kingsville, another movement took place on the Texas A&I campus. Israel Reyna, a Chicano activist, and other Chicano students engaged in marches against the school administration. Held on September 16 and coinciding with the anniversary of the *Grito de Dolores* that started Mexico’s struggle for Independence from Spain in 1810, Reyna and his group of activists coordinated a student walkout with agendas and speeches that lasted three to four hours.⁴¹⁷ They called it “*el comité del 16*.” During this event, some of his followers and supporters questioned the effectiveness of the march and speeches by asking if that was enough. They did not see things changing and discussed further actions such as taking over a building or bombing one.⁴¹⁸ As the leader, Reyna was confronted with question, and in return he asked his followers promoting this course of action, “What was the plan?” More importantly, other than formulating demands and goals if they took a building, Reyes’ main question to them was if they were prepared to die for the cause? He later recounted:

⁴¹⁵See pages 131 and 132 of Navarro’s *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* for a detail description of all these factors.

⁴¹⁶*Ibid.*, 132. For more information about the 1969 student walkout in Crystal City, please see Chapter 8 of José Ángel Gutiérrez’s *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* and pages 132-148 of Navarro’s *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas*.

⁴¹⁷“Texas A&I Activism,” from Israel Reyna oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 10, 2015, Laredo, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/creation-of-a-third-political-party-part-2>, accessed March 07, 2017.

⁴¹⁸*Ibid.*

After we asked that question, no one would answer it. This is because I am not a prepared to die yet. Okay. Until I know that I have followers, people that will follow us...really, really follow us...you know support your cause, no one should be prepared to die because it's not going to make a damn difference. You're just going to be dead.⁴¹⁹

In short, accounts from various Texas A&I alumni, especially Reyes, provide insight to not only the various social issues plaguing the city and the university, but also the rise and actions of Chicano activists in the late 1960s. However, just because students and leaders challenged institutional racism by walking out and organizing did not mean the struggle was over. By the early 1970s, activists at the university came together and focused on the larger aspect of the Chicano movement in Texas.

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time of action for many Chicano activists in South Texas. In 1967, José Ángel Gutiérrez, Juan Patlán, Willie Velásquez, Ignacio “Nacho” Pérez, and Mario Compean came together to discuss the state of the Mexican American people and “reaffirmed their dislike for the *políticos* of the *barrio*.”⁴²⁰ By January 1970, *Los Cinco de Mayo*, as they became known, formed *La Raza Unida* Party (RUP). Once the party was established, the RUP fielded candidates “for nonpartisan city council and school board races the following April in Crystal City, Cotulla, and Carrizo Springs.”⁴²¹ The outcome of these races favored the RUP as they won a total of fifteen seats which included “two city council majorities, two school board majorities, and two mayoralities.”⁴²² In late 1971, the RUP voted to organize at the state level and sought a candidate for the 1972 gubernatorial election while Gutiérrez contended that the

⁴¹⁹*Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, AZ: Mexican American Studies & Research Center-The University of Arizona, 1989), 15-17.

⁴²¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, Teresa Palomo Acosta, “Raza Unida Party,” accessed April 17, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/war01>.

⁴²²*Ibid.*

party focus on strengthening its position in the rural areas.⁴²³ The RUP chose Ramsey Muñiz as their candidate after various individuals such as Democratic state senator Carlos Truán, Hector García, and state senator Joe Bernal declined their offer.⁴²⁴ Alma Canales of Edinburg joined the ticket by becoming the RUP candidate for lieutenant governor.

At the same time in Kingsville, individuals such as Rogelio Núñez, Israel Reyna, Jesus Ramirez, Efraín Fernández, Manuel Medrano, Abel Cadava, Alonso López and many others were among the core of Chicano student activists helping the larger movement gain traction in South Texas. From 1971 to 1972, Muñiz and Gutiérrez visited Kingsville to talk about the gubernatorial race and collect signatures for Muñiz's *Raza Unida* ticket.⁴²⁵ Other state offices that the RUP ran candidates for included the Railroad Commission, treasurer, and the State Board of Education as well as various local posts in Hidalgo, Starr, Victoria, and McLennan counties.⁴²⁶ For Núñez, he did not get involved right away because he came from a conservative household in the Valley. It was not until he heard Gutiérrez speak about the racial and social inequalities many ethnic Mexicans faced that he began to participate and get involved in the movement.⁴²⁷ Like previously mentioned alumni, Núñez's years at Texas A&I during the height of *el movimiento* influenced him to participate in activism because of the flourishing Chicano ideology at the university. Other than meeting Muñiz and Gutiérrez, he also met Carlos Guerra who was later elected to be MAYO's national chairperson in 1971.⁴²⁸ Núñez recalled in his oral

⁴²³*Ibid.*

⁴²⁴*Ibid.*

⁴²⁵"Nunez Political Awakening," from Rogelio Nuñez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 16, 2015, San Benito, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/nunez-political-awakening>, accessed March 05, 2015.

⁴²⁶*Handbook of Texas Online*, Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Raza Unida Party," accessed April 17, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/war01>.

⁴²⁷"College Years," from Rogelio Nuñez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 16, 2015, San Benito, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/college-years>, accessed March 05, 2015.

⁴²⁸Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 93.

history interview that Guerra would “hang out” at the student center (student union) and hold meetings to discuss issues concerning the movement.⁴²⁹ He also discussed and commented on university issues such as the many inaccuracies in the amount of hours students were allowed to transfer and having more “Mexican-American” studies in the history department.⁴³⁰ According to Nuñez, this was the world of Kingsville in the late 1960s and early 1970s as young ethnic Mexicans gained a new level of consciousness and fought against discrimination.

Yet the students at Texas A&I and other Chicano activists were not alone in fighting against inequality at the campus and the region. By the late 1960s, a group of Anglo professors “rebelled” against the system as they challenged the Anglo dominant narrative.⁴³¹ Several of them were professors in sociology and history and hailed from various “fine” schools from New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Colorado and other places.⁴³² Once such professor was Wayne E. Johnson, and he challenged the system by breaking down segregationist ideas of Anglo dominance over ethnic Mexicans.⁴³³ Johnson received his B.A from the University of Illinois in September 1954, then received his graduate degree from the University of Denver in August 1964 and was employed at Texas A&I from September 1964 to August 1967.⁴³⁴

Since Johnson spent most of his young life in Chicago and travelled the world for almost four years due to his enlistment in the Air Force, he had developed a world view and appreciation of different cultures.⁴³⁵ When he moved to Kingsville with his wife a few weeks before the start of the 1964 fall semester, he had little to no knowledge about Texas politics and

⁴²⁹“College Years,” from Rogelio Nuñez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 16, 2015, San Benito, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/college-years>, accessed March 05, 2015.

⁴³⁰“Discri[m]ination at Texas A&I University and as an Educator,” from Manuel Medrano oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 18, 2015, Brownsville, Texas, CRBB, http://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/discrimiination-at-texas-a-i-university-and-as-an-educator_, accessed March 09, 2015.

⁴³¹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

⁴³²Alonzo López interview by Ned Wallace, McAllen, June 27, 1997.

⁴³³Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

⁴³⁴Johnson, “Political Activism in Kingsville, Texas,” 1-2.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

felt no difference between “Hispanics” and Anglos.⁴³⁶ After arriving, they soon realized that there was a divide between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans not only in the city, but also in the schools, churches, and other social spaces. In his memoir, Johnson recounts his arrival to the city.

At any rate, when Dorothy and I came to Kingsville, we had no political bonds and nothing to lose by becoming involved in one cause or another. It became apparent to me that there was a cultural collision in the town and on the campus between the ‘Anglos’ and the ‘Latins’. That was a surprise to me, because I considered them all part of the same group. I saw no difference at all between Hispanic skins and White skins, and I found it hard to believe that some of the Anglo guys would never give a Hispanic girl a second look.⁴³⁷

Johnson explained in his memoir that in order to grasp the idea of segregation in South Texas, he read William Madsen’s 1964 book, *Mexican-Americans of South Texas* a week or two before the semester started. He asserted that this book illustrated to him the “roots of discrimination and the deep cultural antagonisms” against ethnic Mexicans in the region.⁴³⁸

Of course, Johnson was not the only “liberal Anglo” professor working at the university from 1964 to 1967. As he explained it, the university had “many faculty members with a liberal world view, who had no racial discrimination ‘luggage’ and who saw the potential in all students and who harbored no feelings of cultural inferiority toward the Hispanic population.”⁴³⁹ There was Edgar Sneed, a history professor who believed that liberal Anglos needed to be leaders/patrons for the “Hispanic” community.⁴⁴⁰ Johnson did not agree with the latter part of Sneed’s ideology and explained to him that the ethnic Mexican community needed to “develop

⁴³⁶*Ibid.*

⁴³⁷*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴³⁸*Ibid.*

⁴³⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁴⁰*Ibid.* 12.

its own agenda and leadership patterns.”⁴⁴¹ Robert “Bob” Rogers, who arrived at Texas A&I the same time Johnson did, organized liberal causes and union activities not only on campus, but also in the community.⁴⁴² Other liberal Anglo professors at the university who were from various departments and were supportive of ethnic Mexican students were Charlie Cotrell, William E. “Bill” Renfro and his wife Billie, brothers Paul and Dewey Palmer, Carole Rogers (wife of Bob), Dimas Steinbaugh, Stanley Bittinger, Ron G. Harding, and Light German.⁴⁴³

Fernández believed that professors who opposed the system gained consciousness from the 1966 Melon Strike that occurred in Starr County. Once they gained consciousness, they were well prepared to educate “Hispanic” students “in the areas of consciousness and social work.”⁴⁴⁴ Alonso López, who was a graduate student working on his master’s degree during this time, viewed these professors as radical and unique because of their teaching styles.⁴⁴⁵ Efraín Fernández recalled during his oral history interview that Johnson and other Anglo professors who taught such rhetoric did not last very long at the university and were eventually dismissed from their positions.⁴⁴⁶ The removal of radical professors did not stop the growing numbers of Chicanos gaining consciousness since the seed had already been planted.

While all these movements were occurring in the South Texas region during the late 1960s, another Chicano organization that was formed in Mercedes was *Colegio Jacinto Treviño*. Founded in 1969-1970, the mission of the college was focused on developing Chicanos with skills and conscience, give barrios a global view, and provide answers to issues such as racism,

⁴⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴⁴³Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant*, 90.

⁴⁴⁴Wallace, interview; López interview.

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1. Fernández does not mention whether these professors were fired or encouraged to go elsewhere.

exploitation, and oppression.⁴⁴⁷ At first, the college was not “sophisticated enough” to worry about mission and philosophy statements, but it was after the founders were advised by Antioch College to organize a brochure illustrating the curriculum of the school that they did.⁴⁴⁸ Located in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Antioch College lent its name to *el colegio* so it could develop an education degree through its “University Without Walls” graduate program.⁴⁴⁹ The faculty at Jacinto Treviño was comprised of adjunct volunteer professors from various universities, and other individuals who were supervised “by a full-time Ed. D.”⁴⁵⁰ At the time, the founders of Jacinto Treviño did not realize that they were creating “something historical,” something that was a moment in history that many historians are researching now.⁴⁵¹

For Narciso Aleman, the philosophy of *el colegio* tore down the ideas of romanticizing the fight for social justice. In his 2015 oral history interview, Aleman explained that:

Che Guevara put it better than anybody else when he said, ‘we’re not liberators.’ There are no liberators. There’s conditions that exist that the masses of people move. In those movements and under those circumstances, there may be individuals that for periods of time and for specific purposes, serve the benefit of the advancement of people. But it’s not a matter of heroes or liberators or men on horseback. That’s why the structure of the colegio was specifically, specifically, designed to avoid that.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁷*Handbook of Texas Online*, Aurelio M. Montemayor, "Colegio Jacinto Treviño," accessed February 10, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kbc51>. From this point on, Colegio Jacinto Treviño will be referred to as “*el colegio*” or Jacinto Treviño.

⁴⁴⁸“When Jacinto Treviño Started,” from Francisco Briones oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 25, 2015, Mercedes, Texas, CRRB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/when-jacinto-trevino-started>, accessed March 06, 2017. Note: Antioch was a key institution for the *colegio* since they provided accreditation for the new school.

⁴⁴⁹*Handbook of Texas Online*, Aurelio M. Montemayor, "Colegio Jacinto Treviño," accessed February 10, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kbc51>.

⁴⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹“When Jacinto Treviño Started,” from Francisco Briones oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 25, 2015, Mercedes, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/when-jacinto-trevino-started>, accessed March 06, 2017.

⁴⁵²“Philosophy Driving El Colegio,” from Narciso Aleman oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/philosophy-driving-el-colegio>, accessed March 07, 2017.

Indeed, the creation of Jacinto Treviño focused on serving and benefiting the advancement of many ethnic Mexicans in the Valley. The need for “Chicano” teachers in the area led to the establishment of el colegio in the late 1960s, as Chicano youths wanted Mexican-American history courses in their schools. The one event that brought this discourse to the table was the Edcouch-Elsa student walkouts. A week prior to the walkout, Aleman visited Edcouch-Elsa, giving a speech and talking to various Chicano students.⁴⁵³ Aleman explained in his interview that it was a time where the conditions lent themselves to the walkout and that the students were ready. However, when Chicano students walked out of their classes and marched outside the school demanding a better education, they were proposed a series of questions that brought attention to an underlying issue. Aleman claims that the superintendent of the school asked the students:

You want Chicano teachers? Which one of you has a degree? I will hire you right here right now. I have the power, I can hire you. None of you have a degree? You want Chicano studies, you want literature that talks about you and your history? Which one of you wrote a book? I will buy it.⁴⁵⁴

He noted that this incident was a “put up or shut up” moment and made many Chicanos realize that they needed a college that produced Chicano teachers. Thus, Jacinto Treviño became an idea that was later realized in 1969-1970.

El Colegio impacted the community in various ways, as it created a sense of excitement in the youth, apprehension on the part of the parents, and pride on the part of grandparents.⁴⁵⁵

For grandparents, their pride for having a Chicano college for the youth was because of their

⁴⁵³“Edcouch-Elsa Student Walkouts and the Birth of Colegio Jacinto Treviño,” from Narciso Aleman oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/edcouch-elsa-student-walkouts-and-the-birth-of-colegio-jacinto-trevino>, accessed March 07, 2017.

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵“Initial Years of the Colegio,” from Narciso Aleman oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/initial-years-of-the-colegio>, accessed March 07, 2017.

knowledge of who Jacinto Treviño was.⁴⁵⁶ This individual lived near San Benito in 1911 became well known in the local community when he killed an Anglo who beat his brother to death and alluded various capture attempts by going to Mexico—which lead to the writing of a corrido.⁴⁵⁷ The parents’ apprehension came from their lived experiences with the Texas Rangers decades prior, and the youths’ excitement came from having the opportunity to learn more about their history.⁴⁵⁸

A power struggle between two groups in el colegio became evident and led to the demise of the institution a few years after its opening. Aurelio M. Montemayor described this power struggle as “political, intense, and polarizing” and led to both sides parting from el colegio in 1971.⁴⁵⁹ One board member at the time, Amancio Chapa, recalled that there were various internal issues that became detrimental to Jacinto Treviño. Chapa explains in his interview that there were three reasons that led to the closing of el colegio. First, several vans that were donated to el colegio went missing. Second, Aleman and various professors abruptly left el colegio. Third, differences of ideas led to the collapse of the board at Jacinto Treviño.⁴⁶⁰ There were

⁴⁵⁶*Ibid.* Américo Paredes provides in his book, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border*, a brief history of who Jacinto Treviño was and why he became known in the Lower Rio Grande Valley region in South Texas in the early twentieth century. In 1911, Treviño was a “peaceful, hard-working ranchero” who lived near *Los Indios*, a small town close to San Benito. The event that catapulted him into folklore was his reaction to his brother’s beating and death at the hands of an Anglo. Treviño sought out this Anglo and killed him. Treviño then crossed into Mexico and “put the river between him and the *rinches*” as the Anglo community in San Benito placed a reward on his head. A few months later, Treviño was lured back to the U.S. side of the river by his cousin Pablo, who made a deal with Texas authorities to bring him in. Sensing an ambush, Treviño ambushed the ambushers and killed one Texas Ranger, one Cameron County sheriff deputy, his cousin Pablo, and injured two other law enforcement officials. Afterwards, Treviño escaped back to Mexico and “lived to a ripe old age.” Treviño’s story became well known in the Mexicano community in the region in the early twentieth century, and his fight against the “rinches” was commemorated in a corrido, a Mexican folk song.

⁴⁵⁷Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 69.

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹*Handbook of Texas Online*, Aurelio M. Montemayor, “Colegio Jacinto Treviño,” accessed February 10, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kbc51>.

⁴⁶⁰“Experience as a Board Member Part 2,” from Amancio Chapa oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 25, 2015, La Joya, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/experience-as-a-board-member-part-2>, accessed March 08, 2017.

attempts to keep the college open, but things became progressively worse as Antioch became concerned with the situation, and more board members, including Chapa, became disinterested.⁴⁶¹ These differences of opinion, personal and ideological, between the faculty and board members led to individuals such as Andre Guerrero, Lynard Mestas, and others to split from Jacinto Treviño and create a new Chicano college in the city of Palmview called Juarez-Lincoln.⁴⁶² After the split between the two institutions, Jacinto Treviño was taken over by the Brown Berets and then moved to San Juan where it eventually closed its doors after only a few months.⁴⁶³

Overall, all the Chicano movements occurring in South Texas in the late 1960s and early 1970s were related to each other to some extent. As illustrated in this chapter, movements such as the Starr County's 1966 Melon Strike, the 1968 Edcouch-Elsa Student Walkout, the walkouts in Kingsville, and the creation of Colegio Jacinto Treviño all occurred within a five-year period. There were instances that those who participated in one movement also participated in another—connecting them together. If this was not the case, then news about a movement (ex: the Melon Strike) influenced individuals miles away to fight for social, political, and economic justice.

Texas A&I was the mecca for Chicano activists in the late 1960s, as Chicanos converged on the location to either gain an education or to recruit other Chicanos to fight for social, political and economic equality. Texas A&I alumni such as José Ángel Gutiérrez and Carlos Guerra influenced young Chicano students to get involved in the movement and get organized. It was not long until Chicano students became activists themselves. Individuals like Rogelio Núñez, Israel Reyna, Rafael Torres, Manuel Medrano, Jesús Ramírez, Alonzo López, and Efraín

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

Fernández all became activists through MAYO or *La Raza Unida* Party during their years at Texas A&I.

Moreover, the Melon Strike of 1966 and the Edcouch-Elsa student walkout in 1968 influenced activists at Kingsville in the late 1960s. In one of his interviews, Fernández explains that he believed professors who opposed the racial system in Kingsville and at Texas A&I gained consciousness from the 1966 Melon Strike that occurred in Starr County as well as the march to Austin.⁴⁶⁴ As for the 1968 Edcouch-Elsa student walkouts, Armando Navarro claims that since it was MAYO's first major boycott where educational reform could be achieved through the courts, MAYO members "accelerated its educational reform struggle in 1969" in Kingsville.⁴⁶⁵ This led to two major student protests that year in Kingsville, one at Gillet Junior High and the other at Texas A&I. It cannot be confirmed that Fernández was present during those two walkouts, since he moved to the Valley sometime that year but many of the MAYO chapters in Texas supported the walkouts and involved many of the organization's state leaders.⁴⁶⁶

Fernández met Gutiérrez during his last year at Texas A&I, and he (Gutiérrez) became very influential to him as an activist. At a local beer party, Fernández and Gutiérrez discussed various issues affecting ethnic Mexicans in the region. To Fernández, Gutiérrez was "skillful enough to be able to get with fraternities" and other groups to organize massive protests.⁴⁶⁷ Soon after, Fernández joined MAYO in 1967-68 after speaking with Gutiérrez at the beer party and took part in various movements at the university and in the city. His efforts and participation in struggles for social equality in his hometown came at a high cost, especially to his parents who were local business owners.

⁴⁶⁴Wallace, interview; Fernández interview, Tape 1.

⁴⁶⁵Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*, 124-125.

⁴⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷Wallace, interview; Fernández interview, Tape 1.

Fernández's involvement in MAYO and a protest against Humble Oil, a company that maintained oil wells at the King Ranch, affected his parents' restaurant called "*El Jardin*" (the Garden). Along with the King Ranch, Humble Oil was the largest employer in Kingsville, and they only employed Anglo meter readers.⁴⁶⁸ In Fernández's viewpoint, "Humble Oil Refining Company discriminated against Mexican-Americans," and because they did, he and others protested their hiring practices peacefully.⁴⁶⁹ It was not long until the company began to hire "Hispanics" and blacks due to the immense pressure coming from Civil Rights groups. The response from the Anglo community was quick and swift as they targeted his parents' business. Since most of their customers were Anglos, *El Jardin* lost a lot of business because they boycotted the restaurant.⁴⁷⁰ According to Fernández, a group of Anglos was behind the protests and organized the Anglo community against him and his family's restaurant. It was not long until the restaurant closed its doors after 30 years of existence.

Knowing that his actions and involvement in social justice were to blame for the fallout, Fernández left Kingsville to work in construction, but was later terminated because "they found out who he was."⁴⁷¹ Afterwards, with the help of sociologist Dr. Stanley Bitteringer of Texas A&I, he accepted a job with a minority mobilization federal program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley called Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).⁴⁷² With this new position, Fernández ended up in Pharr in late 1969, since the VISTA office was located there and many MAYO members from the Valley helped him get settled.⁴⁷³ It was during this transition that Fernández immersed

⁴⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹*Ibid.* Note: This claim cannot be substantiated since there is no physical or written proof that his firing from his construction job was because of his activism.

⁴⁷²*Ibid.*

⁴⁷³*Ibid.*

himself in the community and began using his training as a sociologist and organizer to improve the lives of poor ethnic Mexicans in the Valley.

Upon his arrival, Efraín Fernández began to organize the people in Pharr. He had done so before in his hometown of Kingsville to some success, and he decided to organize people in the McAllen/Pharr area. Though many of his colleagues from Texas A&I were not directly involved in the pickets and marches in Pharr, they still were aware of Fernández's activities. Alonso López attended and received his M.A. from Texas A&I during the years Fernández was there but did not meet him until the pickets against police brutality in Pharr. They all knew who Fernández was and were aware of his attempts to bring about change in the city of Pharr. Jesus Ramirez would later recount in an oral history interview that Fernández was a good friend of his and was fixated on the police state in those years.⁴⁷⁴

In conclusion, I explain in this chapter how various movements in South Texas that occurred years prior to the riot correlated with one another because leaders, activists, and organizations influenced one another. I detailed how the 1966 Melon Strike in Rio Grande City located in Starr County influenced liberal Anglo professors teaching at Texas A&I to inform their ethnic Mexican students the social, political, and economic disparities occurring throughout the South Texas region. In turn, students such as José Ángel Gutiérrez and Carlos Guerra organized and recruited other students to join MAYO and become involved in the *Raza Unida* Party. Due to such activism, Texas A&I became the main location in South Texas for Chicano ideology and influenced those involved to become leaders and organizers themselves. While all of this was occurring, there were various student movements in the Rio Grande Valley and in

⁴⁷⁴“Texas A&I Activism,” from Jesus Ramirez oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 29, 2015, San Juan, Texas, CRBB, https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/texas-a-i-activism_ accessed March 07, 2017.

Kingsville in the late 1960s. At the same time, one student activist, Efraín Fernández, moved from Kingsville to Pharr and began organizing the people living in the barrios to address various social and political inequalities occurring in the city. It would only be a year later that Fernández and local community leaders would organize a protest that would turn violent causing the death of an innocent bystander.

Chapter 3: “Mas Justicia y Menos Garrotazos:” The Struggle for Social Justice in Pharr, Texas

It was a hot day on Saturday February 6, 1971, and many businesses were bustling as heavy traffic plagued the main streets of Pharr. That morning, a demonstration was in progress in front of the Pharr police station as picketers protested many allegations of police brutality. Those involved in this protest were mostly teenagers, middle age people, and children who strolled up and down the sidewalk carrying signs which illustrated their combined frustrations.⁴⁷⁵ “*Mas Justicia y menos garrotazos,*” “*No necesitamos policías salvajes,*” and “*Fuera con Sandoval y Ramírez*” were but a few of the slogans written on the signs protestors carried.⁴⁷⁶

Frustrations towards the police from the ethnic Mexican community stemmed from various cases of such abuse of power. However, there were also deeper social issues that the city’s Anglo government had ignored for too long. These social issues combined with the ethnic Mexican community’s frustration towards the police and the city itself created a powder keg that could explode at any moment. MAYO activist Efraín Fernández and a group of local people from Mexican side of town organized the picket not only to protest police brutality, but to also show the city government that they would no longer be silent on the issues that affected the ethnic Mexican population north of the railroad tracks.

As dusk approached, the picket took a turn for the worse when the peaceful demonstration erupted into violence. This is where the story is unclear, because there are contradicting accounts about how the riot started. According to Fernández, the police chief asserted that the demonstrators caused the riot, but the demonstrators claimed that the police incited the riot by having the crowd sprayed with fire hoses.⁴⁷⁷ As the riot broke out, many individuals hurled bricks and stones at the firemen who aimed their fire hoses at them.⁴⁷⁸ The firemen then proceeded to spray the large crowd with high-pressure water so they would

⁴⁷⁵David M. Fishlow, “Poncho Flores is Dead,” *La Voz Chicana* (McAllen) vol. 3, no. 2 (date unknown): 1.

⁴⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷Efraín Fernández, “Community Organizing in the City of Pharr,” Personal Paper, Pharr Memorial Library Archive, Pharr, Texas, 1974, 7.

⁴⁷⁸“Violence Rages for Four Hours,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), February 7, 1971, 1.

disperse. What was once a peaceful demonstration against police brutality turned into a chaotic scene where protestors and onlookers either threw rocks or ran away from the mayhem as police tried to regain control of the situation. All efforts by Chief Ramirez and his officers to do so were in vain, so they were forced to call for police reinforcements from nearby cities such as McAllen and Edinburg, as well as Hidalgo County sheriff deputies. Additionally, ten units of Texas State troopers located in Harlingen, and finally one Texas Ranger also arrived to support the Pharr police.⁴⁷⁹

According to one *The Monitor*, the scene in front of the police station was pure chaos. There was broken glass, people threw rocks, tear gas permeated the night air, and many police officers (exact number unknown) fired their guns in the air in order to clear the streets.⁴⁸⁰ As they swept through Cage Boulevard, the main road of the city, police officers arrested individuals who were on the street and those who ran into the nearby pool halls to hide.⁴⁸¹ Throughout this entire ordeal, only one individual was reported to have been seriously injured by a “flying object.”⁴⁸² Unfortunately, that was not case, because this individual was not injured by a flying projectile, but was killed by a bullet that was fired from a sheriff deputy’s gun that ricocheted from a gutter and struck him in the head. With hands in his pocket, 20-year-old Alonso Loreda “Poncho” Flores lay dead facing up towards the night sky in front of Stanley Ramos barbershop located on the corner of Bell Street and Cage. A native of Pharr, Flores was a construction worker who arrived from Baytown, Texas, to visit family and was killed by a stray bullet as he observed the violence and mayhem in front of the barbershop.⁴⁸³

The tragic events in Pharr that night appear to meet the definition of a “riot.” According to sociologists Clark McPhail and Ronald T. Wohlstein in their article, “Individual and

⁴⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹*Ibid.* From this point on Cage Boulevard will be referred to as “Cage” since the locals use that term.

⁴⁸²*Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ Ned Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” in “Studies in Rio Grande Valley History,” ed. Milo Kearney, Anthony Knopp, and Antonio Zavaleta. *The UTB/TSC Regional History Series* 6, 26. Also see Ned Wallace’s full master thesis “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement” from the University of Texas Pan-American, defended in 2008.

Collective Behaviors within Gatherings, Demonstrations, and Riots,” the definition of a “riot” refers to gatherings or demonstrations consisting primarily but not exclusively of individual and/or collective violence against person or property.⁴⁸⁴ In their study, McPhail and Wholstein state that most riots begin on weekday evenings or weekends, peak during late evening hours, decline to virtual inactivity from early morning to noon, then gradually increase again as evening approaches. The actions of the crowd usually tend to focus on rock throwing, looting, and fires. These points described by McPhail and Wholstein are eerily similar to what occurred in Pharr in February 1971.

In the Texas Penal Code, Title IX, Chapter 42, section 42.02, Subsection (a), a “riot” is defined as a grouping of seven or more people resulting in conduct which:

(1) creates an immediate danger of damage to property or injury to persons; (2) substantially obstructs law enforcement or other governmental functions or services; or (3) by force, threat of force, or physical action deprives any person of a legal right or disturbs any person in the enjoyment of a legal right.⁴⁸⁵

Furthermore, in the subsequent Subsections, the Texas Penal Code explains that if an individual knowingly participates in a riot, then he/she is committing an offense, and “it is a defense to prosecution under this section that the assembly was at first lawful and when one of those assembled manifested in an intent to engage in conduct enumerated in Subsection (a), the actor retired from the assembly.”⁴⁸⁶ This legal definition of a “riot” helps explain the consequences that many those arrested faced afterwards.

This chapter details the events that occurred prior to the riot that led to the violent clash between protestors and police that February night in 1971. As explained earlier, this study is a

⁴⁸⁴Clark McPhail and Ronald T. Wohlstein, “Individual and Collective Behaviors within Gatherings, Demonstrations, and Riots,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 9 (1983): 581, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2946079>, accessed January 20, 2018.

⁴⁸⁵Texas Constitution and Statutes, Penal Code, *Offenses Against Public Order and Decency*, ch. 42, “Disorderly Conduct and Related Offenses,” sec. 42.02, sub-section (a) <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PE/htm/PE.42.htm>, accessed January 20, 2018.

⁴⁸⁶Texas Constitution and Statutes, Penal Code, *Offenses Against Public Order and Decency*, ch. 42, “Disorderly Conduct and Related Offenses,” sec. 42.02, subsection (c) <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PE/htm/PE.42.htm>, accessed January 20, 2018.

narrative about a micro-history that is interconnected with regional, state, and national movements occurring at the time. Social and political issues that affected the ethnic Mexican community in Pharr during the early 1970s were prominent and present in other communities of color throughout the United States. However, this study does not suggest that these social and political issues in Pharr were the same as those plaguing other communities of color during this era. What led to the riot in Pharr and its after effects was a unique situation that forever changed the city and its residents. The aim of this chapter is to detail the series of events that led to the riot starting with Fernández's arrival to the city of Pharr, Texas in the late 1960s to better illustrate why the violence occurred. As explained in the previous chapter, Fernández along with other alumni from Texas A&I University in Kingsville were part of a group that influenced and spread the Chicano ideology in the South Texas region. During his years at Texas A&I, Fernández was very active in addressing the social inequalities that ethnic Mexicans were experiencing in his hometown of Kingsville. The lessons he learned at the university and his experience in organizing aided him in his efforts to achieve social justice for ethnic Mexicans living in Pharr.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican Americans began to be more assertive and demanded their piece of the pie in the Valley.⁴⁸⁷ Fernández and many of his MAYO colleagues became involved in the community in various ways, such as helping with the farm worker movement and registering people to vote. Other than helping with the farm worker movement, the South Texas Association of Community Organizations (STACO), which was led by Fernández, and *la Alianza de Pueblos Unidos* attempted to register 70,000 Mexican-Americans to vote in the region within a three-month period.⁴⁸⁸ Members of MAYO aided in the voter registration process in attempts to significantly increase the number of Mexican-Americans who could vote in the upcoming local, state, and national elections of 1970. Wanting change, Chicano activists and organizations attempted to bring about this change by voting.

⁴⁸⁷Wallace, interview; López, interview.

⁴⁸⁸*Ya Mero!* (McAllen), November 1, 1969 tomo 1, num.1, 1.

Through these local social efforts, Fernández and López met each other as well as people from the community who had similar interests.⁴⁸⁹ Fernández was known to be an “expert” in sociology and organizing, since he had insight in grassroots activism and was a capable leader due to his knowledge.⁴⁹⁰ He indeed was knowledgeable about organizing people because, according to Fernández, there are many models or methods of community organizing with two extremes. They are:

A completely cooperative approach in which the organizer tries to reconcile the differences between opposing factions so that there will be unity and progress in the community; and the conflict model, which calls for polarization of the haves and the have-nots, the blacks and the whites, or whatever.⁴⁹¹

Though he does not explain what type organizational method(s) he used to organize people before his involvement Pharr, the method he used was the “conflict model” defined or developed by Saul Alinsky.⁴⁹² According to Fernández, this method was used by Cesar Chávez in California and José Ángel Gutiérrez at Crystal City, Texas. An organizer who uses the conflict model uses the following steps:

(1) getting to know the community; (2) establishing a report or relationship with the barrio people; (3) finding issues of common interests to the people and motivating people to act upon these issues in a forceful, aggressive, demanding manner; (4) dealing with the crises that inevitably follow this type of confrontation; (5) reaching a compromise that usually falls short of the original goal.⁴⁹³

While working for VISTA in Pharr, Fernández received various reports about police brutality and would use the conflict model to combat this and other injustices in the city.⁴⁹⁴ In short, he

⁴⁸⁹Wallace, interview; López, interview.

⁴⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹Efraín Fernández, “Community Organizing in the City of Pharr,” 1.

⁴⁹²*Ibid.*

⁴⁹³*Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

and MAYO members along with poor Mexican Americans living in the north side of the tracks began to fight back.

Table 2.1: 1970 Demographics and Population of Selected Cities

Race City	White	“Negro”	Indian	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	All Other
<u>McAllen</u> Total Pop. 37,636	37,315	76	11	22	0	2	210
<u>Pharr</u> Total Pop. 15,829	15,661	21	7	3	8	0	129
<u>Mission</u> Total Pop. 13,043	12,991	28	3	2	0	0	19
<u>Edinburg</u> Total Pop. 17,163	16,975	78	7	6	0	0	97
<u>Harlingen</u> Total Pop. 33,503	32,881	397	33	34	1	2	155
<u>Kingsville</u> Total Pop. 28,711	27,071	1,330	19	14	12	109	156

1970 Census of Population, “Race by Sex, for Places of 10,000 to 50,000: 1970,” *Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. 1, Part 45, Texas section 1

There were various social issues that were affecting people living on the north side of the tracks in the city of Pharr. The first issue revolved around the lack of adequate city services. In the 1950s, the city of Pharr installed big water lines on the south side of town while, on the north side they installed water lines that were one to two inches in diameter.⁴⁹⁵ Besides the smaller water pipes, 90% of sewage from south Pharr was placed in the north side of the city because of the location of the shift station and then would be pumped back to the sewage station located in the south side.⁴⁹⁶ Improper city planning created this mess, which affected those living in the north side because of the foul odor that would be present.

⁴⁹⁵Dora Leticia González, “A Look at the City of Pharr—Before and After the Riot” (History Paper, University of Texas Pan-American, Edinburg, April 20, 1989), Pharr Memorial Library Archive, Pharr, Texas, 2.

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid.*

Unlike the south side of town, those living in the north side did not have the luxury of using the sewage plant because they did not have indoor plumbing. Within the city limits there were well over 500 outhouses, and all of them were located on the north side of the tracks.⁴⁹⁷ Other than these two major inadequacies, there were traffic lights or traffic signs in barrio intersections, no street lights or paved streets, no city parks, and inadequate water pressure for the north side. There was also no street cleaning or trash collecting services, no police presence to protect migrant homes when these individuals would migrate north for work, and no sewer lines in a twenty-five to thirty block radius.⁴⁹⁸

Fernández believed that the lack of adequate services, facilities, and utilities was not the major concern people living on the north side of the tracks had with the Bowe administration.”⁴⁹⁹ It was the level of control Mayor R.S. Bowe had on the city that affected his relationship with Mexican-Americans. These citizens felt that that his “*jefe politico*” called all the shots and had rigid control of the city.⁵⁰⁰ Mayor Bowe maintained political control for many years because he would always run for office unopposed and win.⁵⁰¹ What also contributed to his control over the city was being a jefe politico. One of his maintenance superintendents and right-hand man, Joe Pettita, would set up place for *politica* in the north side of the tracks to get votes for Mayor Bowe. Fernández depicted him as “the brains of the operation” and claimed that he had a system of “stoolies” that kept him informed of key peoples’ plans, motives, and problems.⁵⁰² He (Pettita) had a “rumor machinery” that was devastating when put into motion because the rumors that were spread were “always of a dirty character assassination type.”⁵⁰³ Pettita also organized voting parties where he would give “un taquito de tortilla de maíz con un pedacito de carne” and beer to garner votes.⁵⁰⁴ He interacted directly with the lower income families to make sure they

⁴⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 2.

⁴⁹⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁰¹Maria H. Magallan, interview by author, Pharr, Texas, June 8, 2016.

⁵⁰²Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 3.

⁵⁰³*Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴Robles, interview; Maria H. Magallan, interview.

voted “the right way.”⁵⁰⁵ Local resident Maria Magallan would see this and did not like it, because these individuals were selling their vote for a taco and a beer.⁵⁰⁶

Having rigid control of the city, Mayor Bowe used a system of rewards and punishments to maintain this control. His supporters reaped the rewards for their loyalty, while those who did not “play ball,” he/she might get evicted from the housing projects, have their water billed raised without notice, or be harassed by police officers when visiting a bar.⁵⁰⁷ Magallan, born in Mexico on June 12, 1931, and brought to the United States as a young child by her parents, was a resident of north Pharr.⁵⁰⁸ She grew up, got married, and raised her children in city, and saw this system of reward and punishment first hand as the drainage system in the north side of town was “purposely blocked for political reasons or to get back at people who displeased Bowe.”⁵⁰⁹ She knew that these issues were not right and befriended many people living in the north side who were experiencing the same problems.⁵¹⁰ Not knowing how she was going to fix the problems affecting her community, Magallan was adamant that she had to do something. She was not an organizer and did not have the training like many other activists in the region, but that soon changed when she met Fernández in a few months prior to the riot.

In mid—1970, Fernández befriended one of Magallan’s sons, Daniel, and was invited by the young man to his house for dinner.⁵¹¹ Fernández and his wife arrived at the home, and that’s when he met Magallan. Aware of the various claims of police brutality in the city, Fernández was then made aware of the lack of city services and other issues that the people living in the north side of town experiencing.⁵¹² He agreed that something indeed needed to be done. Regarding his organizational tactics, Fernández’s first task as an organizer was to find

⁵⁰⁵Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 5.

⁵⁰⁶Oralia Magallan Obrera, interview by Ned Wallace, Pharr, Texas, August 7, 1996.

⁵⁰⁷Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 2.

⁵⁰⁸Robles, interview; Maria H. Magallan, interview.

⁵⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹¹Daniel Magallan’s age cannot be confirmed now because there are various accounts that state he is either 9 or 14 years old during all of this. Thus, he will be addressed a “young man.”

⁵¹²Robles, interview; Maria H. Magallan, interview.

“indigenous leadership” and he was “lucky” to have met Magallan.⁵¹³ In turn, she was tired of having the drainage blocked because of corrupt politics, and it was time for a change.

To start, Fernández focused on the clogged drainage issue that Magallan and her neighbors experienced. He and Daniel filled cans with stagnant water and materials from the clogged drainage and took them to city hall to show the mayor.⁵¹⁴ After they did this several times, Pharr Police Sergeant Mateo Sandoval arrested Fernández and Daniel. Sgt. Sandoval called Magallan to inform her of her son’s arrest, believing that she was not aware what her son was doing and asking her to pick him up at the jail. When Magallan arrived at the jail, she informed the sergeant that she gave her son permission to help Fernández, and if he was going to arrest her, then to arrest her because she was not afraid of the police.⁵¹⁵ It can be argued that Magallan’s attitude towards Sgt. Sandoval stemmed from her knowledge that he was one of the officers accused of police brutality, but she was clearly not afraid him. It can also be that she was “cansada de este mugrero” and knew action needed to be taken. After Daniel’s release, Fernández continued to “raise hell” at city hall, and eventually Mayor Bowe and Pettita finally agreed to address the situation.⁵¹⁶ His persistence paid off not only because the issue was addressed, but because what he did to get results won over Magallan and the community.

Soon after, Magallan and one of her daughters, Oralia, were then employed by VISTA to do social work in the community in late 1970, a few months prior to the riot.⁵¹⁷ They helped low income people and did surveys to see what kind of services they had or needed. As previously mentioned, many people living north of the railroad tracks lacked many city services, and when Oralia and her mother began to do in depth community work, they were surprised with their findings. “We couldn’t believe, you know, that within our city, you know, we had that type of problems. So, we started taking petitions and requesting the services to our community and we

⁵¹³ Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 5.

⁵¹⁴ Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 6.

⁵¹⁷ Wallace, interview; Oralia Magallan, interview.

had a hard time being heard,” Recalled Oralia.⁵¹⁸ Impressed with their work, Fernández viewed Magallan as “the finest indigenous leader that an organizer could hope to find.”⁵¹⁹ Magallan and her daughter Oralia also established a community organization comprised of poor adults called “*Union y Fuerza*” that met every week.⁵²⁰

On December 5, 1970, Fernández and Daniel “silently” picketed in front of city hall to ask for the open records of city council meetings, since the public could not attend them.⁵²¹ Within 5-10 minutes after starting the “silent picket,” Fernández and Daniel were arrested for “leafleting” and their colleague David Giffey for taking pictures.⁵²² Giffey was charged with disorderly conduct for disobeying a police officer by resisting Sgt. Sandoval’s attempted to expose the film in his camera.⁵²³ Their arrest stemmed from an old city law against picketing that was passed in 1968 and required people to have permits to protest.⁵²⁴ Since Fernández and his colleagues had not done so, they were arrested. After their release, they filed a lawsuit against Mayor Bowe, Sgt. Sandoval, and Chief Ramirez in federal court. The lawsuit asked that the court declare that the three city officials violated the constitutional rights of those who were arrested in Pharr on December 5, 1970.⁵²⁵ On January 6, 1971, Federal Judge Reynaldo Garza informed Pharr city officials that their law against gatherings/protest was “not worth the paper it was written on.”⁵²⁶ In short, Judge Garza ruled in favor of Fernández, Magallan, and Giffey and denounced the repressive methods of the Pharr city officials.⁵²⁷ This outcome validated the activists’ efforts to the people in living in north Pharr and influenced Fernández to continue his quest for social equality.

⁵¹⁸*Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 6.

⁵²⁰*Ibid.*

⁵²¹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

⁵²²Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 6.

⁵²³*Ya Mero!* (McAllen), January 16, 1971, vol. 2, no. 6, 6.; Edward Francis Wallace Jr., “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement” (master’s thesis, University of Texas-Pan American, 2008) 41.

⁵²⁴Wallace, “The Pharr Riot: An Incident from the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement,” 41.

⁵²⁵*Ya Mero!* (McAllen), January 16, 1971, vol. 2, no. 6, 6.

⁵²⁶*Ibid.*

⁵²⁷Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 6.

Tensions rose in January 1971 as reports of police brutality were received by Fernández and his organizers. It can be argued that the reasons the police brutality issue took center stage in January could be because of shooting death of a fourteen-year-old young man in Brownsville by an Anglo Cameron County sheriff's deputy on December 10, 1970. No details were given in the local Chicano newspaper, *¡Ya Mero!*, about why Cameron County Deputy Sheriff Nem Bryan shot Victor Nava, but details of the aftermath were given. The Grand Jury absolved the deputy of any wrong doing weeks after the shooting. Afterwards, protests led by MAYO members ensued. Although they remained peaceful, there was one incident of violence. The incident occurred when an unknown man insulted the victim's mother, and protestors took matters into their own hands.

Un hombre tuvo que ser salvado de puñetazos y bolsillasos cuando este interrumpió a una señora que hablaba ante la congregación, la señora siendo madre de Nava. El hombre interrumpió a la señora con la pregunta, '¿Y a ti quien te paga para que digas eso?'⁵²⁸

Many Mexican-Americans and members of MAYO were frustrated over the fact that Bryan was not going to be charged for shooting Nava. Federal Prosecutor J.P. Farris requested for the Justice Department to open a Civil Rights investigation, since it was not apparent that officials conducted a "vigorous" investigation.⁵²⁹ Unfortunately, the sheriff's deputy was never charged. Thus, when reports of police brutality began to surface in Pharr, and the issue was not address by the city, Fernández, Magallan and the rest of their organization addressed the issue.

Fernández received various accounts of police misconduct. One problem came from police unjustly citing people driving through the city. In the early 1970s, Pharr was known as a "speed trap," and drivers going over the speed limit, even by one mile, would be pulled over and issued a citation.⁵³⁰ Another issue concerned the enforcement of liquor laws. Pharr was the only city in the Valley that allowed *cantinas* to stay open until 2:00am, while other cities closed their

⁵²⁸*¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), January 16, 1971, vol. 2, no. 6, 6.

⁵²⁹*Ibid.*

⁵³⁰Wallace, "The 1971 Pharr Riot," 19.

drinking establishments at midnight.⁵³¹ So those who wanted to continue drinking after midnight would venture into Pharr and at times would publicly misbehave or drive while intoxicated after the bars closed.

Pharr police officers, who were mostly all ethnic Mexican, aggressively arrested those who were intoxicated or driving under the influence.⁵³² Complaints soon surfaced that the police were too aggressive with intoxicated detainees and their approach to drunk driving, since some individuals were beaten in the jail cells.⁵³³ The main officer accused of beating prisoners was Sgt. Mateo Sandoval. Fernández met individuals with bumps the size of golf balls on their head and body, and one man had his face disfigured because of the beatings and swelling.

Guadalupe Lucio Salinas was arrested in Pharr on the night of January 23, 1971 and claimed that Sgt. Sandoval brutally beat him while in jail.⁵³⁴ He suffered cuts on his face, a swollen and blackened eye, and bruises all over his body. He eventually had to pay \$40 worth of medical bills.⁵³⁵ He gave his testimony to the *¡Ya Mero!* newspaper and explained that on that night Sgt. Sandoval arrested him and his friend for having an open beer in the vehicle. After being processed and charged, Salinas asked for permission to make a phone call, and that is when things turned from bad to worse.⁵³⁶

Antes de terminar de hablar con su padre, Sandoval le ordenó a Salinas que colgara el teléfono. Salinas dice que él le dijo a Sandoval que todavía no terminaba su llamado. Con eso Sandoval enbravesido le pegó en la boca a Salinas. Salinas dice que otros policías solo veían el incidente mientras Sandoval lo seguía golpeando en la oficina de policia. Salinas dice que por fin el Sgt. Sandoval dejó de golpearlo para ponerlo en la celda. Sandoval después entró a la celda donde estaba Salinas y, burlándose, le pregunto, ‘Tienes un ojo hinchado, ¿qué te paso?’ Temiendo que

⁵³¹*Ibid.*

⁵³²*Ibid.*, 20.

⁵³³ Efraín Fernández did not mention how many individuals file complaints of police brutality with him and there are no existing police records of these complaints. In the following paragraphs, I detail the accounts from a few individuals who shared their experiences with Fernández or with *¡Ya Mero!*

⁵³⁴*¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), January 30, 1971, vol. 2, no. 7, 1.

⁵³⁵*Ibid.*

⁵³⁶*Ibid.*, 2.

Sandoval siguiera su ataque salvaje, Salinas le dio a Sandoval la contestació que el guardian de la paz queria oír, ‘Me caí.’ ‘Así es bueno,’ Sandoval contestó amen[a]zando a Salinas.⁵³⁷

Afterwards, Sgt. Sandoval denied Salinas’ release when his father arrived at the jail to pick him up and remained so in the cell bleeding and hurting from his wounds.⁵³⁸ The following morning, he paid a fine of \$30 and was released.

Another account accused Sgt. Sandoval of beating an individual to the point of breaking his ribs a week prior to Salinas’ beating. The police sergeant accused and arrested forty-four-year-old Manuel Mata for public intoxication while walking home. Mata claimed that Sgt. Sandoval attacked him with a “black jack” and hit him on the head and kidneys, breaking his ribs forcing him to wear a corsé for days.⁵³⁹ The list of accusations grew, as more people came forward, and reports of police misconduct were being presented to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Fernández received a disturbing account in which the individual had tear gas thrown at him and was forced to wash his face with toilet water in his cell.⁵⁴⁰ Noe Rocha, a 23-year-old Pharr resident, was the individual who was forced to wash his face with toilet water after being sprayed with mace by Sgt. Sandoval. His account was published in *¡Ya Mero!* and is as follows:

Rocha dijo que él fue engasado con el líquido llamado Mace que hace llorosos los ojos, produce demaciado líquido en la boca y induce vómito. Dijo Rocha que el había tenido quelavarse con agua del servicio colocado en la celda. Rocha también acusó al Sgt. Sandoval de las atrocidades.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷*Ibid.*

⁵³⁸*Ibid.* Translation: Before being able to finish his call with his father, Sandoval ordered Salinas to hang up the phone. Salinas explains that he informed Sandoval that he was not finished with his phone call. Right then and there, Sandoval hit Salinas in the mouth. Salinas states that other officers stood by as Sandoval beat him up in the station. Soon after, Sgt. Sandoval stopped beating Salinas in order to transfer him to a holding cell. Sandoval then went to the cell where Salinas was and asked him, ‘You have a swollen eye, what happened to you?’ Fearing that Sandoval would continue his savage attack, Salinas gave Sandoval the answer that the peacekeeper wanted to hear, ‘I fell.’ ‘That is good,’ Sandoval replied as he threatened Salinas.

⁵³⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 1.

⁵⁴¹*¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), January 30, 1971, vol. 2, no. 7, 2. Translation: Rocha said that he was gassed with the liquid called Mace that makes the eyes watery, and makes the body produce too much liquid in the mouth and

Based on these accusations, police brutality occurred a lot in city, and Fernández was convinced that the victims he interviewed were telling the truth. However, middle class Mexican-Americans living in the south side of the city “saw the world in a different perspective” than those living in the *barrios* on the north side of town.⁵⁴² When allegations of police brutality became known, they believed that these individuals “had it coming.”⁵⁴³



Illustration 2.1: Photograph of Pharr Police Chief Alfredo Ramirez (in center left), and various Pharr police officers. Courtesy of the archives located in the Pharr Memorial Library in Pharr, Texas.

When city officials ignored the requests for better city services and failed to address the police brutality issue, Fernández suggested to Magallan and other people living in north Pharr that they needed to do something else to gain the mayor’s attention.⁵⁴⁴ Since their grievances were ignored, they decided to picket the Pharr jail and city hall.⁵⁴⁵ According to Magallan, she agreed to Fernández’s idea but proposed that the picket line in front of the jail be comprised of

induces vomit. Rocha said that he had to wash himself with water from the sink or toilet in the cell. Rocha also accused Sgt. Sandoval as the one doing these atrocities.

⁵⁴²Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 5.

⁵⁴³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵⁴⁵Fernández, “Community Organizing,” 7.

señoras. It was planned that there would be two groups of women picketing; one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

The picket line started in the late morning on Saturday February 6, 1971, in front of the city hall.⁵⁴⁶ Magallan volunteered to be in the morning group of protestors and brought many more people from the north side, especially older citizens, to participate. In addition to those picketing, there were also lots of spectators present to watch the protest. Magallan stated that some of these spectators were small business owners who stopped and asked what was going on. Once they were informed, they agreed to join and support the picketing.⁵⁴⁷ These business owners offered their services in case the organizers needed anything, and Fernández saw this as a positive because there were people concerned about the city. These small business owners would later be a significant addition to the movement. Other spectators that were there were affected by the Pharr Police Department in some way. Fernández recalled seeing a family of one of the victims of police brutality there. “I remember in particular Mrs. Flores and her son were real mad at the Pharr police and they were there...because their relative, the one I am telling you about that got beat up Herman Zuniga, was one of the victims.”⁵⁴⁸

There were ill feelings expressed towards the police officers that were present during the demonstration at city hall. One police officer, Carlos Sandoval (no relation to Mateo), notice that a few protestors tried to agitate the police with crude remarks.⁵⁴⁹ The protestor making crude remarks was Daniel Vasquez, who many believed should have not been part of the protest. But Fernández allowed him to participate because he had been arrested and beaten by patrolman Zuniga, and he had as much right to protest just like everyone else.⁵⁵⁰ As they picketed, Vasquez began to chant “los maranos son hermosos (the pigs are beautiful),” in the style of the nursery rhyme of “Old McDonald Had a Farm.”⁵⁵¹ Vasquez then saw Zuniga in the line and yelled at

⁵⁴⁶Efraín Fernández, interview by Ned Wallace, San Juan, Texas, January 14, 2001, Tape 2.

⁵⁴⁷Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵⁴⁸Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

⁵⁴⁹Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 20.

⁵⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2; Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 20.

him the same derogatory phrase, “anda la verga,” (or something to that extent), which Zuniga supposedly called him in the jail. Fearing that Vasquez might start a raucous Fernández goes and tells him that they can’t do that, since the chanting was too provocative.⁵⁵²

By mid-afternoon, the picket line moved from city hall to the police station, with Fernández leading the way. He stated that this was not spontaneous and was planned prior to the protest.⁵⁵³ At the time, Fernández did not think anything violent would happen and saw the picket as just another protest. Alonzo López joined the demonstration on his way home from work and saw nothing wrong with the protest, as he believed that those picketing had every right to do so.⁵⁵⁴ Magallan and other women who had been picketing since the morning had grown tired, since it had been an unusual warm day. Fernández and other men offered to bring them help since they were going to attend a meeting at the Methodist retreat center in the city of Weslaco to address various Mexican-American civil rights issues.⁵⁵⁵ Fernández, López, and other leaders left the picket line to attend the meeting at various times in mid-afternoon. Fernández believed everything was under control and that is why he decided to attend the meeting. Magallan left as well, because picketing most of the day in the heat affected her eye, and she needed medical treatment.⁵⁵⁶ One of her older daughters took her to a doctor in “el otro lado (Mexico),” while her other daughter Oralía stayed at the picket. Without any leaders present in the picket line, it was only a matter of time until something happened.

In Fernández’s absence, the crowd increased from thirty some people to 300 by sundown.⁵⁵⁷ The number grew exponentially because onlookers began to gather, especially patrons of the local *cantinas* or taverns. There were over thirty cantinas that stretched from Highway 83 to Expressway 83 on or close to Cage Boulevard.⁵⁵⁸ As these individuals arrived at

⁵⁵²Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 21.

⁵⁵³Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

⁵⁵⁴Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 21.

⁵⁵⁵Robles, interview; Magallan, interview; Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 21.

⁵⁵⁶Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵⁵⁷“Massed Police Quell Youth Riot at Pharr,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), February 7, 1971, 1.

⁵⁵⁸Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 21.

the picket, the peaceful protestors were surrounded by the police on one side and drunk *cantina* patrons on the other. Fernández claims in his interview that the people who were injured by the police were there as spectators.⁵⁵⁹ The demonstration not only encompassed those fighting for social justice but also spectators who never went to a single meeting and were not “disciplined” in the methods of peaceful protest.⁵⁶⁰

When Fernández returned at dusk, he noticed that something was wrong because he could hear the roar of the crowd as he parked.⁵⁶¹ The kids in the crowd were singing jingles that they had made up that insulted Sgt. Sandoval. According to Dora Leticia González, the jingle went like this--“Sandoval’s a big fat pig, a big fat pig, a big fat pig; He likes to beat the people up, the people up, the people up,” to the tune of “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?”⁵⁶² Vasquez also continued his own personal ditties and no one was there to stop him. As the crowd jeered at the police, Chief Ramirez approached Fernández, who had just arrived, and asked him to stop the protest, which he refused to do.⁵⁶³ Fernández argued that the demonstrators were just yelling and expressing how they felt, since city officials had ignored them and their problems for so long.⁵⁶⁴ The police chief then called the fire department to send fire trucks to the police station. As soon as the fire trucks parked behind the station, Chief Ramirez ordered the crowd to disperse because it was no longer “an authorized picket.”⁵⁶⁵ This is where accounts of what happened become blurry. Police claimed that protestors threw rocks at them and that they were forced to open the water hoses on the crowd. Protestors claimed that the fire fighters hosed them down first, and they then defended themselves by throwing rocks.

New evidence suggests that that a young protester from Pharr started the riot by throwing a rock at the police before the firemen opened their hoses. Jaime Garza, who was a local

⁵⁵⁹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

⁵⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁵⁶²González, “A Look at the City of Pharr,” 6.

⁵⁶³Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

⁵⁶⁴González, “A Look at the City of Pharr,” 6-7.

⁵⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 7.

MAYO activist and contributor to *Colegio Jacinto Treviño* at the time, stated that Gabriel Arrendaño, a local plumber, was the one who started the riot. “People were saying stuff you say at protests. Some radical, some not. You need to take care your police, you need to do this. This guy, Gabriel Arrendaño, he threw a rock at the police across the street, and that sparked the riot.”⁵⁶⁶ When asked how he knew that this individual started the riot when he was not there, Garza replied, “He made it known. He was a big talker.”⁵⁶⁷

Another individual who was present at the scene was editor and publisher of *¡Ya Mero!*, David Fishlow. He recalled that the protestors’ rock throwing touched off the riot and does not agree with the statement, “no one knows who started the riot.” In an interview conducted by Ned Wallace in 2000, Fishlow explained that *The Monitor* sensationalized its April 20, 1996 story revisiting the Pharr Riot. He strongly disputed the statement that “authorities and protestors cannot agree who threw the first stone.” “Well that’s fucking bullshit,” he stated. “The kids were throwing rocks, the cops weren’t throwing rocks. It was the mob of people that had gathered, you know, the mob of spectators who were throwing rocks! Period!”⁵⁶⁸ Regardless of who was responsible, what occurred after the firemen sprayed the crowd with water became a major event in Pharr’s history.

When Magallan and her daughter returned from Mexico, she noticed that many people were running in several directions as they approached her house located on east Bell Street. Since she lived close to the police station, she decided to investigate. She noticed that Fernández was with many young people, and as she got closer to the police station she encountered more people running away from it.⁵⁶⁹ Fernández was close to the area where the water cannons hit the protestors. He explained that once the water hit the crowd in “crossfire” pattern, they ran off and disappeared for a moment.⁵⁷⁰ In shock that there was no crowd, Fernández began to hear a

⁵⁶⁶“Pharr Riot Part Two,” from Jaime Garza oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 2, 2015, Mercedes, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/pharr-riot-part-two>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁵⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁸David Fishlow, interview by Ned Wallace, Winter Park, Florida, May 8, 2000.

⁵⁶⁹Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵⁷⁰Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

“terrible roar.” He then realized that the roar was the sound of rocks hitting the fire engines.⁵⁷¹ Fernández told the picketers close to the fire trucks to “hit the deck,” and take cover, as he tried to protect a few young people from getting hit by rocks.⁵⁷²

Oralia believed that the rocks appeared to be thrown in unison, as if it was a planned counter-attack.⁵⁷³ As rocks flew, policemen began firing their weapons up in the air in attempts to disperse the rock throwers.⁵⁷⁴ During this ordeal, Magallan noticed something peculiar and claimed that many people do not believe it happened. She saw “amas de casa” (housewives) running through the neighborhood gathering rocks: “Se venian y se echaban las piedras aqui en las faldas y se las llevaban a los que andaban en picket line.”⁵⁷⁵ They took the rocks to those still near the police station to defend themselves from the police.

As things worsened, Fernández and a group of young protestors thought it would be wise to leave the area and head west to his home.⁵⁷⁶ In their attempt to leave the scene, they ran towards the fire trucks, where they were met by firemen who threatened them with axe handles.⁵⁷⁷ The firemen were made aware by Fernández that he and his group were not a threat and let them go on their way. As they made their way to Fernández’s home, they heard shots being fired and told the picketers that they were only blanks, or so he wanted to believe.⁵⁷⁸ Afterwards, Fernández and the group that was with him made it to his house, where he called the parents of the young ones to let them know that their children were safe.⁵⁷⁹

As the night progressed, officers from cities from across the Valley began to arrive to aid Pharr police officers. Unable to establish control of the scene, Chief Ramirez called for

⁵⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁵⁷²*Ibid.*

⁵⁷³Wallace, interview; Magallan Obrera, interview.

⁵⁷⁴“All Hell Broke Loose,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/all-hell-broke-loose>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁵⁷⁵Robles, interview; Maria H. Magallan, interview. Translation: “They would come and put the stones in their skirts (which were folded) and take them to those who were at the picket line.”

⁵⁷⁶Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 23.

⁵⁷⁷Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

⁵⁷⁸Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 23.

⁵⁷⁹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

reinforcements.⁵⁸⁰ One Texas Ranger, DPS officers in gray uniforms, McAllen police in riot helmets, Hidalgo County sheriff's deputies, the Edinburg Police chief and some of his officers, and officers from other cities all rushed to the scene.⁵⁸¹ The area around the Pharr police station looked and sounded as if incredible warfare was going on because of the gunshots, tear gas, and pandemonium.⁵⁸² One protestor saw police officers carrying rifles with bayonets and asked the police officers: "What are you doing? Why are you beating the people up? What's going on? Why don't you let the people be?"⁵⁸³

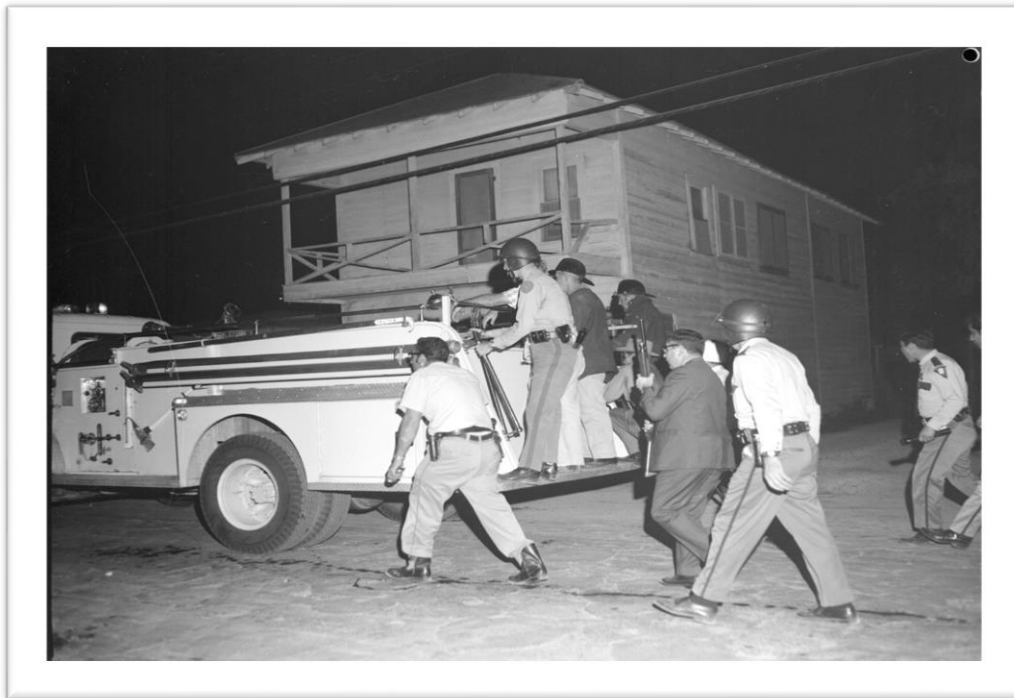


Illustration 2.2: Photograph of police officials from various agencies clearing the street on the night of February 6, 1971. Courtesy of Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, Texas.

Alcadio Zamudio, who was present during the riot, explained that those who participated in the picket "looked" confused because they didn't know where to go, what to do, or who to follow

⁵⁸⁰Wallace, "The 1971 Pharr Riot," 23.

⁵⁸¹González, "A Look at the City of Pharr," 7.

⁵⁸²Wallace Jr., "The Pharr Riot," 61.

⁵⁸³*Ibid.*, 62.

because there was no leadership.⁵⁸⁴ Others, who were there as onlookers, remained in the area just to see what was going on.⁵⁸⁵ It was not long until the riot claimed its first and only victim of the night.

Stanley Ramos was the owner of “Ramos Hair Styling Center,” a barber shop located on the corner of Cage and east Bell Street. Ramos remembered that there were people running outside of his establishment. The following is Ramos’ summarized account of what happened next:

It was around 6:30-7:00 o’clock in the evening and I had just closed the place up, and as I was getting ready to close a customer came in. I told, ‘I’m sorry I’m not going to be able to cut your hair because I need to go over there and find out what’s going on. He said, ‘well it won’t take too long to cut it. Why don’t you just cut it?’ I said, ‘Yeah, I’m afraid that if I start you, I won’t be able to finish you off and then I’ll feel bad.’ And he said, ‘Oh come on, it won’t take long.’ So, I had to cut his hair and it was a flat top. He brought his family, three daughters and his wife, and they went over there to see what was going on. All the family is there, then we heard some shots and I told him that I didn’t think they were blanks but real bullets. There were some people running towards the north (on Cage). Then his wife and daughters come in and they were really upset and afraid. It was getting pretty dangerous. I hadn’t finished his hair cut when he heard a lot of people running. I remember seeing a lady who came into the shop and asked me if I had a towel that a man had been shot in front of the barbershop. I immediately gave her a towel. The man was bleeding...I still couldn’t do anything to help because I was trying to finish the customer.⁵⁸⁶

It was not until later that Ramos was informed that the young man, Alfonso Flores, did not have anything to do with the riot. He had traveled down from Baytown to visit his family that weekend when the riot occurred. He was just an innocent bystander that was shot in the head. “It was real sad. He had his hands in his pockets.”⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴“Pharr Riot,” from Alcadio Zamudio oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, July 1, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/pharr-riot-2>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁵⁸⁵Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 25.

⁵⁸⁶Stanley Ramos, interview by Ned Wallace, Pharr, Texas, October 21, 1996.

⁵⁸⁷*Ibid.*

Texas Ranger Jack Dean, who was helping other law enforcement officials to quell the riot, was approached by a young girl asking for help. She informed him that a man down the street was injured, and Dean soon followed. He recalled that the young man was laying on his back with his hands in his pockets.⁵⁸⁸ At first, he thought Flores had been hit on the head with a rock, but then he noticed the blood coming of his head.⁵⁸⁹ Dean then called for an ambulance, so Flores could get medical attention.

While the rioting was continuing in Pharr, MAYO members and other Chicano activists who were in Weslaco attending the Chicano retreat were unaware of what was happening twenty minutes west of them. In the middle of a *teatro* performance by the theatre group, *Los Malqueridos*, Rabel López informed everyone that the police in Pharr had shot someone and were hurting people.⁵⁹⁰ Everyone stopped what they were doing and headed to Pharr. Jaime Garza hitched a ride with López because “he knew where he was going.” They drove up to the police station, and as soon as López opened the door, police grabbed him and arrested him, while Garza escaped.⁵⁹¹

Jesus Ramirez and his friend Edgar Ruiz were also in Weslaco at the retreat when they heard news of the riot. When Ramirez and his friend arrived in Pharr, he saw two men who he knew (he did not name them) in hand to hand combat with police officers.⁵⁹² Ramirez stated that there was shooting going on and that one could hear bullets going by and not know where they were coming from. As soon as they arrived at the police station, they were arrested and were part of the thirty-one adults who were arrested along with eight juveniles.⁵⁹³ Magallan’s children, who were also involved in the picketing, did not get arrested because Fernández told

⁵⁸⁸Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 26.

⁵⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰“Pharr Riot, Part Two,” Jaime Garza oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 2, 2015, Mercedes, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/pharr-riot-part-two>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁵⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁵⁹²“Pharr Riot,” Jesus Ramirez oral history interview with Katherine Bynum, June 29, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/pharr-riot>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁵⁹³*Ibid.*; Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 23.

them to leave once the violence started.⁵⁹⁴ However, there were countless others who came from Weslaco to see what was going on or to help their fellow activists.

As additional law enforcement arrived in Pharr, Edinburg Police Chief Alfredo Gonzalez and his men assessed the situation. They saw other policemen grabbing and pulling people by their clothes or hair and throwing them into holding cells in the Pharr jail.⁵⁹⁵ Chief Gonzalez believed that hot tempers from both sides would make restoring order difficult, since Chief Ramirez and Sgt. Sandoval had lost control of themselves.⁵⁹⁶ Mayor R.S. Bowe was at the police station when policeman Carlos Sandoval and other Pharr officers urged him to give command to Chief Gonzalez, since he had “up-to-date formal police training on crowd control.”⁵⁹⁷ Once he gained command of all the police forces that had converged in Pharr, Chief Gonzales ordered them to stop acting in an aggressive manner and to make no arrests.⁵⁹⁸ Next, he ordered that police break into two groups, walking down Cage and begin closing all the cantinas, while firemen were ordered to secure the police station by hosing down anyone who tried to get near it.⁵⁹⁹

Those who were running away from the mayhem ran west from the police station to the many taverns that were located on or around Cage.⁶⁰⁰ Many rioters used them as “safe houses” as they would run out, throw rocks, and then run back inside.⁶⁰¹ Ruben Rosales owned a tavern called “Sepis,” which was close to Cage. On that night, he saw the mayhem first hand. He saw police shoot tear gas and shut down taverns as they made their way up the street. Interestingly, his older brother was a Pharr police officer and went to his tavern that night. Rosales explains what happened next:

⁵⁹⁴Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁵⁹⁵Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 24.

⁵⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 25. Records do not indicate when Mayor Bowe arrived or if he was already there when the picket started.

⁵⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁹⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰“All Hell Broke Loose,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/all-hell-broke-loose>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁶⁰¹Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 25.

They came back up 281 (Cage) and then my brother (Jose ‘La Piconá’ Rosales) came into the tavern, the police man. My other brother (Francisco) had been hit over the head with a brick when bricks were being thrown and he was here next door with my sister...my sister was taking care of him. And my brother came into the tavern and there were policemen...uff...in the front and in the back. He just threw open the door and he said, ‘close the tavern up!’ He’s my brother, my oldest brother. I said ‘okay, as soon as they drink their beer.’ ‘No no no no no, right now! Close it up!’ That’s when the backdoor opened up and another bunch of policemen came in. ‘Everybody out! Everybody out!’ And then they hit a tavern next to me, and then two more taverns, and then that was it.⁶⁰²

Rosales’ account illustrates how Pharr police, along with other departments, began to take control of that small area of Pharr. Edinburg Police Chief Gonzales’ attempts to gain control were yielding results. However, Chief Gonzales and Pharr policeman Carlos Sandoval stated that there were many onlookers that night during the riot, making it difficult to tell who the rioters were and who the onlookers were, which contributed to the chaos.⁶⁰³ By 10:00pm the riot had subsided, and by midnight the riot was over.⁶⁰⁴

The following morning, news about what happened in Pharr the night before spread throughout the Valley and the South Texas region. The headlines in *The Monitor* read, “Massed Police Quell Youth Riot at Pharr: Violence Rages for Four Hours,” in big bold letters. Next to the headline was an image of people huddling over Alfonso Loredó Flores’ dead body as his blood flowed on the sidewalk. The picture confirmed that he did have his hands in his pockets. The article informed readers that the twenty-year-old bystander was in critical condition after being struck in the head by a “flying missile,” but that claim was later corrected as information about Flores’ death was confirmed.⁶⁰⁵ No one saw what occurred that Saturday, February 6,

⁶⁰²“All Hell Broke Loose,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/all-hell-broke-loose>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁶⁰³Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 25.

⁶⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵See Appendix A to see a copy of Alfonso Loredó Flores’ death certificate.

separation of whites and non-whites in Pharr in the early twentieth century was based on the railroad tracks. Poor ethnic Mexicans lived north of the tracks, while Anglos and well-off ethnic Mexicans lived south of the tracks. This practice was repeated through the entire Valley and other parts of Texas just south of San Antonio. I illustrated the conditions in which ethnic Mexicans living in the north side of Pharr were living in and that community's demands for social justice. It was not until allegations of police brutality began to emerge that Fernández, Magallan, and other members of the community intensified their protests. Unfortunately, many of the leaders were absent when the peaceful protest on February 6, 1971 became a rowdier one which eventually became violent and caused one innocent man to lose his life. In his interview with Ned Wallace, Fernández stated that "that is the way protests are. You are confronting people, you want to get to a point where you're protesting, and then you pull back. Apparently, we just didn't pull back fast enough."⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁸Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 2.

Chapter 4: “El Pleito No Es Con Los Animales, Sino Con el Dueño del Circo:” The Aftermath of the Pharr Riot

During the weeks and months that followed the riot, the City of Pharr underwent a drastic transformation. Within the decade of the 1970s the city improved the living conditions and quality of life for those living in the barrios, the first Mexican-American candidate won the mayor's office, the people had a greater voice in city politics, city police officers became better trained, and economic growth increased. Alfonso L. Flores' death was the catalyst for this drastic change, since the bullet that struck him on the head came from the gun of an Anglo Deputy Sheriff from Hidalgo County. Prior to the riot, ethnic Mexicans living in the barrios north of the railroad tracks had experienced many social and political injustices. In fall 1970, Efraín Fernández, Maria Magallan, and other members of the community had attempted to bring attention to these issues, but Mayor Bowe and his city commissioners ignored their pleas. Regardless of the methods and tactics these individuals used to gain the attention of the mayor and the rest of the city government, as illustrated in the previous chapter, their demands were ignored. It was not until Flores was killed during the riot that Anglos and ethnic Mexicans of all economic means questioned what was happening in their city and realized that social and political change was needed. This civic awakening not only led to the demise of Mayor Bowe and his administration but also set in motion events that transformed city politics and life.⁶⁰⁹

Why these changes occurred after the riot and not earlier is a key question. The answer is that Flores' death really did influence the people of Pharr to come together and address the issues at hand. First and foremost, attempts to bring attention to the barrio's needs prior to the riot were led by a small group of people who did not pose any threat to Bowe and his

⁶⁰⁹While this chapter discusses the events that occurred in Pharr months after the riot, there were larger political forces happening in the region and state levels. By late January 1970 (after MAYO's national meeting at La Lomita), the Raza Unida Party was established and began the struggle for political autonomy. For a detailed description of the party's creation and goals for the 1970 local, regional, and state elections, please see chapter three of Ignacio M. García's book *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party*. Also see chapters four and five for information about the RUP's goals for their 1972 campaign and 1974 local, regional, and state elections. For first-hand accounts, also see chapters nine, ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen of José Ángel Gutiérrez's *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. These events occurred at the same time as the ones in Pharr described in this chapter, and chapter five of this dissertation.

administration and were seen as just an annoyance. Though Fernández and Magallan were able to organize people to peacefully protest these social and political disparities, it was simply not enough. After the riot and the death of an innocent civilian who was not involved in picket against police brutality, this small group of protesters was later joined by other groups. These groups were Chicana/o activists from across the state and civilian groups comprised of middle class Anglos and ethnic Mexicans business owners in Pharr. With the help of other Chicana/os and middle-class influence, Fernández, Magallan, and people from the barrio were finally able to implement their agenda.

In short, this chapter illustrates how the mobilization of individuals of the community influenced social and political change through protests, marches, and the creation of citizen groups. In addition, the “political” trials of Alonzo López and Efraín Fernández, both who were indicted and tried on various charges stemming from the riot, also played a role in the reformation of social and political issues in the city. Together, all these factors led to the resignation of Mayor Bowe and much of his administration and paved the way for the election of the first Mexican American mayor in the city’s history.

For several days after the riot, the city of Pharr and its residents remained on edge. Such a violent event as the riot, especially the killing of an innocent bystander by the police, had never happened in the city’s history. Accounts from individuals such as Efraín Fernández, Ruben Rosales, David Fishlow, and former policeman Carlos Sandoval affirmed that the city felt like it was under martial law, despite the moderate amount of property destruction.⁶¹⁰ The day after the riot, Rosales called the police station and asked if he could re-open his bar. Officer Zúñiga, who answered the phone, replied that it would be okay to do so, “as long as there was no trouble.”⁶¹¹ Zúñiga instructed Rosales to close his bar if he saw something out of the ordinary. On the following Monday or Tuesday, Rosales was informed by one his customers that something

⁶¹⁰Ned Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” in “Studies in Rio Grande Valley History,” ed. Milo Kearney, Anthony Knopp, and Antonio Zavaleta. *The UTB/TSC Regional History Series* 6, 26.

⁶¹¹“Aftermath of the Riot,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/aftermath-of-the-riot>, accessed May 02, 2017.

strange was occurring in the downtown area. This individual, whom he did not name, went inside Rosales' tavern and instructed him to look towards the south across the railroad tracks.⁶¹² Since his tavern, Sepis, was located just north of the railroad tracks, Rosales had a panoramic view of downtown Pharr. Rosales recalled that he saw various unidentified individuals walking back and forth on the rooftop of one of the local business, the Peterson Insulation building. Upon closer inspection with his binoculars, he could see that these individuals were Anglos with rifles and that they were looking towards his tavern. "I started waving at them from the front door," he explained.⁶¹³ Soon after, one of his patrons also joined him outside to see what Rosales was waving at, and he began to wave at these individuals as well.⁶¹⁴

Sandoval claimed that everyone, including the police, were nervous and very tense because of rumors that an attack on the police was planned.⁶¹⁵ According to him, there were several incidences in which individuals would park their vehicles a few blocks away from the police station, fire their weapons at the building, and then drive away, leaving bullet holes in the building's exterior.⁶¹⁶ This prompted business owners and police officers alike to go on the roofs of the police station and several businesses with guns to make sure that no one tried to instigate further violence. Mayor Bowe attempted to keep the peace by not only using the police force, but at times by asking business owners to keep a watchful eye on individuals who might want to start another riot. A *compadre* of Rosales, Gilberto Espinoza, owned a service station around the corner from his (Rosales) tavern along with his brother Raul. Gilberto informed Rosales that a day or two after the riot, Mayor Bowe instructed him and his brother to go up on the roof of their service station and protect the gas so no trouble maker could obtain gasoline to make Molotov cocktails.⁶¹⁷ Both brothers took shifts in doing so for three days and nights. This was the extent

⁶¹²*Ibid.*

⁶¹³*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁴*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁵Carlos Sandoval, interview by Ned Wallace, Pharr, Texas, October 8, 2001.

⁶¹⁶*Ibid.* No other sources have been found as of yet to collaborate this claim.

⁶¹⁷"Aftermath of the Riot," from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/aftermath-of-the-riot>, accessed May 02, 2017.

of what Rosales saw and heard of what went on in Pharr days after the riot. After about ten days of tension and apprehension, the city was back to “normal.”⁶¹⁸

Contradicting *The Pharr Press*’ claim that things were normal, the local Chicano newspaper made sure Mayor Bowe and his city commissioners knew that the people were conscious of their inability to act. One week after the riot, the front-page headline of the *¡Ya Mero!* read, “*La Raza Pierde Otro Hijo en Ataque por Policías.*” Community members from north Pharr and individuals involved in *el movimiento* were still angry over Flores’ death. Coincidentally, César Chávez visited the Rio Grande Valley a few days after the riot to give a speech at the nearby Pan American College in Edinburg on February 8.⁶¹⁹ Later that night Chávez attended and spoke at a rally in San Juan before a crowd of 800 people. Speaking at what the *Corpus Christi Caller* described as a “subdued rally” that only lasted for half an hour, Chávez urged many of those in attendance to use non-violent tactics in the pursuit for social justice.⁶²⁰ The original plans for the rally were modified because of the riot and Flores’ death. Instead, the rally was devoted to prayers for the deceased from local clergy men and organizing a collection fund for the Flores family by the local United Farm Workers Organizing Committee members.⁶²¹

Activists also focused on helping and supporting thirty-one young men who were arrested on that night on charges of disorderly conduct and inciting a riot.⁶²² Eight to ten juveniles were also arrested that night.⁶²³ They appeared in Justice of the Peace Jim Wilson’s courtroom at the Hidalgo County courthouse two days after the riot (Monday, February 8), but their day in court was postponed until February 26 so the Hidalgo District Attorney Oscar McInnis had time to

⁶¹⁸Lloyd H. Glover, “Pharr ‘Quiet’ After Week of Tension,” *The Pharr Press*, February 18, 1971, Pharr Memorial Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶¹⁹“Chavez in Valley for Speaking Engagements,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), February 8, 1971.

⁶²⁰“800 in San Juan Hear Chavez Plea,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, February 9, 1971.

⁶²¹*Ibid.*

⁶²²“Riot Case Delayed for Probe,” *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), February 9, 1971, 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶²³“FBI, DPS Both Investigating Violent Pharr Demonstration,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

investigate what happened that night.⁶²⁴ McInnis explained to Wilson that the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) was currently investigating the riot, and with allotted time he would present the finding to a grand jury on February 18.⁶²⁵ McInnis originally asked the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department to conduct the investigation of the riot, but was advised by Sheriff Claudio Castañeda that it would benefit all parties if an impartial agency that was not present that night took the lead.⁶²⁶

United Farm Workers union attorney Jim Hall represented many of the thirteen in the courtroom. Since their court date was postponed, they were released on a personal \$200 recognizance bond and were restricted from participation in any rallies until then.⁶²⁷ Yet many of these individuals planned to attend the rally that Chávez was holding in San Juan that Monday night, and Wilson expressed no objection with them going if they did not create a disturbance. The following day, February 9, Judge J.R. Alamia of the 92nd District Court charged a Hidalgo County grand jury comprised of nine men and three women to investigate the incident.⁶²⁸ Judge Alamia instructed the grand jury that their main duty was to find out who shot Flores, but also to conduct a "fair, impartial, complete, and conclusive" investigation so there would be no doubt of the investigation's integrity.⁶²⁹

While McInnis turned over the investigation of the riot to the Texas DPS, Mayor Bowe contacted U.S. Attorney Anthony J.P. Farris to conduct a Justice Department probe of the riot and events leading up to it.⁶³⁰ Farris confirmed to the media that there was indeed an investigation underway that started with the allegations of police brutality. He noted that if there

⁶²⁴"Riot Case Delayed for Probe," *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶²⁵*Ibid.*

⁶²⁶"Sheriff Suggests Probe by Impartial Agency," *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶²⁷"Riot Case Delayed for Probe," *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶²⁸"Alamia Charges Grand Jury with Investigating Violence in Pharr," *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶²⁹*Ibid.*

⁶³⁰"FBI, DPS Both Investigating Violent Pharr Demonstration," *The Monitor* (McAllen), 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

were any cases of police maltreatment of prisoners, then under the U.S. Code 242, which “protects a citizen from violation of rights by a person or persons acting under the ‘color of the law,’” action would be taken.⁶³¹ With two active investigations, time was needed for detailed examinations. The Justice Department finished their investigation within three weeks and took another week to finish its report.⁶³² Afterwards, the reports were sent to the FBI office in San Antonio, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department in Washington, and to Farris. Regarding the delay, McInnis emphasized that those investigating the riot should not skip over the facts hurriedly and that the delay was to make sure “that justice be done to all parties—the accused as well as the accusers.”⁶³³ The end goal of prolonging the court date and forming a grand jury to investigate the matter was not only to get all the facts, but to demonstrate to the people of the Rio Grande Valley that they could trust and rely on the courts and other institutions of law.⁶³⁴

While this was occurring, funeral services for Alfonso Loredó Flores were scheduled for Thursday, February 11. Directed by the De Leon Funeral Home, services were held at St. Margaret’s Church, and the burial took place at Guadalupe Cemetery, both located in Pharr.⁶³⁵ Rosales described Flores’ funeral being “a sight to see.”⁶³⁶ Many individuals that he knew in the community kept him updated about the procession and advised him not to attempt to travel or go through where the procession was occurring because it was just “humongous.”⁶³⁷ Instead of a convoy of cars, it was hundreds of local citizens that comprised the procession, as they walked peacefully to the cemetery to bury Flores.

⁶³¹*Ibid.*

⁶³²*Ibid.*

⁶³³*Ibid.*

⁶³⁴“Alamia Charges Grand Jury with Investigating Violence in Pharr,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶³⁵“Funeral Service Set for Pharr Riot Victim,” *Valley Morning Star*, February 11, 1971, 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶³⁶“Aftermath of the Riot,” from Ruben Rosales oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/aftermath-of-the-riot>, accessed May 02, 2017.

⁶³⁷*Ibid.*

As previously noted, there were tensions in the city during the days after the riot, but to say that things returned to normal after a week and a half is erroneous. By late February and early March 1971, the relationship between the ethnic Mexican community from north Pharr and city officials became more strained. Reports from *¡Ya Mero!* explained that Mayor Bowe refused to acknowledge the problems facing in the city after the riot. Mayor Bowe remained “*amachado*” and refused to discuss the quality of the police force and city government, even mocking his critics on television.⁶³⁸ In response to the mayor’s lack of response to Flores’ death and community complaints in the weeks after the riot, many residents of north Pharr initiated a boycott towards Anglo owned business located south of the railroad tracks.⁶³⁹

Individuals from north Pharr and many activists were also incensed with the slow progress of the grand jury’s investigation. After three days of hearings, activists and family of the deceased wanted answers as to who fired the bullet that killed Flores. Frustrated because of the lack of answers, the editor(s) of *¡Ya Mero!* focused on who composed the grand jury to illustrate the possible reasons for the delay. The newspaper stated, “El jurado se reporte ser compuesto de cinco méxico-americanos y siete ‘otros.’ Adivínele quien será los ‘otros.’”⁶⁴⁰

Hidalgo County Sheriff Castañeda reaffirmed the belief that the protests and demonstrators were not led by local people. He blamed outside agitators who “came in incognito” to agitate and work up the local population into seeing things that were not there.⁶⁴¹ Many residents of Pharr, such as future Mayor A.C. Jaime, disagreed with how law enforcement and city officials portrayed those who were not Rio Grande Valley natives and involved in activism.

“We saw what was going on. We knew why it was going on. We didn’t necessarily support some of the actions that took place. But we knew that it was the people reaching out to someone that could

⁶³⁸“Raza Recoge Riendas,” *¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), February 27, 1971, Vol. 2, No. 9, 2, M-film E184.M5 P3, Sect.III: Roll.3:v.1-3:no.1-23 (1969-1972), Library, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶³⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹“Outsiders Are Biggest Problem, Sheriff Tells Citizens League,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), February 26, 1971, 1.

help them. And these people that came from outside...comunistas, the mayor used to say comunistas. There ain't no such thing! They were here because they wanted to help our people. They stuck their necks out when they could have been killed. All these people, Efraín Fernández and this gentleman que acaba de morir hace rato (Antonio Orendain), I mean, all those guys, they were out there trying to help people.”⁶⁴²

On the other hand, law enforcement saw these individuals as nuisances and outside agitators who only created problems in the community. Sheriff Castañeda believed that private, public, or governmental bodies should refuse to negotiate with outside groups when threatened with force.⁶⁴³ He was referring to the riot and maybe to the attempts by many Pharr community members and activists to propose a city amendment that would limit the powers of a certain elected official (Mayor Bowe).

Regardless of the divisive politics being practiced by Mayor Bowe and Sheriff Castañeda, residents from North Pharr wanted peace, tranquility, and justice. But as one resident asked in the opinion section of *¡Ya Mero!*, could those looking for peace actually find it, knowing that injustices have occurred and will continue to occur if nothing is done?⁶⁴⁴ The only solution to this was to seek justice through non-violence and legal action.⁶⁴⁵ This idea of addressing social, political and racial inequalities in the courts was not new and had been done before in the Valley and the greater Southwest region. Citizens such as Jorge Martinez who also contributed to the opinion section of the Chicano newspaper believed that communication and respect between law enforcement and the citizens living in north Pharr was non-existent.⁶⁴⁶ If justice was to be expected, then communication and respect between both parties was needed.

No todos somos perfectos, pero ni tampoco somos ignorantes para
no darnos cuenta que es lo que está pasando en nuestro pueblo.

⁶⁴²A.C. Jaime, interview by author, Pharr, May 30, 2016.

⁶⁴³“Outsiders Are Biggest Problem, Sheriff Tells Citizens League,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), February 26, 1971, 1.

⁶⁴⁴“Cartas de Nuestros Lectores,” *¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), February 27, 1971, Vol. 2, No. 9, 4, M-film E184.M5 P3, Sect.III: Roll.3:v.1-3:no.1-23 (1969-1972), Library, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁶*Ibid.*

Hay que pensar bien en lo que vamos hacer, porque todos tenemos el derecho a defendernos, y si tenemos que ser unidos para poder pelear la causa entonces vamos a tener que hacerlo ley. La violencia no llega a nada más que le grande decepción sin ningún provecho y el dolor individual si alguna merte[sic] ocurre.⁶⁴⁷

Mr. Martinez supported the creation of a committee comprised of business owners that would support the citizens' fight for social justice. With the aid of said committee and organizations such as MAYO, the citizens of Pharr would be able to challenge those in power using "*la ley*." Residents understood the concept that their votes placed the administration in office and they could just as easily vote them out if necessary. Overall, most ethnic Mexicanos in Pharr were conscious of the political power they had and began a campaign against Mayor Bowe, Police Chief Ramirez, and the unfair system that had oppressed them for too long.

By early March 1971, the people most affected by Mayor Bowe's boss politics received support from Chicanos from all over the state as well as from various areas of the Southwest. Residents' growing frustrations with the grand jury and its slow progress began to materialize as members of the community and Chicano organizations planned a march to remember Alfonso Flores on the one-month anniversary of the riot. Although many people initially believed that the grand jury's investigation would conclude in late February, testimony from various witnesses were still being heard in early March. District Attorney McInnis informed the media that it would not be until mid-March that the grand jury would "wind up its probe" and write its report.⁶⁴⁸ Fearing that this peaceful march would result in a riot just like the peaceful protest a month earlier, Mayor Bowe and District Attorney McInnis attempted to block it.

The planned march would draw various MAYO members from Texas, and from other Chicano organizations in California, New Mexico, and Arizona. MAYO spokesperson, leader, and executive director Carlos Guerra predicted that 1,000 people would participate in the march. This gathering was planned to protest the death of not only Alfonso Loredó Flores, but also Dr.

⁶⁴⁷*Ibid.* Translation: We are not all perfect, but neither are we ignorant to not realize what is happening in our town. We have to think carefully about what we are going to do, because we all have the right to defend ourselves, and if we have to be united in order to fight the cause then we are going to have to make it a law. Violence does not come to anything other than great disappointment without any profit and individual pain if any death occurs.

⁶⁴⁸"Grand Jury in Sixth Day of Pharr Probe," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 4, 1971.

Fred Logan Jr. of Mathis, Rafael Menchaca López of San Antonio, Mario Benavides of Corpus Christi, and Victor Manuel Nava of Brownsville, all of whom had been killed by police officers.⁶⁴⁹ The two-mile march was planned to start at the Shrine of San Juan Catholic Church in San Juan, advance through downtown Pharr and pass directly in front of the police station, and end at Flores' grave at Guadalupe Cemetery in Pharr making in a two-mile trek.⁶⁵⁰

The attempts of Mayor Bowe and District Attorney McInnis to block organizers from going through with the march failed for various reasons. Prior to the riot, Federal Judge Reynaldo Garza from Brownsville, ruled that cities could not prevent peaceful demonstrations regardless if they had a permit or not.⁶⁵¹ This ruling came after Efraín Fernández and his companions were arrested by Pharr police for "parading without a permit," weeks before the riot. Mayor Bowe could not prevent the march from passing through his city because of Judge Garza's ruling, but the city had yet to issue Fernández a permit that he requested for the march.⁶⁵² McInnis asked District Judge Vernon D. Harville of Corpus Christi, to grant a temporary restraining order to prevent the march.⁶⁵³ He drew up a petition that cited a Texas law designed to restrict pop festivals and contended that this march would "produce a clear and present and immediate threat or danger to the physical well-being, property or life of others."⁶⁵⁴ McInnis' motion requested that the march organizer's not hold, advertise, or promote the march, and be restrained from encouraging people to participate in it.⁶⁵⁵ The overall goal was to prevent individuals from marching against police brutality in South Texas on the grounds that the march could erupt in violence, just like the peaceful protest against police brutality on February 6.

⁶⁴⁹"D.A. Asks Judge to Block Pharr March," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 5, 1971.

⁶⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁶⁵¹"Action May Be Taken to Head Off Protest," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 2, 1971, 1, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁵²*Ibid.*

⁶⁵³"D.A. Asks Judge to Block Pharr March," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 5, 1971.

⁶⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵*Ibid.* The defendants named in the restraining order were Efraín Fernández (MAYO member), Carlos Guerra (MAYO member), Tony Orendain (organizer for the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee/UFWOC), Frank Alford (director of the Methodist supported Valley Community Center), David Fishlow (founder of the Chicano newspaper *¡Ya Mero!*), Reymundo López, James Giffey and Mayor R.S. Bowe. According to *The Monitor*, Mayor Bowe was named as a defendant, so the city would not issue a permit for the demonstration.

Despite McInnis' attempts to stop the march from happening, and Mayor Bowe's unwillingness to issue a parade permit to Fernández, the peaceful march still took place. On the afternoon of March 7, 1,000 to 2,000 people participated in the two-mile march from San Juan to Pharr to protest the death of Flores and other individuals who died at the hands of law enforcement. The spirit of the march, as described by *¡Ya Mero!*, was that of brotherhood and emotion where "el pueblo de la raza de bronce" in the Valley where joined by many other peoples and communities.⁶⁵⁶ From Texas towns such as Crystal City, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston, as well as from several Southwestern states, people travelled to the Valley to protest the injustices in Pharr.⁶⁵⁷

Prior to the start of the procession, Carlos Guerra instructed participants that if anything should happen they should all sit down along the parade route, so the police would have no excuse to attack them.⁶⁵⁸ For crowd control, there were parade marshals whose sole responsibilities were to guide demonstrators through the parade route. Prior to the march, Guerra accused the California-based Freedom Newspaper chain for trying to "inflame the public against the march."⁶⁵⁹ The Freedom Newspaper chain owned two valley newspapers, *The Monitor* in McAllen and *The Valley Morning News* in Harlingen. On the day of the march, the newspapers published reports that illustrated the responses the community and the police had on the march. The reports quoted law enforcement officers as saying that they were ready for any eventuality and that twenty or more businessmen would be protecting their business along the parade route by being on the roof with high-powered rifles.⁶⁶⁰ Guerra viewed these reports as "erroneous" and an effort by the conservative newspaper chain to intimidate those attending the march.

⁶⁵⁶"Condolientes Conmemoran Cinco Muertos," *¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), March 13, 1971, Vol. 2, No. 10, 1, M-film E184.M5 P3, Sect.III: Roll.3:v.1-3:no.1-23 (1969-1972), Library, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸"From San Juan to Pharr: 1,000 Join Peaceful Protest," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 8, 1971.

⁶⁵⁹"Chicano March is Quiet in a Tense Texas Town," Special to *The New York Times*, March 9, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁶⁰"Pharr March is Peaceful," *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen), March 8, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX; "Chicano

Guerra also believed that the police hoped for a disturbance, so they could retaliate against the demonstrators because of the sheer number of law enforcement officials and National Guard that were on standby.⁶⁶¹ There is no official count of how many officers, in uniform or plain-clothed, were on standby in case another disturbance broke out. Not only were authorities in Pharr on alert, but also police officers of neighboring cities were ready to respond. All days off for city and county law enforcement officers were cancelled.⁶⁶² Many Texas Rangers were in the mid-Valley, and Highway Patrolmen also massed in the area.⁶⁶³ During the march, participants remained silent while spectators did not say anything to those participating in the march. As instructed by Guerra, marchers did not carry any signs, did not chant nor shout any slogans such as “brown power” or “Viva La Causa,” or wear any costumes that could draw attention.⁶⁶⁴ The march was described as follows by journalist Martin Waldron:

In the front row of seven, there were three women in their fifties, one still wearing a lace mantilla from church. Most of the marchers were young. But there were a few old men, weatherbeaten [sic] from working in the sun. One man was in a wheel chair. Another hobbled along with a cast on his right foot. There were a few Negroes in the crowd and a good many, perhaps a hundred, Anglo-Saxon whites. But the crowd was 90 per cent or more Mexican-American. The first 80 rows were silent, almost grim, as they plodded along the unpaved back roads from San Juan to Pharr. Their feet raised puffs of dust as they marched. At the rear of the half-mile-long column, a guitarist played chords and the last 40 or 50 rows sang raggedly in Spanish.⁶⁶⁵

March is Quiet in a Tense Texas Town,” Special to *The New York Times*, March 9, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX. Carlos Guerra and the media do not give specific details on who the officers were that gave these reports or for what department they worked for.

⁶⁶¹“Chicano March is Quiet in a Tense Texas Town,” Special to *The New York Times*, March 9, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵*Ibid.*

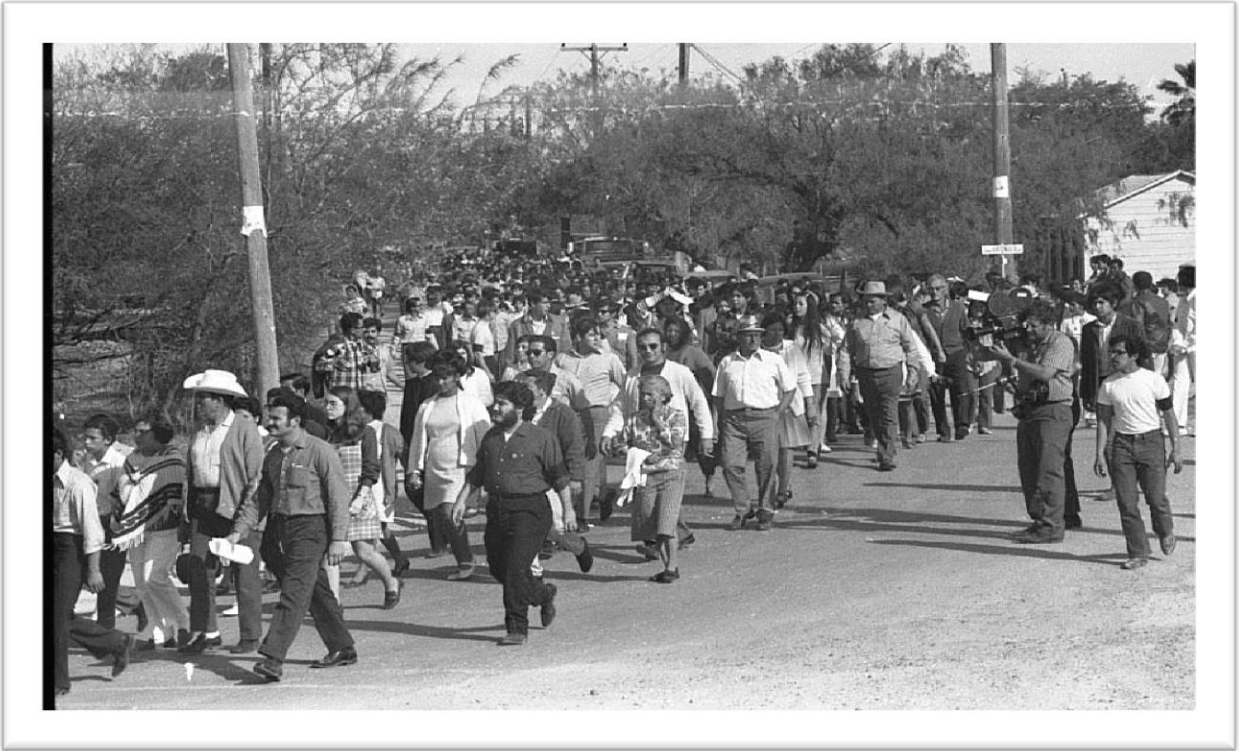


Illustration 3.1: Photograph of the peaceful march that occurred on March 7, 1971. On the left side of the photograph, Efraín Fernández is located to the left of the man with the white cowboy hat. Courtesy of Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, Texas.

As the march passed through downtown Pharr and in front of the police station, an onlooker who was possibly drunk yelled, “Viva la [sic] Chicano, Viva la Moratorium.”⁶⁶⁶ To avoid any conflict, parade marshals asked the man to be silent as the procession continued its march. After the parade arrived at Guadalupe Cemetery where Flores was buried, five Roman Catholic priests conducted mass from the back of a flatbed truck.⁶⁶⁷ Reverend Robert Flores of the Texas Conference of Churches addressed the crowd in Spanish and told them to pray for peace and strength to continue their struggles through non-violence.⁶⁶⁸ Efraín Fernández, Carlos Guerra,

⁶⁶⁶“From San Juan to Pharr: 1,000 Join Peaceful Protest,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 8, 1971. *The New York Times* (the previous reference) reported that it was a “plump drunk” who was standing on the other side of the street in front of the police station that raised a clenched fist and yelled, “Viva la Raza.”

⁶⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁸*Ibid.*

and Antonio Orendain also spoke to crowd. Guerra and Orendain everyone present to boycott stores that were owned by Anglos south of the railroad tracks.⁶⁶⁹

To end the gathering, Guerra recited the names of Dr. Fred E. Logan, Rafael Menchaca López, Mario Benavides, Victor Nava, and Alfonso Loredó Flores, all who had been all killed by law enforcement. Logan, who had a role in the health care and political involvement with low income ethnic Mexican families, was fatally shot by San Patricio County Deputy Sheriff Erich Bauch in the town of Mathis on July 13, 1970.⁶⁷⁰ Menchaca López was shot twice in the chest and killed by Terry M. Dunham (not stated what department he worked for) on October 4.⁶⁷¹ A few days later on October 11, nineteen year-old Benavides was shot and killed in Corpus Christi by off-duty policeman R.P. Spencer.⁶⁷² On December 10, fourteen year-old Nava of Brownsville was shot in the back of the head as he ran away from Deputy Bryan, allegedly because Bryan believed Nava was pulling out a knife.⁶⁷³ Then in February of 1971, Hidalgo County Deputy Sheriff Robert C. Johnson shot the bullet that killed Flores in Pharr. Guerra explained that he wanted the nation to know the names of these five innocent individuals from South Texas and that nothing had been done about their murders by the judicial system.⁶⁷⁴

On March 10, 1971, just three days after the 1,000-person march, the Grand Jury finally presented its findings to Judge Alamia after its lengthy investigation. Ten people were charged in twelve indictments in connection with the violence that occurred during the riot.⁶⁷⁵ One of the ten indictments came as a shock.⁶⁷⁶ Deputy Sheriff Johnson was charged on one count of

⁶⁶⁹“Chicano March is Quiet in a Tense Texas Town,” Special to *The New York Times*, March 9, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁶⁷⁰Kristina Gutierrez, “Final Project: Abstract,” Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, <http://www.tamucc.edu/wiki/KristinaGutierrez/FinalProject> accessed 01/20/2018; Roberto Pena, “The Proverbial Straw,” *La Voz Chicana* (McAllen), Vol. 3 No. 2, date unknown.

⁶⁷¹Roberto Pena, “The Proverbial Straw,” *La Voz Chicana* (McAllen), Vol. 3 No. 2, date unknown.

⁶⁷²*Ibid.*

⁶⁷³*Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁴“From San Juan to Pharr: 1,000 Join Peaceful Protest,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 8, 1971.

⁶⁷⁵Lloyd H. Glover, “Grand Jury Indicts Ten Over Pharr Violence,” *The Pharr Press*, March 18, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX. Please see Appendix B to view a copy of the indictment against Efraín Fernández and others that was signed on March 11, 1971.

⁶⁷⁶Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 28.

negligent homicide in the death of Alfonso Flores, and was subsequently suspended by Sheriff Castañeda, pending the outcome of his case.⁶⁷⁷ Efraín Fernández was charged with malicious damage and Alonzo López with two counts of interfering with police during a riot and engaging in a riot.⁶⁷⁸ The other seven individuals who were charged with engaging a riot were Daniel Vasquez of Pharr, Jose Pantayo Torres of San Juan, Trinidad Pena López of Edinburg, Carlos Avitia of Pharr, Cruz Cortez of Pharr, and Natividad Meya Coronado of Pharr.⁶⁷⁹ Coincidentally, Justice of the Peace Jim Wilson dismissed the disorderly conduct charges against all but three of the thirty-one people who were arrested on the night of the riot.⁶⁸⁰ Those indicted would have to wait for their day in court until the summer and fall of 1971 and spring of 1972.

In addition to providing specific indictments the Grand Jury report submitted by the Grand Jury criticized the Pharr Police, the Pharr city administration, the Valley Community Center, and the demonstrators.⁶⁸¹ Concerning the demonstrators, the report declared that:

Leaders who advocate demonstrations to bring attention to problems of their followers should realize that their acts of protests, while exercising their rights are depriving a great number of people of their rights. This Grand Jury feels that there is no excuse for the total disregard for law and order by any citizens but at the same time, unnecessary provocation on the part of the elected officials of any community or governing body are likewise not be to excused.⁶⁸²

The Grand Jury's report stated that when change in any town is needed it is better recognized when it is achieved through "honest and legal means" while being aware of agitators wanting physical confrontation and militant demonstrations.⁶⁸³ The report described the motives of these individuals as questionable and asserted that the methods used by them eventually led to riot on

⁶⁷⁷Lloyd H. Glover, "Grand Jury Indicts Ten Over Pharr Violence," *The Pharr Press*, March 18, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁶⁸¹Lloyd H. Glover, "12 Indictments Returned by Grand Jury Over Pharr Riot," *The Pharr Press*, March 11, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶⁸²*Ibid.*

⁶⁸³"Text of Grand Jury's Report on Pharr Riot," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 11, 1971.

February 6. In short, the Grand Jury placed partial blame for Flores' death on the leaders and participants in the demonstrations that were held that day.⁶⁸⁴

Another issue the Grand Jury focused on was the Valley Community Center (VCC) in Pharr. The report explained that the center was used by militant organizations as a planning space for demonstrations, especially the demonstration prior to the riot, and that such developments were disturbing since a religious institution sponsored the community center. The Grand Jury asserted that demonstrations that lead to property damage, death and disruption of the peace could not be seen as "acts of Christianity."⁶⁸⁵ Therefore, it was recommended that the director of the center, Frank Alford, be replaced and that the space be used for "a new course of public service."⁶⁸⁶ In June 1971, the Valley Community Center board of directors voted to release Mr. Alford from his position as executive director.⁶⁸⁷ The VCC had served as a location where members of the community would meet and discuss the needs and issues of the times.⁶⁸⁸ Out of various groups using the VCC, the local MAYO chapter led by Efraín Fernández, and Union y Fuerza group led by Magallan, were two groups who used the space to hold meetings and as a staging ground to plan protests.⁶⁸⁹

The Pharr police department also received criticism from the Grand Jury. Its report stated:

The Pharr police should do all it can to correct its reputation. The complaint of police brutality has been substantial only in cases involving drinking. However, enough evidence was presented to suggest two Pharr police officers have acted in such a manner as to

⁶⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵Lloyd H. Glover, "12 Indictments Returned by Grand Jury Over Pharr Riot," *The Pharr Press*, March 11, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷After his dismissal, Mr. Alford accepted a position with another community center sponsored by the Methodist Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. Unfortunately, controversy followed Mr. Alford to New Orleans as he and 34 other individuals were arrested in November 1971 for parading without a permit.

⁶⁸⁸Lloyd H. Glover, "Community Center Council Meeting," *The Pharr Press*, June 4, 1970, 5, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶⁸⁹Linda J. Swartz, "Alfonso Loredó Flores Did Not Die in Vain," College of the Atlantic Bar Harbor, Main and the University of Texas at Austin, Presented at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association Mexico, 1974, Pharr Memorial Library Archives," 10.

bring considerable criticism to the entire police force. Close supervision, constant training and upgrading of all officers to bring about a more peaceful climate in Pharr without sacrificing law and order.⁶⁹⁰

Questions about police training, education, and ability to do the job had been practically non-existent prior to Fernández's efforts to organize the people of North Pharr. Before the riot, those who wanted to become a policeman were given a gun and a badge, and then joined the political faction that ran the city.⁶⁹¹ Ruben Rosales recalled that many police officers did not finish high school and had no training at all. He emphasized that politics were the reason many individuals became police officers even though some could not read, write, or speak a single word of English.⁶⁹² Mayor Bowe's administration and tenure was reinforced by the backing of the police department. By hiring "under-educated," and out of work Mexican-Americans as police officers who were paid minimal salaries, city officials secured the loyalty of the police force.⁶⁹³ As journalist Linda J. Swartz explained in an article in the liberal *Texas Observer*, there was a large disparity between the rich, who were mostly Anglos, and the poor, who were mostly ethnic Mexican, in Hidalgo County. Ethnic Mexicans comprised most of the semi-skilled and unskilled occupations in the city, and the transition from having little to no income to having a steady minimal salary created this sense of loyalty to the Bowe political machine. Police Chief Alfredo C. Ramirez possessed only an eighth-grade level of education and earned \$485 a month, while police recruits with little to no education started off at \$275 a month.⁶⁹⁴ Since all the police recruits received no formal training, much of the police force received on the job even though there were state regulations in place for law enforcement education. To abide by state regulations, officers from law enforcement agencies across the Valley were sent to the FBI law

⁶⁹⁰Lloyd H. Glover, "12 Indictments Returned by Grand Jury Over Pharr Riot," *The Pharr Press*, March 11, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁶⁹¹"Changes After Mayor Jaime," from Ruben Rosales oral history interviewed with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, June 23, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/changes-after-mayor-jaime>, accessed May 02, 2017.

⁶⁹²*Ibid.*

⁶⁹³Swartz, "Alfonso Loredó Flores Did Not Die in Vain," 8.

⁶⁹⁴Linda Swartz, "A Quiet Revolution in Pharr," *The Texas Observer* (Austin), August 9, 1974, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX, 8.

enforcement training facility in Harlingen.⁶⁹⁵ However, Pharr police officers were never sent to this training and their crime reports stayed in-house and were never submitted to the FBI or to the Department of Public Safety (DPS).⁶⁹⁶

Compared to other law enforcement agencies in the Valley during that period, the Pharr police department not only lacked properly trained officers and police staff but also new technology and vehicles. Being a small force of fewer than twenty officers, the police department only had five decrepit unmarked patrol cars and poor equipment. Moreover, it was not part of the growing regional police communications network.⁶⁹⁷ Overall, Pharr police officers were not properly trained and thus unprepared to respond to the riot. This was clearly noticeable because Chief Alfredo Ramirez did not know how to handle the situation and transferred command to the Edinburg Police Chief who had adequate training. The main efforts of the Pharr police consisted harassing drunks and stopping speeding drivers in order to increase revenue for the city, ignoring gambling and prostitution problems.⁶⁹⁸ Officers who questioned the way the department operated to protect gambling and prostitution or who spoke out against police brutality were given dangerous assignments or the late-night shift duty.⁶⁹⁹ After the Grand Jury report, a major shakeup of the police department was inevitable.⁷⁰⁰ The Grand Jury's recommendations also affected the city administration as well. It stated that city officials "could have been more patient and tolerant of Pharr residents that had real or imagined complaints about conditions in their city."⁷⁰¹ One important recommendation the Grand Jury made to the mayor and the city council was to reevaluate their practices regarding the way the city government conducted business. Stemming from past complaints that the mayor and city council conducted

⁶⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁸*Ibid.*; Swartz, "Alfonso Loreda Flores Did Not Dies in Vain," 8.

⁶⁹⁹Swartz, "A Quiet Revolution in Pharr," *The Texas Observer* (Austin), 8.

⁷⁰⁰Those who benefitted from all the gambling and prostitution were local politicians, city employees, and individuals running illicit businesses. This issue is addressed in the Chapter 5.

⁷⁰¹Lloyd H. Glover, "12 Indictments Returned by Grand Jury Over Pharr Riot," *The Pharr Press*, March 11, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

business behind closed doors and during the mid-day hours, which prevented much of the working population from attending, the Grand Jury suggested that this should immediately change. The Grand Jury reported that all business of the city government to be conducted “in an open manner, including evening meetings, as opposed to noon sessions, so that there can be more citizen’s [sic] participation.”⁷⁰² The report made it clear that while it did not condemn the officials’ actions or uphold the various citizens’ complaints, a measure of understanding from both sides could have prevented the riot and Flores’ death.⁷⁰³

While all this was occurring, two new local groups emerged from the disastrous protests that led to the riot. The first, a group of concerned citizens came together in early March to form the Concerned Citizens Committee (CCC), which was led by Stanley Ramos, owner of the barbershop where Flores was killed. The second was *Mujeres Unidas* (Women United) led by Maria Magallan. A third group of citizens would also be formed a few months later.⁷⁰⁴ Known as the Pharr Citizens League (PCL), this organization was founded in June of 1971 and led by Dr. Ruben Garza (president), Quentin Newcombe Jr. (city pharmacist and vice president), and Efraín Fernández (second vice president).⁷⁰⁵ The creation of these three groups within four months after the riot illustrated a shift from young, educated, Chicana/o activists and organizations to ordinary adult citizens and professionals fighting to solve the social and political problems in the city.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰²“Text of Grand Jury’s Report on Pharr Riot,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 11, 1971.

⁷⁰³Lloyd H. Glover, “12 Indictments Returned by Grand Jury Over Pharr Riot,” *The Pharr Press*, March 11, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁷⁰⁴Dora Leticia González, “A Look at the City of Pharr—Before and After the Riot” (History Paper, University of Texas Pan-American, Edinburg, April 20, 1989), Pharr Memorial Library Archive, Pharr, Texas, 9.

⁷⁰⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶The Concerned Citizens Committee and the Pharr Citizens League were mostly comprised of middle class residents (Anglos and ethnic Mexicans) who were also business owners or influential in the community. Also, there were a few activists such as Efraín Fernández (he is the only one who can be confirmed at the moment) who were also members of both groups. The *Mujeres Unidas* group was mostly comprised of older adult and elderly women from the *barrios*.

Problems within the enlarged movement also became noticeable as local leaders disagreed with non-valley native leaders. The indictments handed down by the grand jury, the arrests, and the eventual trials that would be held in the summer months affected moral. David Hall explained that the arrests and trials of various MAYO members months after the riot “blunted” the group’s activities and drained its energy.⁷⁰⁷ It was clear to many people that the arrests and prosecutions of various demonstrators would divert attention away from what they perceived to be the underlying cause of the city’s problems.⁷⁰⁸ Residents from the barrio and these citizen groups were determined not to let that happen, making them the new force behind social and political change in Pharr after the riot.

The reasons why three groups were formed stemmed from various ideological differences. First and foremost, the Concerned Citizens Committee and the Pharr Citizens League were mostly comprised of middle-class Anglos and ethnic Mexicans who owned businesses in Pharr. Their approach to solving the issues at hand may be described as accommodating, since they focused on challenging the system through legal means. Of course, some of the members in these two groups also included members from the *Raza Unida* Party and MAYO, but it was mostly comprised of middle class business owners. Magallan’s *Mujeres Unidas* members neither owned businesses nor were they middle-class. They were just a group of women from the *barrio* using grassroots activism to bring about change.

The CCC’s purpose was to solve the community’s problems through legal channels.⁷⁰⁹ Those involved in the CCC were business owners and other concerned citizens that were described by Leticia González as “a group of barrio oriented middle class Mexican

⁷⁰⁷Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 28.

⁷⁰⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹González, “A Look at the City of Pharr,” 9.

Americans.”⁷¹⁰ According to González, those in the citizens committee did not want to provoke any more violence and wanted to operate within the law. The committee’s meetings were open to the public and scheduled in the evening so working residents could attend.⁷¹¹ On March 3, the CCC petitioned Mayor Bowe to call an election on a proposed recall amendment to the city charter. Committee chairman Heberto Hinojosa explained that the main purpose of the amendment was to offer an “orderly and legal means” of removing an elected public official who had violated the public trust through illegal and immoral actions.⁷¹² The goal was to create a charter commission, comprised of citizens and city officials to prepare a recall provision for the city charter.⁷¹³ The citizens group submitted a list of twenty persons as possible members of the charter commission to Mayor Bowe but were informed that such a commission comprised of fifteen members was already established by the city commission. The CCC then requested that ten people from the proposed twenty be selected to serve in the charter commission so it would have equal representation from various Pharr neighborhoods.⁷¹⁴ Mayor Bowe informed the CCC that he would give the city attorney their list for further study.⁷¹⁵

Hinojosa and members of the citizens group were not pleased with Mayor Bowe’s attempt to ignore their requests for an unbiased study of a recall amendment. The group, with the help of UFWOC attorney David Hall and Pharr attorney Tony Garcia, filed suit in the 139th Federal District Court on May 9, 1971 to block a charter amendment election that was set for

⁷¹⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹¹*Ibid.*

⁷¹²“Pharr Citizens Group Plans Suit to Block June 8 Amendment Vote,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 7, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX

⁷¹³“Citizens Group Ask Additions to Charter Comm.,” *The Pharr Press*, March 18, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX

⁷¹⁴*Ibid.*

⁷¹⁵*Ibid.* The 20 individuals who were proposed to serve in this charter commission were: Heron Ramirez, Carlos Villegas Jr., Felipe A. Elizondo, Nieves Cortez Jr., Pilo Palacios, Emilio Vela, Agapito Vargas, Bobby Rutledge, Antonio Garcia, Rene Salinas, Jesus Sandoval, Paul Moore, Manuel Ramirez, Angel Treviño, Edgar Vela, Alonzo G. Rivas, Mrs. Pat Gonzalez, Mrs. E. R. Walton, Mrs. Felipe A. Elizondo, and Mrs. Loreto Treviño.

June 8, since it was drafted by the charter commission that was appointed by the city.⁷¹⁶ The citizens group contended that their version of the recall provision should be the one presented to the voters instead of the version drafted by the city commission.⁷¹⁷

Three features of the amendment stood out to the citizens group, and they immediately realized the intent of this city appointed charter commission. First, the CCC argued that the amendment protected Mayor Bowe and his administration from being recalled for their actions or refusal to act in any situation prior to the effective date of the amendments. Second, the amendment required that any petition to be signed by 30 percent of voters who voted in previous city election, which denied those who did not vote for various reasons their right to participate in this democratic process. Finally, the amendment allowed the city clerk (who was appointed by the mayor) to decide if a recall petition were acceptable or not.⁷¹⁸ The CCC also questioned the mayor's decision to hold the election in the first week of June. The group feared that many Mexican-American voters who were farm workers would have migrated north by that time and thus would not be able to vote on this amendment. Mayor Bowe's "stealthy and dishonest manner" was now obvious to middle class Mexican-American business owners who comprised the CCC.⁷¹⁹ Afterwards, Judge Darrel Hester of the 139th District Court ruled that Mayor Bowe and the city commission "must allow voters to ballot on both a charter commission's amendment and the CCC's amendment concerning the recall."⁷²⁰ Nevertheless, the City of Pharr rendered

⁷¹⁶"Pharr Citizens Group Plans Suit to Block June 8 Amendment Vote," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 7, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷¹⁷"Typo Causes Delay in Pharr Charter Vote," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 14, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷¹⁸"Pharr Citizens Group Plans Suit to Block June 8 Amendment Vote," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 7, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷¹⁹*Ibid.*

⁷²⁰"Pharr Group Loses Bid for Injunction," *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 8, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

Judge Hester's ruling "powerless" by serving notice and posting bond for an appeal, and the city commission continued with its plans for the June 29 election without offering the CCC's version of the recall amendment to voters.⁷²¹

Attempts to block the adoption of the city's version of the recall provision only prolonged the inevitable. After the first attempt to block the provision failed on June 3, Hall, who represented the CCC, appealed to the 13th Court of Civil appeals in Corpus Christi to secure a *writ of mandamus*.⁷²² This writ was to force the city of Pharr use the recall provision presented by the CCC in the recall election instead of the one provided by the city commission. Hall's request was denied by the Court of Civil Appeals, whose ruling he then appealed to the state supreme court in Austin.⁷²³ On June 7, the State Supreme court declined to hear Hall's petition.

The State Supreme court's decision did not sit well with residents and the *Mujeres Unidas* and the Pharr Citizens League (PCL) also pressured Mayor Bowe, the police, and city commission during the CCC's struggle against the city's recall amendment. On June 29, qualified voters in Pharr went to the polls to vote on the recall amendment. The voters approved the city charter amendment to recall any elected official, if needed, before his term in office ended. The total vote county was 1,229 for and 773 against the amendment.⁷²⁴ According to *The Daily Review* on June 30, this vote ended months of controversy on the merits of the

⁷²¹"Pharr Group Loses Bid for Injunction," *The Monitor*, June 8, 1971, UTRGV Special Collections, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot, Copy 1.

⁷²²"Courts Reject Plea to Stop Pharr Charter Election," *The Pharr Press*, June 10, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX. According to Wex Legal Dictionary, a *writ of mandamus* is an order from a court to an inferior government official ordering said official to properly fulfill duties or correct an abuse of discretion. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/mandamus>

⁷²³*Ibid.*

⁷²⁴"Pharr Passes Recall Rule," *The Daily Review*, June 30, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

proposed amendment.⁷²⁵ Mayor Bowe would not be removed from office by any of the stipulations in the city commission's recall amendment.

Maria Magallan, leader of the *Mujeres Unidas*, remained a crucial community activist and leader during the summer. Through her organization, she mobilized various Pharr women to protest the actions of various individuals within the city government. Nonetheless, her tactics did not resonate very well with a few experienced leaders of the movement, and signs of this tension became evident a few months after the riot. Though leaders and members of the UFWOC, MAYO, and other organizations pledged their moral support and helped with the struggle in Pharr, key differences on the end goals affected the relationships between these groups. Magallan disagreed with Antonio Orendain's approach to organizing people, and in turn Orendain rejected part of Magallan's tactics. When Orendain approached organizers to offer the UFWOC's assistance, he would tell them a Californian saying: "Teníamos que cuidarnos porque el pleito no era con los animales, si no con el dueño del circo."⁷²⁶ He explained that those in power used various methods, including using underlings, to prevent the majority from disrupting their stranglehold on power. Orendain hoped that protestors would understand that the fight was not against the underlings, but against those who had the power.⁷²⁷ He mentioned this because he saw how the protestors in Pharr would direct their hostility to police and cursed them whereas he believed that the main focus should have been on the mayor.⁷²⁸ One of the other leaders from the movement disagreed and explained to Orendain that the people were gaining courage by standing up to the police.⁷²⁹ To Orendain, this did not matter because, he believed that the goal of an organizer was to focus all efforts on those in power and not those who were used to protect it.

⁷²⁵"Pharr Passes Recall Rule," *Daily Review*, June 30, 1971.

⁷²⁶"Pharr Riot 3," from Antonio Orendain oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, June 22, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/pharr-riot-3>, accessed July 04, 2017.

⁷²⁷*Ibid.*

⁷²⁸*Ibid.*

⁷²⁹*Ibid.*

Magallan, on the other hand, never wanted to join with the UFWOC because she did not agree with Orendain's organizing methods. She told Orendain that if he wanted to organize people in Pharr, he needed to help those who were in dire need without expecting anything in return.⁷³⁰ Magallan's main goal was to make sure that the people living in the barrios in north Pharr had their demands addressed. First, for the barrios to have adequate city services, second, have the ability to participate in the city government, and third, protection from police brutality. If Orendain helped to achieve these goals, then surely the people of the barrios would support him. However, Magallan explained that Orendain responded to her by saying, "No, la gente tiene que involucrase [sic] porque se tiene que envolver [sic]."⁷³¹ She argued that the people in Pharr could and would not get involved with him and his organization because they did not know who he was and what his end goals were.⁷³² Antonio Orendain's first wife, Raquel Orendain, understood what Magallan was trying to tell her husband. She agreed with Magallan that if organizers do not attempt to understand the local people and attempt to fix their issues, how can they as organizers organize them?⁷³³ Orendain visited Pharr two more times after the riot. The first time was with Cesar Chavez just days after the riot, and his last visit came in spring 1972. Orendain never received the opportunity to work alongside Fernández and Magallan. With all these problems, the movement in Pharr was in danger of imploding.

In the spring and summer of 1971, *Mujeres Unidas* helped organize several protests in Pharr. In May, the group began boycotts against Anglo operated stores south of the railroad tracks. The first business to be boycotted was the Hanshaw store located on South Cage Boulevard. Two men, one identified as Efraín Fernández, passed out leaflets in front of the store asking shoppers to boycott the business.⁷³⁴ The reason Hanshaw's store was targeted was

⁷³⁰Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁷³¹*Ibid.* Magallan probably meant to use the words "involucrarse," and "involucrar," when paraphrasing Orendain's response to her. Translation: "No, the people need to get involved because they have to get involved."

⁷³²*Ibid.*

⁷³³*Ibid.*

⁷³⁴"Hanshaw's Stores Are Target of Boycott," *The Pharr Press*, May 20, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

because the owner opposed the establishment of a police review board. Fernández was made aware of the owner's position when he conducted surveys days prior to see what business could persuade Mayor Bowe to consider the establishment of a police review board.⁷³⁵ Unfortunately for the boycott, the owner of the store did not notice any decline in business on the day of the boycott.⁷³⁶ Dora Leticia González explained that even though the volunteers passed out flyers in Spanish urging people not to buy from south side stores like Hanshaw, the boycott did not have the impact they expected.⁷³⁷

On April 4, 1971, the City of Pharr saw 150 women march down the streets of the city during heavy rain to protest the low bond given to the sheriff deputy who was indicted for killing Flores.⁷³⁸ At the same time, it was reported in the local Chicano newspaper that the police department had become “debilitated” as half of the police force resigned their posts. *¡Ya Mero!* reported that various officers presented their resignation letters to Chief Ramirez when he refused to fire Sgt. Mateo Sandoval.⁷³⁹ Prior to the resignation of these officers, rumors spread that these “good” officers informed the chief that if Sgt. Sandoval was not fired, then they would leave.⁷⁴⁰ Chief Ramirez challenged the various rumors being printed in *¡Ya Mero!* by explaining that three officers resigned because they were taking higher paying jobs or going to college, and that he was aware for some time that these officers were leaving.⁷⁴¹ Chief Ramirez reported that Sgt. Hector Vargas, and Patrolmen Frank Tagle, Joe Gutierrez and Isidora Ybáñez were the officers who turned in their resignations.⁷⁴² All these officers praised Ramirez for his work and for “doing what he can with what he has.”⁷⁴³

⁷³⁵*Ibid.*

⁷³⁶*Ibid.*

⁷³⁷González, “A Look at the City of Pharr,” 8.

⁷³⁸“Mujeres Marchan: Policías Renuncian,” *¡Ya Mero!* (McAllen), April 10, 1971, Vol. 2, No. 23, 1, M-film E184.M5 P3, Sect.III: Roll.3:v.1-3:no.1-23 (1969-1972), Library, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷³⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁷⁴¹“Chief Explains Why Policemen Leaving,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), April 2, 1971.

⁷⁴²*Ibid.* There is a discrepancy over what Chief Ramirez told the newspaper. He explained in the second paragraph that only three officers were leaving for better paying jobs or going back to school. But on the third paragraph, he contradicted himself by saying the four officers are leaving. Three for better paying jobs and one who was going

By April 14, these 150 women led by Magallan informed the media that they were going to picket the Pharr police station the next day. They explained that they would protest in front of the station as long as necessary until something was done about the issue of police brutality.⁷⁴⁴ The group wanted city officials to fire Chief Ramirez, Sgt. Mateo Sandoval, and patrolman Gilbert Zúñiga for police brutality.⁷⁴⁵ At the behest of the CCC, Mayor Bowe arrived at the scene on Saturday, April 15, and told the thirty-five to forty women protesting that the commission would help them in anyway and explained to them the city had made much progress in the past decade.⁷⁴⁶ The mayor, however, did not believe that all the women protesting in front of the police station were residents of the city. Mayor Bowe was adamant that most of the women picketing were “outsiders,” because when he asked the women were residents of Pharr, only six raised their hands.⁷⁴⁷ He labeled the other women as “trouble makers” who were there to harass them.⁷⁴⁸ When the women asked Mayor Bowe what he was going to do about the police department, he said “nothing,” because the city had “a good police department and that efforts are constantly made to upgrade the quality of the force.”⁷⁴⁹ In short, the mayor did not believe that any changes to the police department were needed, and his reluctance angered many people in the city. As the day went on the police officers who were left went on about their usual business ignoring the women picketing.

The lack of primary sources made it difficult to determine the hometowns of the *Mujeres Unidas* demonstrators. Magallan briefly mentions in her oral history interview that there were

back to college. Yet Chief Ramirez does not specifically say who took better paying jobs and only informed that one officer is going back to school, another was joining his father in the agriculture business, the third was not coming back from vacation, and the fourth simply resigned.

⁷⁴³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴“Women to Picket Police,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, April 14, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶“Bowe Says Most ‘Outsiders:’ Women Picket Pharr Station,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), April 18, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁹*Ibid.*

not only women from Pharr but also women from other cities in the Valley. Exact numbers also cannot be conclusively established. Again, the scarcity of primary sources make it difficult to ascertain if these women claimed any moral authority or special status that directly influenced them to take to the streets. One flyer, presumably from the group, hints that the women drew on their roles as mothers and protectors of the home. In it, they pleaded for the public's help in boycotting businesses in downtown Pharr and for aid to their cause as "*las madres de este pueblo*" who were protecting their community from Mayor Bowe and his commissioners' tyranny.⁷⁵⁰

After continued protests in April and May, the *Mujeres Unidas* group concluded that Mayor Bowe would not fire Chief Ramirez, Stg. Sandoval, and patrolman Zúñiga. Magallan and her followers upped the ante as they started to accost Mayor Bowe at his home on West Caffrey Street, three weeks after their first picket in front of the police station. On May 3, a dozen women picketed in front of the mayor's home in the evening. The group of women met the police chief and the mayor outside his house but refused to stop the picketing until their demands were met.⁷⁵¹ They not only wanted the three officers fired, they also wanted a human relations and police review board. They also demanded that city council meetings be changed from the mid-afternoon to later in the evening.⁷⁵² For the next few days, the women marched in front of the mayor's house, ignoring the water from the sprinkler system, as they took off their shoes and marched along the sidewalk.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵⁰"Los Perros Siguen Sultos...pero No nos rajamos!!!," Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁷⁵¹"Mayor of Pharr Picketed," *Corpus Christi Caller*, May 4, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁵²*Ibid.*

⁷⁵³"Picketers March in Front of Mayor's Residence," *The Pharr Press*, May 6, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.



Illustration 3.2: Front cover of ¡Ya Mero! on April 24, 1971.

The pickets in front of the mayor's house brought attention to the *Mujeres Unidas* group, but it was not positive. Neighbors of Mayor Bowe saw these women as a nuisance to their

community because of all the media attention they brought. Residents believed that the women were marching only to get on television and have spotlight in the news.⁷⁵⁴ One neighbor, Mrs. Avis F. Hatfield, had enough of the women marching in front of the mayor's house and blamed the local media for perpetuating the negativity plaguing the city. She wrote a stern letter to the local news station, KGBT-TV in Harlingen and sent a copy of it to Lloyd Glover, the editor of *The Pharr Press*. In her letter, she recounted that:

The demonstrators arrived around 7:00 P.M. in numerous cars and pickup trucks. Two trucks remained parked in front of my house the entire time, and small groups of men stood [sic] near these trucks talking and keeping an eye on the women who had set up picket lines on the sidewalk across the street. This went on until approximately 9:30 P.M. when I suddenly noticed a very bright light outside. I saw then that the light was for the benefit of a TV cameraman who was photographing a sprinkler left running in the Bowe yard, the pickets, etc. IMMEDIATELY following the picture-taking, the demonstrators took leave. Within minutes, the street was completely empty. In other words, they probably would have left the scene earlier, but they had been promised some publicity by the television people and, of course, had to keep the affair going until the cameraman arrived.⁷⁵⁵

Mrs. Hatfield believed that the women's group and the local news organizations were conspiring with one another. In another incident, Mrs. Hatfield claimed that when the protestors moved from the police station to city hall, news vans were already waiting for them there.⁷⁵⁶ In short, she accused the news agencies of aiding in the planning of events that led to various news stories. She also added that many of Mayor Bowe's neighbors also were fed up with the demonstrations.

In late May, the *Mujeres Unidas* group shifted their tactics and their picketing to Mayor Bowe's office to picket. Described as "a large group of angry women" by *The Pharr Press*, the women's group, along with other protestors, besieged the mayor and several members of the city

⁷⁵⁴"Seen 'Round the Town," *The Pharr Press*, May 6, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁵⁵"Letters to the Editor," *The Pharr Press*, May 6, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁷⁵⁶*Ibid.*

commission during a meeting at city hall on the afternoon of May 19.⁷⁵⁷ The entire group of picketers filled the meeting room to the point of overflowing and remained silent through the entire proceeding. As soon as the meeting was adjourned, Mrs. Magallan and the group of women asked to be heard. Magallan informed the mayor that she had sent him a request to be placed on the agenda weeks prior to the meeting to which he responded that he had received the letter but there was not enough time for more comments.⁷⁵⁸ Tired of being ignored and upset at the mayor's response, the women's group and other protestors took action. As Bowe and other commissioners attempted to leave city hall, protestors blocked all the exits so they could not escape. Señora Bermea, who was described as tall and elderly, stood up and closed the mayor's office door.⁷⁵⁹ When one of the commissioners instructed Chief Ramirez to call the police station to request more officers, people in the crowd began to yell, "Bring them all. Bring the whole force."⁷⁶⁰ Magallan recalled that the mayor and other city officials became genuinely afraid because police officers could not enter the office to protect them.⁷⁶¹ After an unsuccessful attempt to get out of the city hall hoping to prevent any violence, Mayor Bowe and the commissioners gave her five minutes to speak.

Magallan emptied two plastic bags of unopened letters on a table in the room and informed the mayor that the letters were notices about the charter amendment election that were sent to 400 Pharr voters by the city commission.⁷⁶² She explained that they were being returned to the commission unopened as a sign of protest for not considering the *Mujeres Unidas'* alternate charter amendment. Again, she informed the mayor of their demands, which called for a civilian police review board, city commissions meetings in the evening, and the firing of Chief

⁷⁵⁷"Angry Women Accost Mayor in City Office," *The Pharr Press*, May 20, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁵⁸"Pharr Mayor Escorted by Policeman Through Jeering Crowd at Meeting," *The Monitor* (McAllen), date unknown, 1971, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁵⁹Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁷⁶⁰"Pharr Mayor Escorted by Policeman Through Jeering Crowd at Meeting," *The Monitor* (McAllen), date unknown, 1971, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁶¹Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁷⁶²"Pharr Mayor Escorted by Policeman Through Jeering Crowd at Meeting," *The Monitor* (McAllen), date unknown, 1971, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.

Ramirez, Sgt. Mateo Sandoval, and patrolman Gilberto Zúñiga.⁷⁶³ The mayor informed Magallan that their list of demands would be “taken under advisement,” and would be addressed at the next meeting. Afterwards, Sgt. Sandoval escorted the mayor out, as the crowd jeered and shoved him while surrounding protestors carried signs that read, “We Shall Not Be Moved, Bowe,” “We Want Fair Elections,” and “What Are You Hiding Bowe?”⁷⁶⁴ Though the mayor and his administration were under fire from many community activists, those who supported the city administration showed up at the May 27 meeting carrying signs of support.⁷⁶⁵

While the CCC challenged the city commission’s charter amendment in early June 1971, a new citizens group was formed to “cool the tension” between various community factions. It sought to discuss the existing issues in a friendly atmosphere, rather than in a militant and disorderly fashion.⁷⁶⁶ The Pharr Citizens League (PCL or the League) was an organization comprised of various business owners and those with business connections.⁷⁶⁷ Like the CCC, the PCL was formed to discuss, investigate, and find solutions to the city’s many problems. The groups objectives were as follows:

The Pharr Citizens League will strive to serve as a mechanism whereby the tensions, conflicts and problems confronting our city and its citizens might be discussed and investigated with the purpose that appropriate solutions might be found to aid our city, its government and its citizens. The Pharr Citizens League shall serve as a means whereby the citizens of our city can come to know each other and to understand the problems, fears and anxieties, and the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of each other,

⁷⁶³*Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵“Pharr Councilmen Get Show of Support,” *San Antonio Express*, May 28, 1971.

⁷⁶⁶“Officers, Directors Elected for New Group Called ‘Pharr Citizens League,’” *The Pharr Press*, June 10, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁶⁷These individuals were: Zacarias Barreiro; owner of Pharr Shoe Repair; Keith Conquest, PSJA school teacher; Mrs. Nieves Cortez Sr., housewife; Romeo Escobar, co-partner of Pharr Drug; Mrs. Pat (Nora) Gonzalez, PSJA school teacher-librarian; Father O’Malley, St. Margaret’s Catholic Church; Hector Palacios, employee of the State of Texas; Robert Ramirez Jr., manager and partner in Gran Via Auto Service; Stanley Ramos, barber; Gabriel Serda, barber; Edgar Vela, employee of Hale Hardware; Carlos Villegas Jr., Pan American College student; Heron Ramirez, PSJA school administrator. Out of these 13 individuals, Stanley Ramos, Carlos Villegas, Hector Palacios, and Edgar Vela also served in the Concerned Citizens Committee.

thus resulting in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere where problems can be recognized and solved. The League will search for those areas of agreement, rather than conflict, serving to unite all the people for the benefit of all people, their government, and their city.⁷⁶⁸

The creation of the PCL stemmed from the efforts of a few Anglo and ethnic Mexican businessmen from Pharr who were troubled by the strife in their community. The decision to organize with officers and a set of by-laws came at a meeting on May 27 when the majority of the seventy-five attendees agreed to do so.⁷⁶⁹ The number of attendees jumped to 110 to 120 at the second meeting on June 3, 1971.⁷⁷⁰ The president of the PCL, Dr. Ruben Garza, urged the people of Pharr to become involved in local affairs so they could help make the organization a success. Dr. Garza also encouraged those who were protesting, marching, and using militant actions to bring about change to “bring their grievances before the league,” so all sides could come to terms for betterment of the city.⁷⁷¹

The PCL’s objectives and goals received mixed reviews by Pharr residents in the first few weeks of its existence. First Vice President Quentin Newcombe Jr., informed *The Monitor* that all PCL meetings would be open to the public and that any questions or topics would be taken into consideration and added to the agenda with officers’ approval. One of the goals of this new organization, according to Newcombe, was to have orderly meetings. The formation of the PCL was received with mixed emotions, as many people in the community took a “wait and see” approach.⁷⁷² According to *The Monitor*, individual reactions towards the PCL ranged from enthusiasm to apathy while some feared getting involved. There were a few individuals who did not agree with the PCL and intended to boycott the new organization, while others who either

⁷⁶⁸Lloyd H. Glover, “Officers, Directors Elected for New Group Called ‘Pharr Citizens League,’” *The Pharr Press*, June 10, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁷⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷⁷¹“New Pharr Citizens League Hopeful of Solving Problems of City,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 6, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁷²*Ibid.*

supported or were against Mayor Bowe saw the organization as “having good possibilities.”⁷⁷³ Regarding the debate surrounding the city commission’s charter amendment, the PCL did not take a specific stand since the organization was “non-political.” Instead, it sponsored a forum to educate the public on what the two versions of the amendments were.⁷⁷⁴ As illustrated in the mission statement, the PCL was a citizen’s group that brought people from different sides together to discuss the issues at hand and find a common ground as solution. While citizen groups such as the CCC and the PCL attempted to find legal, non-political/non-confrontational solutions to the problems in the city in late spring and early summer 1971, Magallan and the *Mujeres Unidas* were still protesting and marching. By this point, grassroots activism by the *Mujeres Unidas* was in danger of being overshadowed by the more accomodationist policies of the CCC and the PCL, especially during the political trials of those who were arrested because of their involvement in the riot.

From June 1971 to the Spring of 1972, the fall out of the riot was still being dealt with in the city. Alonzo López was the first person to be tried for participating in the Pharr Riot. When the Grand Jury released the indictments in March 1971, López was charged with two counts of interfering with police during a riot and engaging in a riot. By the time his trial started, the charges were inciting a riot and throwing a rock at Chief Ramirez.⁷⁷⁵ López believed that he was indicted because of he questioned Chief Ramirez’s actions during the riot.⁷⁷⁶ Furthermore, he claimed that the District Attorney McInnis sought to find “fall guys” upon which to place the blame for the riot, because he was not going to blame the Pharr police.⁷⁷⁷ López also explained that the police officers took many photographs of them during the picketing. He believed that

⁷⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁴Lloyd H. Glover, “Citizens League Will Sponsor Open Forum on Charter Amendments,” *The Pharr Press*, June 17, 1971, Pharr Memorial Library Archives, Pharr, TX.

⁷⁷⁵Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 29.

⁷⁷⁶Wallace, interview; López, interview.

⁷⁷⁷*Ibid.*; Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 29.

because of these pictures and because local officials viewed him as an “intellectual,” since he was working on his master’s degree from Texas A&I, he was singled out for the first trial.⁷⁷⁸

During the second week of June, López’s trial took place in the 92nd District Court in Hidalgo County. Sgt. Mateo Sandoval was the first witness to take the stand, and he and Chief Ramirez corroborated each other’s testimony. Both contended that that rocks were being thrown by protestors and hitting the officers before the order was given to the fire department to spray them with the water cannons.⁷⁷⁹ Chief Ramirez informed the jurors that right before the rocks started flying, Efraín Fernández signaled his followers and then fell to the ground.⁷⁸⁰ During Chief Ramirez’s testimony, he singled out Alonzo López as the person who threw two rocks at him and then ran away with a group of people who travelled north on Cage Boulevard.⁷⁸¹

Defense attorney Robert Yzaguirre recalled Chief Ramirez to the stand after his first testimony and cross-examined him attempting to highlight his violent past. Yzaguirre tried to portray Ramirez as a man with a violent temper by presenting accusations from his former wife that described Ramirez as a wife beater.⁷⁸² He also brought up Ramirez’s arrest in McAllen in 1947 for being drunk and disorderly and inferred that he had been under the influence of marijuana.⁷⁸³ District Attorney McInnis protested “heatedly,” and Judge Alamia instructed the jury to disregard the accusation.⁷⁸⁴

By the end of the week, López took the stand to deny accusations that he participated in throwing rocks during the riot.⁷⁸⁵ When McInnis questioned López about why outsiders were joining the protests on February 6 (a subtle reminder that he was not a native of Pharr), López answered, “I certainly know my rights and privileges and limitations and I was certainly within

⁷⁷⁸Wallace, interview; López, interview.

⁷⁷⁹“Pharr Police Chief Testifies Several Bullets Struck the Station,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 15, 1971.

⁷⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁷⁸²Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 30.

⁷⁸³“Defense Rests in Trial of First Defendant Charged in Pharr Riot,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 17, 1971.

⁷⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁵“Rock-Tossing Charges Denied at Pharr Trial,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, June 11, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

those bounds.”⁷⁸⁶ Continuing his response, he explained to the court that he decided to get involved when he learned about people being “roughed up” by Pharr police. McInnis then asked López if he ever thought of getting the police’s side of the story, to which he replied, “I didn’t think I had to. I saw there was an injustice and I thought I had to take a stand.”⁷⁸⁷

Another witness who took the stand to defend López was Ida Hernandez. She was his future sister-in-law and an employee at the *Amigos Unidos* Federal Credit Union in Pharr, which was owned by one of López’s brothers. She testified that López was with her and that she did not see him throw a rock.⁷⁸⁸ Hernandez testified that she, her fiancée (Alonzo’s brother), and Alonzo were at the police station at 6:00p.m. but left for the Methodist Youth Camp in Weslaco prior to the start of the riot.⁷⁸⁹ The group did not return to Pharr until 8:45p.m. after another López brother, Reymundo, informed those at the center that people were throwing rocks in Pharr.⁷⁹⁰ Others who took the stand in defense of Alfonzo López were UFWOC attorney David Hall, Jesse Treviño, who sold insurance in McAllen, and Reverend Michael Allen, who was a chaplain at Pan American University.⁷⁹¹

In the closing arguments, Yzaguirre pointed out that Sgt. Sandoval never stated in his testimony that López threw a rock and argued that the case simply boiled down to Chief Ramirez’s testimony against the testimony of López and those who corroborated his story.⁷⁹² Prosecutor McInnis, on the other hand, used fear tactics to make sure the jury found the defendant guilty on all counts. He warned that if they did not find Alonzo López guilty, that his cohort would rejoice and normalize the use of violence to change the system.⁷⁹³ After three hours of deliberations, the jury returned with a guilty verdict and gave López a five-year

⁷⁸⁶“Defense Rests in Trial of First Defendant Charged in Pharr Riot,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 17, 1971.

⁷⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁸“Witness Says López Did Not Throw Rocks,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 16, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁸⁹“Rock-Tossing Charges Denied at Pharr Trial,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, June 17, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁷⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁷⁹¹“Defense Rests in Trial of First Defendant Charged in Pharr Riot,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 17, 1971.

⁷⁹²Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 30.

⁷⁹³*Ibid.*

probated sentence.⁷⁹⁴ López, along with his friends and family, were shocked and bewildered by the jury's verdict and sentencing.⁷⁹⁵ Yet López informed Ned Wallace during his 1996 interview that even before the trial started he had a feeling that he was not going to be treated fairly. López explained that he wanted Judge Ed Gomez to be in the court room to observe. López told him, "Look at the jurors. The jurors are mostly Anglo. (Inaudable)..look at the jurors. I can already tell you how this is going to go."⁷⁹⁶ López claimed that he did not receive a fair trial because McInnis had hand-picked the jury from families he personally knew. Regretably, he was right.

After the initial shock of the guilty verdict, those within the activist community blamed López's defense lawyer for "blowing" the case. David Hall told Wallace in their 1996 interview that District Attorney McInnis was "running all over" the defense and that López's lawyers did not treat the case as a political case.⁷⁹⁷ David Fishlow, editor and organizer of *¡Ya Mero!*, agreed with Hall and believed that verdict given by the jury was "terrible" because the evidence presented at the trial was very "flimsy."⁷⁹⁸

He had everything set up. He had his index cards of people he would call to serve on the jury. He knew them by name, he knew their families, and the people who served in the jury were people he knew. He was always calling them. And very few Mexican-Americans were ever called.⁷⁹⁹

According to López, he went into a depression for a few months after the trial. He would not talk to or see anyone, did not apply for any jobs, and just kept to himself. López was offered many jobs in San Antonio, Kingsville, and Rio Grande City, but he was not "in the mood" to

⁷⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁶Wallace, interview; López, interview. The jurors for Alonzo López's trial were: Willis C. Ford, F.B. Simpson, Gabriel S. Tijerina, Isnoel Rivera, George T. Lewis, Mary C. McDonald, W.A. Rutledge, Sarah T. Hoffower, Orval Elkings, Dorothy J. Ligon, Roel Ponce, and Mrs. Verne V. Hall. This information was printed in the *Corpus Christi Caller* on June 17, 1971.

⁷⁹⁷David Hall, interview by Ned Wallace, Weslaco, Texas, August 13, 1996.

⁷⁹⁸David Fishlow, interview by Ned Wallace, Winter Park, Florida, May 8, 2000.

⁷⁹⁹Wallace, interview; López, interview.

apply because he felt disillusioned with the justice system.⁸⁰⁰ It was not until early fall of 1971 that the Office of Economic Opportunity in Hidalgo County hired López.

The guilty verdict in López's trial made the remaining defendants very nervous. Efraín Fernández was one of those awaiting trial, but he was willing to accept a prison term if convicted.⁸⁰¹ He asserted that when he went to court to hear López's verdict, he heard McInnis say, "Now, we got to put the screws to this Fernández guy."⁸⁰² Fernández told Ned Wallace in his oral history interview that if López would have delayed his trial like the rest of them did, he wouldn't have had "this system" breathing down his neck and probably would have been found innocent.⁸⁰³ In late summer, a new group was formed to collect donations to help in the defense of those indicted. Known as the Pharr Defense Fund, this group, led by Juan Ledesma wanted to raise at \$10,000 for court costs, attorneys' fees, appeal bonds, and other expenses.⁸⁰⁴ Trials for many of the accused were postponed until early fall because many of the witnesses for the defense had migrated north to work. The delay tactic that was used by Fernández and other defendants Jose Pantoja, Cruz Cortez, Natividad Meza, Trinidad Pina, Raymundo López, and Daniel López, played a key role in the end results of each trial. The repeated delays allowed many of the defense's witnesses to return from working in the fields in *el norte* and the passage of time resulted in diminished hostility towards the defendants.

In the fall of 1971, the tide began to turn against the Pharr police department and Mayor Bowe. Even though there had been a guilty verdict in López's trial in June, pressure from the *Mujeres Unidas*, the CCC and the PCL was having adverse effects on city officials and employees as well as public opinion. In October, Mayor Bowe surprised local residents by

⁸⁰⁰*Ibid.*

⁸⁰¹Wallace, "The 1971 Pharr Riot," 31.

⁸⁰²Efraín Fernández, interview by Ned Wallace, San Juan, Texas, January 14, 2001, Tape 3.

⁸⁰³*Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴"Pharr Defense Fund Set Up," *The Monitor* (McAllen), July 29, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX. Defendants in which these funds will be used were Jose Pantoja, Cruz Cortez, Natividad Meza, Trinidad Pina, Raymundo López, Daniel Vasquez, Alonso López, and Efraín Fernández. Also, not a lot of information is given about who Juan Ledesma was and his contribution to the defense fund.

publicly announcing that he was going to resign from office. In a statement, Bowe explained that:

I am not as young as I used to be, and my health is not as good as it was in the past and for that reason and upon the advice of my doctor, I want to take this opportunity to announce publicly that I expect to resign from the elective office of Mayor and call an election for the first Tuesday in April of 1972 and remain in office until the newly elected Mayor is sworn into office.⁸⁰⁵

He further stated that he was not interested in running for re-election after his regular term ended and would not participate in the regular City Elections in April of 1974.⁸⁰⁶ He finished his statement by saying that he only spoke for himself and not the rest of the city commission.⁸⁰⁷

Another development that also surprised many in the community was the resignation of one of the police officers who had been accused of police brutality. In November, long time patrolman Gilbert Zúñiga resigned his post and blamed the “current political situation” for his decision to leave the police force.⁸⁰⁸ Zúñiga explained that long time city employee and Bowe’s political ally Joe Pettita had put him, Chief Ramirez, and Sgt. Mateo Sandoval on notice. Since Pettita planned to run for mayor in the special election, he advised all three men to look for employment elsewhere because after he won the election, he would get rid of them.⁸⁰⁹ Zúñiga also claimed that threats to his family were another reason for his resignation. Finally, Zúñiga explained that the accusations of police brutality against him had prevented him from performing his duties properly and placed too much pressure on his family.⁸¹⁰ Chief Ramirez, however, challenged Zúñiga’s claim that Pettita had issued such a threat. Ramirez called these rumors a “big fat lie” and asserted that he had not been advised to seek employment elsewhere after the

⁸⁰⁵“R.S. Bowe to Resign as Mayor,” October 29, 1971, *The Pharr Press*, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX..

⁸⁰⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁸“Politics’ Causes Police Resignation,” *The Pharr Press*, November 11, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁸⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁸¹⁰*Ibid.*

special election.⁸¹¹ He explained that he had to make a statement because he had received numerous phone calls and approached by many citizens asking if the rumors were true.⁸¹² Ramirez stated that he was not sure who was going to run in the special election in April 1972 and had no idea if he would be asked to remain as police chief.⁸¹³

Finally, after a four-month delay, Efraín Fernández had his day in court in February 1972. The reason for the delay was because Fernández's lawyer had not been able to make the fall court date. District Attorney McInnis confirmed this fact as he presented Judge Alamia a letter from Chief Defense Counsel Warren Burnett of Odessa explaining that he would not be available during the projected week of the trial due to conflicts in his schedule.⁸¹⁴ Fernández knew that the possibilities of being found guilty and go to jail were very high given the verdict in López trial back in June. However, with Burnett being able to make it to the Valley for the trial, Fernández and David Hall were greatly relieved. Hall was especially relieved because he would of had to represent Fernández if Burnett did not show, and he did not have much trial experience.⁸¹⁵ Shortly before the start of the trial, Burnett interviewed both men together and asked them to talk about everything that transpired before, during, and after the riot. As Fernández and Hall talked about the issues, the night of the riot, and everything else they remembered, Burnett took notes.⁸¹⁶ The stage was set for Fernández's trial.

Fernández was charged with a felony for breaking a Pharr fire truck windshield that was valued over \$50.⁸¹⁷ However, this trial would be much different than Alonzo López's for three reasons. First, the trial lasted two weeks and Fernández's supporters filled the courtroom. Second, Burnett spent days selecting a jury that would be sympathetic to the defense. Finally,

⁸¹¹"Termed 'Big Fat Lie:' Pharr Chief Denies Being Asked to Quit," *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁸¹²*Ibid.*

⁸¹³*Ibid.*

⁸¹⁴"Fernández Trial is Postponed," *The Monitor* (McAllen), October 10, 1971, F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁸¹⁵Wallace, "The 1971 Pharr Riot," 31.

⁸¹⁶*Ibid.*

⁸¹⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

the selected jury was comprised of six Anglos and six Mexican Americans.⁸¹⁸ Wallace explained that these jury members were school teachers and educated than the “reactionary” element that would be hostile to a community activist. Fernández described these Anglo teachers and educators as “good kind people who were reasonable.”⁸¹⁹ Prior to the start of the trial, McInnis offered Fernández a plea deal, which he rejected, because he was determined to prove his innocence.⁸²⁰ The prosecutor’s case against Fernández’s was the same as the one used against López since it consisted of the same arguments, the same witnesses, and the same closing arguments. Chief Ramirez and Sgt. Sandoval repeated the same allegation that Fernández gave a signal that initiated the rock throwing, while Pharr policeman Frank Tagle testified that the defendant was encouraging the protestors.⁸²¹

The defense’s tactics were quite different than those used in by López’s attorney in his 1971 trial. Burnett did not play it safe and immediately began to question aggressively the testimony of Chief Ramirez. Described by the *Edinburg Daily Review* as man with a “booming voice,” Burnett cross-examined Ramirez for four hours.⁸²² During that cross-examination, Burnett systematically “deconstructed” Ramirez’s testimony and asserted that the chief had changed his account of what occurred on the night of the riot many times.

Ramirez claimed that he never saw Fernández throw the rock himself but was told about it by two other police officers, one of them Frank Tagle, Jr. But Burnett pointed out that in a sworn statement dated February 10th, the police chief stated that officer Garza and other police officer (not Tagle) had originally told him of Fernández throwing the rock.⁸²³

After producing the sworn statement that the chief gave on February 10, Burnett said to Ramirez that his memory was better the day he made the statement than months after the fact, to which

⁸¹⁸*Ibid.*

⁸¹⁹Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 3.

⁸²⁰*Ibid.*

⁸²¹“Fernández Acquitted,” *Edinburg Daily Review*, February 27, 1972, 1.

⁸²²“Stories Changed by Police Chief,” *Edinburg Daily Review*, February 20, 1972, 1.

⁸²³Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 32.

Ramirez responded, “Garza is dead now.”⁸²⁴ It was during next few moments that the defense gained an edge over the prosecuting team. Burnett accused Ramirez of replacing the recently deceased Garza with Tagle in his testimony, and the chief did not respond. As a final blow to discredit Ramirez as a witness, Burnett told him, “You’re making this up as you go along, aren’t you Chief?”⁸²⁵ According to Fernández, Ramirez was embarrassed on the stand, and this made him feel “glad” because the chief had committed so many injustices against him and other activists trying to help those oppressed in the city of Pharr.⁸²⁶

From that moment on, the prosecution team’s case began to fall apart. Burnett, an experienced defense attorney, displayed a vast awareness of legal knowledge and a photographic memory, both of which “inspired confidence.”⁸²⁷ There were other memorable moments during the trial where Burnett challenged the prosecution’s narrative. His cross-examination of Pharr policeman Francisco Fuentes revealed that the protestors and cantina patrons were not in “cahoots” with one another and that Fernández and his group did not throw rocks as previously claimed by Ramirez.⁸²⁸ Burnett reiterated over and over the point that these two groups were not associated with one another. During closing statements, McInnis used the same rhetoric that he used in the closing arguments in López’s trial. For his part, Burnett reminded the jury that testimony from Chief Ramirez and Officer Tagle were discredited during cross-examination and that no one actually saw Fernández throw a rock.⁸²⁹ Burnett used credible witnesses such as Bishop Patrick Flores from San Antonio to portray Fernández as a peaceful law-abiding citizen who used non-violence to improve the conditions of the poor.⁸³⁰

On February 25, the jury came back with a verdict after deliberating for an hour and thirty-nine minutes. As a precaution, law enforcement officials stationed many deputies outside

⁸²⁴“Stories Changed by Police Chief,” *Edinburg Daily Review*, February 20, 1972, 1.

⁸²⁵*Ibid.*

⁸²⁶Wallace, interview; Fernández, interview, Tape 3.

⁸²⁷Wallace, “The 1971 Pharr Riot,” 33.

⁸²⁸*Ibid.*, 33.

⁸²⁹*Ibid.*, 34.

⁸³⁰*Ibid.*

of the second-floor courtroom, on the first floor, and in the parking lot in case a disturbance broke out once the verdict was read. As those in attendance waited anxiously, the jury found Efraín Fernández not guilty on all counts. At first there was a soft applause in the courtroom, but this quickly changed as most of the audience gave a standing ovation while “handshakes, embraces, and tear-filled displays of emotions” were given as the verdict finally sank in.⁸³¹ This marked a great victory not only for Fernández, but also for the other individuals who were still awaiting their trial dates. After Fernández was found “not guilty,” the remaining cases of the other defendants were dropped. Unfortunately, the Sheriff Deputy who fired the bullet that killed Flores was also acquitted during his own trial.⁸³² The acquittal was a major defeat for city and county officials. After the trial, Bowe announced in late February that he had changed his mind and would stay in office until the end of his regular term in 1974. He asserted that a group of citizens attempted to black-mail him if he did not resign and force his commissioners to resign with him.⁸³³ The mayor did not provide any details, but he challenged his critics to take whatever action they wanted and was ready to account for all of his actions as mayor.⁸³⁴ His bravado was short-lived, however, as pressure from the CCC, the PCL, and *Mujeres Unidas*, as well as the outcome of Fernández’s trial, led to his resignation, along with four of the city commissioners in March 1972.

The protests, marches, creation of citizen groups, and trials that transpired in the months after the riot demonstrated how the people from the *barrios* had finally become conscious of the social injustices in Pharr. In the year after the riot, ethnic Mexicans living on both sides of the railroad tracks became involved in the fight for change and voice their frustrations and concerns as a collective group.⁸³⁵ Of course, differences in tactics between Chicano organizations and

⁸³¹“Fernández Acquitted,” *Edinburg Daily Review*, February 27, 1972, 1.

⁸³²Not enough information was found regarding the trial of Hidalgo County Deputy Sheriff Robert C. Johnson. This issue will be further investigated in the larger book project.

⁸³³“Pharr Mayor Changes Mind, Won’t Resign,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX.

⁸³⁴*Ibid.*

⁸³⁵There were not enough primary or secondary sources that detailed the ethnic Mexican middle-class experience in Pharr during this era.

citizen groups made cooperation difficult at times, but the end goal was to find solutions to various problems affecting the community. For Anglos who opposed Mayor Bowe and his administration, these events allowed them to join with ethnic Mexicans to fight for the betterment of the city as well. The trials of Alonzo López and Efraín Fernández also brought much awareness of the injustices many ethnic Mexicans experienced at the hands of the police and city officials. Though López and Fernández's trials had different outcomes, these results influenced the community's changing behavior.

Overall, the events that followed a year after the Pharr Riot influenced social and political change. Community activists challenged Mayor Bowe and his city commissioners' delay in addressing the various issues presented to them through protests, marches, and the creation of citizens groups. The Chicano Movement ended in Pharr when the CCC and PCL groups were formed, but merely shifted prerogatives. Maria Magallan employed various grassroots activism tactics she learned from Chicano activist Efraín Fernández during the time she was employed in VISTA. Every time she led the *Mujeres Unidas* group to picket, they would do so in front of the police station and the houses of city officials to pressure them to respond to the group's demands. On the other hand, the CCC, which was comprised of middle-class business owners, attempted to address the social and political problems in the city by legal means. The PCL, which was also comprised mainly of middle-class individuals, avoided political action, and instead focused on solving various community problems by bringing opposing sides together to discuss the issues. Rather than protesting to bring attention to the issues at hand, both the CCC and PCL members attempted to solve the problems affecting the community with compromise to appease both activists and city officials.

In this chapter, I illustrated how Alfonso L. Flores' death set in motion various events that affected both activists and city officials. Most importantly, the creation of the *Mujeres Unidas*, the Concerned Citizens Committee, and the Pharr Citizens League allowed men and women of all socio-economic means to share their ideas and participate in the betterment of the city. I expressed their importance because these citizen groups took over where Fernández,

MAYO, VISTA, and other groups left off. Events in Pharr in 1971 and 1972 illustrate how individuals of the community influenced social and political change through protests, marches, and the creation of citizen groups. The result of these actions led to the community of Pharr to search for a candidate that would suit the needs of the people in a special mayoral election after the resignation of Mayor Bowe. These citizen groups, along with activists like Fernández and Magallan, would choose a young educated man to run against Bowe's right-hand man, Joe Pettita. The nomination of this new opponent would also challenge a political system that Anglo agribusinessmen such as Henry Pharr established in the early twentieth century that had subjugated ethnic Mexicans for decades.

Chapter 5: The Party of Unity: The Election of the First Mexican-American Mayor in Pharr and the Years of Progress that Followed, 1972-1978

In June, 1972, A.C. Jaime became the first Mexican-American mayor in the city of Pharr. Despite numerous attempts to defeat him by his enemies, he remained in office until 1978. During these years Jaime and his commissioners worked to reform city politics and social norms so that all the people, not just Anglos, enjoyed a better quality of life. Jaime's election to the mayor's office was a direct result of the Pharr Riot and that the community, ethnic Mexicans and educated Anglos, were ready for new leadership and that his leadership skills allowed him to improve quality of life for the people of Pharr. Mayor Jaime and his city commissioners concentrated on six important issues during their six years in office. The Jaime administration focused on instituting a city manager form of government, addressing the sewage issue affecting the people living in the north side, professionalizing the police department and hiring a new chief, making the city government more transparent, closing down cantinas and other illicit businesses, and winning approval for the construction of an international bridge between Pharr and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Though the Unity Ticket did much more for the city, these six points were the core changes that Jaime wanted for the city. What Jaime and his commissioners did for the City of Pharr after the riot was sweeping at the time in the Rio Grande Valley, and the improvements are still seen today when one walks the streets of Pharr.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁶This chapter is personal for me because the interviews I conducted with A.C. Jaime resulted in a lasting friendship in which he inspired me to not only be more active in my community, but to also be a better person who understands that everyone needs a helping hand once in a while. The key sources for this chapter are interviews with A.C. Jaime, so readers should be alert to his perspective. The author also became a personal friend of Jaime, so that relationship also may affect the perspective presentation in this chapter. A few newspaper articles are also used in attempts to illustrate a general timeline of what he and his commissioners did during their years in office since Jaime does not provide specific dates and times. Also, the city of Pharr could not provide any documentation regarding city records of that time, and it was difficult to corroborate some of the information A.C. Jaime stated in his oral history interviews. Time and time again, I was informed by many of the city clerks that they "would look into" my requests for information, but I never received any emails from them. My request for information regarding the city's international bridge application was a surprise for the Pharr Bridge Director, Luis A. Bazán, as he wrote in an email to his colleagues, "Do we even have records going back to the time when A.C. Jaime was Mayor?" Fortunately, I was able to receive a copy of the "Presidential Permit," but it was too late to incorporate it fully in my dissertation. In short, I cannot say for sure if the unavailability of these city records was done on purpose, or maybe for lack of time by busy employees, or simply because they no longer exist. Thus, the primary sources used in this chapter stem from A.C. Jaime's two oral history interviews, accompanied by some secondary sources and limited newspaper articles.

The narrative that follows is quite different than the ones in previous chapters. This is primarily because the information presented mostly stems from the two interviews conducted with Jaime in the summer of 2015 and 2016. Due to the scarcity of other primary and secondary sources, the story that follows relies mostly on information supplied by Jaime and unavoidably reflects his perspective. After he moved to the city in the early 1960s, Jaime soon discovered that the ethnic Mexican community was regularly subjected to mistreatment and manipulation.

He noticed that Mayor Bowe and his commission constantly ignored the major concerns of the people living in the north side of town. When the city government would call for a major bond issue to improve and pave city streets, the north side would be neglected. According to Jaime, the city would start improvements south of the railroad tracks where Anglo businesses were located and Anglo and upper class Mexican Americans lived.⁸³⁷ By the time these improvements reached the railroad tracks, the city would run out of money and leave the north side barrios without any paved roads while the south side had newly paved streets.⁸³⁸ Jaime recounted that “the streets in the north side were not paved and some had potholes the size where a Volkswagen could get lost.”⁸³⁹ He noted that this also happened with the lack of city water system hookups.

As previously discussed, the sewage and lack of indoor plumbing services in the north side were atrocious. There were no sewer lines, so there were many outhouses, and the water lines in the north side of Pharr were not adequate to serve an entire neighborhood. In the first few decades of the city, poor planning contributed to the lack of sewer lines in north Pharr. Though city planners did build sewer lines that ran to a sewage plant that was located on the corner of Hawk Street just north of the railroad tracks, the only thing residents received from having the sewage plant on their side of the tracks was the stench of human waste. Sewage from

⁸³⁷“Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁸³⁸*Ibid.*

⁸³⁹A.C. Jaime interview by author, Pharr, Texas, May 30, 2016, Mp3 File 1.

the south side of town, especially from the areas where the winter Texans (Midwestern residents who spent the winter months in South Texas because of its mild climate and low cost of living) were staying, would travel north toward the station on Hawk Street, taking two to three days to reach the plant.⁸⁴⁰ Jaime described the smell as “downright ugly and unsanitary,” and area residents pleaded unsuccessfully to Mayor Bowe to fix the issue.⁸⁴¹ Jaime explained that he was surprised that the city did not expand the sewer lines to North Pharr and help residents deal with the sewage plant issue. When asked why the city did expand these sewer lines, he stated that “the city would run out of money.”⁸⁴² The communities in north Pharr also lacked adequate water pressure, streetlights, and other city services. This led Jaime to believe that such injustices were occurring because the city was discriminating against Mexican-Americans, especially those of low income.⁸⁴³ There were one or two Mexican Americans serving on the city commission, but it did not matter because they could not help the Mexican American community because they would go along with whatever the mayor said.⁸⁴⁴ Seeing these type of injustices being done to the people living in the north side infuriated Jaime and eventually motivated him to run for mayor.

Although he lived in South Pharr, Jaime, as a Mexican American, was not blind to the discrimination that was happening and respected those individuals trying to help the people in the barrios. He supported their actions and observed that, “we saw what was going, we knew why it was going on, we didn’t necessarily support some of the actions that took place, but we knew it was the people reaching out to someone that could help them.”⁸⁴⁵ Mayor Bowe and law enforcement officials labeled those who were trying to help the people from north Pharr as

⁸⁴⁰“Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁸⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁸⁴²*Ibid.*

⁸⁴³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴*Ibid.* It is not known what type of repercussions ethnic Mexican city council members would face if they did not agree or follow the mayor’s wishes.

⁸⁴⁵Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

“communists,” which left an impression on Jaime. According to him, all the individuals participating were not communists; they just wanted to help the people in the community. People like Efraín Fernández, Maria Magallan, and Antonio Orendain and his wife Raquel Orendain were actively challenging the social inequalities that were in Pharr, when they could have been killed for getting involved.⁸⁴⁶ “Those people were out there wanting justice,” explained Jaime. Individuals who were arrested for being drunk would be beaten, sent to jail, and if they weren’t promptly bailed out, they were sent the following day to clean the yards of local politicians.⁸⁴⁷ Jaime saw this practice first hand since he lived next door to a Pharr politician in the early 1970s, and he believed that it was not right. With all the discrimination that existed in Pharr, it was only a matter of time until something happened.

A year after the riot occurred, local citizen groups and community leaders knew the time was right for political and social change when Mayor Bowe resigned from office in March 1972. After Efraín Fernández’s acquittal in February 1972, an internal power struggle between Bowe, his former right-hand man Joe Pettita, and ex-commissioner Raul Vecchio ensued for a month and created an opportunity for new leadership. Vecchio resigned as commissioner on February 29 during a commissioner’s meeting, which allowed him to partner with Pettita.⁸⁴⁸ On March 2, Mayor Bowe had rescinded his resignation statement that he had made in October 1971 and informed Pharr residents that he planned to finish the remainder of his term that ended in 1974. However, Pettita and Vecchio met with Bowe at City Hall in late February and told Bowe that they wanted him, the entire city commission, Chief Ramirez, and Sgt. Sandoval to resign.⁸⁴⁹ Bowe refused and challenged Pettita and Vecchio to do what they had to do.

⁸⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁸“All Members of City Comm. Resign,” *The Pharr Press*, March 9, 1972, 1.

⁸⁴⁹“Pharr Mayor Changes Mind, Won’t Resign,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), F381, Pharr, Pharr Riot Copy 1, Library Archives and Special Collections, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX; Recall Effort May Develop,” *The Pharr Press*, March 2, 1972, 1. Mayor Bowe’s commissioners were Raul Vecchio, H.S. Eller, Rosalio Martinez, and E.A. Tippitt.

For reasons unknown, he and the remaining commissioners, H.S. Eller, Rosalio Martinez, and E.A. Tippitt, announced the following day that all would resign their positions.⁸⁵⁰ During a special meeting of the City Commission held on March 9, Bowe and his commission officially resigned in front of a packed room. In the latter part of his resignation letter, Bowe stated:

As Mayor, I have not been able to please everybody, but I have tried to be fair and honest with all citizens. At this time, I am offering my experience to any newly elected Board of Commissioners, and will do my best to acquaint them with all the Mayor's duties if they so desire, regardless of political differences. I hereby tender my resignation, and will continue to serve until a newly elected Mayor is sworn into office.⁸⁵¹

Like Bowe, the commissioners would also remain until a new commission was elected by voters during a special election set for June 13. This election replaced all vacant city offices for the remainder of 1970-74 term. Mayor Bowe and his entire city commission had been in office since 1962 and had easily won each reelection. Their resignations not only created an opportunity for political and social change, but it also created a power vacuum.

On March 15, Pettita announced to Pharr residents that he would be heading a new political ticket that would fill the vacancies of the mayor's office and four city commission seats. Pettita would run for mayor while, Ruben Rosales, Leo Palacios Jr., Joe Salinas and Pascual Treviño would run for the commission seats.⁸⁵² Having four Mexican Americans as commissioner candidates, Pettita attempted to demonstrate to the residents that his ticket was inclusive and catered to their demands of having a more active role in the city government. Pettita kicked off his mayoral campaign in November 1971 soon after Mayor Bowe first indicated that he would resign, but it was not until late March that he officially filed to run for mayor. He had been a longtime employee and influenced the politics in the city since the late 1950s under the Darby, the Walters, and the Bowe administrations.⁸⁵³ During the Bowe years

⁸⁵⁰"All Members of City Comm. Resign," *The Pharr Press*, March 9, 1972, 1.

⁸⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁸⁵²"Ticket Headed by Pettita Announces for City Offices," *The Pharr Press*, March 16, 1972, 1.

⁸⁵³*Ibid.*

Pettita was a City Inspector and supervisor of employees.⁸⁵⁴ His ticket became known as the “Good Government Ticket.” By the time he filed, there was one change to his commissioner lineup, a well-known Pharr resident Lorenzo Garcia replaced Pascual Treviño, who dropped out due to a conflict of interest.⁸⁵⁵

Once Pettita finalized his slate of commissioners, he presented Pharr residents a seven-point platform on which he and his commission would focus on during their first term. The first and most important issue that Pettita vowed to address was to switch the city’s form of government. When Pharr was first incorporated in 1916, the city government was run by a Mayor-Commissioner form of government, and by 1949 a new referendum proposed that the city be run by a Council-Manager form of government.⁸⁵⁶ This made it possible for the Pharr city government to be “completely autonomous and run by one individual.”⁸⁵⁷ Pettita and his commission promoted that the city needed to have a City Manager form of government.⁸⁵⁸ This type of government would lower the “uncertainties that existed by controlling and coordinating the activities of various city departments and by meeting the demands of the citizens for more professional services that the city can provide.”⁸⁵⁹

The second, third, and fourth points of the Good Government Ticket focused on government reorganization and modernization in order to better provide services the community of Pharr. Pettita informed the public that if elected, he would create a City Advisory Board, Human Relations Commission, and Board of Equalization that would allow for better communication between Pharr residents and elected officials.⁸⁶⁰ The last three points promoted

⁸⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁵“Pettita Ticket Officially Files with One Change,” *The Pharr Press*, March 30, 1972, 1.

⁸⁵⁶“Making Things Happen,” Manuscript, Undated, 2010.067.007, RGDOC267, C:1, Folder 8, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 3.

⁸⁵⁷*Ibid.* The primary source gives a simplified description of what a “Council-Manager” form of government is. In this type of city government, a city manager is hired and fired by the city commission and can be equated to being the CEO for daily activities.

⁸⁵⁸“Pettita Ticket Officially Files with One Change,” *The Pharr Press*, March 30, 1972, 1.

⁸⁵⁹“Making Things Happen,” Manuscript, Undated, 2010.067.007, RGDOC267, C:1, Folder 8, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 3.

⁸⁶⁰“Pettita Ticket Officially Files with One Change,” *The Pharr Press*, March 30, 1972, 1.

the modernization of the police department, the creation of a Zoning Board that would help with the growth and expansion of the city, and changing the city meetings from midday to the evenings to allow all citizens to participate.⁸⁶¹ Attempting to appeal to Bowe critics, the Good Government Ticket's seven-point platform focused on the various demands that were made by community members living in north Pharr while Bowe was still in office. Pettita and his commission were poised to take over the city government unimpeded until Jaime decided to challenge them.

After Bowe resigned, Fernández, Maria Magallan, and other community members began to contemplate what to do next. They agreed that they had to find someone to challenge Pettita and his Good Government Ticket, but that this person had to be “un conocido,” someone who was known by the people.⁸⁶² Magallan's godfather, Loretto Treviño, called her on the phone and asked if her group would like to meet at his house to discuss plans on choosing a mayoral candidate, and she agreed.⁸⁶³ Fernández, Magallan, and other people from the community met at Treviño's house to discuss the matter further. At the meeting, people asked, “A quien vamos a poner pa mayor despues de esto?” and no one, apart from one individual, answered.⁸⁶⁴ In attendance was Jaime's father-in-law, and he recommended to the community leaders that Jaime be the one to run for mayor against Pettita. Magallan, being the strong-willed woman that she is, retorted back to him and asked who Jaime was and that if he was being recommended, then Jaime would have to meet with the people so they could get to know him.⁸⁶⁵

While all of this was occurring, Jaime had no idea what his father-in-law had done and was preparing his CPA firm for the 1972 tax season. Jaime believed that the reason his name was mentioned was because of his belief in working hard, doing things the right way, and being respectful towards others, morals that his mother instilled in him when he was a child. An

⁸⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁸⁶²Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁸⁶³*Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁵*Ibid.*

incident that illustrated these moral characteristics came when he opposed the building of an 80-unit public housing project that was to be built near his home. He did not oppose it because it was a housing project, but because the units were going to be built on a small track of land, and the city was going to have the people living like caged animals and create traffic hazards.⁸⁶⁶

Jaime took his concerns to Mayor Bowe months prior to his resignation and was informed that the project had been approved by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and that there was nothing he could do.⁸⁶⁷ Undeterred, Jaime sent a letter addressing his concerns to his senator, and a community meeting was scheduled with two experts from HUD at the local Federal Building to address said concerns.⁸⁶⁸ Jaime advertised the meeting in the local newspapers, printed flyers and distributed them all over the neighborhood, but unfortunately no one but him went to the meeting. For two hours, Jaime presented his case to the people from HUD and informed them about the hazards this housing project would have on the people living in them and to the area.⁸⁶⁹ Two months after the meeting, Jaime was informed that he presented a good case and that the project was scrapped. Jaime's unwillingness to look the other way when a situation would negatively affect people, especially low-income families, was one of the reasons why he was chosen to run for mayor. His main complaint was that people in power were doing whatever they wanted in the community, and he did not like that.⁸⁷⁰

Jaime was approached by a group of twenty people comprised of Anglos and ethnic Mexicans and asked him if he would like to run for mayor. According to Jaime, one individual explained to him that the city needed someone educated, like him, to take the reins and lead the city.⁸⁷¹ He was told, "Mr. Jaime, we've known you for some time, we've observed you, we need

⁸⁶⁶"Deciding to Run For Mayor," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/growing-up-and-my-family-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017. The Meta Data for this interview was mixed up during the loading process. Also, A.C. Jaime did mention in his interview that the size of the lot this housing project would be built on was 7 ½ acres. I was not able to corroborate this claim due lack of primary sources.

⁸⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹ Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

a young Mexican American to be our leader in our community. Whoever you choose, we will support you. We need someone like you.”⁸⁷² Jaime asked the group if he could think about it and give them his answer once tax season was over. Jaime’s delayed response may have stemmed from his dislike of politics, not just a busy tax season, he needed time to weigh the consequences of his involvement. On a night in early April, before giving his answer to the group, he arrived home close to midnight and asked his wife Dora if they should get involved in the politics of the city. Jaime knew it was going to be “tough” because of all the political upheaval that had occurred in Pharr, and he did not want to put his family in any situation. Dora simply replied, “Honey, I’m with you with whatever you decide. Whatever you decide I’ll support you. But I ask you one thing. If you’ve ever run out on me, you better let me know cause it’s going to come out.”⁸⁷³ The following day he informed the group that he would run for mayor, and many of them thanked him for doing so. Jaime told them not to thank him, but to thank his wife because she supported his decision to do so.⁸⁷⁴

Once Jaime had his affairs in order, he went public and addressed the residents of Pharr of his decision. On April 6, 1972, one of the headlines in the front page of *The Pharr Press* read, “New Ticket For City Offices Pledges ‘Unity, New Image.’” Jaime and “five professional men” publicly announced their candidacies for the vacant city offices on Wednesday, April 5.⁸⁷⁵ Called “the Unity Ticket,” this group consisted of Jaime and his commissioner candidates Armando Gomez, Quentin Newcombe Jr., Romeo Escobar, and Bob Henderson. On that Wednesday afternoon, Jaime issued the following announcement to the local media and the people of Pharr: “One of our principal goals is to unite the people of Pharr and allow them to have a voice in the administration of our city government. We furthermore hope to create a new

⁸⁷²“Deciding to Run For Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/growing-up-and-my-family-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁸⁷³Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁸⁷⁴“Deciding to Run For Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/growing-up-and-my-family-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁸⁷⁵“New Ticket for City Offices Pledges ‘Unity, New Image,’” *The Pharr Press*, April 6, 1972, 1.

image for our city through the cooperation of all citizens working together for peace and progress.⁸⁷⁶ Though Jaime's statement was brief, he and his commissioner candidates had an idea on what they wanted for the city and much was influenced by the grass-roots community leaders, especially in North Pharr. When Magallan was informed that Jaime had agreed to run for mayor, she told him that the first thing he had to address, if elected, was the sewer and indoor plumbing issues affecting the people living in the North side. Magallan explained that and other "amas de casa" were ready to support and help his campaign, but that he had to create a rapport with the people who had been long ignored.⁸⁷⁷

The following day, Jaime and his Unity Ticket arrived at the City Hall to file paper work to run for the vacant city offices and released their 10-point platform to those who were present. According to *The Pharr Press*, there was a large and enthusiastic group of supporters at City Hall to watch the brief signing up ceremonies.⁸⁷⁸ From the start, the Unity Ticket had the support of residents from North Pharr as City Hall was filled to capacity, and many stood outside as Jaime and his commissioner candidates signed all paperwork.⁸⁷⁹ Jaime addressed the people at city hall and stated:

I personally feel that Armando Gomez, Quentin Newcombe, Romeo Escobar, and Bob Henderson are men whose honesty, integrity, fairness and proven ability to serve our community is beyond doubt. It would be a great honor for me to serve with these men as mayor of our community and urge the support of all citizens, not only to win the election, but to prove to our Valley, State, and Nation that we can work together and in harmony for peace and progress.⁸⁸⁰

Like the Good Government Ticket, the Unity Ticket's number one concern was to establish a city manager form of government. Jaime and his commissioner candidates pledged to serve

⁸⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁷Robles, interview; Magallan interview.

⁸⁷⁸"Jaime Ticket Presents 10-Point Platform," *The Pharr Press*, April 13, 1972, 1.

⁸⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁰*Ibid.*

without pay and assured the public that no elected official will be appointed as city manager or be assigned any administrative job.⁸⁸¹

Jaime also explained that the Unity Ticket would undertake several major initiatives if elected. They planned to study, evaluate, and upgrade the city's law enforcement, intended to create and appoint a City Board of Development, would assist and promote a strong, independent and effective Chamber of Commerce, and improve housing and building conditions.⁸⁸² Furthermore, the Unity Ticket would insure that city employees were competent in their jobs, conduct all evening meetings in English and give a summary in Spanish if requested, conduct a study of the city tax structure, improve environmental health and sanitation conditions, and make all books and city records available to any citizen upon request.⁸⁸³ Overall, the Unity Ticket's goal was to improve living conditions in the city, make the city government accountable for its employees' actions as well as make it more accessible to public, and move away from the previous administration's manner of conducting city business.

Unfortunately, Anglos who supported Jaime and his ticket could not publicly campaign or vote for him, fearing reprisals from other Anglos in the community.⁸⁸⁴ Also, boss politics would make it difficult for Jaime to gain the Mexican-American vote. According to Jaime, it was difficult to break the stranglehold boss politics had on "la gente Mexicana" living in the north side of the city. The odds were stacked against Jaime, and Pettita was favored to win, since he had been a city employee for over a decade. Jaime's own attorney advised that him that he was making a mistake running for mayor because Pettita would beat him ten to one.⁸⁸⁵ Jaime believed that where there was a will, there was a way. His response to his attorney, "I don't know politics, but I wasn't born yesterday. I think I can come up with ideas."⁸⁸⁶ Indeed, Jaime

⁸⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁸⁸⁵"Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos," from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁸⁸⁶*Ibid.*

did come up with ideas that broke the stranglehold boss politics had on the ethnic Mexican residents of Pharr.

Jaime's primary goal was to meet and greet the people living in north Pharr in order to gain their trust. They were the ones most affected by boss politics, and Jaime needed to convince them that he was the candidate who could help them, the community, and the city. As the Unity Ticket's campaign began, Jaime and one of his commissioner candidates, Armando Gomez, walked the neighborhoods in North Pharr street by street and knocked on every door.⁸⁸⁷ They started on the outskirts and made their way south to the railroad tracks. All the people and families that they visited were very poor, and many of the elders were not able to vote because they were not citizens of the United States.⁸⁸⁸ Regardless of the elders' citizenship status, Jaime and Gomez would make every attempt to talk to everyone. They informed the community that they would try to "bring justice" and would appreciate their support regardless whether they could vote or not.⁸⁸⁹ Jaime fulfilled Maria Magallan's request of meeting the people living in the north side so they could know who he was and what the Unity Ticket offered to the people.

At the time, Magallan was a very influential person in North Pharr and was very respected by everyone, especially Jaime. He described Magallan as a strong woman who wanted to help the people in her community and was not an aggressive person, but merely sincere when she talked to the people.⁸⁹⁰ This was something Jaime and his commissioners could not do, because they people did not know them very well, but Magallan knew them and she also went door to door to promote the Unity Ticket.⁸⁹¹ Magallan would tell her neighbors that they needed to support someone like Jaime and that they should not vote for anyone else, because Jaime would help them and the community.⁸⁹² Magallan's influence and support helped Jaime and his ticket a lot during the campaign and election. Gomez also had a rapport with the people from

⁸⁸⁷Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁸⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁰A.C. Jaime, interview by author, Pharr, May 30, 2016, Tape 2.

⁸⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁸⁹²*Ibid.*

North Pharr and helped Jaime introduce himself to them, but it was Magallan who broke down barriers for the Unity Ticket because she was well respected.⁸⁹³ When residents asked Jaime what the ticket's plans were, he explained that they did not promise anything specifically, but they had a detailed platform and assured them that all their issues would be brought to city hall.⁸⁹⁴

Street by street, house to house, Jaime and Gomez presented the Unity Ticket's agenda. It took them three months to cover the entire area, and it was not easy for Gomez, since polio affected him when he was younger.⁸⁹⁵ Of course, Jaime and Gomez had help from Magallan and other people from St. Margaret Catholic Church. When Jaime announced that he would be running for mayor, he went to the Hidalgo County Courthouse to obtain a list of all registered voters and prepared index cards that had information about every single-family living in the neighborhood. By doing so, he knew the number of people living in a household and who could and could not vote. He organized each card by street address, and with the help of a 100 volunteer couples from St. Margaret, he was able to visit the entire north side of town.⁸⁹⁶

Jaime and those helping him with his campaign did not skip any houses during their campaign efforts. They would leave special tags they would clip on the door when the homeowners were not home. The tag read, "Aquí estuvimos. Sentimos mucho que no no hagamos visto. Por favor, háganos si tiene una pregunta."⁸⁹⁷ Jaime believed that it was important to let the people know they were there, and eventually it did help a lot. During his walks in the barrios, he would explain to the people living in the area that if they wanted a meeting, he did not mind having a meeting in the people's backyards.⁸⁹⁸ The people had to open their homes and tell their neighbors to come over. Jaime and Gomez then would go these homes and present the Unity Ticket agenda. These popular meetings usually took place on Monday and

⁸⁹³*Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁴Robles, interview; Jaime interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁸⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁸*Ibid.*

Tuesday nights were forty to fifty people would attend.⁸⁹⁹ Magallan explains that every time a meeting was organized to introduce Jaime to the people, the location was always filled to capacity.⁹⁰⁰ Jaime and Gomez were able to get their message across and the people had the opportunity to meet the candidates running for office. It was not easy, especially on the weekend, to walk to streets of north Pharr every afternoon and knock on each door to promote Jaime's candidacy for mayor, but it eventually paid off.⁹⁰¹

Meeting and greeting people during the campaign was not always positive for Jaime because people, those who wanted change and those who didn't, would either try to tell him what to do or personally attack him. A few days after filing paperwork to run for mayor, his *compadre*, Stanley Ramos, called Jaime on the phone and asked if he could meet with him at his CPA office. Ramos informed Jaime that he and some of his friends from the Raza Unida Party wanted to talk to him about his campaign.⁹⁰² Jaime agreed to the meeting and with one running commissioner by his side, Jaime and Ramos met. Ramos informed Jaime that he and his friends from the Raza Unida Party were there because they wanted to support Jaime and his ticket, but needed to be assured that he was going to fire Police Chief Alfredo Ramirez if he was elected mayor.⁹⁰³ If Jaime gave Ramos his word that he would, then the Raza Unida Party would support his bid for mayor.⁹⁰⁴ Jaime's response was short and to the point. He told Ramos that even though they were *compadres* and that he loved him as a brother, he was not going to commit or promise something like that because his goal was to go in and steady the situation.⁹⁰⁵ Jaime made it clear to Ramos that it was not going to be him that would decide the fate of Chief

⁸⁹⁹"Rumors Fly in City Race; Stories Branded as 'Lies,'" *The Pharr Press*, April 27, 1972, 1.

⁹⁰⁰Robles, interview; Magallan, interview.

⁹⁰¹"Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos," from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁰²Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁰³*Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

Ramirez, but the city commission, if there was not a city manager by that time.⁹⁰⁶ Ramos and the Raza Unida Party never contacted Jaime ever again.

Over the following days rumors and stories began to circulate about what had been said in the meeting and that Jaime had “sold out to the militants.”⁹⁰⁷ Jaime addressed these rumors and stories in an interview with *The Pharr Press*. Jaime confirmed that he did meet with the *Raza Unida* representatives at their requests and that they asked him to fire the police chief. But he explained that he had not made any promises to them.⁹⁰⁸ Regarding as to why the “militants” were supporting him, Jaime stated that they believe that the Unity Ticket would be honest with all the people. He added that *¡Ya Mero!* never endorsed his ticket, but merely asked for interviews and pictures the same as other newspapers and TV news stations.⁹⁰⁹ For Jaime, rumors that he caved to the demands of “militants” and their organizations, that he would give preference to these groups, and that he would hire personal friends or colleagues to fill city offices were all lies.

During their campaign in South Pharr, Jaime was also asked about his ties to “militant” organizations and the *Raza Unida* Party. In one meeting with a group of south Pharr residents, an Anglo man stood up from his chair and asked Jaime to tell them about his brother who was involved with the *Raza Unida*.⁹¹⁰ Jaime stood up and responded:

Yes sir, I got a beautiful brother. My youngest brother, Raul Villareal and I love him dearly. He is my brother, and he is a wonderful person. Under certain circumstances he became a *Raza Unida* individual. But by the same token, I got an uncle that's teaching. He's a professor at Victoria Community College, a three-time medal of honor, he teaches physics, he teaches chemistry, and he taught many of those working at NASA. He taught many of those engineers señor. Are you going to vote for

⁹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁷“Rumors Fly in City Race; Stories Branded as ‘Lies,” *The Pharr Press*, April 27, 1972, 1. *The Pharr Press* labeled individuals such as Efraín Fernández, the *Raza Unida* Party, the local Chicano Newspaper *¡Ya Mero!*, and other individuals or organizations such as these as militant.

⁹⁰⁸“Rumors Fly in City Race; Stories Branded as ‘Lies,” *The Pharr Press*, April 27, 1972, 1.

⁹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁹¹⁰Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

me because of my uncle? Or are you going to vote against me because of my brother? I hope you vote for me for who I am, not because of who my uncle was or who my brother is. Take into account what I've done, what I'm doing, and what I am trying to do, you vote for me or against me sir.⁹¹¹

After his response, Jaime sat back down and waited for the next question. He explained that after that moment, no one ever asked about his brother's role in the Raza Unida Party ever again. Since he was the first Mexican-American mayoral candidate in the city's history and was challenging boss politics, many Anglos were researching personal details about him and his family. Some even went to his hometown of Premont to get information about him. Things were rough, but Jaime and his ticket were adamant that they would overcome any accusations and lies that were brought forth.

It can be argued that the attacks on Jaime and the Unity Ticket came from Pettita, since it was no secret he disliked Jaime and mocked his campaign method. He was the "main dog," according to Jaime, and he basically ran the show before and after the resignation of Mayor Bowe. While Jaime campaigned in the north side of town, Pettita belittled and mocked the Unity Ticket's efforts to gain votes in the area. People who worked close to him would later reveal his disdain for Jaime and the people living in North Pharr. "Mira, pendejo Jaime," Pettita said, "Allá anda con los mojados. He never would get any votes out."⁹¹² What Pettita never realized was that these "mojados" as he called them (elders that lived in the barrios in north Pharr), had children that were American citizens and of voting age. The mere fact that the Unity Ticket took the time to knock on the door of these people and listen to their concerns meant so much that when "papa bear" told his children to vote for Jaime, they did.⁹¹³

Days before the special election that was set for June 13, 1972, the Good Government Ticket and the Unity Ticket made their final appeals to voters in *The Pharr Press* as each side

⁹¹¹*Ibid.*

⁹¹²*Ibid.* It is not known if Joe Pettita was of Mexican descent. The quote comes directly from Jaime and his own interpretation of what he was told after the election by those working for Pettita.

⁹¹³"Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos," from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

briefly restated their main goals. There were also rumors surrounding Pettita's ticket regarding Bowe and his potential role after the election. It was believed that if Pettita were elected mayor, Bowe would become the first city manager of the city. This rumor was dispelled quickly by Bowe himself, as he made it clear that he had no desire to be city manager of Pharr and was never offered any concession or deal by Pettita.⁹¹⁴ As election day neared, the pressure on both sides began to mount.

On election day, the Good Government and Unity Tickets made their final push to get last minute votes. Jaime gathered his group of church volunteers and sent them out across North Pharr, while he went to the main polling place on Hawk Street just a few blocks north of the railroad tracks. His volunteers covered the entire north side three times on election day, reminding residents that there was an important election going on.⁹¹⁵ Jaime instructed them to recommend a vote for his ticket, but if they favored the opponent, then to insist that they go vote regardless.⁹¹⁶ Surprisingly, people did come out to vote and Jaime and his campaign kept track of people who voted by scratching off the names on the index cards that he made early in his campaign.⁹¹⁷

During election day, Joe Pettita sat in the back of his limousine, laughing at Jaime for his attempts to secure a victory as well as insulting him. Jaime recalls that:

They had him in a big ol' limousine, el hombre atras, I'll never forget that. Oh yeah. He would go by where I was you know. And he would look at me, 'pendejo' desia. They had about 30 cars bringing in people to vote and we had nobody. We had nobody. They were bringing in people to vote. And when they would stop, I was at the North side of town on Hawk Street where the precinct was taking place. People would drive up with the voters and I would stick my head in there, and would say, 'Mam, I would

⁹¹⁴"Bowe Issues Statement About City Race," *The Pharr Press*, June 1, 1972, 1.

⁹¹⁵Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹¹⁶"Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos," from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹¹⁷Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

appreciate for you to vote for us. De le las gracias a Pettita y a los otros.’ All day long, I keep going.⁹¹⁸

Jaime was not afraid of Pettita or his helpers, who were driving their voters to the polling place in North Pharr. When the cars driving voters would arrive at the location, Jaime would approach the vehicles and personally asked those who were voting for Pettita if they would consider voting for his ticket.⁹¹⁹

Jaime and his Unity Ticket ended up securing a stunning victory upset against Pettita and his Good Government Ticket. He explained that the loss hit Pettita from left field as he did not see it coming, much less believe it could ever happen.⁹²⁰ Jaime’s victory not only stunned the Good Government ticket, but it also made waves in Valley politics, as the political pros had given the edge to Pettita, because of his long experience in Pharr politics that dated back to the mid-1950s.⁹²¹ The final vote was fairly close with Jaime receiving 2,032 votes and Pettita only receiving 1,736; a margin of 295 votes.⁹²²

Table 3.1: Votes for various precincts in Pharr’s 1972 Special Election

	Overall	Precinct 35	Precinct 25	Precinct 6	Precinct 36
Jaime	2,032	Not given	385 votes	386 votes	656 votes
Pettita	1,736	44 votes (won)	198 votes	131 votes	560 votes

Source: “Unity Slate is Elected with Record Vote of 3,824,” *The Pharr Press*, June 15, 1972

Members of the Unity Ticket and its campaign managers attributed their victory to many reasons. Jaime believed that it was the volunteers who helped gain this major victory, because of their relentless campaigning every day without asking for anything in return.⁹²³ For

⁹¹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹“Inequality Between Mexicans and Anglos,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequality-between-mexicans-and-anglos> accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹²⁰Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹²¹“Unity Slate Is Elected with Record Vote of 3,824,” *The Pharr Press*, June 15, 1972, 1.

⁹²²*Ibid.*

⁹²³*Ibid.*

commissioner elect Romeo S. Escobar, grass roots campaigning, meeting the people in their homes and yards, running an honest campaign, and adapting a new style of politics free of alcoholic beverages was the key for their victory.⁹²⁴ As mentioned previously, elections during Mayor Bowe's tenure involved parties where Peititta would give away beer and tacos to those in attendance in order to gain their vote. This type of politics and campaign were no more. Commissioners elect Quentin Newcombe Jr., and Bob Henderson explained that going to people's homes to explain their agenda and the help of the women of the community greatly contribute to the Unity Ticket's victory.⁹²⁵ Indeed, the help that women like Magallan and other "amas de casa" gave to the ticket was immense and they deserve much of the credit. Another reason for the victory was the Unity Ticket's effort and willingness to address the community's needs, problems, and other social woes.⁹²⁶

The election of the first Mexican American in Pharr's history inspired northside residents who believed that Mayor Jaime would bring an end to decades-long inequalities. Yet there were other groups who were cynical and did not believe that Jaime would do anything to improve the lives of these residents. At the time, it was difficult to predict whether the new administration would succeed or be like the previous administration. Many young Chicanos saw the new administration as "hopelessly middle class" and did not represent the community of North Pharr.⁹²⁷ Efraín Fernández viewed them as "tremendous within their own framework," but they were only businessmen and not radical enough to change the economic situation.⁹²⁸ From the start, Mayor Jaime and his commissioners faced an uphill battle not only to convince many that they would improve living conditions in the city, but to hire adequate personnel that shared the same goals as they did.

⁹²⁴*Ibid.*

⁹²⁵*Ibid.*

⁹²⁶Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹²⁷Linda Swartz, "A Quiet Revolution in Pharr," *The Texas Observer* (Austin), August 9, 1974, 8.

⁹²⁸*Ibid.*

The Unity Ticket did not fully enjoy and celebrate their victory, much less think about the historical significance of Mayor Jaime being the first Mexican-American mayor in the city's history because there was so much to do.⁹²⁹ They officially took office on June 20, 1972. In the first few months of after the special election, Mayor Jaime and his commissioners changed the government to a city manager run government (a.k.a. Council-Manager form of Government), addressed the waste station issue, established new city committees and departments, re-organized the police department, and conducted city meetings in the evening.⁹³⁰ There were so many issues that Mayor Jaime and his commissioners focused on that he, could not recall the exact dates in which he and the commission addressed them. Overall, the Unity Ticket's short first term would challenge whatever was left of boss politics and racist ideologies, and they addressed the issues that were most dire.

The first order of business for the new mayor and his city commissioners was to select and hire a city manager. They hired Harry H. Dulin as Pharr's first city manager in July 1972.⁹³¹ In a city manager form of government, the mayor and the four commissioners act as a legislative body that propose broad policies for the community while the city manager is responsible for effectively and efficiently implementing them.⁹³² The city manager's major responsibility under this new form of government was to direct the departments of Community Development, Finance, Public Works, Police, Fire, Library, and Parks and Recreation.⁹³³ However, problems between the mayor and the first city manager arose soon after Dulin was hired. At first, he would take his time in making decisions regarding city matters and would take days before he acted.⁹³⁴ Jaime explained that Dulin would have to be fully informed about a project while he

⁹²⁹"Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 2, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹³⁰Dora Leticia González, "A Look at the City of Pharr—Before and After the Riot" (History Paper, University of Texas Pan-American, Edinburg, April 20, 1989), Pharr Memorial Library Archive, Pharr, Texas, 10.

⁹³¹"Dulin Resigns as City Mgr., Effective Nov. 1," *The Pharr Press*, October 3, 1974, 1.

⁹³²"Making Things Happen," Manuscript, Undated, 2010.067.007, RGDOC267, C:1, Folder 8, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 4.

⁹³³*Ibid.*

⁹³⁴Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

wanted him to get informed, give a solution, and act quickly.⁹³⁵ One such case when Dulin did not act fast enough to the mayor's wishes came when a police officer punched a handcuffed prisoner. This issue was brought to Jaime's attention the day after the incident when an attorney representing this individual called him. When Mayor Jaime called Dulin and told him to "Take care of the situation," the city manager responded that he did and that the officer had every right to what he did because the individual had cussed and spit on him.⁹³⁶ Infuriated that he did not properly address the situation, Mayor Jaime informed Dulin that he better fire the officer, because he (Jaime) did not want to go to Federal Court, and if he did, he would go without him.⁹³⁷ That afternoon, the city manager informed Mayor Jaime that the officer had been fired and the situation was taken care of.

In another occasion, Jaime received calls from various people of a neighborhood in northwest Pharr complaining that their streets were flooded and their houses were surround by water after a heavy rainfall.⁹³⁸ Jaime could not believe that the neighborhood could be flooded, since the city installed new adequate sewer and water lines, curbs, curb gutter drainage systems, and paved the streets throughout north Pharr.⁹³⁹ Unfortunately, there were issues with the drainage system, and it contributed to the flooding, making the neighborhood look like a lagoon. As he and Duhn arrived on the scene, Jaime asked him what could be done to remedy the situation. Duhn coldly replied that nothing could be done and that the curb gutter drainage system was inadequately built.⁹⁴⁰

Not convinced that there was absolutely nothing that could be done, Jaime went over to a local city employee who was on scene. The mayor asked the employee what equipment he had

⁹³⁵*Ibid.*

⁹³⁶Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹³⁷*Ibid.*

⁹³⁸"Attending the Needs of Mexicans," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRRB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹³⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

in his city truck, and the young man replied that he had a twelve-pound *mazo* (sledgehammer).⁹⁴¹ Jaime took the hammer from the city employee and proceeded to break the concrete barrier and gutter system while Dulin informed him that he could not do that.⁹⁴² As Jaime swung the sledgehammer for the last time breaking the concrete and releasing all the stagnant water, he replied to Dulin that he just did.⁹⁴³ Afterwards, the Jaime furiously told his city manager, “This is one way to take care of my people. Given them a chance to put dirt in there or something, but don’t tell me that you can’t do something.”⁹⁴⁴ Jaime did not want to hear excuses or that something could not be done, because he believed that there was always a solution to any problem. Responses like the one Dulin gave him that day infuriated and frustrated him. On that same day, Jaime drove his Cadillac through flooded streets to check on other neighborhoods in North Pharr too see if the water pumps were working properly. He led by example and expected everyone else to work their hardest to find solutions rather than make excuses. Jamie was in the middle of everything and he was pushing for solutions because, the people in these neighborhoods could not live in those conditions.⁹⁴⁵

Another incident with Dulin that led to his dismissal as city manager occurred when he verbally abused the Mexican-American women working in the city clerk’s office. Dora Garza, a city clerk, called Jaime at his office phone one morning crying and advised him that she could no longer work for the city because the city manager had racially insulted her and her staff.⁹⁴⁶ Garza explained to Jaime that she asked Dulin if they could use the janitor’s office to eat their tacos, since they had no breakroom, and he told her, while laughing, that he did not want city hall to smell like tacos.⁹⁴⁷ Jaime assured her that he would address the situation. That afternoon,

⁹⁴¹Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁴²*Ibid.*

⁹⁴³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁶“Attending the Needs of Mexicans,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRRB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Jaime called a meeting with his city commissioners and informed them about what had transpired that morning with Dulin, Mrs. Garza, and the other ladies at the clerk's office. The mayor wanted him gone by noon the next day.⁹⁴⁸ To show his commissioners that he was serious about firing this individual and would not tolerate such actions, Mayor Jaime forced them to choose between him and the city manager.⁹⁴⁹ Afterwards, the Jaime and city commission bought him a cake, and gave him a farewell. By firing Dulin, Jaime made it clear that he was not going to tolerate racist behavior in city offices. Unfortunately, Dulin was not the last city employee who was fired for abusive or unethical conduct.

Sometime later, McAllen City Manager Bill Schupp informed Jaime that he had a talk with Duhn on their way to a city manager's meeting in Harlingen months before he was fired. Aware that Dulin had issues with Jaime, Schupp tried to talk to the young man and give him some helpful advice. Schupp made Dulin aware that arguing, fighting, and pushing Jaime and the city commission was not wise.⁹⁵⁰ Dulin had not been following the instructions of Jaime and the commissioners and was very belligerent to them.⁹⁵¹ Dulin laughed and responded that he was "going to teach the Mexicans in Pharr how to run a city."⁹⁵² All of this was said months after Jaime and the city commissioners fired him. Jaime explained that in the end, Dulin "got what he deserved."⁹⁵³

The second issue that Mayor Jaime and his city commission addressed was the smell that the sewage station on Bell Street in north Pharr was producing. Since the city had started paving the streets under Mayor Bowe, they continued under Mayor Jaime as the streets were paved, sidewalks were constructed, and curbs and curb gutters were erected. As mentioned earlier, the sewage from South Pharr would move north to the sewage plant on Bell Street and would take

⁹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁹Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁹⁵¹"Attending the Needs of Mexicans," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRRB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁵²*Ibid.*

⁹⁵³*Ibid.*

days to get there, allowing it fester and create an awful stench that affected those living in the area. Mayor Jaime contacted Melden & Hunt Inc., a local engineering firm, and asked them what could be done to remedy the situation.⁹⁵⁴ The engineers suggested that they would have to divert waste flow to another sewage station that was close and that would get rid of the smell.⁹⁵⁵ Jaime agreed to the engineers' suggestions and signed off on the project. "It was simple," he said, explaining that intercepting sewer lines were put in place along the main line.⁹⁵⁶ These lines diverted the flow of waste from spending days going north, and instead it went directly to another sewage station in South Pharr. The issue of outhouses and the lack of indoor plumbing would later be addressed in the beginning of his second term as mayor. Jaime and his commissioners developed north side barrios by simply using funds from taxes they collected from the city's taxpayers. "I don't know where the heck the money was going to before, but we found a way," explained Jaime.⁹⁵⁷ "We didn't go out and incur debts for the city. We found money to do it."⁹⁵⁸

Jaime and his commissioners also addressed the lack of indoor plumbing in north Pharr. He explained that once they were in office, they immediately took care of the problem and installed sewer lines in the area.⁹⁵⁹ Monies acquired from various state grants as well from federal sources for all forms of capital improvement projects such as water, sewage systems, street lights, etc., were made available for the north side residents.⁹⁶⁰ One such grant, an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant, provided \$743,000 to spend improving and rerouting the sewer systems in the city.⁹⁶¹ Jaime explained that he would personally recommend people to local finance companies such as Jefferson Savings and Loans and Valley

⁹⁵⁴Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁰"Making Things Happen," Manuscript, Undated, 2010.067.007, RGDOC267, C:1, Folder 8, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 5.

⁹⁶¹*Ibid.*

Federal Savings and Loans so they could get some funds to help fix up their homes.⁹⁶² These companies helped many families in the area, and Jaime would only send responsible people he knew that would not default on their loans to these companies. Even St. Margaret's Catholic Church could financially help by also lending community members money through their own credit union. Jaime explained that individuals received \$1,000-\$1,500 loans so they could improve their homes, and many did pay the money back. There were a few who did not but "that was ok."⁹⁶³

The police department also experienced some immediate change after the Unity Ticket took office. Prior to the special election, Mayor Bowe surprised his critics and supporters when he put Chief Alfredo Ramirez and First Lieutenant Mateo Sandoval on leave of absence in early May 1972 until mid-June.⁹⁶⁴ Bowe and the city commission did this to prevent both tickets from using the controversy of the police department as a "political football" during the special elections.⁹⁶⁵ Under Mayor Jaime, Chief Ramirez's job was not secure. His role in the previous administration placed him in an awkward situation, because Bowe and his administration took advantage of him, and he did everything they asked.⁹⁶⁶ In his conversation with Ramirez, Jaime told him that he was "too weak" and should have never followed Mayor Bowe's unethical orders.⁹⁶⁷ In short, he was removed from his position.⁹⁶⁸

Mayor Jaime and the city commissioners placed the sole responsibility for hiring the new police chief on the city manager. They wanted someone who was close to God, someone that was a good family man, someone who could be trusted, and someone who would not embarrass them and the city of Pharr.⁹⁶⁹ Since the new administration established a city manager form of government, council members did not involve themselves in the hiring process and left it up to

⁹⁶²Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁶³*Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁴"Police Chief, First Lt. Given Leave of Absence," *The Pharr Press*, May 4, 1972, 1.

⁹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁶Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

⁹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁸Jaime does not make it clear if he fired Chief Ramirez or if he resigned.

⁹⁶⁹*Ibid.*

the city manager to choose a viable candidate.⁹⁷⁰ If the city manager made a mistake in hiring the wrong person, that individual would be let go.⁹⁷¹ Prior to the riot, police officers were not properly trained, and anybody who wanted to be a police officer was hired into the force without any proper training.⁹⁷² Soon after, Manuel Chavez from Harlingen was hired as the new Pharr Police Chief. Chavez had served for seventeen years in the 1950s and 1960s as a patrolman and then as a lieutenant of detectives at the Harlingen Police Department prior to coming to Pharr in 1972.⁹⁷³ He immediately started reforming the department, establishing a new set of guidelines for police behavior. Whoever did not follow them was immediately let go.⁹⁷⁴ Jaime believed that Mayor Bowe used the police to keep the “Mexicano” down and not let them get out of order and instead accept what he was offering.⁹⁷⁵ Social conditions in the city were horrible, because truck-loads of drugs went through town. Unregulated *cantinas* attracted prostitutes and their pimps.⁹⁷⁶ Jaime believed that some officials were being paid off, because many police officers ignored the various vice crimes that were happening.⁹⁷⁷ These police practices seen under Mayor Bowe ceased soon after the Unity Ticket took office.

Under Chief Chavez, the Pharr Police Department set up a process for checking the local bars for gambling and prostitution and attributed the decline of these practices to the chief’s plan.⁹⁷⁸ However, Chief Chavez soon left the Pharr Police Department in 1973 to work for the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he became the university’s first police chief.⁹⁷⁹ He

⁹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁹⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁹⁷²“Were the Polirce Properly Trained?,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/was-the-police-properly-trained>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁷³“In Memoriam: UTSA’s Inaugural Police Chief Dies at Age 81,” *UTSA Today* (San Antonio), July 13, 2012, 1, <https://www.utsa.edu/today/2012/07/chavez.html>, accessed July 30, 2017.

⁹⁷⁴González, “A Look At the City of Pharr,” 10.

⁹⁷⁵“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 1, from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-1>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁸Swartz, “A Quiet Revolution in Pharr,” 8.

⁹⁷⁹*Ibid.*; “In Memoriam: UTSA’s Inaugural Police Chief Dies at Age 81,” *UTSA Today* (San, Antonio), July 13, 2012, 1.

was then replaced by Raul Reyna who was a sergeant in the Edinburg Police Department.⁹⁸⁰ Soon after Chief Reyna took the helm, he further professionalized the police department. Chief Reyna increased the hiring requirements immediately and increased the recruits' salaries to \$475, since many of them were studying law enforcement at Pan American University.⁹⁸¹ Eventually, all the members of the old force, except for one, were replaced by these young and inexperienced police officers.⁹⁸² Jaime explained that many officers of the old force were not bad persons, but good men who felt that they had to follow the instructions from Mayor Bowe and Pettita.⁹⁸³ These new young men were better trained and better paid. If anyone wanted to pay them off it would not be easy, and these individuals would have to pay a lot for them to accept.⁹⁸⁴ The police department underwent major changes during Jaime's first year in office but would continue to become more professionalized in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Unity Ticket addressed many issues that were ignored by the Bowe administration during the first two years they were in office. But the most important change Jaime's administration made was being accessible and available for the citizens of Pharr. During the first few months in office, Chicano leaders such as Efraín Fernández and Antonio Orendain, as well as other community leaders such as Maria Magallan, kept an eye on Jaime and the commissioners to make sure they were doing what they were supposed to be doing.⁹⁸⁵ Other than meeting with his compadre, Stanley Ramos, who was a member of the La Raza Unida Party, many of them never met with Jaime or his commissioners after the election or sought to interfere with them or their policies.⁹⁸⁶ Instead, these individuals allowed Jaime and his

⁹⁸⁰Swartz, "A Quiet Revolution in Pharr," 8.

⁹⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁹⁸²*Ibid.*

⁹⁸³"Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 1, from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-1>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁸⁴Swartz, "A Quiet Revolution in Pharr," 8.

⁹⁸⁵Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

commissioners to, as Jaime put it, “do their thing.”⁹⁸⁷ Activists such as Orendain would go to city hall, attend the city meetings at night, sit on the floor on one side of the room, and observe Jaime and his commission.⁹⁸⁸ Jaime explained that “he would not bother, he would just come in here and sit down, and see how we were doing things. Never did I get any problems with any of them. Never, never.”⁹⁸⁹ Orendain would be there until he heard what he wanted to hear and then would leave.⁹⁹⁰ Jaime further explained that he knew who Orendain was but did not officially meet him on a personal level until he left office.

Jaime wanted the people of Pharr to understand that he and his commission were doing things differently than Bowe’s administration. In his first term, Jaime would arrive at city hall by six in the morning, organize the day’s schedule, leave instructions to the city manager on what needed to be done, and then depart for his CPA firm by eight in the morning.⁹⁹¹ After a long day at his CPA office, Jaime would then return to city hall and would be in meetings with his commissioners and citizens that would go until one or two in the morning, trying to figure out solutions to the city’s problems.⁹⁹² Jaime also made sure that his commissioners understood his goal of having a government that was fair, transparent, and on par with his values. As previously stated, Jaime informed his employees in a meeting that any unethical action would get them fired. This was no different for members of his city commission.

At the time, the Unity Ticket did not realize that they were setting a precedence, but they opened the doors for other Mexican-Americans to participate in local politics.⁹⁹³ Jaime would not tolerate any unethical actions from his commissioners, because he was busy trying to fix

⁹⁸⁷“Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁰Robles, Interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

⁹⁹¹“Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹⁹³*Ibid.*

many of the problems in the city. In the first few weeks of his short term, he called a meeting with his four city commissioners and warned them, “The day you step out of line, either way, the day you step out of line I want you to send your resignation by mail. I don’t even want to see you here.”⁹⁹⁴ Jaime had to make clear that he was not going to tolerate any form of corruption or unethical activities within his government. He did not want the people of Pharr, especially those most affected by the Bowe administration, to think that nothing had change, and he wanted the people to see that city officials were not going to take advantage of their positions.⁹⁹⁵

This was important to Jaime, because he knew many people in the Valley were watching him and his commissioners in the first year. He felt that at times that he was being subjected to a federal investigation because some of his clients, would ask him to do something illegal. In one occasion, a client went to Jaime’s office to ask him if could work on his accounts and invited him out for coffee. As they went outside to the parking lot, this individual pulls out \$10,000 from a bag and asked Jaime if he “could do this” for him.⁹⁹⁶ Assuming that his client wanted the money laundered, Jaime refused and told him to leave and never do that again.⁹⁹⁷ That same client was later found dead in Houston because of his involvement with drugs and organized crime.⁹⁹⁸ It did not take long until another one of his clients arrived at his office with a set of accounting books. Once Jaime noticed that there were some inconsistencies and realized what the client wanted him to do, he called him, gave him his books, and threw him out.⁹⁹⁹ Jaime explained that since many people in power in the Valley were “on the take,” he felt that someone or some organization was testing him and wanted him out “por ser Mexicano.”¹⁰⁰⁰ Incidents like

⁹⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁶“Attending the Needs of Mexicans, Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview by Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

⁹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁸A.C. Jaime, interview by author, Pharr, May 30, 2016, Mp3 File 3.

⁹⁹⁹“Attending the Needs of Mexicans, Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview by Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁰⁰*Ibid.*

these reminded Jaime that he and his commissioners could not afford a huge scandal at the time and needed to continue to clean up the city, even though someone wanted to catch him with his “manos mugrosas.”¹⁰⁰¹

Local activists, community organizations, and Jaime’s supporters gave him and his city commissioners time between 1972 and 1974 to fix many of the social woes of the city. That was important, because two years was not enough to address all the issues that were negatively affecting the people and the city of Pharr.¹⁰⁰² By spring 1974, Jaime and his commission had to decide whether they were going to run for reelection. Again, Jaime consulted his wife, and her response was the same as before, “if he had anything to hide, to tell her because it was going to come out.”¹⁰⁰³

Jaime and his Unity Ticket filed to run again for the city’s regular four year term election in mid-spring. Though a record number of voters were expected for this election, the campaign was plagued by “unusual rumors” and statements made without verification. Overall, it was described as “low-temperature” when compared to 1972’s special election.¹⁰⁰⁴ The challenging ticket, the Progressive Ticket, was headed by an Anglo named C.W. (Buddy) Linn, whose father was a city commissioner under many prior commissions, and an independent ticket headed by Alfredo Ramirez.¹⁰⁰⁵ Linn was backed by former city inspector Joe Pettita and criticized Mayor Jaime for increasing the salaries of various city employees without providing proof that such actions to attract qualified individuals created a higher quality of public services.¹⁰⁰⁶ Other criticisms that Linn raised against Jaime and his commissioners focused on their refusal to issue new beer and liquor licenses—an issue that will become the focus point of his second term.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰¹Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 3.

¹⁰⁰²“Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁰³Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

¹⁰⁰⁴“Pharr Voters Will Elect Commission For Four Year Terms in Election Apr. 2,” *The Pharr Press*, March 28, 1974, 1.

¹⁰⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁶Swartz, “A Quiet Revolution in Pharr,” 8.

¹⁰⁰⁷*Ibid.*

The night of the election on April 2, 1974, Jaime and his Unity Ticket won the by a substantial two to one margin.¹⁰⁰⁸

Mayor Jaime and his commission continued with their progressive agenda to improve the city of Pharr. The Unity Ticket had major goals for their second term in office for continuing their progressive agenda. Jaime never stopped working with and for the citizens of Pharr, especially those living in the north side, as he and his commissioners met with them constantly. These “neighborhood workshop sessions,” as they were termed, occurred regularly and focused on communication between the city government and the people.¹⁰⁰⁹ Magallan explained in her interview that Jaime and his commission would always meet with the people in different locations to discuss various community issues. “Hacíamos juntas en todas partes. No era nomas aquí oh era con Antonio Orendain, no era con nadie, sino con la gente de la comunidad y los juntábamos en diferentes lugares.”¹⁰¹⁰ These workshop sessions stemmed from Jaime’s political campaign philosophy which revolved around the residents’ needs and input. Jaime, along with translators, would inform the attendees of any new developments within the city. For example, in one such meeting, Mayor Jaime and city commissioners announced that the Department of Housing and Urban Development had notified them that the city’s Community Development Block Grant application had been approved.¹⁰¹¹ These funds would make \$218,000 available to the city to use for various city improvement projects.¹⁰¹² Though the funds would help the city address some of its needs, the grant would not be sufficient enough to remedy all them, but it was a good start.¹⁰¹³

In another meeting just a few days later, Jaime and the commission explained to the citizens of North Pharr the new role of the city manager. The session served a dual purpose.

¹⁰⁰⁸“Jaime Ticket is Returned to Office by Wide Margin,” *The Pharr Press*, April 4, 1974, 1.

¹⁰⁰⁹“Communication Theme of Pharr Workshops,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 15, 1975, 1.

¹⁰¹⁰Robles, interview; Magallan, interview. Translation: “We would hold meetings everywhere. It wasn’t only here (her home) or with Antonio Orendain, it was with no one, but the people of the community and we would get together in different locations.”

¹⁰¹¹“City Gets Okeh of \$218,000 C.D. Funds,” *The Pharr Press*, June 12, 1975, 1.

¹⁰¹²*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹³*Ibid.*

First, the meeting was held to give a “graphic demonstration of just how the city manager form of government works.”¹⁰¹⁴ Second, it introduced the citizens to the City Manager Ted Willis, who replaced Dulin, and gave them an opportunity to ask him questions.¹⁰¹⁵ It was important for the citizens to understand that they should not call Mayor Jaime at his accounting office about problems but instead contact City Manager Willis, since he was the one who handled the day-to-day business of the city.¹⁰¹⁶ In short, the Unity Ticket’s goal of establishing a city manager form of government became a reality, and Willis became the individual the people of Pharr would turn to when they had a complaint. It would not be long, however, until Willis would also be dismissed for almost the same reasons that his predecessor was let go, forcing Jaime and the commissioners to conduct another search. His successor, Reyes Vela, would be hired as the third city manager and would serve the city of Pharr without any problems according to Jaime.

The mayor and his commissioners also addressed the *cantina* issue that had negatively affected life in Pharr in the previous administrations. The *cantinas* were located close to the center of town, near the police station. According to Jaime, there were thirty-four *cantinas* in an eight-block radius in the center of town, right by the police station where the riot occurred. The area was filled with prostitutes going up and down the streets, and their pimps.¹⁰¹⁷ This area was so bad that families and women could not walk down the street there at night because of all the debauchery that happened. In Jaime’s first year as mayor, an incident occurred that forced him to take drastic action against *cantinas* in the area. Eileen Longoria, the wife of State Senator Raul L. Longoria went downtown to a small laundry to pick up her dry cleaning. The business was located between four *cantinas*, two on the left and two on the right. When Mrs. Longoria walkout of the business she was followed by two drunks who were sitting in front of one of the

¹⁰¹⁴“Communication Theme of Pharr Workshops,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), June 15, 1975, 1.

¹⁰¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁷“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 1, from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-1>, accessed July 10, 2017.

cantinas.¹⁰¹⁸ As she approached her vehicle, these two “*borachitos*” pinched her on her rear end.¹⁰¹⁹ Soon after, Mrs. Longoria called city hall to complain, and the city commissioners advised the mayor of the situation. Jaime met and talked to Mrs. Longoria and asked her to give him and his commissioners the opportunity to right this wrong. Soon after, Jaime moved to close the *cantinas* in this area so incidences like that of Mrs. Longoria would not happen again.

To gain support from his commissioners to close many of these establishments, Jaime took Commissioner Newcombe with him to walk the sidewalks where Mrs. Longoria was assaulted. As soon as they started their walk through the area, both men saw drunks and *marijuanitos* sitting outside the *cantinas* on the sidewalk. Two of these individuals began following them when suddenly, they heard switch blades open, and Commissioner Newcombe felt the need to run.¹⁰²⁰ Jaime told Newcombe not to run or be scared and just to follow him around the corner of one of the buildings. When they arrived behind the cantina, they saw women squatting and relieving themselves out in the open, because the restrooms inside the establishments were dirty and unsanitary.¹⁰²¹ Jaime told Newcombe to look at what was happening in their city and that he needed his support as well as the support from the other commissioners to clean up the area. From then on, the city commissioners gave Jaime their full support on whatever he needed to do to clean up the area but were hesitant because many of these businesses were owned by criminals.¹⁰²²

At first, Jaime attempted to simply remove the pimps and prostitutes from the area to curtail crime, public drinking, and any form of illegal activity. Mayor Jaime had a good professional relationship with the Border Patrol Chief at the time and would request that he send his patty wagon to help remove drunkards, ladies of the night, and other individuals.¹⁰²³ By the

¹⁰¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁰Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

¹⁰²¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²²*Ibid.*

¹⁰²³“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 1, from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican->

next day, these individuals would be back in the area, and Jaime would ask for the patty wagon again to remove them from the area once more. Jaime explained that this continued for a while until he took drastic measures. Drunks also posed a great threat to the citizens of Pharr, as they would stay in the bars drinking until two in the morning. There were instances where individuals who were drinking would stumble out of the bars in the early hours of the morning and attempt to drive home. They would get in their vehicles that were parallel parked, and back up against traffic without looking.¹⁰²⁴ At other times, some of these individuals would stop in the middle of the street, finish their last beer, smash the bottle, and then speed off into the night without regards for anyone.¹⁰²⁵ Incidents like these were a nightly occurrence, since all the bars in Pharr could be open until two in the morning, and Jaime believed that enough was enough.

When Jaime and his commissioners began to target not only the *cantinas* but also the owners, the people living in a five-block radius were grateful that they did. The taverns with jukeboxes would have them playing full blast until closing time, and it did not allow the people living around the area to sleep.¹⁰²⁶ Police were often called to ask the bar operator to close the door because the jukebox was too loud and could be heard throughout the neighborhood.¹⁰²⁷ As Jaime and the commission began closing them down, neighborhood residents celebrated his actions.¹⁰²⁸ To begin the process, Jaime had to find out who owned the cantinas as well as the properties behind them, because those houses were used as brothels.¹⁰²⁹ As soon as he had this

discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-1, accessed July 10, 2017. Jaime does not explain why he did not call the county sheriff or other departments with the ability to assist to help him remove these individuals.

¹⁰²⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁶“Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰²⁷“Police Harassment Claimed: Pharr Tavern Owners Protest Ordinances,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), January 7, 1976, 1.

¹⁰²⁸“Mexicans Reaction to Being Mayor,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexicans-reaction-to-being-mayor>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰²⁹“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

information, Jaime contacted many of his clients, colleagues, and friends, and asked if they were interested in buying properties. In one case, one of his friends lived next door to one of the “hotels,” and Jaime encouraged him to buy the property. Jaime helped his friend get a financed loan to buy the property, and within days of the transaction, Jaime closed it down.¹⁰³⁰ This was how Jaime managed to shut down many *cantinas* in the eight-block radius. He would ask his other friends and clients, “Hey, why do you buy a cantina? You need a cantina.”¹⁰³¹ Once the property was bought, the new owners would stop all operations and then shut it down.

Another method Jaime used to combat the cantina problem was by passing city ordinances that limited which businesses obtained a liquor license and setting a new closing time. Four months into his term, Jaime asked his city attorney to write a city ordinance that whenever a cantina closed, the area could never be open again for beer consumption and receive a beer license.¹⁰³² However, the city attorney would not draft an ordinance to Jaime’s satisfaction. Subsequently Jaime discovered that this individual owned four cantinas himself in the eight-block radius. Jaime and the city commissioners promptly dismissed him from his post and hired Ruben Cardenas and Bob Wise Law Firm from McAllen to write the ordinance.¹⁰³³ This new ordinance allowed actions by municipal personnel to “abate any premises or property, closure, condemn, remove any person or thing, court action, suspend, cancel, or void any license or permit issued by the City of Pharr or a state or federal agency, and any and all other relief as may be necessary.”¹⁰³⁴ According to Pharr’s municipal code, section 10-36, this new ordinance empowered the city manager, the city attorney, or any other designated personnel to take action to enforce this ordinance and remove or seize any objects that were used to violate this

¹⁰³⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰³¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰³²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³³*Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁴Texas-Code of Ordinances, chapter 10, *Alcoholic Beverages*, article II-license, sec. 10-36, *Enforcement; punishment; penalties*, sub-section (a), (Code 1976, § 4-19; Ord. No. O-2015-10, § 1, 3-17-15) https://library.municode.com/tx/pharr/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH10ALBE, accessed September 20, 2017.

article.¹⁰³⁵ Either the cantinas were bought by a third party and closed or they were never allowed to get another liquor license.¹⁰³⁶

Cantineros (tavern owners), as Jaime called them, became dissatisfied with the city's new ordinance laws and constant police enforcement in late 1975 and early 1976.¹⁰³⁷ As mentioned earlier, Chief Chavez set up a process for checking the cantinas for gambling, prostitution, and other illicit activity in his first year as Pharr police chief prior to leaving for UTSA. By this time, many tavern owners were tired of the restrictions and of the constant harassment. On January 6, 1972, County Judge Guerra called Mayor Jaime and asked him what he was doing in Pharr because, he had thirty-four cantineros raising hell at his Edinburg office.¹⁰³⁸ "They claim they are going to shoot you, they're going to kill you. What is it that you want?"¹⁰³⁹ Jaime responded, "I want them to run a good business, but apparently, they don't want to run a good business and I want them out of town."¹⁰⁴⁰ He explained to Judge Guerra that the tavern owners could own a business, just not in downtown Pharr, and he wanted them far south of the city. Judge Guerra wanted to help Jaime, but he could not and advised Jaime to take care of himself because the tavern owners threatened to lynch him.¹⁰⁴¹ Not being one to back down, Jaime went to office at city hall to meet the tavern owners.

When Mayor Jaime arrived at city hall, there was one cantinero leading the way and being very loud. Jaime walked up and told him, "Hey, hey, lets go! Vamonos, it's time! You all want to talk to me, come on in."¹⁰⁴² Not wanting Jaime and the city commissioners to pass any more proposed ordinances, twenty tavern owners hired attorney Ronald D. Zipp of Edinburg to

¹⁰³⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁶"Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,) from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰³⁷From this point on, I will be using the term "cantinero" to describe the tavern owners since Jaime used it many times during his oral history interview.

¹⁰³⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴²Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

represent them in a city special meeting.¹⁰⁴³ At the meeting, Zipp explained that police officers would not show their badges when they entered the bars to check liquor licenses, they would force employees to open the cash register so they can look inside, fined potential employees for not have a health permit, and scare customers out of the bar.¹⁰⁴⁴ Gloria Reyes of the *Watergate Lounge* stood up and told Jaime that once the police would arrive at her bar, the customers would get up and walk out.¹⁰⁴⁵ Another woman from the *Diaz Paradise* tavern exclaimed, “Everytime police walk in there, my business is gone.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Other cantineros argued that they had their businesses to look out for and that they had as much right to be there as any other business.¹⁰⁴⁷ “We can’t all be accountants or pharmacists,” added Zipp, as he pleaded with Jaime and the city commissioners to have some “reasonableness.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Through all of this, Jaime sat in his chair and listened to Zipp and his clients, because even though he did not agree with their business practices, he would let them speak.

After the cantineros and their lawyer finished speaking, Jaime presented his side. He admitted that some police practices may have been unwarranted and promised that any improper police actions would be corrected.¹⁰⁴⁹ Jaime informed the group that Chief Reyna was simply doing what he was told to do by him to “get the job done.”¹⁰⁵⁰ The mayor agreed that cantineros had as much right as other business owners to conduct business, but not to the point where their taverns were disturbing the residents living around the area.¹⁰⁵¹ Jaime described what he and

¹⁰⁴³“Police Harassment Claimed: Pharr Tavern Owners Protest Ordinances,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), January 7, 1976, 1.

¹⁰⁴⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁷“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,) from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁴⁸“Police Harassment Claimed: Pharr Tavern Owners Protest Ordinances,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), January 7, 1976, 1.

¹⁰⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵¹“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,) from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

Commissioner Newcombe saw when they had walked down the sidewalk where these cantinas were located. Prostitutes solicited business in the taverns and then would complete their business on the adjacent property in full view of the public, there were intoxicated individuals on the sidewalks, and citizens could not walk in the area for fear of molestation or verbal abuse. He added that there were also traffic and parking problems, narcotics use, and other occurrences that he did not want to mention.¹⁰⁵²

Mayor Jaime continued and advised them that their businesses were creating various problems by staying open until two in the morning. By staying open late, their businesses attracted drunks from all over the Valley into Pharr, causing various problems in the early morning hours for citizens and police.¹⁰⁵³ As the meeting ended, Jaime advised the tavern owners that closing at two in the morning was “too much.” The mayor and the city commission approved the new ordinances that would force tavern owners to close at one in the morning, and if they did not comply, then they would forcibly be closed at midnight.¹⁰⁵⁴ If tavern owners refused to close at midnight, then the city would close the tavern indefinitely. Zipp raised objections to the first two ordinances and questioned the legality of the third.¹⁰⁵⁵ For two months, tavern owners ignored the city ordinance to close at one in the morning and continued closing at two. Mayor Jaime asked the city commissioners to enforce the midnight ordinances, and they did, which infuriated the cantineros.¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁵²“Police Harassment Claimed: Pharr Tavern Owners Protest Ordinances,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), January 7, 1976, 1.

¹⁰⁵³“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁵⁴Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Tape 2.

¹⁰⁵⁵“Police Harassment Claimed: Pharr Tavern Owners Protest Ordinances,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), January 7, 1976, 1.

¹⁰⁵⁶“Mexican Discrimination with Politics and Police, Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interviewed with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/mexican-discrimination-with-politics-and-police-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017. According to Pharr’s code ordinance, Sec. 10-4 regarding the hours of sale of beer, wine, liquor, mixed drinks, all intoxicating beverages should be lawfully sold in an establishment for the hours prescribed by a valid late hours mixed beverage permit issued by the state alcoholic beverage commission.

The owners went back to city hall to raise hell, but Jaime was undeterred and did not change his mind. Instead, he threatened them that if they did not “behave,” that the city would close the cantinas for good!¹⁰⁵⁷ Eventually, Mayor Jaime and the commission would close many of the cantinas in this eight-block radius for not complying with city ordinances, or because their liquor license was not renewed. After months of struggling with the cantineros, Jaime called Judge Garza to tell him that he changed his mind about the whole situation and had decided that he did not want these taverns in South Pharr either, because the city had plans to build an international bridge between Pharr and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico.¹⁰⁵⁸ According to Jaime, Judge Garza was shocked and left speechless.

Jaime’s actions against the tavern owners changed that eight-block radius of the city as many cantinas were forced to shut down. Only a few remain open because they followed the city ordinances. But like everything, actions have consequences and Mayor Jaime and his family became targets for these tavern owners. He knew people were trying to get to him as cantineros, their families and friends held a grudge against him. One of his sons was confronted at school not by a student, but by his teacher, who was related to one of these tavern owners. This individual found out that the young man’s father was the mayor and verbally attacked him and criticized his father’s policies.¹⁰⁵⁹ Not knowing what to do, Jaime’s son got up from his desk and left the classroom. Jaime’s youngest boy also felt the impact of his policies as a group of children whose parents owned taverns followed him and then pelted him with rocks.¹⁰⁶⁰ His daughters were not immune to these attacks. Jaime did not go into detail, but he acknowledged that his daughters also “had a hell of a time” growing up.¹⁰⁶¹ Jaime was hesitant at first, but he mentioned that his wife was also affected, as she was hit by two individuals in car and left in a ditch. She survived the hit and run and it is unknown if the individuals responsible were ever

¹⁰⁵⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁹Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 3.

¹⁰⁶⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶¹*Ibid.*

arrested. Despite this intimidation, Jaime and his city commissioners could not stop their mission to clean up the city. Although all of them felt the pressure and were afraid, they never gave in to these individuals.

The cantineros, their families, and their friends, as well as other “interested parties,” wanted Jaime out of office because he was affecting their businesses. The main group, according to Jaime, that wanted him, and commissioners out was the Mexican Mafia, who were based in San Antonio. Some of the cantinas that he forced to close were fronts for organized crime, but they were not the only businesses that were.¹⁰⁶² Other than closing cantinas, Jaime and his city commissioners addressed the “smut” issue that was affecting the city, because many movie theatres and drive-ins that showed sexually explicit movies were also fronts for organized crime.¹⁰⁶³ Community members gathered at the Pharr Civic Center to sign petitions and organize a petition campaign against the showing of sexually explicit movies in Pharr.¹⁰⁶⁴ Many in the community, including Mayor Jaime, were tired of theatres in the city showing sexually explicit movies and wanted them to stop. This gathering was led by Betty Bundy, president of Mission Morality Bill Ellis, Morality Attorney Vela, and Jaime. The community came together to organize this petition-signing campaign because they had had enough, and they wanted these theatres gone.

To illustrate the group’s concerns, Jaime organized one of these “downright ugly movies” to be shown to the Chamber of Commerce without letting them know.¹⁰⁶⁵ As soon as the movie started playing, many of the women in the audience ran out of the room and made those who were left uncomfortable. Afterwards, Jaime went on stage and opened a discussion about these types of movies being shown in some local theatres and drive-ins. He made it a point that these

¹⁰⁶²“Attending the Needs of Mexicans, Part 2,) from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB,<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁴“350 to 400 Pharr Citizens Show Up at Anti-Smut Meet,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), December 7, 1977.

¹⁰⁶⁵Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

movies were a detriment to the community and attracting unwanted individuals into the city.¹⁰⁶⁶ The mayor and his commissioners were able to shut down many of these theatres, but there was one that was located on “I” Road and Old 83 in Pharr that they could not shut down.¹⁰⁶⁷ Then an opportunity presented itself when one of Jaime’s clients who was a real estate agent informed him that the lot and theatre were for sale. His client asked if he was interested in buying it, and Jaime of course said yes. With the help of this client and others, as well as close friends, they purchased the property for 300,000, closed the theatre, and within a couple of weeks tore the building down.¹⁰⁶⁸

As occurred with the closing of the taverns, the closing of these illicit movie theatres also brought threats to Jaime and those involved in their removal. Jaime did not mention that anyone was physically harmed, but he did share that during all of this, a minister was threatened. According to Jaime, someone broke into the minister’s home and stuck a note on his bible with a dagger, to make a point.¹⁰⁶⁹ Visibly shaken, the minister went to Jaime and the city commission during a meeting to show them the threat that was left. Upon inspection, Jaime saw the note and it read, “You and Mayor Jaime have until October 19 to leave.”¹⁰⁷⁰ After this threat, police officers were sent to patrol Mayor Jaime’s home around the clock and to city hall when he was there, to make sure no one would attempt to hurt the mayor. Fortunately, no severe physical harm came to Mayor Jaime or any of the commissioners during this troublesome period. The removal of various illicit businesses around the city created spaces in which Jaime and the city commission could improve on for the betterment of the citizens.

In the final years of his full term as mayor, Jaime wanted to the city to sponsor an international bridge with the Mexican city of Reynosa. Mayor Bowe also wanted to construct an

¹⁰⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁸“Attending the Needs of Mexicans, Part 2,) from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB,<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/attending-needs-of-mexicans-part-2>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁶⁹Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

¹⁰⁷⁰*Ibid.*

international bridge during his ten year tenure as mayor, but because of the “fluctuating and unstable political situation in Mexico at the time,” the project had to be shelved.¹⁰⁷¹ Soon after Jaime announced that he and the other commissioners were going to ask the federal government for a permit to build an international bridge, Mayor Othal Brand from McAllen threatened to block their proposition.¹⁰⁷² An international bridge already existed between the cities of Hidalgo and Reynosa, but was owned by McAllen. In his oral history interview, Jaime concluded that the building of a new bridge in Pharr would take away monetary gains from McAllen—which led to Mayor Brand’s objection. This caught Jaime and his commissioners by surprise, and he decided to address the issue. Infuriated, Jaime called one his commissioners and told him, “You tell that S.O.B. que I’m gonna come after him. I will, so help! Unless you want us to get in after it publicly, you better get him into a corner and I want to talk to him and see if we can knock some sense into that man.”¹⁰⁷³ Jaime explained that only him, Brand, and the two commissioners knew about the meeting. In fact, he asserted that he has never told anyone about what happened next.

Mayors Jaime and Brand, along with one commissioner each, secretly met at a conference room located in the McAllen airport.¹⁰⁷⁴ As both parties sat down, Mayor Jaime told Mayor Brand that he (Brand) was going to listen to him.

I’m gonna tell you why we need that bridge. I know you are against it, but listen to me and don’t you dare interrupt me. I get two minutes, and you get two minutes. Two minutes and two minutes, back and forth. But don’t you dare interrupt me. I’m sure we can do something.¹⁰⁷⁵

For two hours, Jaime and Brand had a discussion, and no one other than those who were in attendance knew what was said. Jaime would not divulge any detailed information of what was

¹⁰⁷¹“Making Things Happen,” Manuscript, Undated, 2010.067.007, RGDOC267, C:1, Folder 8, Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX, 22.

¹⁰⁷²Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 2.

¹⁰⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁵*Ibid.*

said, except that he made sure Brand understood that McAllen and its bridge would not be able to handle the high traffic that would come from Mexico in the following decades.¹⁰⁷⁶ If Mayor Brand sent a letter of opposition, he and the city of McAllen would regret it in the future. After their meeting, Mayor Brand sent a letter of support to Washington D.C., so Pharr could receive the permits for the bridge.¹⁰⁷⁷

Prior to heading to Washington D.C., Jaime and twenty Pharr delegates travelled to Mexico City to meet with the *sub-secretario* and delegates from Reynosa in August 1977. One of the delegates from Reynosa was Jaime's cousin. The twenty delegates that accompanied Jaime were the president and/or leaders of every city organization, the school board president, one state senator, and the president of the city's Chamber of Commerce.¹⁰⁷⁸ At the meeting, Jaime explained the purpose for their visit and the benefits that an international bridge between Pharr and Reynosa would have on both cities. Afterwards, both parties went to lunch, and that is when one of Jaime's delegates made a comment about the Panama Canal. A hot topic issue at the time, the future of the Panama Canal was being disputed by Panama and the United States. The dispute was not settled until the Torrijos-Carter Treaties were ratified by the U.S. Senate in 1978, granting Panama eventual control of the canal.¹⁰⁷⁹ The sub-secretario lashed out at this individual and the entire Pharr delegation, yelling that, "you damn gringos should get out!"¹⁰⁸⁰ As the sub-secretario continued to lambast them with his political views, Mayor Jaime looked at his group and without any words signaled them to remain quiet and not answer back.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸"Civil Rights Movements," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/civil-rights-movements>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁷⁹"The Panama Canal and the Torrijos-Carter Treaties," *Milestones: 1977-1980*, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>, accessed September 18, 2017. The webpage has posted a note to its readers that "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations" has been retired and will no longer be maintained.

¹⁰⁸⁰"Civil Rights Movements," from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/civil-rights-movements>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁸¹*Ibid.*

As the sub-secretario continued his tirade against the Pharr delegation, the room doors flew open and a large man entered, recognizing Mayor Jaime. “Beto!” the large man yelled at Mayor Jaime. He recognized the man as the former mayor of Reynosa and his close friend who had been promoted to a higher position in the Mexican national government.¹⁰⁸² After greeting each other, Jaime pleaded with his cousin who was in the Reynosa delegation not to say anything about what happened during their lunch. Two days after they arrive back in Pharr, Jaime saw a news headline in the local paper that the sub-secretario was fired and that the city of Pharr acquired the Mexican permits to build the bridge.¹⁰⁸³

Three months after travelling to Mexico, Mayor Jaime and members of the Pharr city government travelled to Washington D.C. to meet with State Department advisors and submit their application for the international bridge. U.S. Representative Kika de la Garza and Senator Lloyd Bentsen met with the Pharr delegation to pledge their support and willingness to work for the completion of the bridge.¹⁰⁸⁴ At the meeting, Jaime presented all the information he and the delegates prepared regarding the impact the bridge will have not only in Pharr, but the entire valley.¹⁰⁸⁵ Mayor Jaime presented to State Department legal aides Frank K. Willis and Diane P. Wood their proposal and the research which proved the need, economic feasibility, the city’s financial capability to construct the bridge, the Mexican government’s signing of the agreement, and finally the preliminary environmental assessment study.¹⁰⁸⁶ Jaime informed the legal aides that Pharr needed to “open up the doors to Mexico since it was the biggest trading partner” the city and the rest of the Rio Grande Valley had.¹⁰⁸⁷ After Jaime’s presentation, State Department officials conferred with each other and issued a permit to build the international bridge.¹⁰⁸⁸ By

¹⁰⁸²*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁴“Pharr-Reynosa Bridge Application Formally Submitted in Washington,” *The Monitor* (McAllen), December 13, 1977, 1.

¹⁰⁸⁵“Civil Rights Movements,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with Sandra Enriquez and David Robles, July 02, 2015, McAllen, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/civil-rights-movements>, accessed July 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁸⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁸*Ibid.*

1979, the Pharr bridge committee comprised of Jaime, newly elected Mayor Quentin Newcombe, and others would travel to Mexico City again to demonstrate that Pharr was serious about the project and discuss bridge and road construction needed on both sides of the river.¹⁰⁸⁹ They were successful, but the process dragged on and on. It would not be until 1994 that the bridge would be finally completed and opened for use.

In conclusion, A.C. Jaime's campaign for Pharr mayor was catapulted by various community organizers and activists that believed change was needed in the city, especially after the riot that left one innocent young man dead. It was not an easy campaign, as Jaime and his campaign were accused of "selling out to the militants," and much of the political establishment in the city was backing his rival Joe Pettita. Pettita, a long-time city employee and former right-hand man for Mayor Bowe, attempted to force his way into office by convincing Bowe to resign as mayor and using boss politics to garner votes from Mexican-American constituents. For the Unity Ticket, it was an uphill battle, but with the help of individuals such as Maria Magallan and other community leaders, they convinced many people in North and South Pharr that they would improve city life if elected.

Once Jaime and his commissioners elect took office, they worked hard to demonstrate to local residents that their form of governing was different from that of earlier city governments. The Unity Ticket addressed many city problems by instituting a city manager form of government, fixing the sewage issue by installing sewer lines in North Pharr, professionalizing the police force, closing the cantinas and other illicit businesses that gave Pharr a negative image, and successfully gaining permits from the U.S. and Mexico to build an international bridge to boost the city's economy. Creating such change in Pharr was not easy, as individuals and organizations resisted Jaime and the city commissioners' efforts to improve living conditions. Threats and physical harm to his family were not taken lightly, but Jaime persisted and would not stop until he and his ticket cleaned up Pharr.

¹⁰⁸⁹"Pharr Bridge Committee is Going to Mexico City," *The Monitor* (McAllen), March 6, 1979, 1.

Jaime's election into the mayor's office was a direct result of the Pharr Riot and the community organizing undertaken by various activist groups like Mujeres Unidas, the Pharr Citizens League, and the Concerned Citizens Committee. The people of the community wanted change and believed that Jaime was the individual who could improve the quality of life in the city. In the seven years they were in office, the Unity Ticket altered the practice of politics in the city and changed the face of Pharr completely without selling the city's soul to organized crime and corrupt politics. The reforms that they enacted during office uplifted the city and its people. To this day, Jaime is proud of what he and his commissioners did for the city and believes that they opened the political doors, especially for the office of mayor, for many Mexican Americans in the Valley.¹⁰⁹⁰

¹⁰⁹⁰Robles, interview; Jaime, interview, Mp3 File 1.

Afterwards: Pharr on the Rise

After being elected for a second term, he told his wife that this was the last time and that was it, he would not seek re-election.¹⁰⁹¹ He kept this decision to himself until a few months before the April 1, 1978 city elections. One can assume that the reasons for him not seeking re-election stemmed from the various threats and physical harm that he and his family experienced when he decided to close businesses of ill repute. Nonetheless, Jaime and his city commissioners did what needed to be done to improve living conditions in the city of Pharr. In early January 1978, Jaime decided that it was that he informed his commissioners and his constituents about the decision he made in 1974.

Mayor Jaime and two of his commissioners, Bob Henderson and Armando Gomez, also announced that they were not going to seek re-election on for a third term. In a statement regarding their retirement from city office, Mayor Jaime explained that it was an honor for him, Henderson, and Gomez to have served the people of Pharr and with cooperation from the citizenry they had been able to accomplish many positive things for the community.¹⁰⁹² Jaime, Henderson, and Gomez believed that they, along with the other commissioners, accomplished and fulfilled many of the goals they had announced when they were elected in 1972.¹⁰⁹³ Mayor Jaime explained that even though the three were not seeking re-election, he was confident that their predecessors would continue the Unity Ticket's vision for the city, since many projects needed to be finished and others needed to be started.

On January 3, 1978, Commissioner Quentin Newcombe announced that he would be heading the ticket as the mayoral candidate, while Romeo Escobar would continue as commissioner.¹⁰⁹⁴ Incoming commissioner candidates joining the Unity Ticket were Lydia

¹⁰⁹¹“Growing Up and My Family Part 2,” from A.C. Jaime oral history interview with David Robles and Sandra Enriquez, July 02, 2015, Pharr, Texas, CRBB, <https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/growing-up-and-my-family-part-2>, accessed July 08, 2017.

¹⁰⁹²“Mayor Jaime, Two Commissioners, Will Not Be Candidates for Re-election April 1,” *The Pharr Press*, January 5, 1978, 1.

¹⁰⁹³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁴“City Politics Starts Early with Comm. Newcombe Heading New Slate,” *The Pharr Press*, January 5, 1978, 1. Quentin Newcombe, an Anglo, would eventually replace A.C. Jaime as mayor in Pharr.

Briones, Jim Brewster, and Keith Conquest.¹⁰⁹⁵ The platform of the newly revamped ticket consisted of further improving the city of Pharr by expanding on what Mayor Jaime and his commissioners had done in the years prior. Newcombe expressed that sound leadership was needed to continue revitalization of the city and that any deviation from the Unity Ticket's agenda would hinder "the good development climate," and the "New Image" of Pharr.¹⁰⁹⁶ This "New Image" was vital for the city to solve various continuing problems such as high unemployment, low family income, the lack of good housing, drainage improvement at the intersection of Business 83 and 495, and many others.¹⁰⁹⁷ With Mayor Jaime's blessing and support, Newcombe led the new Unity Ticket for the April city elections.

While the new Unity Ticket prepared its forum for office, Mayor Jaime and the current administration approved various projects. In preparation for the future traffic from the international bridge, the Jaime administration approved a new truck stop facility at the intersection of North 281 and Sioux Road in North Pharr. The truck stop facility would be the largest one in the area with a forty-six unit hotel, a restaurant, broker offices, and a parking space that could accommodate 104 trucks, all located on a 16.7-acre tract.¹⁰⁹⁸ Other actions undertaken by the administration months prior to the election were authorizing the calling of bids on a new \$70,000 fire sub-station, accepting a bid on a small \$27,840 fire truck from Claude Wright and Associates of Houston, Texas, revising a contract for park improvements, issuing a call for bids on new lights for Witten Park, and many other projects.¹⁰⁹⁹ Even in the final months of the Jaime's tenure, he and his commissioners worked hard to address pending city matters before the April city election. Newcombe asserted in his announcement speech that the city of Pharr had grown and thrived under Jaime's tenure and that continuity of the Unity Ticket's policies were crucial for the future.¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁸"New Truck Stop with Motel, Café, Parking Area, Gets Okay from City," *The Pharr Press*, January 5, 1978, 1.

¹⁰⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁰"City Politics Starts Early with Comm. Newcombe Heading New Slate," *The Pharr Press*, January 5, 1978, 1.

Another issue that was focused on prior to the election was conducting various economic studies for the international bridge. In a show of solidarity with the city of Reynosa and its newly elected mayor, Ernesto Gomez Lira, and his commissioners, Pharr city leaders travelled across the border in a good will visit as a gesture of cooperation and friendship.¹¹⁰¹ It can be argued that the trip of the Pharr delegation to Reynosa was also influenced by the need to investigate the prospects of building new roads on both sides of the border that would connect to the international bridge. One report explained that the proposed Pharr-Reynosa Bridge was economically feasible and that future revenues would pay off the revenue bonds and leave a surplus.¹¹⁰² Studies conducted by both U.S. and Mexican engineers illustrated the need of building a network of roads on both side of the border that would tie in with the bridge. The proposed bridge, according to another report, would “provide a natural extension of US 281 to a link up with adjacent Mexican highways and would be a natural complement to the entire highway system in the Valley and Tamaulipas.”¹¹⁰³ In short, Mayor Jaime and his city commissioners addressed various issues pertaining to the international bridge prior to retiring from office and left the responsibilities for completing the work to his predecessors.

By the end of January 1978, two new political tickets also filed their paperwork to run for office. The “Action Ticket” was headed by Jaime Santa Maria as the mayoral candidate and Rolando Garcia, Richard Hanore Flores, Luis Falcon, and Raul Martinez as city commissioner candidates.¹¹⁰⁴ The “New Pharr Progressive Ticket” was headed by Gilbert Muzquiz for mayor, and Eloy Hernandez, Jaime Ruiz, Frances “Panchita” González, and Fidencio R. “Cuate” Barrera for the city commission.¹¹⁰⁵ Unlike the city’s previous elections, the 1978 city election presented to the voters a more diverse group of candidates for office. The city’s governing body prior to the 1972 election had been comprised mostly of Anglos with one or two ethnic Mexicans serving

¹¹⁰¹“City, CC Officials Meet Reynosa Leaders,” *The Pharr Press*, January 19, 1978, 1.

¹¹⁰²“Pharr Bridge Economically Feasible; Aid to U.S.-Mexico Hwy. Network,” *The Pharr Press*, January 26, 1978, 1.

¹¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁴“Two New Tickets File for City Commission,” *The Pharr Press*, January 26, 1978, 1.

¹¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

as commissioners. Under Mayor Jaime, the city had an even number of Anglos and ethnic Mexicans serving as city commissioners.

In 1978, all three tickets running for office were not only comprised of mostly ethnic Mexican men, but also two ethnic Mexican women. Jaime later explained that becoming the first Mexican American in the history of Pharr to be elected as mayor changed the political atmosphere in the city and opened the doors for other Mexican Americans in the region to pursue higher local government offices. The members of these three tickets fully demonstrated the accuracy of Jaime's statement, and within the following decades more ethnic Mexicans ran for political offices. It would not be until 1997 that the last city in the Valley would elect its first Mexican-American mayor. Former member of the *Raza Unida* Party, Leo Montalvo, was elected as McAllen's first mayor of Mexican descent in 1997, ousting Othal Brand who had been in office since 1977.¹¹⁰⁶

In the weeks leading up to the April 1978 election, all three tickets mimicked Jaime's tactics during his campaign in 1972. The Unity Ticket continued their campaign tactics from previous elections by conducting a complete house-to-house canvass of the city.¹¹⁰⁷ The Progressive ticket also canvassed door to door, and the Action Party Ticket held meetings with their group of supporters and also made house calls.¹¹⁰⁸ The Progressive and Action Party tickets attempted to repeat the success Jaime had with his campaign tactics, but ultimately failed. In the April 1, 1978 election, the Unity Ticket won the city election for a third time, winning the mayor's race and all commissioner seats. With A.C. Jaime, Bob Henderson, and Armando Gomez now retired, Quentin Newcombe and his commission represented the new Unity Ticket. Continuing the previous administrations goals for the city, Newcombe and the new Unity Ticket worked side by side with the citizens to create a "New Image" of Pharr.

¹¹⁰⁶Leo Montalvo, interview by José Angel Gutiérrez, December 12, 1997, Tejano Voices Transcript, 2, CMAS No. 128, University of Texas at Arlington Library, http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/xml/CMAS_128.xml, accessed June 21, 2017.

¹¹⁰⁷"Pharr Voters Will Elect Mayor, Four Commissioners April 1," *The Pharr Press*, March 30, 1978, pg. 1.

¹¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

Newcombe and his commission continued ex-mayor Jaime's vision for improving the city and did not stray away from his policies. A month after the election, the new mayor and city commissioners denied a beer permit request to a business located in the downtown area that the previous administration had cleaned up, while one request for a beer permit by a local grocery store was barely passed by a vote of 3-2.¹¹⁰⁹ This demonstrated the unwillingness of the new commission to grant new beer permits except on rare occasions. Just like Jaime, the new mayor and commission did not ease up on movie theatres showing sexually explicit films. Two films that were being shown at the Texas Theatre were confiscated by the police because they violated the city ordinance against showing "hard core" films.¹¹¹⁰ Police Chief Don Jackson, who had only been in the position for about a year, informed the city commission that theatre was charged with the violation of showing these "hard core" films, and the District Attorney's office had filed charges against the film producer from Dallas.¹¹¹¹

On January 8, 1979, Mayor Newcombe, his commissioners and the citizens of Pharr were informed that the final approval for the Pharr-Reynosa Bridge permit had been granted by the United States government.¹¹¹² The reactions from many of the people and the city commission were that of excitement and hopefulness as the idea of economic growth became a reality. The approval for the bridge also allowed the bridge committee to travel not only across the river to Reynosa, but to Mexico City to demonstrate their cooperation with the Mexican Government. Also, Pharr opened relations with Mexican towns such as Matamoros located across the river from Brownsville and Real de Catorce, located in the state of San Luis Potosi, as part of a cultural exchange and goodwill mission. Pharr and Real de Catorce would later become sister cities in which goodwill missions furthered relations between Mexico and the United States.

Further urban development led to the expansion of city services such as adequate water lines north of the city. The extension project was funded by the Community Development block

¹¹⁰⁹"City Okays One Off Premises Beer Permit," *The Pharr Press*, May 18, 1978, 1.

¹¹¹⁰"Police Seize Two Films at Texas," *The Pharr Press*, May 18, 1978, 1.

¹¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹¹²"Washington Approves Permit," *The Pharr Press*, January 11, 1979, 1.

grant funds and allowed the city to install 12-inch water lines that would run from the water tower just north of Highway 495 to surround neighborhoods and then a 6-inch water line to Colonia Santa Barbara west of town.¹¹¹³ The city's expansion to the west was not well received, as land owners of these properties and other citizens believed that the annexation of these lands was just a power struggle between Pharr and McAllen. William Busch summed up what many land owners felt in complaining that he saw no benefit to being annexed if the city could not offer any city services such as police enforcement, plumbing, water lines, and other forms of infrastructure for many years.¹¹¹⁴ Instead, the people believed that if the city wanted to expand, the commission should annex all the property south along Highway 281 which included the neighborhoods of Hidalgo Parks Estate, Evansville, and *Las Milpas*, and provide water, sewer, and police protection.¹¹¹⁵ In short, the people wanted Mayor Newcombe and the commissioners to take responsibility for the growing city rather than "reaching out to grab power so far from town."¹¹¹⁶

The years after A.C. Jaime retired from the mayor's office, the city of Pharr expanded its borders as the population increased and the economy boomed with the prospects of the international bridge being built. New shops were being built to accommodate the ever-expanding trucking industry, which would lead to Pharr being called "The Hub City." The decades between 1980 and 2000 was one of growth for the city and its people. In 1970, Pharr's population was 15,829 people, and by 1980 the population grew to 21,381.¹¹¹⁷ From 1990 to 2000, Pharr's population grew once more from 32,921 to 46,660 people.¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹³"Council Okays Water Bids," *The Pharr Press*, January 25, 1979, 1.

¹¹¹⁴"Annexation Hot Issue," *The Pharr Press*, February 22, 1979, pg. 1.

¹¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁷U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1970 Census Population, "Race by Sex, for Places of 10,000-50,000: 1970," *Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. 1, Part 45, Texas section 1; U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1980 Population, "Population of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas: 1960 to 1980," *Number of Inhabitants*, 45-50 Texas.

¹¹¹⁸Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties from 1850-2010," <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf> accessed April 10, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, Census 2000 "Land Area and Population Density: 2000" *Summary Population and Housing Characteristics*, Texas 589.

With population growth also came the annexation of land, and Pharr expanded southward in 1980 incorporating the *colonia* of *Las Milpas* in the mid-1980s.¹¹¹⁹ New community groups such as “Valley Interfaith,” an alliance of thirty-eight churches and congregations, focused their efforts on helping people living in *colonias* to gain access to better sewage collection, water lines, and other services.¹¹²⁰ The spokesperson of the group, Ofelia de los Santos, asked the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court for reassurance that the county would focus on helping colonias, especially Las Milpas in South Pharr.¹¹²¹ The court authorized applications for funding for colonia improvements, with Las Milpas as a priority.¹¹²² Since its inception in the early 1980s, Valley Interfaith has helped various colonia communities in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas.

The Pharr Police Department had gone through various professional changes during Jaime’s tenure as mayor and continued to do so at the end of the decade. The department became more professionalized as officers became trained in new policing methods and new technology. Many Pharr police officers participated in Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) training in which course content consisted of lectures on physiology, DWI law and compliance with breath testing regulations, and training in the use of the breathalyzer.¹¹²³ With this training, Pharr police officers Patricio Rangel and Reynaldo Rodriguez, and Sergeant Oscar Saldaña were certified in the department to administer the breathalyzer tests.¹¹²⁴ The department obtained a \$600 breathalyzer instrument with funding received from the Traffic Safety Section of the State Department Highways and Public Transportation.¹¹²⁵

One important social development training that was the brain child of Police Chief Don Jackson and Weslaco attorney Sue Williams was a 50-hour police training session on domestic

¹¹¹⁹“County Promises Priority on Aid for Las Milpas,” *The Monitor*, August 23, 1983, 1.

¹¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²²*Ibid.*

¹¹²³“Getting Drunk Will Be Part of Course,” *The Monitor*, May 6, 1979.

¹¹²⁴“Pharr Police Battling DWI with Breathalyzer,” *The Monitor*, June 8, 1980.

¹¹²⁵*Ibid.*

violence.¹¹²⁶ This training session was sponsored by *Mujeres Unidas*, the Hidalgo County Bar Association, Family Law Section, and the Pharr Police Department.¹¹²⁷ The goals for the training session were for officers and victims of domestic violence to “clear up the gray area in family law,” inform themselves on the issues of rape and incest to better understand the dynamics of both offenses, and to inform victims about following up on domestic violence cases.¹¹²⁸ After Chief Jackson left the department, new Police Chief Patrick Dalager insisted in improving the department further. His first concern was to improve police and community relations by instituting a sixty-forty patrolling policy in which sixty percent of an officer’s time will be spent patrolling and forty percent mingling and getting to know the people on his beat.¹¹²⁹ His second concern was to restructure the standardized pay scale so the department would not lose any officers to higher paying police departments.¹¹³⁰ Chief Dalager wanted the department to have a “high police profile,” and understood that better training, better pay, and better community relations was the key.

In short, during the years after Mayor Jaime and three of his commissioners retired from office, the city of Pharr continued to progress under Mayor Newcombe and the new members of the Unity Ticket. The new administration extended Jaime’s policies well into the 1980s as the city expanded its boundaries, focused on updating the city infrastructure, and continued the professionalization of the police force. These developments, however, and the long-term analysis of A.C. Jaime’s transformative legacy, lie outside the time frame of this study.

¹¹²⁶“Unique Training Session on Family Violence Set Oct. 29,” *The Monitor*, October 12, 1980.

¹¹²⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹²⁹“Pharr Chief Wants High Police Profile,” *The Monitor*, February 15, 1981.

¹¹³⁰*Ibid.*

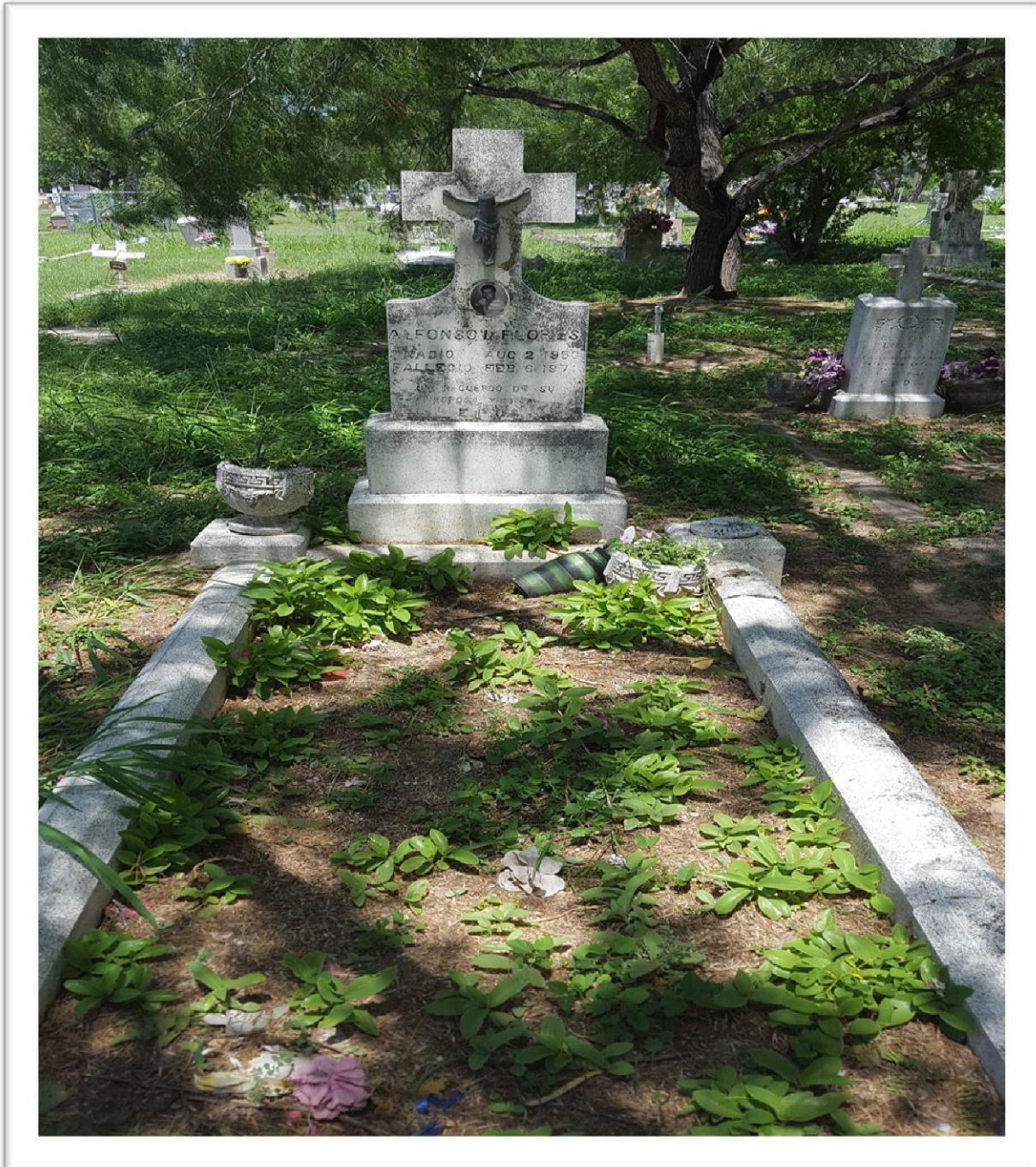


Illustration 4.1: Alfonso Lored Flores' tomb located in Guadalupe Cemetery in Pharr, Texas. Photograph taken by author.

Conclusion: Far from Heaven

In late September 2017, I travelled to the Valley from El Paso, Texas to search for additional primary sources for the last stages of my dissertation writing. Every time I travel to the Valley, I make it a point to have lunch in Pharr's most popular restaurant, the Junction Café, for one main reason—to listen to city elders recount their life experiences while growing up in the city. Located next to the old City Hall building that was built in the early twentieth century, the café is a center for elders who have lived in the city for decades to have breakfast, lunch, or dinner and reminisce about the past. Much has changed since Pharr's founding, but there are still many physical reminders of the riot that survived the test of time. If one heads north just a few blocks off the railroad tracks on Cage, you can still see many buildings related to the riot. On the corner of east Clark and Cage, the old police station remains, weathered by time. Just a few blocks north on the corner of Bell Street and Cage, the building that once housed Ramos' Barbershop and where Alfonso Loredó Flores died is still intact but boarded up and for sale. Interestingly, in that same five block area remains a few *cantinas* that survived the Jaime years and are still doing business.

Besides the buildings, individuals who were involved or simply present at the events before, during and after the riot still reside in the area. Local community leader Maria Magallan still lives in the same house she did in 1971, located on the same block on Bell St. as Ramos' Barbershop. After helping A.C. Jaime get elected and contributing to his success, Magallan continued her own personal crusade to help people. In the years and decades after the riot, Magallan volunteered at a local church to give marriage classes to young people wanting to get married and opened up a daycare at her home to help working mothers.¹¹³¹ Ruben Rosales, who owned Sepis Tavern at the time, also lives in the same house on Hawk Street that he did in 1971. Currently, he no longer runs the tavern as he has leased it to an individual who kept the name of the establishment. Efraín Fernández now resides in San Juan, Texas, but has remained away

¹¹³¹Maria Magallan interview by author, Pharr, Texas, June 28, 2016.

from the public view in the last two decades. A.C. Jaime also still resides in Pharr with his wife on east Sam Houston Boulevard and recently retired from his accounting firm in which one of his sons now runs. Though I never could get in contact with the surviving members of Alfonso Flores' family, Martinez has informed me that they still live in the city and visit his grave regularly. Other individuals who were involved have since passed away, moved, or still live in the Rio Grande Valley.

"Chicano Revolt and Political Response: Grassroots Change in the South Texas Town of Pharr After the 1971 Riot," tells the story of about a community's response to a tragic event that was brought upon by decades of social, and political exclusion of ethnic Mexicans who lived in the barrios. But this story also reflects larger issues brought upon the Americanization process in the region during the early twentieth century. These issues range from American empire, ethnic relations, political, social, and economic disenfranchisement, citizenship, community and police relations. However, the historical study of the South Texas-Mexico Borderlands, especially Chicana/o activism, is still relatively new, and more research needs to be done to fully understand the impact of American development in the region at the turn of the century. Scholars such as David Montejano, Omar Valerio-Jimenez, George Diaz, Timothy Bowman, and others have filled in some of the missing pieces of the region's history with their own scholarly research.

In its entirety, this study illustrates how the Anglo politics, economy, and social structure in South Texas, mainly in Pharr, negatively affected the lives of ethnic Mexicans from the city's founding to the 1970s. Ethnic Mexicans became conscious of these inequalities and participated in the larger Chicano Movement that was occurring in the region in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were local Anglo and ethnic Mexican citizens from various social classes that recognize the need for change and supported the election of the first Mexican-American mayor in the city's history.

Pharr's founding as a city in the early twentieth century by Anglo investors from the Midwest created a society in which ethnic Mexicans who once owned the land became second-

class citizens. A social and political awakening in the late 1960s and early 1970s launched a fight for social justice. This dissertation on Pharr provides a case study or micro-history of the Chicano Movement on the local level in a specific town. The rise of Chicano activism during this time in South Texas created a myriad of opportunities for ethnic Mexicans to fight against various social inequalities and Anglo domination in the region, especially in the city of Pharr. The main focus of this study is to illustrate the various changes that occurred after the riot with the election of the first Mexican-American mayor in the city's history and the social changes he and his commission enacted during their six years in office. From providing basic city services in North Pharr to changing the political spectrum, A.C. Jaime and his administration tackled various social and political inequalities that affected the lives of many ethnic Mexicans.

In late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Rio Grande Valley was developed by Anglo investors, land speculators, and farmers, and became a region that dependent largely on agribusiness. The Americanization process and influx of Anglos into the Valley only intensified after the railroad was constructed in 1904, bringing social, political, and economic changes that ousted ethnic Mexicans from power. Like most valley towns founded in the early twentieth century after the arrival of the railroad, the town of Pharr was organized by the founders in such way that Anglos and ethnic Mexicans were separated from one another. The railroad track, a sign of "American progress," became a physical color line that separated both groups. For over five decades, this separation between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans illustrated clear differences in living conditions as well as social and economic standing between the two groups. On the "Mexican" side of town in North Pharr, residents lacked basic city services such as indoor plumbing, paved roads, and street lights, while the Anglo side had all the modern amenities and access to businesses. The vast inequalities that ethnic Mexicans in the Valley, especially in Pharr, lived under, and the creation of various civil rights organizations during the first half of the twentieth century, led individuals in various communities in the region to organize and demand social justice.

Earlier Chicano and labor movements in South Texas influenced the movement in Pharr and were interconnected. This was due in part because many influential Texas Chicano activists congregated at Texas A&I University in Kingsville and were either attending school or organizing students. Individuals such as Carlos Guerra, José Angel Gutierrez, and Ramsey Muñiz met with various Chicano students to organize and discuss issues pertaining to their education. There were also some liberal Anglo professors who were influenced by the Starr County Melon Strike of 1966 and helped educate their Chicano students on the inequalities many ethnic Mexicans were facing in the Valley. In conjunction with these two groups, young Chicanos such as Israel Reyna, Rafael Torres, Efraín Fernández and others became aware of the various injustices ethnic Mexicans were experiencing in South Texas. Many of them became members of MAYO, and after obtaining their degrees, these individuals moved to various parts of the region and continued their work towards social justice. After a negative experience in his hometown of Kingsville, Fernández moved to Pharr in the late 1960s to work for the local VISTA chapter in McAllen. Fernández continued his work as a social activist, and his attempts to organize people help explain how other social movements in the region influenced the protests in Pharr prior to the riot. These protests were interconnected with others across the region due to the fact that Fernández was part of a larger network of activists whom all were educated at Texas A&I—the mecca of Chicano ideology in South Texas.

By mid-1970, ethnic Mexicans living in Pharr organized to demand social and political change in the city. With Fernández's help, local individuals such as Maria Magallan and her daughter organized the people living in North Pharr to demand that Mayor Bowe and his commission fix the disparities in their neighborhoods in early 1970. Also, these local organizers demanded that the city government become more accessible to the people of North Pharr and allow them to participate in the city's political process. Fernández, Magallan, and other elder individuals of the community signed petitions, picketed in front of City Hall, and demanded a voice in city politics. Along with these issues and new allegations of police brutality and misconduct against intoxicated ethnic Mexican men in mid-1970, these individuals focused their

protests on police conduct. For months, they peacefully picketed in front of the police station, demanding the resignations of Mayor Bowe, Chief Ramirez, Stg. Sandoval, and patrolman Zúñiga. It was not until a February night in 1971 that the peaceful protest turned violent as local cantina patrons joined the crowd and escalated the situation. For four hours, violence filled the streets of Pharr. The police over-reaction led to the arrests of many protestors and onlookers and left one innocent man dead from a gunshot wound to the head. The death of Alfonso Flores may have seemed inconsequential at the time and just an unfortunate event, but it was the catalyst that set things in motion.

The events that occurred in the city after the riot and Flores' death illustrate how local grassroot movements affected and influenced change in the city of Pharr. Even though Fernández, Magallan, and other members of the community attempted to bring social justice to their neighborhoods prior to the riot, it was the violence and the death of an innocent bystander that tipped the scales in favor of reform efforts. After the riot, these individuals, with the support of many local and regional activists, as well as middle class ethnic Mexicans and "educated" Anglos, questioned Mayor Bowe and his city commissioners' response to the event. Magallan and a group of women from North Pharr organized themselves as *Mujeres Unidas* (Women United). They demanded the resignation of Mayor Bowe, Chief Ramirez and two of his officers and picketed in front of the police station and the mayor's residence for months. Chicano activists from all over the state converged in Pharr to peacefully march in protest over Flores' death. Citizen groups comprised of business owners and local community leaders were created to address the issues of all the neighborhoods in Pharr and serve as mediators between local activists and city officials. However, their community leaders and organizations were not the only ones taking a stand. Mayor Bowe, his city commissioners, and the police chief pushed back against allegations of social and political inequality and police brutality. Their main targets were Alfonso López and Fernández, as they were arrested and charged with rioting. At their trials, López was found guilty, while Fernández was acquitted of all charges. By early 1972, the fight for social and political justice in Pharr was given a boost when Mayor Bowe and many of his

commissioners resigned from office. This opened the door for new leadership and the possibility for change at last.

The changes that occurred in the city after the riot and election of the city's first Mexican American mayor were sweeping. As a result the politics in Pharr changed from a "jefe politico" style of governance, or boss politics, to a more inclusive form of government. After Fernández's trial, Mayor Bowe and many of his commissioners resigned from office, arguably due to pressure from the public and from his own circle within the city government. Challenging boss politics in Pharr was a brave decision for A.C. Jaime, since his opponent was none other than long time city employee and Bowe's right-hand man, Joe Pettita. Pettita had used various methods to garner votes for Bowe in previous elections such as giving beer and tacos to ethnic Mexican voters in North Pharr. He also used a system of rewards and punishments to control residents of living north side of the railroad tracks. Pettita used these same tactics for his campaign in the mayoral race. Jaime, on the other hand, focused his efforts on grassroots organizing and campaigning to earn the respect and votes of Northside residents. He and one of his commissioner candidates went house to house in North and South Pharr to present their ticket's political agenda and ask for votes. Jaime also held town hall meetings where at times he would have to dispel rumors and attacks on his character and family. Regardless of the various attacks by his opponent, Jaime won the election as the city's first Mexican American mayor. His victory illustrated a shift in city politics, and the success he and his commissioners received during their tenure demonstrated that social and political justice had finally arrived.

During his tenure as mayor, the Jaime administration attacked various social, political, and economic problems and successfully improving living conditions in Pharr. Jaime's tenacity in addressing the previously mentioned issues, and the methods he and his commissioners used to achieve their goals for change, aided in his pursuit to "clean up the city." The Jaime administration's main concern was to do away with a number of *cantinas* in an eight-block radius near downtown that housed illicit activities and negatively affected the neighborhoods surrounding them. The Jaime administration employed various tactics to restrict the sale of

alcohol and stop illicit activities such as prostitution. They passed city ordinances that required these taverns to close early in the night, and eventually they forced most taverns to close permanently. Other venues that Jaime and the city commission closed were movie theatres that showed pornographic material. Jaime believed that this was one of his main success during his tenure as mayor, but there were other equally impressive feats that he and his commissioners achieved.

It has been forty years since Jaime left office, and many of the improvements he and his city commissioners initiated from spring 1972 to spring 1977 are still visible today. There are still a few *cantinas* in business in the eight-block area that was once a problem. Houses on the North side of the railroad have modern amenities with adequate city services, and neighborhoods have grown in the past four decades. All these city improvements provided Pharr citizens a better quality of life as the city grew in population and expanded its borders north, south and eastward. Jaime's main project, the Pharr International Bridge, also became an important asset to the city, just as he had predicted. For example, in 2017 Bridge Director Luis Bazan asserted at the Pharr Bridge Board's Customer Appreciation Luncheon that the bridge was becoming an important port of entry globally, not just nationally.¹¹³² Bazan explained that Pharr companies were trading with companies from all over the world, including those from Mexico, China, Germany, Japan.¹¹³³ Trade going through the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge was projected to grow steadily in the coming years because of the opening of the Mazatlán-Durango superhighway in Mexico, which would allow fresh produce to reach the region faster.¹¹³⁴ Such economic growth was foreseen by Mayor Jaime when he presented his pitch to government officials right before he left office. Time has proved him right.

¹¹³²Steve Taylor, "Bazan: Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge Set to Become Global Port of Entry," *Rio Grande Guardian: International News Service*, December 26, 2016, <http://riograndeguardian.com/bazan-pharr-reynosa-international-bridge-set-to-become-global-port-of-entry/> accessed November 22, 2017.

¹¹³³*Ibid.*

¹¹³⁴*Ibid.*

With the professionalization of the police force almost two years after the riot, Jaime and his city commissioners approved the construction of a new police building in the fall of 1976. By May 1977, the new \$246,000 Public Safety building was ready to be opened.¹¹³⁵ Located next door to the original police station, the new building had many more jail cells that were larger than the ones from the original building.¹¹³⁶ Now vacant, the building still stands right next to the first police station building. Abandoned, un-kept, and weathered, both stand as aged symbols of a distant time in the city's history. In 2004, the city of Pharr constructed a new police station located on South Cage. The new structure contains 46,000 square feet, houses almost 200 employees, and cost \$6.8 million to build.¹¹³⁷

City meetings are still accessible to the working public, as they are held at 4:00p.m. on the first and third Monday of the month. As stated earlier, one of the main complaints that ethnic Mexicans living on the North side of the city had against Mayor Bowe was the lack of government transparency, but that changed during Mayor Jaime's time in office. Since the late 1970s, Pharr's city government has been open to the public, and there is communication between the citizens and their elected officials. Yet the most important contributions that Pharr city officials have made since the year 2000 has been expanding their relationship with the community. Every October, the City of Pharr hosts its annual "Pharr Fire Fest," where there is live music, raffle prizes, carnival rides, and family games for the community.¹¹³⁸ The main goal of this festival is to educate the public, mainly children, about fire safety and prevention.¹¹³⁹ In October 2017, the city celebrated the sixteenth annual Pharr Fire Fest. Another community event that the city and police department host is "Pharr Night Out." This event is held annually for the community to create awareness against crime and drugs in the city's neighborhoods. With games, food, entertainment, and kiddie rides, free school supplies are given to underprivileged

¹¹³⁵"New Police Public Safety Building," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 6, 1977.

¹¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹³⁷Romeo Rosales Jr., *Images of America: Pharr*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 118.

¹¹³⁸"Invitan a la comunidad a su Pharr Fire Fest," *El Periódico U.S.A.* (McAllen), October 3, 2017.
<http://www.elperiodicousa.com/invitan-a-la-comunidad-a-su-pharr-fire-fest/> accessed November 22, 2017.

¹¹³⁹*Ibid.*

children. There are many more events that city and its city officials host every year to not only help their community, but to bring the community together.

To expand serving the community, the Pharr Police Department in recent years has implemented the policing tactic called “community policing.” This tactic allows for officers to be better trained to recognize the needs of the community when they are patrolling the neighborhoods they are assigned to. One goal of community policing is to focus not only on criminal offenses, but on community problems such as traffic congestion, junked or abandoned vehicles, poor lighting, insufficient parking, and other quality of life issues.¹¹⁴⁰ Also, community policing has built Neighborhood Watch programs, established residential block meetings where people look out for other as “Block Captains” alert patrol officers to criminal activity, and influenced city wide projects that “clean neighborhoods of long weeds, junked vehicles, dumped tires, etc.”¹¹⁴¹ According to Pharr Police, community policing aides in solving community issues that citizens do not know how to resolve or who to call for help. Overall, the Pharr Police Department’s recognizes that the community serves as their eyes and ears, and this collaboration has “made the Pharr Police Department what it is today.”¹¹⁴² According the police department, community policing has enabled them to create a safe family environment and comfortable place to live and work for the citizens of Pharr.

All of these positive changes do not mean that Pharr is a perfect community today. The title of this conclusion, “Far from Heaven,” is a caution against a celebratory interpretation of Pharr’s recent history. Unfortunately, in recent years, the Pharr police department has been in the news for negative reasons. In 2010, Pharr police officer Jaime Beas was arrested for protecting cocaine loads being moved through Pharr while on duty and for his connection with

¹¹⁴⁰“Community Policing,” <http://pharr-tx.gov/public-safety/police-department/pd-patrol-division/community-policing/> accessed November 22, 2017.

¹¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴²*Ibid.*

exporting weapons to the Zetas drug cartel.¹¹⁴³ He was sentenced to twelve years in federal prison in August 2011.

Things worsened for the department when it became the target of a number of law suits from ex-employees and citizens in the years following Beas' arrest and conviction. Assistant Police Chief Javier Perez, a twenty year veteran of the force, "retired" in 2008 after he was placed under investigation for "allegedly making thousands of dollars by selling vehicle crash reports to lawyers."¹¹⁴⁴ The lawsuit Perez filed against the city and police department in 2010 claimed that the city retaliated against him for finding evidence of wrong doing by city officials and reported it to Chief Villescás, the FBI, and Texas Rangers.¹¹⁴⁵ According to the law suit, Perez sought unspecified damages "intentional infliction of emotional distress, civil conspiracy, injury to reputation, and character and diminished earning capacity."¹¹⁴⁶ In 2013, the city and one police officer were served with a lawsuit after a Pharr police SWAT team member, Hector Manuel Mariscal, was injured in 2011 during training when he was accidentally shot in the leg.¹¹⁴⁷ Mariscal claimed the department covered up the incident and violated its own policy by handling the incident internally, instead of having Texas Rangers and the Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office investigate it.¹¹⁴⁸

A year later, another scandal rocked the Pharr Police Department and its citizens. Officer Erasmo Mata was accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl during work hours from July to October 2014.¹¹⁴⁹ He and other officers took the young girl to various abandoned houses

¹¹⁴³"Former Pharr Police Officer Gets 12 years in Zetas Gun Case," *Valley Central KGBT News* (Harlingen), <http://valleycentral.com/news/local/former-pharr-police-officer-gets-12-years-in-zetas-guns-case> accessed November 9, 2017.

¹¹⁴⁴"Former Assistant Police Chief Files Lawsuit Against City of Pharr," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 22, 2010, http://www.themonitor.com/article_b80ad97f-4499-5c1d-8c9a-741ceed9482.html accessed October 6, 2017.

¹¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁷"Former Cop Sues Pharr Police After Getting Shot by Swat Member," *The Monitor* (McAllen), August 30, 2013, http://www.themonitor.com/news/local/article_a9e03660-11d9-11e3-8c24-0019bb30f31a.html accessed October 7, 2017.

¹¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁹"Lawsuit: Cop Raped Teen, Pharr Police Covered it Up," *The Monitor* (McAllen), May 18, 2014, http://www.themonitor.com/news/local/article_04ae26d6-dee6-11e3-990c-0017a43b2370.html accessed October 6, 2017.

throughout the city to rape her. What made this accusation so damning is that even after an internal investigation that confirmed the allegations, the victim's family was asked by Police Chief Ruben Villegas to not hire an attorney, since "he would take care of the matter."¹¹⁵⁰ The attorney representing the family, Richard Alamia, filed suit on the family's behalf, claiming that Villegas intimidated the family and that the police chief only terminated the officers and did not press any criminal charges against them.¹¹⁵¹ Mata was indicted on one count of sexually assaulting a child on August 2014 and a second count was added on April 2015.¹¹⁵² On November 2015, he was found guilty on one of two counts of sexual assault of a minor.¹¹⁵³

With all the turmoil that involved the police department, many local residents began to distrust the police and city politics once again. In a digital world where people vent their frustrations on social media sites, it is easy to see the distrust building up when reports of police misconduct make the news. Just recently in October 2017, the Pharr Police Department made local headlines once again, as news broke out that longtime Police Chief Ruben Villegas and one of his assistant chiefs, Javier Gonzalez, announced their retirement.¹¹⁵⁴ It might seem that that things are calm on the outside, but it has been suggested that "things in the PD aren't quite as calm as they seem," since many officers are reportedly upset because not everyone is treated fairly and there is a sense of favoritism.¹¹⁵⁵ Only time will tell if there were any hidden agendas that forced the "retirement" of these two individuals or if simply their retirement were just a coincidence.

¹¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵²"Ex-Pharr Cop Indicted On Second Sexual Assault Charge," *The Monitor*, April 27, 2015, http://www.themonitor.com/news/local/article_0269cc4a-ed0e-11e4-a9d9-53b94e94f861.html accessed April 14, 2018.

¹¹⁵³"Former South Texas Cop Found Guilty of Sexual Assault of 16-year-old Girl While on Duty," *San Antonio Express-News*, November 11, 2015, <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Former-Pharr-police-officer-found-guilty-for-6625013.php#photo-8910014> accessed November 9, 2017.

¹¹⁵⁴"Longtime Chief Retires: Assistant Chief Retires as Well," *Advance News Journal* (Pharr), October 3, 2017, <https://www.anjournal.com/news/longtime-chief-retires> accessed October 4, 2017.

¹¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

To conclude, the outcomes of the Pharr Riot were various, and many individuals from Chicano and local community organizations contributed to the many changes that occurred. For decades, what happened on the night of February 6, 1971 remained largely unknown to younger generations of ethnic Mexicans growing up in the city of Pharr and the Rio Grande Valley. Unfortunately, the city elders and those directly affected by the riot passed the knowledge of what happened that night only to their own family members. I did not know about the riot until after I graduated with my B.A. in Mexican-American History in 2008 from the University of Texas Pan-American in Edinburg. I was born and raised in McAllen and never really left “el Valle” until I moved to El Paso in 2013, so it was a shock for me to learn about the event as a young adult. Besides learning about the “Bandit Wars” that occurred in the Valley in the early twentieth century, I always believed that nothing really interesting happened in region. It is sad to say that many young ethnic Mexicans still believe this because local historical events are not taught in our public schools.

Yet recently, a new movement of consciousness has emerged in this South Texas community. Community activists and local historians are beginning to inform younger generations of the struggle many people went through in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Valley. In Pharr, a local historian without formal training, Eduardo Martinez, started his quest of keeping the memory of the Pharr Riot alive by creating a digital space in which he gives a brief history of why and how it happened. Calling his webpage “Pharr from Heaven,” he shares accounts of the riot.¹¹⁵⁶ In addition, he has given guest lectures about the riot at local venues such as The Museum of South Texas History. Another group that is keeping the memory alive is called “*Curando* RGV.” According to their Facebook page (under the name Curando RGV), Curando Pharr/Valle is “an intersectional community organization empowering our people in a variety of ways through activism, the arts, local history, and culture.” Their first major action as a group occurred in October 2014 when they held a vigil to honor the only victim in the riot,

¹¹⁵⁶Eduardo Martinez’s webpage name “Pharr from Heaven” was the main influence on using the play on words on the conclusion title.

Alfonso Loredó Flores. It is my belief that with individuals such as Martínez, groups like Curando RGV, and Chicana/o scholars such as myself, the hidden histories of our people will always be brought to light and that those who made exceptional sacrifices during the fight for social justice will never be forgotten.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Alfonso Loreda Flores' death certificate

STATE OF TEXAS 031-02-2 108-05 CERTIFICATE OF DEATH E985X 69 15391

1. PLACE OF DEATH
a. COUNTY CAMERON
b. CITY OR TOWN (If outside city limits, give precinct no.) HARLINGEN
c. LENGTH OF STAY few hours
d. NAME OF (If not in hospital, give street address) INSTITUTION VALLEY BAPT HOSPITAL
e. IS PLACE OF DEATH INSIDE CITY LIMITS? YES ☒ NO ☐

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution, residence before admission)
a. STATE TEXAS
b. COUNTY HIDALGO
c. CITY OR TOWN (If outside city limits, give precinct no.) PHARR
d. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give location) 610 E. LUCAS
e. IS RESIDENCE INSIDE CITY LIMITS? YES ☒ NO ☐ f. IS RESIDENCE ON A FARM? YES ☐ NO ☒

3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or print)
(a) First ALFONSO (b) Middle LOREDO (c) Last FLORES
4. DATE OF DEATH FEB. 7. 1971
5. SEX MALE 6. COLOR OR RACE WHITE 7. Marital Status: Married ☒ Never Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced ☐
8. DATE OF BIRTH AUGUST 2, 1950 9. AGE (In years, last birthday) 20 10. UNDER 1 YEAR: Months 6 Days 5 11. UNDER 24 HRS: Hours 6 Minutes 5
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) LABOR 10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY
11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country) PHARR, TEXAS 12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? U.S.A.
13. FATHER'S NAME MANUEL FLORES 14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME MARTA LOREDO
15. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? NO 16. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. 305-58-4559 17. INFORMANT LIDIA RUIZ FLORES

18. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c).)
PART I: DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:
a. CAROTID-VERTEBRAL CERVICAL
b. BRAIN STEM CRYSTAL
c. GSW TO BRAIN
RECD APR 2 1971 DUE TO (b) BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
19. INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH
20a. ACCIDENT SUICIDE HOMICIDE Undetermined ☐
20b. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED. (Enter nature of injury in Part I or Part II of item 18) Unknown
20c. TIME OF INJURY Abt. 8:45 P.M. 2/6/71
20d. INJURY OCCURRED Unknown
20e. PLACE OF INJURY (e.g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office building, etc.) Corner of North Cage & Bell St.
20f. CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION Pharr 20g. COUNTY Hidalgo 20h. STATE Texas
21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from 2-7-71 to 2-7-71 and last saw the deceased alive on 2-7-71. Death occurred at 6:30 P.m. on the date stated above, and to the best of my knowledge, from the causes stated.
22a. SIGNATURE M.D. 22b. ADDRESS 1610 Ed. Carey Drive Hgn, Tex. 22c. DATE SIGNED 2-22-71

23a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify) REMOVAL
23b. DATE FEB 11. 1971
23c. LOCATION (City, town, or county) PHARR. TEXAS
23d. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY GUADALUPE CEMETERY
24. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE DE LEON FUNERAL HOME Santa De Leon
25a. REGISTRAR'S FILE NO. 96 25b. DATE FILED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR February 26, 1971 25c. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE Mary Boludo

Source: Pharr Memorial Library Archives in Pharr, Texas.

Appendix B: Indictment against Efraín Fernández and others that was signed on March 11, 1971.

1489

NO. 11196

THE STATE OF TEXAS
VS.
EFRAIN FERNANDEZ, ALFONSO LOPEZ, CRUZ CORTEZ,
CARLOS AVITIA, JOSE PANTOJA, RAYMUNDO LOPEZ,
DANIEL VASQUEZ AND TRINIDAD PINA

IN THE 92ND DISTRICT
COURT OF
HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS

PRESENTMENT OF INDICTMENT AND ORDER OF TRANSFER

THIS the 10th day of March, A. D. 19 71, came into open Court, in a body, the Grand Jury, a quorum thereof being present, and through their foreman delivered to the Judge of this the following indictment, to-wit:

THE STATE OF TEXAS
VS.
EFRAIN FERNANDEZ, ALFONSO LOPEZ, CRUZ CORTEZ,
CARLOS AVITIA, JOSE PANTOJA, RAYMUNDO LOPEZ,
DANIEL VASQUEZ AND TRINIDAD PINA

NO: 11196
CHARGE: ENGAGING IN A RIOT

which was thereupon received and ordered by the Court to be filed, and it appearing to the Court from an inspection of the Indictment that this Court has no jurisdiction of this case, the same being a misdemeanor, and that the County Court at Law of Hidalgo County, Texas has jurisdiction of the same, it is ordered that the said case be and the same is transferred to said County Court at Law of said County.

Signed and entered this the 11th day of March, A. D. 19 71.

TOTAL COURT COSTS DUE: \$15.00

THE STATE OF TEXAS *
COUNTY OF HIDALGO *

I, K. C. BOYSEN, District Clerk in and for Hidalgo County, Texas, do hereby certify that the foregoing contains a true and correct copy of all the proceedings taken in said District Court in the Criminal Case of the STATE OF TEXAS -vs- Efraín Fernandez, et al No. 11196; also a bill of the costs that have accrued therein in said Court.

WITNESS my signature and seal of office this the 11th day of March, A. D. 19 71.

K. C. BOYSEN
DISTRICT CLERK
HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS
BY: Laura Hinojosa
Deputy

DATE 9/29/17
A true copy I certify
LAURA HINOJOSA
District Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas
By Allegre Deputy 47

Source: Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk, Edinburg, Texas.

Appendix C: Efraín Fernández's "Not Guilty" verdict.

2/27/146

THE STATE OF TEXAS
vs.
EFRAIN FERNANDEZ

No. 1193

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF HIDALGO COUNTY
JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF TEXAS.

Date February 25, JANUARY TERM A. D. 19 72

THIS DAY this cause was called for trial, and the State appeared by her Criminal District Attorney, and the Defendant EFRAIN FERNANDEZ appeared in person, in open court, his counsel also being present; and the said Defendant EFRAIN FERNANDEZ

having been duly arraigned, and having pleaded not guilty to the charge contained in the indictment herein, both parties announced ready for trial;

thereupon a jury of good and lawful men, to-wit: **H. S. LONG** and eleven others was duly selected, impaneled and sworn, who, having heard the indictment read, and the Defendant's plea of not guilty thereto, and having heard the evidence submitted, and having been duly charged by the Court, retired in charge of the proper officer to consider of their verdict, and afterward was brought into open court by the proper officer, the Defendant and his counsel being present, and in due form of law returned into open court the following verdict, which was received by the Court, and is here now entered upon the minutes of the court, to-wit:

We, the jury, find the Defendant, EFRAIN FERNANDEZ, not guilty.

DATE 9/29/17

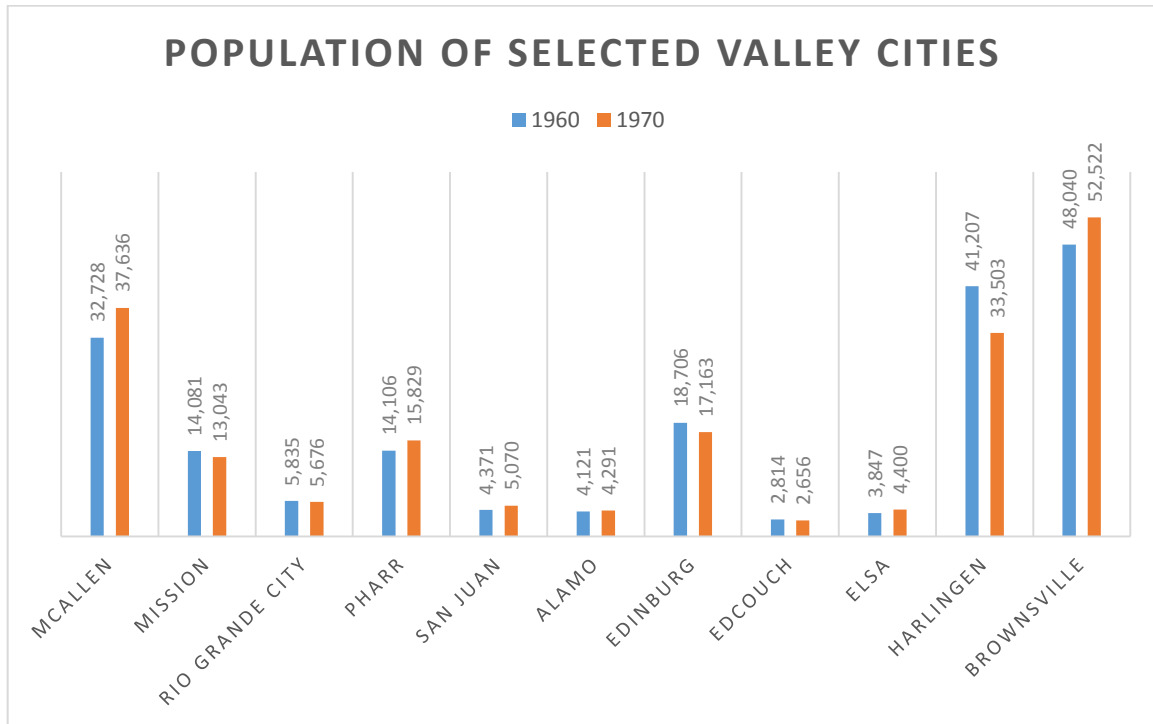
A true copy I certify
LAURA HINOJOSA
District Clerk, Hidalgo County, Texas
By *[Signature]* Deputy At

/s/ H. S. LONG Foreman.

IT IS THEREFORE CONSIDERED, ORDERED AND ADJUDGED by the Court, that the Defendant EFRAIN FERNANDEZ, be immediately discharged from all further liability upon the charge for which he has been herein tried, and that he go hence without day.

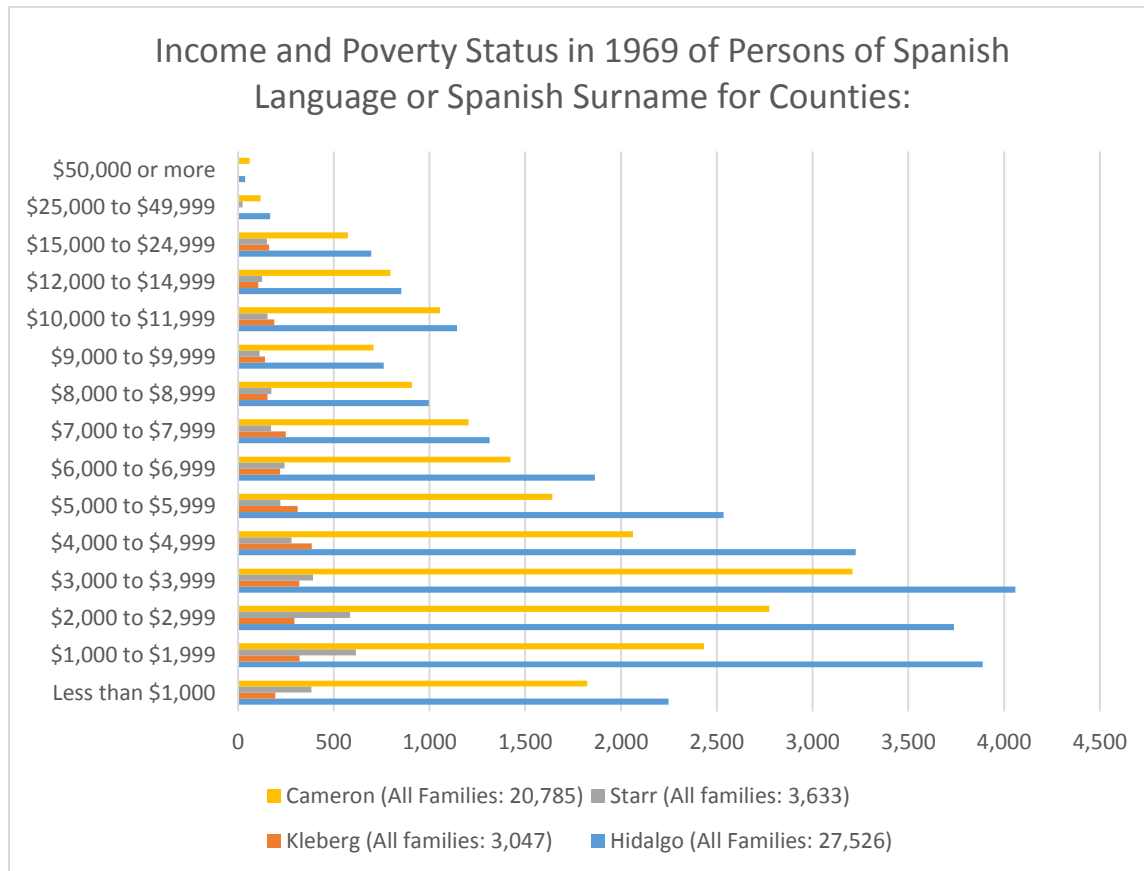
Source: Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk, Edinburg, Texas.

Appendix D: Population of Selected Valley Cities in 1960 & 1970



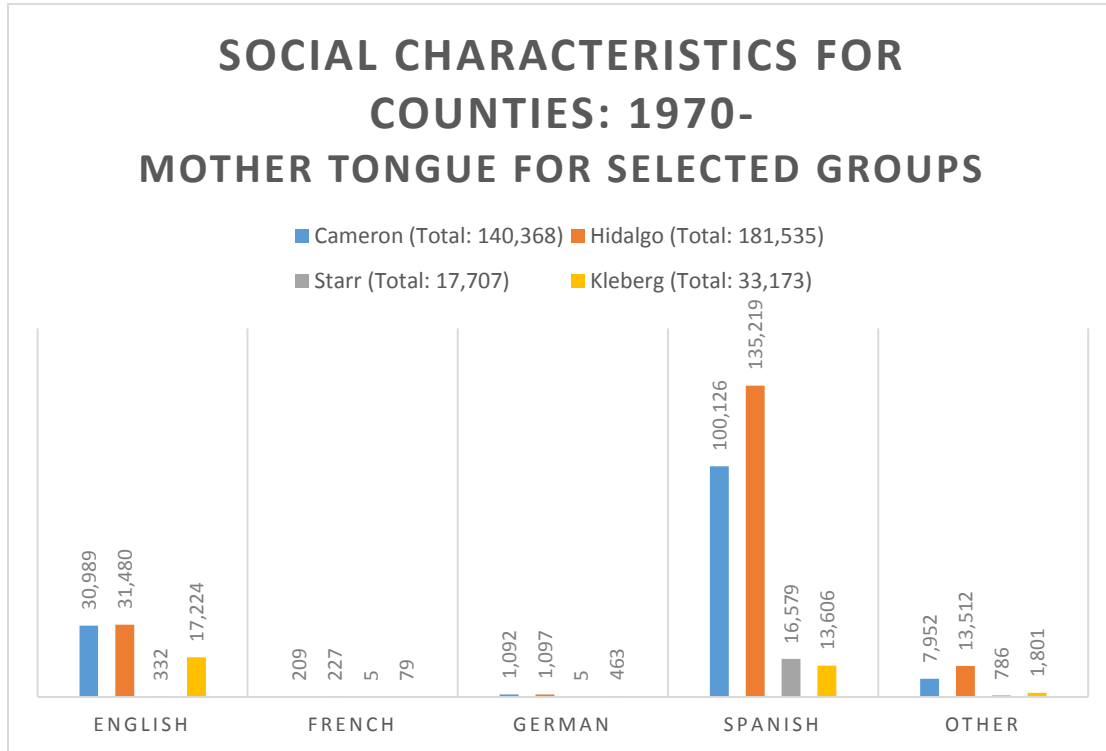
Source: United States 1970 Census of Population, "Population of Places: 1970 and 1960," *Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. 1, Part 45, Texas section 1.

Appendix E: 1969 Income and Poverty Status of Persons Spanish Language or Spanish Surname



Source: United States 1970 Census of Population, "Income and Poverty Status in 1969 of Persons of Spanish Language or Spanish Surname for Counties," *Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. 1, Part 45, Texas section 1.

Appendix F: 1970 Social Characteristics for Selected Counties in South Texas



Source: United States 1970 Census of Population, "Social Characteristics for Counties: 1970," *Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. 1, Part 45, Texas section 1.

Vita

David Robles obtained an Associate's degree in Music from South Texas College in May 2005, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mexican American Heritage in August 2008 and a Master of Arts degree in History in August 2012 from the University of Texas Pan-American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley). He has presented his work at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Texas State Historical Association, UTEP's History Department Roundtable: "1967 in History and Memory," the Third Bi-Annual Sal Castro Memorial Conference on the Emerging Historiography of the Chicano Movement, the Western History Association Conference, the 6th International Colloquium on the Mexican Northeast and Texas-A Region and A Frontier, the Southwestern Social Science Association, and NACCS Tejas Conference. His work has been published in the *Journal of South Texas*.

Permanent address: 3501 Covina Avenue
McAllen, Texas 78503

This thesis/dissertation was typed by David Robles.