

## 7. Lea Ybarra and Nina Genera Report on Chicano Mobilization Against the Vietnam War, 1972

The Vietnam war is far from being over. Since Nixon took office we've dropped more bombs in this war than both sides used in all of World War II. Nixon has expanded the war into Cambodia and Laos. And now, he has started bombing North Vietnam again. . . .

We know something about what the war cost us—**55,000 American dead, over 300,000 wounded**—many of them disabled for life. And the war has cost us two hundred billion dollars. Nixon will spend seven billion dollars more on this war this year alone. **That is money we needed here, for new schools and hospitals, better medical aid for our people, better education for our children. . . .** While our bombers tear apart Vietnam, this war also tears apart our own nation—

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because there is not enough money to . . . deal with drugs, slums, medical care, housing. The poor and unemployed, the blacks and Puerto Ricans—these have paid the price of this war. Our veterans are coming back to find there are no jobs. . . .

In addition to the realization that this war is a direct imperialistic intervention by the United States and has caused an overwhelming amount of suffering and death, what does this war specifically mean to the Chicano?

### **The Chicano & the War**

It has meant, up to the present, **death for more than 11,000 Chicanos**. In other words, Chicanos have accounted for more than 20% of this country's casualties while they make up only 10% of this country's population. . . .

Aside from being drafted in great numbers, Chicanos have also voluntarily joined the military for many reasons. Since they are considered a "foreign minority" they have been under great pressure to prove loyalty to the United States. Chicanos proclaim the sizeable military contributions of the Chicano soldier as proof of loyalty. They point to impressive records of heroism in time of war. There is also the desire for social status that military life offers. Another reason is economic, since many Chicanos help their families with service allotments. And, of course, there is also the fact that only a relatively small number of Chicanos have avoided obligatory military service by attending college, so they have volunteered rather than wait to be drafted.

One positive change to this is that more Chicanos, because of their political involvement, are becoming less willing to submit to induction into the armed forces. . . .

One need only remember the Chicano moratorium throughout California and the Southwest and especially the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles in August of 1970, when thousands of Chicanos marched to protest the Vietnam war, to realize that there is a growing awareness among Chicanos concerning the war. Unfortunately, . . . the majority of young Chicanos are still being drafted or are enlisting because they think that they will eventually get drafted anyway, and that there is nothing they can do about it. The point is, something **can** be done. The Chicano can use the Selective Service regulations to his own advantage by learning the legal procedures necessary to apply for and receive deferments. Realizing, of course, that any type of legal justice is always more difficult and sometimes impossible for the Chicano to obtain, in comparison to the Anglo, in the case of the Selective Service System, Chicanos have received deferments when they have obtained proper counseling as to their legal rights.

. . . We encourage the entire Chicano community, both young and old, male and female, to familiarize themselves with what is happening with the draft today and what alternatives are available to their sons, husbands, boyfriends, nephews, cousins, grandsons and so on.

Historically, Chicanos have played major heroic roles, particularly during World War II and the Korean War. . . . But for every Chicano hero that made it home alive, there were a great many more Chicanos who died in battle. . . . And today, with the Viet Nam war, our Chicanos are still fighting and dying to become

war heroes, many because of the influence and pressures put upon them by their own families to continue the tradition that their own father's and uncles initiated 20 and 30 years ago. It is time that Chicanos begin to realize that our own sons, and brothers, husbands and boyfriends, cousins and nephews are the ones being used to fight a war from which La Raza gains nothing. We only lose—our men and our own honor and our pride by participating or promoting the killing of millions of innocent children, women, and men in Indochina. They are an oppressed people in the very same fashion that we, as Chicanos in the United States, are an oppressed people—oppressed by the same imperialist system. The U.S. mass media portrays North Vietnamese . . . as “the enemy” simply because they want freedom to choose their own form of government. Chicanos in the U.S. are equally portrayed when we make it known that we will attain our equal rights and justice through self-determination in all aspects of our life. . . .

. . . The main point is that thousands of Chicano men are the ones being sent . . . to kill the Vietnamese people and in the process, for every 100 Chicanos sent to Viet Nam, 20 Chicanos return dead and many more wounded or maimed for life. It is time to begin to use our potential here at home in constructive ways which will help our Raza. It is time to seek ways of keeping our Chicanos here at home with their families instead of encouraging them to prove their manhood (“machismo”) by fighting and dying in a war we have no business in. Social status and patriotism must become secondary to the many lives being lost among our Chicanos today.

## E S S A Y S

Organizing the Chicano community politically was a main goal of the Chicano movement. To help achieve this end Chicanos developed student organizations throughout the Southwest and Midwest whose focus was not only engendering ethnic self-pride but also advocating for Chicano concerns. The Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), a Texas student organization, was founded in 1967 by José Angel Gutiérrez, who became its first president. MAYO's structure, goals, ideology, strategy, leadership, and membership base, as well as the role of women in the organization, are the subject of the essay by Armando Navarro, director of the Ernesto Galarza Public Policy and Humanities Research Institute at the University of California, Riverside. Navarro emphasizes that MAYO's aim was to effect social change through political empowerment developed by focusing on self-identity in the fight against discrimination.

Chicanas were active participants and leaders in many of the organizations of the 1960s and early 1970s, including the United Farm Workers of America. However, the failure of scholars to recognize the significance of the family in the farmworkers' struggle in turn has obscured the role of women in the movement, according to Margaret Rose, the author of the second essay. The co-director of the Central California Social Science History Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara, she considers the centrality of women to the UFW boycott strategy, focusing on their domestic roles and union activism by examining the protests of UFW Chicana and Mexican women in the Washington, D.C., boycott. According to Rose, the use of a family model for the organization of the boycott had the effect of bringing women to the forefront of the struggle, although in an less visible role than that of the men. By confining women to traditionally female-defined activities, the UFW helped create an awareness of gender issues among the women.