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"IT WAS REALLY UP TO US:" THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK BERETS OF ALBUQUERQUE IN THE CHICANA/O MOVEMENT OF NEW MEXICO

By

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BACHELOR OF ARTS
POLITICAL SCIENCE
AMERICAN STUDIES

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"IT WAS REALLY UP TO US:"
THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK BERETS OF ALBUQUERQUE
IN THE CHICANA/O MOVEMENT OF NEW MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the history of the Black Berets of Albuquerque and their role in the Chicana/o Movement of New Mexico. The Black Berets of Albuquerque were part of a trend in the Civil Rights and Chicana/o Movement era that saw militant youth-based community groups in urban areas form in response to racial discrimination, poverty, educational and health disparities, and police brutality. The issues the Black Berets formed to confront were based on the unique urbanization process that Albuquerque went through that created political and economic disempowerment for the Chicana/o people but made the city a major site for Chicana/o organizing. The Black Berets, motivated by a politics of self-determination, tackled the social issues confronting Chicanas/os in Albuquerque through efforts like building alternative institutions to create community power and self-determination. The Black Berets oppositional stances made them targets of police and vigilante repression resulting in unwarranted surveillance, arrests, and physical force directed at them, which made them respond through community defense. The attacks led to the end of the organization, but their members continued their activism in new forms. The history of the Black Berets is an important one for the Chicana/o Movement and the history of New Mexico.

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Introduction

In March 2014 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, city police shot and killed James Boyd, a homeless man camping in a residential neighborhood. Video of the killing was spread and sparked mass outrage, and citizens in Albuquerque went to the streets to protest.[1] In the previous four years, the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) were involved in 37 shootings, 23 of them fatal, the highest amount in the nation; just a few weeks later Albuquerque police were involved in another fatal shooting. This high amount of police violence spurred the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate, finding that most of the shootings involved unconstitutional and unreasonable use of lethal force. Later that year the APD entered into a settlement agreement with the Justice Department to make court-mandated reforms, an unprecedented acknowledgment by a government agency of police violence, in this case of Albuquerque.[2] The protests in Albuquerque over police violence coincided with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter social movement that formed over the numerous police murders of African Americans and other people of color.[3] This movement drew the connection of police violence to systemic racism, which the previous Civil Rights Movements in their various forms attempted to confront and change. Those movements brought many gains, but with the recent political climate of police violence and racism, those struggles for social justice continue.

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[1] Mark Berman, "What is going on in Albuquerque? Your guide to the police shooting protest," *Washington Post*, March 31, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2014/03/31/what-is-going-on-in-albuquerque-your-guide-to-the-police-shooting-protest/

[2] Samuel Gilbert and Andy Beale, "Albuquerque PD: A Case Study of Police Brutality," *Al Jazeera*, April 28, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/4/28/albuquerque-pd-a-case-study-of-police-brutality

[3] Studies have also been done in the current time of the disproportionate amount of Chicanas/os and other Latinos killed by police, one example in Nicole Chávez, "An Estimated 2,600 Latinos Were Killed by Police or in Custody in the Past Six Years, Preliminary Report Says," *CNN*, June 21, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/28/us/latinos-police-brutality-report/index.html

In the protests and organizing for police accountability in Albuquerque in 2014, protesters invoked the militancy of New Mexico Chicana/o groups that preceded them. A protest leader said an attempt at a citizen's arrest of the chief of police drew inspiration from previous actions by Tijerina and La Alianza; and a rowdy disruption of a City Council meeting evoked the Black Berets, which a reporter stated, "to draw attention to their causes, they often attended meetings and events unannounced to force authorities to hear them out."[4] In some of the reporting on the Albuquerque police that year, the past police violence of the 1960s and 1970s in New Mexico was raised, especially the 1972 killings of two Black Berets by police.[5] The invoking of the past in this recent struggle echoes what Karl Marx said about the tradition of previous generations weighing on the brains of the living.[6] The understanding of history is important to not only find patterns to understand the past, but to find circumstances to draw from to understand current conditions. This area is needed for New Mexico history, especially of the Chicana/o Movement era. While there have been many works published about Tijerina and La Alianza, little has been written about other parts of the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico, especially about the Black Berets of Albuquerque. What has been written about the organization has been either brief and short without context, focusing on cultural aspects, or in many cases getting basic facts wrong about them.[7] To date there has not been any study on the Black Berets itself or their role in the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico.

To bring a better understanding of this history, the focus of this thesis is on the history of the Black Berets of Albuquerque and their involvement in the Chicana/o Movement in New

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[4] Russell Contreras (Associated Press), "Albuquerque Residents Attempt Citizens Arrest of Police Chief," *Guardian,* May 8, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/08/albuquerque-police-citizens-arrest-chief-protests

[5] Samuel Gilbert and Andy Beale, "Albuquerque PD: A Case Study of Police Brutality," *Al Jazeera*, April 28, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/4/28/albuquerque-pd-a-case-study-of-police-brutality

Mexico. This thesis will contribute to a history of New Mexico during the 1960s and 1970s, the history of Albuquerque in the same period, those histories from a Chicana/o perspective, as well as the role of social movements in that history. In this thesis, I seek to answer the following questions: 1) Why did the Black Berets form in Albuquerque? 2) How did the Black Berets organize among the Chicana/o community in Albuquerque and network in New Mexico? and 3) How did law enforcement target the organization, and what were the effects of these attacks?

In this study, I argue that the Black Berets of Albuquerque were part of a trend in the Civil Rights and Chicana/o Movement era that saw militant youth-based community groups in urban areas form in response to racial discrimination, poverty, educational and health disparities, and police brutality. I further contend that the unique rural/urban contexts of New Mexico and Albuquerque contributed to similarly unique forms of community organizing and

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[6] The full quote is: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, accessed at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm

[7] The Black Berets 12 Point Program was published in an anthology by F. Chris García, *La Causa Política: A Chicano Politics Reader*, (University of Notre Dame Press. 1974). Another anthology published the Program along with other cultural items related to the Black Berets, in Gilberto López y Rivas, (editor), *The Chicanos – Life and Struggles of the Mexican Minority in the United States (*Monthly Review Press, 1973). In Francisco Arturo Rosales, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement,* (Arte Público Press, 1996), the basis of the popular PBS video documentary, the Black Berets are mentioned briefly on one page on the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico: "In Albuquerque the Black Berets were formed to work in conjunction with the publishers of El Grito (sic),...The Black Berets...were among the few organizations that engaged in urban-style protests especially against police brutality. One of their most militant acts was to force their way into Governor Bruce King's office to lodge a number of grievances. They were arrested." (214). This account is brief and presented out of context. Cultural aspects include Teresa McKenna, "The Canales/Córdova Corridos as Social Drama," *Migrant Song: Politics and Process in Contemporary Chicano Literature*, (University of Texas Press, 1997), 27-48. In one academic paper, Jamie L. Bronstein, "Big Trouble In Little Texas: The Chicano Movement in Southern New Mexico, 1968-1977," *New Mexico Historical Review,95: no.* 3 (Summer 2020): 284, it erroneously states "In June 1971, Black Berets in Albuquerque rioted against police brutality." While the Black Berets aided people during this incident, they did not make up all the hundreds of participants.

confrontational politics by the Black Berets in response to the aforementioned issues. The Black Berets worked on the social issues in this time through efforts to build community power for Chicanas and Chicanos in Albuquerque, which they did through building alternative institutions and organizing for self-defense against police abuse. The Black Berets oppositional stances made them targeted by police agencies, which affected how their organization operated and ultimately ended. The organization came to an end but as will be shown, their ideals were kept alive through the activism their members carried out in different ways through different organizing forms.

In this study I hope to add to the literature of the Chicana/o Movement itself through my research on one of the organizations in that movement, the Black Berets in Albuquerque. This study will be a window to understanding the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico, as the Black Berets were one of the most active and influential political organizations in the region. I hope to give a new understanding of how the Chicana/o Movement happened in New Mexico and how one of the organizations within it impacted the region. My research will also analyze how a social movement conflicted with police agencies and became a target of state repression. This study will also advance an understanding of United States history overall during a critical period of its existence. Furthermore, I hope this research brings attention to Albuquerque as an urban area and how social movements impacted the politics in the city, being useful in other fields of study.

Theoretical Framework

One of the theoretical frameworks that will be used in this study will be internal colonialism. Internal colonialism became a popular paradigm in Chicano Studies in that field's beginning to explain the situation of the Chicano people, but it fell out of favor by the 1980's

as the movement itself declined. In looking at the Chicano history of New Mexico, with a legacy of classic and internal colonialism and land-based struggles because of it, the internal colonial model serves to give an explanatory framework for social and political conditions in the state, and why subsequent activism came from these conditions. One of the first studies of Chicanas/os using the internal colonial model was "The Barrio as Internal Colony" by Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, and Charles Ornelas. Their analysis saw that colonialism made Chicanos powerless in every aspect of life, which were political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological. The authors focused on the political problems of internal colonialism, a principal one being the lack of control of institutions in the barrios, and an anti-colonial solution being one of community control.[8] Tomas Almaguer used the internal colonial model when he wrote another study around the same time, "Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism," which focuses on the economic aspects of colonialism for Chicanos. Almaguer stated "In the end, the main economic influences that affect the internal colonies of the Southwest remain in the hands of Anglo business and how they continue to victimize and exploit the colonized Chicano."[9] Mario Barrera created an expanded format of this theory that incorporated class analysis when he wrote *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. In this book, he theorized that Chicanos were a colonial labor force, who were exploited because of both race and class. Colonization brought land displacement which changed the economic system from a semi-feudal one to capitalism, which forced land-based people into urban wage labor in a process of proletarianization. This economic exploitation shaped the reality of Chicanas/os of all class segments as they were all affected by

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[8] Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, and Charles Ornelas "The Barrio as an Internal Colony," *Urban Affairs Annual Review* 6 (1972): 465-498.

[9] Tomas Almaguer, "Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism," *Aztlán,* 2, 1, (Spring 1971), 19.

colonialism.[10] John R. Chávez in "Aliens in Their Native Land: The Persistence of Internal Colonial Theory," argues that internal colonialism, despite dropping out of favor with scholars, still has the capacity for explanatory power because of the material reality that colonialism creates. Chávez states that the theory is still viable, because it "...more fully explains the workings of colonialism within national borders; more importantly, it explains in clearer ways the unequal positions of indigenous and mestizo peoples than do theories based primarily on class, assimilation, diffusion, immigration, and the like."[11] The history of Chicana/o people in New Mexico involved different forms of colonialism. The different political, economic, and social inequalities faced by the Chicana/o people in New Mexico can be examined through the lens of internal colonialism. Furthermore, the activism of Chicana/o groups like the Black Berets, who espoused anti-colonial politics, and the state violence directed at them because of it, had a basis in colonial oppression. All these factors show the usefulness of internal colonialism theory in this study.

Another theoretical perspective to be used is theories of social movements. In "Ten Theses on Social Movements," Maria Fuentes and Andre Gunder Frank examine the essence of modern social movements. Social movements, according to Fuentes and Gunder Frank, "mobilize social power appealing to morality, justice, survival and identity" and "generate and wield social power through the social mobilization of their participants ...direct social power in pursuit of social goals."[12] Social movements operate through the mobilization of people based on the particular circumstances of the time they are active. Usually independent of the

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[10] Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality, (*University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 103.

[11] John R. Chávez, "Aliens in Their Native Lands: The Persistence of Internal Colonial Theory" *Journal of World History,* 22: no. 4 (December 2011), 809.

[12] Maria Fuentes and Andre Gunder Frank, "Ten Theses on Social Movements," *World Development* 17: no. 2, (1989), 179, 182.

state, social movements attempt to influence state policies from outside of it through pressure it exerts on it. In contemporary times, social movements build on previous movements, multiple ones can coexist, and people can be part of more than one movement. Immanuel Wallerstein in "New Revolts Against the System" examines the history of antisystemic movements, and how contradictions with previous strategies of social change led to the emergence New Social Movements to address neglected constituents like women, ethnic minorities, and environmental concerns. These new social movements also looked for other sources of power besides the state, such as in civil society, and emerged from different crises generated in the world system. Wallerstein sees the need for social movements to continue to mobilize the masses of people to affect social change.[13] The study of the Chicana/o Movement and their organizations as a social movement is exemplified in the book *Social Protest In An Urban Barrio: A Study of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1974,* by Marguerite V. Marin. In this study, Marin utilizes various theories of social movements to apply to Chicana/o organizations in Los Angeles in a comparative study, seeing them as components of a mass movement for societal transformation. Marin states that "by exploring the origins, development and outcome of one of this group's major struggles for social equality, it describes the yet unfolding social history of Mexican Americans."[14] For this study, the focus is on the Black Berets and how they operated as a social movement organization. Specifically, how an ethnic national minority group mobilized people and resources for justice and equality and in opposition to the existing social order. The Black Berets were part of other social movements happening at the time, and those movements created other organizations around New Mexico. These other social

[13] Immanuel Wallerstein, "New Revolts Against the System," in *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?*, ed. Tom Mertes, (Verso, 2004), 262-273.

[14] Marguerite V. Marin, *Social Protest in an Urban Barrio: A Study of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1974,* (University Press of America, 1991), xiv.

movement organizations need more attention in historical research, and I hope this study will spur more interest in this area of history.

Methodology

Since there have not been many studies on this topic specifically, I first created a historical narrative that examined the organization and its activities during its existence, then concluded with the direction some of the organization members took after it ended. This research is exploratory in that the general purpose is to document what transpired during the organization's existence from 1969 to 1973 to place the Black Berets within broader history. Since there have not been many studies of the organization or of the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico itself, there is no current paradigm in this research except comparisons with the broader Movement nationally. This study will aid in creating a more comprehensive picture of how Albuquerque and New Mexico contributed to the Chicana/o Movement, and how the Movement overall affected people in New Mexico.

First, I have conducted archival research in the archives of the Center for Southwest Research (CSWR) at the University of New Mexico. The CSWR holds various collections about Chicana/o Movement activism. The materials on the Black Berets are spread out in different collections, as there is not a specific collection of materials for the Black Beret organization itself. In these different collections there exists a handful of documents from the organization as well as their newspaper *Venceremos*, all of which gives a perspective of the inner workings of the Black Berets organization itself. There are also several documents from law enforcement agencies, legal and court records, and other papers from outside the organization that have been helpful in obtaining an understanding of this history.

Other primary sources were used extensively to create this narrative, specifically newspapers, to create a chronology of specific events significant to the organization's history. One important newspaper I used for research was *El Grito del Norte,* which was published in New Mexico and is considered a "movement" newspaper. The coverage of this paper, being more familiar with the subjects, was consulted to bring about a diverse range of reporting and coverage not conducted by other news sources. The CSWR digitized all issues of the newspaper from 1968 to 1973, which made research with this newspaper accessible. Other newspapers used in my research were mainstream newspapers in New Mexico, specifically the two newspapers in Albuquerque at the time, the *Albuquerque Journal* and *Albuquerque Tribune*, as well as newspapers outside of Albuquerque such as the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. The Albuquerque Public Library Special Collections Library has a folder of newspaper clippings that mention the Black Berets, which I utilized for this research. I supplemented this with the use of Newspapers.com to find other articles that mentioned the Black Berets in order to cite for specific events. I analyzed secondary sources such as published books to examine what has been written on the subjects, what gaps need to be filled in this history, and place the Black Berets in the Chicana/o Movement and Civil Rights periods. Overall, this research relied mostly on primary documents and news reports that are used to create an interpretation of the past.

Furthermore, oral histories of participants of the time were utilized to give accounts that have not yet been written or needed different interpretations than if written. One that I utilized extensively was a public oral history teach-in entitled "Still Rising! An Oral History Teach-In on the 1971 Chicano Rebellion," held on June 13, 2021 (the 50th anniversary of the Roosevelt Park Uprising) at Roosevelt Park. At this public event, Black Beret leaders Richard

Moore and Joaquín Luján spoke and gave their accounts of that incident and the history of their organization, and which I have recorded on video. I have utilized other oral histories and interviews relating to the subjects discussed here that have been recorded previously by others. Due to time constraints on this project, I was unable to obtain direct one-on-one interviews with participants, which I admit is a limit and restriction on the data obtained for this project. Despite this I have completed this work with the most academic resources available.

Historiography

Ideology

The Chicana/o Movement of the 1960s and 1970s occurred during a period in American history when various other civil rights movements were going on in the United States, and in world history where many anti-colonial struggles were occurring in the "Third World." The Chicana/o Movement represented the push to strive for rights in the political system while also representing an assertion of cultural identity in resistance to assimilation based on decolonization. The Chicana/o Movement represented a continuity of previous struggles for political, economic, and cultural rights the Mexican American people have engaged in since 1848, while at the same time representing a rupture from previous ways Mexican Americans identified and how they strove for power. Along with a slew of literature about the Mexican American generation of the early to mid-20th century, an analysis of the ideological roots of that generation is presented by Gabriela González in *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights (*2018). González examines how Mexican American ideology developed based on their treatment as second-class citizens, and where the middle class developed a liberal politics of respectability with the goal to become accepted as American citizens while retaining parts of their Mexican culture. The shift from the liberal agenda of the Mexican American generation led to the Chicana/o generation that brought forth the Chicana/o Movement. Scholars place the Chicana/o Movement from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and was a response to the limits of the liberal ideology and tactics of the previous generation. A common theme in many classic works on the Chicana/o Movement and recent scholarship is the trend toward more militant and nationalist politics. Rodolfo Acuña, in *Occupied America: The Chicano Struggle for Liberation* (1972), noted the growth of

Chicana/o nationalism by Movement participants, and their increasing rejection of the American colonial system. Carlos Munoz in *Youth, Identity, and Power: The Chicano Movement* (1989) wrote that the Chicana/o generation was a "militant generation." Juan Gómez-Quiñones wrote *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise 1940-1990 (1990),* where he stated, "For some activists toward the mid-sixties, matters compelled a reevaluation of earlier ideological tenets and the development by both older and younger activists of a new style of politics, which was based on wide mobilization and an insistence upon democratic rights."[15] Ignacio M. García wrote *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (1997), where he noted that a key part of the Chicana/o Movement was its shift away from, and rejection of, the liberal agenda of what he called assimilation, in favor of what would be called cultural nationalism, which at the time was the basis of the militant ethos. The movement was made up of multifaceted and diverse parts, but the movement's overall direction was one of militancy and embracing more nationalist politics. In this study of the Black Berets, I aim to place this organization and its activities in New Mexico in that tradition of militancy and nationalism within the Movement.

Organizations/ Community Defense

During the Chicana/o Movement, ideological commitments to cultural nationalism or moral commitments to challenge racism led to the formation of community defense organizations. Some of the literature focusing on certain organizations that went into that direction provides insight into the reason for the formation of community defense networks in the barrios. One is Armando Navarro's work *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (1995). Along with examining the ideological

[15] Gómez-Quiñones, 1990, 102.

origins and tactical changes of this youth organization that was a precursor to La Raza Unida Party, Navarro noted how conditions in the barrios led to the growth of other militant youth organizations.[16] Ernesto Vigil, in *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (1999), thoroughly examines through heavy use of primary sources the Crusade for Justice led by Corky González in Denver and how it inspired other militant youth activism. While the book focuses on the organization itself, Vigil notes throughout the collaboration with the Brown and Black Berets chapters in the city. On the Brown Berets, the largest symbol of Chicana/o youth militancy and community self-defense, many studies have been done on the organization, including that by Ernesto Chávez in *Mi Raza Primero (My People First): Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles* (2002). Chávez focuses his study on Chicana/o activist groups in Los Angeles, but it looks at how the militant symbolism of the Brown Berets resonated throughout the places Chicanas/os resided in the Southwest. A more recent work on the origins of the Chicana/o movement is *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966-1977* (2014), by Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez. This work examines the social history of the Chicana/o Movement as a whole and the origins of the various parts of the movement. The authors noted the need for community defense for Chicana/o youth and the growth of militant youth organizations for self-determination like the Brown Berets and Black Berets.[17] In this study of the Black Berets, I emphasize their history as a community defense organization and the material conditions that led to their development as that formation. This study will add to this literature on these type of organizations within the Chicana/o Movement.

Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico

[16] Navarro, 60.
[17] Gómez-Quiñones and Vásquez, 120.

For the most part, the works on the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico have focused on Reies López Tijerina and the land grant activism through the La Alianza organization, and of these works they usually have a focus around the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid in 1967. Most of these works were published in the years right after this incident and are mostly journalistic accounts and biographies. A more recent scholarly treatment is from Lorena Oropeza in *The King of Adobe: Reies López Tijerina, Lost Prophet of the Chicano Movement* (2019). Making use of recently obtained archives and oral histories, Oropeza gives historical context to the land grant movement in New Mexico beyond the courthouse raid itself. One exception to works that emphasize the land grant struggle when mentioning New Mexico in the Chicana/o Movement was the book by Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, titled *Viva La Raza: The Struggle of the Mexican American People* (1974). The book devotes a whole chapter to New Mexico and the diverse activism in the state at the time and mentions the Black Berets. This is due to the authors being present in New Mexico at the time with *El Grito del Norte* newspaper and having working relationships with the groups they wrote about. Another work that focuses on New Mexico is *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico* (2000), edited by Erlinda Gonzáles-Berry and David R. Maciel. The book gives a Chicano interpretation of New Mexico's history overall, not just of the Movement era. A chapter on the Chicana/o Movement makes up the last chapter in the book and gives many details about the various activism in New Mexico during the Chicana/o Movement era, yet leaves out much information, including that of the Black Berets. Overall, works on the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico are limited, and more work is needed in this area. This study of the Black Berets organization in Albuquerque will add to the literature on the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico by looking at an important organization

that was part of it. The connections between other movement organizations with the Black Berets is referenced in this study and is hoped to inspire continuing research on this topic.

Local Focus of Chicana/o Movement(s)

Many recent trends in Chicana/o Studies have attempted to expand the analysis of what the Movement meant, specifically by focusing on the effects on localities that have often been overlooked or not covered because of a focus on national leaders and issues. One example is *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (2010) by David Montejano. This work examines the movement activity of Chicanas/os in San Antonio, Texas, an area that did not get much national coverage. Another recent work that came out is *Rewriting the Chicano Movement: New Histories of Mexican American Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (2021), an anthology edited by Mario García and Ellen McCracken. This collection of essays presents different areas of the Chicana/o Movement not previously discussed, creating expanded and revised understandings of the Chicana/o Movement. They write about the need to study by locality when they state, "Studies of new locations and different communities reveal how the movement manifested itself regionally and locally and how it was mobilized around community issues pertinent to that locale. In other words, the Chicano Movement was not only a national movement but a local one."[18] The scholarly works on the Chicana/o Movement have expanded on the activities that happened in specific localities, mainly in California and Texas, but other areas still lack a focus of research, with New Mexico being one of them. My research will add to the importance of study of Chicanas and Chicanos in the Movement era and show that the range of activity in the era was more widespread. My study

[18] García and McCracken, 15.

will not only add to the particular locality of Albuquerque, New Mexico, but show that other localities need more study.

Chapter Summaries

This study examines how the Black Berets organized as a movement organization in Albuquerque, New Mexico and how it impacted Chicanas and Chicanos during the Movement era. Chapter 1, a background chapter, explores the impacts of urbanization on Chicana/o people in Albuquerque. Using an internal colonial model, this section provides context for how Albuquerque developed through urbanization from its founding in 1706 to the 1960s and how Chicana/o people were affected. A brief overview of the Chicana/o Movement in Albuquerque is also given as a precursor to the founding of the Black Berets.

Chapter 2 examines the founding of the Black Berets organization and the activism and community organizing they performed during their existence. Their organization was based on the advocacy of self-determination and reflected the material conditions Chicanas and Chicanos faced in Albuquerque by the late 1960s. The Black Berets built their ideas while they performed their organizing, attempting to root themselves in the history of New Mexico, built coalitions around the state, and built alternative institutions to bring about community control and power.

Chapter 3 examines the reaction to the Black Berets from the state, as they were ultimately targets of police repression. Their conflicts with police were a driver of their politics, as they put into practice their platform of community self-defense. The Black Berets faced many methods of repression from surveillance to extra-legal violence. The conflicts with police were faced by the Chicana/o community on a mass scale, culminating into a large urban uprising, where the Black Berets played a role in defending their community. The repression ultimately led to the murder of their members by the police. The violence inflicted through police measures exposed repressive measures utilized against Chicana/o activist organizations

who in turn created alliances with other community organizations, but ultimately led to the decline of the Black Berets.

The concluding chapter examines how the Black Berets continued as a social movement in a different direction, with their members and others founding the Chicano Communications Center. This was a way to continue their political organizing in a different form. This represented an attempt at building a revolutionary political organization but met the fate of other similar attempts in that period. Members who continued to be active experienced a new transformation through non-profit-based activism that made their political work more institutionalized but still tried to uphold their original goals through different types of institutions.

Chapter 1: The Consequences of Urbanization in Albuquerque for Chicanas/os

By the 1960s, Albuquerque was one of the major urban hubs of Chicana/o Movement activity.[19] In this background section I argue that the history of Albuquerque and the urbanization process it went through was based on colonialism, where Albuquerque became an urban area with a large Chicana/o population but where political power was concentrated in Anglo elites. Looking at the urban history of Albuquerque through internal colonialism brings an understanding of the material situation of the city when the Black Berets were formed. This is also significant because the Black Berets responded to these material conditions through an anti-colonial framework.

The history of Albuquerque and its urbanization process can be examined through the internal colonial model, as its history was intertwined in different types of colonialism. The history of the city came about during the era of Spanish colonialism, involving Spanish, mestizo, and indigenous people. A generation after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the villa, or settlement, named after the Duke of Alburquerque was founded in 1706 in the Rio Grande valley. Like other villages that were set up north and south of the villa, Albuquerque became centered around acequias, and much of the land was obtained through land grants.[20] As an agricultural village, Albuquerque changed little through the Spanish colonial period that ended in 1821 when the republic of Mexico gained independence. In 1848 with the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the northern half of

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[19] David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981,* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 3.

[20] The other villages surrounding Albuquerque included Alameda, Los Garcías, Los Ranchos, Los Poblanos, Los Gallegos, Los Griegos, Los Candelarias, Los Duranes, Atrisco, Los Sanchez, Pajarito, Barelas and Los Padillas. Most of these villages would become the barrios of Albuquerque by the middle 20th century. In Mary Kay Cline, *Albuquerque: Portrait of a Western City - Many Cultures and Opportunities* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishing, 2006), 6.

Mexico was brought under United States dominance, bringing in the era of American colonialism. An American military supply depot was set up in Albuquerque until 1867, and the hundreds of military personnel engaged with the depot, who were mostly European immigrants, began drastic changes in the economy and social structure of the city. The arrival of the railroad to Albuquerque by 1880 began more dramatic changes, as more Anglo citizens from the East came to settle and new buildings were built, beginning the growth of Albuquerque into a major urban center.

The railroad consolidated the settler colonialism of Albuquerque as well as New Mexico. As Spanish colonialism brought Spanish settlers to New Mexico, American colonialism brought American settlers, the latter at a much faster pace. The increased transportation via trains brought settlers from the East, mostly Anglo and European immigrants, more rapidly. The increased population affected the region politically and economically. The growth of Albuquerque became concentrated around the train depot and became known as New Town or New Albuquerque, in contrast to Old Town (Old Albuquerque) which was closer to the Rio Grande river. In 1891 Albuquerque was officially incorporated as a city, with a majority Anglo population, and surrounded by mostly Hispano villages with their own autonomous governance.[21] Political life was dominated by an Anglo elite, who established a City Commission type of city government for Albuquerque in 1922, with a City Manager as the head. The changes also included economics, which affected the surrounding Hispano population, who still lived on a mixed economic system revolving on subsistence farming and livestock ranching, supplemented with part time wages and barter.

[21] In this study I will use Hispano to describe the Spanish-speaking and Spanish-surnamed population of New Mexico, and Anglo to describe those considered white and of European origin. The complex history of Spanish identity is explored in John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish American Identity in New Mexico 1880s-1930s,* (University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

The increase of industrial capitalism gradually disrupted this way of life. Many Hispanos left agricultural labor to work in new industries that came to the region. The railroad and the railyards downtown became major employers for Hispanos, especially those in semi-skilled positions.[22] Others had to travel to other regions for paid work. New economic policies, especially around water, were brought in that further disrupted the lives of Hispanos. For example, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District was established in 1925 to regulate irrigation, and the new authority caused many Hispanos to lose their land.[23]

Another form of colonialism that would affect Albuquerque was nuclear colonialism. Nuclear colonialism is described by scholar Myrriah Gomez as sharing similar characteristics with settler colonialism, but with a major distinction where nuclear colonialism "is a neocolonial framework that targets not only Indigenous people but also other ethnic minority groups in poor economic situations that have become disenfranchised because of state occupation of their homelands."[24] New Mexico became the site of the Manhattan Project during World War II which developed the first nuclear weapons, with Los Alamos the site of the main research laboratory and Trinity Site near Alamogordo where the first atomic bomb was detonated. This was a colonial process as these and other sites were forcefully taken by the federal government, usually involving Indigenous and other ethnic minorities, and created a dependency for New Mexico on the new nuclear economy.[25] Albuquerque became affected

[22] Joseph Metzgar, "Guns and Butter: Albuquerque Hispanics, 1940-1975," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 56.2, April 1, 1981, 118.

[23] "It is estimated by one scholar that in 1937 alone, 8,000 people lost title to their property because they could not pay assessments and taxes to the Conservancy District." Benny Andres Jr., "La Plaza Vieja (Old Town Alburquerque [sic]): The Transformation of an Hispano Village, 1880s-1950s," in *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico,* ed. Erlinda Gonzáles-Berry and David Maciel, (University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 247.

[24] Myrriah Gomez, *Nuclear New Mexico: Colonialism and the Effects of the Nuclear Industrial Complex on Nuevomexicanos,* (University of Arizona Press, 2022), 5.

[25] This history is described in Lucie Genay, *Land of Nuclear Enchantment: A New Mexican History of the Nuclear Weapons Industry, (*University of New Mexico Press, 2019).

by, and dependent upon, the new nuclear economy. The city's location would make it an important part of the Manhattan Project, as it was two hours away from Los Alamos and a major transportation hub already at that time. Kirtland Airfield opened in 1941 and became important in transportation for the general war effort but also specifically for the Project. A branch of Los Alamos Laboratories called Z Division was based near the airfield and was instrumental in the assembly portion of nuclear weapons production. After the beginning of the Cold War, the airfield would become Kirtland Air Force Base, and Z-Division would become Sandia National Laboratories, both of which became important institutions of the United States nuclear arsenal.

The growth of military spending in New Mexico overall would drive the economy of the state in the postwar era, especially in Albuquerque. Sandia became an independent corporation in 1949, and employment by the Labs went from 1,700 in 1949 to 7,000 in 1959.[26] By 1957, 30 percent of the city of Albuquerque was employed at either Kirtland or Sandia.[27] Government jobs overall became a major employer of Albuquerque and surrounding Bernalillo County.[28] Other defense-related industries grew in Albuquerque, and the University of New Mexico grew as a research university tied to federal agendas of science and technology research in the Cold War era. A popular magazine would later describe Albuquerque, with its employment revolving around Kirtland, Sandia, and UNM, as "a community mired in the easy, bureaucratic life."[29] That life was brought on because of federal spending for defense industries, especially nuclear weapons, creating a dependent economy. This dependence

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[26] Dennis Domrzalski, "Big Military Science Projects Shaped Modern New Mexico," *New Mexico Business Weekly,* February 3, 2012, https://www.bizjournals.com/albuquerque/print-edition/2012/02/03/big-military-science-project-shaped.html

[27] Genay, 120.

[28] "The percentage of the working population in Bernalillo County employed by some branch of government rose from 17.2 in 1950 to 19.3 in 1960 and 23.9 in 1970." Wood, 64.

[29] "Silicon Mesa," *Working Women,* March 1997, 9-10.

affected other parts of the Albuquerque economy, where other industries and services grew along with this prime economic driver, also creating an economic dependency.[30]

The military and nuclear economy was one of the main drivers for rapid population growth in Albuquerque. Urbanization increased throughout the United States in the postwar era, but the above factors caused Albuquerque to expand at a greater rate. The census data illustrates the dramatic growth of Albuquerque in terms of population in the postwar period (Table 1). While New Mexico had population growth of 91.1 percent from 1940 to 1970, Albuquerque itself had population growth of 590 percent and surrounding Bernalillo County had a population increase of 355 percent in the same period. The population increase was tied to the expansion of the defense industry in Albuquerque, which brought not only out of state Anglos but many Hispanos from surrounding rural areas searching for new job opportunities. The main driver was the influx of mostly Anglo "atomic immigrants" from out of state with highly advanced professional and technical training for these industries.[31] The percentage of Hispanos decreased in Albuquerque, going from 35 percent in 1940 to 25 percent in 1950, then 21 percent in 1960 (Table 2). The population size of Hispanos also reflected their political power in Albuquerque. Economic power was also in disfavor of Hispanos, as they were more likely to occupy unskilled and semi-skilled positions, along with higher rates of unemployment and lower capita income.[32] The population growth spurred by the economic growth created a boom in building and construction, especially in housing, and changed the borders of Albuquerque as a city.

[30] Tad Bartimus and Scott McCartney, "City of Secrets," in *Trinity's Children: Living Along America's Nuclear Highway.* (University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 51, 66.
[31] Genay, 120; Metzgar, 122.
[32] Metzgar, 126, 130.

Table 1: Population Changes, 1940-1970			
Year	New Mexico	Bernalillo County	Albuquerque
1940	531,818	69,391	35,449
1950	681,190	145,673	96,815
1960	951,020	262,199	201,189
1970	1,017,055	315,774	276,891

Table 2: Percentage of Population Hispano or Spanish-Surnamed		
Year	Bernalillo County	Albuquerque
1940	50%	35%
1950	30%	25%
1960	26%	21%
1970	30%	27%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The rapid urbanization of Albuquerque was also caused by land acquisition, another colonial process, as it affected Hispanos more. Driven by policies that encouraged growth, the physical area of Albuquerque greatly expanded through various land acquisitions. One of the first major annexations was that of Old Albuquerque in 1949. Many city interests campaigned for the annexation of this and other areas to boost the city population before the 1950 census, and the City Commission and supporters used heavy handed tactics to bring this area into city limits. Despite much opposition from residents of Old Albuquerque, the annexation was completed in 1949, and in later years the once vibrant Hispano community gradually became a tourist destination called Old Town.[33] The city continued aggressive annexation measures

[33] "The City Commission used threats, insults, and undemocratic means to annex the village," In Andres Jr, 253-258. The essay by Benny Andres Jr. gives a thorough history about the often-forgotten story of how the vibrant Hispano community of La Plaza Vieja or Old Albuquerque became Old Town, a tourist plaza created by the same Anglo interests that created a tourist economy based on the tricultural myth, and the processes it went through to destroy that community.

through 1960 when many acres of land south of Albuquerque were annexed despite opposition from its Hispano residents. Another annexation that was part of the overall expansion of the city of Albuquerque included parts of the Atrisco land grant when the governing board in 1959 sold several thousand acres to the city. The completed annexation included land that was not officially sold, furthering land loss for Hispanos.[34] More annexations expanded the city limits, with many done with less conflict, as the city obtained voluntary annexations from property owners who requested incorporation into the city. Furthermore, changes in state and local laws were enacted that not only allowed more annexation of bordering communities but also prevented those communities from incorporating themselves to keep their autonomy; most of these communities were Hispano.[35] The resulting land expansion increased the area of Albuquerque from 12 square miles in 1945 to 49 square miles in 1950, then to 86 square miles by 1972.[36] The increased land acquisition made Albuquerque a growing urban area and brought many more people under its jurisdiction. This also pushed development policies for the increasing population, geared toward the interests of Anglo newcomers.

The urban growth and the development policies from it made Albuquerque a divided city, with a de facto segregation on the east and west sides. A housing boom happened in Albuquerque in the 1950s to accommodate the growing population, especially the new employees of Sandia Labs and other facilities. With this came the growth of other businesses to support this new population. Most of this development happened on the east mesa side of the city because of land acquisition policies. As Robert Wood observed, "Ownership of large

[34] Wood, 196, 290.

[35] After the communities of Atrisco, Arenal, Five Points, and Armijo attempted to form an independent town, the State Legislature passed a law in 1963 prohibiting any village from incorporating if it was located within five miles of an urbanized area surrounding an already incorporated municipality unless that municipality approved the incorporation. In Wood, 289.

[36] Wood, 326.

portions of the land on the westside of Albuquerque had been passed down from generation to generation for centuries, and the tradition of attachment to the land and the confusion of unclear property titles had been important reasons why that territory had not been developed so much as the east."[37] The land west of the rail tracks of Albuquerque was mostly populated by Hispanos, who resided on land that was part of land grants or passed down from generation to generation, and in many places still attempted to preserve the rural character of the land. This section became known as the North Valley and South Valley and absorbed the Hispanos who migrated from rural areas of the state for economic reasons. At the same time, the east side of the city, known as the Heights, absorbed the mostly Anglo residents who worked in the military-based industries that required higher skills. As newer housing was based in the Heights area, along with more job opportunities, much more affluent Hispanos, especially those who had the GI Bill, moved into this area, leaving an income drain on the communities they left in the Valley.[38] Divisions based on race, class, and political affiliation grew between the Heights and the Valley. The introduction of the highway system in the 1960s through the center of the city further changed and divided the city, as many homes and land were lost to bring about the construction of the highways.[39] By 1970, the population of Albuquerque was nearly 300,000, with 26 percent Hispano, and divided by the Interstate 25 highway between Anglo and Hispano residents on the east and west side.[40] Rapid urbanization brought about institutional racism and segregation which further exacerbated urban social issues in the city based on race and class.

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[37] Wood, 196.

[38] Metzgar, 123.

[39] In the case of Duranes, Interstate 40 highway physically separated it from Old Town and divided those communities. Los Duranes Neighborhood Association. "About Los Duranes." https://losduranesneighborhoodassociation.home.blog/history-of-los-duranes-neighborhood/

[40] David R. Diaz, *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities*, (Routledge, 2005), 74.

The once autonomous agricultural villas around Albuquerque became barrios of the city itself in the postwar era and faced many issues that came with urbanization. The barrio was seen as the center of Chicana/o life due to segregation that kept them isolated from mainstream society. Tomas Almaguer argued that the political and economic power of the barrios remained outside of them, leaving the residents powerless:

> To this day, control of the colonias and the barrios still comes from the outside. The Chicano largely remains unable to determine how things will be done in his own community. All the major institutions that directly affect the lives of the Chicano population remain in the hands of the colonizer. Even where Chicanos have been successful in gaining some political power and control, i.e., electing city councilmen and other local officials, the true political and economic power that controls the barrio eludes his grasp.[41]

The economic disruptions in the postwar era affected the barrios of Albuquerque in many ways. For example, the Barelas neighborhood was greatly affected by postwar economic policies that led to economic decline for its residents.[42] Other barrios based around acequias were greatly affected by the general trend away from an agrarian-pastoral economy after World War II.[43] Poverty increased in the barrios, exacerbated by the flight of middle-class residents.[44] The previous norms of social control in Hispano communities broke down with the increasing urbanization and new organizational structures, increasing social problems in these areas. Crime began to increase in the 1950's and 1960's, especially by young people, and by 1970 Albuquerque had one of the highest crime rates in the country.[45] There was an uptick in drug

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[41] Tomas Almaguer, Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism, *Aztlan*, 1971.

[42] This included the construction of the highways, which made travelers bypass Route 66 that passed through their neighborhoods, affecting many businesses that ran along 4th Street through that neighborhood. Another was the decline of the railyards until finally shutting down in 1970, which employed many people in the neighborhood. In The Barelas Neighborhood Association and The Barelas Community Coalition, "Barelas: A Community Vision for the Redevelopment of the Railyards." March 2010, http://www.cabq.gov/council/documents/1appendex_e-community_vision_statements.pdf

[43] Metzgar, 118.

[44] A federal study noted the large circle of poverty in Bernalillo County, pointing out the areas of acute deprivation located in the barrios of Albuquerque such as Martínez town, Barelas, and South Broadway. In Metzgar, 126, 127.

[45] Metzgar,128.

use and abuse, especially with heroin, which affected residents of the Valley area. The increase in crime and drugs led to increases in arrests and court cases, and these cases disproportionately affected Hispanos.[46] Police and policing also increased with the general trends of increased urbanization and rising crime, with the number of police officers in Albuquerque spiking from 30 in 1948 to 380 by 1971.[47] The barrios were also physically affected by urban renewal programs imposed on them. Most of the housing was classified as substandard by housing authorities because of the previous rural and semi-rural environment, as many were built of adobe and did not have indoor plumbing.[48] Usually, the urban planning agendas were focused more on gentrification, to remove longtime residents rather than improve those residents' housing, and many were displaced in this process.[49] The increase in crime, drugs, policing and imprisonment, along with urban displacement, came about because of powerlessness in the Hispano communities of Albuquerque by a system imposed on them. Yet these conditions led to greater awareness of systemic issues by the people in the barrios, who increasingly began calling themselves Chicanas/os.

Another effect of urbanization in Albuquerque was the national War on Poverty, where Albuquerque received millions in federal funds for housing and employment programs. Starting with the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, many programs and federal dollars were directed at the urban poor to fight poverty across the United States. Early programs had Community Action Programs intended to create organizations of poor people to advocate for

[46] Metzgar, 123-128.

[47] Albuquerque Police Department Museum, https://www.cabq.gov/police/our-department/the-albuquerque-police-department-museum

[48] The percentage of substandard housing was 56.6 percent in Martínez town, 56 percent in North Barelas, 69.2 percent in South Barelas, and 64 percent in San Jose. In Metzgar, 127.

[49] In many cases, communities formed citizen groups to fight urban renewal. One case in the barrio of Martínez town is explored in Vanessa M. Macias, "'*En Unidad, Hay Poder': Community Activism and Ethnicity in South Martíneztown, 1930-1974,"* (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 2004).

themselves, to pursue the democratic goals of the Civil Rights Movement. Later the Office of Economic Opportunity was created to further the goals of community economic development and have "maximum feasible participation of the poor."[50] In Albuquerque community improvement associations were set up in mostly African American and Chicana/o neighborhoods in 1964 that had high concentrations of poverty.[51] In 1967 Albuquerque was selected as one of the cities to participate in the Model Cities program, bringing in more federal funds.[52] Many advocates and organizers were hired for the programs, some came from out of state.[53] The programs brought more community participation but were not given enough federal funding for full support as needed, because of the growing involvement by the U.S. in the war on Vietnam. Furthermore, these programs were seen as a type of managerial politics to politically contain the urban poor politically.[54] The ongoing Civil Rights Movement for African Americans took on the push for community empowerment, especially embraced by its more militant adherents. Other movements arose in this time, including movements for the poor, other ethnic minorities, women, and youth, along with the movement against the Vietnam War. Albuquerque would be affected by all these movements, most significantly the Chicana/o Movement.

The Chicana/o Movement in Albuquerque

The Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico up to 1968 was centered around Reies López Tijerina and La Alianza Federal de Mercedes. While most known for the Courthouse raid in 1967 as well as forwarding the land grant struggle and the struggle for land rights, La Alianza

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[50] Wood, 220.

[51] Wood, 221.

[52] Wood, 171, 186.

[53] These include John Goldsmith, who would form The New Breed, and Richard Moore, who would form the Black Berets. Both came with VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Job Corps, respectively.

[54] An analysis of welfare programs and their political uses is presented in Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor; the Functions of Public Welfare, (*Pantheon Books, 1971).

worked on many other issues that contributed to activism in New Mexico. One important detail is that the headquarters of La Alianza was based in Albuquerque, located at 1010 3rd Street Northwest. With Albuquerque being the largest city in the state, it was also a central location for La Alianza's activism that required travel to different communities, being less than a day's drive to anywhere in New Mexico.[55] With many rural Hispanos coming to live in Albuquerque for economic reasons, including land grant heirs, La Alianza also organized in the city around their main issue. Having a base in Albuquerque would also make the organization involved in local political issues through the 1970's, holding protests and events in Albuquerque, and members attending many City Commission meetings throughout this time. La Alianza and Tijerina would create cross-racial ties with African American and Native American groups, including a wide range of civil rights and Black Power organizations. La Alianza's participation in the National Conference on New Politics in 1967 would lead to their participation in the Poor People's Campaign the next year and help bring many Nuevomexicanos to Washington D.C. for this event.

The Poor People's Campaign, announced in early 1968 by Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), was aimed at building a multiracial mass movement for economic justice. After King's assassination in April 1968, the campaign continued when Ralph Abernathy took the leadership of the SCLC. Caravans were mobilized across the country to travel to Washington D.C. that summer for the Campaign, which would last from May 12 to June 24, 1968. Many Chicano organizations from around the country participated, and Tijerina became one of the representatives of the Southwest United States. A march was held in Albuquerque on May 18, 1968, attended by 1,000 people, as part of the

[55] Lorena Oropeza, *The King of Adobe: López López Tijerina, Lost Prophet of the Chicano Movement,* (UNC Press Books, 2019), 113.

caravan going through the region.[56] Tijerina helped secure calls for land rights on the official platform of the Campaign. The Poor People's Campaign did not realize all of its goals at its end, but one important legacy of the Campaign for the Chicana/o Movement was the increased contacts with other organizations and individuals across the country, many for the first time. These included not only contacts from different ethnic groups but many shared experiences with other Chicana/o groups, all of which would influence their organizing when they returned to their local communities.

The aftermath of the Poor People's Campaign was a turning point for Chicana/o activism in New Mexico. For one, Elizabeth Martínez and Maria Varela, then working with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), both moved to New Mexico after being inspired by the land grant struggle. Varela became a community organizer in northern New Mexico, with some of her activities including helping found the Tierra Amarilla Clinic and an agricultural cooperative.[57] Martínez helped found *El Grito del Norte* in the fall of 1968, which would become one of the most influential newspapers of the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico as well as nationally. Originally set up to be a newspaper for La Alianza, *El Grito del Norte* became more independent and expanded its scope, and was credited with bringing innovative ideas and thoughts to the movement, including feminism, internationalism, and leftist politics.[58] Another major shift in the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico after the Campaign was the growth of youth-based activism and organizations.

[56] Wood, 242.

[57] Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, *500 Years of Chicana Women's History* (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 102-104.

[58] Dennis López, "El Grito del Norte, Chicana/o Print Culture, and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism," *Science & Society* 79, no. 4 (October 2015): 527–554.

The year 1968 saw the growth of many forms of organizing from Chicana/o youth and students in New Mexico. Spurred by the Blowouts in East Los Angeles high schools in March 1968, which involved tens of thousands of students there, other high school walkouts by Chicana/o students happened around the southwest, which Rodolfo Acuña saw as the spreading of Chicana/o student militancy.[59] In Albuquerque during the Spring of 1968 students conducted walkouts in local high schools and middle schools and presented demands for social change.[60] Subsequently, the formation of youth-based militant organizations took off nationally in this period, including in New Mexico. Two New Mexico youth organizations that emerged that year had connections to La Alianza.[61] Los Comancheros del Norte, which emerged in the Fall of 1968, acted as the youth component of La Alianza and had membership around northern New Mexico.[62] Los Caballeros de Nueva España also formed during the end of 1968 and based in Albuquerque, made up of high school students and dropouts claiming a membership of 150, and worked to improve educational policies.[63] With the Brown Berets being the most prominent youth organization nationally, many chapters formed around the country, and after the Poor People's Campaign chapters formed around New Mexico, including in Albuquerque.[64]

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[59] Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, 9th Edition*, (Pearson Longman, 2020), 305.

[60] "Washington Jr. High Students Confront Power Structure," *El Papel* (Albuquerque), May 1968, 2.

[61] Nancie L. González, "The Continuing Scene: Activism in New Mexico, 1966-1969," In *The Spanish Americans of New Mexico: A Heritage of Pride*, (UNM Press, 1969), 189.

[62] A Declaration from the organization, where they use La Alianza terminology like Indo-Hispano and New Breed, is printed in "Los Comancheros Del Norte: For Machos Only," *La Raza Yearbook,* September 1968, quoted in: Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*, (Vintage Books, 1972), 306-310.

[63] Valentina, "Who are they? !Los Caballeros!" *El Grito del Norte*, January 11, 1969, 7. Los Caballeros was also influenced, if not tied to, La Alianza, with their program mentioning Indo-Hispano people and calling for recognition of land grant rights.

[64] This article mentions that Brown Berets chapters had been formed by 1969 in Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Espanola, Belen and Socorro, in "The Brown Berets Dimensions of Their Plan for "Revolution," *Albuquerque News,* March 6, 1969.

The Brown Berets of Albuquerque were founded in the summer of 1968 by attendees of the Poor People's Campaign in Washington D.C. from New Mexico. Gilberto Ballejos, who was affiliated with La Alianza and a teacher employed with the Economic Opportunity Board, was one of the founders.[65] In D.C. Ballejos and others met with Brown Beret chapters from California who helped inspire him and others to form a chapter when he returned to Albuquerque.[66] The Brown Berets had no official structure, although they reportedly organized in all 15 of the Spanish-speaking barrios in the city, and Ballejos was their public spokesman.[67]

When the Brown Berets started a chapter in Albuquerque, they immediately focused on police brutality, which was a prominent issue for Chicanas and Chicanos in Albuquerque. On August 13, 1968, Tommy Valles, 26, was shot and killed by the police, which led the Brown Berets and other groups to protest what they saw as an unwarranted killing.[68] The Brown Berets protested in Old Town Plaza with their allies from August 17th to 19th, 1968 and called for the establishment of a civilian police review board, immediate suspension of the officer who killed Valles, and psychiatric tests of new and present police officers.[69] The Brown Berets continued to speak on Valles' killing and the need for police accountability at City Commission meetings through the next month.[70] The issue of police brutality was an issue that

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[65] Ballejos resigned from the EOB after becoming spokesman for the Brown Berets. (Wood, 244).

[66] Gordon Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974,* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 161; "Who are Brown Berets Who Protest Fatal Shooting by Albq Policeman?," *Albuquerque Tribune*, August 20, 1968.

[67] The Brown Berets did not discuss their membership publicly, but Ballejos said they were made up mostly of "vatos" who were dropouts, undereducated, unemployed and under 30. In Martha Buddecke, "Mostly Unemployed, Uneducated: Brown Berets Seek Protection," *Albuquerque Journal,* August 22, 1968, A16.

[68] Joline Daffer, "Shooting Protested by 'Brown Berets,'" *Albuquerque Journal,* August 17, 1968.

[69] "Cop Killing of Chicano, Brown Berets Protest," *El Grito Del Norte* August 24, 1968, 4.

[70] "Unwarranted Ultimatum." *Albuquerque Journal,* August 21, 1968; Laura Robertson, "Brown Berets Reject Commission Decision, But Others Back City," *Albuquerque Tribune*, August 27, 1968; "City Commission Plans Meet on Police Policies," *Albuquerque Journal,* September 8, 1968; Bob Brown, "Commissioner Keeps Cool Under Fire." *Albuquerque Journal,* September 24, 1968.

was present in Albuquerque and that the Brown Berets organized the Chicana/o community on.

The Brown Berets campaigned on other issues affecting Chicanas/os in Albuquerque and made connections with other activists in New Mexico. In October 1968, the Brown Berets protested a UNM meeting in northern New Mexico on the university's racism and discrimination against Chicanas/os.[71] The Brown Berets met with Los Comancheros in northern New Mexico in October 1968, and the next month both organizations had a picket in support of Tijerina.[72] The next month an internal conflict would engulf the Brown Berets. On December 4, 1968, Ballejos was expelled from the Brown Berets by a member on their governing board's behalf, with reported issues over racism and organizational tactics.[73] Another announcement said the decision was not made on the organization's behalf but part of power struggle within the organization.[74] Nevertheless, Ballejos resigned from the Brown Berets and went on to run for school board the next year. The Brown Berets in Albuquerque declined after this and dissolved by 1969. In their brief time, the Brown Berets displayed a militant and organized Chicana/o activist group, built coalitions, and organized against police abuse of Chicana/o people. The absence of the Brown Berets in Albuquerque paved the way for another organization to form to continue this type of activism while also expanding its scope, this organization being the Black Berets.

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[71] "Brown Berets Confront UNM, Charge Racism," *El Grito del Norte,"* October 31, 1968, 14.

[72] "Brown Berets, Comancheros Plan Strategy Meeting," *Albuquerque Tribune*, October 22, 1968; "Hermanos Picket," *El Grito del Norte,* November 27, 1968.

[73] "Who Wears Berets?" *El Grito del Norte*, December 18, 1968.

[74] "Brown Berets Governing Board Backs Ballejos," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 11, 1968.

Chapter 2:

Service, Education, and Defense of La Raza:

The Formation of the Black Berets in Albuquerque and the Building of Community Power

Similar to the Brown Berets after the Poor Peoples Campaign in 1968, another group inspired militant Chicano youth at that national gathering, that group being the Black Berets. In 1969 many Brown Beret chapters formed around the United States, including many places in New Mexico. At the same time a smaller number of Chicana/o youth organizations took on the name of the Black Berets. The first Black Berets group was set up in San Jose, California in 1968, taking the name Black Berets Por la Justicia, and rooted in barrio youth organizing from years before.[75] The Black Berets Por la Justicia of San Jose were present at the Poor People's Campaign in Washington D.C. in 1968, providing security and taking part in a youth march.[76] Like the Brown Berets there, they influenced other activists at the Campaign, including youth from Denver, Colorado, who established multiple chapters in that city in early 1969.[77] Altogether, there were three known cities that Black Berets chapters were known to have formed, and Albuquerque was the third one, also established in 1969 by Nuevomexicanos who participated in the Campaign. There was no central structure to the Black Berets, so all chapters operated autonomously, although they communicated with each other. One similarity with the Black Berets chapters, and a slight difference from the Brown Berets, is that the Black Berets chapters stated that they chose their name and uniform in honor of Che Guevara and to

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[75]The history of the San Jose chapter is examined in oral histories presented in Arturo Villarreal, "Black Berets for Justice," (master's thesis, San Jose State University, 1991).

[76] Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent,* University of Wisconsin Press, 1999: 58, 62.

[77]The history of the Black Beret chapters in Denver are examined in Vigil, 71, 110.

espouse the revolutionary symbols of Latin America.[78] Thus, the Black Berets, at least in Albuquerque, were seen as having a more internationalist ideological outlook, in contrast to the narrower cultural nationalism of many Brown Berets chapters.[79]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the activism of the Black Berets in Albuquerque, along with its origins and impact. What I will answer here is 1) What were the influences of the Black Berets of Albuquerque? 2) How did the Black Berets organize in Albuquerque for civil rights and self-determination for Chicana/o people? 3) How did the Albuquerque Black Berets work with other Movement groups in New Mexico?

As I argue in this chapter, the Black Berets would prove to be one of the more influential organizations in the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico. One reason is that the social conditions facing Chicanas and Chicanos in Albuquerque were based on a rapid urbanization, and those affected by it were attracted to a militant youth group that gave an anti-colonial analysis and a solution as one of self-determination. Furthermore, the internationalism of the Black Berets of Albuquerque gave them not only an ideological base to guide their activism, but a flexibility that allowed them to adapt to the conditions facing Chicana/o people of New Mexico. The flexible ideology allowed them to take influence from others not restricted

[78]Villarreal, 106. Other scholars have written about the role of Che Guevara, who was killed in 1967, as a symbol in the Chicana/o Movement. Rodolfo Acuña wrote in 1972: "The cult of Che has also spread among the youth. To students, Che became a hero after his death; he was one man who did not betray his ideals, but who died for them. He is especially appealing to Chicano youth, since he was a Latin American and because he was an enemy of the same forces that have oppressed them" Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation,* (Canfield Press, 1972), 230. A full overview of the phenomenon of Che as a symbol in Chicano culture is in: George Mariscal, Ch.3: "Tu Querida Presencia", in *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975, (*University of New Mexico Press, 2005). In the context of New Mexico during this time, a popular slogan starting in 1967 was "Che is alive and hiding in Tierra Amarilla," as the assassination of Guevara happened the same year of the Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid.

[79] Elizabeth Martínez recalled that "In Albuquerque, the Black Berets also followed an internationalist approach. They adopted principles and a program sometimes modeled on the Black Panthers, for example, its breakfast program, that made it less strictly nationalist than Brown Beret groups in Texas and California." In Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, "A View from New Mexico: Recollections of the Movimiento Left," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 54, no. 3 (2002 July/August): 83.

by Chicanismo. These included the many leftist ideologies that were also based in internationalism that became prevalent in civil rights organizing in the United States at the time, especially influenced by similar militant community-based organizations like the Black Panthers and the Young Lords. Like these groups, the Black Berets used community organizing to respond to the needs of the people and built a base of support in the barrios of Albuquerque as well as other communities in New Mexico. Their methods included protests, other confrontational tactics, and the creation of counter-institutions. Through these efforts they attempted to build community power separate from government influence, and in turn challenged government policies they considered unjust. The Black Berets also built coalitions and networks throughout New Mexico, based on their ideals and the unique nature of New Mexico that kept Chicana/o activists from working in isolation in the state. The activism of the Black Berets was an important part of the Chicano Movement in New Mexico and left a lasting legacy in many areas.

Origins

The material social conditions faced by Chicanas/os in Albuquerque by the late 1960's were seen by some founding members as a major influence in the formation of the Black Berets. In a public oral history/teach-in held in 2021, Joaquín Luján talked about his life before he joined the Black Berets. Growing up in the Duranes neighborhood in Albuquerque's North Valley, which he described as a farming community like others in the North and South Valleys of Albuquerque, Luján saw the increasing social ills where he lived. He observed the rampant heroin use in the barrios, speculating that it started around the 1920's when the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District started overseeing water use. Along with discrimination in the public school system and abuse by police, he began to see connections to systemic injustice:

> And so, in that history, we were dealing with heroin usage in our communities, how do we help our brothers and sisters. Already at that particular point we had grandfathers, fathers, and sons that were shooting up. The problem was rampant. The police, like today, all they did was take people to prisons. So, since 1968, things just exploded. My upbringing was like everyone else's upbringing up and down the Rio Grande valley. I am speaking on my piece. Also, important enough, when I was in the first grade on that first morning I went in as Joaquín, and at the end of the day I came out as Jackie. They changed my name, that really upset my grandfather. My brother was already shooting up. It was very intense in the barrios, in the North and South Valleys. The beautiful areas in the bosque were filled with what we called tecatos, drug addicts, shooting up. The police said, well, you guys can shoot up in your communities, stay in there, and they never did anything. So, it was really up to us.[80]

Luján's upbringing occurred around the rapid urbanization in Albuquerque and the social problems that came with it, affecting the Chicana/o community in the area. With discrimination from schools and abuse and neglect by the police, Luján and others did not see a solution from the state or other official institutions. The racism and other injustices led many to become activists. Luján was active in the Brown Berets chapter in 1968 when he was about 15 years old, and the next year helped found the Black Berets. Guided by self-determination, the Black Berets turned toward building power in the community to tackle these issues.

The Black Berets were formed in Albuquerque in the later part of 1969 from a diverse group of activists in the city. Some of the founding members included Richard Moore, Joaquín Luján, Plácido Salazar, Marvin García, Richard Sawtelle, Santiago Maestas, Nita Luna, José Soler and Father Luis Jaramillo, a priest, among others. Most of the membership were Chicanas/os from New Mexico but not exclusively, as two members, Richard Moore and José Soler, were of Puerto Rican descent.[81] As mentioned earlier, many of the founders went to the

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[80] "Still Rising: Oral History Teach-in on the 1971 Chicano Rebellion in Albuquerque." Talk by Richard Moore and Joaquín Luján. June 13th, 2021.

[81] José A. Soler became a lifelong activist and scholar of labor studies. His background states "While a student at the University of New Mexico (B.U.S. 1971) Soler was radicalized by the Chicano rights movement, and with others founded the Black Berets in Albuquerque, following the model of the Brown Berets (Los Boinas Marrones)." Among his later activism was membership in the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). At "José A. Soler Papers," Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, http://findingaids.library.umass.edu/ead/mums864 (accessed February 1, 2023).

Poor People's Campaign in Washington D.C. in 1968 and some were former members of the Albuquerque Brown Berets. They formed the organization to confront the general issues facing Chicano people in this era. As described by observers and participants of the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico, the issues taken up by groups in this time included racism in the school system, exploitation and discrimination in workplaces, poor health and medical facilities, the problems of the welfare system, and police brutality, issues facing a growing and disempowered urban population.[82]

The Black Berets created a disciplined organization to defend themselves and their community. They structured themselves around a central committee made up of a chair and ministers and set up different ministries. Similar to groups like the Black Panthers and Young Lords, The Black Berets had a militant uniform, promoted a numbered program based around revolutionary nationalism, provided services not being provided by the government, and organized against police abuse. The Black Berets established 21 "reglas" or rules, points of attention every Black Beret member had to follow.[83] They created a 12-point program, which the preamble opened with: "We, the members of the Black Berets of Albuquerque, Aztlán, being aware of the injustices, discriminatory, and oppressive actions against La Raza, hereby pledge to commit our lives to the **Service, Education, and Defense of La Santa Raza."**[84] The titles of each of their points are as follows:

1. We Want Self-Determination and Liberation for All the Chicanos in the USA
2. We Want Self-Determination for All Latinos and Third World Peoples
3. We Want Community Control of Our Institutions and Land
4. We Want a True Education of Our Mestizo Culture and Spanish Language

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[82] Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Viva La Raza! The Struggle of the Mexican-American People*, (Doubleday, 1974), 181-182.

[83] "Reglas de Los Black Berets," *Venceremos (Black Beret newspaper)*, Vol. 1 No. 1, February 1971.

[84] Black Berets Organization, "Twelve Point Program of Las Gorras Negras," *Venceremos*, 1971, quoted in *The Chicanos – Life and Struggles of the Mexican Minority in the United States,* ed. Gilberto López y Rivas, (Monthly Review Press, 1973), 162-167.

5. We Want Freedom for All Political Prisoners
6. We Oppose the Amerikkkan Military and Its Unjust Wars of Oppression
7. We Want Equality for Women, Machismo Must be Revolutionary…Not Oppressive
8. We Want an Immediate End to Police Harassment, Brutality, and Murder of La Raza
9. We Want For Our People to Have the Basic Necessities to Exist
10. We Want Full Employment For Our People
11. We Oppose Capitalism and Alliances Made By Our Treacherous Politicos
12. We Believe Armed Self-Defense and Armed Struggle Are the Only Means to Liberation

From this program they adopted, the Black Berets overall presented an agenda of self-determination and community control, with an internationalist focus, that was also anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, feminist, and upheld armed self-defense. This program had similarities to other groups in form, yet also being relevant to the local conditions they were in.[85]

Consistent with their anti-colonial politics, the Black Berets evolved their program to focus more on the history and culture of New Mexico itself. In a telling of the history of the Black Berets, Richard Moore talked about how their community elders told them that they need to "New Mexicanize" their program to be relevant to their locality.[86] In 1971, the Black Berets announced that they changed their name to Las Gorras Negras, the Spanish version of their name. They were still known to many as the Black Berets, but the embrace of the Spanish name showed how they rooted their program and activities to the land and history of New Mexico and its Spanish-speaking people. They announced in their newspaper the following:

> The change in name from Black Berets to Las Gorras Negras means more than just changing from English to Spanish. It means a change in ideals from the model of Che

[85] For their program, it is noted in similarities to the numbered programs of other militant groups mentioned above, but especially its similarity in content as well as form with the Young Lords Party 13-Point Program, with almost word for word similarities with a few variations, i.e., replacing Puerto Rico with Aztlan. This may be because of the number of Puerto Ricans in the Black Berets. The text of the Young Lords program is available at http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_platform.html

[86] Richard Moore, Still Rising (2021).

> to that of la gente en Nuevo México. Resistance to Invaders of Nuevo Mexico has been long and still continues today.[87]

In this statement the Black Berets emphasized their anti-imperialist politics but rooted that politics in the history of anti-colonial resistance in New Mexico. Some of the history addressed in this statement included the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Taos Revolt of 1847, and other acts of resistance like guerrilla warfare and labor struggles conducted prior to and after the United States annexation. They connected these past events with their current struggles, saying in the same statement "now all our lands are stolen, our language almost forgotten and our culture raped." The statement ends with "It is time for Las Gorras Negras to continue la lucha de las Gorras Blancas, la lucha por JUSTICIA, TIERRA, y LIBERTAD por nuestros hijos."[88] These actions show how the Black Berets developed their political positions by learning from and making them relevant to their locality.

Unique to their organization, and in contrast to the Brown Berets, the Black Berets implemented feminism in their political philosophy. There have been several primary and secondary writings about the sexism in the Brown Berets organization, particularly from their main chapter in Los Angeles.[89] In the Black Berets 12-Point Program, point number seven upheld feminism and women's rights:

> We Want Equality For Women: Machismo Must Be Revolutionary…Not Oppressive. Under this system our women have been oppressed both by the system and our men. The doctrine of Machismo has been used by our men to take out their frustrations on their wives, sisters, mothers, and children. We must support our women in their struggle for economic and social equality and recognize that our women are equals within our struggle for Liberation. Forward Hermanas In The Struggle!

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[87] "Nosotros Somos Las Gorras Negras," *Venceremos (Black Berets)*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 2, 1971.

[88] ibid; The history of Las Gorras Blancas is examined in: Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[89] An analysis of how patriarchal views and actions of the Brown Beret leadership in Los Angeles affected their organization is examined in Ernesto Chávez, *"Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First!): Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978.* (University of California Press, 2002), 57-59.

Along with implementing feminism into their political platform, they worked to put their feminism into practice. The Black Berets had many women members and supporters, women ran many of their projects, and women served as spokespersons and other roles in the organization.[90] The organization was not completely free from sexism, but implementing feminism in their program was unique among similar organizations and made their membership and the community face those issues.

The politics of the Black Berets was created to resolve contradictions around race, class, and gender, as well as the unique colonial situation in New Mexico. Motivated by a need to organize their communities, the Black Berets created a tight-knit organization guided by their political program and rules of discipline. As stated in the preamble to their 12-Point Program, they were formed for service, education, and defense of La Raza. Their actions were based not only on these principles, but in response to the needs of the community in Albuquerque and their networks in all of New Mexico.

Service

The first part of their program, service, was created for the immediate needs of the people, and involved building alternative institutions to serve the people. In a first step toward setting up counter-institutions, the Black Berets opened their own community centers. The first center was El Mestizo, located in the South Valley at 829 Isleta SW, and another was set up in Duranes.[91] These centers provided food and clothing distribution, youth recreation and other activities, and meeting places for the organization. These efforts were aimed at countering

[90] In an interview, Black Beret leader Joaquín Luján named the following organizers involved with the Black Berets: Carolina Sanchez, Betsy Trujillo (formerly of Legal Aid, served as Black Beret spokesperson), Bonny Arias, Ana Otero, Lucy Lucero, and Arlene Baca. In "Special Insert: The Black Beret Legacy," *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Summer/Fall 2000, 1-8.

[91] "The Black Berets," *El Grito Del Norte*, October 8, 1970; "El Mestizo Center Open." *El Grito Del Norte*, November 10, 1970.

poverty and lack of resources available to residents in the Valley. At this time there was a growth of community organizing in the barrios of Albuquerque by other individuals and groups, many also building alternative institutions, and the Black Berets assisted them. For example, a barrio organization in Albuquerque, Quebrar (to break), a drug treatment facility made up of addicts, ex-addicts, and their families, was established in 1968.[92] The drug treatment facility was located at the Old Armijo School in the South Valley, a short distance from El Mestizo.[93] As drug abuse was a major issue, the Black Berets assisted families of addicts in helping their relatives get clean.[94] The organization worked closely with their communities to respond to their needs, and in many cases built institutions to help accomplish that.

A major issue determined through communication with community members in Albuquerque was a lack of healthcare and healthcare facilities in their neighborhoods. In response, the Black Berets put out a call to establish a health clinic. In April 1971, the Black Berets helped initiate and establish the Albuquerque Free Clinic Inc. Other groups involved in its creation included the Kirtland Air Force Base Wives Organization, National Welfare Rights Organization, and two UNM (University of New Mexico) service organizations.[95] At first called the People's Clinic, the name of the clinic changed shortly afterward to the Bobby García Memorial Clinic.[96] Their first location was at 624 Arno St SW in the South Broadway neighborhood of Albuquerque. The clinic was run by volunteers, received donated equipment, and got the support of over 30 volunteer doctors, nurses, and technicians to help operate it.[97]

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[92] Armando Rendon, *Chicano Manifesto*, (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 236.

[93] Joseph Metzgar, "Guns and Butter: Albuquerque Hispanics, 1940-1975." *New Mexico Historical Review*, 56.2, April 1, 1981, 129.

[94] One of their members, Judy Baca, died of an overdose. Joaquín Luján, Still Rising (2021).

[95] "Free Clinic Inc. To Open Today," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 24, 1971.

[96] Advertisement for fundraiser, *El Grito del Norte*, June 5, 1971, 3.

[97] Tony Lucero, "García Clinic Serving Health Care Need," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 22, 1973.

This was the first health care clinic serving the Valley area of Albuquerque, which consisted mostly of a Chicana/o population. The clinic was forced to move from that location after a dispute with the property owner and found a new home at the San Jose Parish Catholic Church, at 2401 Broadway Blvd SE.[98] Located in the San Jose neighborhood, the parish priest gave support for the clinic in the hopes to serve people in the neighborhood who needed these services. The clinic included a pharmacy and blood testing services.[99] The establishment of the clinic was to convey that "Health Care is a human right, not a privilege," and would treat patients regardless of ability to pay or citizenship status.[100] The clinic was created in terms of the Black Berets goals to empower and serve their communities needs through alternative institutions, in this case a people's clinic for health care needs.

To further improve health services in their community, the Black Berets and supporters later set up a community run dental clinic. The dental clinic was located near East San Jose Elementary School in the same neighborhood as the health clinic. Richard Moore described the process they took to get a dental clinic:

> The other thing was dental care. There was a facility by the East San Jose Elementary School that the city of Albuquerque owned, and it was a full stacked dental clinic. We approached the city of Albuquerque. We had already been running the Bobby García clinic with volunteers and in that process, we asked the City of Albuquerque to turn that facility over to us so that we could open up the dental clinic. They refused, and we occupied that facility. You know, we had a little fiesta there with music, and our children were singing and dancing, and the elders were there. We had chile, we had tortillas, we had burritos. And then that day, some of our people went inside the Clinic, inside the doors, took the plywood off the windows of the doors, and went in and we declared it a liberated territory, and we declared it that day that this Clinic as of today will become the health clinic of the people.[101]

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[98] Caroline Sanchez, "News From Las Gorras: Bobby García Memorial Clinic," *El Grito Del Norte*, October 2, 1971, 11.

[99] "Special Insert: The Black Beret Legacy," *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Summer/Fall 2000, 1-8.

[100] "Clinica del Barrio Will Serve Health Needs for Region," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 5, 1972; Betita Martínez, "Health Is A Human Right," *El Grito del Norte,* May 1, 1973.

[101] Richard Moore, Still Rising (2021).

To create people-run health care facilities, the Black Berets took direct action and organized the community, often confronting the government agencies that should have provided these services otherwise. Like other efforts around the country to secure health care and other basic needs for underserved communities, these efforts came from community organizations often considered militant. Shortly after the Bobby García Memorial Clinic was created, the City of Albuquerque began work on creating low-income clinics in the barrios of Albuquerque for its underserved populations.[102] The goal of self-determination along with an absence of these services caused the Black Berets to act, and in turn, brought the City of Albuquerque to begin to create these services long term.

Beyond the urban center of Albuquerque, the Black Beret's service extended to the rural portions of the state of New Mexico. The nature of New Mexico made travel and communication between different towns and areas important to the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico as a whole, and organizing happened between these communities on a large scale throughout this period. Although based in Albuquerque, the Black Berets reached out to others in New Mexico and aided in organizing projects in various locations outside the city. One of these projects was the establishment of the Cañoncito Wood Cooperative. Many people of the town of Cañoncito, located in northern New Mexico, were connected to current and former land grants, and depended on the land for resources. This included fuel, as many households in the area still used wood as a primary means for cooking and heating. The cooperative members shared the wood they cut, sold what remained, and used the funds for the purchase of more wood cutting tools and equipment.[103] The Black Berets did other activities outside

[102] Kurly Tlapoyawa (director), "First Choice: A People's History," (2011), 33 minutes, 35 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMH22qlya00 (accessed February 1, 2023).

[103] Richard Moore, Still Rising (2021).

Albuquerque and would have their members travel to other places in New Mexico to aid rural communities. These activities ranged from picking crops in northern and southern New Mexico to performing cultural events at the end of their work. Richard Moore stated, "So, although we were urban based we wanted our membership to experience rural realities. To have ties with their roots in rural communities was very important."[104] Their activism outside of Albuquerque showed their relationship to communities in the state, and their influence in the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico as a whole.

The work of the Black Berets outside of Albuquerque created strong networks with other Chicano activists around New Mexico. In Santa Fe, young Chicanas/os formed La Gente, who did similar community organizing with the Chicana/o community in that city. In Española, the Black Berets formed an ongoing partnership with *El Grito del Norte* newspaper, founded by Elizabeth Martínez in 1968. The Black Berets also aided in the formation of other Chicano activist groups around the state. As the organization was keen to stay in Albuquerque and not form other Black Beret chapters, they encouraged the formation of Chicano Youth Association (CYA) chapters for youth and students to organize autonomously.[105] Chapters of the Chicano Youth Association formed across different towns in New Mexico.[106] On September 26, 1970, Black Beret members traveled to Silver City, New Mexico to participate in a protest against a discriminatory business located there, where they also announced the formation of a new CYA chapter.[107] In April 1971 the Black Berets went to Portales, New Mexico for a march organized

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[104] "Special Insert: The Black Beret Legacy," *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Summer/Fall 2000, 4.

[105] "Special Insert: The Black Beret Legacy," *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Summer/Fall 2000, 3.

[106] Joaquín Luján listed CYA chapters forming in Tierra Amarilla, Las Vegas, Espanola, Torreon, Mountainair, Portales, Roswell, Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe. In "Special Edition: Antonio y Rito ...Presente!" *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Spring 2001, 6.

[107] Santiago Maestas (Minister of Information), "Dirty Deal at Silver City." *El Grito del Norte*, November 10, 1970.

by the CYA against another discriminatory business.[108] The activism of the Black Berets was focused on Albuquerque but extended beyond it, and they built coalitions around the state. These actions demonstrated how the Black Berets were keen to the needs of Chicanas/os across New Mexico, and how they adapted to their conditions in an urban/rural context in their attempts to build community power and self-determination.

Education

With education being the second part of their motto, the Black Berets tackled problems of the education system as part of their activism. Echoing their preamble of their 12-Point Program, Chairman Plácido Salazar stated that education in various facets was needed for liberation as a people:

> We have come to the conclusion that we cannot solve all the problems by ourselves so one of our most important tasks is to make our people aware. That is education. In order to completely educate the people we must not only concentrate on the problems and causes but we must instill in our people pride in our culture and heritage and love for that which is ours.[109]

One part of their work in education, related to their goals of self-determination, was working to correct inadequacies in the current public school system. One of their accomplishments was the establishment of a Free Breakfast Program for low-income children before they went to school. The program was funded by donations and ran out of El Mestizo Community Center.[110] The Black Berets modeled their breakfast program on the Survival Program of the Black Panther Party, which served to highlight that children's ability to perform in school was impeded by hunger, as well as the limits of government efforts to address childhood poverty

[108] Tony Mesa, "Raza in Portales Fight Anglo Leeches," *El Grito del Norte*, April 26, 1971.

[109] Tomas O Martínez, "Black Berets Pledged to Help La Raza," *Albuquerque Journal,* December 20, 1970.

[110] Divana Olivas and Stefany Olivas, "Planting Seeds for Community Needs," *Edible New Mexico,* January 7, 2021, https://www.ediblenm.com/planting-seeds-for-community-needs/ (accessed February 1, 2023).

and hunger through the War on Poverty.[111] For Albuquerque, this program was the first of its kind, as the Albuquerque Public Schools did not have school breakfast at the time, much less any other school districts that needed them.[112] The Black Berets also provided a community transportation system in neighborhoods where school buses were not available to transport students to and from school. In all, the Black Berets created programs for students to address inequalities in educational institutions that affected Chicana/o children and families.

The Black Berets assisted and continued many efforts to improve the public schools. In 1967, before the Black Berets were formed, community members in Duranes campaigned for new and better schools and libraries, a Head Start kindergarten program in their neighborhood, and a Spanish-speaking principal.[113] There were other efforts by parents and students in the North and South Valleys protesting the Albuquerque Public Schools due to racism, inadequate schooling, and the lack of Nuevomexicana/o faculty. Students organized walkouts in 1968 against a racist school system, and they continued to organize into 1970, and the Black Berets aided them in their own organizing. On September 16th, 1970, Mexican Independence Day, hundreds of mostly Chicana/o students at Rio Grande High School in the South Valley of Albuquerque conducted a walkout in protest against their "white-washed" education.[114] The Black Berets assisted the students with the walkout and led them in a march to El Mestizo Community Center. Before they reached the center, police arrested four Black

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[111] Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party, (*Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 185-186.

[112] Rodrigo Rodriguez, "Feed the People to Free the People," *El Grito de Nuevo Mexico,* January 27, 2016, http://www.elgritonm.org/2016/01/27/feed-the-people-to-free-the-people/ (accessed February 1, 2023). The federal government expanded their school food programs by 1975 to cover more children, credited to the response of the Black Panthers and other community groups like the Black Berets.

[113] Rose Marie Walker, "Duranes Group 'Marches' for Better Education," *Albuquerque Tribune*, June 6, 1967.

[114] Roberto Contreras, "The Schools - No More Brain Washing! Walkout at Rio Grande," *El Grito Del Norte*, October 8, 1970.

Beret members. In March 1971, the Black Berets also assisted with the organizing of students at Albuquerque High School.[115] During this period there was organizing by Chicano university students at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and other universities around the state, by students who were often the first of their family to attend higher education. Through the efforts of UMAS (United Mexican American Students) at the University of New Mexico, a Chicano Studies program was launched in 1970, and the Black Berets and other community groups assisted in this effort.[116] The activism of the Black Berets around education was multifaceted in tackling inequality in education and encouraging young people to organize.

Another part of the Black Berets activism around education was building alternative institutions and promoting liberatory history and culture. Because of a community need for childcare, the Black Berets set up "liberation schools," which were community run independent schools that would give young people a culturally relevant education. Liberation schools were set up in the North and South Valley and the Martíneztown neighborhood. The teachers and staff of these schools came from elders and other members from their communities, from which they created a community-based setting where they could share their knowledge with young people in the community.[117] They invited speakers and created curriculums to teach Chicano history and culture to students that did not otherwise have access to this type of curriculum. One school established through these efforts was the Bobby García Cultural School, located in the Atrisco barrio, which the city newspaper described as "...a bilingual preschool operated by volunteers, supported almost entirely by donations and

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[115] "After-Schools AHS Fights Bring Police to Scene," *Albuquerque Journal,* March 12, 1971; "100 Students Leave School," *Albuquerque Tribune*, March 19, 1971.

[116] "Senate Gives $8,000 to Chicanos," *New Mexico Daily Lobo (University of New Mexico),* February 19, 1970.

[117] Richard Moore, Still Rising (2021).

stressing the Spanish language and Chicano traditions."[118] Community organizing for education came in the form of alternative institutions of education that the Black Berets helped initiate with support from their community.

The Black Berets did other actions in support of a liberatory culture to counter stereotypes and negative depictions of the Chicana/o people. For instance, they would target businesses who used advertisements with stereotypical depictions of Mexicans, demanding the advertisements be removed, and accompanied by threats of boycotts if those businesses did not comply with the removal of the racist advertisements.[119] One example of a boycott the Black Berets helped organize was the boycott of the State Fair in September 1970. They organized the boycott to demand a Chicano Village section, which addressed the lack of representation of Chicanas/os in the annual New Mexico State Fair.[120] Since the boycott, a Spanish village section has remained a part of the State Fair. In their efforts to expand positive depictions of their culture, the Black Berets hosted movie nights, speakers and other presentations at their community centers and other spaces, and some of their members engaged in cultural production like music and plays. Their activism in this field of education was part of their goals of self-determination and empowerment of their communities.

Defense

In the preamble to their program, the Black Berets made clear that expanding community power also required a call for self-defense:

> In order to combat injustices, racial discrimination, and oppression we have set up a defense against the repressive agencies which carry out these established practices

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[118] "Cultural School Graduates 24," *Albuquerque Journal,* August 1, 1973.

[119] "Special Insert: The Black Beret Legacy," *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Summer/Fall 2000, 2.

[120] Gloria Mena, "Boycoteo de Raza Contra La Feria," *El Grito del Norte*, October 8, 1970; Kent Paterson, "Remembering the Black Berets and the Struggle for La Raza in New Mexico," *Frontera Norte Sur,* February 3, 2014, http://freedomarchives.org/pipermail/news_freedomarchives.org/2014-February/004797.html (accessed December 1, 2022).

> against the Chicano and all Third World peoples. To have an effective defense against these practices we must observe at all times the federal, state, local, and other agencies which are the main contributors to the repressive conditions which exist among La Raza and all other Third World peoples.[121]

As a paramilitary group, they acted as security for other events, with one of their first actions being a solidarity march in Albuquerque in conjunction with the Chicano Moratorium on August 29, 1970, that protested the Vietnam War.[122] They also acted as marshals during a march of 600 people in Martíneztown in protest of urban renewal.[123] Overall, their main target of self-defense was against the police.

The eighth point of their 12-Point Program called for "An Immediate End to Police Harassment, Brutality, and Murder of La Raza." Furthermore, the twelfth point called for armed self-defense, specifically directed at police, ending with: "El Chicano Ha Despertado! Cuidate Chota!" ("The Chicano has Awakened! Watch Out Pig!"). Police abuse was a major issue for Chicanas/os in the barrios of Albuquerque, where residents faced regular harassment and violence from law enforcement agents who were called the slang term "chotas." Police violence was a major organizing issue for the Brown Berets previously, where they campaigned around the killing of Tommy Valles; they conducted meetings with city officials, made coalitions with other groups, and did petitions, rallies, and marches around this issue. The Black Berets continued these forms of activism, along with expanding different tactics to defend their communities from police violence. After the Black Berets formed, they began publicizing incidents of police abuse in *El Grito del Norte* and later in their own newspaper *Venceremos*.[124] In the Fall of 1970, the Black Berets set up a 24-hour hotline for people to call

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[121] Black Beret 12 Point Program.

[122] Tomas O. Martínez, "500 Participants Parade in Chicano War Moratorium," *Albuquerque Journal*, August 31, 1970

[123] "Martíneztown Not For Sale," *Venceremos (Black Beret Newspaper)*, Vol. 1 no. 2, June 1971, 4.

[124] One example is in: Joaquín Luján, "No Hay Justicia Por La Raza," *El Grito del Norte,* December 7, 1970.

for assistance on police abuse, stating “The Berets and La Raza won’t be taking this kind of treatment anymore.”[125] This was the beginning of the communications network they created with their communities to handle conflicts with police. Their activism on police brutality was a large part of their doctrine of self-defense and community empowerment.

The Black Berets used petitions and rallies to directly confront police abuse. In one case, on October 27, 1970, two Black Berets and another person were stopped and harassed by two officers from the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department (BCSD), detective Lundy and deputy Cody.[126] With some of the South Valley being unincorporated and outside Albuquerque city limits, the county sheriffs were often the law enforcement the people in this area interacted with. The Black Berets organized a community rally on November 15, 1970, attended by about 60 Chicanas/os to present a petition of demands to the BCSD. One of the demands was to have Lundy and Cody resign for their “extreme racism.”[127] An undersheriff had promised the group that the two would be transferred out of the South Valley. Yet on December 3rd, 1970, according to news reports in *El Grito del Norte*, shots were fired at a sheriff’s deputy's patrol car in the South Valley, that deputy being Lundy.[128] What happened was that the Sheriff's Department did not transfer the deputies out of the area as promised but instead only restricted them to night shifts in the same neighborhoods. This incident would show the reaction to police agencies by community groups that attempted to bring accountability to their officers. The Black Berets would continue to intercede as a political force on the issue of police accountability and perform tactics to bring police accountable.

[125] “Black Berets News Service,” *El Grito del Norte,* November 10, 1970.
[126] “Black Berets News Service,” *El Grito del Norte,* November 10, 1970. The same issue names the two officers in a poem about police abuse, entitled “Three Little Pigs.”
[127] “Lundy Shot At - Anybody See Cody?” *El Grito del Norte,* December 7, 1970.
[128] ibid.

The Black Berets attended and created meetings with city officials and police representatives to attempt to bring attention to police abuse. From December 1970 until the early half of 1971, the Black Berets spoke at City Commission hearings and attended official meetings with city officials. During this time other groups were also pressing for police accountability. On November 30, 1970, a group of nine African American organizations in Albuquerque that would become known as the Black Community Alliance (BCA) gave a mandate with a list of eight resolutions relating to police accountability. The BCA later issued these demands at a City Commission meeting on December 14th, 1970, a meeting where Black Berets members also spoke on police abuse.[129] One of the leaders of the Alliance was John Goldsmith of The New Breed, an African American community youth organization he founded in Albuquerque. The City of Albuquerque held other meetings throughout the next year specifically for "minority concerns", which the Black Berets and other groups attended.[130] The Black Berets called for equal and adequate representation from the community at these official meetings, which became a source of conflict between the organization and the city and police.[131] For example, a meeting scheduled on January 19, 1971, with police officers and city officials resulted in those representatives not showing up. That meeting continued with the three community members appointed to the panel where they heard testimony on five instances of police harassment and brutality by community members who were not Black Berets.[132] The

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[129] "Minorities Vow Action After Meeting Fails," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 14, 1970.

[130] "City Plans Meetings With Minority Groups," *Albuquerque Tribune,* January 7, 1971; "Minority Group Meet Scheduled Thursday," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 3, 1971; "Minority Meeting Good, Says Wilson," *Albuquerque Tribune,* February 4, 1971; "Minority Groups' Problems Is Topic," *Albuquerque Tribune,* February 4, 1971.

[131] Mike Padget, "City Minority Proposal Hit, Also Praised," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 6, 1971; "Wilson Agrees to Assist Berets in Naming Panel," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 7, 1971.

[132] The three community members on the panel were Joe Armas, Father Ramon Aragon, and Emma Chavira. "Police, City Chiefs Ignore Beret Meet," *Albuquerque Journal*, January 20, 1971; "Concerned Citizens Form Citizens Police Review Board," *Venceremos (Black Berets),* Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1971.

Black Berets organizing around police accountability often took the form of talks with city officials to find solutions, where the organization was accepted as a political entity working on behalf of their communities.

On January 4th, 1971, after another community meeting with city officials, police, and minority community representatives, the Black Berets announced a change in methods. The organization announced the formation of citizen patrols in the North and South Valleys of Albuquerque to protect Chicanas/os from police harassment.[133] The Black Berets stated the patrols would continue until city officials held a meeting with them about certain police officers accused of harassment. The Berets warned of "all-out war" between Chicanas/os and police if action was not taken.[134] The formation of the patrols was part of the Black Berets' goals of community empowerment and expressed their opposition to police abuse through means of self-determination. The patrols also brought increased conflict with police. On January 30th, 1971, a Black Beret, Dionicio Lee Baca, was arrested during a patrol and found guilty a couple of months later for interference with a police officer.[135] The Black Berets at the same time continued to take part in official meetings with the city on police accountability while building alternative institutions like these patrols that challenged those official institutions.

The Black Berets also organized a mass protest in response to police abuse. On February 5th, 1971, Tony López, a Vietnam veteran, was shot and killed by Albuquerque police, the circumstances around which many considered unjust, another example of police

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[133] Art Bouffard, "Black Berets Form Patrol in Valley," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 5, 1971.
[134] ibid.
[135] "Beret Is Found Guilty of Charges Of Interfering With Police Officer," *Albuquerque Journal,* March 14, 1971.

violence against Chicanas/os.[136] Shortly thereafter, the organization called for a Marcha Por Justicia in Albuquerque scheduled for February 27th, 1971.[137] The call for action was for "all the people with justice in their hearts to march, demonstrate, and stop the pig harassment, brutality, and murder of our people."[138] The march started at Robinson Park near downtown, with a participation of about 400 people, representing many diverse groups and many people from all over New Mexico.[139] After rallying at the park, they marched to City Hall. Chants in the march included: "Raza Si, Chotas No!," "Free the People!," "Viva La Raza!," "Chicano Power!," "Justicia o Muerte!" The Black Berets gave speeches at the end of the rally, then an open mike was presented where people gave their accounts of police abuse. A list of demands was read at the end of the march, which included: a demand for a civilian review board over police with real power; community involvement in police training; a five-year state residency requirement for those hired as police; and a review of laws and ordinances targeting minorities.[140] They also called for the release of non-white prisoners from city, county, and state jails, contending that many were sent there on phony charges and could not get fair trials.[141] A 2-week deadline was set for the demands to be met or for City Manager Wilson to resign. The demands were not met, but the march expressed the discontent the people had with the situation of excessive policing, and how the Black Berets mobilized that discontent in Albuquerque.

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[136] "Albuquerque - Tony López," *El Grito del Norte,* February 28, 1971.

[137] "Berets Schedule 'Justice March'," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 12, 1971.

[138] Flier for march, printed in *Venceremos (Black Beret newspaper)*, Vol. 1 No. 1, February 1971.

[139] Journalists reported protesters from Santa Fe, Portales, and Tierra Amarilla, among other places in New Mexico. Some of the groups reported at the March included clergymen, representatives from Quebrar, La Alianza, Chicano Youth Association, Las Chicanas, members of Brown Berets chapters outside Albuquerque, and members of La Gente of Santa Fe. In Tomas O. Martínez, "Black Berets Protest Police," *Albuquerque Journal*. February 28, 1971.

[140] ibid.

[141] "Policia Killing Raza…A Time To Unite: Albuquerque - Marcha Por Justicia," *El Grito del Norte,* February 28, 1971.

While the Black Berets were active there was a wave of police killings around New Mexico, that affected other groups as well as Chicanas/os. On April 23, 1971, Paul Green, an Anglo, was killed by Albuquerque police. In Taos on May 21, 1971, police killed Felipe Mares, a Chicano, and on June 21, 1971, police there killed Roy Gallegos, also Chicano, who was from Santa Fe. On April 10, 1972, James Bradford, an African American man, was killed by Albuquerque police. The Black Berets attended the funerals and protests for them outside of Albuquerque, continuing to link together in coalition with local groups in their areas.

The Black Berets support of self-defense of their communities manifested in a variety of tactics in protest against police violence. Their range of tactics were aimed at mobilizing and organizing the people to bring accountability to these institutions and creating community power to counter these state institutions based on force. As part of their activism the Black Berets officially announced that their members would be armed in self-defense. While upholding this stance through the organization's whole existence up to 1973, in all those years the Black Berets handled their weapons within lawful means, did not publicly display their weapons, and never fired their weapons. As will be examined in Chapter 3, the justification for their announcement of armed self-defense came because of attacks by police and outside opponents, and the police responded with repressive measures that created a chilling effect on the organization and others in the movement in New Mexico.

Conclusion

Overall, the Black Berets pursued their activism within the Chicana/o communities of Albuquerque and surrounding areas with the goals of self-determination and community empowerment. The material conditions of Chicanas/os combined with an Anglo-dominated system that kept them from affecting change led them to pursue tactics that not only challenged

the present power structure but built their own power in their communities. While rooting themselves in their communities they addressed problems of poverty, health and educational disparities, racial injustice, and abuse from law enforcement. Furthermore, because of the lack of representation and response from official institutions of power, or the use of those institutions as a force of domination and subjugation, they were obligated to take action to help their communities and fight injustice. The Black Berets practiced principles of self-determination, where people can make decisions over their lives and have the power to do so effectively. They did this by attempting to create community power to solve their issues and affect change. While not all their goals were met overall, their actions had long lasting effects in the history of New Mexico.

Chapter 3:

In the Shadow of Justice:

Police Repression and Community Defense of the Black Berets in Albuquerque, 1970-1972.

As described in the previous chapter, police accountability and defense against police violence were central tenets of the Black Beret's political organizing. As a result of their challenges to authorities, the Black Berets were targeted through different measures of state repression. Like many activist groups in this period, the Black Berets were subject to counterintelligence actions by law enforcement agencies, in the form of surveillance, harassment, and violence, aimed at undermining their political activities. The purpose of this chapter is to show the extent of the techniques and methods of police intelligence operations against the Black Berets and the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico in general. How did the state use repressive measures to target the Black Berets, and how did the Black Berets respond? What was the climate and landscape of political repression in New Mexico, and how did that climate affect the Black Berets? How did police brutality affect the broader Chicana/o community, and how did it effect that community's response to police repression? In this chapter I argue that the Black Berets, because of their actions against racism and colonialism, were subject to various forms of political repression by police acting in defense of that present system. This repression was inflicted on movements around the country, and even on other groups in New Mexico.

The contradictions of racism and injustice the Black Berets brought against the political establishment in New Mexico would lead to expressions of mass outrage and an unprecedented

violent response from police agencies. Political researcher Ken Lawrence describes political repression as existing in three discernable forms: police brutality, vigilantism, and secret police activity; all three were subjected upon the Black Berets from 1970 to 1972.[142] During this period various police agencies targeted the Black Berets through surveillance, harassment, and extra-legal violence, aided by organized right-wing white nationalist aggressions to disrupt lawful political dissent. In turn, the Black Berets and the Chicana/o community responded to this campaign of repression in a cyclical process, upholding their stance of community defense. The attacks by the police gave the Black Berets a wide range of support in the Chicana/o community and elsewhere but ultimately led to their decline. The revelations of these activities give a new understanding of how state repression occurred against Chicana/o political organizations in New Mexico and how they organized in response.

Era of Resistance and Repression

The Black Berets activism was part of a trend of youth advocacy that was the target of police repression during the U.S. civil rights era. The conflicts of the state against the Black Berets were shaped by the political climate of the United States at the time. The 1960's and 1970's were a time of massive social change and unrest. Challenges to the status quo were met with backlash from many parts of society and repression from law enforcement agencies on the local, state, and federal level. This period saw revelations that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conducted Counter-Intelligence Programs (COINTELPRO) from 1956 to

[142] "Police brutality, which is widespread violence committed by armed agents of the state against members of oppressed communities, nationalities, and classes, usually of a diffuse and relatively random character; vigilantism, which is violence against the oppressed committed by ostensibly private (non-government) individuals and organizations, sometimes random but more typically aimed at explicit targets; and secret police activity, nearly always directed by elite government agencies against carefully chosen enemies considered to be political threats to established authority." In Ken Lawrence, *The New State Repression*, (Chicago: International Network Against State Repression, 1985), 1.

1971 that worked against political groups and individuals they deemed subversive.[143] The focus of COINTELPRO was not on preventing criminal activity but instead on undermining political activity that was constitutionally protected but which the established authorities had ideological opposition to. The methods used by the programs were: infiltration, manipulating public opinion, psychological warfare, harassment through the legal system, and extra-legal force.[144] The programs were officially discontinued after they were uncovered in 1971, but the FBI and other federal agencies continued to use similar methods against their perceived political opponents years afterward.[145] So far, the Chicana/o Movement has not been revealed as a direct target of COINTELPRO, but many repressive actions against individuals and groups within it were conducted by the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies.[146] Above all,

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[143] Many studies have been done on the COINTELPROs of the FBI and other agencies against dissent in the United States. A sampling of these studies are the following: Nelson Blackstock, *COINTELPRO: The FBI's War on Political Freedom*. (Pathfinder, 1975); Frank J. Donnor, *The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement, (*Boston: South End Press 1988), and *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States,* (Boston: South End Press, 1990); Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action Against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It. (*South End Press, 1989); Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America from 1870 to 1976, 1st Illinois Edition,* (University of Illinois Press, 2001).

[144] Glick, 10.

[145] One study of federal law enforcement interference with social movements to undermine their political influence going into the 1980s is in Ross Gelbspan, *Break-Ins, Death Threats, and the FBI: The Covert War Against the Central America Movement, (*South End Press, 1991).

[146]One of the most well-known cases of infiltration and provocation against the Chicano Movement on a federal level was Eustacio "Frank" Martínez 's infiltration of five Chicano groups in Texas and California on behalf of the then Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau of the IRS (later to become the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives). Martínez not only engaged in intelligence gathering but in provocateur activities. He came forward after he refused to frame a community group for terrorist activity. This story is documented in Acuña (1972), 267-268 and Donnor (1981), 347-348. José Angel Gutiérrez possesses the largest body of literature that brings attention to state repression against the Chicana/o Movement on the federal level, first with: "Chicanos and Mexicans: Under Surveillance: 1940 to 1980," *RENATO ROSALDO LECTURE SERIES MONOGRAPH*, vol. 2, Mar. 1986, 29; followed by: *The Eagle Has Eyes : The FBI Surveillance of César Estrada Chávez of the United Farm Workers Union of America, 1965-1975,* (Michigan State University Press, 2019); *Tracking King Tiger: López López Tijerina and the FBI,* (Michigan State University Press, 2019); *FBI Files on Mexicans and Chicanos, 1940-1980: The Eagle Is Watching,* (Lexington Books, an Imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2021). The federal monitoring of the Brown Berets is documented in Jennifer G. Correa, *Chicano Nationalism: The Brown Berets and Legal Social Control,* (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 2006).

an understanding of the state repression of this period is that much of this activity was conducted by law enforcement agencies at the state and local level, with federal actions providing cover for state and local police targeting political activity.[147] This is the case for the Chicana/o Movement, where many of the main groups and events of this movement were targeted by police at the state and local level in these manners.[148] Furthermore, law enforcement engaging in state repression utilized the tacit support and assistance of organized right-wing groups acting as vigilantes outside of legal sanction but sharing ideological justification. As will be shown, the acts of repression faced by Chicana/o Movement organizations in New Mexico were overwhelmingly conducted by state and local police agencies combined with the extra-legal targeting from right-wing agitators.

State repression against the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico that would target the Black Berets was exemplified in the actions conducted against Reies López Tijerina and La Alianza Federal de Mercedes. Tijerina and La Alianza faced surveillance and infiltration, even before the organization was founded, from state and federal law enforcement including the

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[147] These local police divisions were often known as Red Squads, due to targeting socialist and communist groups and those considered leaning toward them. Examined in Frank J. Donnor, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America (*University of California Press, 1990).

[148] In Los Angeles, some of the main activities in this era that had national prominence included the East Los Angeles high school Blowouts in 1968 and the National Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War in 1970. There has been extensive literature that has covered both events, which were heavily targeted by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) with widespread beatings, arrests, and even deaths at the hands of the police. The LAPD had an established Intelligence Bureau that monitored and surveilled Chicana/o activists as well as conducted dirty tricks and other psychological warfare, manipulated public opinion, used the legal system to harass, and conducted other extra-legal activities including violence. An analysis of the role of the LAPD against the Chicana/o Movement is brought out in Edward J. Escobar, "The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971" *Journal of American History*, vol. 79 no. 4, Mar. 1993, 1483–1514. Escobar mentioned here back in 1993 that "[T]he historical literature has not fully analyzed the relationship between the protest movements of the sixties and law enforcement" (Escobar, 1488). A few years later an examination of the movement led by Corky González in Denver was published in Ernesto Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), which analyzes the police repression the said organization faced. This is done through the lens that Vigil had as a leader in that organization.

FBI.[149] One of the actions that instigated the 1967 Courthouse Raid was the extra-legal and unconstitutional actions of District Attorney Alfonso Sanchez against Alianza, and before and after this incident, organization members faced much legal harassment in and outside of courts. Tijerina and La Alianza also faced psychological warfare and manipulation of public opinion by politicians and the media, motivated by racism and red baiting.[150] These attacks were amplified by the interventions of the far-right John Birch Society, which spread much disinformation about Tijerina and La Alianza around the state and nationally, demonstrating the role of right-wing groups in the subversion of social movements.[151] Most importantly, right-wing disinformation contributed to large amounts of extra-legal violence against La Alianza and its members after the raid. A witness at the courthouse raid, Eulogio Salazar, was later found murdered. His murder was blamed on Tijerina with no evidence. Furthermore, the organization's members and projects came under violent physical attacks during and after

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[149] Analyses of law enforcement effects on Tijerina and La Alianza is given in: David Correia, "'Rousers of the Rabble' in the New Mexico Land Grant War: La Alianza Federal De Mercedes and the Violence of the State," *Antipode* 40, no. 4, (2008): 561-583; and José Angel Gutiérrez, *Tracking King Tiger: Reies López Tijerina and the FBI,* (Michigan State University Press, 2019). A recent study of Tijerina states that the FBI began monitoring the organization in 1964 with the help of a confidential informant, and would continue to for the next ten years, in Lorena Oropeza, *The King of Adobe: Reies López Tijerina, Lost Prophet of the Chicano Movement,* (UNC Press Books, 2019), 151.

[150] The redbaiting of La Alianza, despite adopting an anti-communist clause in the Cold War era, is described in: Oropeza, 145, 176. Other media attacks against Alianza are described in Oropeza, 170, 174, 261.

[151] The rise of the John Birch Society and its stance against the Civil Rights Movement motivated by its paranoid style of anti-communism is examined in David R. Farber and Jeff Roche, *The Conservative Sixties,* (New York: P. Lang, 2003). After the 1967 Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid, the John Birch Society put out hit piece articles in their publication *American Opinion* by Alan Stang, entitled *"Reies Tijerina: The Communist Plan to Grab the Southwest"* (October 1967) and "*Terror Grows: War on Poverty Supports Castroite Terrorist,"* (March 1968). These articles were distributed outside courthouses during the trials of Alianza members to influence the court decisions, as described in Patricia Bell Blawis, *Tijerina and the Land Grants: Mexican Americans in Struggle for Their Heritage*, (International Publishers, 1971), 61. A Civil Rights Commission report stated: "The representative of the (New Mexico) State attorney general's office said that newspaper reports of the incidents involved were biased and that an article published in the John Birch Society magazine, which characterized the Alianza as a Communist front organization, was the best account of these events," in United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest*, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1970), 16. In evidence of cooperation with police and the right-wing, Stang was granted "unusual" access to the state's law enforcement files to write those propaganda articles, in Peter Nabokov, *Tijerina and the Courthouse Raid, 2nd edition,* (University of New Mexico Press, 1970), 184.

many of their court cases. From 1968 to 1969 their headquarters in Albuquerque and projects in northern New Mexico came under physical attacks through numerous acts of vandalism, shootings, bombings, and arson.[152] The tactics of repression being inflicted on social movements nationwide were put in place with La Alianza, which not only affected the organization but created a chilling effect for others in the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico.

Police Harassment and Vigilante Violence Against the Black Berets

The repressive tactics that were deployed against La Alianza would be in the memory of the Black Berets and other Chicana/o Movement groups. The same extensive surveillance, infiltration, and political subversion inflicted upon La Alianza would extend to the Black Berets, who would also be targeted by state and local police aided by right wing accomplices. The actions against Alianza created a climate of political repression that was felt throughout the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico. This climate was ongoing with general police harassment and violence inflicted on Chicanas/os and other people of color, which caused them to organize around these issues through community defense. These actions by the state also influenced the Black Berets and the more militant stances they took, including upholding their stance on armed self-defense in response.

From December 1970 to the early part of 1971, the Black Berets faced a wave of police harassment and vigilante violence. The first recorded incident of the latter happened on December 4, 1970, when two to three gunshots were fired through the windows at the El Mestizo Community Center. This occurred while three people were inside, who narrowly

[152] A list of the incidents is documented in: Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Viva La Raza: The Struggle of the Mexican American People,* (Doubleday, 1974), 176-180; Gutiérrez (2019b), 217; Oropeza, 256-258.

missed getting shot.[153] The Black Berets suspected that this and other acts of violence were inflicted by the Minutemen, a far-right paramilitary organization that targeted leftists in the 1960s and 1970s.[154] During this time, the organization and other activists around New Mexico received a trademark threat from the Minutemen, leaflets and postcards with a shooting target on it. These leaflets and postcards threatened civil rights activists deemed enemies by the Minutemen, who they called "traitors," and warned these individuals to beware of assassins everywhere.[155] The Black Berets suspected cooperation if not joint membership with the Minutemen and law enforcement officials in New Mexico.[156] Both the Minutemen and many police shared similar ideologies rooted in paranoid anti-communism and racism, which made the Black Berets a target for vigilante violence that went along with police repression.

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[153] "Youth Center Target of Shots." *Albuquerque Journal.* December 6, 1970; "Bullets Fired at El Mestizo." *El Grito del Norte*, December 7, 1970.

[154] Founded by Robert DePugh in 1959, The Minutemen shared the same conspiratorial anti-communism of the John Birch Society but advocated more extreme goals and measures. Members formed underground guerrilla cells, stockpiled weapons, and conducted paramilitary training, believing that they would need to fight communism through military means. There has been extensive literature on the organization, one analysis is in Farber and Roche, 43. A connection to New Mexico was that DePugh was arrested in the town of Truth or Consequences in southern New Mexico in 1969 for weapons charges and jailed the next year. Much of the literature on the Minutemen say the organization disintegrated after DePugh and other members went to prison, but one source says they maintained a following through the 1970's and had a publication *On Target* through the 1980's, in Ciaran O'Maolain, *The Radical Right: A World Directory*, (Longman, 1987), 374. As the Minutemen were known to be active in New Mexico during the 1970's, they were a major part of repression against social justice movements, whether they were official or not.

[155] The Minutemen postcard is in a flier put out by the Black Beret Organization, "Why We Are Armed," available at *Reies López Tijerina Papers* (MSS 654) Box 34 Folder 32, Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico Libraries. This Minutemen postcard was a tactic used against many other leftist groups around the country during this time. One source wrote that it was sent to chapters of the Black Panther Party and Students for a Democratic Society, "...usually those operating in locations remote from the urban hubs of new left activities...during the fall of 1970," the same time the Black Berets received these cards, in Churchill and Vander Wall (1990), 226.

[156] "According to Beret leader Richard Moore, the group sent an informant to the militia's meetings in the late-1960s and created a roster of those who attended, including multiple police departments comprising the secretive Metro Squad, a police intelligence unit. 'Many members of the right-wing Minute Men [*sic*] organization were from the sheriff's, the state police, and the Albuquerque Police departments. So making a distinction between the two sometimes wasn't easy,' said Moore in 2001. The group gave out the list at a press conference in Santa Fe, including to a New Mexico attorney general, hoping for an investigation. It never came." In Kalen Goodluck, "New Mexico's Thin Blurred Line," *High Country News,* July 20, 2020, https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.8/south-corruption-new-mexicos-thin-blurred-line

The escalating attacks by police and vigilantes led the Black Berets to publicly uphold their right to self-defense. In another incident the same month, on December 9th, 1970, the Black Berets Minister of Justice was stopped by two white men in a pickup truck armed with guns who threatened to kill him if he did not remove his beret.[157] Shortly after this, the Black Berets publicly announced that their members would arm themselves because of the physical threats received from police and other outside nemeses.[158] Along with vigilante violence, the Black Berets referenced previous incidents of police harassment, beginning with arrests at the Rio Grande High School walkout in September 1970 and the incident with Sheriff's deputies the month after.[159] The physical attacks against La Alianza as well as numerous other incidents of police abuse factored into their decision to arm.[160] During this time, the Black Berets and other groups in Albuquerque continued to engage in meetings and talks with city officials over police accountability, along with other independent efforts like tribunals and community patrols, going into the next year 1971.[161] Yet police harassment and vigilante violence continued against the Black Berets and their allies in this same period.

Vigilante violence was the suspected motive in the murder of Robert García, an Albuquerque activist and Black Beret associate. Robert ``Bobby" García, 21, worked through VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) at a project in the South Valley to help the poor. On December 10th, 1970, he was found dead in his car in Edgewood, a few miles east of

[157] Black Beret Organization, "Why We Are Armed," op. cit.; Mike Padget, "Minorities Press Demands to City," *Albuquerque Journal,* December 15, 1970.

[158] "Black Berets Say They'll Arm," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 10, 1970.

[159] see Chapter 2.

[160] The wave of police brutality against Chicanas/os nationwide was documented in the U.S. Civil Rights Commission report, *Mexican Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest,* 1970, which referenced many incidences of police misconduct in Albuquerque.

[161] See Chapter 2.

Albuquerque, from a shotgun blast to his chest.[162] A sawed-off shotgun was found with his body. The death was immediately ruled a suicide by law enforcement, but the Black Berets and other community members saw flaws in the investigation because questions about his death went unanswered. As a result, the Black Berets asserted that García was murdered and subsequently called for an investigation into his death. Some of the discrepancies included that García was not considered suicidal as he had just enrolled in classes at UNM, and the shotgun found at the scene was different from one that a member borrowed from García three weeks before.[163] Before this incident García also received similar death threats in the form of postcards from the Minutemen at his work site. Despite efforts by the Black Berets and the community, no other investigation was brought about into the death of Bobby García. The Black Berets named many of their projects after García in his memory. His death was seen by them as an example of the continuing injustice inflicted upon Chicana/o people attempting to create social change.

The next year the Black Berets had another major incident of violence inflicted against them. On the night of Sunday January 24th, 1971, a car owned by their Chairman, Plácido Salazar, exploded and burned. The car, a Jeep, was located at a garage near the El Mestizo Community Center on Isleta Blvd. Two bullet holes were found in the gasoline tank strapped under the front passenger seat, and a .30 caliber rifle bullet casing was found nearby. Police also speculated an explosive device may have been involved in the explosion that was heard throughout the South Valley.[164] Federal agents with the IRS Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

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[162] "Probe Into García Death Continuing Despite Findings," *Albuquerque Journal,* December 18, 1970; Patrick Lamb, "Authorities '99 Per Cent Sure' García's Death Not Murder," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 19, 1970; "Probe Continues into VISTA Worker's Death," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 7, 1971.

[163] "Carnale Murdered," *Venceremos (Black Beret newspaper)*, Vol. 1 No. 1, February 1971.

[164] "Black Beret Official's Car Burns; 2 Bullet Holes Found in Gas Tank," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 25, 1971.

division entered into the investigation the following month and sent ten samples from the explosion site to the FBI laboratory in Washington D.C.[165] The Sheriff's Department theorized a "third party" group was responsible for the explosion, who they say may have been attempting to incite more confrontation between police and the Black Berets. The Sheriff's also speculated the explosion may have been linked to previous incidents of violence the past year.[166] The Black Berets refused to cooperate with the sheriff's investigation and dismissed this theory. The Black Berets suspected the Minutemen organization was involved with this and other incidents.[167] The El Mestizo Community Center closed shortly after the explosion, and a new center was opened in a different location, which was also a target of vandalism.[168] In another incident at the residence of two Black Beret leaders, which happened three days after the Black Berets had their Marcha Por Justicia, three shots were fired at Plácido Salazar's car, and Richard Moore's truck had a tire slashed.[169] Since these incidents did not seem to happen at random, the Black Berets connected them to previous attacks against La Alianza and other Chicana/o activists by police and vigilantes, and revelations of police and vigilantes often being one of the same.[170] The violent attacks faced by the Black Berets created a hostile political atmosphere around them that affected how they organized.

During this same period the Black Berets were the targets of various incidences of police harassment showing police complicity, whether direct or indirect, in the violence

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[165] "Federal Agents Now Probing Car Explosion," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 4, 1971; "Testing Shows Dynamite Bomb Used at Clinic," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 20, 1971.

[166] These incidents include the shots fired at El Mestizo and shots fired at the Sheriff's Deputy in 1970. "Sheriff Theorizes On 'Third Party' In Car Blast," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 27, 1971.

[167] "Berets Jeep Bombed," *Venceremos (Black Beret Newspaper)*, Vol.1 No. 1, February 1971.

[168] "Recreation Hall Hit by Vandals," *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 3, 1971.

[169] "Berets Leaders Report Vehicles Are Vandalized," *Albuquerque Journal,* March 4, 1971.

[170] In a reflection, Richard Moore stated "Later on we proved that many of the members of the right-wing Minute Men organization were from the sheriffs, the state police, and the Albuquerque police departments. So making a distinction between the two sometimes wasn't easy." In "Special Edition: Antonio y Rito ...Presente!" *Voces Unidas (Newsletter of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP))*, Spring 2001, 6.

targeted against the organization. When they announced the start of their community patrols, Richard Moore and Joaquín Luján described how on December 19th, 1970, they were pulled over by police and forced out of their car at gunpoint. They recounted three other occasions when their members were stopped by police for no apparent reason and treated roughly.[171] Richard Moore reported receiving several traffic and parking tickets in this period, 15 in a 10-day period, and convicted of only two.[172] Moore also reported his phone was disconnected after a person claiming his identity called the phone company to disconnect it.[173] In a case of targeted harassment, on January 27, 1971, police made a traffic stop on a vehicle driven by Moore and another Black Beret, James Roy Maestas. Police claimed they found a rifle in their truck while issuing a citation, along with two ammunition clips between the seats, and charged both with carrying a deadly weapon.[174] Moore and Maestas pleaded innocent during the arraignment where judge Harold Robins dismissed the charges. The judge mentioned a law that permits hunters to carry unconcealed weapons in their cars, and since the weapon the Black Berets had was not loaded nor concealed, Moore and Maestas were within the law.[175] Also during this arraignment, judge Robins noted the numerous police called for backup during the arrests, solely because the police said the two were Black Berets. Robins asked, "Is there any reason why all these were present at the scene? Are they under surveillance or something?"[176]

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[171] Art Bouffard, "Black Berets Form Patrol in Valley," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 5, 1971.

[172] ibid. Also documented in: New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *The Struggle For Justice and Redress in Northern New Mexico: A Report.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1974), 7-8.

[173] Art Bouffard, "Robins Turns Down Request To Mediate Beret-City Meet," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 6, 1971.

[174] "Black Berets Plead Innocent On Deadly Weapon Charge," *Albuquerque Tribune,* January 28, 1971.

[175] "Robins Dismisses Weapon Charges On Black Berets," *Albuquerque Tribune,* January 29, 1971.

[176] Art Bouffard, "Robins Dismisses Weapons Charge Against Berets," *Albuquerque Journal,* January 29, 1971.

Revelations of Surveillance and Counterintelligence

The following months after the above incidents would reveal evidence of police surveillance against the Black Berets. One came out during the Marcha Por Justicia on February 27th, 1971, where there were also incidences of attempted provocateurs who tried to incite the crowd in the march to violence. One of these alleged provocateurs attempted to throw a rock but a Black Beret marshaling the march prevented that person from throwing it. Also at the march, one person was arrested for interfering with police officers, specifically those who were taking photographs of the participants of the march. News reports stated that this was being done for the police department's "Identification Division" for identification files.[177] This would be the first of many revelations that the Albuquerque police and other agencies were deliberately targeting the Black Berets.

The revelation of an Intelligence Division in the Albuquerque Police Department came from a leaked document. In mid-1971, evidence of police intelligence operations came through the publicizing of "Intelligence Division Bulletin #209," an Albuquerque Police Department publication dated December 1970.[178] This five-page dossier recorded the information of a total of 35 people, with pictures of 17 of these people included in the file. Most on the list were members or affiliates of the Black Berets, along with members of The New Breed and La Alianza. The bulletin published each person's name, dates of birth, height and weight, address,

[177] The incidents of provocation and police identification were reported in both Tomas O. Martínez, "Black Berets Protest Police," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 28, 1971; and "Policia Killing Raza…A Time To Unite: Albuquerque - Marcha Por Justicia," *El Grito del Norte,* February 28, 1971.

[178] Bulletin #209, Intelligence Division, December 1970, *Reies López Tijerina papers*, (MSS 654) Box 34, Folder 35, Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico Libraries. La Alianza publicized this bulletin in a letter to Gov. Bruce King and the US Civil Rights Commission dated June 28, 1971, demanding an investigation into the "intelligence" activities of the Albuquerque Police Department, seeing the overwhelming number on the list being "Indo-Hispano," seeing it as racism toward them. In "Duke City Police Activity Questioned," *Clovis News Journal*, June 29, 1971, 3. This document was also entered into the public record at the US Civil Rights Commission hearings in 1972, in "The Struggle for Justice and Redress," 18.

occupation, organizational affiliation, and vehicle registrations. The bulletin stated that those listed were not wanted for or accused of any crime but revealed that the police were actively surveilling the members and activities of the Black Berets and other activist organizations in Albuquerque.

Other police intelligence activities were revealed to be operating by 1971 in New Mexico. In 1972, a news report in the *Albuquerque Tribune* revealed that the New Mexico State Police had an Intelligence Division that targeted political groups. The NMSP published in their annual bulletin that in 1971, the previous year, they opened 377 investigations on groups they described as "militant."[179] The Black Berets were one of the groups investigated and the subject of a high number of those investigations in total, which amounted to an average of one per year. The report mentioned the "buildup of activities by two militant groups, the Black Berets of Albuquerque and the Brown Berets," elaborating that the increase of activity of these two groups forced the Intelligence division to double its workload.[180] Furthermore, in 1971 the act of multiple local and state police agencies involved in political surveillance and actions culminated with the creation of an interagency police unit in Albuquerque, the Metro Squad. First formed in other cities in New Mexico mainly to pursue narcotics cases, they were made up of city, county, and state police.[181] The Albuquerque Metro Squad, made up of officers from the Albuquerque Police Department, Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department, and New Mexico State Police, would operate like a Red Squad and be used for aggressive actions against political groups, specifically the Black Berets.[182]The particular targeting of the

[179] "State Police Finds Increased Activity in Militant Groups," *Albuquerque Tribune*, May 12, 1972.
[180] ibid.
[181] "Road Check Nets Huge Drug Haul," *Las Cruces Sun News,* January 15, 1971.
[182] David Correia, "Police War on the Poor: The Return of the Albuquerque Death Squads," *Counterpunch,* November 23, 2011, http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/11/23/the-return-of-the-albuquerque-

Black Berets involved actions from state and local police, with actions by likely right-wing agitators acting as vigilantes, who may have had collaboration with the police. These actions would serve to put the climate of repression created by COINTELPRO into effect in New Mexico.

Roosevelt Park Uprising

In 1971, Albuquerque was also looking for a new police chief, and this process further exposed the tensions between police and the Chicana/o community, as well as other communities in Albuquerque. To bring attention to police accountability, Black Beret Minister of Justice Richard Moore put his name in for nomination of this position in an announcement at the Marcha Por Justicia in February 1971. In March 1971, The City of Albuquerque ultimately selected Donald Byrd, formerly the assistant chief of police in Dallas, for the new Chief of Police of Albuquerque.[183] The Black Berets and other groups in Albuquerque protested Byrd's appointment, mainly because the selection bypassed 25 local applicants for one out of state. The high number of police officers from outside of New Mexico was a common criticism. Black Beret Joaquín Luján recounted how the Albuquerque Police Department often advertised for new police recruits in places outside New Mexico, alluding to images of the state as the Wild West, attracting police who would be aggressive to the communities they would supposedly serve.[184] The high number of police from outside their communities became a main cause of antagonisms. Previous brutality complaints of Dallas police under Byrd, especially against Chicanas and Chicanos, were publicized by activists, but

death-squads/; Kent Paterson, "The Black Berets Live On." *Frontera NorteSur,* October 10, 2012, https://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/the-black-berets-live-on/

[183] "Minority Group, City Staff Meet Tonight," *Albuquerque Journal*, March 17, 1971.

[184] "The Black Beret Legacy: Special Insert." *Voces Unidas (SWOP).* Summer/Fall 2000. 1-8.

despite protests Byrd took his position on April 1, 1971.[185] The new police chief faced increased tensions between the police and the citizenry of Albuquerque, exacerbated by the high number of police murders and other brutality, which would top off with an explosion of urban civil disorder the following summer.

The growing tensions between the police and the Chicana/o community in Albuquerque would rupture on June 13th, 1971, with the Roosevelt Park Uprising. A civil disturbance caused by police overreaction against a mostly Chicana/o crowd would touch off an act of resistance that would spread throughout New Mexico. What CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite announced as "the wildest night of rioting in [Albuquerque] history" would result in the deployment of nearly 1,300 National Guard troops to the city itself.[186] This uprising would be one of many during this period in United States history sparked in reaction to police violence rooted in systemic racism.[187] Also, while most of these urban uprisings were from African Americans, there were many similar happenings in this period that were conducted by Chicana/o and other Latina/o participants, but which did not come into public consciousness as much.[188] Furthermore, the memory of the Chicano Moratorium of August 29, 1970 in East

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[185] "Dallas Sends Top Cop Here, Protests Grow," *El Grito del Norte*, March 30, 1971; "Dallas Pigs Go On a Rampage," *Venceremos (Black Beret Newspaper)*, Vol. 1 no. 2, June 1971, 10.

[186] CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite, June 14, 1971, clip available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HNXC7E6k-s. For terminology, there is debate on how to describe incidents of civil unrest due to the political implications of terms ranging from "riot" to "rebellion." For this paper, I will refer to the incident at Roosevelt Park in 1971 as an uprising because of its roots in discontent. Further discussion on this is at https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/04/30/403303769/uprising-or-riot-depends-whos-watching

[187] A recent study of urban rebellions in the Civil Rights era is by Elizabeth Hinton, *America On Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960's,* (Liveright Publishing, 2021). Hinton sees the so-called urban riots in this period as rebellions, "explosions of collective resistance to an unequal and violent order," adding that between 1968 and 1972 there was a level of internal violence in the United States not seen since the Civil War (Hinton, 2).

[188] Referring to the 1971 uprising in Albuquerque, Aaron Fountain, who has brought forward more research on Latino-based uprisings, stated, "unlike the riots of Watts in 1965 or Detroit in 1967, Albuquerque lacks the evocative label of 1960's urban uprising." Aaron G. Fountain, "Forgotten Latino Urban Riots and Why They Can Happen Again," *Latino Rebels,* May 2, 2016. www.latinorebels.com/2016/05/02/forgotten-latino-urban-riots-and-why-they-can-happen-again/

Los Angeles was in the consciousness of Chicana/o Movement participants when another uprising happened shortly after.[189] The Roosevelt Park Uprising had the Black Berets intervene politically in service to the people at that moment and afterward to continue to bring accountability to law enforcement. The consequences of this uprising would have wide-ranging effects.

A series of events involving police and parkgoers would lead up to the Roosevelt Park uprising. On Tuesday, June 8, 1971, three youths were arrested at Robinson Park near downtown Albuquerque for public drinking.[190] Later on Thursday, June 10, 1971, two people were arrested at Yale Park on the UNM campus for public drinking, and a third was arrested for disorderly conduct. During these arrests at Yale Park, a group of people gathered and then threw rocks at an unmarked police car and other vehicles, which ended in the arrest of 17 people for destruction of public property.[191] These two events would lead to escalating tensions in the next few days. On Friday, June 11, 1971, there was an announcement to people at Civic Auditorium that day that a free rock concert would be held that Sunday at Roosevelt Park. This resulted in hundreds of youths coming to the park on June 13, 1971, but the concert was canceled. On that day there were already hundreds of people who were at the park enjoying it on that hot summer weekend. The concertgoers added to the people who were already at the park for regular purposes. On that Sunday there were an estimated 500 to 1,000 people gathered at Roosevelt Park for various reasons, many of them Chicana/o families, as the park was a

[189] For instance, the Chicano Moratorium march in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970, and the police riot that ended with the death of three Chicanos, including journalist Ruben Salazar, happened less than a year before. In that instance, the police overreaction was allegedly caused by shoplifting at a nearby liquor store on that march.

[190] Art Bouffard, "Robins Defends Riot Case Handling After Jury Report," *Albuquerque Journal*, July 3, 1971.

[191] Wood, 317.

popular place for barrio residents. The large number of people, especially young people, at the park that day would be another factor in the uprising.

The overall cause of the disturbance was overreaction by police caused by discriminatory enforcement of ordinances which many community activists have campaigned against years prior. With many young people at Roosevelt Park, many of them partook in activities that day such as drinking beer and smoking marijuana. These were technically violations of municipal ordinances, but also considered “petty violations” which if enforced would demonstrate discriminatory enforcement. That day undercover park police called in uniformed police officers to the park to make arrests for public drinking, and three officers in two police cars arrived at about 5:30 p.m. The uniformed police arrested six Chicanos for public drinking, yet some were only using empty beer bottles for water. The arrests caused about 30 people to gather and complain. Just afterward, an object, either a frisbee or bottle, was thrown at one of the police cars by someone in the park. Cops then arrested an individual they suspected of throwing the object, which caused a greater reaction from the crowd. Rocks and bottles were hurled at the police by people in the crowd. The police subsequently radioed for more officers to the park for reinforcements. The police acted aggressively with the crowd, beating many with their batons. The crowd responded with more projectiles, and eventually several police cars were overturned and set on fire. There were pitched battles along the hills of the park between the parkgoers and the police. Police fired tear gas at the crowd until they expended their stock, and then they fired shotguns, pistols, and rifles, mostly in the air, but at

least one person was shot by the police. The disorder would continue at the park in an unprecedented amount of violence provoked by police actions.[192]

Also on June 13, 1971, the Black Berets were celebrating Richard Moore's birthday, which happened to be on the same day as what would become the Roosevelt Park Uprising. The Black Berets had previously contacted their supporters around the state to come to Albuquerque to celebrate Moore's birthday with them, and many people outside Albuquerque did travel to the city for the birthday celebration.[193] The Black Berets previous community work created a network for people to contact them about issues with the police, and on that day they received many calls about the disorder going on at Roosevelt Park. In response, the organization went to the park to help the people there. When they arrived, the Black Berets assisted people, especially elders and children, who needed help to escape the dangers of police violence. The Black Berets also attempted to diffuse the situation by trying to mediate between the police and the crowd at the park, but the efforts failed because of police aggression, especially their willingness to wantonly use their firearms. Joaquín Luján recollected on what happened at that moment:

> We came down and it was already going crazy. The police were starting to move away from here and they all gathered up the hill. They seemed to be getting ready. You could see the guns and the rifles and all of that. Three of us, myself, Richard (Moore), Dickie (Richard) Sawtelle…went to walk to where the police were to diffuse what was going

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[192] The news reports cited for the following general information are: "500 Battle Police, Loot Stores in Albuquerque," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1971; "Police, Mob Battle in New Mexico," *Los Angeles Times,* June 14, 1971; Howard Graves and Tom Fenton, "National Guard Mobilized to Curb Albuquerque Riots," *Prescott Courier*, June 14, 1971; Martin Waldron, "20 Held in Albuquerque as Guard Curbs Rioters," *New York Times,* June 15, 1971; Jack Waugh, "After Riot City Asks 'How, Why?'," *Christian Science Monitor,* June 16, 1971; Tomas Martínez and Mike Padget, "Nine Shot as Police Battle Mob," *Albuquerque Journal*, June 14, 1971; Mark Sanchez, "Park Arrests Touch Off Violence," *Daily Lobo (UNM),* June 17, 1971; El Grito Staff, "The Rebellion," *El Grito del Norte*, July 5, 1971.

[193] Later, the Albuquerque police attempted to blame the Black Berets for conspiring to instigate the riot, mentioning that they had evidence that the Black Berets made a high number of calls throughout the city and state to have people arrive in Albuquerque on June 13, 1971. The calls were for Moore's 25th birthday celebration. The police showed no evidence of incite to riots, but this revealed the extent of police surveillance on the organization in the form of wiretaps on Black Berets phones. Kent Paterson, "El Grito de Roosevelt Park," *Frontera Norte Sur,* June 22, 2014, https://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/el-grito-de-roosevelt-park/

> on. So when we were walking up, halfway between here and where they were, they opened fire. They just starting opening fire on us, at the park, we ran to hide. That day just opened it up to a particular point. Like today, they weren't willing to have a conversation, they weren't willing to talk about what our issues were, why people were feeling the way they were, no, let's just open fire and deal with it that way.[194]

Luján also recalled being witness to a potentially fatal incident of police violence when the Black Berets helped a wounded person get to the hospital, because the police would not help him:

> Literally I see one of the brothers get shot in the back. You see the blood in the back and out through his chest. We're getting people, we had to bring in somebody with a car and we got the car in where that young man had fallen to get him out of there. I mean, it was really up to us.[195]

As Luján further describes, the Black Berets then decide to lead people out of the park to direct them downtown to the police station:

> And so, we see the families and what's going around here, we make a decision, to say, well, let's see if we can get all this crowd, let's go to Central and let's go to the police station, and let's take this fricking problem back to them. And that's what we did, we went up to Central, most of the folks started following us, and we started going down.[196]

In this situation the Black Berets intervened politically in service and defense of the people. The uprising at Roosevelt Park, like other similar incidents around the country, was caused by police overreaction, and many people at the park were subjected to police brutality. In this situation of conflict with police and citizens, the Black Berets operated in community defense, and were able to direct the situation in a different direction, in this case by bringing the target of the people's angst to the police themselves.

More than 500 people marched with the Black Berets down Central Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare a few blocks away from the park, to the downtown police station at City

[194] Joaquín Luján, Still Rising (2021).
[195] ibid.
[196] ibid.

Hall. Once there, they led fifteen people inside to talk to the police chief to report and give complaints about the police brutality that happened earlier at Roosevelt Park. The crowds outside were still enraged and continued to express their discontent through the night of June 13, 1971, which led to people looting stores, breaking windows, and setting fires. News reports also tell of inmates at the city and county jail nearby starting a protest inside the facility concurrent with what was going on outside. The inmates were likely influenced by the crowd that was visible to them from the jail. A state of emergency was called by the City Manager, and a curfew was implemented, and several people were arrested for these violations. Governor Bruce King ordered up the National Guard after requests from city officials, with nearly 1,300 guardsmen deployed to Albuquerque. Through that night fires raged all over the city, with many stores and buildings burned and looted that resulted in millions of dollars in damage. The night ended with dozens of people arrested and injured, with at least 13 injuries from gunshots from police and business owners. The Black Berets attempted to sway people away from the disturbance, but many stayed out through the night, and the organization called for a rally back at Roosevelt Park the next day. The largest civil disturbance in Albuquerque history involved hundreds of people of various backgrounds but mostly Chicanas/os and youth, caused by police brutality along with decades of discontent because of inequality and injustice. The Black Berets responded by serving and defending their community against police violence and continued to do so that night and in the days following.

The uprising went on in Albuquerque the next day, and several incidents continued through the days after. Early on the next day of June 14, 1971, the Black Berets held their rally at Roosevelt Park, with about 400 to 500 people gathered. There were some tensions at the park between Chicanas/os and white youth there. Black Beret members and other community

leaders made speeches to the crowd. Politicians including Attorney General David Norvell and Lt. Governor Roberto Mondragón attended and spoke, although no city officials attended. An announcement happened that the park was renamed Tijerina Park, in honor of Reies López Tijerina, who was serving his last month in prison at the time. After the rally, the crowd marched to Yale Park at UNM, with sporadic looting and window smashing happening along the way, including at a car dealership. Crowds continued to rise up around Albuquerque, with several reports of vandalism and looting. Later that night there were battles with National Guard troops at Roosevelt Park, and over 300 were arrested throughout the city, mostly for curfew violations. Scattered acts of violence continued the days after, symbolizing continued tensions between the police and the citizenry. For example, on June 16, 1971, six off-duty APD officers threw a tear gas grenade at a "hippie" hangout near UNM, and were given a 10-day suspension without pay.[197] On June 17, 1971, a Fraternal Order of Police building was firebombed in Albuquerque, making it the 21st building linked to the violence that started four days earlier.[198] The effects of the uprising lasted for some time afterward and revealed smoldering conflicts with police and the citizens of Albuquerque.

The responses to the uprising in the city varied and reflected the stratified positions in Albuquerque based on race and class. The *Daily Lobo* stated that it was the worst violence in the city's nearly 300-year history.[199] John Ira Petty of the *Albuquerque Journal* wrote "[I]t was something you'd think couldn't happen in Albuquerque - but it did, in all its ugliness and violence."[200] On the other hand, Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Vásquez, then with *El Grito del Norte*, called it a rebellion and wrote in their book on El Movimiento a few

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[197] Wood, 315.
[198] Robert Beier, "FOP Bldg. Is Damaged by Firebomb," *Albuquerque Journal,* June 18, 1971.
[199] Sanchez, op. cit.
[200] John Ira Petty, "Violence Explodes in City," *Albuquerque Journal*, June 14, 1971.

years later, "...most of the Chicano community knew that some kind of protest against the powers of Albuquerque was long overdue."[201] Joaquín Luján connected it to the powder keg of discontent with the injustices that Chicana/o people in New Mexico faced, symbolized with the direct confrontations with the police:

> Now, the issues that came out during that time, it wasn't just the youth, it was hot, they were drinking, or whatever. It was nuestra gente. We haven't had a chance to have an explosion; and to come out and say: you know what, the racism, losing our water rights, losing our land, putting our people in jail; all of that came to a head. We had people coming afterwards, family people; they had their jobs, their homes; they were involved. They had been working for 20, 30 years, no one was moving up.[202]

On the other side, more conservative voices attempted to put the blame on those who rose up. These accusations often reflected the unearthed racial tensions that came out in Albuquerque, as demonstrated with racialized tones in the media.[203] Journalists also reported that more business owners and residents were arming themselves for protection. Amongst politicians, Lt. Governor Mondragón spoke in favor of the people and stated that police brutality was a fact and a cause of the disturbances. Because of these words, he was attacked by other politicians and faced calls for his impeachment.[204] The Albuquerque chapter of Support Your Local Police, a front group of the far-right John Birch Society, called for the Albuquerque City Council to pass a resolution that attempted to empower police to use deadly force in any

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[201] Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez, and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Viva La Raza: The Struggle of the Mexican American People, (*Doubleday, 1974), 182.

[202] Joaquín Luján, Still Rising (2021).

[203] For example, Martin Waldron of the New York Times reported statements such as "...to curb marauding bands of hippies, Negroes and Mexican Americans who had created serious disorders through the day" and "...hundreds of almost naked hippies and hundreds of teen-agers from Albuquerque's Mexican American barrios had gathered before the riot." Waldron (June 20, 1971), op cit. In another example, the Albuquerque Tribune blared a headline in its June 15, 1971, issue: "2nd Night of Terror for Albuquerque! Roving Bands Loot and Burn; Jail 283."

[204] For one, Albuquerque City Commission Chairman Charles Barnhart accused Mondragon of racism against white people. Martin Waldron, "State Aides Scored in Albuquerque Riots," *New York Times,* June 16, 1971.

circumstance. This group also called for the Black Berets to be investigated for alleged subversive activities.[205]

The Black Berets continued to advocate for the people in the days after the uprising. Members spoke at City Commission meetings about police violence. A community meeting was held at the Black Beret headquarters on June 16, 1971, where up to 250 attended. At the meeting people gave testimony of their experiences of police brutality at Roosevelt Park that day.[206] Many other incidents of harassment and violence by police were reported in the days after the uprising. In another incident, on June 22, 1971, Father Jaramillo's car was burned under mysterious circumstances.[207] Governor King promised a commission to investigate the "riot," and created a Select Commission on Civil Disorders. The makeup of the commission disproportionately included the police and National Guard commanders and was immediately criticized by many people.[208] The Black Berets protested the lack of community representation on the panel and took direct action. The Black Berets went to Santa Fe on June 24, 1971, and conducted a sit-in at the Governor's office, which ended with eight members being arrested.[209] On June 30, 1971, Governor King dissolved the commission after it had only one meeting and recommended the Bernalillo County Grand Jury be charged with the investigation.[210] The next day on July 1, 1971, the Bernalillo County Grand Jury issued its report on the "riot", which praised law enforcement for their supposed restraint during the two days of unrest and suggested a pay raise for the police.[211] The grand jury report did recommend investigations be

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[205] "Police Support Group Lists Issues for Probe," *Albuquerque Journal,* June 29, 1971.
[206] "Pigs Are Blamed for Revolt," *Venceremos (Black Beret Newspaper)*, Vol. 1 no. 3, July 1, 1971, 10.
[207] "The Pigs Continue to Brutalize La Gente," *Venceremos (Black Beret Newspaper),* Vol. 1 no. 3, July 1, 1971, 12-13.
[208] "Riot Commission Makeup Criticized by Mondragon," *Albuquerque Journal*, June 26, 1971.
[209] Antonio Córdova, "24 - Raza Takes Over King's Office," *El Grito Del Norte*, July 5, 1971.
[210] "King Dissolves Commission on Civil Disorders," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 30, 1971.
[211] "Grand Jury Praises Police," *Las Vegas Optic,* July 2, 1971

made on alleged police brutality, but it failed to ask the succeeding grand jury to investigate. After this, the Black Berets proposed the formation of a tribunal to study the uprising as well as other reports of police harassment and brutality.[212] The Black Berets organized the people and confronted power in the aftermath of this uprising. Meanwhile another policing authority, the National Guard, continued to occupy many places in Albuquerque, as well as other parts of New Mexico, throughout that summer.

The repercussions of the uprising in Albuquerque spread to other parts of the state during the summer of 1971. On June 16th, 1971, two days after the unrest in Albuquerque, a federal building was firebombed in Santa Fe, and the National Guard was called to respond, with nearly 300 guardsmen deployed to that city.[213] There was various reactions from law enforcement, politicians and vigilantes in the towns of Las Vegas, Española, Taos, Portales, Ratón, and Roswell, based on rumors of more Chicano riots and other violence being spread.[214] In Portales, a town near the border of Texas, the National Guard was deployed for four days.[215] On July 10, 1971 in Española, police abuse against Chicana/o attendees at the Oñate Fiesta resulted in an uprising.[216] On September 7, 1971, the annual Fiestas event in Santa Fe ended in disorder when police tear-gassed the crowd, mostly Chicanas/os, and 100 National Guardsmen were called to protect state buildings and aid city police.[217] There were likely were many other incidences of unrest in other parts of New Mexico that summer. The number of times the National Guard was called out in 1971 was significant, especially as it was called up

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[212] "Black Berets Move to Form Unit to Study Riots, Police," *Albuquerque Journal,* July 3, 1971.

[213] Ed Mahr, "Santa Fe Guardsmen Doubled," *Albuquerque Journal,* June 18, 1971; "National Guard in Santa Fe," *El Grito del Norte,* July 5, 1971.

[214] "Rumors and Repression," *El Grito del Norte*, July 5, 1971. The authors speculated that police were spreading these rumors to create fear in the citizens of New Mexico to justify repression.

[215] ibid.

[216] "The "Oñate Riot" in Española," *El Grito del Norte,* August 20, 1971.

[217] "Santa Fe 'Fiesta' Ends in Disorder," *New York Times*, September 8, 1971.

in the state two other times in the previous five years.[218] The Roosevelt Park Uprising of June 13th, 1971, was a symbol of the discontent that Chicanas/os and young people felt in Albuquerque and elsewhere in New Mexico, and the conditions the Black Berets and other Chicana/o Movement groups organized around. This militant activity brought more conflict with police and ideological opponents in power, which would result in more violence against Chicana/o Movement activists, including the Black Berets, in the form of escalated police repression.

Frame-ups, Dynamite, Provocateurs: The Assassination of Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova

The aftermath of the June 13th uprising in Albuquerque was in the thoughts of many in New Mexico and revealed the discontent around the state. The Black Berets had an increase in members, activity, and attention. Two of their new members were Antonio Córdova and Rito Canales. The escalated conflicts by the police against the Black Berets would lead to both being killed in a police ambush in circumstances that remain unanswered, an attempted frame-up of the Black Berets, and a response of outrage from the organization and its supporters. The many actions after this incident would reveal the extent of police repression against a Chicana/o Movement organization in New Mexico, with the violent death of two of their members based on the previous targeting of the organization by police agencies.

Antonio Córdova would end up in Albuquerque in late 1971 because of his career as a journalist. Born to a migrant family in Trinidad, Colorado, Córdova became a journalism and photography student at the University of Utah. He moved to New Mexico by 1970 and ended

[218] The two events are first, the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid led by Reies López Tijerina of La Alianza, deployed in northern New Mexico in 1967; and then in 1970 (the year before the Roosevelt Park Uprising), to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque during anti-war protests, this where National Guard troops bayoneted students and protesters.

up working for an Española newspaper the next year.[219] When Córdova heard about the Albuquerque uprising on June 13, 1971, he went to the office of *El Grito del Norte* in Española. He subsequently traveled to Albuquerque to report and photograph the event and worked for the newspaper afterwards. Córdova's photographs of police brutality at the Oñate Fiesta the next month would be the basis of a complaint he filed with the Attorney General about targeted arrests and mistreatment by Española police.[220] He met Black Beret members through their close collaboration with *El Grito del Norte*, and by December 1971 Córdova moved to Albuquerque to help with *Venceremos*, the Black Beret's newspaper.

Another activist that would join the Black Berets in this period, and direct them to prison activism, was Rito Canales. By late 1971 Rito Canales was an ex-convict turned prison activist. Born on March 10, 1942, he grew up in southern New Mexico where he experienced the racism in that region which locals referred to as Little Texas. He dropped out of high school, and at 20 years old was arrested and charged for fatally shooting a man during a fight. He claimed his inadequate legal representation led to him being sentenced to three years to life for second degree murder. While in prison, Canales educated himself and did his own law work, becoming a jailhouse lawyer. After Canales was released in January of 1971, he worked to organize other former prisoners, which he accomplished by working with the Black Berets and the Committee of Citizens Concerned with Corrections (CCCC).[221]

Prison activism grew in the fall of 1971 with the Attica uprising in New York, bringing national attention to inhumane prison conditions. In New Mexico, activists worked on prison

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[219] His career included working for the New Mexico State Legislature in the public relations department, the first Chicano to do so. The background of Antonio Córdova is in "Antonio: Un Soldado Por Su Raza," *El Grito del Norte,* August 6, 1972.

[220] This complaint was indexed in: New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *The Struggle For Justice and Redress in Northern New Mexico: A Report,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1974).

[221] "Rito: A Pinto Who Broke the Chains," *El Grito del Norte,* August 6, 1972, 10-12.

issues after a strike by prisoners at the New Mexico State Penitentiary in Santa Fe on October 6, 1971. That strike was organized in protest of conditions there and in solidarity with the Attica uprising that subsequently happened.[222] The Black Berets worked with the CCCC in bringing attention to the accounts of abuse at the Santa Fe prison. The Black Berets also conducted direct actions around prison issues, including another sit-in at Governor King's office in October 1971 that resulted in eight arrests, and an attempted citizen's arrest of state prison warden Felix Rodriguez on November 19, 1971.[223] Antonio Córdova also worked to support prisoners' rights, which was motivated by his correspondence with Luis Talamantez of the San Quentin 6.[224] Similarly, Rito Canales, having more direct involvement with the issue, had spoken about physical abuse inflicted on him and fellow prisoners during his time there, and implicated top officials in being involved in other abuse.[225] In late January 1972, Canales and Córdova were scheduled to appear on a television program with a panel of the CCCC to talk about police brutality and prison abuse. Canales planned to speak on the prison officials he implicated in abuse, and Córdova planned to speak on his experiences on police abuse as a reporter. They never appeared on the program because they were killed by police the day before the scheduled event.

The most violent episode of police repression against the Black Berets would happen on January 29, 1972. At about 12:50 am at Black Mesa, ten miles south of Albuquerque outside the city limits, Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova were shot and killed by six police officers

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[222] "Hiding the Truth at the State Prison," *El Grito del Norte,* October 28, 1971.

[223] "Felix Rodriguez, You Are Under Arrest," *El Grito del Norte*, December 6, 1971.

[224] A joint interest in poetry led Córdova and Talamantez to both exchange poems in their communications. A book of poetry by Talamantez would include one of Córdova's poems as the preface, in Luis Talamantez, *Life Within the Heart Imprisoned*, (San Jose: Fidelity Printing, 1976).

[225] Canales investigated the August 18, 1969, death of inmate Ramon Silva, and filed a lawsuit against prison officials he believed were responsible for his death. Canales dropped the lawsuit as a condition to make parole. He was going to release information about this incident before he was killed. In "La Gente, Berets to Probe '69 Hanging Death of Inmate," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 20, 1972.

that ambushed them at a construction site, shooting Canales six times and Córdova nine to ten times. Twelve hours later, Albuquerque police raided the Black Berets new headquarters at 1106 12th Street NW. The basis of a search warrant were allegations of marijuana possession. During the search police allegedly found dynamite bombs and other firearms in the basement. The police raid resulted in the arrest of six people residing at the location on 12th Street. These incidents would be one of the most controversial cases of police murder in Albuquerque, and because of their previous targeting of the Black Berets, of political repression by police.

The official story given by the police was broadcast in the media the following days, and raised speculation about how these incidents were part of a politically targeted operation by different police agencies. The six officers at the site that day were all part of the Metro Squad, three with the Albuquerque Police Department and the other three with the New Mexico State Police Intelligence Unit.[226] Some of the officers were known for their previous actions against activists in New Mexico.[227] The State Police claimed they received a tip from an unidentified woman around noon on January 28, 1972, that a burglary would happen at the construction site to steal dynamite. The construction site, owned by Wylie Brothers Contracting, had a break-in previously on January 19, 1972, but police never charged anyone with that incident. Police claimed Canales and Córdova were at the site to steal dynamite. Police further claimed that Canales and Córdova fired at the cops and that they fired back in self-defense. In the house raid, a subsequent federal complaint quoted a "confidential source"

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[226] The officers were: Sgt. Wayne Larson, Det. Rialino Pollo, and Det. José B. Salazar of Albuquerque Police Department; and Ted Drennan, Leroy Urioste, and Ralph McNutt of the New Mexico State Police. In "Still No Detail In Beret Deaths – No Public Report," *Albuquerque Tribune*, January 31, 1972.

[227] Ted Drennan of the New Mexico State Police, who directed the stakeout on Black Mesa that night, was accused of directing previous counterintelligence activity, including spying on activists at UNM and spreading rumors after the Albuquerque Uprising in 1971 to spread fear. In "The Murder of Antonio and Rito: The People's Eyes Are On The Killers," *El Grito del Norte*, April 10, 1972. Sgt. Wayne Larson of the Albuquerque Police Department was named in charges of political surveillance and harassment of Chicano activists two years before. In "Norvell Okays Murders, Police State," *El Grito del Norte*, May 19, 1972.

that accused the occupants of the residence had "intended to bomb several Albuquerque buildings in the near future."[228] Furthermore, there was misinformation spread in the media the following days intended to paint the Black Berets in a bad light, including rumors of power struggles within their organization and alleged confessions of guilt, all of which the Black Berets denied.[229] Chief of Police Donald Byrd publicly attacked the Black Berets in the media, where he asserted the organization was "resorting to violence to destroy our system of government." Byrd specifically targeted Richard Moore, alluding that he was "conveniently out of town" during the incidents when he was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to attend the trial of the Berrigan brothers.[230] The stories given by the police attempted to demonize the Black Berets and place guilt on Canales and Córdova in the court of public opinion.

Questions from the community came almost immediately due to how the police handled the incidents, as well as discrepancies in the official story. First, the assertion of self-defense by the police was brought into question by observers, as Canales was found shot in the back, indicating he was running from the police and did not present an immediate danger to justify lethal force. Also, a .45 caliber pistol police say he fired was never found. In the immediate aftermath, the police acted to keep information about the killings from the public. There were delays in reporting the incident as well as mishandling of the information, and according to the *Albuquerque Tribune,* police and ambulance drivers were told to say nothing about what they saw or heard.[231] Canales' family was never notified of his death, and when they attempted to contact Albuquerque police themselves to acquire more information about

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[228] "6 Living at Beret HQ Charged with Having Dynamite," *Albuquerque Tribune*, January 31, 1972.

[229] "Coroner Gives Data on Killings," *Albuquerque Journal*, February 1, 1972; "Norvell LULAC's", *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 3, 1972.

[230] "Byrd Blasts Berets," *Albuquerque Tribune,* February 3, 1972.

[231] "Still No Detail in Beret Deaths – No Public Report," *Albuquerque Tribune*, January 31, 1972.

Canales' death they were treated rudely by the police. In another revelation that raised more questions, the New Mexico Review reported from previous news reports that the dynamite theft on January 19, 1971, that was a precursor for the subsequent events that would happen, was allowed to happen by State Police Intelligence officers Drennan and Urioste, who ordered Wylie Brothers not to interfere because they did not want to expose their informer.[232]

For the raid on the Black Berets' house and the alleged dynamite seized, that case quickly unraveled. There were conflicting reports given to the media of the amount of the alleged dynamite seized. Furthermore, the landlady of the house confessed that the basement was occupied by a previous tenant before, with the Black Berets not having access to the basement where the dynamite was allegedly found.[233] The federal complaint, signed by a representative of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division of the IRS, was dropped because the charges were being pursued by the state.[234] Although five of the residents were indicted by a grand jury, when the case got to court in April 1972 the explosives possession charges were dropped due to the search warrant being ruled invalid. As a result, all six of the defendants who were arrested at the raid were freed.[235] The possible intent of the police was to portray the Black Berets as terrorists and violent radicals, in turn showing the killings of Canales and Córdova as justified. Yet the court case showed them innocent of these allegations, and community distrust of the police led to support for the two victims as well as calls for investigations into their deaths to get justice.

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[232] "Albuquerque Beret Killings: An In-Depth Report and an Alternative Theory," *The New Mexico Review,* March 1972, 9.

[233] New Mexico Review, 9. Also, some of the dynamite police presented was a different brand than used by Wylie Construction. In "Killed at Dynamite Shed: King Asks AG Probe in Death of Two Men," *Albuquerque Journal*, February 1, 1972.

[234] ibid.

[235] "Charges Against Berets Dismissed in Dynamite Possession Case," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 26, 1972.

The killing of Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova created a wide level of outrage as well as support from different areas of the community. The range of community support was shown when over 750 people attended their funerals.[236] Antonio Córdova was memorialized on February 1, 1972, in Albuquerque, and Rito Canales was buried in his hometown of Artesia on February 2, 1972. After the funerals, a candlelight vigil was held outside the police station downtown that was attended by 75 people. A cross was set up made of luminarias with two black berets in the center.[237] Afterward, a community meeting held at Duranes Community Center about the police handling of the case was attended by about 150 people.[238] Many people at this meeting spoke out against police harassment and supported the Black Berets, and called for an independent investigation into the killings. In the days after this meeting, organizations that included La Alianza, Legal Aid Society, the Student Senate of UNM, and the New Mexico Civil Liberties Union called for independent investigations into the deaths of Canales and Córdova.[239] The Albuquerque chapter of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) held a special meeting attended by 250 people where a Citizens Committee was formed in order to press for an investigation. Made up of thirty members, the Committee requested funding from the city government, along with subpoena and arrest powers, to conduct its own investigation into the killings.[240] Furthermore, a memorial was introduced in the New Mexico State Senate by Sen. Junio López, a Republican from San Miguel County, as an assurance to the families of a thorough investigation. The memorial was blocked on the Senate floor, but

[236] "750 Attend Memorial for Slain Beret Member," *Albuquerque Journal*, February 2, 1972.

[237] Chuck Anthony, "Candlelight Vigil Held for Berets," *Albuquerque Journal*, February 2, 1972.

[238] ibid.

[239] "Still No Detail in Beret Deaths – No Public Report," *Albuquerque Tribune,* January 31, 1972; "Police Chief Byrd Raps Berets- Both LULAC, AG Probing Shootings," *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 3, 1972; Robert V Brier, "City Unable to Grant Subpoena Use – Kinney," *Albuquerque Journal,* February 4, 1972.

[240] "Police Chief Byrd Raps Berets; Both LULAC, AG Probing Shootings," *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 3, 1972.

López made a certificate of condolence in lieu.[241] The wide range of support and calls for investigation revealed the outrage from many communities and the distrust of the police version of events, which was also widespread in this period when other wrongdoings by the government and police were being revealed.

Some official investigations happened because of community pressure, but those investigations refused to indict any police involved. Right after the news of the deaths of Canales and Córdova, Gov. Bruce King ordered Attorney General David Norvell to conduct an investigation separate from that being done by the police agencies themselves.[242] The Albuquerque district attorney in their own investigation cleared the officers involved and no one was brought to trial for the deaths of Canales and Córdova.[243] Shortly after, the DA set up a grand jury in Bernalillo County to investigate, but by early March the grand jury ruled the killings of Canales and Córdova were justifiable homicide and accepted the police version of events.[244] In late April, Attorney General Norvell concluded his office's investigation, ruling there was clear justification in the killing of Córdova. On the killing of Canales, the Attorney General report showed uncertainty whether deadly force was authorized as he was shown running away from the police and shot in the back.[245] Nevertheless, the report did not recommend prosecutions of the officers involved because of insufficient evidence, mainly the difficulty of determining which officer's gun killed the men, and found no evidence of conspiracy to murder by the police. The Black Berets and the Committee criticized the report

[241] Bill Hume, "Black Beret Memorial Brings Strong Words" *Albuquerque Journal,* February 5, 1972; "Raza Speak Out on the Murders," *El Grito del Norte*, August 6, 1972; "Beret Memorial Tabled by Senate." *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 8, 1972.

[242] "Still No Detail in Beret Deaths – No Public Report," *Albuquerque Tribune,* January 31, 1972.

[243] Leroy Aarons, "New Mexico Police Cleared in 2 Deaths." *Washington Post,* Feb 3, 1972.

[244] Barbara Lawless, "Justifiable Homicide Ruled in Beret Deaths," *Albuquerque Journal*, March 8, 1972.

[245] "AG Report on Black Beret Deaths: Says Clear Justification In One Death," *Albuquerque Tribune,* April 28, 1972.

for relying too much on information from the police when determining its conclusions. The Black Berets, the Committee, and family members also called for a federal investigation, noting that the killings were on the border of the Isleta tribal reservation outside Albuquerque city limits, which was federal jurisdiction. However, the FBI was not contacted about this incident involving Canales and Córdova's death, nor the January 19th burglary of dynamite. The investigations of Canales and Córdova's death were opened by the city and state because of public pressure, but eventually all investigations ruled in favor of the police.

Community efforts brought attention to this case to the New Mexico Advisory Committee of the United States Civil Rights Commission, who held hearings in Santa Fe on June 8-10, 1972. They heard from about 40 witnesses, who were mostly either Chicana/o, African American and Native American. All witnesses gave testimony on their experiences of police abuse throughout New Mexico. The subsequent report documented a series of complaints against police departments around New Mexico that included lack of sensitivity to the community, patterns of harassment, invasion of privacy, and use of excessive force.[246] The murder of Canales and Córdova was one of three cases of police killings in New Mexico that the Advisory Committee documented in their report, the other two being Roy Gallegos and James Bradford.[247] Subsequently the New Mexico Advisory Committee on June 22, 1972 asked the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to recommend that the U.S. Department of Justice convene a grand jury and special prosecutor on these three incidents of murders by police. The request was denied by the Justice Department.[248] Although no action was done in this case to

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[246] New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *The Struggle For Justice and Redress in Northern New Mexico: A Report,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1974), 5

[247] See Chapter 2.

[248] New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *The Struggle For Justice and Redress in Northern New Mexico: A Report,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1974), 40.

bring justice to Canales and Córdova, the documentation of this case by this body was another acknowledgement about the unjust killing of the two.[249]

The Black Berets, other community members, and the families of Córdova and Canales continued to press for justice. On July 22, 1972, the Antonio Córdova-Rito Canales Committee for Justice was formed, with the families of the two being a major part of the organization.[250] Starting in January of 1973 both families filed wrongful death lawsuits. Mary Córdova of Salt Lake City, Utah, mother of Antonio, filed a $300,000 lawsuit against the City of Albuquerque, Wylie Brothers Contracting, and six police officers. Daniel Canales, brother of Rito, filed a $1.5 million wrongful death suit against the City of Albuquerque and nine officers.[251] The suit by Córdova gave allegations that Tim Chapa, a police informant, either took the two to the site or arranged for them to go to the site. In so doing, Chapa would have conspired with the police to cause Canales and Córdova's deaths. These allegations were based on contradictions in a previous deposition taken from Chapa. The appeals court dismissed these charges as innuendo, and both suits were dismissed in court.[252] Yet during a case filing many years later in 1999, Tim Chapa changed his story and admitted to being an informant. The case filing stated:

> In 1999, Tim Chapa made an affidavit that purported to "clear [his] conscience in this matter regarding the homicides of Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova in January of 1972." The affidavit stated that Chapa had been a confidential informant for the state police in the 1960s and 70s, that he was asked to infiltrate an organization called the Black Berets, that he had devised a plan in conjunction with the police to kill members of this organization, and that the plan had culminated in the shootings of Córdova and Canales. Chapa also stated that the police officers involved threatened to kill him if he ever exposed this plan and that he denied the existence of the conspiracy during all the subsequent court proceedings because he feared for his life.[253]

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[249] San Miguel County District Attorney Donaldo A. Martínez called the death of Córdova and Canales assassinations, a sentiment echoed by many others, and surprising from this and other elected and appointed officials. "Will U.S. Investigate Police Murders?" *El Grito del Norte*, June 27, 1972.

[250] "Special Report – Police State in New Mexico: Antonio and Rito Murders," *El Grito del Norte*, August 6, 1972.

[251] "Wrongful Death Suit Filed," *Las Cruces Sun News*, January 30, 1973.

[252] "Death Suit Dismissal Is Upheld," *Albuquerque Journal*, September 12, 1974.

[253] Córdova v Larsen: http://caselaw.findlaw.com/nm-court-of-appeals/1004022.html

Chapa also admitted being used by the New Mexico State Police as an informant and provocateur against La Alianza and *El Grito del Norte* before being used against the Black Berets, although he never became a member of the Black Berets.[254] Despite his confession, that lawsuit was dismissed in 2001.[255] Tim Chapa's confession gave new evidence on the extent of the techniques and motives of police intelligence operations against the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico.

The martyrdom of Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova continued to be remembered even outside New Mexico. Angela Davis invoked their memory when she spoke at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in 1973. She called New Mexico a "hotbed of political repression," citing the murders of the two Black Berets along with the targeting of Tijerina and the police murder that year of indigenous activist Larry Casuse to show how concentrated political violence was in the state.[256] Luis Talamantez, who exchanged poetry with Antonio Córdova in their correspondences, himself wrote a poem about the incident, published in an anthology which commented that the exchange "reflects the growing solidarity felt between Chicanos behind walls and those outside."[257] Black Berets and their supporters conducted regular vigils and other commemorations on the anniversary of Canales and Córdova's deaths. Solidarity statements were printed in subsequent issues of *El Grito del Norte,* as well as poems, visual art, and other cultural products created in remembrance. A play about the incident was written by Nita Luna Davis, a Black Beret member who became a playwright. A corrido, "El Corrido de Córdova and Canales," was written by Roberto

[254] José Angel Gutiérrez, "Chapter 7: The Informant," in *Tracking King Tiger: Reies López Tijerina and the FBI*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019).

[255] Matt Mygatt, "Court Upholds Ruling In Chicano Activists Lawsuit," *Associated Press*, March 5, 2001.

[256] Scott Beaven, "State Is A Hotbed – A. Davis," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 20, 1973.

[257] López y Rivas, 178.

Martínez.[258] The wide range of commemorations and remembrances of Rito Canales and Antonio Córdova expressed how people rejected police narratives about them and saw them as martyrs for social justice.

The effects of police repression and violence on the Black Berets coincided with the wider repression faced by social movements nationwide. The Black Berets continued their community projects and solidarity efforts into 1973 but continued to face the effects of increased police repression. Black Beret members reported increased and continued harassment from the police after the killings of Córdova and Canales.[259] In this period there a wave of violence against other social justice movements and revolutionary groups around the country, especially to Chicana/o Movement activists in this area. On March 1, 1973, Larry Casuse, a Native American student activist, was killed by police in Gallup, New Mexico around events that revolved around struggles against racism and exploitation of Indigenous people.[260] Another incident that affected Chicana/o activists in New Mexico happened in September 1973, when a shootout between police and Chicanas/os at Escuela Tonantzin alternative school in Santa Fe ended with the killing of 19-year-old Linda Montoya.[261] In nearby Colorado, from 1972 to 1974 eight Chicana/o activists met violent deaths in this period.[262] This wave of repression coincided with the general decline of Chicana/o Movement

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[258] Alexandro D. Hernandez, "A Corrido of Struggle: Remembering Roberto Martínez and the Black Berets through 'El Corrido de Córdova y Canales,'" *Smithsonian Folklife Festival blog,* March 16, 2013, http://www.festival.si.edu/blog/2013/a-corrido-of-struggle-remembering-roberto-Martínez -and-the-black-berets-through-el-corrido-de-Córdova-y-canales/

[259] In one incident, the targeting and harassment came from some of the same officers who committed the killings, in "Police Harass Berets," *El Grito Del Norte*, August 6, 1972.

[260] David Correia, *An Enemy Such As This: Larry Casuse and the Fight for Native Liberation in One Family on Two Continents over Three Centuries,* (Haymarket Books, 2022).

[261] Ronald Gallegos, "11 Arrested, 4 Shot in Agua Fria Raid," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, September 4, 1973.

[262] The killings of Ricardo Falcon, Luis Jr. Martínez and those known as Los Seis de Boulder are described in Alan Prendergast, "Chicanismo, Reloaded," *Westword*, November 27, 2003, https://www.westword.com/news/chicanismo-reloaded-5076791 accessed February 1, 2023.

activity nationally. While not the only reason for their decline, it is undeniable that police repression was a main factor in the decline of, and subsequent transformation of, the Black Berets as an organization.

An anonymous poem published after their deaths conveyed the mood of the Chicana/o Movement in this time:

> And still the shots resound
> In the throbbing stillness of the night
> Our comrade in struggle has fallen, murdered, dark blood pouring forth,
> Into all the raging rivers
> Of all the continents in struggle
> Latin american guerrillas, african freedom fighters, irish patriots – the list is long,
> Of all who fell assassinated, by nixon, ford, rockefeller,
> And all the puppets of the Dollar.
> Beware!
> Our martyrs are in the wind,
> Peoples of the world wait
> In the shadow of justice
> They take aim with their rage.
> The wind carries a message:
> When murder is Order, then revolution is Law.[263]

Conclusion

Police repression against social movements was a reality during the Civil Rights Movement and the Chicana/o Movement. The Black Berets, being an organization that challenged the then present state of affairs, became targets of police agencies on behalf of those who wished to preserve those present state of affairs. A combination of attacks by police and organized right wing forces were targeted at the Black Berets. Extensive anger at police abuse and what it represented exploded around New Mexico, with the Black Berets continuing to do activism to serve and defend their community. A police action that was in all probability targeted led to the outright assassination of two of their members by the police, which caused

[263] no author, published in *450 years of Chicano History in Pictures*, later *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*, 145.

more reactions in the community. The revelations of these activities give new understanding of how state repression happened against not only a Chicana/o political organization but the people they represented, and how they organized in response to continue to empower their community.

Conclusion:

Reflections and Moving Forward

The police repression as well as the changing political environment led to the end of the Black Berets as an organization. Yet like many social movements they did not just end but transformed into a different formation due to their changed circumstances. This is what happened in 1973 when the Chicano Communications Center was formed with *El Grito del Norte* in order to continue their political work. Through this institution Black Berets members were able to further put their internationalist ideals into action. With the political climate of the time, they also attempted to forward revolutionary politics, but this direction led to that project's end. Some of the members continued activist work through more institutionalized nonprofit organizations, but the ideals they had continued to be reflected in their new entities. This activity also reflected how the Black Berets membership continued to contribute to social justice work in New Mexico well into changing political climates going into the 1980's.

A main factor in the conversion of the Black Berets consisted of a need to adapt to the changing political climate and to find new ways to organize. These sentiments were shared by other movement activists in New Mexico. At the same time, the staff of *El Grito del Norte*, the newspaper edited by Elizabeth Martínez, had similar contemplations. Martínez recalled in a later reflection on this period that "[I]n the early 1970's, El Grito began looking for a new strategy and tactics, both for the newspaper and the movimiento in general."[264] By early 1973 the newspaper relocated from Española to Las Vegas and published its last issue in August

[264] Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, "A View from New Mexico: Recollections of the Movimiento Left," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 54, no. 3 (2002 July/August): 83.

1973.[265] The Black Berets as an organization and *El Grito del Norte* as an institution had close communication with each other, including sharing labor of members and staff, and considered each other partners.[266] Through their communications, by late 1973 both the Black Berets and *El Grito del Norte* came together to form a new organization, the Chicano Communications Center (CCC). Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez and other *El Grito del Norte* staff moved to Albuquerque, where the Center would be based, to work on the new project.

The Chicano Communications Center focused on education and media production to find new techniques to reach people. Martínez would describe the Center as "a multimedia, educational barrio project."[267] Sofia Martínez, an activist and educator from northern New Mexico who would work with Betita Martínez years later, wrote that the CCC "produced Chicano literature, history, and teatro, and challenged tradition and stereotypes," adding "[The Center] was central to the Chicano Movement in New Mexico."[268] The CCC would bring in speakers, form a theater group, and use other forms of media besides print to convey information.[269] During this time, Black Beret member Nita Luna Davis, who worked previously on liberation schools set up by the Black Berets, would form a theater group called Teatro Aguacero.[270] To finalize the transition of the newspaper, in March 1974, they published

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[265] Enriqueta Vasquez,*Enriqueta Vásquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte - Hispanic Civil Rights Series,* eds. Dionne Espinoza and Lorena Oropeza, (Arte Público Press, 2006), xliii.

[266] Joaquín Luján talks about going to Espanola and Las Vegas to work as staff for El Grito del Norte, in: Southwest Organizing Project, Episode Nine. "Interview with Kathy Orgain-Kelly and Joaquín Luján," SWOP 40th Anniversary podcast audio, https://soundcloud.com/user-341516513-230723832/episode-nine-kathy-orgain-kelly-and-Joaquín-Luján;

[267] Martínez 2002, 83.

[268] Sofía Martínez, "Go-Go Betita," *Social Justice* 39, no. 2/3 (128-129) (2013): 108.

[269] Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez interview by Loretta Ross, video recording, March 3, 2006, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, tape 1, https://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Martínez Betita.pdf (Accessed February 1, 2023).

[270] Teatro Aguacero would last until 1985, and Luna-Davis would become a poet, actress and playwright, in Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, *500 Years of Chicana Women's History* (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 102-104.

a final issue of *El Grito del Norte* as a newsletter under the Chicano Communications Center name.[271] Other publications by the CCC would include comic books about Emiliano Zapata and Tupac Amaru.[272]

The most well-known publication from the CCC would be *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*, which was first published in 1976 to coincide with the American Bicentennial and planned protests around that day.[273] This book was later expanded to *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* and became a popular textbook in Chicana/o history courses in the United States. Elizabeth Martínez credits Nita Luna Davis with developing the original idea for the book. The format of the book was similar to how *El Grito del Norte* was printed because it included many photos and graphics printed in the paper previously, and acknowledged the labor of CCC members and the previous organizations they were from.[274] This project of the CCC exemplified how they benefited from the previous experience of members of the Black Berets and *El Grito del Norte*, and this book would have lasting impacts.

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[271] The issue had articles about alternative schools in New Mexico and about the shootout at Escuela Tonantzin in Santa Fe in 1973 that killed Linda Montoya. "El Grito Newsletter, published by the Chicano Communications Center," (Albuquerque, NM, March 1974). CHICANO / SPANISH LANGUAGE / MOVEMENT PAPERS, Reies López Tijerina Papers, (MSS 654-BC, Box: 67), UNM Center for Southwest Research & Special Collections.

[272] Rene G. D. Montemar and Roberto Alfonso, *Emiliano Zapata: His Life Was La Revolución,* (Albuquerque: Chicano Communication Training Project, 1973); Fidel Morales and Newton Estapé, *Tupac Amaru y Los Rebeldes de Peru: The Story of the Inca Revolt against Spanish Rule in Peru,* (Chicano Communications Center, 1975).

[273] "Espejos de Aztlan; Richard Moore," 2001-10-30, KUNM, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress), Boston, MA and Washington, DC, accessed January 10, 2023, http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-eef3d6ad41e.

[274] The 1991 edition of 500 Years of Chicano History listed and acknowledged the people who worked on 450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures, who were the following: Susana Fuentes, Cecilia Fuentes García, Marvin García (Canoncito Wood Cooperative), Joaquín Luján (Black Berets, El Grito del Norte), Nita Luna (Black Berets, El Grito del Norte), Betita Martínez (El Grito del Norte), Ruth and Dr. Manuel Martínez (translators), Richard Moore (Black Berets, distribution), Susan Seymour, Romelia Escamilla Silva. In Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez, *500 Años Del Pueblo Chicano=500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures, Revisado.* (SouthWest Organizing Project, 1991), cover page.

The political stances of CCC members were rooted in their politics previously developed in *El Grito del Norte* and the Black Berets. While cultural nationalism was considered prevalent in Chicano organizations at the time, the CCC would invoke principles based on class analysis, international solidarity, and strived to be Third World centered. They presented these Third World politics in the introduction to *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*, which had the following:

> *By the early 1970s our people were beginning to look beyond nationalism and "Chicanismo." We could see that there were other, non-white oppressed peoples called "Third World" within the U.S. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and Asians have the same oppressors as we do. So we formed alliances with them. We saw that the enemy wasn't just the gringo but "the system." Capitalismo, imperialismo - words like that came into our vocabulary along with racismo and pinche gringo.*[275]

In this period members of the CCC were inspired to put their internationalism and international solidarity into practice. Elizabeth Martínez had already traveled to Cuba, Eastern Europe, and North Vietnam before this, and other El Grito staff had visited Cuba during the paper's publication. In 1974, Richard Moore and Joaquín Luján traveled to Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade, which started a trend of Nuevomexicanos conducting regular trips to Cuba. Eventually, Moore served on the national committee of the Venceremos Brigade, which facilitated Chicana and Chicano activists' travels to Cuba for the purposes of Third World political education and building solidarity with the Cuban Revolutionary movement. Along with travel to Cuba, Marvin García traveled to China with a delegation of twelve people from New Mexico in 1975.[276] On separate occasions, Enriqueta Vásquez also traveled to China as part of her political education.[277] These travels were also part of a growing movement in Chicana/o activism to create transnational solidarity with Third World revolutionary

[275] *450 Años Del Pueblo Chicano = 450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures,* (Chicano Communications Center, 1976).

[276] Tomas Martínez, "N.M. Group Views China," *Albuquerque Journal*, May 25, 1975.

[277] Vásquez, xliii.

movements. In this period, New Mexico activists would also operate on a transnational level and would put their internationalist ideals into practice.

The internationalism of the CCC also translated into the advocacy of socialism, which came out in their more activist-oriented measures. In their 12-Point Program the Black Berets were explicitly anti-capitalist if not explicitly advocating socialism. *El Grito del Norte* gave voice to leftist ideology in the Chicana/o Movement and supported socialist and communist countries and movements. After the CCC formed, their advocacy of socialism became more explicit when members formed an activist-oriented part of the organization to develop and spread their politics. The Chicano League Against Racism and Oppression (CLARO) was formed as a formal alliance with their affiliated organizations to build mass organizing, to network with other groups, and to push revolutionary and socialist politics. Martínez recollected "[I]n 1974, self-identification with the socialist vision reached a high point," and that many grassroots people in northern New Mexico were receptive to those ideas.[278] In this time the New Communist Movement was emerging, with many activists from the social movements of the sixties committing themselves to versions of Marxist-Leninist ideology and attempting to build vanguard parties to promote socialist and communist revolution.[279] Many of these efforts were led by people of color activists from previous social movements, as well as took the ideas from non-white communist leader, and one scholar called them the Third World Left.[280] Activists through CLARO communicated with many national Marxist-Leninist

[278] Martínez 2002, 85

[279] A history of this movement is examined in Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che,* (Verso, 2002).

[280] A study of three organizations in the Los Angeles area in this time is in Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, & Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*, (University of California Press, 2006).

groups and invited them to New Mexico to connect nationally.[281] CLARO set up study programs on Marxism and contemporary socialism, structured a central committee, and brought in ideas from Mao Zedong to build a disciplined cadre. The efforts of Chicana/o activists in the mid-1970s were focused on building a revolutionary socialist movement while continuing to root themselves in the history and culture of New Mexico.[282]

While the CCC adopted more leftist and socialist politics, a sectarian variety of these politics led to its dissolution. One group attracted to the CCC was the August Twenty-Ninth Movement (ATM). ATM was unique from the other Marxist-Leninist groups in the NCM in that it was one of the few groups that formed outside of the white left. The ATM was founded in 1974 by groups and individuals with roots in the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles, California, and formed with other collectives around the Southwest.[283] The founding groups included a collective in Albuquerque that started as a study group and would become one of the key ATM chapters.[284] While active in Albuquerque, the chapter worked on the Chilili land grant struggle happening simultaneously and entered into the Chicano Communications Center. The political line that ATM developed and put forward, based on their Marxist-Leninist politics, was their interpretation of the Chicano National Question, and one of their factional actions in Albuquerque towards the CCC overly emphasized differing opinions regarding the

[281] Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez interview by Loretta Ross, video recording, March 3, 2006, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, tape 1, https://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Martínez Betita.pdf (Accessed February 1, 2023).

[282] Martínez later admitted that "our dogmatic imposition of cadre demands ran against the barrio culture and longtime styles of organizing," Martínez 2002, 85.

[283] Carlos Munoz, *Youth Identity Power: The Chicano Movement,* (Verso, 1989), 179.

[284] The organization's own history gives them the name Albuquerque Collective, describing this group as the youngest and most inexperienced of the four groups that founded the August 29th Movement, also noting that this chapter made a number of "sectarian errors." In "Statements on the Founding of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist)," 1978, at https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/atm-history.htm

"national question" debate that permeated many NCM's during the 1970s.[285] According to Elizabeth Martínez, ATM had an ideological dispute on whether *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* conveyed the National Question to their version of correctness, and in response ATM members shredded an entire second print run of the book in 1976.[286] Martínez also observed that ATM was a destructive influence on other struggles in New Mexico. Their destructiveness led to them driving members away from the CCC that did not agree with the specific version of ATM's communist politics. ATM's actions regarding their sectarian version of NCM political ideas eventually led to the dissolution of the CCC after 1976.[287] Shortly after this, Elizabeth Martínez left New Mexico and settled in the Bay Area of California.[288] The dissolution of the CCC also ended a major attempt to organize around revolutionary politics in Albuquerque, and those organizers who were with that project took on new directions in their activism based on new situations coming into the 1980s.

Institutionalization and Continuity of Organizing

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[285]Their ideology was put forward in their pamphlet, "Fan the Flames – A Revolutionary Position on the Chicano National Question: A Pamphlet by the August Twenty-Ninth Movement (M-L)", available at: https://marxistleninist.wordpress.com/2010/11/14/fan-the-flames-a-revolutionary-position-on-the-chicano-national-question-a-pamphlet-by-the-august-twenty-ninth-movement-m-l/.

[286] Martínez 2002, 84.

[287] Articles in two 1977 editions of the ATM newspaper *Revolutionary Cause* printed an address for the Chilili defense committee (The People of Chilili) in the care of Chicano Communications Center, indicating that ATM was using the name up until that year. Revolutionary Cause, Vol. 2 No. 4, June 1977, at https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/revolutionary-cause/rc-2-4a.pdf and Revolutionary Cause, Vol. 2 No. 5, August 1977, at https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/revolutionary-cause/rc-2-5a.pdf. By the next year, 1978, the August Twenty-Ninth Movement would merge with other groups to form the League of Revolutionary Struggle. There is no indication yet found of anyone doing political work under that name in Albuquerque.

[288] Betita Martínez went on to have a prominent career as a nationally recognized scholar, writer, and activist. On the dissolution of the CCC, Martínez spoke to ATM members in California who believed that the New Mexico chapter had government infiltrators in it, explaining the destructive actions by that chapter. The actual cause is only speculative without any evidence, but the prevalence of infiltration in this era of police repression symbolized by COINTELPRO makes this plausible, as much as the sectarian activities of extreme leftist organizations in this same period also was prevalent and in the realm of possibility for motives. The activities of ATM are further examined in Eddie Bonilla, "'Fan the Flames:' The Theories and Activism of Chicana/o Communists Between 1968-1990," (dissertation, Michigan State University, 2019), 110-111.

The trajectory of every member of the Black Berets and the Chicano Communication Center after their dissolution is beyond the scope of this study. But a general trend that can be observed in New Mexico leading up to the 1980s is how many activists continued their work through progressive organizations of a nonprofit structure. Max Elbaum wrote in his study of the New Communist Movement when many went into so-called civilian life:

> …changing contours of the left gave the progressive nonprofit world greater weight than it had previously had. As the 1980's proceeded the kind of volunteer/activist-based organizations that had predominated during the 1960's and 1970's receded, and staff-run, foundation-supported, paper membership organizations became the norm. This shift in part reflected an adaptation to conditions of reduced popular insurgency and grassroots involvement, but it also reflected the increased influence of liberal foundations and individual philanthropists. Despite their limitations, jobs in nonprofits - as well as within labor, electoral politics and academia - provided a way for movement veterans to simultaneously make a living and stay politically involved.[289]

Overall, Elbaum saw many former activists "meshed into the country's amorphous progressive milieu." Scholar Laura Pulido also noted how many former activists in the Third World Left in the Los Angeles area continued their work and helped build many progressive organizations in that city.[290] This phenomenon also manifested in New Mexico among former members of the Chicano Communications Center who went on to continue their public service as part of non-profit organizations.

In an interview in 2001, Richard Moore recalled that the period between 1976 to 1980 was a low period for community organizing in New Mexico due to the decline of many grassroots organizations, where there were few groups where people advocated for themselves.[291] In response to a lull of organizing with a changed political landscape, Moore and other activists canvassed and had discussions with people statewide during the late 1970s.

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[289] Elbaum, 309-310.

[290] Pulido, 216-217.

[291] "Espejos de Aztlan; Richard Moore," 2001-10-30, KUNM, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress), Boston, MA and Washington, DC, accessed January 10, 2023, http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-eef3d6ad41e

By 1980, these actions helped found the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP), a multiracial, multi-issue community organizing group based in Albuquerque. According to their history, SWOP was founded by community activists "...to build a strong grassroots organization in the Southwest to fight for environmental and social justice."[292] Founding members included Richard Moore, Joaquín Luján, and others formerly with the Black Berets and the CCC, with Moore as co-Director. SWOP operated as a non-profit community organization, funded by foundation grants. SWOP is a membership organization that is run by a professional staff overseen by a board of directors, and continues to be active as of 2023. The activism of SWOP embraced an emerging 1970s trend in environmentalism, which they took with the recognition of environmental racism and thus helped put forward the concept of environmental justice.[293] In 1990 members of SWOP helped create the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ), a regional network of people of color led organizations working on similar issues, and Richard Moore would become its director.[294] Elizabeth Martínez briefly returned to New Mexico in the 1980s and helped produce *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures,* an updated version of the book published by the CCC, and SWOP published this book in 1991.

When the Black Berets merged with *El Grito del Norte* to form the Chicano Communcations Center, they embraced the prevailing trends of Third World revolutionary organizing, and the limits of these methods and ideas eventually ended the CCC. Many of the members regrouped again and continued their activism in new forms under a nonprofit based

[292]Southwest Organizing Project, https://www.swop.net/timeline

[293] Elizabeth Martínez, "When People of Color Are An Endangered Species," in *De Colores Means All Of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century*, (South End Press, 1998), 100-107.

[294] Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, (pamphlet, Albuquerque, NM, 1994), in authors files.

model that became prevalent among progressive organizers going into the 1980s. As a social movement, the people that made up the Black Berets were not confined to that organization but adapted to circumstances and were able to continue work first developed in the Chicana/o Movement on a different level.

Conclusion

The examination of the Black Berets in Albuquerque gives an understanding of a critical organization during the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico, as well as the issues that brought them into existence. The social issues they tackled were rooted in the urbanization experiences of Albuquerque, which served to disempower its Chicana/o population by the 1960s. The Black Berets emerged in the Civil Rights era and Chicana/o Movement era, when protest activity and community empowerment became prevalent in many localities. Through principles guided by self-determination, the Black Berets aimed to serve, educate, and defend the people through community organizing, confrontational politics, and building alternative institutions. The work of the Black Berets coincided with and often collaborated with other activist work in New Mexico. The forms of activism of the Black Berets followed many national trends of civil rights organizing, especially with paramilitary-style urban based youth organizations. Along with following national trends in youth organizing the Black Berets also rooted themselves in the specific historic conditions of New Mexico, particularly Albuquerque.

This study also reveals the extent of political repression against a Chicana/o social movement organization in New Mexico. The Black Berets as an organization faced an orchestrated campaign of surveillance, infiltration, harassment and violence by different state and local police departments as well as right wing groups acting as vigilantes, all of which aimed to disrupt and discredit the Black Beret's political work. Tensions against police abuse

culminated in many actions around New Mexico, most prominently the 1971 uprising in Albuquerque, which the Black Berets involved themselves in to defend the people. In what has been considered an assassination by many, law enforcement murdered two Black Beret members in an ambush, which revealed the lengths of tactics that state forces used against the organization. This incident also revealed the amount of community support they received from the outrage over police murder, especially one politically motivated.

The transformation of the organization reflected their need to continue the work they did while changing with the political landscape. The Chicano Communications Center, formed with *El Grito del Norte*, represented a different era of Chicana/o activism not only in New Mexico but nationwide. This era also reflected a time where many from the social movements the decade before attempted to engage in forms of revolutionary politics. Their next transition reflected a turn to progressive organizations that continued their grassroots politics but in less confrontational means.

The history of the Black Berets reflected how Chicana/o youth took action to fight injustices toward their communities that were caused by systemic racism and domination by outsiders. The sentiment given by Joaquín Luján, “It was really up to us,” reflected the sentiment that issues of racism, poverty, health and education inequality, and police abuse, required the people to organize on these issues to realize their power to find solution. There has been progress since then in many of these issues, which came about because of activism of groups like the Black Berets. In this present moment there have also been pushbacks by more conservative forces on many of these gains that came from these past movements, along with the continuing campaigns against police brutality and murder. Studying history is necessary to understand the past and the parallels with current situations. This study is a

necessary contribution to an understanding of a critical part of the history of Albuquerque and of New Mexico, as well as the meaning of this history for its Chicana/o population. As the history of the Chicana/o Movement in New Mexico has often been overlooked, an intervention to further explore the local histories of this region is necessary and will bring a more knowledgeable understanding of this era in the state, and the movements that came about because of them.

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