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**"DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO SAN JOSE?" ETHNIC  
MEXICANS, URBANISM, CULTURE AND POLITICS IN  
EMERGING SILICON VALLEY, 1940-1980**

**BY**

**ALEXANDRO J. JARA**

B.A., Latin American History, Santa Clara University, 2009  
M.A., U.S. Western History, University of New Mexico, 2013

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
History**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May, 2022**

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**“DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO SAN JOSE?” ETHNIC MEXICANS,  
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M.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2013  
Ph.D., History, University of New Mexico, 2022

**ABSTRACT**

My dissertation explores the Latino experience in Santa Clara County, especially in San Jose. The area, located in Northern California's Bay Area, is nestled just south of the more popular cities of Oakland and San Francisco, nearly five hundred miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. My examination of the social, cultural, and political activities of Latinos in San Jose provides insight into the community development of ethnic Mexicans away from traditional sites of study in places like Tucson, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. I argue that beginning at mid-century, Latinos moved into the downtown area and helped prevent nearby neighborhoods from experiencing depopulation, minimizing some of the impacts of white flight experienced by many other cities across the country. In addition, I argue ethnic Mexicans claimed space downtown through social-cultural activities, allowing them to make political inroads and eventually finding representation in city council with the arrival of district elections.

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## Introduction

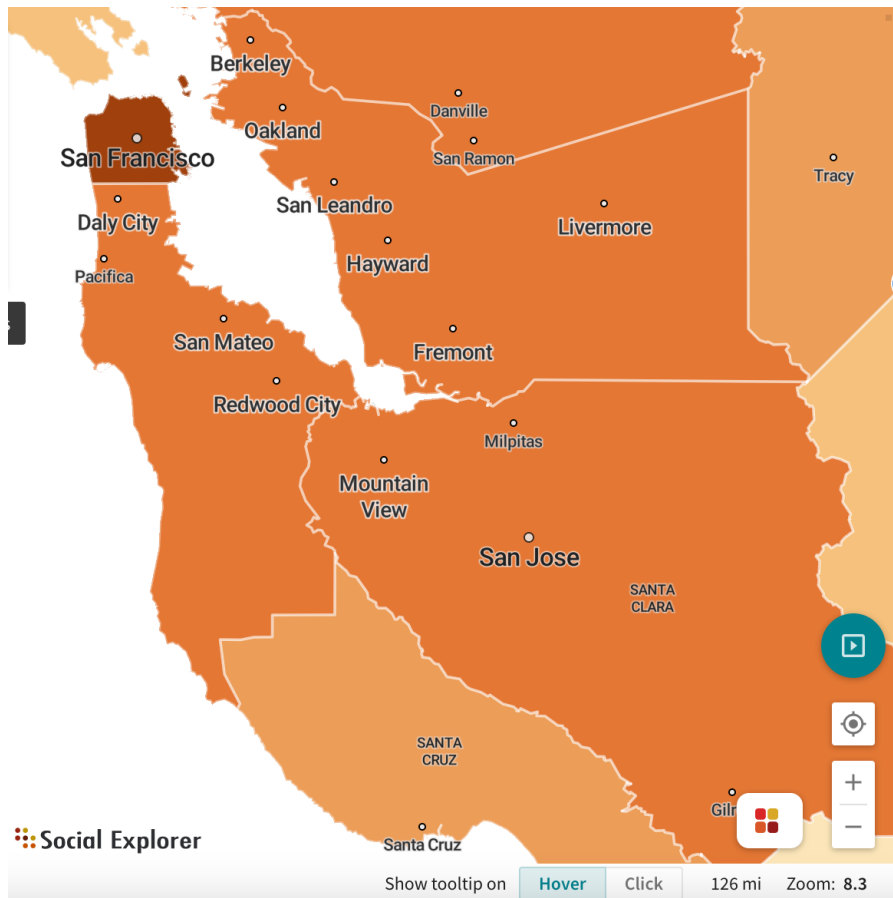
San Jose, California, is located roughly forty miles southeast and southwest of San Francisco and Oakland, respectively, in Northern California's Bay Area. Santa Clara County, where San Jose serves as the county seat, is the southern-most county in the Bay Area and is popularly referred to as the South Bay.<sup>1</sup> The city has a long history of touting itself as the largest city in its county, which it has been since its founding in 1776. In 2011, though, it gained new national prominence when the Census Bureau declared it the tenth largest city in the United States; since 2010 it has also been home to the tenth largest concentration of Latinos in the United States.<sup>2</sup> A major technological boom occurred in the Santa Clara Valley (for which the county is named) after the 1970s and San Jose's Northern California region became renowned for its innovation and wealth. The region successfully transformed from "The Valley of Heart's Delight," an agricultural center famous for its apricots and prunes, to "Silicon Valley," a home for trendsetting and world-spanning computer companies such as IBM, Hewlett Packard, and Apple—and later became a center for e-commerce and service-oriented juggernauts like E-Bay, Amazon, Facebook, and Google. At a time when many American cities were in decline, the San Jose metropolitan area boomed: no other city in the Valley expanded over more land or gained more population than San Jose during the second half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the dissertation the terms Santa Clara County and South Bay will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Rodriguez, *San Jose Mercury News*, March 24, 2011 <https://www.mercurynews.com/2011/03/24/san-jose-officially-becomes-10th-largest-city/> [accessed July 5, 2020]; Sharon R. Ennis, Merary's Ríos-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, "The Hispanic Population: 2010" U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce. Economics and Statistics Administration, May 2011.

Map 1



Description: The map shows the proximity and location of San Jose in relation to the other two major cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco and Oakland.

Source: Social Explorer, February 21, 2022.

This dissertation places ethnic Mexicans at the center of San Jose’s growth during the postwar period and into the late twentieth century by examining the development of Latino neighborhoods in Santa Clara County’s largest city.<sup>3</sup> Mexican Americans and

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<sup>3</sup> As of 2019 the “Hispanic” or “Latino” population in San Jose was 324,848 people or 31.6% of the city’s total residents. In 2019 Non-Mexican Latinos in the city comprised less than 5% of the Spanish-speaking population, reflecting the historical proportion of San Jose’s Latino composition—in 1950, the principal starting point for this dissertation, non-Mexican descendant Spanish speakers only comprised about 6% of the Latino population. At the conclusion of this study, in 1980, 20% of the Hispanic population was comprised of non-Mexican descendants; this number includes Spaniards. However, early community builders—predominantly of Mexican descent—frequently referred to Spanish-speakers in the city and county as Latinos. This nomenclature recognized the presence (albeit small) and contributions of non-

Mexican migrants were essential to the area's growth, prosperity, and international fame as a tech hub (one with a startling degree of economic, social, and political inequality).

The shift in economy that created so much wealth for some led to a change in the types of work available to ethnic Mexicans in the region, which is characterized by a huge economic gap between the predominantly whites or Anglos who work in the offices and board rooms of major tech companies and the ethnic-Mexican community that is largely relegated to lower-paid service-economy jobs.<sup>4</sup>

A social history of this ethnic-Mexican community has a great deal to tell historians because San Jose's diverse makeup and large concentration of Latinos offers insight into the Latinization of cities in the United States.<sup>5</sup> There are several reasons for taking on this project. Due to immigration from Latin America, there has been a large demographic shift in the country; currently, nearly one out of every five people in the United States is of Latino descent, and studies suggest that within a generation the figure

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Mexican Latinos to the community. To minimize redundancy and acknowledge the presence of other Latinos in San Jose, the terms "ethnic Mexican," "Latino," and "Spanish speakers", are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation. In the last chapter I will also include the term "Hispanic" to acknowledge the state-created nomenclature embraced by the general public during the 1970s and 1980s. Primarily in chapter 4, I will use the term "Chicano" when referring to Mexican Americans ascribing to particular generational and political characteristics in the 1960s and 1970s. To the best of my ability I will also distinguish moments when I am speaking specifically about non-Mexican Latinos.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in the Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003); Christian Zolniski, *Janitors, Street Vendors, and Activists: The Lives of Mexican Immigrants in Silicon Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Daniel Dohan, *The Price of Poverty: Money, Work, and Culture in the Mexican-American Barrio* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Shannon Gleeson, *Conflicting Commitments: The Politics of Enforcing Immigrant Worker Rights in San Jose and Houston* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012); Francisco Jimenez, Alma M. Garcia, and Richard A. Garcia, *Ethnic Community Builders: Mexican Americans in Search of Justice and Power: The Struggle for Citizenship Rights in San Jose, California* (New York: Altamira Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> San Jose celebrates a diverse racial make-up but unlike many large cities in the United States, it neither currently has nor ever had a significant black population. The largest and poorest minority groups, Latinos (Mexican) and Asian (Vietnamese) are segregated in neighborhoods near the urban core and on the city's eastern periphery. According to the 2010 Census San Jose is home to the largest settlements of Vietnamese in the United States. Although the Asian population of San Jose is significant, the focus of this dissertation will be on the Latino (predominantly Mexican-descendant) population of the city.

will reach one in three.<sup>6</sup> Many of these Latinos—native and foreign-born—are living in cities and influencing the economic, political, social, and cultural landscapes as seen in the transformation of scores of neighborhoods throughout urban and suburban America.<sup>7</sup> In recent decades there have also been massive protests and social movements responding to immigration rights and policy, along with efforts to address racial, cultural, and social challenges.<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation intervenes in several fields of scholarship, engaging with scholars working in histories of U.S. cities, Chicano/Latino studies, immigration/transnational studies, and political history.

The primary contribution of this dissertation is to put Latinos at the center of a new approach to urban history. In his 2014 book, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, historian Neil Foley centers ethnic-Mexican experiences and contributions to building and shaping the United States. He observes that at that time, in “seven of the ten largest cities in the United States—New York, Los Angeles, Houston, San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, and San Antonio, in that order—Latinos now outnumber blacks.”<sup>9</sup> By using the

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<sup>6</sup> 2020 Census; Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7. The majority of the increase since 2000 has been from natural birth, not further immigration, meaning the “Latinization” of the United States will continue mostly as a result of citizens born within the country’s borders.

<sup>7</sup> Vikki L. Ruiz, “Nuestra América: Latino History as United States History,” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 93, no. 3, 2006; Roxanne Frias, “Latino: The Changing Face of America,” (2016), *Archival Copy of Videos*. 3 <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/acq-archival-videos/3>; Jon Alpert and Matthew O’Neill, “The Latin Explosion: A New America,” documentary, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Randal C. Archibold, “Immigrants Take to U.S. Streets in Show of Strength,” New York Times online [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/us/02immig.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/us/02immig.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) [accessed February 1, 2015]; Walter J. Nicholls, *The DREAMers: How the Undocumented Youth Movement Transformed the Immigrant Rights Debate* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013); Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration,” Nov. 20, 2014 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-President-address-nation-immigration> [accessed online, October, 5 2020]; State of Arizona, Senate Bill 1070, Arizona SB 1070, 2010, <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf> [accessed online, October 5, 2020].

<sup>9</sup> Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 4.

significant Black populations of these cities to foreground Latinos, Foley highlights the way that Black-white racial relations in the United States continue to dominate conversations about race in the United States, even as Latinos have become more numerous.

Most major works in U.S. urban history reflect this prioritization of Black-white narratives. Almost all the leading contributors to the postwar historiography have emphasized urban decline and suburban growth. In these narratives, Black people who had earlier migrated to mostly northern cities sought to move out of segregated ghettos in search of better housing beginning in the civil rights era. White people reacted to the prospect of new Black neighbors, whom they imagined as “encroaching” into their space, by “defending” their neighborhoods through manipulation, intimidation, and violence before fleeing to burgeoning suburbs.<sup>10</sup>

But in San Jose, unlike the other cities mentioned, Black people never settled in large numbers. Therefore, San Jose’s Spanish-speaking population never “outgrew” the nation’s traditionally largest minority group. Ever since statehood in 1850, ethnic Mexicans in San Jose and Santa Clara County prominently figured as the major group at

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004); Nathan Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2019); Destin Jenkins, *The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).



the center of racial inequality, conflict, and debate.<sup>11</sup> Foley and other scholars have pointed out that “the color of America has been changing since the end of World War II.”<sup>12</sup> Especially as a result of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the economic crises in Mexico and other parts of the world, more diverse peoples from places such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America migrated to the United States. Those coming from Asia in particular benefitted from this reform in immigration policy; but Mexicans and other Latin Americans were rendered presumptively illegal by the 1965 act’s new limitations on migration within the hemisphere. Foley commented that Latinos, predominantly comprised of those of Mexican descent, had become the country’s largest and fastest growing (in absolute terms) ethnoracial minority.<sup>13</sup>

It thus behooves scholars to not only consider but emphasize how Latinos have been transforming culture, social practices, political activity, and economies in the United States. San Jose provides an opportunity to examine how this demographic shift

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<sup>11</sup> There was also significant anti-Asian violence, to be sure. Located just forty miles South of San Francisco, San Jose absorbed or felt anti-Asian sentiment spilling from California’s most urban nineteenth-century city. Animosity towards Asians reached its peak in San Jose during the last thirty years of the nineteenth-century with the burning of San Jose’s segregated Chinatown in 1870 and 1887 and the expression of strong anti-Japanese sentiments as well. For more information on the experiences of Asians in Santa Clara County and San Jose, see Cecilia M. Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California’s Santa Clara Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1; Mark Brilliant’s book, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), discusses how growing numbers of minorities in California influenced the political landscape of the Golden State during the postwar period. The publication of several recent textbooks that emphasize the contributions and experiences of non-Black minorities and social groups are also clear reflections of shifting racial and social conversations in the United States as a result of an increasingly diverse population. For example see Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014); Paul Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018); Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2016); Felipa Fernández-Armesto, *Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014); Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 7.

contributed to the transformation of a meagerly populated municipality in 1950 to a major city in California within the span of thirty years.

A growing number of U.S. urban scholars have taken notice of the Latinization of the United States and have prioritized examining Latino experiences in city life beyond the traditional Black-white ethnoracial paradigm.<sup>14</sup> By shifting focus to predominantly immigrant communities such as Latinos, the narrative of urban America changes trajectory, especially by becoming a pole in the transnational exchange of people and cultures.<sup>15</sup> For example, in his article “Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of a New Urban America,” urban historian Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz explicitly calls for “the next urban history: one that analyzes U.S. cities in their transnational context, particularly as they relate to the Americas.”<sup>16</sup> Following in this

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<sup>14</sup> Some monographs that discuss Latinos in urban or suburban settings are Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City* (New York: Verso, 2000); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California 1848-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979); Virginia S. Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012); Tomas F. Summers Sandoval Jr., *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Llana Barber, *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> For information on Latinos and transnationalism in urban settings see Ruben Hernandez-Leon, *Metropolitan Migrants: The Migration of Urban Mexicans to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Robert Courtney Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Jesse Hofnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); ); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Sandoval-Strausz, “Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of a New Urban America,” *The Journal of American History* 101, no. 3 (December 2014): 804-831.

vein, I intend to demonstrate how the transnational character of San Josean Latinos—ethnic Mexicans in particular—influenced social, cultural, and political life in the city.

But this dissertation also takes the urban history field in a different direction by exploring a city without a history of substantial Black settlement and with a distinctive history of white resettlement. I argue that San Jose has a different story of “urban decline” and white flight typically ascribed to urban America during the postwar period. While white people left neighborhoods in and around the urban core, many did not leave the city. Joined by other white transplants coming to San Jose from outside Santa Clara County and California, white residents leaving the core settled in new peripheral and suburbanized areas of San Jose after these spaces had been annexed and developed. Despite the number of white people leaving the downtown area, for decades Latinos increased and sustained the urban core’s population. At the same time, the city government’s emphasis on home building and suburban development in its white peripheries led to disinvestment and abandonment of downtown and its growing Latino residents. Despite continued growth in the Latino population, this disinvestment, coupled with white flight, meant that the downtown area ultimately lost people. The urban core’s total population eventually stagnated and Latino political activism shifted, becoming increasingly influenced by Mexicans residing in San Jose’s Eastside.

Second, this dissertation contributes to the history of ethnic Mexicans, Chicanos, and other Latinos by offering a detailed community study, following the kind of work done by other scholars in the field—initially in locations from California to Arizona to New Mexico to Texas to Florida to New York, and more recently in places in the South and New England as well, following the expansion of Latinos beyond the Hispano

homeland of the Southwest and the growth of Latino communities from across the hemisphere. The majority of work of this kind has been about Mexican Americans because nearly two-thirds of the U.S.-Latino population is made up of those with Mexican heritage.<sup>17</sup> Over time, though, the field has expanded to include a greater diversity of Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, acknowledging the growing presence of people immigrating from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. More diverse Latino populations tend to arise in cities and communities located farther away from the U.S.-Mexico border in places like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and even Lawrence, Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup>

My examination of San Jose adds to this body of work by chronicling the development of a predominantly ethnic-Mexican community that was some three hundred miles away from the border and recognizing the presence and contributions of

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<sup>17</sup> For community studies centered around the ethnic Mexican experience see Alberto Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2001); Lydia R. Otero, *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Jerry González, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills: Latino Suburbanization in Postwar Los Angeles* (Camden, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2018); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); George J. Sánchez, *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> For community studies centered around non-Mexican and more diverse Latino experiences see Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Edgar Sandoval, *The New Face of Small-Town America: Snapshots of Latino Life in Allentown, Pennsylvania* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Tomás F. Summers-Sandoval, *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Llana Barber, *Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1954-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

non-Mexican Latinos in the community. This dissertation also joins newer scholarship that has transnationalized the field by explaining how Latino groups have maintained connections with their countries of origin—mainly by consuming and reproducing Latin American social, cultural, political, and economic practices in the United States and transferring analogous “American” practices back to Latin America. Scholars utilizing this analytical tool move the field beyond the nation-state, enriching and complicating our understanding of Latino-immigrant communities.<sup>19</sup> I do this by focusing attention on everyday social activities and the cultural reproduction of *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) in San Jose from the late 1930s through 1980—a process that contributed to the growth of a *Mexico de afuera* (Mexico outside of Mexico) far from the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>20</sup>

In his book, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans*, Stephen Pitti undertook a community study of the area around San Jose. In fact, *Devil in the Silicon Valley* is the first comprehensive historical study of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose.<sup>21</sup> But while Pitti’s book has become foundational in the study of

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<sup>19</sup> For information on ethnic Mexican and Latino-community studies that emphasize the transnational experience see Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jimmy Patiño, *Raza Sí, Migra No: Chicano Movement Struggles for Immigrant Rights in San Diego* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* (New York: Basic Books, 2019). Jesse Hoffnang-Garskoff, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York After 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> The term *Mexico de afuera* was coined in the 1920s by Mexican intellectual Jose Vasconcelos as a way to refer to Mexican nationals residing in the United States. San Jose and its ethnic-Mexican population contributed to an expanding Mexico outside of Mexico during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially through the reproduction of Mexican culture. For a more recent discussion of similar understandings of cultural expressions contributing to political activity see: Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> For an early sociological study of the ethnic-Mexican community in San Jose, see Margaret Clark, *Health in the Mexican-American Culture: A Community Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959). For more recent sociological and ethnographic studies on ethnic Mexicans in San Jose see Patricia Zavella, *Women’s Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987); Francisco Jiménez, Alma M. García, and Richard A. Garcia, eds., *Ethnic Community Builders: Mexican Americans in Search of Justice and Power: The Struggle for Citizenship Rights in San Jose, California* (New York: Altamira Press, 2007); Christian Zolniski, *Janitors,*

Latinos in San Jose—following in the methodological footsteps of the work of Albert Camarillo and George Sánchez on Santa Barbara and Los Angeles—my work diverges from his in a few key ways. First, my study is more focused in time and place. Pitti discusses the activities of ethnic Mexicans from the Spanish period through the 1990s, providing a broad perspective that sacrifices development of specific elements in San Jose’s history. The more focused scope of community development between the late Great Depression and 1980 provides the opportunity for more attention to nuance and details. By the late 1930s it was clear that ethnic Mexicans were beginning to establish roots and more permanent settlements in San Jose and their political activity began to take shape during the 1940s and 1950s, culminating with the direct election of a Mexican American to city council in 1980. Also, Pitti’s discussions of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose get somewhat blurred between specific neighborhoods, the city, and the county. The urban focus of my work accentuates differences between ethnic-Mexican neighborhood developments and more clearly distinguishes among them when discussing issues within the city of San Jose and Santa Clara County. Furthermore, while his transnational conversation predominantly revolves around California’s labor movement associated with farmworkers, obscuring the particularities of time and place, my emphasis on city-based cultural reproduction and municipal politics keeps my analysis grounded in San Jose.<sup>22</sup>

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*Street Vendors, and Activists: The Lives of Mexican Immigrants in Silicon Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Shannon Gleeson, *Conflicting Commitments: The Politics of Enforcing Immigrant Worker Rights in San Jose and Houston* (Ithaca, New York: ILR Press, 2012); Daniel Dohan, *The Price of Poverty: Money, Work, and Culture in the Mexican American Barrio* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Josie Méndez-Negrete, *Activist Leaders of San José: En Sus Propias Voces* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Pitti, *Devil in the Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

To be more specific, I argue that San Josean Latinos claimed space and created community downtown on a daily basis through everyday work, consumption, and leisure activities that made public officials notice their presence. During the *fiestas patrias*, in particular, attendance of Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals who dwelled throughout the city and beyond transformed downtown into a transnational space. These cultural-nationalist events highlighted the transnational character of ethnic Mexican San Joseans as *mexicanidad* was reproduced in the streets of downtown and public venues in the area. By establishing a daily presence, taking over the urban core during the *fiestas patrias*, and inviting government officials to the events, ethnic Mexicans demonstrated their political awareness and made political inroads in the city.

Finally, my dissertation also speaks to scholars interested in Latino political activity during the second half of the twentieth century as they worked to achieve meaningful representation at the municipal, state, and national levels. The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, or the Chicano Movement, are often bifurcated into narratives of either “radical” militant activists or establishment-moderate reformers. These are often further delineated one from the other through a generational divide between an emerging Chicano youth and an older Mexican American cadre of leadership. My examination of the Chicano Movement in San Jose, however, reveals a more complex and nuanced practice of ethnic Mexican identity, political activism, and intra-ethnic tensions and collaborations in their effort to seek redress and representation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For information on more “militant” or unorthodox activity of Chicanos and Latinos, see Ernesto Chavez, *¡Mi Raza Primero! My People First: Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Felipe Hinojosa, *Apostles of Change: Latino Radical Politics, Church Occupations, and the Fight to Save the Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021); Johanna Fernández, *The Young Lords: A Radical History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Jimmy Patiño, *Raza Sí, Migra*

As in other localities with large ethnic Mexican populations such as San Antonio, Los Angeles, and Tucson, the older Mexican American leadership in San Jose continued to work within establishment-oriented avenues while an emerging Chicano generation distinguished itself by organizing in less-orthodox ways. But I identify key moments when these groups collaborated and worked together towards common goals. The dissertation pays special attention to electoral politics at the local level from 1950-1980 when ethnic Mexicans struggled against a discriminatory at-large voting system to elect a Latino to city council. Their eventual triumph in this effort in the municipal elections of 1980 institutionalized the legacy of ethnic-Mexican political struggles by establishing a permanent and eventually an expanded Latino presence on the city council.

The story of San Jose adds to the Chicano/Latino scholarship by presenting a late twentieth-century story about ethnic Mexicans in one of California's and the country's most-populated urban environments not located in Southern California or a site traditionally studied for its Latino population.<sup>24</sup> Other well-known cities in the United

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*No: Chicano Movement Struggles for Immigrant Rights in San Diego* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). For information on more establishment-oriented approaches see Cynthia E. Orozco, *The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement: No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012); Richard R. Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). For more nuanced analyses that describe both the "militant" and establishmentarian approaches see Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990); Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Many recent books from the social sciences have begun to analyze San Jose's Mexican population but historians have yet to unpack the complex stories of San Jose specifically and the Bay Area's Latino populations generally. Recent works from the social sciences on Mexicans in San Jose are Shannon Gleeson, *Conflicting Commitments: The Politics of Enforcing Immigrant Worker Rights in San Jose and Houston* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012); Daniel Dohan, *The Price of Poverty: Money, Work, and Culture in the Mexican American Barrio* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); Christian Zolniski, *Janitors, Street Vendors, and Activists: The Lives of Mexican Immigrants in Silicon*



States with significant or growing Mexican populations located outside the purview of the U.S. Southwest include Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Oakland, and New York. Although the examination of Latinos in urban spaces is not new, the field of urban history has not provided enough attention to or research on the development and effects of local, state, and national politics as influenced by Latinos in cities; only in the past few years have historians seen substantial interventions in this area.<sup>25</sup> In ways that are sometimes similar to but more often different from the Black experience in the United States, Latinos have changed economies, cultures, landscapes, social relationships, and politics in cities, especially in the postwar period due partially to the transnational character of their lives and activities.

Perhaps more akin to San Jose, however, is Denver, Colorado. Located six hundred miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border, this Western city contains a significantly understudied ethnic Mexican population in an urban landscape where Black people did not settle in large numbers. In fact, in 2010, Black residents made up 10% of

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*Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). For the most recent historical analysis of Latinos in San Jose and the Bay Area see: Stephen Pitti, *Devil in the Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americas* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Tomás Summers Sandoval Jr., *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). >

<sup>25</sup> Some monographs that discuss Latinos in urban or suburban settings are Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California 1848-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979); Virginia S. Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012); Tomas F. Summers Sandoval Jr., *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Llana Barber, *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

the city's 604,414 number of people while Latinos made up 32% of the cities total population.<sup>26</sup> This dissertation should be seen as part of an effort to write the Latino history of an understudied category of major cities.

### **Methodological Notes**

A significant methodological tool utilized in this study is analysis of decennial U.S. Census information. The large-scale basis for understanding and analyzing changes in the city and county are based on detailed analysis of census data in their traditional bound-volume form and through Social Explorer, an online database that compiles information and can create detailed maps and tables with census data. The tabulation of county, city, and neighborhood populations were derived and calculated using the total numbers that were generally provided and easy to find. However, specific information on the Latino population (Spanish-surnamed as the demographic is classified in the 1950, 1960, and 1970 censuses) and their numbers in the two urban areas examined in this study proved more challenging. It is worth noting that the total Latino population provided are most likely undercounted. The 1950 census only provided information for census tracts where 250 or more persons with Spanish surnames lived—in the 1960 census the number increased to 400 persons with Spanish surnames. This means Latinos living in census tracts with fewer than these numbers were not taken into consideration when the census presented information on San Jose's Latino residents.

Analyzing neighborhoods over time can be a difficult and arduous task as physical markers and social-cultural understandings of residential clusters often change,

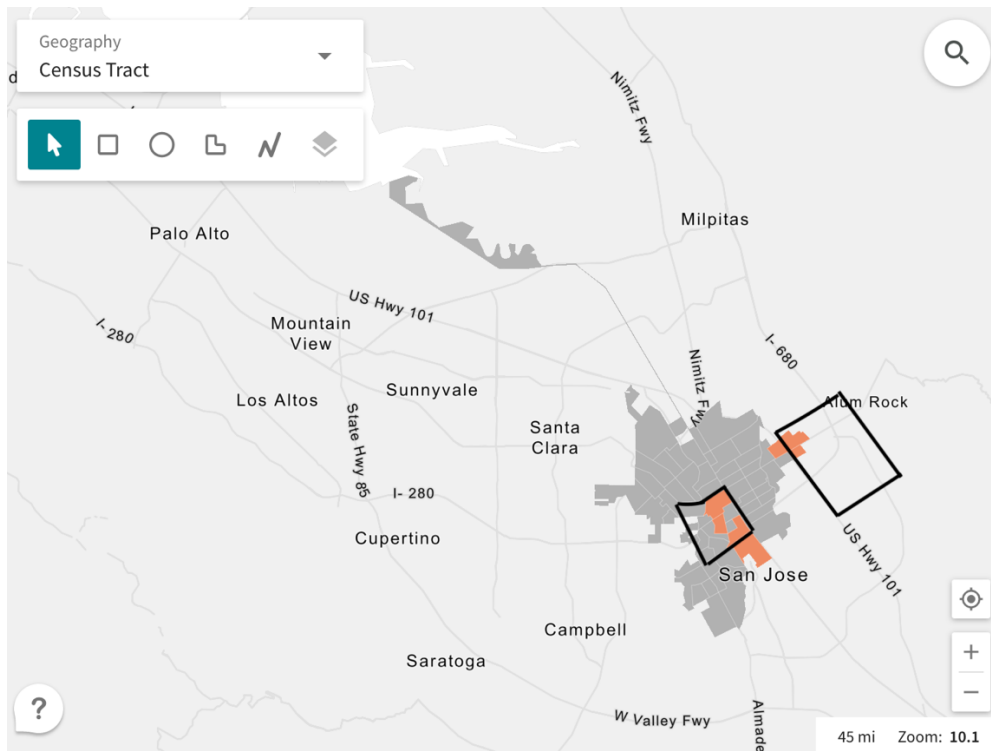
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<sup>26</sup> Social Explorer, 2010 Census, Denver, Colorado.

shift, or cease to exist. Complicating matters, census tracts are subject to change in size and shape. Factoring in these challenges, I have attempted to analyze two Latino enclaves in San Jose with careful consideration of both the historical boundaries of the “neighborhoods” and my local knowledge of present-day understandings of ethnic Mexican *barrios* in determining which census tracts to include in my decennial tabulations. I have focused my analysis on two Latino enclaves, one located near the urban core and the other existing on San Jose’s eastern periphery.

First, “Goosetown,” the cluster of *barrios* I refer to as “El Ganso” (due to the gradual shift in the area’s ethnoracial composition), is demarcated by the following general boundaries: Santa Clara Street and The Alameda on the north; Lincoln Avenue and Race Avenue on the east; Minnesota and Alma Avenues on the south; and First Street on the east. I constructed these boundaries with a general understanding of the region and utilizing the census tracts beginning in 1950. San Jose was analyzed using census tracts for the first time in that year and fifteen tracts comprised this general area. Over time, the number of census tracts defining El Ganso were condensed, amalgamating and consolidating several census tracts, reducing the total number. By 1980, the size of the census tracts expanded and only six tracts were contained within the rough borders of El Ganso. Today, the general area that was once referred to as Goosetown and what I refer to as “El Ganso” is comprised of several wholes or parts of other neighborhoods, including Alma, Washington-Guadalupe, Goodyear-Mastic, Auzerais-Josefa, Gardner, North Willow Glen, and East Virginia.

## Map 2



Description: The map shows the census tracts of San Jose in 1950. The tracts in orange pertain to those with Spanish-Surname populations of 250 persons or more that pertain to the areas I refer to as El Ganso (center) and the Eastside (upper right). The dark outlined areas show the areas of El Ganso and the Eastside. By 1980, the census revealed the region outlining El Ganso as predominantly inhabited by Spanish-speakers. In the same year, the unincorporated (white) space of the Eastside would be annexed to San Jose and populated by Spanish speakers. I created the outlines myself by comparing maps of San Jose from 1950 and 1980.

Source: Social Explorer, December 10, 2020.

The second Latino urban space examined in this study is the area popularly referred to as the Eastside. In 1950 most of this ethnic Mexican region was located in the eastern periphery of San Jose in unincorporated county land. Eventually ethnic Mexican colonias and barrios in these peripheral lands were annexed to San Jose proper, and the number of Eastside census tracts expanded. The Eastside underwent more development than its downtown counterpart as the eastern peripheral lands were slowly annexed to San Jose. The incorporation and home building that occurred on the Eastside meant a transition from a rural and secluded colonia to a more densely populated barrio. To

account for the geographic and population growth of newly annexed lands, it became necessary for the census to increase the number of census tracts to better record Eastside characteristics. In 1950, only two census tracts existed in what I define as the Eastside but development soon came to the area, and by 1980 twelve tracts made up the cluster of *barrios* in San Jose's Eastside. Indeed, in 1950 most of the land that eventually became the Eastside was unincorporated and streets were unpaved. However, broadly speaking, the Eastside enclave rests east of U.S. Highway 101 and is roughly bounded by Maubury Road on the north, White Road on the east, and Tully Road on the south. Some of the current neighborhoods that fall into my demarcations of the Eastside are Mayfair, Mayfair North, Tropicana, Little Portugal, Alum Rock, Doncaster-Washington, Florene-Nancy, Lombard, Warmsprings, and Barletta-Madeline, to name a few.

A significant source for the arguments and the form of this study of San Jose is *El Excéntrico Magazine*, a long-running Spanish-language newspaper in San Jose that eventually became bilingual. The newspaper was published from 1949 through 1981 and served as one of the richest sources produced by and for Latinos in San Jose, the South Bay, and beyond. People located in neighboring counties read and contributed to the magazine; people wrote in to *El Excéntrico* from Mexico, and during the Vietnam War, soldiers were kept informed on local matters by family members mailing issues abroad. While other scholars have utilized *El Excéntrico* intermittently in their analysis of San Jose and its Latino population, in my view it belongs at the center of the narrative or argumentation.

When I first returned home to begin research on the project, tragic circumstances led to a meeting that became a blessing in disguise. While attending the funeral of a

friend, Catalina R. Carrillo-Shirakawa, I was introduced to Dr. Ramon Martinez. He had been working with other older Chicanos in San Jose to start a Mexican-centered historical society in San Jose. Through him, I met Humberto “Bert” Garcia, the son of Humberto Garcia I, who was the founder and principal editor for nearly the entirety of *El Excéntrico*’s publication before he passed in the mid-1970s. In his basement, Bert had a physical copy of nearly every single issue of *El Excéntrico*. He was kind and gracious enough to allow me to borrow these physical copies for the day and return them at night so I could take pictures and study the contents of the newspaper. Over two years, I took over 10,000 photographs of *El Excéntrico* and its content. Much of my understanding and knowledge of Latino San Joseans found in this project is owed to the information found in *El Excéntrico*.<sup>27</sup>

In the pages of *El Excéntrico*, we see the ways in which the ethnic Mexican population maintained social, cultural, and, to a lesser extent, economic and political ties to Mexico between 1950 and 1980. These connections provide the basis for my transnational interpretation of ethnic Mexicans residing in San Jose. These people imagined themselves as connected to their motherland and created a *Mexico de afuera* by reproducing Mexican culture in public space.<sup>28</sup> The term “*México de afuera*” was coined

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<sup>27</sup> This is a highly untapped resource and can serve as foundational for studies in gender, political, religious, health, social, and cultural studies of San Jose’s Latino population.

<sup>28</sup> For information on *mexicanidad* and Mexican national identity see: William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2008); Rick A. Lopez, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Paul Gillingham, *Cuauhtémoc’s Bones: Forging National Identity in Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2012). Another term sometimes employed to have the same meaning and connotation is *lo mexicano*. For an example see: Marie Sarita Gaytán, *¡Tequila! Distilling the Spirit of Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). For a close examination of how *mexicanidad* manifests itself through the export, consumption, and reproduction of Mexican culture in the United States see: Colin Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street: Transnational Film Culture in Los Angeles Before World War II* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

by Mexican intellectual and presidential candidate José Vasconcelos. He is most popularly recognized as Mexico's secretary of public education and author of *La Raza Cosmica* (1925), which provided a key foundation for Mexico's nation-building and national-identity campaign during the postrevolutionary period, highlighting *mestizaje* (racial mixture) as central to unifying a fractured country.<sup>29</sup> The utilization of this concept is important because it foregrounds the social and cultural reproduction of *mexicanidad* in San Jose, since ethnic Mexicans in the city viewed themselves as attached to and, to some extent, a part of Mexico.

Many newer monographs discuss immigration and transnationalism together, often under the rubric of migration as two sides of the same coin—and my examination of San Jose's ethnic Mexican population during its greatest period of development follows in this new direction.<sup>30</sup> The growth of San Jose's ethnic-Mexican population was a result of both a long tradition of Mexican presence and continued immigration. As an agricultural hub, Santa Clara County required the labor of immigrants, predominantly Mexican and Asian; San Jose was (and continues to be) the major city in the county during the postwar period. During this period of increased economic prosperity in Santa Clara County and San Jose, migration from Mexico into the United States increased due to troubling times for the United States' southern neighbor. Mexico had seen a steady increase in national GDP due to Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) between the 1950s and the mid-1970s, leading to a booming economy that was referred to as the

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<sup>29</sup> John Skirius, "Vasconcelos and México de Afuera (1928)," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1976): 479-497; José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Hernandez-Leon, *Metropolitan Migrants*; Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*; Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground*.

“Mexican Miracle.” However, that miracle came to a halt during the late 1970s and 1980s, leading Mexico into more troubled times, especially in its rural agricultural sector but also due to the slowing growth of urban economies. The economic growth of the South Bay, coupled with economic difficulties in Mexico, certainly attracted Mexican immigrants, influencing the social, political, and cultural landscapes of San Jose during this time.<sup>31</sup>

Central to the dissertation is emphasis on Mexican cultural production and its utility as a political tool. Chapter 1 discusses the early formation of ethnic Mexican enclaves in San Jose during the late 1930s and describes the emergence of *El Excéntrico*. Chapter 2 focuses on early community development and the claiming of space downtown through cultural activity that makes the urban core an ethnic and transnational place. Chapter 3 highlights the importance of ethnic Mexicans celebrating Mexican national holidays in the downtown area to make political inroads. Chapter 4 offers insight into the Chicano Movement in San Jose by emphasizing the significance of coalition building and the formation of the Confederacion de la Raza Unida, a major civil rights organization in San Jose and Santa Clara County. Finally, Chapter 5 provides the details for the arrival of district elections to San Jose that marked the institutionalization of a seat on city council for the Latino community.

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<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that San Jose is home to the largest population of Vietnamese in the country, predominantly located near one of the city’s most densely populated ethnic-Mexican enclaves; this area represents a transnational space from across the Pacific as well as from south of the border. U.S. history, or any other country’s history for that matter, does not occur in a vacuum, independent from or without affecting other nations. A discussion of San Jose’s history and that of the United States must be told in terms that acknowledges their relationship to Mexico because the past, present, and future of both countries are “inextricably linked” (Foley). With regard to the Vietnamese population it might be intriguing how/why they made their way to San Jose, how they have built community, and how they interact with the Mexican community.



## **Chapter 1: Latinos and the Origins of City Growth: The Beginnings of an Ethnic Mexican Community from Depression through Mid-century San Jose**

Every year since 1952, on July 25 the people of Puerto Rico have commemorated Governor Luis Muñoz Marín signing the U.S. commonwealth's constitution. On the first anniversary, Mexican journalist and novelist Martín Luis Guzmán visited the governor's palace in San Juan on behalf of Mexican President Miguel Alemán and delivered as a gift an impressive life-size portrait of Mexican national hero Benito Juárez. The two men exchanged pleasantries, and the island's governor presented Guzman with a Puerto Rican flag as a sign of appreciation to be given to President Aleman, "[e]xpresando así una vez mas los grandes lazos fraternos que unen a la bella isla de Puerto Rico con la buena tierra Mexicana" (expressing once again the great fraternal ties that bind the beautiful island of Puerto Rico with good earth of Mexico).<sup>32</sup>

A little over six months later, a photograph and account of the meeting were printed in a local Spanish-language newspaper in San Jose, California. At mid-century, San Jose was home to the largest concentration of Latinos in Santa Clara County. The Latino population of the South Bay and San Jose was predominantly of Mexican origin, but many Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Argentines, and other Latino groups lived among their Mexican counterparts in the South Bay's urban and rural environments.

From the 1930s to mid-century, the ethnoracial profile of San Jose differed starkly from the Bay Area's largest cities, San Francisco and Oakland. Despite its relatively small population, San Jose emerged as the third largest city in the region by 1950 and served as the South Bay's largest urban center. Unlike its northern neighbors, through the

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<sup>32</sup> "Lazos Fraternos," *El Excéntrico*, February 5, 1953.

1930s and into the postwar period, San Jose never attracted a large Black population. Major works in urban history detail the experiences of Black residents in cities where they comprise a significant proportion of the population. San Jose offers a different perspective and insight into the lives of ethnoracial minorities in a major U.S. city with an extremely small Black presence. Partly due to the agricultural economy of Santa Clara County, Black people would choose to work in better-paying industrial jobs concentrated near the docks and ports of the Bay Area's two most-populous cities—especially during the defense production campaigns of World War Two. This left canning, picking, and other agricultural work to migrant laborers, mostly of Mexican descent. These laborers began establishing more permanent roots throughout Northern California's Bay Area, creating links with other local communities and retaining connections abroad. While ethnic-Mexican communities enjoyed a long history in the region, including larger concentrations in San Francisco and Oakland, it was not until the late 1930s that a significant population began to settle more permanently within San Jose's city limits. By the mid-1950s, the Spanish-speaking population in San Jose established itself with the consistent printing and distribution of a community newspaper.

The West Coast and the Bay Area welcomed many new residents throughout the war and postwar years, ushering in a period of rapid social, cultural, economic, and political change. During the immediate postwar years and into the 1950s the most dramatic changes arguably occurred in San Jose and Santa Clara County. Local businessmen and developers worked closely with government officials to turn San Jose into the fastest-growing city in the country. Neighboring municipalities either developed their economies and expand themselves or became engulfed by San Jose's leapfrog

annexations. The seeds of growth policies were planted soon after the war's conclusion, and while San Jose led the way in city expansion, other South Bay cities began establishing and nurturing nascent service and technological economies that fostered broader development. Struggles by smaller cities to maintain autonomy, and San Jose's ambitions to become a higher-order urban center, led to a suburban borderlands in Santa Clara County, where cities fought over land, crops, subsoil resources, and power in the South Bay.<sup>33</sup>

It was in this context of struggle in a suburban borderlands that the Latino community of Santa Clara County began to define itself. As a population just beginning to come into its own at mid-century, Latinos in Santa Clara County possessed a general understanding of their community that allowed for flexible connections to San Jose. Latino communities existed within San Jose proper, on the outskirts of San Jose in peripheral zones throughout the county, and even beyond the county in settlements that were still considered part of a broad Latino *colonia* throughout the South Bay. Because their numbers were relatively small, Latinos who resided in rural unincorporated *colonias*

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<sup>33</sup> Many scholars have discussed the development of ethnic-Mexican suburbs that predated the postwar suburbanization of "white America." These scholars have pointed to the separation of Spanish-speaking colonias on the outskirts of cities that provided the foundation for future suburbanization of ethnic-Mexican enclaves, recognizing their ties to the agricultural economy. Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jose Alamillo, *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Aaron Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Race and Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012). The term "suburban borderlands" is often used to discuss the suburbanization of the Southwest but the field lacks a clear definition of the term and concept. San Jose was frequently referred to as an "octopus" and "imperialistic" between 1950 and 1970 in local papers because of its massive annexation project. Indeed, this period is frequently defined as the period of the "annexation wars," in which new cities incorporated to protect themselves from being swallowed up by San Jose and older cities competed with San Jose for environmental, bureaucratic, and economic resources. The issue of massive annexations was not isolated to Santa Clara County. In fact, it was such a disruptive issue across California that a new state agency, the Local Agency Formation Commission, was created in 1963 in the attempt to address urban sprawl. Future research on San Jose and Santa Clara County during the "annexation wars" can provide an opportunity to better define and explain "suburban borderlands."

throughout the county, or in more settled *barrios* within cities, felt a connection to one another—especially through a shared language—and recognized a need for unity.

The emergence of a Spanish-language newspaper at mid-century helped create a stronger sense of community among Latino people throughout the South Bay. *El Excéntrico* [*The Eccentric*] was printed out of San Jose and not only allowed but encouraged people from the Latino *colonia* to write in and have their opinions and ideas published. Early on, the paper developed a wide-reaching geographic readership as issues were distributed and people wrote in from places as far as San Francisco and Oakland in the north and Salinas, Watsonville, and Monterrey to the South. As members of a far-reaching *colonia* with transnational ties to Latin American and Caribbean countries, by mid-century Santa Clara County Latinos began to significantly change the demographics of the region, creating a social and cultural foundation that future generations would build on.

### **Latino Enclaves, *Colonias*, and *Barrios* in Santa Clara County**

Ethnic Mexican enclaves, known as *colonias*, in Southern California emerged alongside the increasingly expanding, productive, and profitable agricultural economy of the region at the onset of the twentieth century. They became more populated and ubiquitous as the century pressed on. Urban historian Jerry Gonzalez defines these *colonias* as “distinctly working-class Mexican suburbs.” He explains that “[t]hey emerged at the turn of the twentieth century and provided refuge for laborers who toiled in the fields, foundries, factories, and privileged homes found across metropolitan Los

Angeles.”<sup>34</sup> Gonzalez and fellow urbanist Matt Garcia characterize *colonias* in Southern California as rural and sparsely populated clusters of ethnic-Mexican communities that often exist outside established city boundaries in unincorporated and peripheral areas. In his seminal work on ethnic Mexican communities in Southern California, Albert Camarillo describes the process of these peripheral enclaves becoming engulfed by urban growth and calls it *barrioization*; the clusters are swallowed by city growth but remain segregated *barrios* (neighborhoods) within the larger cityscape and are almost always afflicted by poor political representation among other social, economic, and environmental ills. In Southern California, *colonias* “differed from *barrios* because of the latter’s urban connotation. *Barrios* are communities that are locked in by other residential and industrial tracts and more tightly integrated into the pace of daily urban life, whereas *colonias* definitely broke from the urban center.”<sup>35</sup> In two relatively recent works, scholars have taken the intellectual understanding of *colonias* further, arguing that these spaces can be understood and examined as working-class suburbs due ethnic Mexicans’ creativity and abilities to work and build homes for themselves and their families in these peripheral zones.<sup>36</sup>

In his highly influential study of urban Northern California, Robert Self discusses *colonias* in Alameda County, located northeast of Santa Clara County. He states that, like

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<sup>34</sup> Jerry Gonzalez, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills: Latino Suburbanization in Postwar Los Angeles* (Camden, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Jerry Gonzalez, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills*, 5. For further discussion of *colonias* in Southern California see Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1-3.

<sup>36</sup> For more information see Aaron Cavin, “The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012); Paul J. P. Sandul, *California Dreaming: Boosterism, Memory, and Rural Suburbs in the Golden State* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2014), 57. Jerry Gonzalez, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills*.

their Black counterparts, ethnic Mexicans found themselves ignored by local boosters when they imagined and planned the East Bay's suburban landscape, rendering "their residential options limited to marginal land and older housing stock." He adds a positive interpretation to types of housing options available to ethnic Mexicans by noting that "[t]he existence of *colonias* . . . meant that a greater variety of housing options were available to the large Mexican-origin communities in Alameda and Santa Clara counties."<sup>37</sup> The county's open space allowed Latinos to settle in enclaves and establish *colonias* outside of formal municipal borders, limiting access to infrastructure and city services. Living outside city control, however, allowed them the opportunity to build homes for themselves and utilize land as they saw fit. They took advantage of the lack of oversight to establish "suburban" working-class communities on the fringes of the city just as white ethnics, like Italians, had also done.<sup>38</sup> With agriculture serving as a leading economic sector, land in Santa Clara County remained rural and undeveloped throughout the 1930s and 1940s as ethnic Mexicans settled in peripheral areas.

In San Jose and Santa Clara County, the understanding of belonging to a *colonia* was, both, specific and broad. Latino San Joseans saw themselves as part of a community in San Jose and its nearby eastern periphery. However, *colonia* also referred to the larger community throughout the county and even beyond. To some extent, ethnic Mexicans in particular, members of the *comunidad*, expressed a feeling of belonging to a more abstract concept of a *Mexico de afuera* that made all ethnic Mexicans throughout San Jose, Santa Clara County, and California part of a bigger *colonia*. Previous conversations

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<sup>37</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 113.

<sup>38</sup> For information on Italians creating suburban working-class neighborhoods see Becky M. Nicholides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

regarding *colonias* and their formations are set in physical space and defined by a particular location—conversations among San Josean Latinos reveal a more comprehensive understanding that moves beyond the particularities of place.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Latino population of Northern California in general, and Santa Clara County more specifically, was greatly overshadowed by that of Los Angeles. Although Latinos made up the largest minority group in the South Bay, in the 1930s their communities were not nearly as settled, established, or dense as those in Southern California. In an early memory of his family's early life in Santa Clara County during the 1930s, Jose Antonio Villarreal recalled that "[t]here were not many Mexican people in Santa Clara in those days, and the few families scattered throughout the far reaches of the valley became close friends. Few ethnic Mexicans lived in the South Bay as permanent residents but those who did became acquainted with those families from nearby cities and towns."<sup>39</sup> During harvest season, and in the summers, more ethnic Mexicans arrived from different parts of California, other states, and Mexico for the agricultural work. And when that happened, ethnic Mexicans helped one another by offering the sojourners a place to stay if they had the room. Jose remembered that "it became the custom for his father to allow two or three families to pitch their tents in the large back yard, or to use a portion of the barn to live in until the prune season was over and they would return" to their homes.<sup>40</sup> While similar customs certainly existed in rural communities in Southern California, by the 1930s the ethnic Mexican population in Southern California was large and settled enough for many

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<sup>39</sup> José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 42.

<sup>40</sup> Villarreal, *Pocho*, 43

to “become Mexican American.”<sup>41</sup> The Mexican community in San Jose would not begin to establish a firm Mexican American identity until the 1950s

Although many, and perhaps most, Latinos lived outside of formal city limits in Santa Clara County during the 1930s and 1940s, a closer examination of the presence of Latinos who managed to live within the city limits expands the understanding of their relationships with the city, one another, and other ethnoracial groups. *Colonias* existed throughout the rural environment in the South Bay and neighboring counties in Northern California, but the seeds of more permanent Latino settlements were planted within San Jose’s urban environment during the 1930s as city *barrios* sprouted and began to take shape. While some emerged in expected places, as with those on the periphery of the city, others developed near the city’s core with ethnic Mexicans living among ethnic whites. Slowly, beginning in the 1930s, ethnic Mexicans moved into neighborhoods inhabited by and recognized as Italian spaces, a trend that continued through the postwar period when these neighborhoods became predominantly Latino. Early on, the presence of Latinos, along with ethnic white immigrants, was viewed with suspicion by Anglo property speculators and owners.

During the Great Depression era many families found themselves in precarious situations as unemployment, hunger, and poverty ravaged the country and the world. Italians had been one of the largest immigrant groups to the United States during decades around the turn of the century, and most white Anglo-Protestants viewed them with suspicion—the ethnic prejudices against Italians amid the economic uncertainty in the

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<sup>41</sup> George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press). The Mexican American generation would not begin to emerge in San Jose until the mid-1950s while combatting a resistant Mexican nationalist identity, a major topic in the following chapter.



country did not make life easy for these new transplants.<sup>42</sup> The ethnic Mexicans who increasingly lived among them were from a group that was among the most vulnerable of immigrant groups; many ethnic Mexicans, non-citizens and citizens alike, were targeted in large deportation efforts during the Depression. Despite these attacks, ethnic Mexicans in the South Bay, especially in and around San Jose, began planting the seeds for a more permanent presence in region.

We can learn a great deal about both groups' opportunities for housing from federal records. Between 1935 and 1940 the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) surveyed over two hundred cities and thousands of areas (neighborhoods) across the U.S. for the purpose of determining which neighborhoods were favorable or not favorable for investment. Maps of surveyed cities were graded "A" through "D" and color coded with areas outlined in green (A), blue (B), yellow (C), and red (D); the colors indicated the best, still desirable, definitely declining, and hazardous areas in a given city that lenders used to determine whether to approve loans. San Jose's survey indicates a city at tremendous risk with only one-third of the graded areas colored in blue or green. In general, the remaining two-thirds of the city were described as having "infiltration" of "inharmonious races"—including "Negroes," Chinese, Mexicans, and ethnic whites—or

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<sup>42</sup> For more information see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983); Rudolph J. Vecoli, *Cult and Occult in Italian-American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Rudolph J. Vecoli and Duarante, Francesco, "The New Italian America," in *Oh Capitano! Celso Cesare Moreno—Adventurer, Cheater, and Scoundrel on Four Continents* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018); Rudolph J. Vecoli and Suzanne M. Sinke, eds., *A Century of European Migrations, 1830-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Maddalena Marianari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization against Restrictive Immigration Laws, 1882-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

high percentages of foreign-born populations like “Italians, Portuguese, Slavs, and Mexicans.”<sup>43</sup>

The findings of San Jose’s survey that were published in September of 1939 made clear the significance of race, class, citizenship, and nationality in determining a neighborhood’s worth. Four of the thirty-five surveyed areas of San Jose and its immediate surroundings recorded an “infiltration” or slow encroachment of Mexican families into San Jose’s city limits.<sup>44</sup> (The language utilized by the HOLC surveys revealed nativist and discriminatory attitudes of the time that painted sinister pictures of non-Anglos). By the late 1930s one of these zones was home to a well-established community of ethnic Mexicans. Located in a small eastern portion of the city, surveyors designated the area with a “D” grade, describing the region as highly susceptible to flooding with unpaved streets and located at a distance from the city center and high schools. From a racial point of view, D10 was “largely populated by a lower stratum of Italians and Portuguese” living among “the largest concentration of Mexicans in the community.”<sup>45</sup> Infrastructure in this section of San Jose was poorly developed and the area was racially heterogeneous with the prevalence of another significant number of ethnic Mexicans.

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<sup>43</sup> Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America, 1935-1940,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 6, 2020, [https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/\[YOUR VIEW\]](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/[YOUR VIEW]). San Jose.

<sup>44</sup> Out of the thirty-five surveyed areas, eleven were given a “D” grade. The only areas that mentioned the presence of “Negro” (5), Mexican (4), or Oriental (1) populations were all assigned to the lowest grade. Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 6, 2020, [https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/\[YOUR VIEW\]](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/[YOUR VIEW]). San Jose.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, San Jose, D-10.

Interestingly, the surveyors also noted this particular section of San Jose existed “without the protection afforded by zoning or deed restriction.”<sup>46</sup> This was likely a major reason Mexicans and Mexican Americans could live there; Los Angeles’ Boyle Heights became a multiethnic neighborhood in part for the same reasons, as George Sánchez has pointed out recently.<sup>47</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, deed restrictions and racial covenants were utilized to prevent people of color (Black, Asian, and Latino) from moving into newly developed suburban neighborhoods throughout the United States, and the South Bay was no exception. Between 1920 and 1945 the Office of the County Recorder in Santa Clara County surveyed two thousand real estate deeds every five years and documented the number of racial covenants; for the years recorded, 20 per cent of the deeds surveyed contained racial restrictions.<sup>48</sup> The redlining tactics that determined investment, coupled with the racial discrimination that characterized deed restrictions in the first half of the twentieth century, worked in tandem to shape the way cities and neighborhoods developed across the United States.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, by the late 1930s D10 was already a stronghold for ethnic Mexicans and its character, as a space for Latinos, meant the area was undesirable from racial and economic standpoints.

Just west of San Jose’s downtown was a significant “foreign-born” Italian enclave that was also redlined. The non-Anglo white character of the region might have been enough to deem the surveyed area a risk for investment, but the area was also described

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., San Jose, D-10.

<sup>47</sup> George J. Sánchez, *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>48</sup> In 1920 there were only 188 deeds with a racial covenant. The number reached its peak at 698 in 1930 and finished in 1945 with 497. San Jose Real Estate Deeds, 1920-1945, in Santa Clara County Real Estate Records, Office of the County Recorder, San Jose, California.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Rothenstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

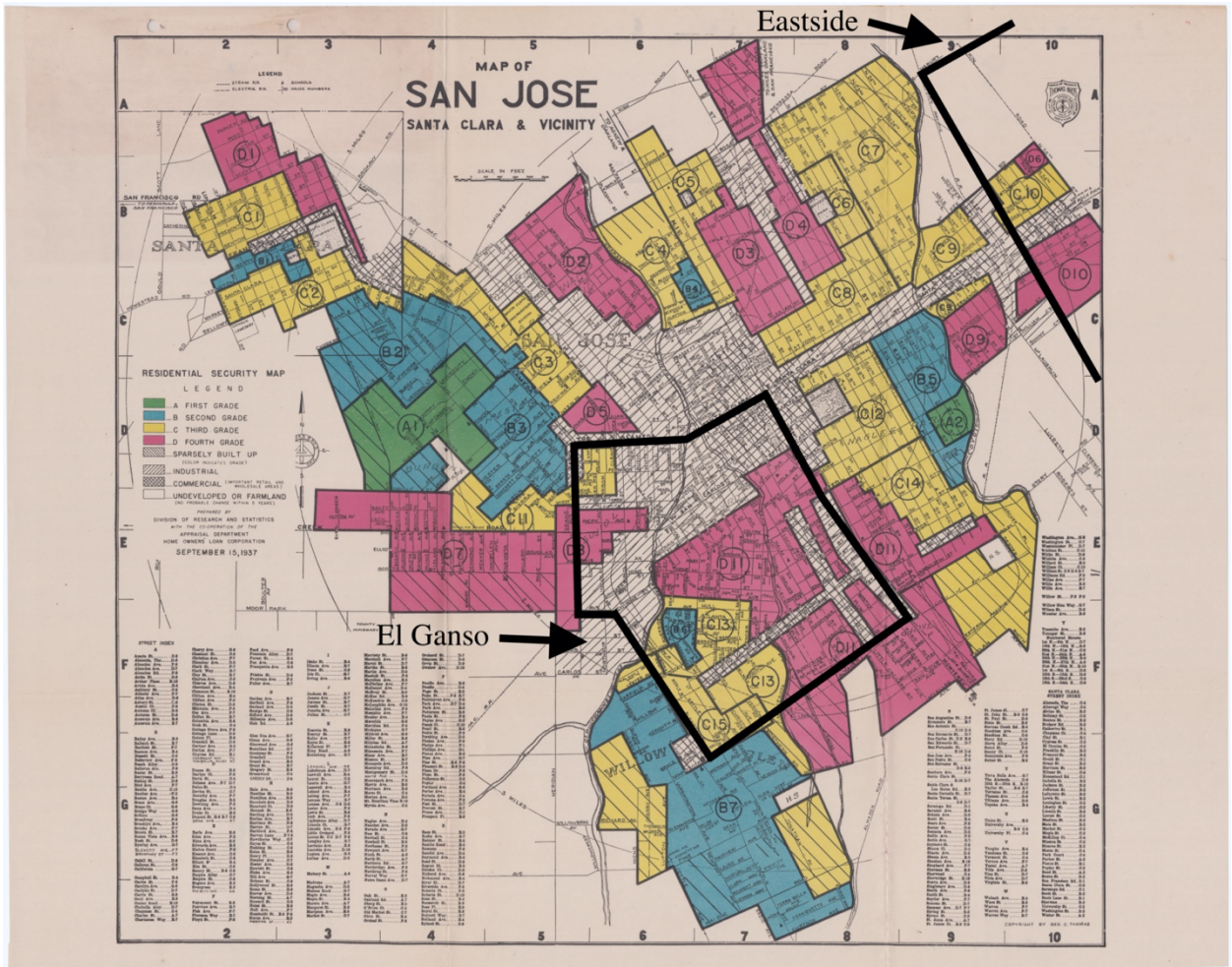
with what was repeatedly and pointedly called an “infiltration” of Mexicans. Between the late 1800s and the mid-1900s, Italian immigrants made up the largest foreign-born population in many large and small cities across the United States, and San Jose was no exception. Italian-born men and women made their way to the South Bay in droves and made homes for themselves despite negative views and perceptions. Although facing prejudice and cultural differences Italians across the country seldom remained working-class people for more than a generation, for many families quickly attained affluence and acceptance by the majority Anglo society as “white.”<sup>50</sup> By the 1930s, despite prejudicial views and wariness of Italians, many of these Southern Europeans became homeowners and had established distinct neighborhoods. This Italian neighborhood in San Jose was known as “Goosetown” due to the proclivity of geese to reside near and around a pond in the neighborhood.<sup>51</sup> This “Italian Town”—as many Italian neighborhoods were referred to throughout the country—was primarily located in San Jose’s Fourth Ward, just south of Santa Clara Street, downtown’s main east-west thoroughfare, and east of First Street, another major commercial corridor.

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<sup>50</sup> In the 1950 Census of San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose the largest number of foreign-born whites came from Italy. For the information on European immigration and the construction of whiteness see David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White; the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folk and What That Says about Race in America* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream: Gender, Class, and Opportunity in the Twentieth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 26-31.

Map 3



Description: This is the Home Owners Loan Corporation map of San Jose (1937). Nearly 15 years prior to the U.S. Census analyzing San Jose by housing tracts, areas near downtown and the Eastern periphery, where ethnic Mexicans were beginning to settle, were redlined and deemed a risk for investment. I outlined the general areas that would become what I call El Ganso and the Eastside.

Source: Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 6, 2020, [https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/\[YOUR VIEW\]](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/[YOUR VIEW].). San Jose.

The HOLC description of Goosetown reveals the unfavorable way in which Italians and other groups were viewed by the Anglo majority that controlled many of the banks and the loans they provided. The Goosetown neighborhood was labeled and analyzed under the district labeled D11. Listed under "Detrimental Influences" in the report were "[h]eterogeneous population and improvements." Considering that under the "Inhabitants" category it listed foreign-born Italians as 75 percent of the population and

also indicated an “[i]nfiltration of Slavs, Portuguese, [and] Mexicans” in the area, it can be deduced that these groups make up the “heterogeneous population” deemed as detrimental. It should not be ignored, however, that a presence of Black residents was also reported. Although the area was given a “D” grade, the surveyors appear to have been somewhat conflicted, stating that “[l]and values make grading impossible. Good loans can be made in areas based upon rigid appraisal, but extreme caution is urged.” In the clarifying remarks for San Jose’s Goosetown the authors commented,

This is one of the oldest parts of the city and is extremely heterogeneous. The section is known as “Italian Town” and contains the slum section of San Jose. There are, however, many isolated blocks on secluded streets where the improvements and immediate surroundings would justify a “B” or “C” grading, but in every direction within a stone’s throw of such spots will be found industrial or business development. The area joins the central business district on the north and contains many apartment houses and hotels. The extreme southern part of the area lies outside the city limits and contains a concentration of Mexicans.<sup>52</sup>

Apparently, the surveyors were basing the general area’s grade on the types of developments within and surrounding Goosetown and also on the racial and ethnic make-up. The “concentration of Mexicans” found on the southern fringe of this surveyed area documents the origins of a Mexican barrio, one that expanded over the next decade to

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<sup>52</sup> Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed August 6, 2020, [https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/\[YOUR VIEW\]](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/[YOUR VIEW]). San Jose, D-11.

become the largest concentration of Latinos residing *within* San Jose's city limits by 1950.

Examination of a "C" grade area in the northeast section of San Jose provides evidence that despite some reluctance to give Goosetown a "D" grade due to structural and not social reasons, the low grade was most definitely based more on an ethnic and racial basis. The northeastern area was inhabited by 10% foreign-born Italians—no Black residents were recorded and no group was reported as infiltrating the area. However, the survey did mention "a threat" of "foreign elements." Under "detrimental influences" the area description mentioned its location as "somewhat isolated," with a "lack of proper sewage" and "[i]nharmonious racial elements just outside city limits on [the] north."<sup>53</sup> Here, the authors acknowledged the lack of infrastructure necessary for development—but with a low foreign-born population, no Black people, and only a "threat" of infiltration (as opposed to an already existing threat), they deemed this area in decline as opposed to hazardous. In their clarifying remarks, they mention "the district just north of [the area] outside the city limits is extremely heterogeneous in character, being inhabited largely by low-class Italians, Portuguese, Slavs, and some Mexicans. *This condition puts a blight upon both this area and the 'yellow-hatched' district to the northeast* [emphasis added]."<sup>54</sup> Here, the area was less equipped for development because of a clear lack of infrastructure, such as water and sewage, needed for new development and improvement of existing property but the ethnic and racial component appeared less troubling within the area and is, therefore, viewed in a slightly more positive light than in Goosetown.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., San Jose, C-7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., San Jose, C-7.

The HOLC reports of San Jose make two things unequivocally clear: (1) in the late 1930s, San Jose viewed Italian *immigrants* as detrimental to society and development; and (2) ethnic Mexicans were beginning to “infiltrate” some sections of the city. Ethnic Mexicans continued to settle in the city and its periphery through the 1940s, and by 1950 they began establishing more permanent settlements throughout the city, most notably in the Italian neighborhood adjacent to downtown, Goosetown (D11), and on the Eastside (D10).

Ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos began in earnest to carve out a space for themselves within the city limits during the 1930s by “infiltrating” environments deemed “off limits” to them by white Anglos. By making their way into homes within the city limits, Latinos began to crystalize the way they defined their neighborhoods and community as both separate and connected entities. They were distinguished by nationality and physical location but unified through a common culture, primarily language.

### **The Origins of Community and Finding Identity**

The largest concentration of Latinos in Santa Clara County during the second half of the twentieth century would become Eastside San Jose. Historian Stephen Pitti suggests that some of the first Latino people to settle the region were Puerto Ricans. After the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States in 1898. The island was devastated by a hurricane in 1899, causing a shortage in sugar cane production. The responsibility for producing sugar cane then shifted to Hawaii, where plantation owners there lacked experienced workers. Therefore, in 1900 a boat full of



Puerto Ricans left for New Orleans and trains took them to either Los Angeles or San Francisco. The trip took longer than expected and many returned home or simply stayed upon their arrival in the Bay Area. It is most likely that those Puerto Ricans who settled early on in Eastside San Jose were originally destined for Hawaii as sugar cane laborers.<sup>55</sup>

Just as many Mexican immigrants made their homes next to or in already established ethnic-Mexican communities so, too, did other Latino groups like Puerto Ricans. Historian Virginia Sánchez Korrol describes Puerto Rican *colonias* in New York as “geographic, urban centers marked by dense settlement” that “provided outlets for Puerto Rican interests, creating institutions which affirmed social identity and fostered internal activities while coping with problems stemming from contacts with the host society.” She continues, “*Colonias*, furthermore, attracted potential migration from Puerto Rico because they offered the migrant a familiar base in which to operate.”<sup>56</sup> In her formulation, Puerto Rican *colonias* are somewhat synonymous with ethnic Mexican *barrios*, and in Santa Clara County, Puerto Rican migrants certainly found themselves surrounded and influenced by the larger and more established ethnic Mexican people.

Ted and Isabel Dávila were born in Puerto Rico and eventually made their way to San Jose from New York by the mid-1940s. Ted began writing for *El Excéntrico* in late 1951 and was later joined by his wife; they both wrote fondly and nostalgically about their mother country and also commented on large issues like national and international politics, especially as it pertained to communism, freedom, and Puerto Rico (Latin

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 90-91. find article describing Puerto Ricans to Hawaii

<sup>56</sup> Virginia Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 53.

America).<sup>57</sup> Surprisingly neither ever commented on the political turmoil occurring in Puerto Rico and the United States over the nationalist push during the independence movement during the 1950s. One would think that when Puerto Rican nationalists participated in a shooting in Congress in 1954 that the Dávilas would have expressed an opinion on the matter, but they neglected to address the issue. In addition to Puerto Rico, several residents came from countries in South America and Central America; the number of people from these countries were small compared to their numbers in neighboring San Francisco but were highlighted in *El Excéntrico*.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, many organizations—Latin American Club, United Latin Americans of America Inc., Mesa Redonda Pan Americana, and Alianza Hispano Americano—formed in San Jose, showcasing the diverse transnational population of Latinos residing in San Jose.<sup>59</sup> However, by far, the most-populous Latino nationality in San Jose was people of Mexican descent, and they pertained to organizations with the most social, political, and economic capital.

While scholars have defined *barrios* and *colonias* along urban, suburban, and rural terms, Latinos of San Jose and Northern California possessed their own understanding of the spaces where they lived. Latino spatial conceptualization of *colonias*

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<sup>57</sup> Ted Dávila, "Porto Rico," *El Excéntrico*, February 2, 1952; Ted Dávila, "Playing Dominos," *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1952; José Gautier Benítez, "¡Borinquen!," *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1952; Ted Dávila, "La Verdad y la Vida...", *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1952; Ted Dávila, "La Verdad y la Vida...", June 20, 1952; Isabel Dávila, "Puerto Rico History," *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1952; Ted Dávila, "Puerto Rico Liberty," *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1952; Isabel Dávila, "Ideales que Inspiran," *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1953; "Lazos Fraternos," *El Excéntrico*, February 5, 1953.

<sup>58</sup> "Descripción de la Portada," *El Excéntrico*, February 1950; "Sociedad... Colonia Centro Americana," *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1951; Maria de la Luz Sanchez, "Sociales-Personales," *El Excéntrico*, April 20, 1958.

<sup>59</sup> "Latin American Club," *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1950; "United Latin Americans of America Inc.," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953; "Mesa Redonda Pan Americana," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953; "Alianza Hispano Americano," *El Excéntrico*, February 2, 1952.

in the South Bay, at mid-century, was perhaps less rigid and more fluid, blurring the urban-rural divide. Latinos in the South Bay acknowledged the existence of separate *colonias* and *barrios* within the county and beyond but also demonstrated a broader understanding of a larger “unified” Latino or Hispano *colonia* that existed throughout the city, county, and greater Bay Area.

In a local Spanish-language newspaper, *El Excéntrico*, members of the Latino community often expressed sentiments of belonging to a Latino *colonia* whose borders or boundaries were not geographically defined. In the paper’s 1949 inaugural issue, a dedication stated, “Este su magazine ‘El Eccentrico’ [*sic*] esta dedicado y consagrado a toda la *colonia* latino-americana, su objeto y fin es dar a conocer y prestar todo el elemento latino, llevando en sus planas vibrantes un mensaje de cordialidad para todos y cada uno de nuestros meimbros de habla hispana. [Your magazine, ‘El Eccentrico [*sic*] is dedicated and devoted to the whole Latin American *colonia*. The magazine’s objective is to shed light on and share all elements of Latino life, carrying in its vibrant pages a message of cordiality for each and every one of our Spanish-speaking members.]”<sup>60</sup> In addition to the dedication, two women wrote in from San Francisco and another from the Oakland suburb of San Leandro, contributing poems and discussions on love and life from the female perspective and exploring differences between the spirit of man and woman.<sup>61</sup> At times, particularly during the magazine’s early years in the 1950s, authors acknowledged the various Latin American nationalities and identities residing in

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<sup>60</sup> La Empresa, “Dedicatoria,” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April, 1949.

<sup>61</sup> Lilliam M. Casals, “‘Todo en la Vida es Ilusion,’” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April 1949; Lilliam M. Casals “Sin Saberlo Porque,” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April, 1949; Ruth Mumaugh, “‘El Amor y la Vida,’” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April, 1949; Ruth Mumaugh, “‘El Tiempo Pecaminoso de la Mujer,’” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April, 1949; Altagracia Escobar, “Alma de Mujer, Alma de Hombre,” *El Eccéntrico* [*sic*], April 1949.

Northern California by referring to the diversity that existed in the region, addressing the readers as members of “*colonias* hispanoamericanas” or as members of a specific ethnic group like the “*colonia Mexicana*.”<sup>62</sup> These contributions from fairly distant places coupled with references to both singular groupings and compounded groupings of the various Latino nationalities reveals the existence of and desire for connectivity between separate *colonias* and a larger more all-encompassing *colonia* in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, but especially in the Santa Clara County South Bay.

Subsequent issues of *El Excéntrico* included regular columns from contributors in Monterrey (about forty miles southwest of San Jose) and Decoto (a small Oakland suburb thirty miles northeast of San Jose). These contributors wrote about life in their respective towns but also recalled their visits to, experiences in, and relationships with the community in San Jose.<sup>63</sup> Early on, Latino columnists and business owners expressed their ideas and promoted their stores from nearby towns; all the while magazine editors referred to all expressions in the magazine as part of the *colonia*. Early on, the limited number of Latinos in the South Bay attempted to create community through a newspaper in which they expressed a shared culture and language that united them. In fact, it is through the shared Spanish language that a couple of contributors rejected the Latin

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<sup>62</sup> *El Excéntrico*, “Elecciones para Oficiales de la C.H. Mexicana,” January 20, 1952; Ted Dávila, *El Excéntrico*, “Carta Abierta: ‘A LAS COLONIAS HISPANOAMERICANAS,’” February 20, 1952.

<sup>63</sup> Manuel Campos was an *El Excéntrico* contributor and columnist from Monterrey, California, located about forty miles south of San Jose along the coast. See Manuel Campos, “Noticias, Sociedad, Vaciladas,” *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1952; Manuel Campos, “Noticias, Sociedad, Vaciladas,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1952; Manuel Campos, “Salinas y Monterrey,” *El Excéntrico*, February 5, 1952; Manuel Campos, “Noticias, Sociedad, Vaciladas,” *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1952. Simon Villa was an *El Excéntrico* contributor and columnist from Decoto and Union City, CA, neighboring communities located roughly thirty miles northeast of San Jose in Alameda County. See: Simon Villa, “La Desconfianza,” *El Excéntrico*, August 20, 1959; Simon Villa, “Dejo de Existir la Srita. Blanca Estela Cardenas,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1959; Simon Villa, “Datos sobre el día 20 de Noviembre de 1910 Día de la REVOLUCION MEXICANA,” November 20, 1959.

American and Latino nomenclatures, arguing for the usage of Hispano Americano. In separate writings, Mexican national Trinidad Montes de Oca and Puerto Rican Ted Dávila provided a brief historic overview of the Iberian Peninsula, the emergence of the Spanish language, Spanish conquest in the Americas, and the propagation of the Spanish language across South, Central, and North America. In 1952, Ted Dávila reasoned that very little was known about the “races” of the world but understanding people through language was much easier. He explained: “Se piensa con palabras y mientras dos o mas pueblos conserven un mismo idioma, pensaran en el fondo lo mismo. . . . La sangre del espiritu es el idioma. [Thinking is done with words and as long as two peoples speak the same language they will think the same. . . . The blood of the spirit is language.]”<sup>64</sup>

Trinidad Montes de Oca had argued previously, in 1950, that all “Americans” who came under Spanish rule were Hispano. He argued that regardless of whether Spanish speakers immigrated to the United States or if they were born in the U.S. to Spanish-speaking parents, they retained their Hispano identity: “Asi pues, los descendientes de HISPANOAMERICANOS inmigrados o nacidos en este pais son como sus ancestros, HISPANO AMERICANOS [emphasis in original.] Descendants of Hispanic Americans who immigrated or were born in this country are like their ancestors, Hispanic American”<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, as early as 1950 the term “Chicano” was already being used frequently enough within the San Jose *colonia* that Montes de Oca took the time to write an article unequivocally denouncing the use of that term by people in the *colonia*.<sup>66</sup> These men made it clear they favored the term “Hispano,” maintaining that the persistence of

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<sup>64</sup> Ted Dávila, “Hispanoamericanos o Latinoamericanos?” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1952.

<sup>65</sup> Trinidad Montes de Oca, “Hispano Americanos?, Si!.....No Latino Americanos,” *El Excéntrico*, May 1950.

<sup>66</sup> Juan T. Montes de Oca, “‘Hablar Mejor Para Entendernos Mejor,’” *El Excéntrico*, February, 1950.

the Spanish language in people's country of origin and in their *colonias* made them all "Hispano" and, therefore, should abandon the term "Latino" because the Hispano Americano nomenclature was not only more appropriate but necessary.

The majority of writers chose to continue employing the terms "Latino" or "Mexican" over Hispano when referring to the *colonia* in San Jose and Santa Clara County. Indeed, *El Excéntrico* had introduced itself in 1949 as a "Latino Magazine" and continued to describe itself as such through the end of its publication. More important than the specific term they chose to identify their community, the recognition of diverse Spanish-speaking nationalities present in the *colonia* makes clear the existence of a truly transnational Latino community. These transnational connections were showcased in many photographs, columns, and articles published in *El Excéntrico*, and nationalist ideas and loyalties to Latin American countries were also expressed. Early on, despite subtle assimilationist overtones projected from the magazine, some contributors and organizations wrote favorably of their mother countries, especially of Puerto Rico and Mexico.<sup>67</sup>

### **Social Space, Mexican Cultural Forms, and Transnationalism**

San Jose served as the focal gathering place in the region for people in the city and county to socialize and spend their money, especially during the late spring, summer, and early fall months. While many forms of leisure were highly segregated by custom, downtown San Jose was the place frequented by local residents, serving as a place for

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<sup>67</sup> "Descripción de la Portada," *El Excéntrico*, February 1950; "Sociedad...*Colonia* Centro Americana," *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1951; Maria de la Luz Sanchez, "Sociales-Personales," *El Excéntrico*, April 20, 1958.

diverse racial and ethnic groups to enjoy themselves. In a 1972 *Mercury News* article, Luis Juarez reflected on San Jose during the postwar period. With an influx of people, reminisced Juarez, “Market Street presented a festival atmosphere that made San Jose look like a boom town.”<sup>68</sup> With the period’s influx of Spanish speakers, there arose a demand for both entertainment and worship. Juarez, a San Jose resident since the late 1940s, recalled that “[t]he movie house and St. Joseph Church were filled with people on Sundays. Dance halls like the Balconades of Santa Clara Street, the Rainbow Ballroom on San Antonio Street, the Benevolence Hall on Market Street, and the Majestic on Third Street, and the Palomar Gardens (now the Starlite) on Notre Dame Street were popular dancing spots.”<sup>69</sup>

The movie house Juarez referenced was most likely the Liberty Theater (Teatro Liberty), located at 67 South Market Street—this was one of the most important sites in San Jose for the dissemination of what became a transnational Mexican and Mexican American cultural zone.

The growing numbers of Latino, primarily Mexican, people living in *colonias* and *barrios* produced and consumed cultural practices from their motherland. For Mexicans living away from their *patria* (motherland) the reproduction and consumption of *mexicanidad* was particularly important, especially during the period following the Mexican Revolution. At the conclusion of the violence that consumed Mexico for the first two decades of the twentieth century, a cultural efflorescence occurred within the country in an attempt to mend and unify the nation under the banner of *mexicanidad*. The

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<sup>68</sup> Luis G. Juarez, “Fruit Harvest Awoke Sleepy S.J. of ‘40s,” Mexican-American Notes, *San Jose Mercury News*, Sunday, September 10, 1972, in Luis Juarez, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University Main Library, California.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

expression of national pride, however, extended beyond the borders of Mexico and was also present in ethnic Mexican communities in the United States. *Mexicanidad* became a transnational phenomenon that promoted Mexican national identity and pride in the United States primarily through cultural reproduction and consumption and that fed a growing *Mexico de afuera*. In addition to music, especially through radio, movies became important mediums that promoted and distributed *mexicanidad* to the masses in Mexico and ethnic Mexicans in the United States.

Mexico's film industry was essential to and at the forefront of the production and distribution of *mexicanidad*, presenting Spanish-speaking audiences in Latin America and the United States with images and characters whom viewers rallied behind and identified with. During the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (1940s-1950s) there was an enormous explosion of film production, such that the industry emerged as the sixth most important in Mexico.<sup>70</sup> Surely this meant Mexico experienced economic benefits but the real importance of Mexican cinema throughout this time period literally appeared from the portrayals on the screen that affected the audience in their social and cultural understanding of themselves. Independent scholar Anne Doremus relates that "[d]uring a period when most Mexicans were illiterate, film—which reached the largest audience of any other artistic medium—likely constructed the predominant image of national identity."<sup>71</sup> Mexico had not reached a level of widespread literacy where the dissemination of nationalistic convictions and ideals could be achieved through writings. The use of visual figures, icons, and symbols was the most effective manner through

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<sup>70</sup> Andrea Noble, *Mexican National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> Anne Doremus, "Authenticity, the Pelado and the Mexican National Identity: Essay versus Film during the 1930s and the 1940s," *Confluencia* 16, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 46.



which concepts of national identity reached the populace. In the culmination of its existence, the film industry was possibly the most important creator and distributor of Mexican identity that encompassed romantic ideas of Mexico's indigenous, Spanish, and mestizo ancestry but denied and frowned upon influences from elsewhere, especially the United States.

Mexican cinema grew tremendously throughout the 1930s and 1940s, solidifying it as a strong and important industry of the time. During this time financial and technical assistance aided the process of producing films more consistently and less sporadically. Partially responsible for the industry's growth and stability during this time period was the Mexican government's recognition and interest in film's potential to make money (just as Hollywood began to explode in wealth and fame in the United States) and spread national interests; in 1935 the Cinematográfico Latino Americana, SA (CLASA), was founded and funded by state subsidies which supplied Mexican studios with the best cinematographic accessories.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, in 1942 film production and distribution was financed by the Banco Cinematográfico, a newly created private institution that became nationalized in 1947 and that guaranteed "the film financing for the foreseeable future, in which state and private initiatives combined to offer funding."<sup>73</sup> Mexican cinema and the government collaborated in a symbiotic relationship where the state provided monies for modern technology and development, and in return, the film industry helped promote

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<sup>72</sup> Noble, *Mexican National Cinema*, 14. For more information on the relationship between the Mexican film industry and the state see Carl Mora, *Mexican Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 59,69; Noble, *Mexican National Cinema*, 13-22; Aaulo Antonio Paranaguá, *Tradición y modernidad en el cine de América Latina* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 221-225; Charles Ramírez Berg, *Cinema of Solitude* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 40, 44; and Francisco Sánchez, *Luz en la oscuridad, crónica del cine mexicano, 1896-2002* (Mexico City: Cineteca Nacional an Juan Pablos, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Noble, *Mexican National Cinema*, 14.

national ideals. Historian Carl Mora explains that after the creation of a “nationalist cinema” producers were funded by the Banco Cinematográfico if they created movies that represented “the contemporary Mexican reality on the screen.”<sup>74</sup> To support Mexico’s nation-building project, the film industry produced nationalistic movies that promoted ideals and images supported by the government and perceived by the masses as authentically Mexican. Movies produced and manufactured and exported *mexicanidad*.

Mexico’s national project of creating and promoting *mexicanidad* made its way across the U.S.-Mexico border and into cities like San Jose, where a significant number of ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos lived. Movies bankrolled by the Banco Cinematografico appeared in theaters across Latin America, Mexico—and, before long, the United States. In a 1952 advertisement for San Jose’s Teatro Liberty, manager Tony D. Maria made clear that the theater screened Spanish-language films daily and always screened the latest films from Mexico. Acknowledging that non-Mexicans viewed films at the Liberty he thanked “todas las *colonias* hispanas por su valioso patrocinamiento [all of the Hispanic people for their invaluable business].”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, understanding the role of the Mexican government in producing and distributing the films screened at the Teatro Liberty, he reassured audiences that “este teatro siguirá exhibiendo lo mejor y mas nuevo en cintas del CINE NACIONAL [this theater will keep showing the newest and best of (Mexico’s) NATIONAL CINEMA [emphasis in original]].”<sup>76</sup> His announcement revealed an understanding of diverse Spanish-speakers in the region who frequented the

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<sup>74</sup> Carl Mora, *Mexican Cinema*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> Tony D. Maria, “Teatro Liberty,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1952.

<sup>76</sup> Tony D. Maria, “Teatro Liberty,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1952.

theater for entertainment but also recognized the role of Mexico's government in the film industry.

The Teatro Liberty screened films in Spanish, especially those produced in Mexico and served as a brick and mortar manifestation of the developing *Mexico de afuera* in San Jose where *mexicanidad* was exported, promoted, and celebrated. Tony D. Maria, a transplant from Philadelphia, became manager of the Teatro Liberty in the mid-1940s which is likely when the theater began screening films in Spanish.<sup>77</sup> The theater became a transnational space downtown that allowed ethnic Mexicans from San Jose and the surrounding Santa Clara County to congregate and socialize in the city center while consuming exported images of Mexican national identity. The theater acted as a space that simultaneously allowed ethnic Mexicans the opportunity to celebrate their culture while showing the general public of San Jose their "normalcy" by participating in one of America's most popular social-cultural activities, going to the movies; ethnic Mexicans consumed Mexican culture while "acting" American. The Teatro Liberty is one example of the multiple ways Latinos carved out both physical and social spaces for themselves in the San Jose and Santa Clara County while promoting cultural ties to their motherland.

Without a large presence of Black Americans in Santa Clara County, Latinos took center stage in the realm of urban life and racial politics as ethnic whites moved into an expanding city where the county's largest minority also had its largest concentration.<sup>78</sup>

Latinos living within San Jose's official city limits predominantly resided near

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<sup>77</sup> "Tony Di Maria ciudadano Sobresaliente del Año," *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1959.

<sup>78</sup> Despite the small number of Black people living in San Jose and Santa Clara County, Herbert Ruffin II argues that the Black community played an important role in the development of San Jose's urban environment as it pertains to social and political issues relating to discrimination and civil rights. See Herbert G. Ruffin II, "Uninvited Neighbors: Black Life and the Racial Quest for Freedom in the Santa Clara Valley, 1777-1968 (Ph.D. diss., Claremont College, 2007).

downtown, although a significant number also resided in the city's Eastside neighborhood and in the unincorporated eastern periphery. Ethnic Mexicans in San Jose found themselves making inroads into the emerging service economy while maintaining a strong presence in the agricultural sector while it lasted. As an ethnoracial minority, Mexican-origin people were vulnerable to actions taken and decisions made by the white majority. This was particularly true when it came to economic and political choices established by government officials who paid little attention to the relatively small minority who participated minimally in formal politics.

### **Race, Ethnic Mexicans, Santa Clara County, and the Politics of Growth**

The development of the Latino community in San Jose should be seen in the context of the economic, racial, and political environments of the Bay Area. Understanding these elements, especially in cities like San Francisco and Oakland, foregrounds the urban development of San Jose and Latino communities in the South Bay.

During World War II many U.S. cities in the North and the West experienced an industrial boom as war industries employed millions of Americans, including women and minorities. Cities like Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Baltimore increased their populations and thrived as the war economy drove increased production and job opportunities in manufacturing. Urban centers in Southern California like Los Angeles, San Diego, and Long Beach also experienced a large increase in population, due in large part to the expansion of military bases and ports in the region. In fact, the war economy led to one of the greatest internal migrations in U.S. history; a significant number of these

migrants were people of color seeking higher wages by entering the industrial workforce for the first time. This migration led to economic, social, cultural, and political changes in U.S. cities, particularly as they addressed race relations. The massive migration of Black people to the North and the West is frequently referred to as the second Great Migration, and when discussing their movement to Northern California specifically, one author referred to this period as a “Second Gold Rush.” The wartime economy provided opportunities for Black transplants eager to find better prospects than the Jim Crow South had to offer.<sup>79</sup>

The labor demands of wartime industry were changing the racial makeup of San Francisco and Oakland in the heart of the Bay Area. Racial demographics shifted in the Bay Area’s core cities as wartime industries emerged and provided job opportunities for working-class people, largely white and Black. Cities like San Francisco and Oakland experienced swift industrial expansion as they augmented their shipyards and witnessed more traffic in their ports. Like urban centers in Southern California, these Northern California cities provided desirable jobs for people and especially Black individuals and families who eagerly welcomed opportunities to leave the Jim Crow South. San Francisco’s Black community was forged during the war as its population rose nearly tenfold from 4,864 to 43,502 people between 1940 and 1950. They quickly found work in

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<sup>79</sup> On the Second Great Migration and development of the West and North during World War II see Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); James Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Overview,” in *African American Urban History: The Dynamics of Race, Class, and Gender Since World War II*, ed. Joe W. Trotter Jr. and Kenneth L. Kusmer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Gregory D. Sumner, *Detroit in World War II* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015). For information on ethnic Mexicans and industrial work during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century see: George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; and Elizabeth Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Homefront* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

war-industry jobs but were restricted to only a few neighborhoods; one of these, the Fillmore, was home to many vacant homes due to the forced removal of Japanese residents.<sup>80</sup> Across the Bay, in Oakland and Alameda County (frequently referred to as the East Bay), a similar formation of Black communities was emerging as newcomers arrived to fill wartime industry jobs as well. Banned from neighborhoods in central Oakland by racist whites, Blacks urbanites settled in the outskirts of the city and in other nearby communities. The West Oakland area emerged as a center for Black settlement, the population expanding from 24 percent of the region in 1940 to 67 percent in 1950. As a whole, Black inhabitants of Oakland grew from 8,452 to 47,562 people during the same period.<sup>81</sup>

Unlike in San Francisco and Oakland, the war effort in San Jose and Santa Clara County was less focused on military production and more grounded in agriculture. Specifically, the region was renowned for growing, drying, and canning fruit; it produced sixty-two major food crops, and was one of the most productive agricultural counties in the United States. In fact, at the height of agricultural production during the 1950s Santa Clara County ranked “first in strawberries (quantity produced); first in prunes (total value and acreage); third in pears (acreage and yield); sixth in fruits and nuts (total value);

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<sup>80</sup> Clement Lai, “The Racial Triangulation of Space: The Case of Urban Renewal in San Francisco’s Fillmore District,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (January 2012), 155-156; William Issel and Mary Anne Wold, “Catholics and the Campaign for Racial Justice in San Francisco From Pearl Harbor to Proposition 14,” *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 119, No. 3 (Fall 2008), 23; 1940 California Census. Table F-35.-Age, by Race, and Sex, For the City of San Francisco: 1930 and 1940; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1. “Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1950.”

<sup>81</sup> Marilyn S. Johnson, “Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Richmond and Oakland, California, 1941-1945,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), 293; 1940 California Census. Table C-36.-Race, By Nativity and Sex, for the City of Oakland: 1930 and 1940; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1. “Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1950.”

[and] sixth in cherries (quantity).”<sup>82</sup> George Starbird, San Jose mayor and City Council member from 1950-1962, recalled that in 1942, “[T]he war was on, of course, but San Jose did not participate in the war-rushed industrial growth.” Making light of the level of development of industry in San Jose and the county during the war, he continued, “[T]aking sailors and marines back and forth to Moffett Field [an air base just a few miles north of the city] probably brought more income into San Jose than any other one activity.”<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, agriculture and canning employed about half of the city’s population, leading to a vibrant economy during the summer months but high unemployment for about half the year.<sup>84</sup> In short, the economies that developed in San Francisco and Oakland provided job opportunities attractive to Black workers; the story in San Jose and Santa Clara County was different.

Just as industry influenced the urbanization, economy, and racial makeup of the Bay Area’s largest cities during the war, industry also influenced these factors in San Jose and the South Bay. The Black population in Santa Clara County increased from 730 to 1,718 people during the 1940s with only 591 living in San Jose in 1950.<sup>85</sup> These numbers were substantially lower than those of the more industrialized cities of San

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<sup>82</sup> Paul F. Griffin and Ronald L. Chatham, “Urban Impact on Agriculture in Santa Clara County, California,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 48, No. 3, (Sept. 1958), 195.

<sup>83</sup> Short description of Moffett Field in nearby Sunnyvale. George Starbird, “The New Metropolis: San Jose Between 1942 and 1972,” speech given to the San Jose Rotary Club on March 1, 1972.

<sup>84</sup> George Starbird, “The New Metropolis: San Jose Between 1942 and 1972,” speech given to the San Jose Rotary Club on March 1, 1972. California Room, San Jose State University Library.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1. “Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1950: San Jose”; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population: Volume 11, *Characteristics of the Population, Part 5, California*, (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 5-21; and University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser: County-Level Results for 1850-1960 (University of Virginia Library: Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 2005) as cited in Herbert G. Ruffin II, “Uninvited Neighbors: Black Life and the Racial Quest for Freedom in the Santa Clara Valley, 1777-1968” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont College, 2007), 144.

Francisco and Oakland; after all, farm and agricultural labor was the type of work Black Americans attempted to leave behind when departing from the South.<sup>86</sup>

With the low numbers of Black Americans in the South Bay, it was Latinos who made up the largest racial minority at mid-century, accounting for about 7% of San Jose's population.<sup>87</sup> Ethnic Mexicans had a long history in the region and although their numbers at the war's inception were not large, the agricultural economy attracted thousands through the war years.

While many Mexican Americans migrated to the region from across the Southwest, many Mexican nationals also made their way to the South Bay through a formal labor program established between the United States and Mexico. The Bracero Program was implemented by the U.S. federal government in 1942 as a binational agreement with Mexico to fill the labor shortage, especially in the agricultural sector, as American men deployed to theaters of war. Although the agreement was initially intended as a temporary solution to a labor shortage, the Bracero Program was extended and not officially terminated until 1964. Companies contracted Mexican nationals for a specific time period with the promises of fair wages, good treatment, and suitable

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<sup>86</sup> Herbert G. Ruffin II, "Uninvited Neighbors: Black Life and the Racial Quest for Freedom in the Santa Clara Valley, 1777-1968" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont College, 2007), 143-144, 157. Black migrants who decided to settle in San Jose and Santa Clara County made up the "smallest and perhaps most scattered African American population in the Bay Area." Most Black migrants to the Bay Area came from Missouri, Kentucky, Georgia, Arkansas, and Virginia. For many, their initial destination was San Francisco but when the train stopped in San Jose some stayed. For more information see Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley* (Sunnyvale, CA: Lockheed Missiles & Space Co., 1978).

<sup>87</sup> 1950 was the first year the Census collected information on "White Persons with Spanish Surnames," and it was the first time information was tabulated by census tracts in San Jose. As a result, the census only examined tracts with 250 or more persons with Spanish Surnames and the total number of 6,216 White Persons with Spanish Surnames is low because it omits those living in other incorporated areas where there were fewer than 250. Making a proportional calculation by taking the number of foreign-born Mexicans throughout the city's incorporated tracts and the foreign-born Mexicans in the Spanish-surnamed Census tracts we see the number of residents might have been closer to 10,000. The census calculations also omit the large number of Latinos who would have been living on the periphery of San Jose's eastern border. Census information for Black community 1950, Spanish Surname census 1950.



housing near their workplace. At the end of the contract, *braceros* would return to Mexico with U.S. dollars to boost their individual income and Mexico's economy. However, many *braceros* settled in U.S. communities or migrated from job to job, breaking their contracts and working and residing in the United States without legal authorization.<sup>88</sup>

*Braceros* worked largely in California and made their way to Santa Clara County to work in agriculture.<sup>89</sup> In fact, at the height of the 1954 harvest season, an estimated one thousand *braceros* were employed in the county.<sup>90</sup> These Mexican nationals, along with their Mexican American coethnics, began establishing more permanent roots during the war years and initiated a transformation in the racial demographics of the county and San Jose just as Black people had done in San Francisco and Oakland.

When writing of his family's experience when they first moved to Santa Clara County during the 1930s, Mexican immigrant Jose Antonio Villareal recounted that settled families in the area were few but migratory circuits changed the complexion of the

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<sup>88</sup> Although many scholars focus their examination of *braceros* on policy, maltreatment of these workers, their high employment in agriculture, and on those who broke their contracts, they were far from a monolith. Some completed their contracts, returned to Mexico, then legally immigrated back to the United States. Also, many worked in more industrial and skilled jobs than those associated with agriculture. For more information see: Wayne A. Grove, "The Mexican Farm Labor Program, 1942-1964: Government-Administered Labor Market Insurance for Farmers," *Agricultural History* 70, no. 2 (1996); Robert Robinson, "Taking The Fair Deal to the Fields: Truman's Commission on Migratory Labor, Public Law 78, and the Bracero Program, 1950-1952," *Agricultural History* 84, no. 3 (2010); Gilmore, N. Ray, and Gladys W. Gilmore. "The Bracero in California." *Pacific Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (1963); Scruggs, Otey M. "Texas and the Bracero Program, 1942-1947." *Pacific Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (1963); Debora Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando el Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014); Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990).

<sup>89</sup> Asian immigrants also made their way to Santa Clara County and San Jose during the early twentieth century and managed to establish roots. For more information see: Cecilia M. Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream*, 84.

area during the harvest. He recalled that families lived throughout the county but “[i]t was another thing in the summer, when people arrived by the hundreds from southern California, first for the apricot and then the prune harvest.”<sup>91</sup> In addition to coming in droves from Southern California, between 1900 and 1947 many Mexican nationals made their way to the South Bay from states in Mexico like Sonora, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Coahuila, Guanajuato, and Michoacán.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, recalled another San Jose resident, “The summertime was great—it was an exciting time when Mexican families by the thousands began to arrive in San Jose and other parts of the valley. The families came from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and other parts of California. Many families came across the border under various circumstances and made it to the agricultural fields of Santa Clara Valley.” Through the early 1950s ties to places in Mexico manifested themselves in the names of stores and restaurants like the Morelia Café and the Tampico Café.

The local economy during the war period also influenced local politics in San Jose as city leaders attempted to maintain authority in the South Bay. Efforts to diversify Santa Clara County’s economy emerged out of Stanford University during the 1940s, and similar struggles to change the urban development of San Jose and the county began to materialize out of San Jose.<sup>93</sup> With at least some success, business leaders started pushing for more diverse industries; Boeing declined the offer to open a production facility in San Jose but business, and city leaders rejoiced in 1943 when “IBM built its first West Coast

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<sup>91</sup> José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho*, 42; Luis G. Juarez, “Cannery Job Opportunities Shrink with Urbanization,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 21, 1975; Luis Juarez, “Illegal Immigrants ‘In Season,’” *San Jose Mercury News*, July 4, 1976.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 94.

<sup>93</sup> For more information see: Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); John Findlay, “Stanford Industrial Park: Downtown for Silicon Valley,” in *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

plant in the city.”<sup>94</sup> In 1944, a new cadre of local politicians were voted into city council, and “it was their determination to build something they all wanted, a new metropolis, in the place of sleepy San Jose.” These men, the Progress Committee, began working immediately to improve the condition and status of San Jose. By 1950 they initiated plans for an airport (no easy feat considering most airports of its planned size in California started by using old military port facilities). The Committee also labored to improve San Jose’s fire rating from a Class 5 to a Class 3 city, meaning that the city’s fire stations improved their ability to respond to fires (most likely through investment in more stations).<sup>95</sup> One news columnist later stated that “[w]hen the industrial fever of World War II struck Contra Costa, Alameda and San Mateo counties, the boomers of San Jose looked north in envy.”<sup>96</sup> These political businessmen did not want to be left behind as the gears of progress turned throughout Northern California’s Bay Area. Their aspirations for San Jose were ambitious and for six years they toiled to make San Jose a more urban and desirable place to visit and live. The Progress Committee provided the ideological foundation of growth utilized by San Jose’s new city manager. The shifting political ideology that favored aggressive growth policies over those that simply maintained the status quo helped establish the foundation that would lead the transformation of San Jose and the South Bay from a rural and agricultural geography to a landscape characterized by a suburbanizing city surrounded by urbanizing suburbs.

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<sup>94</sup> Philip J. Troustine and Terry Christensen, *Movers and Shakers: The Study of Community Power* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 86.

<sup>95</sup> Starbird, “The New Metropolis” [my emphasis].

<sup>96</sup> Richard Reinhard, “Joe Ridder’s San Jose,” *San Francisco Magazine*, November 1965, 48.

## Conclusion

The Spanish-speaking population of Santa Clara County during and after the war was predominantly ethnic Mexican, but other Latino groups lived in smaller numbers in the region as well. When people in the Spanish-speaking community used the term “Latino,” they did so intentionally—the members of the majority ethnic Mexican population meant to recognize and acknowledge other Spanish-speaking nationalities present in and around San Jose. To be clear, ethnic Mexicans made up a clear and disproportionate Latino majority in the South Bay, and the area was less diverse in its Spanish-speaking population at mid-century than other major Latino cities like Chicago and San Francisco. It is nevertheless important to use the language and understandings these people utilized in order to maintain fidelity to their voices and credit their agency as active participants in the definition and creation of their communities.

The diverse composition of Spanish-speakers from the Caribbean, South and Central America, Mexico, and the United States reflected the beginnings of a transnational Latino community in the South Bay. Latinos in the region made up only a small proportion of Santa Clara County’s population, and they sparsely populated the area in small, peripheral communities outside official city limits, where they found comfort living among other Spanish-speaking people. The highest concentration of Latinos in Santa Clara County developed in and around the county seat, San Jose. As a way of forging a connection between all the scattered *colonias* throughout the region with the dominant *colonia* of San Jose, Latinos in the South Bay developed a sense of belonging to a larger, broader *colonia* characterized by a shared culture and language and

less by a particular geographic location. *El Excéntrico* helped foster and promote the idea of a panethnic Latino community in Santa Clara County.

The city of San Jose functioned as the center of social, cultural, economic, and political life for the region's Latino population and also for the county as a whole. The South Bay was renowned for its agricultural economy and the majority of the processing and canning jobs were located in San Jose. Beginning during the Second World War and moving into the postwar years, however, a concerted and calculated effort was made by San Jose's city government to change the direction of the city by fostering particular kinds of growth. Partly as a response to their changing role in a burgeoning Santa Clara County's economy, city leaders hoped to maintain its status as the county's largest city. Through an aggressive annexation campaign San Jose sprawled outward, encouraging other incorporated cities to do the same. Competition between established cities for land, subsoil resources, people, and tax revenue characterized the birth of Santa Clara County's suburban borderlands. The annexation wars forced unincorporated communities to decide whether to incorporate or become part of already established cities; and if they decided to incorporate, they, too, participated in the competition.

Unlike the cities of the South Bay that were so often in competition with one another, Latino *colonias* throughout the region attempted to collaborate in their efforts to build community and support one another. The larger climate of political, economic, and urban competition in San Jose and Santa Clara County at mid-century provided the backdrop and context for Latino community formation and development. The politics of growth that characterized San Jose during the postwar period soon brought many

*colonias* once on the fringes of society into the regulated urban landscape, and the Latino community of Santa Clara County began to take form.

## **Chapter 2: Businessmen, Leadership, and Contention: The Emergence of a Middle-Class Ethnic Mexican Community in San Jose, 1949-1960**

At mid-century San Jose Latinos rapidly populated and claimed space in Santa Clara County's urban core, at a time in U.S. history that was characterized by suburban growth across the country. Ethnic Mexicans in San Jose took the lead in establishing a number of organizations that worked together to unify and politicize the Latino community—but with mixed success. Ethnic Mexican leaders took positions on issues pertaining to race, class, and citizenship as they worked to mobilize the *colonia*. Their civic engagement simultaneously unified and fractured the growing Latino population as these leaders sought to establish themselves and the *colonia* socially, culturally, and politically in San Jose's shifting urban environment. While many also settled on undeveloped and peripheral land east of San Jose, it was the activities of Latino residents living within the city limits that more clearly established, defined, and solidified their place in San Jose through energetic participation in the economy and civic activities.

In 1950, fewer than ten thousand Latinos lived within the city limits of San Jose, most notably in and around Goosetown, a declining Italian neighborhood that was adjacent to one of downtown's busiest corridors. Their proximity to downtown allowed San Jose Latinos to participate in the local economy as entrepreneurs, salesmen, and professionals in the business district, elevating many in the community to middle-class status. Throughout the fifties Latino San Joseans leveraged their middle-class status to make political inroads by creating and participating in civic organizations that aimed to elevate the status of Spanish speakers in San Jose and the surrounding area. With growing numbers, rising socio-economic status, and an emerging leadership, Latinos

attempted to improve the lives of their community by gaining the attention of city officials to support Latino causes.

To build community, ethnic Mexicans in San Jose joined and supported existing organizations but also created new ones. As Latinos grew in numbers, civic groups and organizations boomed and matured, demonstrating their members' desire for a bigger piece of the American Dream. They organized social, cultural, and educational events to promote unity among the members of the *colonia* that included Spanish speakers from throughout Santa Clara County and beyond. However, civic engagement and social interaction also led to clashes between organizations, especially when political action overlapped with cultural representation. Organizations like the Comisión Honorífica Mexicana (CHM) fought to maintain its level of influence and relevance over actions taken up by ethnic Mexicans in San Jose. Other organizations like the Concilio de Coordinación Cívica (CCC) directly threatened and undermined the CHM's sense of authority.

The arrival and popularity of newer organizations sometimes caused division and resentment between individuals and organizations despite their common goals of unifying and improving their community. The tensions between organizations and ethnic Mexican leadership became so volatile in the mid-1950s (and at various other points after) that a schism emerged during important events. National and cultural festivities like Cinco de Mayo and Día de Independencia were sponsored by a single organization, the *Comisión*, and celebrated on a single weekend in May and September, respectively. However, in 1954, and on several subsequent occasions, competing groups sponsored their own celebrations, leading to different festivities on the same or separate weekends. Clearly



ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos in the *colonia* did not always express themselves in one voice and in harmonious ways and the intra-ethnic tensions presented themselves as struggles for power, authority, and acknowledgment.

Despite the squabbling that occurred between members and organizations of the Latino community there was always one organization—or more accurately, business—that kept the message of unity and improvement at the forefront. The Spanish-language newspaper *El Excéntrico* emerged as the first long-lasting publication for the Latino community of Santa Clara County and San Jose. This newspaper played a critical role in the community-building process of Latinos in San Jose. Beginning at mid-century the magazine promoted all manner of enterprises, activities, and ideologies; Latino-owned businesses and white-owned businesses (where Latinos worked and frequented) paid for advertisements; articles educated the public about health and legal issues; social and cultural events were announced; and writings relating to politics and the economy found a consistent readership. The publication revealed the many ways in which Latinos participated in and contributed to everyday life in San Jose and the South Bay while they maintained cultural ties, relationships, and interests in their motherlands.

The day-to-day actions of San Jose ethnic Mexicans documented in *El Excéntrico* reveal evidence of a clear transnational community that flourished within and contributed to the city's urban culture at large. Even though the San Jose *colonia* was located nearly five hundred miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, Spanish speakers in the South Bay worked to carve out space for themselves—and *El Excéntrico* represented a manifestation of these efforts. Ethnic Mexican communities had established strongholds in places like El Paso, San Antonio, San Diego, Tucson, and Los Angeles for many years.

In San Jose, however, it was not until the 1950s when Latinos began more firmly settling in the area and creating an urban community.

Ethnic Mexicans, especially those who began to attain middle-class status, moved into San Jose's core region and helped ameliorate the immediate impacts of "white flight" and suburbanization in San Jose and Santa Clara County. Indeed, although Anglos were departing and the ethnoracial makeup of neighborhoods in and around the central business district was therefore becoming less white, Latinos helped many city blocks grow in population throughout the 1950s. They helped establish and maintain a vibrant downtown through social, cultural, and economic activities that facilitated their efforts to create community and make political inroads during a time when San Jose's political elite worked towards expanding and building the city outward; this masked and hid some of the harsh social, cultural, and political realities that still plagued many ethnic Mexicans in and around the city.

Examination of Latino San Joseans during the 1950s illustrated how the group forged an understanding of itself and created a community that held local and transnational implications. Previous studies that have examined community development of predominantly ethnic Mexican communities in California have prioritized the more populated Los Angeles region of Southern California. In places like Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and the San Gabriel Valley, early community developments that eventually led to a politicized Mexican American generation came sooner than they did in San Jose.<sup>97</sup> For example, a Mexican American identity formed in and around Los Angeles during the

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<sup>97</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society*; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); Matt Garcia, *A World of its Own*.

late 1930s and into the 1940s. Historian George J. Sánchez explains that during this period, there occurred “a change in political direction” within the ethnic Mexican community with a transition “from a community dominated by the Mexican-born to one which centered around the American-born.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly, in San Antonio, Texas, historian Richard A. Garcia describes the 1930s as essential for the formation of the city’s Mexican American middle class. He argues that the Depression “was the only period in American history in which the flood of Mexican immigration was almost completely halted.”<sup>99</sup> As a result, the ethnic Mexican community in San Antonio, like in Los Angeles, “solidified and consolidated,” creating a desire to remain culturally Mexican but politically American.<sup>100</sup> The result was the formation of a politically conscious and socially present Mexican American identity with many moving into the middle class.

In Northern California’s Santa Clara County, however, the Mexican-born population was still highly influential in social, cultural, and political activities of the ethnic Mexican community at midcentury—the transition described by Sánchez and Garcia in Los Angeles and San Antonio, respectively, did not occur in San Jose until the 1950s. The chapter will describe some of the intra-ethnic struggles that occurred within the comunidad as the intra-ethnic transition of political influence unfolded throughout the decade. The civic and political activities undertaken by ethnic Mexicans in the city were clear signs of political organizing that provided a foundation for future organizing efforts that would bear fruit in the 1970s and after.

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<sup>98</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 228.

<sup>99</sup> Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>100</sup> Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 5-6.

## Transition from an Italian Goosetown to a Mexican Barrio

San Jose city leaders were determined to make their municipality a regional powerhouse. Municipal power brokers, the core of whom comprised the Progress Committee, hired Anthony P. “Dutch” Hamann as the new city manager in 1950. Their politics of growth, spearheaded by the Progress Committee and Hamann, proved successful by the early 1960s. At the time Hamann was hired, San Jose’s population was only 95,280 people—a small number compared to the 775,357 and 384,575 of nearby San Francisco and Oakland.<sup>101</sup> Under the new city manager’s leadership, San Jose became the fastest growing city in the United States, with a population increase of 121% between 1950 and 1960. San Jose’s growth even surpassed burgeoning municipalities like Phoenix, Miami, Houston, and Los Angeles, which expanded their populations by 100%, 89%, 54%, and 50%, respectively, during the same period.<sup>102</sup>

Similar to these other fast-growing cities, San Jose reflected characteristics of emerging urban centers in the Sunbelt. Unlike the great industrial cities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that expanded on the eastern seaboard and in the nation’s northern tier, Sunbelt cities boomed during the postwar period and gradually became home to some of the largest populations in the country as their northern and eastern counterparts began to decline.<sup>103</sup> Despite falling somewhat outside of the general geographic

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<sup>101</sup> *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1.—Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1950; *San Francisco-Oakland and Adjacent Area*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 49. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1.—Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1950.

<sup>102</sup> “San Jose was Decade’s Fastest-Growing City in U.S.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1962.

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion on the Sunbelt and its cities see Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983). On cities in the

understandings of the region, arguably no other city epitomized the growth and politics of the Sunbelt during the postwar period more than San Jose.

Racially, San Jose's growth during the 1950s was characterized by a large influx of white residents, with people of color also contributing significantly to the city's expansion. Black people, for instance, increased by 230% but remained relatively very few in number with 1,955 residents in 1960. It was Latinos across the city—and especially near downtown and the Eastside—who accounted for the most notable demographic shift in the city during the between 1950 and 1960.<sup>104</sup>

The U.S. Census began keeping a record of persons with Spanish surnames in 1950 and for the first time San Jose was analyzed by housing tracts. A 1950 map of San Jose reveals fourteen of the city's fifty-six (or one-in-four) census tracts containing 250 or more residents who were racially categorized as white with Spanish surnames; half of these Spanish-surname tracts were located adjacent to First Street, five of which would have been recognized as part of downtown. First Street was a north-south thoroughfare that passed through the city's central business district and the eastern portion of Goosetown, where a significant number of Spanish-surnamed people lived. Interestingly, when comparing the 1950 map with the HOLC map of 1939, many of the redlined areas

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West see John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

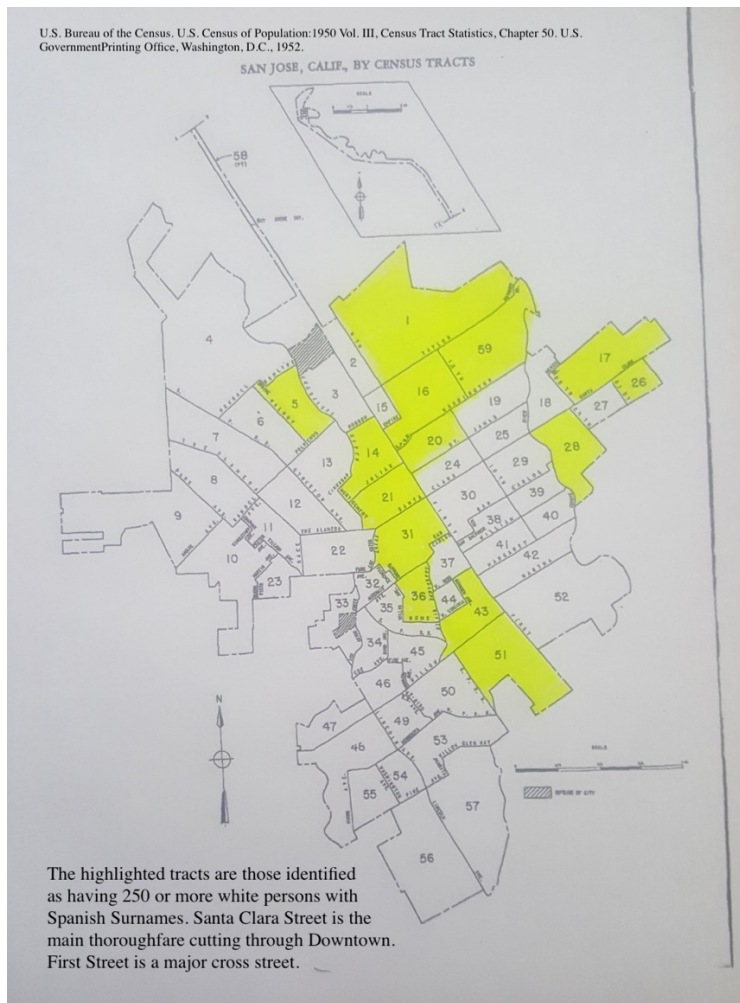
<sup>104</sup> Richard Reinhard, "Joe Ridder's San Jose," *San Francisco Magazine*, Nov. 1965, 66, 70; Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream*, 95; *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1.—Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1950; *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 6.—Characteristics of the White Population With Spanish Surname, For Selected Census Tracts, 1950; *San Jose, Calif. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1962. Table P-1 General Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1960.

from the late 1930s—including the D11 and D10 areas of Goosetown and the Eastside—align with the tracts where Latinos lived in 1950. With the increasing Latino population in these tracts and the gradual out-migration of ethnic whites (Italians) from Goosetown during the 1950s the neighborhood could have been called “El Ganso.” By 1970, with Latinos making up just under half the area’s residents, that name was more fitting. To be sure, at mid-century four of the fifteen tracts that made up Goosetown were categorized as significant Spanish-surnamed zones, three of which existed along First Street.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Map. SAN JOSE, CALIF., BY CENSUS TRACTS. *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952; MAP OF SAN JOSE, SANTA CLARA AND VICINITY. Home Owners Loan Corporation, 1939. Accessed online: <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/37.328/-121.982&city=san-jose-ca> [accessed August 6, 2020]. I compared 1950 Census map of San Jose with the Redlined map from 1939. The 1939 map recognizes the D11 area, which fits into the area I demarcated as “Goosetown” and “El Ganso,” as an “Italian Town.”

#### Map 4



Description: The highlighted tracts are those identified as having 250 or more white persons with Spanish surnames. Santa Clara Street is the main thoroughfare cutting through downtown from east to west. First Street is a major cross street running north and south where seven tracts with Spanish surnamed people residing.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population: 1950 Vol. III. Census Tract Statistics, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington D.C., 1952.

In 1950, the Spanish surnamed population in El Ganso was 2,532, making up about half of San Jose's total recorded Spanish-surnamed population but less than 10% of the neighborhood's population. Despite comprising a small percent of the neighborhood's residents the Spanish-surnamed population was significant because those living in the area established roots and culture that would later attract other Latinos to the area. Within the decade the area's population would grow—but with whites leaving the area, it was

thanks to Latinos moving into El Ganso that the area remained populated and continued to grow. Between 1950 and 1960 the neighborhood increased from 21,255 to 23,748 people, with the Spanish-surnamed residents nearly tripling their numbers from 2,133 to 6,265. While the population of El Ganso only grew by 2,493 people, those with Spanish-surnames grew by 193%, increasing the number of Latinos to 26% of the neighborhood's total population.<sup>106</sup> These numbers suggest that ethnic whites (like Italians) began moving out of the area while Latinos (predominantly those of Mexican descent) moved in and were responsible for the neighborhood's growth during the decade. The actions taken by ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos to move into and keep the Goosetown neighborhood vibrant is a significantly earlier example of what urban historian Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz, in his call for a Next Urban History, has emphasized as the influence and importance of immigrant Latinos in the stabilization and then revival of city life beginning in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>107</sup> Although San Jose would eventually pass through a unique "urban crisis" of its own, the transition from Goosetown to El Ganso provides an early example of how Latino immigrants moved into cities, created community, became part of the urban tapestry, and helped maintain a local economy.

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<sup>106</sup> The 1950 numbers were calculated by adding the totals for census tract numbers 22, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, and 51. The numbers for 1960 were tabulated by selecting and analyzing those census tracts most closely aligned with the 1950 tracts and the overall demarcation of "El Ganso." The 1960 tracts are A0007, A0008, A0017, A0018, A0019, and A0024. There was no map provided with the 1960 Census. To determine which census tracts correlated with the 1950 tracts and fit within the demarcations I utilized the data base Social Explorer. *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 1.—Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1950; *San Jose*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* vol. III. *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 6.—Characteristics of the White Population With Spanish Surname, For Selected Census Tracts, 1950; *San Jose, Calif. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1962. Table P-1 General Characteristics of the Population, By Census Tracts: 1960.

<sup>107</sup> Andrew Sandoval-Strausz, "Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origin of a New Urban America," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (December, 2014), 804-831.



At mid-century just over six thousand Latinos were officially recorded by the Census as residing in San Jose proper, making up a relatively small number of the total population. Within the next decade, however, the number of ethnic Mexicans living in San Jose increased dramatically as the city expanded and annexed Latino neighborhoods in the eastern periphery but also as they populated the urban core. During the 1950s, when Latinos living in the eastern peripheral barrios of San Jose earned enough money—and especially if they lived outside of the eastern city limits—they took the opportunity, just as white and Black Americans of the time, to move into “better” neighborhoods. At the time, compared to the barrios in East San Jose and the eastern periphery, “better” barrios, like El Ganso, were located near the center of the city because of superior municipal services and infrastructure. One resident of Mayfair, a renowned Latino barrio of San Jose’s Eastside, recalled: “‘The big shots don’t live in the same neighborhoods with us [in Mayfair]. . . . Even if they once lived here, when they’ve made enough money, they usually move into town [San Jose] or to one of the fashionable suburbs.’”<sup>108</sup> Relocation from eastern peripheral barrios to neighborhoods like El Ganso were signs of upward mobility; by moving into the city’s core, ethnic Mexicans rejected living in substandard conditions without city services like running water, paved roads, or street lights. As some ethnic Mexicans improved their economic position, they left the Eastside and settled in San Jose proper, frequently moving into or near El Ganso and downtown to be around other middle-class Americans, especially those of Mexican descent.

During the 1950s, many markers helped establish middle-class status but none was more representative than homeownership—and Latinos were not absent from this

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<sup>108</sup> Margaret Clark, *Health in the Mexican-American Culture: A Community Study*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley,: University of California Press, 1970), 18.

achievement. “Un Nuevo Tipo de Casa ‘ESTUDIO’ Construida en su lote por solamente \$2,570” (A new ‘studio’-style home built on your lot for only \$2,700) read one advertisement in *El Excéntrico*. The ad promoted home ownership for the Spanish-speaking population of San Jose and was paid for by Samuel G. Arrazate, a Latino real-estate agent from San Jose. As part of the emerging professional, white-collar middle class, he worked in an industry that celebrated and created that middle class. The announcement continued by encouraging those interested in home owning to visit Mr. Arrazate’s office, located at 65 North San Pedro Street in a corridor of the city’s downtown business district.<sup>109</sup> Printing the ad in Spanish identified Arrazate’s target audience as Spanish-speakers residing in or near San Jose; it also revealed a market for Latinos as customers and, more importantly, as middle-class homeowners. In fact, at mid-century ethnic Mexicans lived in 126 owner-occupied dwelling units valued between \$5,000 and \$9,999 in San Jose’s Goosetown neighborhood near downtown.<sup>110</sup> The total number of owner-occupied dwelling units in this price range for all whites in Goosetown was 1,601 making 8% of these units owned by Spanish-surnamed people. Although relatively low, these numbers show Latinos occupying space and claiming places near downtown as their permanent home. This small number of Spanish-surnamed owners of dwelling units near the city’s core made up one-third of all San Jose’s Latino-held dwelling units in that price range.<sup>111</sup> Although relatively few, a significant number of

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<sup>109</sup> *El Excéntrico Magazine*, “Un Nuevo Tipo de Casa,” August 20, 1953.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 7. “Characteristics of Dwelling Units Occupied by White Persons With Spanish Surname, For Selected Census Tracts: 1950.”

<sup>111</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952. Table 3. “Characteristics of Dwelling Units, By Census Tracts: 1950.” Also Table 7

Latino families in San Jose owned their home during the 1950s, having established themselves as a key demographic in several neighborhoods near downtown.

### ***El Excéntrico and Creating Community***

With a growing middle class, Latinos in San Jose worked together to build community, stay informed on local and national issues, and make political inroads with local government through the promotion of Latino success. Latino business owners and store managers, along with radio disc jockeys, were local celebrities of sorts. Some used their positions as successful businessmen to promote civic engagement within the community and also to appeal to city officials. By 1949 the Latino community in San Jose, and especially near downtown, was sizeable and supportive enough that one of their own, Humberto Garcia II, began publishing *El Excéntrico*. Garcia was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, in August 1917 to a father who served in the Mexican army. Six months after his son's birth, Humberto Garcia I died pursuing Francisco "Pancho" Villa in El Paso, Texas, leaving his son to be raised by his older sister. Eventually, the family moved to El Paso where the younger Humberto would start his own family; this after graduating from technical school, where he learned the art of print media (1938), and serving in the U.S. Navy for a few years as a noncitizen. In 1946, Garcia moved his family to San Jose where he found work with the Smith Printing Company. Within three years, Garcia saw the need for a Spanish-language news outlet and, utilizing his experience in a print shop, he started working on publishing a newspaper.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Humberto "Bert" Garcia III. March 3, 2021.

*El Excéntrico* began as a Spanish-language outlet but as the Mexican American population grew the paper became bilingual and eventually English dominant by the mid-1960s. The magazine sporadically published eleven issues between April 1949 and December 1950 before regularly printing biweekly for the next thirty years. As the magazine's founder and director, Humberto Garcia II worked to ensure the paper was run professionally yet light-heartedly, allowing for people from all walks of life to contribute; articles were written in Spanish and English by professionals and students, men and women, the young and the old. Personal and private events became public as many Latinos paid to have births, baptisms, weddings, and anniversaries announced with photographs sent in to the paper; short biographies with headshots of Latinos serving in the armed forces were very common, in addition to pictures of social and cultural events.

The magazine's office moved several times but never left the area around downtown. Humberto Garcia II continued to run the paper until his death in late 1974, at which point his son picked up the responsibility until 1981, when he halted publication. Other Latino-serving newspapers emerged in San Jose during these thirty years but none ever achieved the longevity or popularity of *El Excéntrico*, making this paper one of the richest sources for examining the lives of Latinos in the area during the postwar period. The community created by the newspaper was localized in San Jose, but with the migratory patterns of ethnic Mexicans within the U.S. and between the U.S. and Mexico, community connections often existed outside the city, state, and country.

*El Excéntrico* documented many activities undertaken by ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos in San Jose during the city's period of dramatic growth and offers insight into the ways community members and leaders expressed themselves, interacted with one

another, created community, and situated themselves within the larger society in a rapidly growing city. *El Excéntrico* reveals a heterogeneity that existed among the ethnic Mexican people of San Jose and discloses how their connections to Mexico often led to the creation of, and participation in, transnational spaces and activities that celebrated Mexican culture while simultaneously claiming U.S. citizenship. Humberto Garcia II established himself as a community leader in the effort to unify, inform, and educate Latinos, and the expanding *colonia* in San Jose, through *El Excéntrico*. The media outlet allowed him to try to bring Latinos together and gave city officials a way to reach them.

*El Excéntrico*'s inaugural issue was published in April 1949 and offered an introduction to the magazine, its authors, collaborators, and director. Most of all, the first issue assured readers that the purpose and vision of the magazine was to create and foster community. The front cover featured an attractive Loraine Caudillo, a transplant from Hutchinson, Kansas, wearing a flower dress, smiling, sitting on a zarape, reaching with her right hand for a rose-embroidered-patterned sombrero resting on her head. Under the paper's title it read, "Magazine social, Fotográfico Latino-Americano," and the price of thirty-five cents was printed at the bottom right corner (eventually the paper would be free). The inside cover had a description of Loraine's work as a music talent and entertainer and also explained that the magazine "no es la idea ni el capricho de un solo individuo que egoistamente busca su bienestar propio sin miramientos para nadie, es el producto de una *colonia* fuerte, unida y cooperativa. [The magazine is not the pride or product of a single individual who egotistically looks to better himself without the

acknowledgement of others. It is the product of a cooperative, united, and strong collective community.]”<sup>113</sup>

Humberto Garcia II published the newspaper to reach the Latino community of San Jose, emphasizing that the magazine served them and not just his own self-interest or upward mobility. Although the first issue contained only a few articles, its writers celebrated the new magazine for unifying and uplifting Latinos in San Jose. In a column entitled “Our Strength is Our Unity,” photographer Bill Gonzales stated that the newspaper symbolized the “true birth of being a collective group,” and represented the “fetus that produces an educated society.” He continued celebrating the magazine by adding: “The publication of *El Excéntrico* is the baptism of the newly born.”<sup>114</sup> In addition, Jesuit priest S. Iglesias insisted in his article that his interest in writing for *El Excéntrico* stemmed from a desire to assist in the “well-being of Spanish readers in California,” and he wished “the best for people of my social background.”<sup>115</sup> His words expressed a sentiment or belief in self-improvement and betterment of the *colonia* as a whole; these words reflected a common theme that ran through the magazine for the next thirty years. Nearly all the columnists or collaborators who wrote, worked, or volunteered for *El Excéntrico* indicated that they did so out of some desire to serve and uplift Latinos in San Jose as manifested by the countless articles written regarding social and cultural gatherings, health, legal, and political issues, and ads supporting Latinos as patrons, employees, and business owners and operators.

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<sup>113</sup> Front Cover, *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1949; “Descripción de la Cubierta,” *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1949; No Author, *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1949.

<sup>114</sup> Bill Gonzales, “Our Strength is Our Unity.” *El Excéntrico*. April, 1949.

<sup>115</sup> P. Iglesias, S.J. “Bienestar Latino-Americano.” *El Excéntrico*. April, 1949.

Many columns and articles set forth an assimilationist editorial line by advocating for education and a need to stop blaming others for any Latino political or economic misfortune. In 1950, as part of *El Excéntrico*'s seventh issue since its inception, Humberto Garcia wrote a column entitled "Patriotismo?" that lectured the community about their sentiments towards Mexico. He believed it was natural for people who immigrated from one country to another to have love for their homeland but that it was hypocritical for them to maintain a sense of loyalty or patriotism towards a country they had deserted. Indeed, he believed it would serve Mexico better for its transplants to accept the United States as their new home and become an integral part of society by engaging in civic activities, going to school to merit good jobs, and succeeding in their new homeland. This, he opined, was the best way to show pride for Mexico—by showing people in the United States that Mexico produced top-quality people who contributed to society.<sup>116</sup> In a later article, Garcia questioned whether Latinos were partially to blame for discrimination against them, bringing up issues of language, cleanliness, and assimilation. He declared, "Es indispensable tratar de encontrar si hay alguna causa, algun defecto en nosotros mismos que alimente este estado de descriminacion. [Its vital that we try to figure out if there is some cause or defect within ourselves that feeds discrimination.]"<sup>117</sup> Garcia and other writers early on maintained that there was a need to assimilate to life and culture in the United States but the reason for adapting to life in the U.S. was not always clear. While some promoted full assimilation, here Garcia promoted assimilation to bring pride and honor to Mexico.

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<sup>116</sup> Humberto Garcia, "Patriotismo?" *El Excéntrico*, February 1950.

<sup>117</sup> Humberto Garcia, "La Descriminacion...." *El Excéntrico*, December, 1949.

This assimilationist point of view, or suggestive writing and imagery favoring Americanization, along with the self-blame for discrimination, brought attention to internal struggles occurring within Latino communities across the country but specifically for Latin America's largest immigrant group, Mexicans. Richard Ornelas, *El Excéntrico* contributor, expressed empathy for Mexican nationals who fled the violence during the Revolution in Mexico and "sought this country only as a refuge from which they would, in time, leave to return to their homeland," but in the same breath blamed ethnic Mexicans and their ties to Mexico for experiences of discrimination. He expressed these feelings with nuance, however, rejecting the notion that assimilation should come at a cost of completely abandoning Mexican culture.

Most of us, thinking ourselves to be Mexicans, have retained our characteristics, customs and language to such a great extent that we, as a group, have set ourselves apart from the rest of our fellow americans [sic]. I would like to make it clear, here and now, that I do not advocate a complete abandonment of these characteristics, [sic] I do, however, believe that we should accept and adopt the American way of life and yet retain our Mexican characteristics in the background, for they are part of us and have a beauty, greatness, and tradition of their own. "Nos tenemos que sacudir. [We have to shake ourselves off]." <sup>118</sup>

The call for assimilation by contributors like him and Humberto Garcia, along with emerging civic groups, demonstrated a belief that the strong affiliation and emotional attachment to Mexico impeded the development and progress of ethnic

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<sup>118</sup> "¡vamos al grano!", *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1953.



Mexican communities. Many assimilationists acknowledged that an older generation of Mexican nationals might not want to fully integrate but that at the very least they might acculturate to pass on American traditions to their children so that the next generation after them might be better equipped to succeed and not feel discriminated against. Ornelas wrote, “I do not think that we are entirely to blame for this problem [of discrimination] but I do believe that we must better ourselves from within before we can get recognition from without.” He continued, “To tell those on the outside that we are all equal, made to the image and likeness of God, is too idealistic and abstract. . . . What they want is action, something concrete and tangible. It is up to us to give it to them.”<sup>119</sup> The internal struggle of assimilating and acculturating to U.S. society was experienced across the Southwest and not isolated to the ethnic Mexican population of San Jose, and with continuous immigration from Mexico, this struggle proved durable.

These assimilationist and acculturationist attitudes were not just expressed in the writings of columnists; they were also reflected through other modalities in the newspaper. For example, many photographs published in *El Excéntrico* demonstrate a commitment by Latinos in San Jose to fight for the rights of U.S. citizens through military service. Short biographies and photos of Latino servicemen appeared ubiquitously in the magazine and as early as 1952 they were featured on the cover.<sup>120</sup> These images of U.S.-Latino military men would often appear next to images or ads promoting Mexican culture like restaurants or the Virgen de Guadalupe and were clearly incorporated into the magazine to show positive contributions made by Latinos to U.S.

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<sup>119</sup> “¡vamos al grano!,” *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1953.

<sup>120</sup> “Ramon Ortega,” *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1952; “Phillip Bettencourt,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1952; Cover Page, “Descripcion de la Portada,” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1952

society.<sup>121</sup> Images of servicemen also helped promote patriotism, loyalty, and love for the home country as a way to inspire readers to improve the community as a way of showing appreciation for their service. In addition, photos documenting coming-of-age and celebratory life events like birth announcements, special birthdays (quinceñeras and sweet sixteens), proms, graduations and weddings also served as a way of showcasing the ways in which Latino families were like typical “American” families.<sup>122</sup> Although it was not uncommon at the time for people to pay for these types of ads, Latinos rarely appeared in any of San Jose’s mainstream newspapers, and always appeared in *El Excéntrico*. Furthermore, assimilationist ideals were also reflected in biographies of successful businessmen and women in the community who were not Latino. These biographies documented the hard work and determination of immigrants like O. N. Mikkelsen (Copenhagen, Denmark) and Dr. Raisa N. Ravve (Russia) who successfully came to own their own printing company and optometry practice, respectively.<sup>123</sup>

Another, albeit not as frequent, example of the ways ethnic Mexicans demonstrated their subtle ways of assimilating to the United States was through acts of consumption on trips they took to Mexico and the letters they exchanged with those in the United States. Correspondence with people in Mexico also provides an insight into the transnational activities performed by ethnic Mexicans every day. Several letters and postcards were written directly to *El Excéntrico* from Mexico for the purpose of

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<sup>121</sup> “Leo ‘Humphry’ Jimenez,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1954.

<sup>122</sup> Examples of baptism see: Mac A. Hernandez, “Galeria Infantil,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1959; Examples of communions see: No Author, Front Cover, *El Excéntrico*, December 20, 1951. Examples of weddings see: Humberto Garcia II, “Wedding Bells,” *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1952; Front Cover, *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1960; No Author, No Title, *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1958; Reyes Studios, Front Cover, *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1956. For examples of high school proms and graduations see: Richard Diaz, “Junior Prom,” *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1958.

<sup>123</sup> “O.N. Mikkelsen,” *El Excéntrico*, October 20, 1951; “Biografia Dr. R. Ravve,” *El Excéntrico*, December 20, 1951.

communicating with the Latino population of San Jose. Many post cards and letters came from ethnic Mexican San Joseans on vacation or on business in Mexico wishing to share their experiences of visiting the homeland with their co-ethnics in the United States. Some images came from local musicians, like Las Hermanas Montoya, on tour in Mexico and Latin America. Also printed were photos of important ethnic-Mexican San Joseans, like Pompeyo Garcia, shaking hands with Mexican officials. Other times letters were from Mexican nationals writing to their family and friends in San Jose.<sup>124</sup> In any case, these postcards, photos, and letters sent from Mexico directly to *El Excéntrico* provide a small and selective sample of ethnic Mexicans traveling for business and leisure activities to the motherland. Vacationing can be viewed as a form of assimilation in that ethnic Mexicans traveled to Mexico simply to visit and possessed less inclination of returning permanently. However, it is notable that these visits simultaneously presented a permanent connection to Mexico as people traveled regularly to visit relatives, places they used to live, and people they still kept in contact with. These actions provide examples of the broad ways Latino and other transnational minorities view and experience the world they live in that expands their understanding of life and society beyond the boundaries of nation-states.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> “De Visita,” *El Excéntrico*, December, 1949; Hermanitas Montoya Photograph, *El Excéntrico*, October 20, 1951; *El Excéntrico*, May 5 1950.

<sup>125</sup> “De Visita,” *El Excéntrico*, September, 1949; “Entre Los Circulos Sociales,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1952; Juan Espinosa, “Juan Espinosa periodista de Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mex. Expresa una opinion,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1952; JJ returns from Mexico, *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1952; Cecilia Rodriguez, “Gossip Column,” *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1953; “Hermanitas Montoya hacen entrada triunfal en Bogota, Colombia: Fotos exclusivos para El Excentrico,” *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953; Emilio Pardo “La Voz del Pueblo,” *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1952; “Pompeyo Garcia Viaja a Mexico,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1953; Pompeyo Garcia, “Pompeyo Garcia Desde Mexico,” October 5, 1953; Rev. Francisco J. Mendez, “Parroco y Vicario Foraneo, Director del periodico LA VERDAD, El Salvador, C.A.” *El Excéntrico*, October 20, 1959; “Costa Rica Judge Visits San Jose,” *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1960.

## Businessmen, Leaders, and Contention for Authority in the Ethnic Mexican Community

While *El Excéntrico* certainly functioned as a tool and vessel for building community in San Jose it must not be overlooked as a business that accumulated a lot of clout because of its ability to reach the city's largest minority group. In fact, by the time the paper celebrated a few years of stable bi-weekly publication local government officials began printing ads calling for readers of *El Excéntrico* to vote for them.<sup>126</sup> The *San Jose Mercury News* and the *San Jose Evening News*, both owned by Joe Ridder and his family, published ads asking for readers of San Jose's Spanish-speaking population to subscribe to their papers as well. These major papers played on the assimilationist bent of *El Excéntrico* to promote themselves to the Spanish-reading population. A line from a published letter in the Spanish-language paper read, "Creemos que aunque algunos de ustedes hablan poco Ingles, UD. y sus hijos—desearan familiarizarse mas con nuestro idioma y tambien con sus vecinos. [We believe that although many of you speak little English you and your children will wish to become more familiar with it]."<sup>127</sup> The marketing plan clearly sought to play on assimilationist sentiments to learn English in order to fit into the larger society. The subscription ad continued, "Encontrara UD. que una subscripcion al San José Mercury o San José News—sera un paso firme para mayor comprensión de nuestro idioma, costumbres e eventos de interes general. [You will find that subscribing to the San Jose Mercury or the San Jose News will be a good step

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<sup>126</sup> "Phil A Cuffaro for Sherriff," *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1954; "William H. Young for Sherriff," *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1954; "Bruce Allen for Assemblyman," *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1954. In Los Angeles, the well-established publication *La Opinon* featured local, state, and federal political coverage and ads by the mid-1950s.

<sup>127</sup> "Para Mejor Servir," *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1955.

towards understanding our language, customs, and social events].”<sup>128</sup> The San Jose newspapers saw the potential for expanding their market and profitability by advertising themselves in *El Excéntrico*, and its proprietor Humberto Garcia became a leader in the community. He was often photographed alongside other Latino leaders in the community and with officials of city and state government.

Garcia was not the only ethnic Mexican in San Jose with a business or with the power to influence. The city was filled with entrepreneurs, managers, and a growing number of professionals who also saw their potential to work together and improve how Latinos in San Jose were treated, viewed, and considered. For example, in 1954 sixteen men of Mexican descent created *La Cámara de Comercio Mexicana* or the Mexican Chamber of Commerce (MCC); by March, membership had reached forty.<sup>129</sup> Members of the *Cámara* owned and/or managed a variety of businesses located near the primary business district in downtown San Jose, including restaurants, night clubs, a barber shop, auto body repair shops, bakeries, tortilla factories, a private physician’s practice, a flower shop, and a grocery store. These businessmen provided goods and services to the ethnic Mexican community and expressed their desire to help build a better future for the *colonia*. In an opening address the MCC wrote, “San Jose marcha hacia el progreso y con él tambien nuestra *colonia*. Nuestros comerciantes Mexicanos se unen con el proposito de mano a mano conseguir el mejoramiento de nuestra *colonia*. [San Jose marches towards progress and so does our community. Mexican business owners are uniting to work hand-

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<sup>128</sup> “Para Mejor Servir,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1955.

<sup>129</sup> “Se forma en San Jose la *Cámara de Comercio Mexicano*,” *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1954; “Mexican C of C Here Grows,” *San Jose Mercury News*, March 29, 1955; “Mexican Chamber Forms,” *San Jose Mercury News*, March 31, 1955. *Cámara* and MCC will be used interchangeably in reference to the Mexican Chamber of Commerce.

in-hand for the improvement of our community.]”<sup>130</sup> As business owners, these men viewed themselves as leaders in their community and wanted to create a body that would look out for the interests of its people as consumers. One of the purposes of the *Cámara* was to investigate different promotions or campaigns targeting ethnic Mexicans to provide protection against fraud. Around the time of the *Cámara*’s formation, some announcements began appearing in *El Excéntrico* promising to advocate for readers and helping them address any issues that members of the community experienced when shopping downtown, especially if problems occurred with one of the magazine’s sponsors. In addition, shortly after the founding of the *Cámara*, translated articles from the Better Business Bureau began appearing in *El Excéntrico*; it is unclear if the Bureau published the articles themselves or if the *Cámara* took it upon itself to distribute messages on behalf of the Bureau.<sup>131</sup> In any case, taken together, these actions suggests that some businesses frequented by ethnic Mexicans might have been preying on the community by overpricing or not valuing promotions or discounts and business leaders were taking steps to address wrongdoing.

As leaders in the community, especially as major economic contributors to San Jose in general, several members of the *Cámara* and other businessmen assumed high-ranking positions in other civic organizations and met with local government officials. As leaders of their community these businessmen had some level of influence when it came to local politics and addressing issues pertinent to the community. For example, Johnny Hernandez, salesman at Price’s shoes, established the Latino Health Club (a gymnasium)

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<sup>130</sup> “Se forma en San Jose la *Cámara* de Comercio Mexicano,” *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1954.

<sup>131</sup> “Better Business Bureau Briefer,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1955; “Better Business Bureau Briefer,” *El Excéntrico*, August 20, 1955; “Better Business Bureau Briefer,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1955.

to help address delinquency among Latino youth and pushed for city aid; the building was initially provided by the city at a low rent but was eventually rented at value. Hernandez also organized a committee in the attempt to lobby San Jose to establish a “Spanish Village” or “Mexican-Style Village” in the mid-1950s that would serve as a central location for Latino businesses—this was an attempt to create a San Jose version of Olvera Street in Los Angeles. He met with the city manager, Anthony Hamann, a few times but unfortunately the project failed due to lack of fundraising. Although Hernandez’s attempts to seek financial support from the city was not successful, he was able to gain access to top-rank city officials and present his ideas so that they were heard at the highest levels of governance.<sup>132</sup> As a collective, the businessmen endorsed the candidacy of a local government official and members of the *Cámara* socialized with San Jose’s city officials. Later, in October, 1956, the *Cámara* joined the Santa Clara County Tax Payers Association, Builders Exchange of Santa Clara county, and Police Local No. 170—among other organizations—in supporting an increased salary for San Jose City Council members to professionalize the positions.<sup>133</sup> By 1956, after two years, the *Cámara* boasted a membership of ninety-five San Jose residents and businesses and

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<sup>132</sup> Humberto Garcia, “Johnny Hernandez, ‘Young man with big Ideas,’” *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1954; No Author, “More Tourist Attractions Needed, Says Hamann,” *San Jose Mercury News*, April 29, 1954; No Author, “A Tourist Center: S.J. ‘Spanish Village’ Planners Push Project,” *San Jose Mercury News*, June 17, 1954; No Author, “Stock Sale Due: Hernandez Heads Planning of S.J. ‘Spanish Village,’” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 18, 1955; No Author, “Spanish Village Seek Site,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 16, 1954;

<sup>133</sup> “HOWARD F. HORNBuckle,” *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1954. While there is no official author listed in the advertisement to re-elect Hornbuckle for Sheriff, the ad reads, “Advertisement sponsored by the committee for Hornbuckle by leading Mexican business men.” After the statement, the names of ten prominent Latino businessmen in San Jose are listed, including Dr. Juan de Heras, Pompeyo Garcia, and Bill Gonzalez. These men at one point or another were members of the C.H.M. the M.C.C. or both. “LET’S DROP IT AS A HOBBY AND MAKE IT A BUSINESS,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 25, 1956. The *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* and the Civic Co-Ordinating Council were also listed as a supporting organizations for Proposition A on the city ballot to increase council salary to \$250. “Mexican Chamber Endorses Proposition 3 ‘Yes,’” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 16, 1956.

touted itself as “[u]na de las organizaciones mas fuertes que existen en San Jose [one of the strongest organizations in San Jose.]”<sup>134</sup> Just as they had done in other cities like Tucson, members of the ethnic Mexican, business-middle-class of San Jose utilized their social position as businessmen and leaders in the community to establish political ties: historian Geraldo Cadava has discussed the domestic and transnational activities of Mexican and Mexican American businessmen in twentieth-century southern Arizona that contributed to the economic development of the city as well as the northern Mexican state of Sonora.<sup>135</sup>

Businessmen and members of the *Cámara* were also active in other organizations in San Jose that looked to “improve” or “better” the position of the *colonia*. In particular, several members of the *Cámara* were also members of the San Jose *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* (CHM).<sup>136</sup> A Mexican nationalist organization affiliated with the Consulate in San Francisco, the CHM was one of, if not the most influential, organizations in San Jose during the early postwar period. This organization primarily communicated information to and from the Consul General to address issues troubling Mexican nationals living abroad (although seldom, sometimes Mexican American issues were undertaken as well) and promoted celebrations of Mexican national holidays like Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day.

These efforts had their origins in revolutionary Mexico. During the Porfiriato, Mexico experienced rapid economic development alongside growing social and political

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<sup>134</sup> “Ray Inclán ingresa a la Cámara de Comercio Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1956.

<sup>135</sup> Geraldo Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground: The Making of a Sunbelt Borderland* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>136</sup> I will use the terms *Comisión* and CHM interchangeably in reference to the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana*.



turmoil stemming from great socioeconomic disparity and inequality, especially with regard to land tenure. By the 1910s, members of Mexico's poor and rural classes joined the call from some political elite who demanded an end to the Porfiriato. Failure to address the needs of those calling for change, Mexico burst into an armed Revolution that exacerbated the social, economic, and political situation in Mexico. Although Mexicans had already been migrating to the United States to work in the growing agribusiness, among other reasons, the brutality of the Revolution led to an intense exodus of Mexicans to cross the porous U.S.-Mexico border to escape the mounting violence.

These Mexican refugees relocated especially to places in the Southwest where most ethnic Mexican people, settlements, and communities in the United States already existed. In an effort to reach these emigrants and encourage them to maintain loyalty to Mexico while on their assumed sojourn, the Mexican government created a formal line of communication with Mexican nationals residing in the Southwest, primarily through the Mexican Consular Service. Mexican Consular officers were charged with several responsibilities: (1) to maintain a positive and progressive view of Mexico; (2) act as a civil judge; and (3) perform notary duties. Consuls represented the Mexican government on U.S. soil and their tasks were simple: "to protect the interests and rights of Mexican nationals." For the most part, Consuls only served Mexican nationals but sometimes they also acted on behalf of children born in the U.S. to Mexican parents (by extension of the Mexican constitution the nationality of parents was given to their children regardless of their place of birth). At times, the Mexican Consular Service would invoke their Constitution or the Mexican Nationality and Naturalization act of 1934 (that also

cemented Mexican citizenship for children of Mexican-born parents) to extend services or offer support for Mexican Americans.<sup>137</sup>

Consuls were given considerable latitude on how to administer support for Mexican nationals in the United States but were guided by Mexican laws and international agreements. Often, they were assisted by U.S. attorneys who helped them navigate the legal system and negotiate on behalf of the Mexican people. These lawyers “prepared legal briefs, assessed the impact of American laws or proposed legislation on the *colonia* and Mexico, defended Mexican nationals who lacked funds, submitted petitions for pardons or paroles for mexicanos serving jail sentences, reviewed requests for victims of criminal offenses, and presented claims from industrial accidents to appropriate authorities.”<sup>138</sup> These attorneys provided much needed assistance to the Consular Service but could not easily hear all requests, complaints, or inquiries of all the Mexican people, especially those residing at a distance from the Consul’s office.

To better address the Mexican people living in the United States, the Consuls—a diplomatic arm of the Mexican government in the United States—created official extensions of their offices in nearby cities and towns. Sometime in the 1920s, the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* program was created to serve as an outreach program for the Consular Service that aided the Consul’s attorneys in providing assistance to Mexican nationals in U.S. cities. Branches of the program were ubiquitous throughout the Southwest and served as a means of communication between the sprinkled *colonias mexicanas* in the region and the nearest Consul. Throughout the region it was clear that

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<sup>137</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936* (Tucson,: University of Arizona Press); 6-8.

<sup>138</sup> Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza*, 9.

“[t]he overriding importance of the comisión was its position as the consulate’s ‘official representative’ to the *colonia* Mexicana and the Anglo society.” In Southern California, there were thirty-nine *Comisiones* in five counties that reported to the Consul in Downtown Los Angeles.<sup>139</sup> These Consuls and their *Comisiones* provided service and support to Mexican people and are clearly an example of official political transnationalism. To make this point clear, historian George Sánchez stated the *Comisiones*, along with other organizations, began work in the 1920s “to keep Mexicans in the United States loyal to their mother country.”<sup>140</sup> Although the official Consul was an appointee from the Mexican government, sent to the U.S. to serve as its representative, the directory board of the *Comisiones* was comprised of Mexican nationals already living in the United States who looked to help their communities by serving as official liaisons to the Consul. These *Comisiones* were clear examples of political transnationalism occurring at the local level as members addressed issues by communicating with the Mexican government through the Consulates.

It is unclear how many *Comisiones* reported to the single Consul in northern California, located in San Francisco, but there was at least one established in Santa Clara County, and it operated out of San Jose. Like its counterparts throughout the Southwest, the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* of San Jose was comprised of “the most respected members of the [community]” and looked to serve, assist, and protect the ethnic Mexican community.<sup>141</sup> The Consul General of San Francisco, along with the San Jose *Comisión*,

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<sup>139</sup> Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza*, 9-10.

<sup>140</sup> George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 123; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).

<sup>141</sup> Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc), 132; Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), chaps. 4 and 6.

frequently reached out to the ethnic Mexican community of the region through print media, particularly, via *El Excéntrico*. The *Comisión* first appeared in the local paper with a brief mention of its sponsorship of the *fiestas patrias* that took place on September 16, 1949. The next time the organization was brought up, it comprised a much more significant amount of content. On May 5, 1950, *El Excéntrico* printed its eighth publication—the front cover was decorated with green, white, and red to resemble the Mexican flag, with the emblem of the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* clearly visible on the right edge. The issue was dedicated to the celebration of the Cinco de Mayo *fiesta patria* and included such items as a short biography of Mexican Independence leader Ignacio Zaragoza, a printing of the Mexican national anthem, a few photos of the *Comisión*'s Executive Board, and photos of the *reina* (the event's queen) and her Corte de Honor (Court of Honor). A copy of the official banquet program was also printed and outlined the activities for celebration at the San Jose Civic Auditorium after the day parade. The *Comisión* had for some years been the sole sponsor of the *fiestas patrias* in San Jose and used the money earned to support a scholarship for college students of Mexican descent.<sup>142</sup>

This scholarship was one way the *Comisión* in San Jose aided Mexican Americans and actively demonstrated its commitment to “unificar a todos los mexicanos bajo el vínculo de la Paz y de la Buena Voluntad. [unify all Mexicans through peace and goodwill].”<sup>143</sup> In fact, the scholarship program was one of two major projects identified

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<sup>142</sup> *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1 no. 8, May 5, 1950; “Emily Rivera to Reign Over Mexican Fiesta,” *San Jose Mercury News*, May 2 1952.

<sup>143</sup> “Untitled,” *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1952; ; “‘5<sup>th</sup> of May’ Fete Tomorrow,” *San Jose Mercury News*, May 6, 1950. For the next thirty years, around May 5 and September 16, issues of *El Excéntrico* included similar photos, biographies, and programs to promote and celebrate the *fiestas patrias* in San Jose. Further discussion of the *fiestas patrias* will be presented in the following chapter.

by the *Comisión* during the early 1950s as priority in their platform. *Comisión* Presidente Adolfo Q. Hernandez declared his commitment to the scholarship in 1952, honoring the program that was created under the previous administration and expressed the importance of continuing the aid for future generations. Applicants for the scholarship underwent a rigorous selection process that required a high school diploma and that they be subject to “pruebas de inteligencia, aptitud natural para la profesion elegida, pruebas psicologicas [sic], para que no exista ninguna duda de las posiblilidades de terminar su carrera.[educational, psychological and aptitude tests related to their field of study to ensure completion of their studies.]”<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, it appears that these scholarships may have been loans more so than grants as the *Comisión* asked for a signed contract that obligated recipients to repay the money in some form or another to the *Comisión* for the purpose of continuing the program.<sup>145</sup> This scholarship program demonstrated one way ethnic Mexican organizations committed themselves to support community members in their pursuit of a higher education. The *Comisión* scholarship program continued through the early 1970s when the organization ceased to exist; similar educational scholarships were created by contemporary and future organizations to provide financial support for qualified Latinos interested in attending college.

The second major initiative under Hernández’s tenure as *Comisión Presidente* was to follow through with procurement or construction of an office for the San Jose *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* that was approved under the previous administration. The

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<sup>144</sup> “1950—Comision Honorifica Mexicana—1950” *El Excéntrico*, May, 1950; Adolfo Q. Hernandez, “Plataforma de la C.H. Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1952; No Author, “S.J. Mexicans Ready for Annual Fiesta,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 14, 1951;

<sup>145</sup> No Author, “1950—Comision Honorifica Mexicana—1950” *El Excéntrico*, May, 1950; Adolfo Q. Hernandez, “Plataforma de la C.H. Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1952.

office was to be known as the “Casa del Mexicano” and was to hold symbolic as well as practical purposes. The “Casa del Mexicano,” explained Hernández, “es tan importante que llena las aspiraciones de todo buen mexicano, el de tener un lugar propio para la *colonia*, puesto que se hace necesario una oficina propia de la C.H.M., para recibir y atender a las personas que tengan asuntos con la misma. [is so important that it fills Mexicans with pride to obtain their own place for their people. It’s necessary for the C.H.M to have an office so that it may assist those who have issues that need to be addressed by the C.H.M.]” He continued on by detailing a more ambitious vision of the “Casa del Mexicano” that included construction of an auditorium or hall that would be open to not just the *Comisión*, but to all “organizacion[es] mexicana[s]” to host and plan social and civic events. The “Casa del Mexicano” was procured before February 1953 and was located at 426 Royal Avenue in San Jose, just north of the growing Mexican community in El Ganso; by early 1953 the Consul General from San Francisco visited the office twice a month to provide consulate services .<sup>146</sup> The Casa was to serve as a central location for all people of Mexican descent to gather for assistance, planning, and celebratory purposes; bringing the *colonia* together was the paramount belief and understanding of the Casa’s potential. The *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* of San Jose and the Consul General of San Francisco worked in tandem to protect, educate, and serve Mexican nationals and their U.S.-born children in the South Bay and members were committed to the betterment and improvement of the community.

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<sup>146</sup> Adolfo Q. Hernandez, “Plataforma de la C.H. Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1952; “Nueva Mesa Directiva de la C.H. Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953; Adolfo Q. Hernandez, “Informe del Secretario,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1953; No Author, “Mexican Fund Argued: Commission to Consider Clubhouse,” *San Jose Mercury News*, July 19, 1952; “Clubhouse, Student Aid Both Voted,” *San Jose Mercury News*, July 21, 1952.

Unfortunately, despite the *Comisión*'s aspiration for the Casa to provide a sense of place, ownership, and unity to the *colonia* in the San Jose area, the organization found itself in the middle of a tumultuous battle that caused friction and fracture within the region's ethnic Mexican population centered around the Casa. Local radio disc jockey and local "Walter Winchell," Jose J. Alvarado strongly opposed the *Comisión*'s decision to spend funds on a "Casa del Mexicano." He criticized the project for diverting funds away from the scholarship program that, in his opinion, better served the community because it supported and invested in the youth, arguing that money spent to pay for a house was wasteful. As a member of the *Comisión*'s Mesa Directiva (Executive Board) he first expressed his frustration with the decision in small public meetings but later utilized larger media outlets to express himself; this became especially true after his quarrels became so fiery that the *Comisión* expelled him and later received support from the San Francisco Consul General, Edmundo Gonzalez, in the decision to expel him.

Alvarado expressed his frustration in *El Excéntrico* and demanded that the *Comisión* practice more transparency by asking for financial reports on how the organization was spending its money. He also utilized his platform on K.L.O.K. radio to criticize the Consul General. *El Excéntrico* published several letters of support for both Alvarado and the *Comisión*. Enrique Acosta of Decoto, California (an Oakland suburb), vehemently wrote in support of the *Comisión* and cited specific articles of the organization that validated Alvarado's expulsion. The *Comité de Acción Democrata* (Democratic Action Committee) in turn wrote in support of Alvarado and even went as far as nominating him for the position of President of the *Comisión* in the 1953 elections. The spat between Alvarado and the *Comisión* became so petty and personal that one

member of the community traveled to San Francisco in an attempt to prevent his citizenship and others wrote to local businesses calling on them to stop sponsoring his radio show. One magazine contributor commented that the tension was detrimental to the community and expressed a “need to put differences aside between individuals to work towards improving the declining position of the community.” With the election of a new Mesa Directiva in March 1953 the *Comisión* committed to “remedy tension within the community,” but despite its promise, tensions and fractures within the community were about to reach their peak.<sup>147</sup>

What publicly presented itself as a single individual holding a grudge with the *Comisión* led to the exposure of a much larger issue occurring within the community. In 1952 the *Comisión* voted and approved the removal of a “discriminatory” statute that limited participation in the Mesa Directiva explicitly to Mexican nationals. Eliminating this rule allowed for Mexican Americans to serve on the Mesa Directiva, and Blanca Sanchez became the first female and first U.S. citizen to sit on the board and was elected to the Secretary position.<sup>148</sup> Her election to the Mesa Directiva revealed the growing influence Mexican Americans possessed on local issues, especially with matters concerning Mexican culture. She served on the Mesa Directiva while Alvarado (her future husband) was criticized by the organization, and after her term was over she supported a new organization that challenged the *Comisión*. In early 1953, the Concilio

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<sup>147</sup> "J.J. Alvarado alias el (Walter Winchell Mexicano) agasaja a un grupo de amistades," *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1953; Jose J. Alvarado, "Se solicita Informe de la Comision H. Mexicana," *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1953; Humberto Garcia, "EDITORIAL—Lo Qu en San Jose Sucede...", October 20, 1952; Juan Rodriguez, "COMENTOS DE ACTUALIDAD: Aclaraciones Autenticas," *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1952; A. Ramirez Herrera, "Asi Me Lo Contaron," *El Excéntrico*, July 20, 1952; Edmundo Gonzalez, "Consul Manifiesta [sic] Posicion," *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1953; Enrique C. Acosta, "Orientaciones...", *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1953; Jose J. Alvarado, "Mi Opinion Ante La Situacion," *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1954.

<sup>148</sup> Frank Martinez, "Concilio de Co-Ordinacion Civica," *El Excéntrico*, February 20, 1952.



de Co-ordinación Cívica, or the Civic Coordinating Council (CCC), was formed and was comprised of ten organizations in the South Bay dedicated to serving the *colonia*.

Alvarado supported the organization and during that year and the following year, the CCC sponsored its own *fiestas patrias* with its own parade, banquet, and *reina*. And as a sign of transparency and openness (or perhaps more in a passive aggressive action) the CCC published a report on finances after their first widely publicized *fiestas patrias* celebration.<sup>149</sup> The CCC expressed a desire for more public input and participation in the planning of the *fiestas*, especially by Mexican American organizations.

Tensions over sponsoring and coordinating the *fiesta* celebrations reached such high levels that leaders from both organizations had to meet with City Manager Anthony “Dutch” Hamann. It remains unclear if the meeting was mutually organized by both organizations, whether one of the groups forced the gathering, or, more likely, if the sit down was scheduled by the city manager himself. Although questions may arise regarding who or how the rendezvous was planned, the purpose of the get-together was clear. There was an attempt to reconcile the differences between the *Comisión* and the CCC because both wished to celebrate the event on the same weekend and were requesting usage of the Civic Auditorium on the same day. Tellingly, though, not even the head of the city government was able to bring the two organizations together. By the mid-to-late 1950s more clubs and organizations existed than ever before that celebrated Mexican culture or that formed around some common interest(s). Members of these

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<sup>149</sup>Frank Martinez, “Concilio de Co-Ordinacion Civica,” *El Excéntrico*, February 20, 1952; Lucio Bernabe, “Informe de Finanzas, Comision Honorifica Mexicana,” *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1953; Frank Martinez, “Informe de Finanzas, Concilio de Co-ordinacion Civica,” *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1953; “Civic Coordinating Council anuncia proximas Fiestas,” *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1954; “Mexican Parade Today,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 19, 1954.

groups were predominantly Mexican American and expressed interest in the planning of the *fiestas*, the city's largest celebrations of their heritage. Efforts were made to reconcile as Alvarado and the CCC raised funds for a relief effort supporting victims of a hurricane in Mexico in late 1955 and he, personally, delivered the check to Edmundo Gonzalez, Consul General. Later, in 1957 both organizations attempted to collaborate and co-sponsor the Cinco de Mayo *fiestas* together but the efforts were unfruitful.<sup>150</sup> Alvarado never again participated as a member of the CHM's Mesa Directiva but a tacit truce was established and the CHM and the CCC co-existed without further public displays of animosity.

During the latter half of the 1950s the *fiestas* still occurred, often with two celebrations, but their coverage in *El Excéntrico* dwindled. The individual squabble between Alvarado and *Comisión* members was miniscule when compared to the much larger issue of contention for the right to claim leadership over the ethnic Mexican population. Noticeably, the growing number of Mexican Americans challenged the authority of the *Comisión* to claim proprietorship over the celebration of Mexican culture.

The *Comisión* stubbornly resisted assistance from outside organizations, refusing them the opportunity to participate in the planning process and denying them sponsorship of the *fiestas patrias*—the refusal represented a transnational phenomenon of cultural protectionism. San Jose's *Comisión* spent several years, especially during the height of its quarrel with Alvarado, declaring itself the single and only organization permitted to sponsor the *fiestas*, continuously announcing itself as the “official” sponsor of these

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<sup>150</sup> Hank Paramo, “Strictly from Hunger,” *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1954; Frank Martinez, “Grandiosa Fiesta el 19 de Septiembre,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1954; Hank Paramo, “Strictly from Hunger,” *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1954.

celebrations because it was recognized by the Consul General, and therefore, by extension, the Mexican government. Because the *Comisión* viewed itself as an arm of the Mexican government it also believed itself responsible for maintaining a sense of authority and control over the celebrations to ensure they remained purely and authentically “Mexican.” This desire and need to protect *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) also stemmed from similar issues that emerged in Mexico after the Revolution over cultural authenticity and defining who or what was truly, naturally, and unmistakably “Mexican.” Between the 1940s and the 1960s Mexico was arguably at the apex of its cultural efflorescence with the production of art, music, and film that helped (re)create and promote Mexican culture; often, projects received federal funding if recognized by the Mexican government to sponsor productions of Mexican culture and other projects were targeted, attacked, or defunded if they undermined or threatened images, sounds, or understandings of *mexicanidad*. The *Comisión* attempted to keep these celebrations of Mexican culture pure and authentic (at least from a planning perspective as Mexican Americans attended and participated in the parades and banquets) and not have them tainted too much by Mexican Americans.

In the 1950s, nationalist organizations like the *Comisión* and the *Cámara* constituted an influential stronghold in the community. However, the growing Mexican American community began forming organizations centered around addressing issues from a position in San Jose, Santa Clara County, and the United States as citizens. Depending on local circumstances, other ethnic Mexican communities throughout the Southwest began forming organizations to support Mexican Americans around issues of

citizenship earlier in the twentieth century.<sup>151</sup> One such organization in San Jose was the Community Service Organization (CSO) that traced its origins in San Jose back to late 1952 and was crucial to the development of an infrastructure geared towards politicizing Mexican Americans in San Jose. The CSO established its second chapter in San Jose, five years after its founding in Los Angeles in 1947. In Los Angeles, the CSO successfully assisted in the election of Edward Roybal, the city's first Mexican American city council member in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although never explicitly stated, implications pointed to a desire of the CSO and San Jose Mexican Americans to replicate the empowerment and mobilization experienced in Southern California and elect a Mexican American to city council in the South Bay.<sup>152</sup> The first Advertising Chairman for the San Jose CSO, Joe Flores, announced in the early 1950s that the organization's goals included "improv[ing] the conditions under which [Spanish speakers and other minorities in San Jose] live and to secure their rights to equal opportunity in employment, housing, health services, education at the ballot box and before the law."<sup>153</sup> The largest concentration of ethnic Mexicans in Santa Clara County resided in the incorporated and unincorporated area of San Jose's developing Eastside. Unlike other organizations that chose to situate themselves downtown and concentrate their activities in the core, the CSO established its office and focused its energy in the eastern periphery.

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<sup>151</sup> George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Geraldo Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground*; Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (London: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>152</sup> Joe Flores, "Noticias del Community Service Organization," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953; No Author, "C.S.O. Escuela de Ingles por las noches," *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1953; Humberto Garcia, "EDITORIAL: Community Service Organization," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1952; Pitti, *Devil in the Silicon Valley*, 168-170.

<sup>153</sup> Joe Flores, "C.S.O. News," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1953.

Throughout the decade, and well into the 1970s, the CSO worked to improve the lives of ethnic Mexicans residing in San Jose's Eastside barrios and *colonia*. A major focal point of activity surrounded the enfranchisement of Mexican Americans in the area. The CSO sponsored English classes, citizenship classes, and voter registration drives.<sup>154</sup> The civic organization worked towards developing an infrastructure in San Jose like it did in Los Angeles to educate, inform, and mobilize the entire ethnic Mexican community; efforts began by "creating citizens," then registering and encouraging them to vote. In 1953, CSO correspondent for *El Excéntrico*, Joe Flores, provided an enthusiastic and informative article on recent organization activities. He announced the registration of 4,000 new Mexican American voters (brining the county total to 23,000), promoted a "Get Out and Vote Committee," headed by Cesar Chavez, and celebrated the first Mexican American Deputy registrars in Santa Clara County, Viola Cadena, Jesse de la O., Lena Manriquez, and Herman Gallegos.<sup>155</sup> By promoting English to Spanish speakers, encouraging them to become citizens, and registering them to vote throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, the CSO helped create the foundation of a political infrastructure—one that would become essential to the rise of a Mexican American leadership in the decades that followed, as we shall see later in this dissertation.

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<sup>154</sup> "C.S.O. Escuela de Ingles por las noches," *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1953; "C.S.O. announces NIGHT CLASSES in Citizenship, English & Driving," *El Excéntrico*, June 5, 1959; "Community Service Organization," *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1954; Juan Marcoida, "Mensaje del Community Service Organization," *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1954; Consuelo Granada, "Obtiene Ciudadania," *El Excéntrico*, October 20, 1954; Jose H. Moreno, "Reportaje del C.S.O.," *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1954.

<sup>155</sup> Joe Flores, "C.S.O. News," *El Excéntrico*, August 20, 1953.

## Conclusion

Ethnic Mexicans made tremendous gains during the 1950s while also notably improving San Jose. They contributed immensely to population growth in the city, helping to stabilize and offset the outmigration of ethnic whites near the city's core. Their presence in and near downtown added vibrancy to a growing city as many practiced and shared their culture through business ventures that catered to the Latino population of a growing urban environment but also drew a significant Anglo clientele. Through their economic activities, many Latinos in San Jose were able to buy homes, helping them establish a middle-class cohort who celebrated their culture but also looked to assimilate and acculturate to U.S. society. Their work as business owners, store clerks and managers, and salespeople made them recognizable to not only Latinos in the city but to the larger white population as well. As home-owning, middle-class business owners, ethnic Mexicans sought to personify the American Dream and earned respect from their community. Some gained enough notoriety and popularity within the community that helped establish them as leaders and people of influence who utilized their status to gain access to city officials. By making these political inroads, the ethnic Mexican leadership attempted to improve the conditions for the rest of their community.

At mid-century, many leaders in the Latino community were public figures within their own circles due to their work but also because of their affiliation with or membership in certain organizations. A few of these organizations included the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana*, the *Cámara de Comercio Mexicano*, the Civic Coordinating Committee, and *El Excéntrico*. Many members of the *Comisión* were also members of the *Cámara* and held strong loyalties to each other, primarily due to strong beliefs in and

ties to Mexican nationalism. However, in the early 1950s the *Comisión* abolished a rule requiring all members to be Mexican nationals, bringing on a struggle for authority in the community. The *Comisión* (Mexican nationals) began losing ground to a growing Mexican American population in the struggle to control, influence, and claim proprietorship of cultural celebrations and by extension the allegiance of the ethnic Mexican community. The Civic Coordinating Committee grew out of this emerging tension as a way for Mexican Americans to stake a claim and contribute to the (re)production of *Mexicanidad* through the *fiestas patrias*. As many founding members of the *Cámara* were also members of the *Comisión* it can be argued that its founding was an attempt by Mexican nationals to regain influence through their occupations as business owners and businessmen that helped them win political favor with local government officials (although many members of the *Cámara* were likely Mexican Americans as well). Humberto Garcia was a member of the *Comisión* but also owner of *El Excéntrico* that became one of the primary sources of information for the Latino community throughout the South Bay, in general, and San Jose, specifically. *El Excéntrico* as a business thrived as proven by its longevity and as an organization it provided a platform for Latino individuals, clubs, businesses, and civic organizations to express their varied viewpoints and document the history of the community.

The contentious attitudes that quickly emerged within the upper echelon of the ethnic Mexican community were documented in *El Excéntrico* and revealed deep-seated ideas of citizenship and how it related to control over Mexican cultural celebrations. At face value, the tensions between Latino leaders in San Jose appear personal and frivolous but actually manifested developing expressions of *mexicanidad* that were not owned or

controlled by the Mexican government, its officials, or its citizens; Mexican Americans also played a role in producing and reproducing *mexicanidad*. As citizens of the United States, the growing number of Mexican Americans in San Jose during the late 1950s and early 1960s celebrated their parents' and grandparents' culture while simultaneously experiencing life in the U.S. as a racialized minority. They lived a precarious and ambiguous reality where many celebrated both the *fiestas patrias* and the Fourth of July; many spoke Spanish, English, or a combination of the two. Mexican Americans in San Jose, and elsewhere in the United States, were also cultural citizens of Mexico who consciously and subconsciously promoted Mexican culture on a daily basis but did not always receive the full benefits guaranteed to them by their home country despite their efforts to become part of the American fabric. Perhaps more than any other decade, the 1960s would highlight the experiences of ethnic Mexicans as they struggled to maintain their culture while fighting for recognition and acceptance in U.S. society.



### **Chapter 3: Continued Growth and Emerging Tensions: A Segregated Eastside and Shifts in Latino Activism in San Jose, 1960-1968**

“Every town, city, and metropolis in our country has a distinctive personality, a spirit, a way of life all its own,” wrote Dave Sierra in early 1960. “Cities are very much like people,” he continued, “each behaving different, dressing in a different manner, and thinking unlike any other.” He then listed fourteen other cities across the state and country, providing a short blurb that captured what he believed to be the essence of each municipality. San Diego, personified a money-spending, booze-drinking sailor; Oakland was a young adolescent in his brother’s shadow; and San Francisco represented a well-dressed, cultured businessman. He also went on to describe Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City before offering a two-page description of San Jose.<sup>156</sup> Sierra recognized the growth and maturation San Jose had achieved by 1960 and explicitly placed the city in a context with other major cities in the region, state, and country to celebrate his hometown’s growing prominence. In his two-page homage to San Jose, Sierra included many places and people he believed characterized the growing urban center. But he also omitted key or recognizable features, including massive Mexican cultural celebrations—the *fiestas patrias*—and a growing Mexican American political consciousness that contributed to organizing efforts around elections.

Nationalist organizations like the Comisión Honorífica Mexicana began losing influence within the community with the emergence of the Mexican American and Chicano generations in San Jose. While nationalist, Mexican American, and Chicano organizations frequently appeared oppositional and antagonistic towards one another,

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<sup>156</sup> Dave Sierra, “This is San Jose,” *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1960.

they all sought to keep the best interests of their community in mind. Several civic-oriented groups continued to squabble over the *fiestas patrias* into the 1960s as a way to gain legitimacy and supremacy within the Latino community while also attempting to make political inroads with city government. The public display of Mexican culture during the *fiestas patrias*, coupled with the large crowds the celebrations attracted to San Jose, brought attention to ethnic Mexicans' cultural pride. The manifestation of cultural pride demonstrated the transnational character of the community's population in and around the city in a very public way. Through the *fiestas patrias*, these organizations attracted ethnic Mexicans to San Jose from Santa Clara County and beyond, deploying their cultural duality to gain political influence. By bringing large numbers of Spanish-speakers to the South Bay's largest city, ethnic Mexicans shed light on their voting potential and invited local, state, national, and international government officials to the celebrations. By utilizing public space and inviting an array of politicians, these festivities continued to serve as a conventional avenue for ethnic Mexicans to claim political authority in the city. This chapter will provide an examination of the *fiesta* parades and banquets to discuss how they served social, cultural, and political functions.

Although ethnic Mexicans continued to deploy the *fiestas* as a way to gain access to local politicians, by the 1960s the strategy was predictable and had reached its pinnacle for success. Despite their political gains during the 1950s it was apparent that the community desperately needed and was willing to work for greater political participation and representation. "Among California cities with a concentration of Mexican-Americans," wrote *El Excéntrico* contributor Robert Rodriguez, "San Jose stands

majestically as a city where Mexican-Americans are a political non entity.”<sup>157</sup> Rodriguez made these comments in 1964, expressing his frustration with the lack of political participation and representation of Mexican Americans in local government. He challenged his readers to identify and name the leadership of the city’s largest minority group, listing numerous organizations and individuals, objecting that simply too many “leaders” existed in the community and not enough progress or action was taking place.

Rodriguez’ frustrations highlight the diversity and fractures within a community where too many disparate opinions and positions existed, hindering ethnic Mexicans from coalescing to achieve common goals. In fact, Rodriguez went on to declare, “[t]here is nothing that resembles anything of a Mexican-American power structure.”<sup>158</sup> In a somewhat contradictory manner he described a unity within the community and attributed community failures to a lack of effort in bringing different people and organizations together. “We may differ but that does not mean that we are not united,” he wrote in a slightly equivocal statement. “There is much unity in our community now. If there is no unity for political recognition of the Mexican American it may be simply that we have never tried to get together a good cross section of our community. The members of organizations that have an interest in our political betterment should be brought together.”<sup>159</sup> These comments exemplified many challenges facing the growing Mexican American community of San Jose during the 1960s.

First, the issues facing the Spanish-speaking community were less Latino problems and ever more concerns pertaining specifically to Mexican Americans.

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<sup>157</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews; Who and Where is the Power?” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1964.

<sup>158</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews; Who and Where is the Power?” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1964.

<sup>159</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews; Who and Where is the Power?” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1964.

Immigrants, primarily from Mexico, continued to make their way to the South Bay but it was their children, the children of older immigrants, and second-generation Mexican Americans who most increased the region's ethnic Mexican population. The influx of Mexican Americans made the city more "Mexican" and less "Latino" than other cities with increasing Spanish-speaking populations in California like San Francisco and Los Angeles, where more diverse Latino populations lived. Hence, the major political issues facing the minority community in San Jose that emerged from the 1960s were those that impacted Mexican Americans. Second, it became more apparent over the decade that Mexican Americans were far from being a monolithic community. They all shared a connection to a motherland south of the border and came together for social-cultural events that continued to demonstrate their transnational activities and identities.

However, the diversity of the community in terms of generation, socioeconomic status, and geographic location in the city combined with the large number of local charismatic personalities coalesced to create a situation in which there were perhaps too many organizations that ultimately failed to unite San Jose's Mexican Americans politically.

The center of ethnic Mexican life in the South Bay continued to thrive in downtown San Jose. The *fiestas patrias* persisted as major annual cultural events. The grand spectacle of *mexicanidad* that was performed during the *fiestas patrias* attracted ethnic Mexicans to the city's downtown from within and beyond the South Bay, allowing them to claim the space as theirs—thus openly and unapologetically making downtown a transnational space that reproduced *mexicanidad* and contributed to the ever-expanding *Mexico de afuera*. While the recreation of culture made downtown an ethnic-Mexican

space, it simultaneously made the space transnational through the expressions of *mexicanidad* that brought Mexico to the city.

The cultural politics practiced by ethnic Mexicans in San Jose can be placed in a larger urban context that moves beyond the scope of the United States. Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz has called on historians of cities to consider “an emergent pan-American urban system” when discussing urban America during the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>160</sup> He stresses the need to consider how Latino *immigrants*—increasingly coming to the United States from cities in Latin America during the postwar period—shaped urban landscapes through their local and translocal social, cultural, and economic contributions throughout the hemisphere.<sup>161</sup> However, I believe this is only part of the story when discussing the Latinization of U.S. cities. The contributions of U.S.-born Latinos to urbanism in the United States—secondary to their immigrant parents and other *migrantes*—must also be taken under consideration.

The hybrid cultural practices of U.S.-born Latinos played a more important role than Sandoval-Strausz allows in the growth of this pan-American urban system. U.S.-born Mexican Americans, notwithstanding their birthright citizenship, were major contributors to the phenomenon of *Mexico de afuera* through their practices of cultural nationalism. This made U.S. cities, primarily in the Southwest, more “Mexican” and part of the transnational urban system. Expressions and celebrations of *mexicanidad* during the *fiestas patrias* were one way in which San Jose was “Mexicanized” by a growing

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<sup>160</sup> Sandoval-Strausz, “Latino Landscapes,” 826; See also: Sarah Lynn Lopez, *The Remittance Landscape: Spaces of Migration in Rural Mexico and Urban USA* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Sandoval-Strausz, “Latino Landscapes,” 826-829. For more information on Latino immigrants impacting urban life in the United States see: Llana Barber, *Latino City*; Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; *Mexican New York*(full); Christian Zolinski, *Mexican Street Vendors* (full)

number of U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Similar cases of cultural politics contributing to the “Mexicanization” or “Latinization” of cities in the United States by Latino-descendant citizens can be found in places like Tucson, El Paso, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and New York.<sup>162</sup>

In the realm of domestic political activism, the emergence of a Mexican-American political identity took hold at different times in different places, as scholars including George Sánchez, Benjamin Johnson, and Eduardo Contreras have shown.<sup>163</sup> In San Jose, the intra-ethnic transition of political influence—from Mexican nationals to Mexican Americans—corresponded to the increased ability and willingness of Mexican migrants and their children to establish a more permanent presence in the United States. The transition was completed during the 1960s, again reflecting a process that occurred much earlier in other ethnic Mexican cities throughout the Southwest. As ethnic Mexicans continued populating the San Jose throughout the 1960s, they solidified their residency in the city. After establishing more permanent roots, the next step in community development was to plan, organize, and work towards political representation. This chapter explains how San Josean Mexican Americans and Chicanos sought civic equality and political influence, the same goals as other Latino activists in cities like Chicago, San Antonio, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Geraldo Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground*; Monica Perales, *Smeltertown*; George Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*; Jesse Hofnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*; Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*; Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City*; Tomás F. Summers Sandoval, *Latinos at the Golden Gate* (full).

<sup>163</sup> George Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*; Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City*; Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*.

<sup>164</sup> Johanna Fernández, *The Young Lords*; David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*; George Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*; Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!*; Jimmy Patiño, *Raza Sí, Migra No*; Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City*; Tomás F. Summers Sandoval, *Latinos at the Golden Gate*.

## Impacts of Continued Growth, El Ganso, and the Eastside

The South Bay region as a whole continued to increase its population between 1960 and 1970 at an impressive rate. The number of people living in Santa Clara County grew by a total of 422,399, reflecting 66% growth within the decade. Although white residents still made up the majority of the region, accounting for over 90% of the population, the South Bay's minorities played a crucial role in the growth. The white population with Spanish surnames, in particular, rose astoundingly during the 1960s. Spanish-surnamed people increased from 77,755 to 186,525, swelling just under 109,000 people and making up 25% of the county's total growth. This surge of people boosted the number of Spanish-surnamed residents from 12% to 18% of the county's aggregate population. Although Black people raised their total numbers by almost 14,000 people (4,178 to 18,090), marking a growth rate of 333%, they only represented 1.7% of the county's total inhabitants. Throughout the decade racial groups categorized as "Other" increased by 26,223 people (marking a 63% growth rate).<sup>165</sup> The increase in total population in Santa Clara County, and especially by minority groups, highlighted the type of growth experienced in the Sunbelt during the 1960s.<sup>166</sup> Reflecting Sunbelt

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<sup>165</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962. San Jose: Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts:1960; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962. San Jose: Table P-5. General Characteristics of the White Population with Spanish Surname, for Census Tracts with 400 or More Such Persons: 1960; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*, Final Report PH(1)-190 San Jose, Calif. SMA, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972. Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population: 1970; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*, Final Report PH(1)-190 San Jose, Calif. SMA, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972. Table P-7. General and Social Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language or Spanish Surname: 1970.

<sup>166</sup> Bradley R. Rice and Richard M. Bernard, "Introduction" in *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II*, ed. Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 6-12.

characteristics, the South Bay emerged as a destination for settlement by diverse populations.

The region's principal city, San Jose, provides an even more clear picture of how a particular Sunbelt city expanded as a whole and how its minority populations contributed to that growth as well. The city itself augmented by 241,583 people (204,196 to 445,779) at a rate of 118%, contributing to nearly 60% of the county's growth. As part of the "white" community, the Spanish-speaking people made the most visible and impactful demographic contribution to the South Bay's urban center. San Jose's Spanish-surname residents jumped by 69,041 people (28,596 to 97,637) at a 241% growth rate and was home to over two-thirds (68%) of the county's Latino community. The city's surge in Spanish-surnamed people alone made up over one quarter (29%) of its expanding population throughout the 1960s. Remarkably, the 97,637 Latinos residing in San Jose outnumbered the total population of Sunnyvale, the county's second-most populated city. By 1970, San Jose's Spanish-speaking urbanites of more than doubled their Latino counterparts residing in the other six surveyed cities in Santa Clara County combined.<sup>167</sup> As the most-populated municipality in the county, housing the largest

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<sup>167</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962. San Jose: Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts:1960; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-38. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962. San Jose: Table P-5. General Characteristics of the White Population with Spanish Surname, for Census Tracts with 400 or More Such Persons: 1960; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*, Final Report PH(1)-190 San Jose, Calif. SMA, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972. Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population: 1970; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*, Final Report PH(1)-190 San Jose, Calif. SMA, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972. Table P-7. General and Social Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language or Spanish Surname: 1970.



number of Latinos, San Jose continued to serve as the center for social, cultural, and political activity for Latinos in the South Bay.

San Jose was also home to the largest number of Black people in the county with a population of 10,955. The city's Black population, in fact, totaled more than the additional 7,135 Black residents living within the incorporated territory of the South Bay's remaining six municipalities (5,074) and unincorporated county land (2,088) combined. Despite housing the largest number of Black people in the county, San Jose ranked only third in percentage of Black residents (2.5%) behind newly incorporated Milpitas (5.2%) and the innovative Palo Alto (2.6%).<sup>168</sup> The growth rate of Black urbanites in San Jose surpassed that of the county, more than quintupling from 1,955 to 10,955 between 1960 and 1970. Black transplants migrated to Santa Clara County and San Jose just like hundreds of thousands of other people.

Examining the demographic changes at the county and city levels during the 1960s reveals an intriguing story of neighborhood growth and sustainability, especially in areas highly populated by ethnic Mexicans. More specifically, analysis of El Ganso and the Eastside paints a clear picture of the ways Latinos continued to concentrate and populate (sub)urban spaces where community was growing and well-established. The urban barrio of El Ganso and the "suburban" *colonia* of the Eastside swelled in population throughout the 1960s like the city and county but with a more obvious uptick

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<sup>168</sup> Milpitas bordered San Jose to the northeast, adjacent to San Jose's Eastside where a significant concentration of the city's Black population lived. The city gained favor with the Ford Motor Company and became home to a new assembly plant after resisting annexation to San Jose and successfully incorporating in the early 1950s. Palo Alto is located about twenty miles northwest from the center of San Jose and is the farthest city north in Santa Clara County before entering San Mateo County. Bordering Palo Alto and Santa Clara County is East Palo Alto, a community that was the most densely Black-populated locality in both counties during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. East Palo Alto was always its own entity and an unincorporated settlement of San Mateo County until 1983. In 1990, 43% of its population was Black. In 2019, about 65% of East Palo Alto was Latino.

in in Latino inhabitants. El Ganso only increased by 831 people, expanding from 23,766 to 24,597 people. But the Spanish-surnamed residents of the neighborhood rose by 3,169 people, signifying an increase in Latinos from 29% to 47% of the area's population.<sup>169</sup> The movement of white residents away from San Jose's urban core throughout the 1960s resembled the white flight occurring across the country in which white populations migrated away from cities to suburbs.

In major cities across the United States white flight occurred, among other factors, as a response to Black migrants moving into new neighborhoods and resulted in overall city depopulation. In San Jose, however, white people moved away from an increasingly Latino population while the new minority helped increase and sustain the population in the urban core. Similar to other Sunbelt cities, and differing from urban places in the Rustbelt, San Jose grew horizontally in a somewhat haphazard way referred to as sprawl. San Jose's urban sprawl gave the city suburban qualities and white residents who left the core frequently settled in San Jose's newly annexed and developing suburban peripheries. White people who left San Jose's core, or the city altogether, along with those attracted to the South Bay from elsewhere, also settled in San Jose's neighboring and burgeoning suburbs like Santa Clara, Cupertino, Mountain View, Saratoga, Milpitas ,and Campbell to name a few.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> These figures were tabulated using the following tables from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960 and Table P-5. General Characteristics of the White Population with Spanish Surname, for Census Tracts with 400 or More Such Persons:1960. *U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-38.* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962; Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population and Table P-7. General and Social Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language or Spanish Surname: 1970. *U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Populations and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-190* San Jose, Calif. SMSA. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972.

<sup>170</sup> Aaron Cavin argues in his dissertation that white people leaving the city should not be viewed so much as white flight as white opportunity. He argues that reasons for leaving the core for the city's peripheries

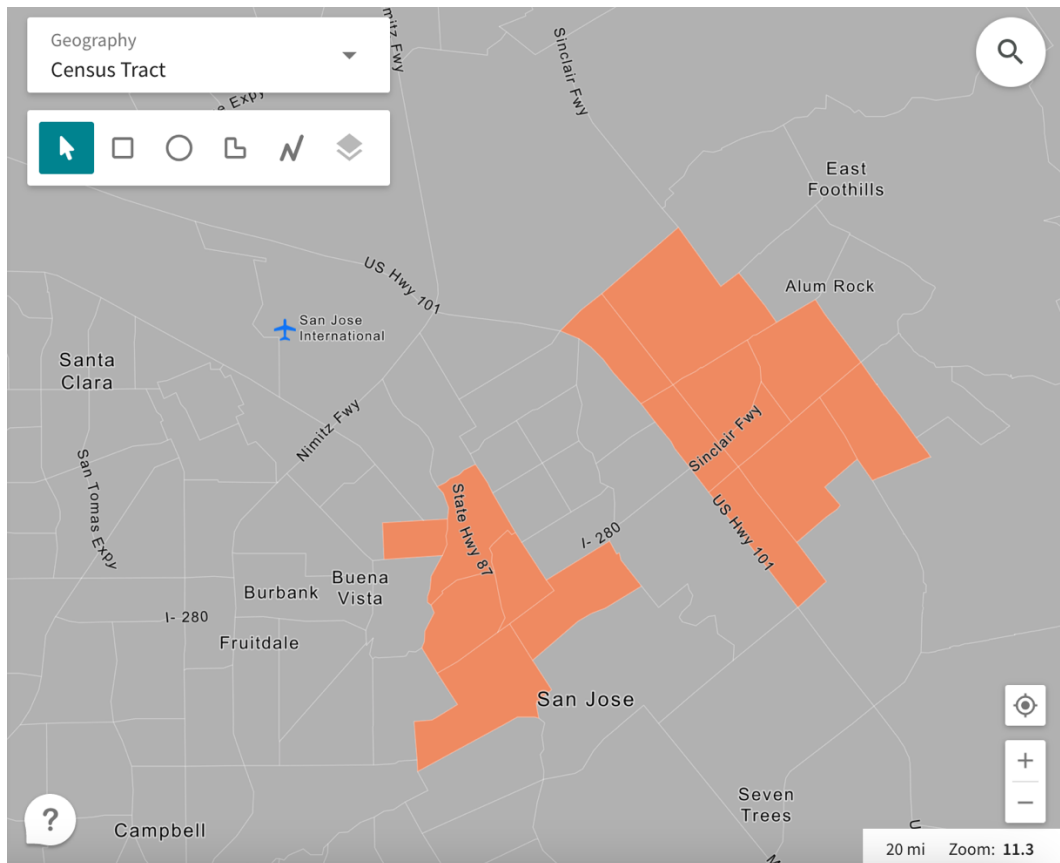
Tracing the change over time in the Eastside proves more difficult than El Ganso from 1960 to 1970 due to continued annexations and development that expanded the area's geography. Incorporating peripheral communities and barrios resulted in instant populating and spatial augmentation. Despite this discrepancy, the proportion of Latinos in the Eastside and its significance to San Jose and Santa Clara County is certainly worth examination. San Jose's Eastside more than doubled in population as it added 23,020 people, almost the equivalent of the entire population of El Ganso. Latinos made up nearly seventy-five percent of that growth, increasing by 16,632 people (from 4,642 to 21,274). Despite the rapid growth, however, it bears reiteration that hundreds (if not thousands) of these people most likely already lived in the Eastside but were not previously counted as part of the city because their homes were located in unincorporated county land. Nevertheless, the area swelled in population by 119% and Spanish-surname people surged by 358%, making up half of Eastside residents. The region was unequivocally home to the city and county's largest concentration of Latinos. As such, attention by city officials and Latino political activity slowly began to move away from San Jose's urban core and more towards the underdeveloped and newly annexed Eastside barrios.<sup>171</sup>

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had more to do with the "political economy of metropolitan development, which drew white residents to suburban areas regardless of urban racial patterns" (23) and were not equivalent to the reasons whites left cities like Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit, etc. While he highlights the "suburban" spaces occupied by minority groups like ethnic Mexicans and Japanese in San Jose he neglects to discuss their presence in the core. I believe the reality was more nuanced and, most likely, a combination of white flight from an increasing number of Latinos and urban problems in the core combined with the allure and opportunity to live in suburban spaces. Aaron Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Race and Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley," Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan (2012), 21-23.

<sup>171</sup> These figures were tabulated using the following tables from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960 and Table P-5. General Characteristics of the White Population with Spanish Surname, for Census Tracts with 400 or More Such Persons: 1960. *U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-38.* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1962; Table P-1. General Characteristics of the Population and Table P-7. General and Social Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language or

Map 5



Description: These are the census tracts comprising El Ganso (center) and the Eastside (right) in 1970.  
Source: Social Explorer, December 10, 2020.

By 1960, after ten years of Hamann's leadership, at least three characteristics of his administration became evident for the foreseeable future. First, San Jose would maintain its growth and continue to house the largest population in the county. Second, as home to the largest population in the county, the city would also be home to the largest number of minorities, especially Latinos. And third, San Jose would fight to retain its place as the urban center in Santa Clara County. While white residents were responsible for the majority of the South Bay's growth, the influx of minority groups and their

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Spanish Surname: 1970. *U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Populations and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC(1)-190 San Jose, Calif. SMSA. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1972.

populations to the region—Latinos in particular—clearly made significant contributions to the county’s maturation.

Notwithstanding their increased presence, however, Latinos still lacked representation in city and county governments. As a result, early on, county and municipal leadership often overlooked, failed to consider, or ignored the ways their planning decisions regarding land usage, zoning, sanitation, and public services in the region impacted Latino communities. City leaders of San Jose did what they could to expand the municipality’s territory and build housing for its residents but either lacked the foresight to consider or simply ignored the needs of the region’s largest minority group.

To address the needs of its citizenry, the City Manager’s Office published a report during the late 1950s that laid out a general plan for growth and the manner in which it would be executed and sustained financially. The study provided several maps, including one entitled “Planning Areas for Future Growth” that projected the city’s geographic growth and divided the area into districts. Each district would be responsible for creating its own plan for development, especially when mapping out streets and thoroughfares. These districts were large and covered massive areas of land not yet under San Jose’s control but the idea was to think big and avoid problems that would certainly come with only planning for smaller areas already existing as part of the city proper. However, planning was slow and infrastructure development and improvements, especially in the ethnic Mexican Eastside, arrived with minimal haste. Dave Sierra, Eastside resident and *El Excéntrico* columnist, once asked, “[w]hen do you get water” in your home?<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Dave Sierra, *El Excéntrico*, August 20, 1961.

Paying for the infrastructure that accompanied annexation and development would not be cheap and the disposition of the city manager was to implement “a specific capital improvement program...carefully related to the ultimate needs of San Jose and its metropolitan area.”<sup>173</sup> The strategy deployed by Hamann and the city to finance its growth (without increasing the tax rate) was through issuing bonds; ethnic Mexicans contributed to the strategy by encouraging one another to support bonds. In 1961, one community member commented that “bond proposals will mean children’s play areas, softball and baseball diamonds, swimming pools and picnic areas, and a \$225,000 Community Center building for general recreational activities for the entire community.” He finished by stating, “IT IS BETTER TO BUILD PLAYGROUNDS TODAY THAN HAVE TO BUILD PRISONS TOMORROW [emphasis in original].”<sup>174</sup> Hamann argued that a “pay-as-you-go” strategy would be more costly in the long term than borrowing money to pay for development and improvements quicker and at a lower cost. Hamann and other city officials lobbied investors on the East Coast for their capital and special bond elections were held several times during his tenure that financed San Jose’s growth.<sup>175</sup>

The failure of city government to properly invest in and develop Latino neighborhoods in El Ganso and the Eastside manifested itself in San Jose’s bid and approval for federal funding for local improvements in the late 1960s. At the tail end of the decade, President Lydon B. Johnson launched the Model Cities Program under the

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<sup>173</sup> “San Jose Shapes Its Future,” 5; No Author, Council Incumbents to Run Again, *San Jose Mercury News*, January 15, 1958;

<sup>174</sup> Dave E. Sierra, “San Joaquin: ‘Synonymous with Success...,’” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1961.[Emphasis in original]

<sup>175</sup> “San Jose Shapes Its Future,” 6, 39; Philip J. Troustine and Terry Christensen, *Movers and Shakers: The Study of Community Power* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 95-98; Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream*, 97-102.

auspices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1968 San Jose applied for monies through the Model Cities Program and out of four assembly districts that eventually received funding from the federal program by 1970 (Mayfair, Tropicana, Olinder, and Gardner), all four were home to predominantly ethnic Mexicans near downtown and the Eastside.<sup>176</sup>

In fact, prior to the city's application, Mexican American community members documented some of the issues plaguing their neighborhoods. Juan de Heras noted how San Jose's tremendous and continued expansion since the installment of Anthony Hamann as city manager in 1950 often overlooked the "explosive growth of our school children population."<sup>177</sup> He went on to highlight how the growth of the child population "created [a] gigantic problem of insufficient school houses, personnel and equipment."<sup>178</sup> When campaigning for city council in 1965, John Castro promised to address, among other issues, displacement (due to freeway construction), improve the city's Human Relations Commission, and create a civilian police review board. In that same year, Ron Valdez also promised to "meet greater demands for school, housing due to freeway displacement" and to "improve San Jose's downtown image and making it once again the

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<sup>176</sup> Rudy Belloumini, "Critica Social," *El Excéntrico*, July 5, 1970. The article mentions residents of the four assembly districts would be "proud in the delegates they voted to represent them." Belloumini continues by stating that the majority of the delegates were Mexican American. The Mayfair and Tropicana districts (or neighborhoods) are/were in the heart of the Eastside with the major intersections at King and San Antonio, and King and Story, respectively. Gardner is/was located in the heart of what I have labeled El Ganso with the major intersection at Bird Avenue and Virginia. The Olinder district/neighborhood rests just west of the Eastside (a few blocks west of Highway 101) and East of El Ganso with the major intersection at Santa Clara Street and 21<sup>st</sup> Street. The 1968 application only discusses conditions in the Mayfair neighborhood. City of San Jose, City Manager's Office, *San Jose Model Cities Program Application*, 1968, April 6, 1968.

<sup>177</sup> Dr. Juan de Heras D.C., "Chairman Mexican-American Citizens Committee of San Jose," *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1964.

<sup>178</sup> Dr. Juan de Heras D.C., "Chairman Mexican-American Citizens Committee of San Jose," *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1964.

center of activity.”<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, in 1967 the San Jose Human Relations Commission produced a documentary that “deals with human relations problems in our city [San Jose] and a good deal of the film deals with the Mexican American.”<sup>180</sup>

While the city continued to grow and appeared to be thriving, it also faced similar problems of urban decline as the country’s largest cities: underfunding of schools, downtown disinvestment, and community displacement. While these issues affected cities as a whole, they predominantly impacted minority communities. In San Jose, ethnic Mexicans were the minority at the center of racial issues, and the negative impacts of urban decline that affected Black urbanites across the country were characteristic in the experiences of Latino San Joseans. In other major cities throughout the United States, the story of the urban crisis centers around Black communities and their displacement, lack of funding for schools, insufficient and untenable housing, and police brutality, etc. The paradoxical growth of San Jose and the simultaneous decline of its downtown demonstrates how sprawl and suburbanization of a city helped hide the city’s neglect of their largest ethnoracial minority, ethnic Mexicans.

These larger political conversations regarding the planning, development, and growth of Santa Clara County and San Jose had real impacts on people and their communities. With the massive growth, plans were made but not always executed to their greatest potential and fell short of addressing the needs of the people, in particular, Latinos. Sometimes plans reflected shortsightedness or fell victim to tunnel vision,

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<sup>179</sup> “San Jose has long needed a Mexican-American on the City Council: VOTE NEXT TUESDAY, APRIL 13,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1965; Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 165- 172; Aaron Cavin, “The Borders of Citizenship,” 315-330, 523.

<sup>180</sup> Bob Rodriguez, “The Bob Rodriguez Report: ‘The Many Faces of a City,’” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1967.



especially when (not) considering minority populations and their communities. As demographic changes impacted the way city and county officials attempted to govern, ethnic Mexicans continued to build community.

### **Public Space, Culture, and Politics in San Jose**

The Comisión Honorífica Mexicana (CHM) in San Jose continued to be one of the most influential organizations in the ethnic Mexican community through the 1960s. It spread and promoted the nationalist notion of *mexicanidad* by way of sponsoring the *fiestas patrias*. It should be understood, however, that despite celebrating commemorative days in Mexican history, the public display of Mexican traditions and the outpouring of people to these events was celebratory *and* political. These events provided Mexican Americans in San Jose with short-term political opportunities for local politicians to recognize them, and, in turn, for politicians to mingle with voters. Paradoxically, the celebration of Mexican nationalism during these extremely public social-cultural events—sponsored by a Mexican nationalist organization—served as a strategy for American citizens of Mexican origin to claim space downtown as their own and use the events as a gateway to prompt city officials to acknowledge, recognize, and respect their existence in the city and county. The manner in which Mexican Americans politicized these functions and the reasoning behind the politicization were twofold. First, ethnic Mexicans took over public space in the urban core of not only the city but the county as well, staking claim to public spaces and inserting themselves into the public eye as part of the San Jose and South Bay community at large. Second, with the large number of participants and spectators, ethnic Mexicans ensured local bureaucrats could

not ignore them—this was how U.S. citizens used Mexican nationalist celebrations to make political inroads. The *fiestas patrias* were magnanimous displays of *mexicanidad* that ethnic Mexicans strategically employed as a means to ensure they were not forgotten or disregarded.

These celebrations typically consisted of two parts: a parade downtown followed by a banquet. During the parade it was common to see cars converted into floats with ethnic Mexicans promoting their businesses, mariachis performing as they promenaded down the avenue, and spectators watching with anticipation for the *reina* to make her appearance. For months, young women from San Jose and nearby cities gathered votes and sponsorship to be named the *reina* and become the center of attention during the parade and banquet that followed. During the 1966 Cinco de Mayo *fiesta*, the *reina* was Maria Primera, who gathered 30,673 votes; the runner up, Maria Cristina Lucero, gathered 21,854 votes. The *reina* and her court that year were only comprised of only four women, though in previous and later years the court was comprised of up to six.<sup>181</sup>

As the procession commenced, Latinos filled the streets, coming from around the neighborhood, city, county, and as far away as San Francisco and Watsonville (both roughly forty miles away from San Jose). The Mexican flag was raised by a color guard, *baile folclórico* dancers performed, and horses mounted by men and women dressed as *charros* made their way across downtown. In 1968, a recently formed social group for young women, Las Coronelas, participated in the parade by promenading down Santa Clara Street mounted on horses; a photo taken of the group shows at least seven women dressed in *trajes de charro* with each young woman sitting upon a horse.<sup>182</sup> During the

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<sup>181</sup> “Viva Mexico! Programa Literario Musical,” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1966.

<sup>182</sup> Marce Mora, “Club ‘Las Coronelas,’” *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1968.

1950s, organizations like the Mexican Legion from San Francisco participated and carried the Mexican flag down Santa Clara Street and by the 1960s, groups like the American G.I. Forum participated and served as color guards for the U.S. flag.<sup>183</sup>

Interestingly, these visual displays of an old rustic Mexico were found side-by-side with very modern displays of U.S. consumer culture like cars and floats. Men would sit in convertibles with the top down, wearing sunglasses, and in suits while accompanied by women in traditional dresses. And women also rode with other women in their cars displaying their chicness with modern dresses, outfits, and sunglasses. Over the years, people used the *fiestas* as opportunities to promote and advertise their businesses. Store owners and office employees decorated cars and displayed signs for establishments like the KAZA radio station, House of Values Fine Cars, Bazar Jewelry Store, and the Furniture Discount House, to name just a few.<sup>184</sup>

Often, these celebrations garnered a lot of attention from public figures as well. Over the years government officials—local, state, and federal—were frequently photographed next to Mexican consuls and leaders in Santa Clara County’s ethnic Mexican community. During the Mexican Independence Day celebrations in 1969, President Nixon sent Martin G. Castillo and Henry Quevedo, members of the President’s Inter Agency of Mexican American Affairs, to represent him during the *fiesta* celebrations—they were greeted at the San Jose airport with Mariachis and members of the San Jose CHM.<sup>185</sup> In the late 1960s San Jose’s Mayor Ron James was frequently

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<sup>183</sup> Photo, “LA LEGION DE HONOR MEXICANA,” *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1953; No Author, “100 Units Enter Mexican Parade in S.J.—Any More?” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1962; No Author, “Mexican Parade Plans Set,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 17, 1962.

<sup>184</sup> Photos, *El Excéntrico*, October 5, 1968; Photos, *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1969.

<sup>185</sup> “Martin G. Castillo and Henry Quevedo-President Nixon’s representatives arrive in San Jose for 16th of September Celebration,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1969.

photographed at the parades and banquets wearing a mariachi hat. Perhaps more than any other city official until that time, James was the most responsive to legitimizing and giving acknowledgement to the significance of the ethnic Mexican community of San Jose. On August 17, 1967, he made a formal written proclamation that September 10-17 be recognized as “Mexican Week.” On official city letter head and seal, the proclamation read:

WHEREAS, Over the years, strong bonds of friendship have developed between the people of Mexico and the United States, and, WHEREAS, San Jose, California, is proud of the fact that fifteen percent of our population is of Mexican descent, and, WHEREAS, These Mexican-American citizens have contributed greatly to cultural enrichment of our history and the current progress of our City; NOW, THEREFORE, I, Ronald R. James, Mayor of the City of San Jose, California, do hereby declare the Week of September 10-17, 1967, as ‘MEXICAN WEEK’ AND salute all Mexican-Americans as they celebrate their Mexican Independence Day.<sup>186</sup>

Mayor James continued to issue this proclamation for the rest of his tenure, and in 1969, former Mexican President Miguel Aleman visited San Jose and exchanged flags with James during Mexican Week as part of the *fiestas*.<sup>187</sup> Certainly, gaining this special recognition meant a great deal to ethnic Mexicans in the community—but it also demonstrated how maintaining their transnational ties and claiming public space appealed to them as a political tool that helped earn them the honor of a Mexican Week. These

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<sup>186</sup> Ronald R. James “City of San Jose, California: Proclamation,” reprinted in *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1967.

<sup>187</sup> Richard Diaz, “El Fotografo de Las Estrellas,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1969.

celebrations expressed a transnational sense of culture through not only the social-cultural activities but also through formal and informal recognition of the events by both U.S. and Mexican government officials.

Although the parade drew the most attention, the banquets following the afternoon activities were also well attended by public figures and ethnic Mexicans eager to keep the festivities going. The Civic Auditorium in downtown opened in 1936 and, since at least 1950, served as the venue for the CHM-sponsored banquet. In addition to the streets of downtown, especially the main thoroughfare (Santa Clara Street), the Civic Auditorium was also synonymous with the *fiestas patrias*. Weeks in advance, organizers promoted the *fiesta* parades and invited the public to the Civic Auditorium to continue the celebrations in a more formal setting. The banquet programs presented a schedule for the evening that always began with the national anthems and presentation of both the United States and Mexican flags. Seeing the *bandera mexicana* (Mexican flag) and hearing the *Himno Nacional de Mexico* (Mexican national anthem) highlighted the Mexican nationalist tone of the evening, while seeing the U.S. flag and hearing the Star Spangled Banner paid respect to the country where most banquet guests lived. Following the national anthems and presentation of the flags, it was also customary that the next agenda items were the presentation of guests of honor and the *reina* with her *Corte de Honor* (Honorary Court). After these presentations, a variety of Mexican-themed songs, dances, and other performances occurred; the evening concluded with a dance. These banquets, like the parades, reveal the continued practice of performing cultural traditions that promoted pride in having connections with Mexico; the Civic Auditorium was the brick and mortar location recognized as central to the celebrations. The *fiestas patrias*

converted both public and private spaces—areas where ethnic Mexicans lived, shopped, and played—into places where they displayed their cultural pride and border-spanning identities.

In the 1960s, as had been the case during the 1950s, the *fiestas patrias* highlighted struggles between the CHM and emerging Mexican American organizations to maintain and assert control over the celebrations. Competition to participate in the planning and to claim sponsorship over the *fiestas* reveals the importance and power of these events for ethnic Mexicans. As the Mexican American population continued to grow so did the number of organizations dedicated to helping them, and the CHM attempted to hold onto its dwindling power and influence as long as possible. As the quarrels between the CHM and other emerging Mexican American organizations and leaders continued into the 1960s, the squabbles were not as drawn out or publicized as they had been the previous decade. The growing *colonia* did not wish to relive the intra-ethnic battles of the past as people worked to move the community forward. The massive expansion of the Spanish-speaking community in the South Bay garnered the attention of the Mexican government, and a Mexican Consulate was established in San Jose in 1968—interestingly, the CHM continued to operate in San Jose and sponsor the *fiestas patrias* after the arrival of a formal consulate in the city.

Ethnic Mexicans carved out space for themselves in downtown San Jose by attending social-cultural events in the area. Particular venues, like the Civic Auditorium and Liberty Theater, proved especially receptive and friendly to Santa Clara County's largest minority group. These public venues assisted in creating transnational spaces downtown by promoting Mexican culture. In doing so, these venues were accepted by

community members as part of the community, and, as such, these locations were frequently utilized for planning and hosting public-service events, making them a bedrock of social, cultural, and civic life for ethnic Mexicans. In every-day leisure, shopping, and work activities, but especially through the *fiestas patrias*, ethnic Mexicans walked, socialized, and spoke Spanish—particularly when visiting a “Mexican” store—in San Jose’s business district, creating a sense of belonging that reflected both Mexican and American culture. These social-cultural place-making activities were *indirectly* political; by claiming space, especially in downtown, ethnic Mexicans established themselves as members of the larger San Jose community. Organizations, businesses, and individuals helped promote *mexicanidad* downtown that attracted ethnic Mexicans to the urban core, prompting city officials to take note. This strategy was not lost on community members; Dave Sierra called it, “Mexicanos using ties to local government officials to get things done.”<sup>188</sup>

### **Mexican American Political Organizing and Activity**

Although the strategy of indirect activism to make political inroads by claiming space and building relationships continued, Mexican Americans and their organizations quickly began taking more direct political action in Santa Clara County and San Jose. By 1960, Mexican American individuals and associations were more vocal and explicit about their political goals and activities intended to improve the lives of their ethnoracial compatriots in the city, county, state, and nation. Organizations led by Americans of Mexican descent diverged from past organizations like *mutualistas*, the CHM, and the

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<sup>188</sup> Dave Sierra, *El Excéntrico*, April 20, 1962; “Two Groups Back Hamann,” *San Jose Mercury News*, March 30, 1962; “Legion Sets Kids’ Party Saturday,” *San Jose Mercury News*, December 22, 1960;

MCC, which were founded to assist Mexican nationals (although they did help Mexican Americans as well) by highlighting their U.S. citizenship or status as “Americans” to ensure their concerns were addressed. Political activity and awareness accelerated due to the proliferation of Mexican American organizations and individuals who emphasized their rights and duties as U.S. citizens, calling for political participation and civic engagement. Throughout the 1960s, Mexican American individuals and groups attempted to effect change more directly—especially in electoral politics—by promoting the vote.

By the mid-1960s the CSO celebrated over ten years of work in San Jose aimed at improving the lives of Mexican Americans, and a new organization emerged to more explicitly increase political engagement in the *comunidad*.<sup>189</sup> In the previous decade, CSO members had helped Spanish-speaking immigrants earn their citizenship, hosted English classes, and sponsored registration drives. The CSO maintained a non-partisan and apolitical stance, simply encouraging civic engagement within the Latino community. In the 1960s, however, some organizations were more explicitly political in their objectives and looked to improve and influence elections. The Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) was a salient product of the 1960s; motivated by political ambitions, MAPA worked towards creating a local, state, and national Mexican American voting bloc.

Taking political engagement one step further, Mexican Americans in California formed MAPA in 1960. In a summary report on the purpose of MAPA, the organization’s state secretary, Juan D. Acevedo, reported that “150 of the most active Mexican-Americans throughout California met at Fresno in April of 1960 and decided that what

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<sup>189</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the CSO and its political activity in San Jose during the 1950s and 1960s see Stephen Pitti, *Devil in the Silicon Valley*, Chapter 4.



was needed was an organization that would be frankly Mexican-American and specifically and exclusively political.”<sup>190</sup> One of the primary delegates, lawyer and CSO member Jose Hector Moreno, lived in San Jose and served as the organization’s first Vice President. Promptly after the meeting in Fresno, Moreno wrote enthusiastically that “[f]or the first time in the history of California, an organization has been established that has its primary purpose the betterment of people of Mexican ancestry through political action.”<sup>191</sup> Although actions taken by the CSO were clearly political in nature, its central goal never prioritized electoral politics—MAPA was distinctly in the business of impacting elections. Moreno unequivocally reiterated the importance of electoral politics. “One of the first objectives of this new organization” wrote Moreno, “will be the election and appointment to public office of Mexican Americans and others sympathetic to their aims. It will also recommend increased activity and participation in all legal political parties, labor groups, and civic organization.”<sup>192</sup> When the delegates left Fresno in April 1960, it did not take long for participants to establish local chapters throughout California, and San Jose was no exception.

Running with the momentum from the convention, San Jose MAPA began a “Get Out and Vote” campaign and endorsed candidates for state and national elections. With advertisements taken out in *El Excéntrico*, MAPA recommended that San Joseans vote for John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson for the presidential ticket in 1960. On September 3 of that year, candidate Kennedy arrived in San Francisco and was greeted by a crowd

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<sup>190</sup> Juan D. Acevedo, “Mexican-American Political Association: How MAPA was Formed,”(Online Archive of California/UCLA Special Collections); Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 169-192; Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 194—1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 67-68,

<sup>191</sup> Jose H. Moreno, “MAPA a new force is born,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1960.

<sup>192</sup> Jose H. Moreno, “MAPA a new force is born,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1960.

that included many Mexican Americans as part of the “Viva Kennedy” campaign.

Among those were MAPA Vice President Jose H. Moreno and San Jose MAPA President Luis Hevia. At the reception, Hevia and California governor Edmund G. Brown stood on a podium alongside Kennedy in front of the crowd and presented the presidential candidate with a charro sombrero and a *zarape* as a way of showing the support of MAPA and the Mexican American community as a whole.<sup>193</sup>

During the 1960 election and throughout the 1960s, despite claiming non-partisanship and supporting *any* candidate who empathized with Mexican American concerns, MAPA San Jose exclusively endorsed Democratic candidates. In fact, an early MAPA endorsement printing read, “Vote Democratic for a Stronger America at Peace.”<sup>194</sup>

Following the 1962 gubernatorial election, San Jose’s MAPA President, Ignacio Galindo, thanked those who participated in the state-wide “Get Out and Vote” campaign and announced the organizations’ new focus on San Jose and Santa Clara County issues. Galindo declared that it was of “utmost importance that more Mexican-Americans participate in the civic activities of our city and county governments.”<sup>195</sup> In fact, the call for political participation and the frustration that came with failure to reach expectations characterized San Jose’s Mexican American community.

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<sup>193</sup> “Untitled,” *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1960; Moreno served Kennedy as an ambassador to Mexican American Communities in Northern California; Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 170; Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 194—1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 92-93.

<sup>194</sup> “The Team for the 60’s,” *El Excéntrico*, November 5, 1960; Untitled Photograph, *El Excéntrico*, November 5, 1960; Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 187.

<sup>195</sup> Ignacio Galindo, “MAPA,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1963.

Mexican Americans in San Jose participated with a fervor during the 1960s to elect officials who would address issues pertinent to the Spanish-speaking community. More often than not, however, disappointment branded their efforts. They often felt defeated, helpless, and vulnerable because no matter how much they organized and campaigned, they always failed to elect one of their own to public office. Throughout the 1960s, more Mexican Americans were appointed to local, state, and national positions. For example, in 1960, Governor Edmund Brown appointed San Jose CSO member Louis Zarate to the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth; in 1966, San Jose MAPA Vice President Mark Guerra was appointed to Santa Clara County's Economic Opportunity Commission as Deputy Director; in 1965 Forumeer Bob Rodriguez was appointed to the Human Relations Commission of San Jose. Although no Mexican American San Joseans were appointed to national positions, the community celebrated President Lydon B. Johnson's appointment of Daniel Luevano from Los Angeles as Assistant Secretary of the Army and Johnson's decision to select AGIF founder Dr. Hector P. Garcia to serve as an ambassador to attend the inauguration of newly elected Venezuelan president Raul Leoni.<sup>196</sup> Dr. Juan de Heras, a quiet mover and shaker in San Jose's Latino community, was appointed to the city's Mexican American Citizens Committee. When Ronald Reagan won the governorship in 1966, he called on Heras for his input on "Hispanics" to serve on the governor's cabinet and administration.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> "Mr. Louis Zarate Appointed to Advisory Committee," *El Excéntrico*, September 20, 1960; "Mexican-American Leader Guerra Wins Poverty War Deputy Duties," *San Jose Mercury News*, February 2, 1966, reprinted in *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1966; Robert Rodriguez, "Views and Reviews," April 5, 1964; GI Forum, *El Excéntrico*, February 5, 1965. In 1965 Governor Pat Brown hosted a conference at the governor's mansion to discuss Mexican American issues with delegates from the CSO, MAPA, and other Mexican American leaders throughout the state. Andrew Diaz, "The Quiet Mexican-American," *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1965; Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed*, 213.

<sup>197</sup> Letter from Ronald Reagan to Juan de Heras, reprinted in *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1967.

Throughout the country, state, county, and city, Mexican Americans began to gain representation; but in San Jose, in the eyes of many politically conscious Mexican Americans, the community was not doing enough.

Mexican American leadership and other community members in San Jose habitually criticized their community for its lack of political participation; efforts to rally behind a single candidate and elect them to city or county positions continuously left community members disheartened. Failed efforts were made in the 1950s to elect a Mexican American to local office and despite the population boom and political infrastructure in place during the 1960s, *comunidad* determination and efforts remained ineffective and unsuccessful in directly electing a Mexican American to local office.<sup>198</sup>

Local elections in 1964 and 1965 proved especially indicative of Mexican American failures to elect one of their own to local office in San Jose and Santa Clara County. In 1964, Fred Lucero and Nash Galindo filed for election to the San Jose Junior College District Board of Trustees; five people were to be elected and a major upcoming issue regarded opening a junior college in Eastside San Jose. John Castro—CSO, MAPA, Mexican American Civic Council member, and President for, both, the Catholic Spanish Speaking Council and Gardener District Neighborhood Council—ran for County Supervisor for District 2 which covered major portions of El Ganso and Eastside.<sup>199</sup> Neither Galindo nor Lucero won during the early Spring election. The loss led local leaders to consider that, perhaps, too many organizations in the South Bay worked

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<sup>198</sup> Leo Sánchez of San Jose ran for city council in 1956. Los Angeles city council member Edward Roybal attended a dinner to show his support for Sánchez. Hector Moreno, “Un Poquito de Todo,” *El Excéntrico*, February 20, 1956; No Author, “Rucker and Fletscher: Two Newcomers Enter Contest for San Jose City Council Seats,” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 27, 1956.

<sup>199</sup> Pat Vasquez, “American GI Forum,” *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1964. Biography information for John Castro from “San Jose Has Long Needed a Mexican-American on the City Council,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1965.

counterproductively against one another. As one community member viewed the situation, “[t]he defeat of Nash Galindo and Fred Lucero to the Junior College Board of Trustees brought into focus the lack of interest and coordination in getting Mexican Americans into elective office.”<sup>200</sup> Responding to the loss, Forumeer Pat Vasquez decried, “March 10, 1964 was a dark day for all Mexican Americans in Santa Clara County. It is a shame that of all the Mexican American voters we were only able to get 786 votes for [Galindo and Lucero].” He continued his criticism, “[w]e all say that we, the Mexican American, have no representation in Santa Clara County, yet when we can do something about it, we don’t exercise our right to voice our opinion.”<sup>201</sup>

These sentiments were certainly felt again with the loss of John Castro in the June 1964 Democratic primary for the District 2 County Supervisor seat. Castro had garnered growing support from white and Mexican American voters and his supporters certainly found some solace knowing that his campaign for the democratic ticket ran against incumbent Sam Della Maggiore, an “institution in local politics.”<sup>202</sup> But the loss still hurt; Maggiore and other county supervisors were viewed as supporting big ranchers and businessmen; an advertisement favoring Castro stated, “[i]t is only the rest of us in the Second District, the homeowners and working people, who are left out.”<sup>203</sup> In a prophetic

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<sup>200</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1964. The Mexican American Civic Council was formed after leaders from the Political Education Group (PEG), Mexican American Citizens Committee, Mexican Chamber of Commerce (MCC) and Mexican American Political Association gathered to discuss the issue. In the end, MAPA did not participate as a member of this coalition. The purpose of the Mexican American Civic Council was “to screen, recommend, endorse, and actively support primarily American citizens of Mexican ancestry for appointive and elective offices in the City of San Jose, The County of Santa Clara and the State of California.” “Political Group Forms,” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1964.”

<sup>201</sup> Pat Vasquez, “American GI Forum,” *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1964.” For information on Mexican American political attitudes and voter turnout during the 1960s see Marilyn H. Buehler, “Voter Turnout and Political Efficacy Among Mexican-Americans in Michigan,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn, 1977).

<sup>202</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1964.

<sup>203</sup> “John Castro for Supervisor,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1964.

way, this same announcement asked “[h]ow deep must our concern be before we are moved to act to reshape our [c]ounty government in the image of the people? Is all our talk about democracy just a hollow beating of gums?”<sup>204</sup> The desire for political representation increased among Mexican Americans throughout the 1960s but disappointment riddled the community.

Perhaps more frustrating, however, was feeling neglected by those politicians who Mexican Americans did vote into office. Following his bid for county supervisor, John Castro believed he might make a run for city council the following year. Joining him, Political Education Group member and Vice President of the newly formed Mexican American Civic Council, Ron Valdez also ran for San Jose City Council in April, 1965. Castro enjoyed favor in the community; columnists in *El Excéntrico* largely expressed partiality towards him and, in an effort to consolidate votes, MAPA members voted unanimously to endorse Castro as the single candidate for city council (five seats were up for election).<sup>205</sup> It was important to Mexican American leadership that one of their own be elected to city council so issues facing the community be more readily addressed. One month prior to the election, disillusioned with the political payout after past elections, AGIF member Pat Vasquez lamented:

The San Jose City Council race is going into full swing. So now you can see the politicians coming around to all functions and shaking your hand.

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<sup>204</sup> “John Castro for Supervisor,” *El Excéntrico*, May 20, 1964; In Crystal City, Marc Simon Rodriguez argues that the success of the Chicano youth during the second half of the 1960s decade was a result of young Mexican Americans baring witness to the “success and failure” of their predecessors. Marc Simon Rodriguez, “A Movement Made of ‘Young Mexican Americans Seeking Change’: Critical Citizenship, Migration, and the Chicano Movement in Texas and Wisconsin, 1960-1970. *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), 278-279.

<sup>205</sup> “San Jose Has Long Needed a Mexican-American on the City Council,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1965. You can read several columnists’ support for Castro in this entire issue; William Ellis, “The Political Scene,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1965.

They will tell you how much they like the Mexican-American and what they are going to do for us. They are going to treat us like newlyweds. But our honeymoon will be over on election night. The next day they will drop us like a hot potato and tell us to go pick prunes.<sup>206</sup>

When Castro and Valdez lost, Vasquez repeated his sentiments of anger, frustration, and disenchantment. “Just remember all you Mexican Americans that we stay where we are because we want it that way. We seem to be satisfied just to pick the bones that the Anglo politician[s] throw at us.”<sup>207</sup> Another community member, echoed Vasquez’s sentiments by stating that “despite our population in this county, in fact throughout the state, we have no representation in the political, economic and industrial and social strata of the community is lamentable [...] we must awaken from this lethargy.”<sup>208</sup> While the emergence of new organizations and increased community interest and participation suggested a growing politicization of Mexican Americans, there was a strong feeling that nothing was accomplished.

When other small cities across the Southwest and Northern California successfully elected Mexican Americans to city council the feeling was bitter sweet for Mexican American San Joseans. Dave Sierra commented on the victory in Crystal City,

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<sup>206</sup> Pat Vasquez, “American GI Forum,” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1965.

<sup>207</sup> Pat Vasquez, “American GI Forum,” *El Excéntrico*, April 20, 1965; Pat Vasquez’s frustrations were real but he failed to acknowledge the significance of the city’s at-large election system. At-large elections favored white majorities in city council and county supervisor elections across the U.S. Southwest and hindered the chances of minority representation. This subject is the major topic discussed in Chapter 5. For more information see: Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 195-206; Jesús Martínez Saldaña, “At the Periphery of Democracy,” 4, 94-95; The Yale Law Journal Company, Inc., “The Constitutional Significance of the Discriminatory Effects of At-Large Elections,” *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (April, 1982), 974-999.

<sup>208</sup> Joseph T. Rosales, “Americans of Mexican Descent, Awaken!” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1965; Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 171; For information on low Mexican American political success or participation at the local level see: Rudolph O. de la Garza, “The Politics of Mexican Americans,” in *The Chicanos: As We See Ourselves*, ed. Arnulfo D. Trejo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979).

Texas where an all Mexican American city council was elected in 1963. He stated, “[the city] gave the world a lesson in politics,” and concluded, regrettably, “no signs of life around here [San Jose].”<sup>209</sup> The Mexican American community in Union City, about thirty miles northeast of San Jose in Alameda County, admired the leadership of San Jose’s ethnic Mexican community and frequently followed San Jose’s example.<sup>210</sup> In April 1964, the Mexican American community of the working-class suburb successfully elected local Forumeer Bernie Morales to city council with a collaborative effort by local Mexican American organizations. San Jose’s Robert Rodriguez accredited the victory to utilizing “‘THE CRYSTAL CITY TECHNIQUE’” and praised the accomplishment. However, he acknowledged San Jose’s notable inability to achieve such a goal. According to Rodriguez, the South Bay’s urban center could afford to learn from this East Bay suburb, and concluded that “[t]ill we go to school on it a gloomy political cloud will remain over our fair city.”<sup>211</sup>

For decades many community members and leaders believed having one of their own in city council might help alleviate some of the issues facing San Jose’s ethnic Mexicans. Organizations like the CSO and MAPA worked diligently to register Mexican American voters and create a voting bloc to affect change through the electoral process.

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<sup>209</sup> Dave Sierra, “Time Marches On,” *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1964; David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 282; Marc Simon Rodriguez, “A Movement Made of ‘Young Mexican Americans Seeking Change’: Critical Citizenship, Migration, and the Chicano Movement in Texas and Wisconsin, 1960-1970. *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), 274-299.

<sup>210</sup> Ethnic Mexicans in Union City established a CHM during the 1950s, and organized, CSO, MAPA, and AGIF chapters quickly after they emerged in San Jose. Mimicking the Teatro Liberty, the Teatro Decoto opened in 1960 and was managed by Jose Gonzalez who “esta hacienda lo possible para satisfacer al publico que lo patrocina se ha propuesto a exhibir las mejores peliculas mexicanas y americanas y presenter en persona a los mas famosos artistas del cine national [sic] mexicano. [doing what is possible to satisfying its patrons by proposing to screen the best Mexican and American films and host the most famous artists of the Mexican national cinema.]” Simon Villa, “Teatro Decoto,” *El Excéntrico*, DATE. For more information on Decoto and Union City see: “Poverty Dreams” in Aaron Cavin, “The Border of Citizenship.”

<sup>211</sup> Robert Rodriguez, “Views and Reviews,” *El Excéntrico*, April 20, 1964.



Organizations like these represented the old guard—or first wave—of Mexican American mobilization of San Jose’s Chicano Movement. However, like elsewhere across the Southwest and the country, during the 1960s and into the 1970s, Latinos in San Jose—especially Mexican Americans—began to operate less conservatively when it came to fighting for representation and their civil rights.

By the mid-1960s Mexican Americans in San Jose, especially those of a younger generation, were tired of waiting for change and began to take matters into their own hands in more abrasive and confrontational ways to bring about improvements in their daily lives. These younger, more rambunctious, activists embraced the label “Chicano” and frequently found themselves at the forefront of the Chicano Movement, often referred to as *El Movimiento*. In San Jose, the term “Chicano” had been discussed in *El Excéntrico* early in the 1950s and was sometimes used to describe lower-class farm laborers; by the early 1960s the term was embraced by several cross-sections of the community. Bob Rodriguez began a 1963 article by describing diverse political, social, professional, scholastic, and leisure identities leading to the conclusion that at the end of the day all these seemingly different people identified as Chicano. He ended by stating:

He’ll go to the moon in one of them rockets but send him up with a band of mariachis..... He is a part of the great melting pot that has made this country the greatest power one earth.....He’s a CHICANO and proud of it but doesn’t really know why.....The only sure thing he knows is that he’s

an American and nobody is going to push him around.....He's the proudest individual on the face of the earth.<sup>212</sup>

While Rodriguez acknowledged the diversity within those who identified as Chicano, highlighting their contributions and desire to find their place in U.S. society, he singled them out as men. Daniel Saldaña, CHM member and *El Excéntrico* contributor, wrote an article entitled “La Juventud Femenina” a few months prior to Rodriguez’s article and although he did not refer to women as Chicanas, his description of modern women in the early 1960s certainly fit the mold. Despite a few moments of conservative thought, Saldaña described young women in San Jose as crucial to the progress of society. He stated, “La mujer de nuestro día lucha hombro con hombro al lado de el hombre, compartiendo con las penas y las alegrías que van aunadas a las responsabilidades que representa la iaria lucha por la existencia. [Women of today fight side by side the men, sharing in the sorrows and happiness linked to the daily struggles for existence.]”<sup>213</sup> By the early 1960s Chicanos in San Jose were recognized as a group of Mexican Americans, both, young and old, including women, fighting for the survival of the community and their civil rights.

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<sup>212</sup> Bob Rodriguez, “Somebody You Know?” *El Excéntrico*, July 20, 1963; Rudolph O. de la Garza, “The Politics of Mexican Americans,” in *The Chicanos: As We See Ourselves*, ed. Arnulfo D. Trejo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979).

<sup>213</sup> Daniel Saldaña, “La Juventud Femenina,” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1963. There have been many works published discussing the contributions of women to Mexican American history and the *Movimiento*. For more information see: Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Ellen Baker, *On Strike and on Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Regua, Nannette. “Women in the Chicano Movement: Grassroots Activism in San José.” *Chicana/Latina Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 114–52; Ledesma, Irene. “Texas Newspapers and Chicana Workers’ Activism, 1919-1974.” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1995): 309–31.

While most older leaders participated in and joined organizations with more traditional or establishment-oriented approaches towards civil rights, most younger participants in the Movimiento were influenced by a new way of thinking. Their expectations of society and life in the U.S. were, perhaps, greater than those of the older generation because of the advancements made by previous activists. Simply put, they felt more entitled to civil rights, equality, and the guarantees of the U.S. Constitution. Chicano youth were certainly aware of the establishmentarian and indirect political actions of their predecessors. Despite knowledge of the work done by activists and reformers before them, and that they benefitted from their efforts, Chicano youth felt they deserved better. Chicano youth were diverse in their generational, ethnic-Latino, and even in their status as citizens, but they all shared in the experience of being raised as American. As such, when the negative impacts of San Jose's unique "urban crisis" impacted them, largely due to governmental neglect, they vocalized and mobilized differently than previous activists and reformers. They expressed their frustrations with the status-quo more visibly and abrasively when they felt the claws of injustice, inequity, and inequality scraping them away from their pursuit of happiness.

In 1964 the voice of San Jose's Chicano youth bellowed from the pages of *El Excéntrico* with an unapologetic and sharp tone that differed from anything previously published by the paper. In the year's first issue, an essay was published in a column entitled "El Machete," that described an identity crisis that plagued Mexican Americans. "[F]or us, north of Tijuana," wrote the columnist, "it must mean that, like it or not, we are not Mexicans; that, like it or not, we are not Americans either."<sup>214</sup> Few writers or articles

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<sup>214</sup> Luis Valdez, "El Machete," *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1964.

in *El Excéntrico* expressed the dislocation, disillusionment, and internal conflict that many Mexican American youth experienced and certainly none did so in as brash a manner as El Machete. He continued: “The Mexican-American is an entity in himself. His pretensions will not save him from suspecting it. At night when he sleeps, that stupid little hyphen will leap into bed with him and disturb his dreams like a persistent flea. Mexican yet not Mexican...American yet not American...then a cloud. A flash of light! And the hyphen will expand to become a phantom charro.”<sup>215</sup> El Machete expressed his own frustrations in dealing with his upbringing and dealing with the knowledge, feeling, and understanding that as a Mexican American he frequently felt lost and confused about where he belonged. El Machete was a student at San Jose State University and went on to create the Teatro Campesino that educated and entertained farmworkers in California’s Central Valley. Luis Valdez, who later became known as one of El Movimiento’s most renown contributors to the arts, first gained notoriety in San Jose’s *El Excéntrico* as *El Machete*.

Valdez’s voice expressed the frustration of a younger generation coming into its own but his words and attitude were not appreciated by all. Responding to Valdez’s first essay, Daniel Saldaña criticized him for using the word “Cabron” [Bastard] in his writing, calling him ill-mannered and vulgar. After Valdez’s second, publication of “El Machete,” Dave Sierra (liberal Democrat writer for *El Excéntrico*) took the time to meet Valdez by inviting him to watch a boxing match and they discussed politics and baseball. After the meeting, Sierra wrote “I do not agree with everything he has to say and told him

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<sup>215</sup> Luis Valdez, “El Machete,” *El Excéntrico*, January 5, 1964.

[Valdez] so.”<sup>216</sup> Sierra’s criticism of Valdez went further when he went on to describe the young Chicano as a “radical” and a “Communist.”<sup>217</sup>

At the height of the Cold War, both these labels were viewed with suspicion, fear, and antagonism but none of Valdez’s written words expressed a desire for the government to take over the means of production nor did they describe identity issues foreign to other Mexican Americans. In 1964, publication of “El Machete” in *El Excéntrico* provided the older generation with an insight into real questions, ideas, and frustrations regarding the identity formation occurring within the emerging Chicano generation. In some ways, Valdez, as a writer for *El Excéntrico*—San Jose and Santa Clara County’s most distributed Spanish-language newspaper—became the voice of Chicano youth in the region during the one year he contributed to the paper. Critiques of him reflected larger fissures in the community between generations that went beyond the individual.

Throughout the second half of the 1960s Mexican Americans formed several grassroots organizations to confront issues of discrimination, police brutality, and inequality outside the realm of electoral politics. Similar to the Brown Berets in Los Angeles, Chicano youth in San Jose formed a community organization that functioned as a source for Chicano identity formation and consciousness that provided support to other organizations. Around 1965 young men and women created the Black Berets for Justice in San Jose and quickly made themselves recognizable, primarily in San Jose’s Eastside, by wearing black berets and engaging with the police. In fact, one of the founding members, Chemo Candelaria, revealed that the Black Berets actually had roots in a Sal Si

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<sup>216</sup> Dave Sierra, “El Machete Interesting Conversationalist,” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1964.

<sup>217</sup> Dave Sierra, “El Machete Interesting Conversationalist,” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1964.

Puedes neighborhood gang (Jackson Kings) that formed the Eastside Boys Club in 1958. Past affiliations with neighborhood gangs made the group a target for local police and while other groups solicited protection from the Black Berets they also distanced themselves from the group to avoid confrontation with law enforcement.

Also in 1965, parents at Theodore Roosevelt Junior High in Eastside's Mayfair neighborhood formed the Community Progress League to address issues of racism in the school. Mexican American children claimed other students and even some faculty insulted them with racial epithets like "pepper bellies," "bean chokers," and "taco benders." The organization was relatively successful, bringing about staff changes that included a new principal. Despite these changes, Mexican American parents and teachers were still not satisfied and under the leadership of Sophia Mendoza, they organized a student walkout in 1967—the Black Berets provided security for the protest.<sup>218</sup> The success of the walkout led Mendoza and other parents to form another group. United People Arriba (UPA) was formed as a way for community members to "broaden their action beyond school problems, to seek improvements in health conditions, to protect the rights of welfare recipients, to resolve differences with the police, to find jobs, and get better housing."<sup>219</sup>

San Josean Mexican Americans and Chicanos were increasingly politicized, so why were they unsuccessful in electing one of their own to public office in Santa Clara

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<sup>218</sup> City of San Jose, City Manager's Office, *San Jose Model Cities Program Application, 1968*, April 6, 1968, Part 1-B, 6. Two teachers, Jose Carrasco and Consuelo Rodriguez, helped organize and participated in the walk out. The racial epithets were taken from a 2009 oral interview with Sophia Mendoza, as quoted in Nanette Regua, "Women in the Chicano Movement: Grassroots Activism in San José, *Chicana/Latina Studies* 12:1, Fall 2012, 119. (Regua mentions the walkout in 1968 and Pitti references it in 1967 from the Model Cities Application...United People Arriba formed after the walkouts and UPA was formed in 1967).

<sup>219</sup> City of San Jose, City Manager's Office, *San Jose Model Cities Program Application, 1968*, April 6, 1968, Part 1-B, 6.

County and its largest city, where the majority of them lived? After failure in 1965 to elect a Mexican American to San Jose's city council, Forumeer Joseph T. Rosales shared his frustrations with *El Excéntrico* and its readership. He called the failure a "fiasco" and grumbled that the stage was set and energy in the Mexican American community was ripe for triumph and yet the community botched the opportunity. The problem in the community, according to him, was the failure to unite behind one group; too many "splinter groups" existed in San Jose that worked against the formation of a cohesive voting bloc. He applauded community members for joining groups like the AGIF, MAPA, and the CSO but also recognized the fractures these organizations created that undermined unity.<sup>220</sup> To be clear, many groups overlapped in their goals and purpose. For example, the Political Educational Group and the Mexican American Civic Council formed after MAPA but their commitments echoed those of their predecessor (to encourage political participation and endorse candidates).<sup>221</sup> Nevertheless, Rosales implied that these groups endorsed their own candidates and, while they had the same goal—to elect one of their own—they actually worked against one another. Addressing the issue, he suggested "[i]t would be wise for our people to observe the Negro of this country, their achievements; their progress; their pitfalls."<sup>222</sup> Rosales commented that the NAACP was a formidable organization that Black people in the United States supported and rallied behind. With the support of Black people across the country, the NAACP succeeded in pushing for change that improved the lives of Black individuals and communities in the United States. Rosales commented then concluded with a question,

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<sup>220</sup> Joseph T. Rosales, "Americans of Mexican Descent, Awaken!" *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1965.

<sup>221</sup> Political Educational Group, *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1963; Mexican American Civic Council, *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1964.

<sup>222</sup> Joseph T. Rosales, "Americans of Mexican Descent, Awaken!" *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1965.

“[t]he colored people with their NAACP have joined for a purpose, and it is evident that they have achieved. Is it not feasible that we of Mexican descent that we can do likewise?”<sup>223</sup> Indeed, these frustrations were not his alone and, unfortunately, these feelings persisted for another decade.

## **Conclusion**

As San Jose’s population continued to grow throughout the 1960s, city limits expanded outward and local government made plans to address and accommodate expansion. The ethnic Mexican neighborhoods of El Ganso and the Eastside continued to grow as well. El Ganso enlarged its population with an influx of Latinos who maintained the area vibrant as white people fled the urban core to neighboring suburbs and San Jose’s newly annexed suburban peripheries. Many ethnic Mexicans living in San Jose’s eastern periphery officially became city residents as more parts of the Eastside *colonia* were annexed. The municipality was given the “All-American City” award in 1960 and local boosters and city officials celebrated the achievement. However, this award also made city residents, particularly Mexican Americans, more aware of San Jose’s greatness and how their experiences, living conditions, and socioeconomic status, perhaps, did not reflect the ideals of an “All-American City.” San Jose’s ethnic Mexican population was highly concentrated in El Ganso and the Eastside and these residents called for better living conditions.

As many ethnic Mexicans viewed the situation, city and county officials did little to improve the lives of ethnic Mexicans who called San Jose and Santa Clara County home. Ethnic Mexicans continued to make political inroads through building

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<sup>223</sup> Joseph T. Rosales, “Americans of Mexican Descent, Awaken!” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1965.



relationships with local officials, especially by utilizing the *fiestas patrias* as a mechanism to bring government officials together with ethnic Mexican leadership and call attention to the minority group's significant population size. By attending the *fiestas patrias* the *comunidad* members continued to claim space for themselves downtown and transformed the area into a more unmistakably and visible transnational place two weekends of the year. Ethnic Mexican residents and visitors practiced, celebrated, and reproduced their culture in downtown and their neighborhoods. In doing so, they expressed forms of *mexicanidad* that simultaneously blended with U.S. culture and politics. Ethnic Mexicans paraded themselves downtown, making their presence in the city and county felt, and pressuring local government officials to recognize them.

Like many cities and regions across the country with significant ethnic Mexican populations, San Jose became overwhelmingly Mexican American during the 1960s. Civic engagement and political activity intensified as the minority groups, reformers, and activists worked towards securing their rights, improving their socioeconomic status, and fighting against issues of racism and discrimination that impacted facets of life like education, housing, and policing, to name a few. Urban centers like San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Tucson, Dallas, Denver, and Chicago represented a few cities understood by many as hotbeds for Latino activism and San Jose was no different. In San Jose, influential organizations like the CHM, MCC, and mutual aid societies that emphasized Mexican nationalism persisted but lost some level of influence; they were increasingly pushed to share the community's political clout with emergent Mexican American organizations. These burgeoning collectives stressed Mexican American citizenship and encouraged Mexican Americans to exercise their rights and participate in

the political process. The CSO helped establish a political infrastructure in the 1950s and continued its efforts by sponsoring citizenship classes and voter registration drives into the 1960s but always claimed to be apolitical. MAPA, on the other hand, became the first overtly political organization focused on electoral politics by screening and endorsing candidates (who tended to come from the Democratic Party). Together, in the 1960s, these two organizations solidified an infrastructure that represented Mexican American efforts at coalition building to impact local, state, and national elections.

Mexican Americans in San Jose worked tirelessly throughout the decade, without success, to work within “polite,” “accepted,” and establishmentarian forms of political action to address the needs of the community and elect one of their own to local bureaucratic positions. MAPA, Mexican American Civic Council, and Political Educational Group endorsed Mexican Americans and other, predominantly Democratic, candidates in the hopes of achieving representation. These organizations reflected the desire by Mexican American San Joseans—and Latinos across the country, more broadly—during the 1960s to secure their civil rights and ameliorate social, economic, legal, and political perversions. Civic-oriented and Civil Rights organizations led by Mexican Americans and Chicanos continued to drive efforts for betterment in the lives of the people they represented and remained politically active. However, as the city sprawled, it became more overtly segregated and, as a result, Mexican Americans, particularly the youth and Eastside residents, grew progressively restless and agitated. They witnessed the development and suburban amenities afforded to newly annexed lands, especially in San Jose’s Southern and Western peripheries, that predominantly housed white residents. Many living near downtown and in the Eastside saw themselves

as neglected by local government as they bore the brunt of the city's urban crisis. To seek redress, Chicanos began loudly vocalizing their concerns and mobilizing more aggressively than previous organizers, frequently approaching representation, civic engagement, and political action in more direct and non-establishmentarian ways that did not shy away from confrontation. Although these Mexican American youth approached political activity differently than older generations, they all—militant youth, political organizers, and business leaders—worked towards the common goal of advancing the socioeconomic prospects and political position of San Josean Latinos. Ethnic Mexicans in San Jose attacked their communities' social, economic, and political ills with various approaches, and participated in shaping the Chicano Movement in Northern California's South Bay.

## **Chapter 4: Addressing Inequality in Emerging Silicon Valley: Riots, Courtrooms, and Business Meetings in San Jose's Chicano Movement, 1969-1977**

In 1968 Dionne Warwick released one of the most popular songs of her decades-long career as a singer and vocalist. "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" juxtaposed life in Northern California's fastest growing city with Los Angeles, the better-known metropolis of Southern California. She described Los Angeles as full of possibility for stardom and a fast-paced existence while also reflecting that life can get lonely when fame and fortune are gone or, more often, are never found in the first place. Throughout the song she asks, "Do you know the way to San Jose?" and paints a picture of a quiet place one travels to be among friends and "find some peace of mind."<sup>224</sup>

The quaint, small-town description of San Jose might have bruised the ego of San Jose City Manager Anthony Hamann, who had worked to turn the city into the "Los Angeles of the North."<sup>225</sup> While San Jose underwent tremendous growth and transformation under the politics of growth that Hamann spearheaded, there was truth in Warwick's words. San Jose experienced a dramatic population boom between 1950 and 1970 but most development occurred on the city's peripheries in newly annexed land that was developed to emulate the growing residential suburbs across the country. These developments provided Santa Clara County's largest city with a character more akin to the grass yards of the burgeoning suburban landscape and less like the bustling streets of big cities.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Dionne Warwick, "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" Valley of the Dolls. Scepter (New York: A&R Studios, March 23, 1968). The song was written by Burt Bacharach.

<sup>225</sup> As quoted in Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream*.

<sup>226</sup> In his seminal work on the development of U.S. suburbs, Kenneth Jackson described the development of Santa Clara County after World War II and referred to San Jose as "the nation's largest suburb." See

Still, the song's depiction of San Jose was oversimplified and ignored two important characteristics of the city: it was beyond the scope of a small town and, like other cities across the country, its central business district was in decline. However, while downtown, the core, and neighborhoods in El Ganso had been abandoned by whites and their retail stores, and neglected by city officials, the peripheral suburban parts of West and South San Jose expanded geographically and demographically. The Eastside also saw an increase in population, especially among the area's Latino residents. But unlike peripheral areas inhabited by white residents, the neighborhoods in the Eastside were largely ignored by city council. In San Jose, many symptoms of the "urban crisis" were more nuanced and difficult to recognize from a macro perspective.

For twenty years San Jose's growth brought smiles to the faces of those in local government, but the expansion overshadowed harsh realities that plagued several parts of the city. With so much emphasis on development on the periphery, the core had been disregarded and people living in the area had suffered. Residents of El Ganso, who had saved the area near downtown from depopulation, bore the burden of decentralization as major retailers and city offices moved out of the urban core. In the face of abandonment, Latinos made downtown and its nearby neighborhoods home and opened their own businesses to serve the community.

Over time, Mexican Americans no longer competed with Mexican-born or Mexican-national community members for political or cultural influence. By the 1970s Mexican Americans and Chicanos were at the forefront of social, cultural, economic, and political mobilizations in San Jose. However, class issues often spurred internal conflicts

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Kenneth Jackson Turner, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 265-267.

within the American-born ethnic Mexican community. A major event in San Jose's Chicano Movement, the Fiesta de las Rosas (1969), magnified these internal class struggles within Latino San Joseans—an issue occurring within other Latino communities across the country.

Despite the growing Mexican American and Chicano population of the comunidad, cultural ties to Mexico were not abandoned as a political tool. Instead, organizations like the Confederacion de La Raza Unida and the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce communicated their positions as representatives of a transnational community, seeking to improve the social, economic, and political position of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose and Santa Clara County. They identified themselves with Mexico's history, culture, and politics as a way of addressing discriminatory housing practices and spearheading efforts to revitalize downtown, respectively. In the case of the CRU, the organization made local claims to Aztlán—the mythical homeland of the Mexica people who would create the Aztec empire—as a way of expressing their right to live in suburban spaces that excluded them. The MACC created connections with Mexico and called attention to its transnational endeavors in an attempt to help revitalize downtown. Recognition of Latinos using their transnational connections to drive revitalization efforts in U.S. cities is a phenomenon only recently examined by Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz. However, he almost exclusively explains these strategies as a late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon. Actions undertaken by San Jose's MACC provides an example of this transnational tactic occurring nearly three decades earlier.

While businessmen continued to deploy Mexican heritage as a way to improve life for the city and county's largest minority group, activists worked to do the same.

Older Mexican Americans and younger Chicanos utilized various strategies to address the socioeconomic and political marginalization faced by the community in San Jose and throughout Santa Clara County. The older Mexican American generation focused on addressing these issues through the electoral process and working within the systems and processes accepted as proper and polite. On the other hand, the younger Chicano generation utilized more confrontational tactics and challenged the status quo in their efforts to effect change in a society they believed forgot and left them behind. Both generations worked in the same direction towards the common goal of improving life for Mexican Americans in San Jose—but sometimes issues of class placed community members at odds with one another, especially when people of different socioeconomic statuses all claimed to be working for community improvement.

The politics and economy of Santa Clara County and San Jose underwent drastic political and economic shifts during the 1970s. Uncontrolled growth was halted by a new city council that emphasized improvements of land and property already under city jurisdiction. By 1980, the agriculture economy that had sustained the South Bay for over fifty years was nearly completely superseded by the space age and investments in high technology. In 1941 there were seventeen large canneries operating in Santa Clara County, with eleven in San Jose. They all began closing in 1972. In a 2006 news article, local historian Leonard McKay explained, “the canneries started closing one by one, coincident with the tearing up of the orchards for houses and factories. Finally, the Del Monte plant, the last cannery still operating in San Jose, closed in 1997.”<sup>227</sup> He further lamented, “Some of the richest agricultural land in the country is now covered with

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<sup>227</sup> Leonard McKay, “The Canning Industry in San Jose,” San Jose Inside, February 20, 2006. Accessed online, January 21, 2022. [https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the\\_canning\\_industry\\_in\\_san\\_jose/](https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the_canning_industry_in_san_jose/)

cement, houses, hi-tech plants, freeways and parking lots. Will there ever be a time when this is reversed and this wonderful land grows nature's products again?"<sup>228</sup> The most dramatic loss of canneries in the area occurred during the fifteen years after the first cannery closed in 1972; by 1987 only eight remained in the County.<sup>229</sup>

As the region continued to grow in size, prosperity, and prestige, its largest minority, ethnic Mexicans, did not reap the same benefits as their white counterparts. In addition, despite continued growth, many social, cultural, and economic problems that plagued major cities in the United States during the urban crisis found their way to San Jose. Chicanos, as many politicized ethnic Mexicans referred to themselves during the late 1960s and into the 1970s, fought for civil rights and demanded justice and equality. This was a new generation of ethnic Mexicans that worked both within and outside the power structures they felt contributed to their status as second-class citizens. While many fought to disrupt the status quo to bring about change, there were still others who chose to work in more establishment-oriented ways to improve the status of ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos in San Jose, California, and the country as a whole.

### **Growth, a Shifting Economy, and Segregation**

During the postwar period, people, almost exclusively white, fled the busy avenues of U.S. cities for the more quiet and quaint streets of burgeoning suburbs. The

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<sup>228</sup> Leonard McKay, "The Canning Industry in San Jose," San Jose Inside, February 20, 2006. Accessed online, January 21, 2022. [https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the\\_canning\\_industry\\_in\\_san\\_jose/](https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the_canning_industry_in_san_jose/); For more information on the declension of canning and ascension of defense and hi-technology in Santa Clara County see: Megan L. Alpers, "Valley of Heart's Delight: Orchards to Hard Drives in the *San Jose Mercury News*" (M.A. Thesis, San Jose State University, 2010); RoseAnne Teresa Dominguez, "The Decline of Santa Clara County's Fruit and Vegetable Canning Industry (1967-1987)" (M.A. Thesis, San Jose State University, 1992).

<sup>229</sup> RoseAnne Teresa Dominguez, "The Decline of Santa Clara County's Fruit and Vegetable Canning Industry (1967-1987)," 71-72.



exodus left minority populations (primarily Black people in most of the U.S.) to deal with issues of poverty, unemployment, crime, and housing in the country's cities. Throughout the 1970s, Bay Area cities with large concentrations of Black residents, like San Francisco and Oakland, began to lose population.<sup>230</sup> In both cities, the number and percentage of Spanish-origin people were less than the Black population but the difference was more extreme in Oakland than in San Francisco. By 1980, 12.7% of San Francisco's total population was comprised of Black people with those of Spanish-origin making up 12.3%. In Oakland, the Black population represented over 45% of the city's residents while Spanish-origin people only made up 9.6% of Oakland's city dwellers. Although the cities both grew between 1950 and 1970, they decreased in total population during the 1970s. San Francisco lost 5% of its residents while Oakland lost 6%, reducing their total populations to 678,974 and 339,337, respectively.<sup>231</sup>

In the South Bay, however, with a significantly lower number and percentage of Black residents—and a much higher percentage of Latinos—San Jose continued to grow, and rapidly. Similar to Sunbelt cities in the South and Southwest that grew horizontally and expanded during the postwar period, San Jose grew by a remarkable 41% during the 1970s, bringing the city's population up to 629,442 people by 1980. In fact, the city's growth even outpaced that of California's two most populous Sunbelt cities, Los Angeles and San Diego, that increased by 5% and 26%, expanding their total populations to 2,966,850 and 875,538, respectively. In these cities, the Spanish-origin population was larger than the Black population. In Los Angeles, Latinos made up nearly 28% of the

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<sup>230</sup> Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City*; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon*.

<sup>231</sup> Table 14: Summary of General Statistics. 1980 Census of Population, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter A, Number of Inhabitants, Part 6, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March 1982.

city's total population while Black urbanites made up 17%; in San Diego, Latino inhabitants represented 15% of the population and Black city-dwellers accounted for 10%. Similarly, in San Jose, the percentage of Spanish-origin people (22.3%) was greater than that of the Black population (4.6%).<sup>232</sup> By examining the numbers in the sample size of these five California cities there appears to be a correlation between growth and the racial makeup of the city during the 1970s; when the number of Black residents outnumbered that of Latino residents the city declined in total population but when the number of Latinos was greater than the amount of Black people then the city managed to continue growing. There are certainly many factors that lead to population and urban decline but at face value it appears that in areas where Black people were more concentrated whites were more likely to leave whereas they might not feel as inclined to do so when living next to Spanish-origin people.<sup>233</sup>

On its surface, San Jose and Santa Clara County appeared to be thriving for three major reasons—but an unpleasant underbelly lingered underneath the surface that impacted Latinos in San Jose. First, the population of the city and the county were increasing and showed no signs of slowing down. The Spanish-origin people of the region, again, accounted for a significant percentage of growth in the area, adding 42,892 people in San Jose and 83,477 people in the county.<sup>234</sup> This swell in population

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<sup>232</sup> Table 14: Summary of General Statistics. 1980 Census of Population, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter A, Number of Inhabitants, Part 6, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March 1982.

<sup>233</sup> Lilia Fernández discusses the ability of Puerto Rican and Mexican residents to rent or buy housing units because of an ability to "blend in" with fluency in English and, especially, by those with lighter skin complexion that could "pass" as white. See Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*.

<sup>234</sup> 140,529 is the number given in Table 16 of 1980 Census for Sp. Origin People. 97,637 is the number tabulated for Spanish Surname people in Table P-7 of the 1970 Census. The difference is 42,892. 226,611 Table 16, 1980-143,134 tabulated from P-7, 1970 = 83,477.

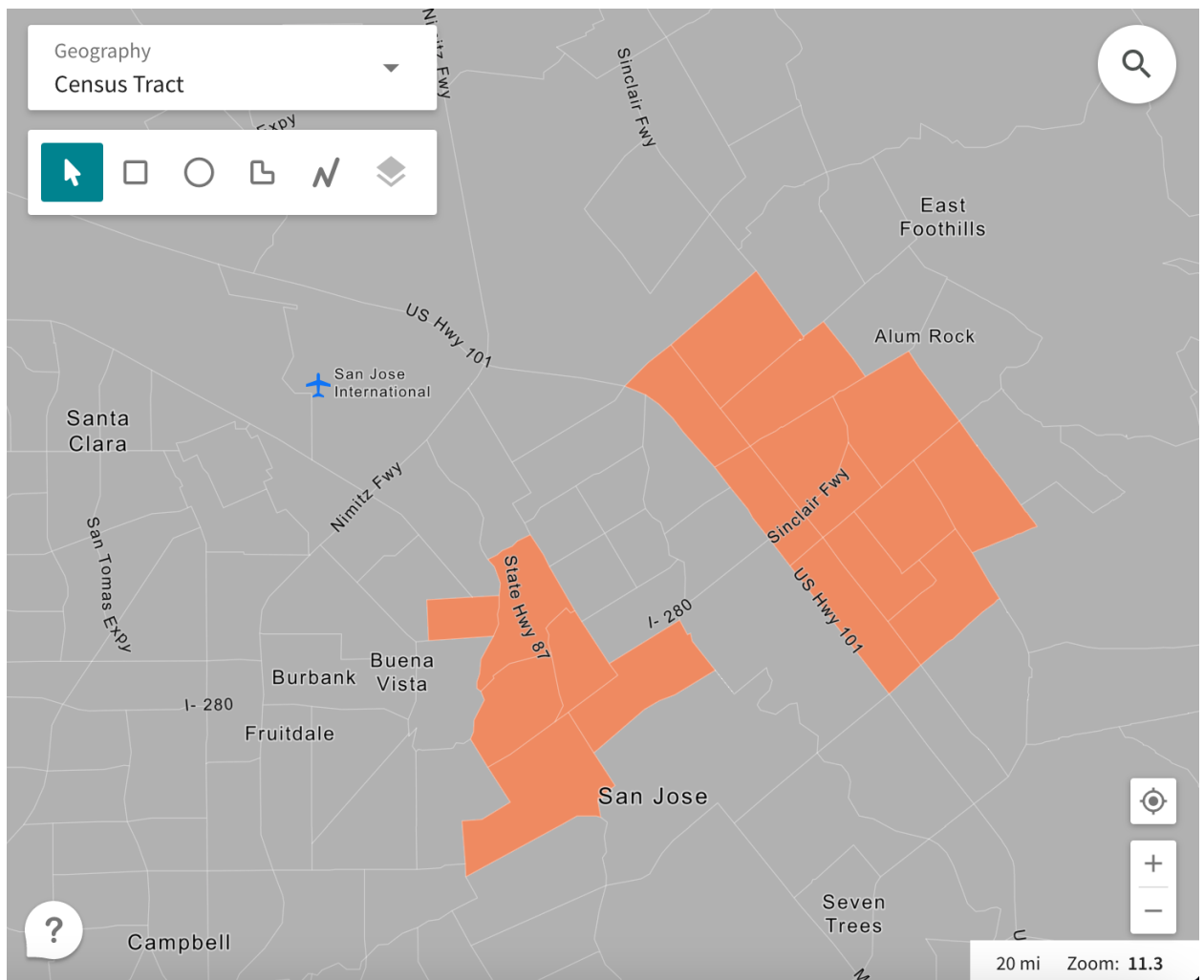
maintained the percentage of Latinos residing in San Jose at 22%.<sup>235</sup> The city's Eastside, in particular, experienced significant growth in total population and in the Latino population, especially. The number of residents who augmented the Eastside enumerated 20,127 people and Latinos accounted for 65% of that growth (12,980 people); the Eastside's total population had increased by 48% since 1970 and the Latino population in the area jumped by 61%.<sup>236</sup> By 1980, Latinos made up 55% of the Eastside's total population. The incorporation of Eastside colonias and barrios continued to add people to San Jose's total population and, as a hub for Spanish speakers, the area became more concentrated in its Spanish-origin population that appeared to correlate with prosperity and city growth.

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<sup>235</sup> 22.3% taken from Table 14, 1980. 21.9% calculated from P-7 and P-1, 1970. 17.5% taken from Table 14, 1980. 13% calculated from Table P-7 and P-1, 1970.

<sup>236</sup> 62,542 was the number I calculated by adding the Eastside tracts from Social Explorer. 42,415 is the number I calculated for the Eastside using Table P-7 from the 1970 Census. The 1980 Census documents I looked at did not break San Jose down by tract. It was also easier to visualize and locate the proper census tracts for the areas I demarcated as "Eastside" and "El Ganso."  $62,542 - 42,415 = 20,127$

Map 6



Description: These are the census tracts comprising El Ganso (center) and the Eastside (right) in 1980. The size, shape, and number of census tracts pertaining to El Ganso remained unchanged since 1960. However, even between 1970 and 1980 the tracts pertaining to the Eastside are changed due to the area becoming more densely populated and more census tracts become identifiable with, and as a result added to, the Eastside.

Source: Social Explorer, December 20, 2020.

However, examination of El Ganso, near the city's core, reveals signs of declension in Latino neighborhoods in the city that escape scrutiny when looking at the city as a whole. For twenty years, Latinos were responsible for the steady increase or stabilization of population loss due to "white flight" in the city's core. Even during the 1970s, Latinos kept the area populated, increasing by 1,699 people and moving El Ganso

from 41% to 49% Latino.<sup>237</sup> Like the Eastside, those of Mexican descent comprised just under 90% of the Spanish-origin people in the neighborhood.<sup>238</sup> Despite the increase in the Latino population, for the first time since 1950, El Ganso experienced a net loss in population. With 948 people less in El Ganso in 1980 than in 1970, the population decreased by about 4% despite a 1.7% increase in the Latino population—demonstrating that without the Spanish-origin people, San Jose’s downtown certainly would have suffered from depopulation sooner and the negative impacts to the city’s core might have been more dramatic. Since the 1950s, under the politics of growth, investment in the improvement of the suburban peripheries attracted people, especially whites, to San Jose’s newly annexed and developed subdivisions, leaving the core, and its growing ethnic Mexican population, to survive on its own.

Second, the county’s economy solidified its transition from an agricultural center to a hub for high-technology industry. While agriculture, processing, and canning had dominated the economy during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the 1970s, Santa Clara County recast itself as a major center for the high-technology industry. Headed by Fred Terman, during WWII and the postwar period Stanford’s Engineering Department developed and trained many minds that emerged as leaders in the high-tech industry. Stanford built one of the country’s first industrial parks in 1951 and followed that up in 1954 with a research park.<sup>239</sup> Many who trained and worked at Stanford went on to found companies like Fairchild Instruments and Camera Corporation, National Semiconductor,

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<sup>237</sup> 11,659 calculated with Social Explorer tract numbers. 9,960 calculated with P-7, 1970 Census...difference is 1,699.

<sup>238</sup> 89.2% calculated for El Ganso with Social Explorer numbers, 1980. 87.7% calculated for the Eastside with Social Explorer numbers, 1980.

<sup>239</sup> Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Margaret O’Mara, *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019)

Intel, and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD). In 1971, three years after leaving Fairchild and founding Intel, the new company invented the microprocessor which revolutionized the industry. That same year, in a three-article series describing the vitality of the industry in Santa Clara County, Don C. Hoefler, editor of *Microelectronics News* magazine, dubbed the region “Silicon Valley” and by the 1980s over 3,000 electronic companies operated out of the region.<sup>240</sup> Interestingly, despite the concentration of hi-tech industry and companies in the county’s northern suburbs—and apparent absence in San Jose—city mayor Tom McEnery gave the county’s largest city the moniker “Capital of Silicon Valley” in 1988.<sup>241</sup>

While the electronics industry slowly and quietly supplanted the agricultural economy and canning industry as the leading sector of Santa Clara County’s economy between 1950 and 1970, its presence and dominance in the region flourished during the 1970s and helped establish the foundation for a new racially segmented economy. Just as Latinos in the region began to make economic gains in the region, the shifting economy quickly left them behind. In an effort to address problems in San Jose, new city manager, Thomas Fletcher, invited the RAND Corporation to analyze the effects of growth in 1973. One of two summary findings early in the report unequivocally announced the limited benefits of growth on the Latino community. “That two decades of rapid growth have improved the absolute income levels of the minority population (Mexican-Americans), but have done little or nothing to improve the minority’s relative status as

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<sup>240</sup> Terry Christensen, “San Jose becomes the Capital of Silicon Valley,” a supplemented excerpt from a chapter in *San Jose: A City for All Seasons*, Judith Henderson, ed. (Encinitas, CA: Heritage Press, 1997). In my possession.

<sup>241</sup> A. Jarrod Jenkins, “Jenkins: It’s Time to Drop the ‘Capitol of Silicon Valley’ Slogan,” San Jose Spotlight, April 19, 2019. Accessed online, January 21, 2019: <https://sanjosespotlight.com/jenkins-its-time-to-drop-the-capital-of-silicon-valley-slogan/>

compared to the majority. This situation, rather than the control of growth, may be the major problem in San Jose's future."<sup>242</sup> The report went on to detail the disparity in occupational advancement between Anglos and Mexican Americans in San Jose, explaining that "Anglo children tend to get better jobs than their parents; Chicano children about the same as their parents. Children of Anglo parents with mid-level white and blue-collar occupations, for example advance beyond their parents more readily than children of Chicano parents in the same occupations."<sup>243</sup> And a perhaps more damning finding was that "Chicano-Anglo differences tend to be larger for the young than for the old; many Anglos start their working careers above the highest level that Chicanos ever achieve."<sup>244</sup>

The shifting economy led to the development of Santa Clara's northern suburbs that began to follow a suburban model set by Palo Alto and Stanford. During the 1970s cities like Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Cupertino became homes for residents and emerging high-tech companies. The idea of locating places of work next to places where people lived was an old concept but in California, and in Santa Clara County in particular, the concept of combining suburbia with industry came to fruition.<sup>245</sup> With the revenue amassed from a growing tax base these suburbs invested in improving their downtowns and building regional shopping centers and malls to attract people from inside and outside their communities to increase local income. In Sunnyvale, for

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<sup>242</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, "Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement," (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), vi.

<sup>243</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, "Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement," (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), vii.

<sup>244</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, "Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement," (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), vii.

<sup>245</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Self, *American Babylon* (Industrial Garden); Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*; John Findlay, *Magic Lands*.

example, the city council voted in 1976 to demolish their downtown, rebuild it and add a regional shopping mall to accompany its redevelopment. Residents protested but the project pushed on and in 1979 the Sunnyvale Town Center opened.<sup>246</sup> The shifting economy led to a shift in the ways municipal governments planned for industrial and residential developments, particularly in the northern suburbs where the high-technology industry concentrated.

The not-so-glamorous part of these booming suburbs and the new economy paralleled the underbelly of San Jose's sprawl and emphasis on developing newly annexed lands in the city's suburban peripheries. These cities, like San Jose, invested in residential building and improvements and most of these new developments contributed to a more segregated county just as San Jose's sprawl contributed to a more segregated city. By 1980 the city of San Jose was home to 62% of the county's Latino population with the majority residing in the Eastside.<sup>247</sup> In a 1982 National Geographic article, Moira Johnston critiqued the county's economic achievements by commenting that "success stories did not apply to all as evidenced by 120,000 assembly-line workers of various ethnic backgrounds who could not afford to buy homes in the valley."<sup>248</sup> People in the county and San Jose were segregated by income and ethnoracial composition, which frequently co-exist, characterizing the two as inseparable or two sides of the same coin. In fact, the 1973 RAND report on San Jose commented on the Mexican American community's status in San Jose and the county that "[o]n the basis of median family income and other measures of economic well-being, the low-income areas of Santa Clara

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<sup>246</sup> Mary J. Ignoffo, *Sunnyvale: From the City of Destiny to the Heart of Silicon Valley* (Cupertino, CA: California History Center and Foundation, De Anza College, 1994), 80-84.

<sup>247</sup> Table 16: Total Persons and Spanish Origin Persons by Type of Spanish Origin and Race: 1980.

<sup>248</sup> Ignoffo, *Sunnyvale*, 78.



County have been declining relative to the better-off areas, and ethnic and economic segregation has increased.”<sup>249</sup> The report highlighted that Mexican Americans tended to live in poorer neighborhoods with less economic advancement than their white counterparts not only in the city but county as well. In fact, the report went into more detail, stating the following:

By various indices of earnings and occupations, the Chicano population has been getting worse off, or in some cases just holding its own, as compared to the Anglo population—this in a period of the most rapid economic growth. The data suggests that inequality is not decreasing; if anything, it has actually increased and is continuing to do so.<sup>250</sup>

Although ethnic Mexicans had contributed to population growth and helped maintain the core populated and some individuals had achieved economic success the group as a whole did not prosper. Growth in the city and county coupled with a shifting economy left Latinos behind; just as many began to gain their footing in the agriculture economy and as business owners in downtown, industry moved to high technology (that required more education) and city government abandoned downtown to focus on peripheral developments in North, West, and South San Jose, where ethnic Mexicans did not reside.

Third, in addition to population growth and a shifting economy, political representation for minorities, while it improved, largely failed to bring about much change for Latinos. Virginia Shaffer became the first woman elected to San Jose’s city

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<sup>249</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, “Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement,” (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), 16.

<sup>250</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, “Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement,” (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), 17.

council in the early 1960s, and when she declined to run for re-election in 1971, Janet Gray Hayes replaced her as the only woman on the council. That same year, businessman and insurance agent Norman Mineta (a Japanese American who had experienced internment as a child during WWII) ran for mayor. He was appointed to city council in 1967 by pro-business, pro-growth mayor Ron James, who decided not to run for re-election in 1971. Mineta was viewed as James' protégé and easily won his election to city council in 1969 and the mayoral contest in 1971, becoming the first Asian American mayor of any large city in the United States. To fill his vacant council seat he appointed teacher and local activist Alfredo Garza, a Mexican American who had lost in the council election to Hayes—he became the first Mexican American to sit on city council since statehood in 1848.<sup>251</sup> Ethnic Mexicans had struggled since the 1950s to elect one of their own to city council and in 1971, although he was not elected, a Mexican American finally had a seat at the table of local government.

Interestingly, Garza was not Mineta's first choice to replace him on the city council. According to Garza, the council ““made me run the hoops for my appointment,”” requiring him to meet with several groups across the city including the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, several homeowner associations, and the Asian community to name a few.<sup>252</sup> In 1973 he ran again for city council and had the full support of San Jose's Mexican American population. Beginning in 1973 Garza was promoted in *El Excéntrico* and was featured on the cover twice (including on the magazine's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue) with the words “Vote for Al Garza.”<sup>253</sup> In January, columnist Rudy Belloumini wrote

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<sup>251</sup> Terry Christensen, “San Jose Becomes the Capital of Silicon Valley,” 8.

<sup>252</sup> Doreen Carvajal, “Garza jabs bureaucratic ‘windmills,’” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1977.

<sup>253</sup> Rudy Belloumini, “Critica Social,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1973; *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1973; *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1973.

about the upcoming June election with a combination of hope and cynicism, stating “I believe we have run out of excuses not to vote for Councilman Garza to represent us; not only is he a Chicano who speaks for us but habla Español y Inglés, and is a credit to his raza.” He finished this column with the catchy campaign slogan, “La Raza por Garza!”<sup>254</sup> Later, another *El Excéntrico* columnist, Candy Veliz, commented, “[w]e have one Mexican-American in the city council, so let’s keep him there.”<sup>255</sup>

In 1973 no other Mexican American ran for city council and Garza certainly counted on their votes. However, in one of the last articles written to support him before the election, Belloumini raised an interesting point when he commented that Garza was representing Mexican Americans but that he was also “respected by whites.”<sup>256</sup> Because of the city’s at-large elections it was imperative that Garza receive votes from the city’s largest minority group but also garner support from the majority (white) population. However, unlike his first election, this time he had two years of experience and exposure to the entire city and not just recognition from the Mexican American community. Garza went on to win his first election to city council in 1973 by a 60% vote; he later went on to win re-election in 1975 and 1977. He forced a run-off mayoral election in 1978 against Janet Gray Hayes but was easily defeated at the polls in November. In an interview in 1977 he reflected that when he first started off he “lacked the exposure and organization to attract a wide following in San Jose’s at-large election system.” He also “readily admit[ted] he would not be a councilman today [in 1977] if it hadn’t been for his appointment” in 1971.

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<sup>254</sup> Rudy Belloumini, “Critica Social,” *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1973.

<sup>255</sup> Candy Veliz, “Club San Felipe,” *El Excéntrico*, March 5, 1973.

<sup>256</sup> Rudy Belloumini, “Critica Social,” *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1973.

Mexican Americans, along with Asians Americans and women, were all represented on the city council during the 1970s.<sup>257</sup> However, even this achievement was not without shortcomings not readily visible on the surface. The major issue stemmed from the city's voting process; Garza and Mineta could push for changes to address minority issues (and they did) but they had to be careful not to upset the city's white constituents. As political scientist Terry Christensen succinctly states, "[t]he only minority persons to serve on the council—Norm Mineta and Al Garza—were appointed by the white council majority and needed the white voter majority to win elections and stay on council." In fact, between 1950 and 1974 the majority of council members had been white, middle-class, businessmen and attorneys who predominantly lived in just two of the city's neighborhoods. Mineta and Garza needed white-voter support to continue representing the Asian and Mexican American communities.<sup>258</sup> In other words, with at-large elections, minorities serving on city council needed to be cautious in their attempts to address social and racial issues so as to not upset the white majority. As the 1973 RAND report claimed, "[a]t the political level, at least, the city has been trying to deal with Chicanos on a more representative basis—for example, Mayor Mineta and the San Jose City Council appointed a Mexican-American to a vacant position on the City Council—but this has not yet effected any substantial change in ways of doing business."<sup>259</sup> In essence, representation on city council did little to help the Mexican

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<sup>257</sup> In 1974 Janet Gray Hayes became San Jose's first woman to serve as mayor of San Jose. In that same year, Leona Egeland became one of the first women elected to represent South San Jose in State Assembly. By 1976, a woman was chair of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Susie Wilson served as San Jose's vice mayor. In this year, San Jose gained local and national attention as the "feminist capital of the United States." See Glenna Matthews, *Women in Silicon Valley*.

<sup>258</sup> Terry Christensen, "San Jose Becomes the Capital of Silicon Valley," 12.

<sup>259</sup> Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, "Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement," (Sant Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, May 1973), 21

American community in any large or substantive way. In fact, during the 1970s, many issues plaguing San Jose's Latino communities—such as, discrimination, racism, segregation, housing, education, and police-community relations—were exacerbated. As a result, some worked outside electoral politics to seek redress.

### **Chicanos, Riots, Courts, and Suburbia**

Most members of the older Mexican American generation focused their attention on representation through electoral politics at the local, state, and national levels. They celebrated the appointment of Alfredo Garza to City Council in 1971 and reveled in his successful reelection campaigns in 1973 and 1975. But his presence at the decision-making table was not enough to meet the growing demands and needs of the growing ethnic Mexican community in San Jose. The younger Chicano generation called for more from their municipal government and mobilized in the streets to address issues pertaining to civil rights and political representation that included issues relating to discrimination, racism, police brutality, health, and labor. Chicanos felt alienated and worked in less establishmentarian ways to express their frustration.

Older Mexican Americans and younger Chicanos had helped establish roots for the Chicano Movement during the early and mid-1960s that gained notoriety for maturation during the 1970s. Work done by organizations like the CSO, MAPA, and participation in local and state government programs like the Model Cities and Human Relations Commission exemplified successful contributions to the Movimiento by the old guard; by contrast, organizations like the Black Berets, United People Arriba (UPA), and the Community Alert Patrol (CAP) reflected efforts by younger Chicano groups. While

the young and the old deployed different tactics, both generations organized and worked to address racial and socioeconomic issues of discrimination that impacted San Josean Latinos in areas like job opportunity, housing, education, police brutality, and voting, to name a few. Despite working towards a common goal, however, sometimes the divergence in approaches shed light on internal struggles within the community stemming from class issues.

Perhaps no other event during the Chicano Movement in San Jose highlighted growing class and generational tensions within the Mexican American community more clearly than the revival of the city's Fiesta de Las Rosas (FDLR) celebration.<sup>260</sup> The FDLR was a quaint floral parade during the late 1920s that celebrated the city and county's Spanish heritage. While the event had not been celebrated since 1933, having been discontinued due to the economic burdens of the Depression, talks began in 1966 to revive the event. Luis Juarez and others in the emerging Latino middle class favored reviving the event to help revitalize a declining downtown. He represented the interests of many middle-class Latino homeowners in San Jose who benefitted from city growth and suburbanization. They believed the event would improve the city's image and prestige, which would help increase the value of their homes. But many Chicano activists in the city and county asked ethnic Mexicans to boycott the event. They pointed to the fact that "many of the area's over 100,000 Mexican American population were without adequate housing and other important social and economic benefits currently enjoyed by San

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<sup>260</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the implications of class division within the Mexican American community in San Jose and the role played by the Fiesta de Las Rosas in uncovering those divisions see Joseph A. Rodriguez, "Ethnicity and the Horizontal City: Mexican Americans and the Chicano Movement in San Jose, California," *Journal of Urban History*, Jul 1, 1995, 597-621.

Jose's other 300,000 citizens.”<sup>261</sup> They viewed the event as imperialistic and Eurocentric, promoting a white and Spanish history of the city that ignored the many social and economic problems impacting Latinos in the city, county, and country.

As a way of showing their opposition to the FDLR, Chicano activists gathered at the event in protest on June 1, 1969. Once the procession passed them where they waited, on the corner of First and Santa Clara Street, demonstrators began moving with and making their way into the parade. Police officers took harsh action. One reporter noted, “In an effort to clear the streets the police charged the gathering crowd from behind with their clubs extended. Motorcycles weaved perilously through the crowd chasing people back to the curb.”<sup>262</sup> Mexican American demonstrators were beaten and arrested, protestors—in an attempt to protect themselves—hurled chairs and other items that soon littered the street. The scuffle between police and demonstrators lasted about fifteen minutes, with officers chasing protestors for two blocks along the parade route. When the confrontation ended, “17 chicanos were arrested, three were hospitalized, while several others also suffered slight injuries.” It was estimated that some 75,000 people attended the event; roughly 100 of them were protestors, representing some thirty-five Bay Area Chicano organizations. Police claimed they were attacked and were therefore forced to “initiate riot procedures.”<sup>263</sup> Those arrested were charged with a variety of crimes including “assaulting an officer, assault with a deadly weapon, rioting, in addition to disturbing the peace, conspiracy and resisting arrest.”<sup>264</sup> The event helped solidify stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans as criminals who needed to be controlled and contributed

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<sup>261</sup> Albert Krebs, “fiesta de las rosas,” *Bronce Magazine*, vol.1 no.4, June 1969, 2-3.

<sup>262</sup> Albert Krebs, “fiesta de las rosas,” *Bronce Magazine*, vol.1, no.4, June 1969.

<sup>263</sup> Albert Krebs, “fiesta de las rosas,” *Bronce Magazine*, vol.1, no.4, June 1969.

<sup>264</sup> Albert Krebs, “fiesta de las rosas,” *Bronce Magazine*, vol.1, no.4, June 1969.

to “clouded” visions of ethnic Mexicans held by elected officials.<sup>265</sup> These reports, along with others, served as a “racial projects” that essentialized ethnic Mexicans in the city as trouble makers.<sup>266</sup>

After their violent encounter with the police, Mexican Americans and Chicano youth gathered at an East San Jose church and discussed the event. The violence of the FDLR and the sporadic meeting gave birth to one of San Jose and Santa Clara County’s best coalition-building organizations. Black Beret founder Jesse Dominguez recalled, “[t]hat night, after we took our beating we went over to Guadalupe Church [on the Eastside] to lick our wounds. And that’s when there was the birth of *La Confederacion de la Raza Unida* [Confederation of the United Latino People].”<sup>267</sup> Within a year, the *Confederacioin de la Raza Unida* (CRU) opened an office in downtown, just above the Model Cities office, and represented not only a majority of organizations in San Jose but the county as well. As one community member declared, “the Confederation is a blanket organization representing 90% of them in Santa Clara County. The organization helps people with different problems to improve all of the Spanish-speaking community.”<sup>268</sup> By 1971 the CRU represented over 200,00 Mexican Americans in Santa Clara County and was comprised of various social groups with members coming from various political, civic, religious, and educational backgrounds.<sup>269</sup> “Even conservative, liberal and ultra-liberal Chicano leaders have come together under the auspices of *La Confederacion* to

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<sup>265</sup> Stephen Pitti, *Devil in the Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 175.

<sup>266</sup> For information on “racial projects” see: Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “The Theory of Racial Formation” in *Racial Formation in the United States 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* (New York: Routledge Press, 2015), 105-136.

<sup>267</sup> Oral history of Jesse Dominguez as quoted in Arturo Villarreal, *Black Berets for Justice*, 98-99.

<sup>268</sup> Antonio S. Gomez, “M.A.C.O.” *El Excéntrico*, May 5, 1970.

<sup>269</sup> Aaron Cavin, “The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Race and Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2012), 489.



resolve their differences and form a united front,” commented Luis Juarez.<sup>270</sup> Arguably more successful than any other organization in forming a strong coalition among the diverse interests in San Jose and Santa Clara County, the CRU was highly involved and at the forefront of several protests and lawsuits during the 1970s.

One of the first events in San Jose the CRU helped organize led to the galvanization of Mexican Americans and Chicanos around a common cause. It occurred three months after the FDLR parade. On September 2, 1969 Superior Court Judge Gerald Chargin of San Jose attracted the anger and frustration of Mexican Americans and Chicanos throughout the city, county, and state. When presiding over a case where a young Mexican American was charged with incest, the judge spewed a mouthful of racist and derogatory words that made national headlines. After pleading guilty, the minor was asked to stand along with his parents. Chargin began reprimanding the youth by stating that having sexual intercourse with one’s sister is terribly wrong and one of the worst actions a person might engage in. Chargin asked the minor if he ever went to church and questioned his moral upbringing, then went on to degrade the young man. “You are just an animal. You are lower than an animal. Even animals don’t do that. You are pretty low.”<sup>271</sup>

These statements were harsh and demeaning but were aimed at one individual; had he stopped there, perhaps the case would never have made national headlines. But Chargin continued. “Mexican people, after 13 years of age, it’s perfectly all right to go

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<sup>270</sup> Luis Juarez, “Mexican-American Notes: Chicanos Gain Ground Through Non-Violence,” *San Jose Mercury News*, March 4, 1973.

<sup>271</sup> *State of California v. Paul Pete Casillas (minor)*. Transcript, Exhibit “A,” 5. Accessed online: [https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin\\_12-18-691.pdf](https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin_12-18-691.pdf)

out and act like an animal.”<sup>272</sup> At this point the judge moved beyond addressing the individual and expressed a prejudicial slander against all people of Mexican descent. He continued, “We ought to send you out of the country—send you back to Mexico...Maybe Hitler was right. The animals in our society probably ought to be destroyed because they have no right to live among human beings.”<sup>273</sup> Latinos in San Jose interpreted Chargin’s words as a direct attack on them and their culture. Judge Chargin suggested that sending the young man, or any other Mexican American charged with a crime, could and should be sent back to Mexico, overlooking how his statements reeked of nativism and racism.<sup>274</sup>

For the next several years Mexican Americans across the state held protests in their localities; many made the trip to San Jose from as far as Los Angeles to call for the judge’s removal. In March 1970 the Chicanos Issues Coordination Committee of San Jose held a press conference announcing a mass demonstration in San Jose and multiple cities in California on March 25 calling for the judge’s removal. Assemblyman Alex P. Garcia of Los Angeles and American GI Forum national president Dr. Hector P. Garcia of Texas were just two of the major Mexican American figures who joined 600 other

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<sup>272</sup> State of California v. Paul Pete Casillas (minor). Transcript, Exhibit “A,” 5. Accessed online: [https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin\\_12-18-691.pdf](https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin_12-18-691.pdf)

<sup>273</sup> State of California v. Paul Pete Casillas (minor). Transcript, Exhibit “A,” 5. Accessed online: [https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin\\_12-18-691.pdf](https://www.oal.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Chargin_12-18-691.pdf)

<sup>274</sup> For information on the deportation and repatriation of ethnic Mexicans during the 1930s see: Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Francisco E. Balerrama, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2006).

dissidents in downtown San Jose during the demonstration.<sup>275</sup> The CRU helped promote the event and many individual and organizational members participated in the protest.

The Chargin incident was a major turning point for the San Jose Chicano Movement because it garnered attention far away from the South Bay and made the plight of San Josean Chicanos visible to other Chicanos across the state and the greater Southwest. The CRU primarily functioned as a support group during the early months of the Chargin incident as the group began to organize itself. Within a year, however, the coalition established itself as a major player in the South Bay's Chicano Movement.

One of the first major social projects undertaken by the CRU was to democratize the spaces where Latinos could live in Santa Clara County. Primarily through litigation, the CRU fought to secure affordable housing for Latinos in places that excluded them, both, within San Jose and throughout Santa Clara County.<sup>276</sup> With mixed success, the CRU pressured wealthy, affluent suburbs in the South Bay like Los Altos Hills and Saratoga to make living in their locales more accessible to the poor. According to the CRU, these suburbs, among others, discriminated against Latinos by not providing affordable housing. Class and race were highly intertwined as ethnic Mexicans made up a significant portion of Santa Clara County and San Jose's most economically vulnerable population. Affluent suburbs in the county were zoned for single-family residential units

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<sup>275</sup> Rudy Belloumini, "Critica Social," *El Excéntrico*, March 20, 1970; Rudy Belloumini, "Critica Social," *El Excéntrico*, April 5, 1970.

<sup>276</sup> The CRU was highly involved in myriad issues affecting ethnic Mexicans in San Jose and Santa Clara County. For example, they demanded better job opportunities by calling for job quotas in city and county agencies, organized protests, fought for better representation by challenging census counts and supporting district elections, and even defended undocumented people within the ethnic-Mexican community. News coverage of the CRU by the *San Jose Mercury News* can be found in the California Room at San Jose State University in selective Microfiche films.

or provided very little in terms of affordable housing that, either by chance or design, excluded Latinos.

In late 1970, Los Altos Mayor Walter Benson explained that since incorporation (1956) the suburb had committed itself to preserving open space in the quaint town. The township was committed to single-family residential living with homes built on plots of land no less than one-acre in the effort to protect its neighboring hillside. CRU spokesman, and future president, Jack Ybarra disagreed with the mayor's premise that large lot sizes protected the environment and that low-income housing would destroy it. In an effort to force Los Altos Hills to adopt more accessible zoning laws the CRU sued Los Altos Hills that same year. Ybarra clearly stated the lawsuit to overturn the suburb's single-family residential zoning ordinance and build affordable housing was not meant to "destroy the ecology of scenic Los Altos Hills, but to let poor folks enjoy the scenery, too."<sup>277</sup> After two years, the lawsuit to democratize space and housing in picturesque Los Altos Hills concluded in 1973 with U.S. District Judge Stanley Weigel ruling in favor of Los Altos. He argued that zoning was discriminatory on the basis of economic income, and therefore, discriminated against everyone equally and ruled that "zoning affects [Mexican Americans] not because of their ancestry, but because significant numbers fall under poverty income lines."<sup>278</sup> The issue would remain tied up in appeals courts for

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<sup>277</sup> Ron Miller, "Los...", *San Jose Mercury News*, Monday, December 21, 1970, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Aaron Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Race and Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley," Ph.D diss., 2012, 489-533.

<sup>278</sup> Karen, "Court Upholds Town Zoning; Appeal Set," *San Jose Mercury News*, February 17, 1973, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; "La Raza Appeals Bias Suit: Ruling Favors Los Altos Hills," April 7, 1973; "CRU is Pressing Hills Zoning Suit," *San Jose Mercury News*, April 9, 1973, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Karen Klinger, "Hills...", *San Jose Mercury News*, November 21, 1972, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

another two years before the issue was ultimately dropped by the CRU because it could no longer afford to continue paying the legal fees.<sup>279</sup>

Despite the loss, action taken by the CRU demonstrated a couple of key characteristics. First, the lawsuit revealed a willingness to challenge the status quo, a ubiquitous quality found within the Chicano generation. Second, utilizing the courts and the appeals process showed a level of sophistication within the Chicano Movement in San Jose where, in the attempt to disrupt the accepted reality of segregation, the CRU maneuvered through a very establishmentarian channel—the effort to establish “radical” change was carried out with an institutional tactic. And third, the lawsuit showed ethnic Mexicans attempting to carve out and establish more permanent spaces for themselves outside of San Jose and within Santa Clara County’s suburbs.

In early 1971, just a few months after the initial suit against Los Altos Hills, the CRU put pressure on Saratoga, another wealthy, predominantly white, Santa Clara County suburb to consider affordable housing. Saratoga had adopted a new housing plan that newly elected CRU President, Jack Ybarra, challenged as “exclusionary” and restricted to the upper class. Indeed, one of Saratoga’s anticipated housing developments marketed housing at no less than 75,000 dollars, equivalent to 530,000 dollars today. The minimal multi-family units proposed were luxury rentals out of low-income families’ price range. In addition, Saratoga had sent eviction notices to fifteen farmworker families who resided in a cluster community in Galeb Camp, located near the city’s shrinking prune and apricot orchards. Speaking before Saratoga’s city council, Ybarra demanded that the city provide housing for lower-income families (like the recently evicted) or face

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<sup>279</sup> “Town’s Zone Law Under New Attack,” *San Jose Mercury News*, April 10, 1975, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

a lawsuit that would delay much needed federal funding for highway construction. As a concession, Saratoga government officials agreed to find housing for the fifteen families evicted from Galeb Camp. The CRU viewed this as a successful outcome and gave Saratoga credit for taking housing discrimination and affordable housing in the county seriously. In fact, according to Ybarra, “Saratoga [was] the first city in Santa Clara County to realize that zoning should recognize human rights.”<sup>280</sup>

Historian Aaron Cavin provides a detailed analysis of both these lawsuits, arguing that the CRU “departed from the strategies and political visions of the CSO” and other groups like MAPA. He contends that the major difference between the CRU and previous organizations was that the CRU challenged segregation more directly and explicitly, to carve out space for Latinos and other poor minorities in the county’s suburban landscape. He acknowledges that many ethnic Mexicans throughout the Southwest voluntarily chose to settle in racially segregated neighborhoods or enclaves, “the CRU’s political and legal emphasis on attacking laws that perpetuated segregation represented a shift in political thinking about metropolitan space.”<sup>281</sup>

While I agree with Cavin’s assessment, he neglected to acknowledge the relationship between low-income housing, the suburbs, and San Jose. In addition to suing Los Altos and Saratoga, the CRU also sued the City of San Jose, along with members of the city council, the local housing authority, and the Housing and Urban Development area director, among others. However, the lawsuit was not challenging zoning ordinances

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<sup>280</sup> Jeanette Befame, “La Raza Praises Saratoga,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 21, 1971, Confederacion de La Raza, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; “La Raza Leader Lauds Saratoga,” *San Jose Mercury*, August 21, 1971, San Jose-Affordable Housing, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; “Saratoga Housing Plan Hit,” *San Jose Mercury News*, July 17, 1970 Aaron Cavin, “The Borders of Citizenship: The Politics of Race and Metropolitan Space in Silicon Valley,” Ph.D diss., 2012, 489-533.

<sup>281</sup> Aaron Cavin, “The Borders of Citizenship,” 511-512.

or calling for more affordable housing—instead, the legal action demanded that housing for the poor be more equally distributed throughout the city. The lawsuit, filed in September 1971, maintained that low-cost housing in the city was overwhelmingly concentrated in San Jose’s Eastside—just over 70 percent of all the housing units leased by the San Jose Housing Authority (1,045) were located east of First Street. According to the CRU, the clustering of low-income housing in the downtown and Eastside neighborhoods violated the 1937 Federal Housing Act that sought improve the living conditions of low-income families.<sup>282</sup> By filing the lawsuit, the CRU charged the City of San Jose, its local government officials, and the housing authority of purposefully bunching its poorest residents into particular spaces that magnified socioeconomic problems and racial segregation. In fact, Ybarra had bluntly asked in 1970, before filing the lawsuit: “Why can’t the poor live in the Almaden Valley or on the West side and see the mountains instead of looking out on a bar or gas station?”<sup>283</sup> The CRU sued so that low-income housing would be “scattered” throughout all of San Jose and not isolated to downtown and the Eastside; coupled with the CRU’s actions in the suburbs, the organization clearly attempted to move Latinos into spaces previously believed or understood as inaccessible.

Cavin also argues that the CRU and county Chicanos made claims to suburban land by reclaiming an indigenous identity that made them transnational peoples. Like other Chicanos across the Southwest, South Bay Chicanos claimed an identity with the Mexica people whose mythical homeland, Aztlán, was believed to be in the lands lost to

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<sup>282</sup> “Scattering Wanted...La Raza...,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 15, 1971, Confederacion de La Raza Unida, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>283</sup> “Scatter Low-Cost Housing,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 10, 1970.

Mexico in the U.S.-Mexico War.<sup>284</sup> Specifically, Cavin contends that the CRU claimed the county's suburban space as part of Aztlán and in doing so, Chicanos asserted "a borderlands political identity in metropolitan space [and] represented a shift in Mexican Americans' transnational imagination."<sup>285</sup> Staking claims to suburbia as part of Aztlán, Chicanos embraced indigeneity as part of their identity, and, in turn, became an American-born transnational peoples.<sup>286</sup> A CRU article made the connection to the county's suburbs and Aztlán unequivocally clear when the author wrote, "[w]e are indigenous to the land. We are part of Aztlán."<sup>287</sup>

Reclaiming the Southwest as indigenous land of U.S.-born Chicanos might have been abstract—but the purpose for claiming the South Bay's suburban space as part of Aztlán was very concrete. Chicanos, and in particular those in the CRU, claimed the land as a way to secure a place for themselves throughout the county and legitimize their calls for affordable housing. Identifying with Chicano indigeneity marked a distinct difference between the transnational identity of previous generations.

Cavin suggests this shift in ideology and strategy meant leaving behind past understandings that asserted ties with Mexico by building a *Mexico de afuera* through cultural nationalism.<sup>288</sup> However, this line of thinking neglects consideration of the continued (im)migration from Mexico that fed the reinvigoration of Mexican culture with the arrival of successive generations of Mexican-born people to the United States.<sup>289</sup> In

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<sup>284</sup> Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship," 517-524.

<sup>285</sup> Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship," 522.

<sup>286</sup> Renya K. Ramirez describes Native Americans from San Jose and Northern California identifying as transnational peoples. For more information see: Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>287</sup> Confederacion de la Raza Unida, "El Boletin," 2. As cited in Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship," 517.

<sup>288</sup> Cavin, "The Borders of Citizenship," 522.

<sup>289</sup> David Gutieérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).



San Jose and Santa Clara County, both of these transnational understandings operated simultaneously during the 1970s. In fact, as was common, in 1973 squabbles within the community emerged around sponsorship and planning of the *fiestas patrias*. After a meeting in early August, groups within the community agreed that the CRU would be the association applying for the parade permits. The other two groups working to organize the event were the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* and the *Veteranos de la Revolución, 1910-1920*, groups committed to upholding ties to Mexico and promoting Mexican nationalism.<sup>290</sup> The new indigenous identity was highly utilized by those who identified as Chicanos, especially among the youth, while the more “Mexican” cultural identity was embraced by many in the ethnic Mexican community who identified as Mexican, Mexican American, and even Chicano.

In earlier decades, during the 1950s and into the 1960s, ethnic Mexicans had demonstrated their transnational character by promoting *mexicanidad* as a cultural-political tool to claim space downtown so they might be acknowledged and recognized as part of the city’s community at-large. However, by the 1970s with the disinvestment in downtown and investment in the city’s sprawling western and southern suburban peripheries they no longer needed to claim space downtown. Albeit due to de facto segregation as a result of a white exodus away from the core, neighborhoods near and around downtown—like El Ganso—were now highly populated by ethnic Mexicans. San Jose’s Eastside had always been a Latino stronghold and became synonymous with “Mexicans” in the 1970s. Ethnic Mexicans in San Jose maintained a cultural hybridity in their communities that demonstrated their belonging to both U.S. society and *Mexico de*

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<sup>290</sup> “Mexican Independence Parade Hassle Settled,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 6, 1973.

*afuera*—in a sense, they also utilized this duality to reach into more suburban spaces throughout the northwestern region of the county.

As San Jose’s Mexican Americans solidified their identity throughout the 1970s, they continued to push the boundaries of what it really meant to be an American of Mexican descent. Their transnational character allowed them to think in bigger terms and imagine large possibilities for themselves and their communities. Despite the growth that exacerbated segregation and the shifting economy, the Mexican American business class and entrepreneurs continued to grow and search for ways to improve their personal wealth along with the social, cultural, economic, and political position of the entire community. The formation of a San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce in the early 1970s demonstrated ethnic Mexicans’ abilities to think beyond borders when entering into enterprise and building community.

### **From Mexican to Mexican American Businessmen**

The Mexican Chamber of Commerce (MCC) had been sporadically active in San Jose since its founding, never demonstrating that it could be more than a shadow organization of the *Comisión*. In 1969, however, there was a “reorganization” of the MCC and for two years it held a steady presence in the community with more frequent ads and announcements in *El Excéntrico*. The MCC held more frequent and consistent public meetings and encouraged local business owners to join by hosting membership drives and awards dinners for members. The Spanish-speaking business community continued to grow with several services and businesses opening to promote small business and help entrepreneurs. These services and businesses included the federally

funded Office of Minority Business Enterprises in San Jose and the opening of the Banco San Jose, a local bank owned and operated by Spanish-speakers. The venture of opening a bank owned and operated by Spanish-speakers for the Latino community was an ambitious task but other ethnic minorities had succeeded in similar enterprises in the past. (Indeed, Bank of America first started as the Bank of Italy in San Francisco in 1904 and established its first branch outside the city in nearby San Jose in 1909 to provide financial services for Italian immigrants and their community).

Despite failing to make clear its purpose, the MCC attempted to assert itself as an independent organization with its own ambitions for clout and authority in San Jose's Spanish-speaking community. In 1970 the MCC broke with the *Comisión* and attempted to sponsor its own *fiestas patrias*. The celebrations were still sites of contention where organizations and individuals squabbled to assert themselves as leaders and representatives of the community. In this particular year, the celebration was a flashpoint of friction and fracture within the community that highlighted mounting internal struggles and tensions over issues of identity, class, and citizenship. In 1970 the number of Mexican Americans greatly outnumbered the Mexican nationals in the city.<sup>291</sup> Just as the *Comisión* made concessions during the 1950s to allow Mexican Americans to serve on the executive board because of their growing influence, it can be speculated that during

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<sup>291</sup> The information presented here was attained by using both, the printed Census and Census information tabulated by the database Social Explorer (SE). The numbers tabulated by SE are derived from the 1970 U.S. Census and correlate to Santa Clara County. U.S. Census Table P1 (186,525 Total Spanish Language or Spanish Origin population in Santa Clara County); U.S. Census Table P7 (97,637 Total Spanish Language or Spanish Origin population in San Jose). With these two figures, San Jose is home to roughly 52% of the county's Latino population. This number is closer to 68% if you eliminate those living in unincorporated areas. SE:T134 Country of Origin and Nativity (14,292 Foreign-born Mexicans, 671 Foreign-born Cubans, 2,909 Foreign-born Other America. These total to 17,872). If we proportion the total foreign-born population to the Spanish Origin population in San Jose you arrive at 8,936. Therefore, the foreign-born Latino population of San Jose is just over 9%.

the 1970s Mexican American business owners played an increasingly important role in the MCC as Mexican American membership increased. More Mexican American membership in the MCC might explain the fracture between the two organizations. Despite trying to come into its own, efforts by the MCC were short lived and the organization soon faded out of the public eye.

However, the Mexican American community in San Jose and across the Southwest was growing and so was their business community. Mexican American and other Latino businesses were sprouting across the United States during the 1970s as new immigrants made their way north from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. While Latinos in San Jose stabilized and populated neighborhoods, maintaining local economies, Latin American migration to the United States as a whole slowly began repopulating and stabilizing neighborhoods across the country. As such, more Latino entrepreneurs opened businesses in their neighborhoods to fulfill the catering and social-cultural needs of the spaces where they lived. With a growing Spanish-speaking population across the country and a high concentration of ethnic Mexicans in the Southwest, a movement to unify the entire Spanish-speaking business community in Mexico's old territory emerged out of Northern California, with San Jose playing a crucial role.

In 1972 a National Mexican American Chamber of Commerce (NMACC) was founded; organizers established its headquarters in Stockton, California. By 1973 the NMACC was comprised of at least three chapters in California—Stockton, Sacramento, and Los Angeles—and looked to San Jose as one of its next potential sites for expansion in the Golden State. Two of the NMACC's Executive Board members organized a

meeting with eight members of San Jose’s Mexican American business community at the Old Mexico Restaurant at 3166 Monterey Road in San Jose. NMACC President, George Mosqueda, and Executive Director, Joe Flores, explained that “states such as Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Oregon, Florida, Kansas, and New York were already organizing local chapters” to build clout for the national organization.<sup>292</sup> The process might have appeared backward, establishing a national chamber before the foundation of local chapters, but the existence of a national organization—even if just in name—helped motivate and encourage small business owners to found local organizations, knowing they were helping to build the NMACC. Local chapters were to champion the mission and purpose of the National at home, while their strength at the local level would reinforce the National. In the words of John Zamora, President of the San Jose MACC for its first five years,

The new chapters and groupings of all the other states under the National MACC umbrella would give Mexican American owned businesses a powerful vehicle for negotiating change and advancing their interests into the mainstream of Economic Development across the country. The goals of the local chapters would be to serve the same function withing their local communities, to build membership, leadership and survival programs for Mexican American owned businesses and as a non-profit organization, be the voice of small businesses in their local communities.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> John Zamora, “The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973,” n.d, in my possession, 1.

<sup>293</sup> John Zamora, “The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973,” n.d, in my possession, 1.

By the end of the meeting eight people in attendance signed on as founding members and selected a temporary executive board.<sup>294</sup>

While a Mexican Chamber of Commerce existed in San Jose since 1955 it was dormant and non-existent by 1973 when the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce was founded. Rudy Belloumini was a member of the MCC and was elected as the MACC's first Publicity Chairman. However, aside from Belloumini's membership, no other connection existed between the old MCC and the new MACC. In fact, there existed a level of professionalism and accountability that distinguished the old from the new. In the initial meeting with the NMACC, George Mosqueda made clear that "[t]he Board of Directors of each new chapter had to be a no-nonsense group dedicated to serving the membership and the community" and needed to avoid promoting personal agendas over the interests of the community as a whole.<sup>295</sup> John Zamora, the SJMACC's first elected president, commented that prior to the MACC, Spanish-speaking businesses gathered occasionally to celebrate events in the city, but the events "were poorly organized and often were marred by deceit and fraud to the benefit of the organizers and involved much dissention and infighting among the different groups as a result."<sup>296</sup> In contrast, the

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<sup>294</sup> Handwritten notes show the signatures of the following individuals: Rudy Belloumini, Noe Longoria, Angie Martinez, Juan Espinosa, Mary Esther Sanchez, Joseph Calderon, Juan (John) Zamora, and Henry A. Verdugo. These notes in conjunction with typed notes document the following: President, Juan Espinosa; Vice President, John Zamora; Secretary-Treasurer, Angie Martinez; Publicity Chairman, Rudy Belloumini; Industrial Professional Chairman, Joseph Calderon; Booking Chairman, Mary Esther; Unnamed position, Henry A. Verdugo. "Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Meeting Minutes," [handwritten] April 2, 1973 (in my possession); "Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Meeting Minutes," [typed] April 2, 1973, 1 (in my possession).

<sup>295</sup> John Zamora, "The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973," [n.d, in my possession], 1.

<sup>296</sup> John Zamora, "The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973," [n.d, in my possession], 1

MACC sought to conduct itself in a different manner and quickly proved successful in promoting small business improving the status of Mexican Americans in San Jose.

During its first year, the SJMACC struggled to make headway within the community and with the city of San Jose. According to Zamora, people were wary about joining the MACC because they did not see the benefit, or they conflated the MACC with the old MCC and other organizations that had proved unsuccessful in bringing projects to fruition. If establishing legitimacy and professionalism was the goal, it did not help that the MACC's first office had been located in the home of Treasurer-Secretary Mary Esther. In addition, the city council, San Jose Greater Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Small Business Association refused to acknowledge the need for another business organization. Despite the difficulties, Zamora and the MACC forged on, moving their office to the Vintage Towers on Santa Clara Street in downtown San Jose, building their credibility by creating a logo that was placed on stationary and business cards, and especially addressing the problems of their thirty members.<sup>297</sup>

Over the following two years, the MACC gained tremendous momentum and earned the respect of the local business community and city government. Re-elected to a second and third term, Zamora began a public relations campaign that involved going into the community and explaining the MACC's purpose and goals to Latinos, small business owners (of diverse racial backgrounds), the Greater San Jose Chamber of Commerce, and city council members. He explained to everyone that the MACC "wanted to become part of the mainstream in the community, and participate in the process of the governmental decision-making in matters of economic development within our

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<sup>297</sup> John Zamora, "The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973," [n.d, in my possession], 2.

community.”<sup>298</sup> In a way, the MACC operated as a business-oriented organization that functioned as part of the larger Chicano Movement in San Jose and beyond.

The MACC looked to improve the social, cultural, economic, and political position of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose—but as a business organization it also sought to help all small enterprises. Sometime during the 1970s the MACC distributed a bilingual brochure that explained its history, goals, and services. In addition, the pamphlet made clear that the business organization maintained its Mexican American label to “act as a voice that has the respect of not only the small business man but all ethnic groups as well as civil-industrial organizations, for the betterment of *everyone* in the City of San Jose, and Santa Clara County [emphasis mine].”<sup>299</sup> Just as others had done before him, Zamora utilized his Mexican culture to access the social and political capital that came with it. Unlike his predecessors, however, Zamora used this capital to not only uplift Latinos, but also other business owners of different backgrounds. The MACC, through business, attempted to bring Mexican Americans, Mexican nationals, other minority groups, and small business owners to the forefront of conversation for larger businesses and city officials so that the needs of small businesses and minorities be met.

Although this strategy—using business to establish credibility with the “mainstream” business class and local government—had been utilized by ethnic Mexican leadership in the past, the MACC managed to achieve greater legitimacy and respect from the city’s movers and shakers. As part of the MACC’s publicity campaign, the organization spearheaded a membership drive, incorporated as a non-profit, and established an Advisory Board. Through the growth campaign the organization

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<sup>298</sup> Interview with John G. Zamorra, August 21, 2021.

<sup>299</sup> “What is MACC?” brochure [n.d., in my possession].



multiplied nearly ten-fold, demonstrating not only tenacity but also a desire by local small businesses to participate. In 1975 the *San Jose Mercury-News* reported the membership campaign “raised the total of small business firms represented to more than 250.” “From a one-man operation,” the article continued, “the Chamber has also outgrown its first two locations, is now established at 416 N. First St. and has a staff including three full-time secretaries.”<sup>300</sup> In fact, after just two years of operation the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce celebrated more membership than the Los Angeles Mexican American Chamber of Commerce that traced its history to the 1930s.<sup>301</sup> President Zamora reflected that in 1975 the San Jose MACC became “the darling chapter of the National Organization.”<sup>302</sup>

Increase in membership grew from tremendous effort on the part of the MACC executive board, but announcing an advisory board and its members truly improved the perception of the organization. Zamora recalled that people did not trust the MACC but the advisory board, especially because of who was on it, provided much needed legitimacy.<sup>303</sup> Letters were sent out to recognized and respected members of San Jose’s elite class asking for participation in the MACC’s advisory committee. Former city manager Anthony “Dutch” Hamann—who had done so much to shape the development of the city and the region—received such a letter and accepted the role. By May 28, 1975 the MACC Advisory Committee was complete and included thirteen members comprised of two Santa Clara County Supervisors, officials of the *San Jose Mercury News*, the

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<sup>300</sup> “Zamora Chosen by C of C,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 15, 1975.

<sup>301</sup> John G. Zamora, “The President’s Column,” *La Camara*, January/February, Volume 1 No. 1 (San Jose, CA: Directory Publications, 1975), 21.

<sup>302</sup> John Zamora, “The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973,” [n.d. in my possession], 3.

<sup>303</sup> Interview with John Zamora, March 5, 2017.

largest development company in San Jose, a city council member, and the President of the San Jose Chamber of Commerce.<sup>304</sup>

As the MACC expanded, President John Zamora looked to extend services and expand operations but needed funding to help pay for increased activity. After some inquiries, Zamora realized securing financial support from the city required incorporation, a step that further legitimized the MACC. On January 1, 1975, Articles of Incorporation for the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce were filed with the State of California. The MACC was recognized as a non-profit whose “primary purposes are to promote Mexican-American business, industry, commerce and culture in the City of San Jose, County of Santa Clara, State of California, and the United States of America.”<sup>305</sup>

The San Jose MACC thrived locally and soon after Zamora was elected to the Vice President position of the National Mexican American Chamber of Commerce in 1976 he worked to transnationalize his local chapter. Zamora’s work with the national chamber certainly influenced his thought process regarding the potential scope and reach the San Jose chapter possessed—his identity as a Mexican American and ability to speak Spanish opened doors for the San Jose MACC to establish connections and develop relationships with Mexico. In 1975 Zamora began conversations with Mayor Janet Gray

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<sup>304</sup> San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce: Advisory Committee, n.d, in Anthony Hamann Papers, Santa Clara University, Box 1, Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Folder; San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce: Letter from John Zamora to Anthony Hamann, April 10, 1975, in Anthony Hamann Papers, Santa Clara University, Box 1, Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Folder; San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce: Letter from Anthony Hamann to John Zamora, May 5, 1975, in Anthony Hamann Papers, Santa Clara University, Box 1, Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Folder; San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce: Letter from Anthony Hamann to John Zamora, May 28, 1975, in Anthony Hamann Papers, Santa Clara University, Box 1, Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Folder; John Zamora, “The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years, 1973,” [n.d, in my possession], 3-4.

<sup>305</sup> “Articles of Incorporation of Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce of the City of San Jose, State of California,” January 1, 1975 [in my possession].

Hayes to establish a Sister City Program with the city of Veracruz in Mexico. In early 1976 Zamora, along with other MACC members, were greeted at the Veracruz airport by members of the city's own chamber of commerce. The next few days were spent rubbing elbows with Veracruz city officials and local business leaders. At the welcome reception, Zamora was presented with keys to Veracruz and he delivered letters of introduction from Mayor Hayes and Ned Cicciu, President of Pacific Neighbors, the Sister City coordinators. When the delegation returned, Zamora commented, "The people were so friendly and beautiful that a close friendship was developed in the short time we were there."<sup>306</sup> Through the Sister City Program, Zamora and the MACC established a government-sponsored transnational connection between San Jose and Veracruz; as a Mexican American, Zamora imagined the possibility for cultural and economic exchange to extend beyond San Jose and the United States.<sup>307</sup> Zamora's work at the local and national levels solidified the shifting influence of Latino businessmen from Mexican-born and Mexican nationals to Mexican Americans.

While the initial visit from the MACC delegation to Veracruz demonstrated efforts to export American culture and ideas to Mexico, Zamora and the MACC also worked to bring Mexico to San Jose. Early on, between 1973 and 1974 there were efforts by the MACC to build a Mexican-themed complex along First Street in downtown to provide services, leisure, and retail to the ethnic Mexican population. First, the complex

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<sup>306</sup> "Chamber Delegation to Sana Jose's Sister City," *La Camara*, January/February, Volume 1 No. 1 (San Jose, CA: Directory Publications, 1975), 21.

<sup>307</sup> In 1978, San Jose Mayor, Janet Gray Hayes made the trip to Veracruz herself to visit San Jose's Sister City. Later, in 1982, ex-Major League Baseball player Roberto Avila Gonzalez (known as Bobby Avila of the Cleveland Indians and former American League batting champion) visited San Jose as Mayor of Veracruz. The mutual visits demonstrate a clear effort to maintain transnational relationships between local government officials. In addition, during the 1980s a shopping center in Veracruz was named "Plaza San Jose" as a recognition of the relationship between the two cities.

was to serve as the site for San Jose's Mexican Consulate, providing assistance to Mexican nationals throughout the city, county and Northern California region south of San Francisco. And second, the proposed building would also provide retail space vendors and restaurant owners to help revitalize downtown. Reading through the proposal, proponents of the project visualized businesses promoting Mexican culture occupying the majority of available space. In doing so, the complex would centralize ethnic Mexican culture, economic and political activity, and social gatherings. While not explicitly stated, an clear intended purpose of the space was to revitalize downtown by appealing to the transnational character of ethnic Mexicans residing in San Jose and Santa Clara County.

The proposed project was endorsed by local government officials like Santa Clara County Supervisor Dominic Cortese and San Jose Councilman Alfredo Garza, and letters of support were sent to Miles Maynard of the State of California Department of Transportation in San Francisco.<sup>308</sup> John W. Hamilton, the Project Management Director of the San Jose City Manager's Office, also wrote to Mr. Maynard, "As far as we are concerned, Mr. Zamora's idea for the Mexican Village seems to agree with our objectives for the core area to provide and encourage new development, especially those which are oriented to providing new life and activity."<sup>309</sup> After two decades of divestment in downtown, San Jose city officials looked to increase foot traffic and vitality in the old business district; small Latino businesses did enough to keep their local economy afloat but did little to attract visitors from outside the area. Local officials looked favorably

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<sup>308</sup> Letter from Dominic Cortese, October 31, 1973 [in my possession]; Letter from Alfredo Garza to Miles Maynard, State of California Department of Transportation, July 29, 1974 [in my possession].

<sup>309</sup> Letter from John W. Hamilton to Miles Maynard, November 1, 1973 [in my possession].

upon Zamora's proposal of a new "Mexican Village" downtown because it would stimulate social, cultural, and economic activity in the abandoned business district. They recognized the potential social, cultural, and economic activity of local ethnic Mexicans and those visiting from throughout the county, state, and beyond but also hoped the development might bring the "mainstream" white community back to the urban core as well. Zamora's proposal and emphasis on downtown improvement and revitalization echoed the effort made by Luis Juarez half-a-decade before with the promotion of the Fiesta de las Rosas.

Despite broad support in the early 1970s the project never came to fruition. But continued Mexican immigration and a growing Mexican American population in San Jose encouraged other efforts to maintain transnational connections. A 1977 memorandum revealed continued efforts by Zamora and the MACC to bring a Mexican-themed complex to downtown San Jose. The memorandum more explicitly detailed the "Mexican" nature of the proposed project:

We would like to support a project in San Jose which would permit the *Mexican Government* [my emphasis] to develop the various tourist and industrial attractions of the various states of Mexico. This building could also house the Mexican Consul and become a center of activity in Northern California. The building has a second, third and fourth floor which could be partitioned for the display of Mexican products and services. Field representatives could headquarter in these areas and

originate orders from that location. Trade shows could be held periodically at the location.<sup>310</sup>

The MACC pushed to enhance economic activity downtown and utilized a transnational approach by contacting Mexican government officials directly to attract funding and business back to the old business district. They argued for a space downtown dedicated to Mexican interests that would serve both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants through business and leisure activities. And furthermore, suggesting the site as a home for the Mexican Consulate demonstrates a couple of things: 1) the MACC recognized the need for a building where the newly created Mexican Consulate in San Jose; and 2) the building would be a mixed-use facility, leased by the Mexican government to promote Mexican industry, products, and services to ethnic Mexicans and other interested consumers throughout Northern California. included appealing to their cultural needs that required transnational connections. Unfortunately, this project also suffered defeat but demonstrated the growing aspirations and influence of ethnic Mexicans in working towards providing services and leisure to Mexican nationals, immigrants, and Mexican Americans.

It is worth noting that despite these setbacks, John Zamora and the MACC played a crucial role in successfully connecting the San Jose Chamber of Commerce with the Office of Fairs and Expositions in Mexico. In doing so, Zamora helped bring the first international trade show to San Jose in September 1977. While working as the President of the San Jose MACC, Zamora was also highly involved with the National MACC movement and efforts to procure federal funding. In his work with the National, he met

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<sup>310</sup> W. Robert Morgan, "Memorada," n.d. [in my possession].

the President de Ferias y Exposiciones Mexicanas (PFEM) in Texas during a visit in Texas in 1976 and Zamora asked him to bring a trade show to San Jose. Zamora recalled the PFEM explained to him that the Mexican President, Jose Lopez Portillo, did not enjoy a good relationship with the U.S. government at the time and decided Mexico would only sponsor one trip to the United States in 1977. The trip would be for an annual trade show in San Antonio Texas that existed for more than twenty years and Portillo did not want to break the tradition. However, the PFEM promised to look into the matter.<sup>311</sup>

Later in 1976 PFEM invited Zamora to a celebration in Mexico City where Zamora walked next to President Portillo for the duration of the parade. With a slight chuckle and smile on his face, Zamora recalled in an interview, “ you know, I walked next to President Portillo the whole parade and we didn’t speak to each other. But when it was over, he looked at me shook my hand and said ‘va tener su feria, Señor Zamora.’” To avoid looking weak or like he was going back on his word that Mexico would only visit the U.S one time, the PFEM and Portillo planned a route from San Antonio to San Jose to avoid crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, thus making two stops in one visit.<sup>312</sup> From September 21-25, in conjunction with the Bi-centennial celebration of San Jose’s founding, San Jose hosted over 100 exhibits of Mexican manufacturers and distributors. An advertisement in the San Jose Mercury News reads “MEXPO ’77 EXPOSITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND ARTISTIC EXPORTS OF MEXICO...The first International Trade Fair in the history of Santa Clara County.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Interview with John Zamora, February 27, 2021.

<sup>312</sup> Interview with John Zamora, February 27, 2021.

<sup>313</sup> “MEXPO ’77,” San Jose Mercury News, September 21, 1977.

By the late 1970s the MCC was a relic of the Spanish-speaking business class and the MACC solidified itself as a champion of small business. The MACC struggled to establish itself at first but quickly earned legitimacy among the Spanish-speaking, other minority business owners, and “mainstream” businessmen and government officials alike. Legitimacy allowed the organization to expand membership, making it one of the largest chapters of the National MACC, giving the local chapter influence to gain support for their projects. The MACC utilized transnationalism to establish a Sister City Program with the city of Veracruz, Mexico, and bring the first international trade show to the South Bay.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the 1970s, San Jose’s ethnic Mexican community grew dramatically, and several new organizations formed to address socioeconomic issues exacerbated by a shifting economy. During this period, the Mexican Americans and Chicanos took the reins of political activism from Mexican nationals. However, these younger generations continued to emphasize the transnational character of their community as a mechanism to bring attention to the socioeconomic and political troubles facing Latinos throughout San Jose and Santa Clara County. But the specific ways Chicanos and Mexican Americans drew attention to and identified their transnationalism revealed a more complicated and nuanced understanding of ethnic Mexican identity that was as much connected to generational differences as to conceptualizations of space and place. The CRU, and many Chicano youth, for example, identified with an indigeneity that connected them to an indigenous past located in the South Bay’s suburbs. By claiming suburbia as part of



Aztlán, Chicanos viewed themselves as U.S.-born transnational peoples—they claimed the suburbs as places they deserved (had a right) to live in because they were native to these spaces. The MACC emphasized the need to provide social, cultural, and political spaces for the ethnic Mexican community near downtown. The group's continued effort to assist with providing a brick and mortar location to house the San Jose's Mexican consulate downtown demonstrated the organization's understanding of its immigrant community. The collaboration efforts between the MACC and local government to house the Mexican government office downtown also served San Jose's economic interests. Time and again, projects for a Mexican-themed complex in the urban core suggested the space offer ethnic Mexicans—and others interested in Mexican social-cultural consumption—leisure activity in an attempt to revitalize economic activity in San Jose's old business district.

The CRU and Chicanos emerged as a force to be reckoned with in San Jose and throughout the county, utilizing more direct action to challenge the status quo. Through protests and lawsuits, Chicanos brought attention to the poverty, discrimination, and inequality they experienced throughout the South Bay and especially in its largest city. An "older" Mexican American generation, on the other hand, continued to operate within more prescribed or accepted forms of civic engagement, primarily through the electoral process. They continued to rally behind efforts to elect one of their own to city council and celebrated the appointment and successful reelections of Alfredo Garza throughout the decade. In addition, business-minded individuals continued to utilize a transnational approach to improving the lives of ethnic Mexicans in the city and throughout the South Bay by offering help to small businesses and speaking up on their behalf. The Chicano

Movement in San Jose and Santa Clara County was characterized by a diverse approach to address issues of discrimination and segregation that frequently brought the community together but also highlighted divisions within the community based on understandings of race and class as reflected in the Fiesta de las Rosas parade.

The Chicano Movement in San Jose had its particular issues but it was also part of the larger Movimiento across the state and U.S. Southwest. Chicanos came from throughout the state and beyond to protest racist comments by Judge Chargin—one way San Josean Chicanos connected with the broader movement. However, the most significant connection with and contribution to the struggle for civil rights and equitable representation during the 1970s remained at the ballot box. During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s it was clear that discriminatory at-large elections prevented minorities from sitting at local decision-making tables across the country. San Josean Mexican Americans participated in coalition efforts to eliminate prejudicial at-large elections and move the city towards more representative district elections. This undertaking placed San Jose Mexican American activists alongside other urban Latinos across the Southwest who pushed for better local representation—San Jose’s Chicanos and Mexican Americans became part of the wave that brought district elections to cities across the country.

## Chapter 5: Solidifying Latino Political Representation: San Jose, Eastside, and the Arrival of District Elections

In September of 1980, *El Excéntrico* reprinted a statement made by President Jimmy Carter proclaiming the week containing September 15 and 16 as National Hispanic Heritage Week. President Carter was the fourth president to do so, the observance having begun with Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968 after Congress approved a joint resolution “request[ing] the President to issue annually” a declaration acknowledging the contributions of Hispanics to U.S. society in mid-September.<sup>314</sup> In his 1980 proclamation, President Carter “call[ed] upon Federal, State, and local officials to observe this week with appropriate activities and to search out innovative ways for government to work in partnership with the Hispanic community.”<sup>315</sup>

In San Jose, local officials had already supported the celebration of Mexican culture for nearly four decades, attending the parades and banquets of the fiestas patrias in the city’s downtown to commemorate the Battle of Puebla on May 5 and Mexican Independence on September 16. City Hall solidified its support for Mexican culture in the late 1960s when Mayor Ron James declared the first “Mexican Week” in the middle of September. The fiestas patrias and other social-cultural events during the *Semana Mexicana* served political purposes for the city’s growing middle class and business-minded entrepreneurs of Mexican descent who socialized and mingled with local officials during the observances. San Jose politicians also benefitted from attending the events and

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<sup>314</sup> <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-4516-national-hispanic-heritage-week-1977> [accessed September 30, 2021].

<sup>315</sup> “National Hispanic Heritage Week,” *El Excéntrico*, September, 1980.

providing city recognition by making their names known among their Mexican American constituents.

For San Jose's Latino community, observances like these were viewed as opportunities to establish relationships and thus gain favor with local government officials—and in turn to obtain public resources to improve the community. These Latino civic leaders viewed electoral politics as the way to effect change, but considering the size of the city's Hispanic population, that change seemed very slow in coming. The Mexican American leadership continuously urged the Latino electorate to vote one of their own into city council.

But it was not until the appointment of Alfredo Garza to city council in 1974 that ethnic Mexicans could see themselves represented in local government since prior to statehood in 1850. Notably, Garza was initially *appointed* to the position and only thereafter elected and re-elected to city council—he never would have achieved his political success without first being selected by the city's all-Anglo leadership—this even though he represented a group that made up nearly a quarter of the city's population.<sup>316</sup>

One major reason Latinos and other people of color were consistently frustrated in their efforts to elect one of their own to municipal office was the city's at-large election system. On election day, San Josean citizens turned out from across the city to cast their vote for the council members running for office. Elections were held in alternate years for the even and odd council for the seven-member body. Once the polling locations closed,

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<sup>316</sup> Latinos were the largest minority demographic group in 1980. However, beginning in the 1970s and into the 1980s, San Jose became an arrival city for Vietnamese immigrants who were the city's fastest-growing demographic group. Today, San Jose is home to the largest number of Vietnamese people outside of Vietnam.

ballots were counted and a simple majority determined the city's elected officials. While the at-large system appeared egalitarian, the electoral process favored white candidates from affluent neighborhoods and diminished the chances of victory for minority candidates. This electoral system had been implemented during the late 1910s and over time proved effective in favoring business, development, and growth interests. By the end of the 1970s, however, support for a different electoral process in San Jose gained favor among various social, economic, and ethnoracial groups.

President Carter's invitation for government to work with Hispanics emblemized how the combined efforts of San Jose's minoritized voters and white special interest groups coalesced as the city held its first district elections in November, 1980.

The elimination of the at-large voting system marked the beginning of the end for a white majority city council in San Jose. The arrival of single-member districts provided Latinos with a stronger voice in electing officials to city government and marked the culmination of Mexican American efforts to elect one of their own—without first being appointed—to represent them politically in San Jose. Outlining the arrival of district elections in San Jose provides a conclusion to the multiple strategies Latinos utilized during the postwar period in their efforts to seek, establish, and solidify political representation and community improvement.

The movement favoring more localized representation where city council members were elected by distinct regions, neighborhoods, and ethnic enclaves in San Jose was part of a larger movement occurring across the United States. Throughout California, the Southwest, and the country, cities, large and small transitioned from at-

large to district elections. The actions taken by Latino and other civic organizations and activists in San Jose to find more localized representation in city government by abolishing the election system that minimized or silenced their voices provides an important example of similar processes occurring in other municipalities during the 1970s and 1980s.

Many municipalities that changed their electoral process made the decision as a result of lawsuits against city governments. These lawsuits forced cities to apply the Voting Rights Act of 1965, leading to “the replacement of the old at-large electoral system with single-member, ‘majority-minority’ districts.”<sup>317</sup> In addition to the 1965 legislation, the 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act that protects language minorities was especially important for Spanish-speaking voters, the majority of whom lived in Western Sunbelt states. Between the 1960s and 1980s the practice of district elections was especially adopted by Sunbelt cities. In fact, in their edited volume on the region, historians Bradley R. Rice and Richard M. Bernard state that, “[s]ometimes under political pressure and other times under legal compulsion, [by 1983] the Sunbelt cities have ended or limited at-large voting, so minority candidates now often win elections to city councils and other governing boards.”<sup>318</sup> Historians like Max Krochmal, David

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<sup>317</sup> Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 404. For more information on cities abolishing at-large elections in favor of district elections see: David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1980* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 239-243; Daniel D. Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 193; Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 23; Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* (New York: Basic Books Press, 2019), 217-222.

<sup>318</sup> Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 23.

Montejano, and Andrew Sandoval-Strausz have explained how lawsuits forced many cities across Texas, such as Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas, respectively, to abandon at-large elections because the Justice Department ruled the political system violated the Voting Rights Act.<sup>319</sup> The courts served as an effective tool in pressuring municipalities to adopt a single-member district electoral system.

However, some municipalities avoided the courts and placed the issue of districting on the ballot, asking voters to decide what form of government under which they were to be represented. A couple Sunbelt cities that chose to allow their residents to vote on the issue were Albuquerque, NM (1974) and Phoenix, AZ (1982).<sup>320</sup> In Northern California, the executive governing bodies of, both, San Francisco and San Jose elected to leave the issue of districting to their residents in 1976 and 1979, respectively.<sup>321</sup>

Regardless of how U.S. cities made the decision, the growing trend of implementing district elections was meant to alleviate the diluted voices and votes of the country's minoritized populations. Eliminating at-large elections was a long and arduous process that frequently relied on coalitions to garner city-wide support—ironically, to approve single-member districting the issue needed a majority vote in an at-large election. The movement to abandon at-large elections in San Jose spanned nearly a

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<sup>319</sup> Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 404; David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1980* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 239-243; Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* (New York: Basic Books Press, 2019), 217-222.

<sup>320</sup> On Albuquerque, NM see Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Albuquerque: City at a Crossroads," in Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 264. On Phenix, AZ see Bradford Luckingham, "Phoenix: The Desert Metropolis," in Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 320.

<sup>321</sup> San Francisco will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

decade and Latinos played critical role in shifting the city's political structure that made city council more diverse and representative of its constituents.

### **Arrival of District Elections**

When California achieved statehood, San Jose's municipal officials were determined through a form of district elections. Four of San Jose's five city council members were elected by districts (or wards) with one member, who served as mayor, elected at large. During the late nineteenth century upper middle-class men in San Jose began pushing for a revision of the City Charter. These reformers worked as doctors, lawyers, businessmen with membership in the Chamber of Commerce, and publishers of the city's largest newspaper. They viewed the ward politics of the city as detrimental to the economic interests of San Jose as a whole and saw machine politics run by Republicans in the city as corrupt and inefficient.

In 1916 they successfully helped establish a new local government structure that would remain in place for the next sixty years. The city council was increased from five to seven members, and all of the positions were to be elected at large. The seven-seat council (which included the mayor) would appoint a city manager to serve as the chief executive over municipal matters.<sup>322</sup> The city-manager form of government proved successful in helping business leaders, lawyers, merchants, and other property owners maximize their political influence throughout the twentieth century in San Jose. During World War II, and especially in the postwar period, this form of government proved

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<sup>322</sup> Philip J. Troustine and Terry Christensen, *Movers and Shakers: The Study of Community Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 83; Citizens for Responsive Government, "SPEAKERS' MANUAL," 1978 (in my possession/SJSU California Room, un-released clipping file), 1.



beneficial and lucrative for developers and pro-growth proponents because of the mutual social, political, and economic benefits created and fostered between growth and development.

But while those who supported San Jose's growth and urban sprawl found financial and political benefits, minority groups—especially Latinos—were largely excluded from representation in the city council. By the 1970s, however, the growth of San Jose and shifting ethno-racial demographics spurred people in the city to look for more proportionate representation and therefore to push for the elimination of at-large elections in favor of district elections. Latino residents of San Jose's Eastside first began to call for district elections in 1970. Urban sprawl in San Jose had created a more segregated city, and Latinos who predominated in the city's Eastside felt neglected by City Council, especially when it came to addressing matters pertaining to law enforcement.

A report compiled in 1978 by a coalition of pro-districting groups and individuals, Citizens for Responsive Government (CRG), noted that the Eastside community's initial efforts to establish district elections “grew out of their frustration when the City Council turned a deaf ear to their continued complaints about police inadequacies and malpractice. The move to district was initiated by people who felt powerless and unheard by the city administration responsible for both the police department and the administration.”<sup>323</sup>

Eastiders believed districting would create a more representative city council that would address issues on a more localized and neighborhood scale. In the years leading up

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<sup>323</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 4.

to the first district election, “78% (24 of 31) City Council members lived in 2 of San Jose’s planning areas—Willow Glen and Central (usually the Rose Garden).”<sup>324</sup> These two neighborhoods were, and continue to be, among San Jose’s most affluent, populated by a high and disproportionate percentage of white homeowners.

The 1970 push for district elections failed in the face of opposition by an organization known as the Citizens for Better Government, which argued the districting maps gerrymandered the city and did not divide it into districts that reflected clear boundaries easily recognized by citizens as representative of their neighborhoods’ social and political makeup.<sup>325</sup>

Two years later, in 1972, the CRU began another push for district elections. After Jack Ybarra declined to run for re-election so that he could devote his time to forming a national coalition of Mexican American organizations, Puerto Rican machinist George Pinero was elected president in March 1972.<sup>326</sup> Under Pinero’s leadership, the CRU began a petition drive to place the organization’s plan for a twelve-district election on the November ballot. To make that a reality, the CRU needed to collect 19,800 signatures by late July. The CRU’s Committee for Equal Representation by City Council District recommended districts be drawn with ““respect to neighborhood boundaries throughout the city.”” The committee emphasized that district elections that considered and valued neighborhoods were in a fundamental sense an “attempt to give all ‘elements within the city comparable representation.”<sup>327</sup> Whether due to a lack of general support for the issue

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<sup>324</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 2.

<sup>325</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 4.

<sup>326</sup> “La Raza President Elected,” March 24, 1972. Confederacion de La Raza, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; “Ybarra Says He Won’t Seek La Raza Post,” January 6, 1972. Confederacion de La Raza, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University

<sup>327</sup> “New Election Setup Sought for Council,” June 16, 1972. Confederacion de La Raza, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Elias Castillo, “12-Member City Council

or a poor publicity campaign, the CRU fell short of the required signatures to place the issue on the ballot.

While the CRG report seems to have ignored the push made by the CRU in 1972, it described another major push for districting in 1973. This effort attempted to inform and include more white residents in the discussion regarding districting. Specifically, the movement to district looked to the newly developed areas on the westside of San Jose for support. By reaching out to westside residents, the districting effort gained more support and momentum when it became clear that homeowners living in the newer westside identified with particular neighborhoods in the area. As the 1978 report noted:

Since the areas with high Chicano, low-income and student populations were pinpointed, the problem remained of how to put the rest of the city together. After discussion with many westside community activists, strong neighborhood perceptions were identified. Several westside areas had developed common “dividios” which it turned out fit well with a twelve district plan even though most of the lines were changed from those of the first plan.<sup>328</sup>

This second effort to district elections received greater support than the first and, in fact, inspired three different groups to come up with a districting plan. The first plan was put forward by CCIC; it called for an 8 district election. The League of Women voters modeled its San Jose districting plan on Long Beach’s district elections, in which primaries were conducted at the district level but general elections were exercised at

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Sought by La Raza,” June 16, 1972. Confederacion de La Raza, Microfiche Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>328</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 4.

large. The third group was primarily comprised of those who had led the call for district elections in 1970, proposing that San Jose be divided into twelve districts. In the end, this second push for district elections failed due to legal technicalities relating to official signatures and the Registrar of Voters' records.<sup>329</sup>

Despite these early failures, the movement for district elections continued to gain support among San Joseans and the city council. By 1976 the council appointed a Charter Review Committee (CRC) to study the issue of districting.<sup>330</sup> A year later, the CRC held three public hearings to discuss the districting plans where they revealed three possibilities: dividing San Jose into ten, eight, or six districts representing roughly sixty thousand, seventy thousand, and ninety-three thousand people, respectively. The group contacted over three thousand local organizations and individuals in San Jose to comment and offer suggestions for the plan to divide the city into districts. A subcommittee of the CRC had worked on the districting alignments for nearly a year based on a city population of 560,000 people.

All three options included an Eastside district comprised of a more than fifty percent Mexican American population. The Latino district in all of these proposals was explicitly created "to insure election of an ethnic minority representative to the City Council."<sup>331</sup> The district demarcations of the ten-district plan conformed most closely to San Jose's city planning areas. In February of 1978, after six months of public hearings

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<sup>329</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, "SPEAKERS MANUAL," 5.

<sup>330</sup> Philip J. Troustine, "San Jose districting plan holds slim lead," San Jose Mercury News, no date.

<sup>331</sup> "3 Plans Offered: Public to weigh electing council by city districts," San Jose Mercury News, September 1, 1977.

and extensive research, the CRC announced its recommendation for districting follow the ten-district proposal.<sup>332</sup>

The growing number of minorities in San Jose certainly contributed to the push for representation in local government, and the move to district elections was a way to achieve representation. As the 1970s came to a close, San Jose's population approached 630,00 people with a general racial make-up of 73% white, 5% Black, and 22% Latino.<sup>333</sup> The significantly larger number of Latinos continued to overshadow the growing Black population but the plan for ten districts attempted to offer a best-case for all to receive a seat at the decision-making table. While the city-backed CRC supported a ten-district plan, the community-based CRG supported a fourteen-district division of San Jose. The CRG produced its map by taking into consideration several factors like equal population size (a Federal Court decision in districting), and keeping intact "as much as possible" neighborhoods, communities of interest, planning areas, and school districts, while also considering natural and man-made barriers and landmarks. Analysis of the two proposals reveals many similarities in district boundaries but the CRC option collapsed into a single district a few areas the CRG had recommended be two districts, including the minority-majority Eastside.

Examination of the racial makeup of the ten CRC-proposed districts revealed high levels of segregation and income inequality between white and minority areas. The

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<sup>332</sup> "3 Plans Offered: Public to weigh electing council by city districts," San Jose Mercury News, September 1, 1977; "Determining the boundaries—a demographic puzzle," San Jose Mercury News, October 15, 1978.

<sup>333</sup> Information compiled by analysis of: 1980 Census of Population. Volume 1, Chapter B, General Population Characteristics: Part 6, California. Table 25: Age by Race, Spanish Origin, and Sex for areas and Places: 1980. SCSA's, SMSA's, Urbanized Areas, Places of 50,000 or More and Central Cities of SMSA's. U.S. Department of Commerce (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 6-98 California.

Eastside's District 5, for example, was home to 55,203 people comprised of an ethnoracial minority majority that consisted of a 43% Hispanic and 12% Black population with a median household income of \$9,977. On the opposite side of town, in San Jose's westside District 1, the population was 55,990 people, with the Hispanic and Black populations combining to account for only 4% and the white majority amounting to 90%; the median household income of District 1 was averaged at \$11,133. Interestingly, while the average household income was over \$1,000 more in District 1, both were well below the city average of \$14,361. In south San Jose's Almaden Valley, District 10, the disparity between whites and Latinos was much more evident. With an 87% white majority, the average household median income there was \$18,882, significantly higher than the city average and nearly twice the median income of the Eastside's District 5.<sup>334</sup>

The desire for district elections, and especially for the purposes of minority representation, were not isolated to San Jose. In fact, throughout the 1970s several major U.S. cities adopted district elections as their form of local government. The 1978 CRG report contained a section entitled, "District Elections in Other Cities." Here, the report listed eight other municipalities that were practicing some form of district elections by 1978. The list revealed the types of cities people in San Jose attempted to model their local government after, and suggested how San Joseans thought of themselves. These cities included Los Angeles, Albuquerque, San Francisco, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis. The section then went on to list three cities that took direct action in making the transition from at-large to district elections: Atlanta (1973), Albuquerque (1974), and

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<sup>334</sup> "The debate over districting," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 15, 1978.

Portland (1976) had all passed ballot measures to approve district elections. Interestingly, the report then went on to list six cities involved in lawsuits to move towards district elections. Plaintiffs argued that at-large elections violated federal law—the Voting Rights Act of 1965—and/or led to underrepresentation of minorities. The cities cited in the report as having settled or currently dealing with court cases challenging the legality of at-large elections were Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Memphis, TN; New Orleans, LA; Richmond, VA; Mobile, AL.<sup>335</sup>

Lawsuits were useful and significant in bringing about the shift from at-large to district elections across the country. Frequently leading the charge in the courtrooms were Black Americans who filed suit on the grounds that at-large elections discriminated against Black people and other minority groups, diluted minority voting power, and, therefore, violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965. While this was the case in cities like Richmond, VA, Memphis, TN, and Mobile, AL, cities in the Southwest with significant Hispanic populations included Mexican American plaintiffs in the pursuit for equal representation in city councils. In fact, in Texas, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) organized several lawsuits to end at-large elections in Bexar County and San Antonio during the 1970s.<sup>336</sup> Between 1974 and 1978 the Courts “ordered that five (5) South and Southwestern cities change their method of election from at-large to district because at-large elections inherently discriminate against minorities.”<sup>337</sup> The Attorney General had commented on the subject, saying that “at-large

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<sup>335</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 10.

<sup>336</sup> For an overview of MALDEF’s role in San Antonio and Bexar County see: David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 241. For an example of African Americans leading the charge towards district elections in Dallas with efforts to include Mexican Americans see: Andrew Sandoval-Strausz, *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 217-219.

<sup>337</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 17.

elections dilute minority voting strength. These [Court] decisions were based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1 man (person/one vote) and the Voter's Rights Act of 1965.”<sup>338</sup>

Closer to home, San Francisco held its first district elections in 1977. The move towards districting in San Francisco paralleled San Jose's process in several ways. First, and foremost, the call for representation—especially from minority groups—was at the core of district elections and a large push came from the most-dense Latino neighborhood, the Mission. Early efforts to district failed during the early 1970s. Between 1976 and 1977 Latino organizations in San Francisco joined with other individuals and organizations in “The City” to form a coalition of district election advocates who called themselves San Franciscans for District Elections (SFDE). After twenty months of intense activism that made a concerted effort to include more broad support from various grassroots organizations with diverse interests that favored districting, SFDE succeeded in putting the issue on the 1976 ballot. Latinos in the city, and especially in the Mission, aspired to elect “one of their own ethnic kin” to represent them and their interests in City Hall. The excitement for the opportunity to represent their neighborhood and the largest ethnoracial minority residents in the neighborhood and city sparked the interest of six Latinos to run in the Mission's District 6 and seven other Latinos to run for other seats across the city.<sup>339</sup>

Since San Francisco is one of a handful of cities across the country whose city limits share the same demarcation as the county, district elections were not for a city council but for the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors. The results of the 1977

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<sup>338</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 17.

<sup>339</sup> Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 229-235.



election led to “a Board of Supervisors that was closer in its composition to the people who live and work in San Francisco than the old, at-large system.”<sup>340</sup> San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors election provided valuable information that helped bolster two major arguments that would be made in favor of district elections in San Jose. First, the Board of Supervisors would become more diverse with the election (rather than appointment) of the first non-white member (as was also the case in San Jose). Adding to the diversity, the first person who lived in the city as a tenant, the first Asian American, and the first gay person, were all elected to the Board of Supervisors. The district elections resulted in more “third world Supervisors (A Latin, a Blac [sic], and an Asian)” to serve on the Board than any other time in the city’s history. And second, money was less of a factor in determining victors with two winners having spent less money than the second-place candidate.<sup>341</sup>

Proponents of district elections in San Jose frequently cited six primary reasons to elect city officials according to geographic representation. First, there existed a need to improve representation among all citizens of San Jose. In fact, with San Jose’s six-member council, the ratio of constituents to representatives was 93,000 to 1, among the worst in the country. The second argument favoring districting was to limit the influence of special interest groups—primarily developers like builders, real estate sales people, contractors, and property management and title companies—who contributed large amounts of money to political campaigns. Third, San Jose officials tended to possess a high level of political ambitions that hindered their work in the city because they were consistently campaigning for a higher office. Frustrations were expressed by the CRG:

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<sup>340</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 12.

<sup>341</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 12.

“We need their [council members] attention. Such ambitions are far less frequent in a system of district elections.” Fourth on the CRG’s list was that single-member districts would lead to more minority candidates with improved chances of victory, especially for Latinos. Some may argue that listing race fourth minimizes the significance of race to the districting campaign. However, considering point one was increased access to public officials for all San Joseans, minority groups were already included in the first argument favoring districting. That racial representation was specifically mentioned emphasized, not minimized, the call and demand for better recognition of needs coming from the city’s minority communities. It was also argued that district elections might help resolve several environmental issues associated with San Jose’s sprawl that was viewed by many as a direct result of the comfortable relationship between developers and their contributions to council members. And finally, district elections improved political participation. The more representative form of government “facilitate[d] participation through small, local, low-cost campaigns, [with increased] identification with an individual from your community and face to face contact.”<sup>342</sup>

These six arguments supported an increasing sentiment of controlled growth and more efficient government to address the needs of all San Joseans and reducing the influence of a select white upper-class. The push for district elections was a grass-roots movement that collected over \$11,000 in donations with 327 individual contributions of under \$50. The biggest contributors were the Santa Clara County Central Labor Council (\$824), Retail Employees Local 428 (\$500), attorney Robert Hogan (\$400), the San Jose

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<sup>342</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, “SPEAKERS MANUAL,” 13-21; “Elections by districts?” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 11, 1978; “S.J. goes to districts: diversity expected,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 11, 1980; “Districting: Will the Council Go For It?,” *San Jose Community News*, April-May 1977.

office of the National Women's Political Caucus (\$360), and the local chapter of Tom Hayden's Campaign for Economic Democracy (\$355).<sup>343</sup> Indeed, political science professor and political commentator, Terry Christensen of San Jose noted that "the Yes on F campaign is based on small contributions and volunteer efforts from people who have been left out of decision making at City Hall."<sup>344</sup>

While the movement favoring districting gained momentum in San Jose, there was still a solid anti-districting sentiment among city residents. Those who argued against districting grasped onto their own convictions that called city residents to uphold the status quo. They believed districting would result in the emergence of, or boost in, several negative characteristics to the city. Such impediments to San Jose included, but were not limited to, less effectiveness in local government due to a larger city council, access to only one city official as opposed to every member, fragmentation and parochialism, a return to "ward politics" supported by "payoffs" and favoritism, increased administrative costs, and amplified "radical" thought.<sup>345</sup> Given the growing number of Mexican Americans, Chicanos, and other minority activists "amplifying" their "radical thought" of demanding Civil Rights, the last point made by those who supported maintaining at-large elections alludes to the growing usage of elusive and equivocal racial dog-whistling during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Opponents of district elections collected \$13,000 to finance their campaign, with 90% of the funding coming from development interest groups and individuals with a \$10,000 contribution from the

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<sup>343</sup> "Anti-Measure F donors way ahead of supporters," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 30, 1978.

<sup>344</sup> "Election Letters: Measure F: power to the people," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 2, 1978.

<sup>345</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, "SPEAKERS MANUAL," 22-28; "The debate over districting," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 15, 1978; "No on Measure F," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 31, 1978; "Anti-Measure F donors way ahead of supporters," October 30, 1978.

Builders and Contractors Committee, “the political action arm of the Bay Area construction industry.”<sup>346</sup> The anti-districting campaign was spearheaded by the Citizens Against Unfair Representation, a paper organization that was established to oppose and defeat the call to revise the city’s electoral process in the selection of local government; the San Jose Chamber of Commerce was another strong opponent to the measure.<sup>347</sup> Those who opposed districting believed amending the city charter would “create a council that is principally concerned with what is happening with each council members’ district and one that is myopic on city-wide issues.”<sup>348</sup> Most of the money fundraised against the measure “was spent on radio and newspaper advertising decrying district elections as increasing the cost of government, fragmenting the city, and plunging city hall into corrupt horse-trading and backroom dealing.”<sup>349</sup>

The CRG organized a group of people to speak in favor of districting during the City Council meeting on May 16, 1978—and notably, twelve Spanish-surname individuals were on the formal list of forty-eight speakers, a proportion close to that of Hispanics in the city’s population. The list of individuals was also accompanied by a short list of eleven other organizations who endorsed the abolition of at-large elections. Seven of these organizations unequivocally represented the interests of Black, Asian, and Latino people. The Black Senior Center, Black Employment Exchange, and Black Council of Santa Clara spoke on behalf of its members. The Asian Americans for Community Involvement expressed Asian interests in districting. And the Comité de

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<sup>346</sup> “Anti-Measure F donors way ahead of supporters,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 30, 1978.

<sup>347</sup> “Anti-Measure F donors way ahead of supporters,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 30, 1978; “San Jose chamber opposes council redistricting,” September 30, 1978.

<sup>348</sup> Ed Pope, “Districting may amplify call to give mayor more power,” *San Jose Mercury News*, November 10, 1978.

<sup>349</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “San Jose districting plan holds slim lead,” *San Jose Mercury News*, no date.

Mejoras de Alviso, Guadalupe Parish, and La Raza Attorneys represented Latino interests.<sup>350</sup> Clearly, minority groups saw the benefit in moving away from at-large elections and participated in the effort to make the change. With the upcoming local elections in November, Latino leaders and community members, in all of their diversity, worked to make their voices heard.

There were also efforts coming from within the Latino community in San Jose to learn how voters felt about particular candidates and to increase participation of both young activists and older civic leaders. The Chicano Voters Association (CVA) conducted surveys in July and August that revealed participants' interests in San Jose and the greater Santa Clara County. The surveys asked, "What political office campaign or issue do you feel should be supported by the voters of Santa Clara County?"<sup>351</sup> Outcomes from the surveys were published in *El Excéntrico*, but were taken from "a very small and pre-selected area" of the county. Results of the opinion surveys revealed that participants strongly supported district elections in San Jose, Jerry Brown for Governor, Al Garza for Mayor amending Proposition 13 to personal residence only and Jerry Estruth for San Jose City Council.<sup>352</sup>

Working together with the younger generation, the CVA had also collaborated with the lowrider car club, "Concilio of Lowriders," to sponsor a voter registration drive in April 1978. Now, in preparation for the upcoming election, the two groups were co-sponsoring a political rally on November 5. The event's purpose was to provide

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<sup>350</sup> Citizens for Responsive Government, "Speakers List: Public Hearing on District Elections for San Jose," unprocessed clipping file, California Room, San Jose State University (in my possession).

<sup>351</sup> P. Curiel, "Chicano Voter's Association," *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1978.

<sup>352</sup> P. Curiel, "Chicano Voter's Association," *El Excéntrico*, August 5, 1978; P. Curiel, "Chicano Voter's Association," *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1978.

candidates the opportunity to communicate their platforms and connect with the community to win over voters. The rally also served as a fundraiser where funds were to be dispersed among participating lowrider clubs that would parade or “cruise” in their neighborhoods with “voter turnout promotion signs—starting Saturday, November 4 through Tuesday, election day.”<sup>353</sup> By utilizing the “Chicano” nomenclature in their name and collaborating with lowrider car clubs, the CVA was associating itself with the younger generation of activists. However, the organization’s purpose was also clearly aligned with efforts of the older generation—to effect change at the ballot box.

Districting was looked upon favorably by the majority of the city council. In the middle of October, 1978, the council voted 6-1, approving districting as Ballot Measure F in the November election; councilman Joe Colla was the only dissenting vote. He supported the idea of districting but opposed the form in which it was proposed, as a direct election from the individual districts. Instead, he supported a proposal made by the League of Women Voters that called for either nomination by district with an at-large election or “a combination plan” that allowed the election of council members by both districts and at-large. Councilman Alfredo Garza supported Measure F as drafted, citing the need to evenly support all neighborhoods in the city. He stated, “‘It’s virtually impossible to serve each area of the city now regardless of how many hours a council member puts in.’”<sup>354</sup>

Alfredo Garza and the majority of the council viewed districting as an opportunity to provide better representation for all of San Jose’s neighborhoods, but voters were more

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<sup>353</sup> P. Curiel, “Chicano Voters Association,” *El Excéntrico*, October 20, 1978.

<sup>354</sup> Armando Acuna, “Goes on November ballot: City districting up to voters,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 18, 1978.

split on the issue. Michael Antonacci, former city planning director, spearheaded [need to find a new word; I think you've used this three times] the anti-districting forces. He commented on his anticipation for the election results: "'It's closer than I expected.'" Terry Christensen, chairman of the steering committee for Neighborhoods for District Elections (the grass-roots organization that promoted for the charter amendment), felt confident in his side's chances at victory but shared Antonacci's sentiments of hesitancy and apprehension as votes were still being counted on the morning of November 8. As the votes were being tallied on election day, Christensen stated that the decision on districting was still "too close to call."<sup>355</sup>

On November 8 the San Jose Mercury news reported the election results; Measure F passed with a slim majority of 52% of the vote—72,557 voters approved of the measure, with 67,287 opposing. A study that analyzed how San Joseans voted on the matter of districting revealed that nine out of the city's twelve major neighborhoods voted "Yes" in support of revising the city's electoral process. The three areas that voted against districting were Almaden, Cambrian-Pioneer, and Willow Glen—some of San Jose's most affluent neighborhoods where white people were clearly majority stakeholders. Willow Glen was the most ardent against districting with 56% of the vote in opposition; the other two neighborhoods disapproved by a slim majority of 51%.

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<sup>355</sup> Phillip J. Troustine, "San Jose districting plan holds slim lead," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 8, 1978; Philip J. Troustine, "District elections approved for S.J. Council members," *San Jose News*, November 8, 1978.

Table 1

San Jose Vote By Neighborhood											
Neighborhood	Median Income	% White	% Hispanic	Registered Voters	% Turnout	Hayes	Garza	Estruth	Colla	DISTRICTS	
										Yes	No
Almaden	\$23,640	94	2	13,272	73	6,621 71%	2,664 29%	6,417 71%	2,676 29%	4,288 49%	4,455 51%
Alum Rock	\$11,340	36	42	19,804	58	6,064 55%	4,893 45%	5,638 55%	4,692 45%	6,066 61%	3,953 39%
Alviso	\$ 9,300	27	70	419	55	86 39%	132 61%	81 41%	116 59%	114 61%	72 39%
Berryessa	\$16,740	75	10	16,608	68	7,716 72%	3,033 28%	6,678 65%	3,589 35%	5,793 58%	4,243 42%
Cambrian-Pioneer	\$16,160	90	5	22,370	70	10,698 72%	4,249 28%	9,387 65%	5,116 35%	6,898 49%	7,062 51%
Central	\$7,031	53	34	21,884	64	9,163 71%	3,819 29%	7,000 56%	5,402 44%	6,058 52%	5,566 48%
Edenvale	\$16,900	89	7	36,212	68	16,473 70%	7,016 30%	14,941 66%	7,776 34%	11,486 52%	10,438 48%
Evergreen	\$15,400	61	22	10,348	70	4,500 66%	2,369 34%	4,208 63%	2,438 37%	3,616 56%	2,814 44%
North	\$17,120	75	16	1,646	73	810 71%	329 29%	651 59%	452 41%	616 58%	442 42%
South	\$11,780	60	27	12,452	64	5,036 67%	2,475 33%	4,256 59%	2,942 41%	3,809 55%	3,110 45%
West Valley	\$15,320	91	4	40,635	71	20,787 76%	6,667 24%	16,986 65%	9,039 35%	13,022 52%	12,105 48%
Willow Glen	\$12,240	86	8	32,258	72	16,530 75%	5,416 25%	13,226 61%	8,342 39%	8,903 44%	11,480 56%
San Jose	\$14,600	72	15	227,930	70	107,174 71%	44,070 29%	91,617 63%	54,030 37%	72,557 52%	67,287 48%

Source: Philip J. Troustine, "Why it happened: an analysis of voting patterns," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 12, 1978.

It was the city's two-most Latino-dense neighborhoods, Alum Rock and Alviso, that showed the greatest support for district elections—both approved the measure by a 61% majority.<sup>356</sup> Alviso had resisted annexation efforts for a long time but San Jose was successful in bringing the working-class community under its jurisdiction in 1968. Alum Rock comprised much of what is understood to be the Eastside. With the successful bid for district elections, Latinos in San Jose finally had a real opportunity to elect one of their own to city council without first gaining approval and appointment by white politicians and a predominantly white electorate.

<sup>356</sup> Philip J. Troustine, "Why it happened: an analysis of voting patterns," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 12, 1978. Alum Rock was a San Jose planning area since the 1950s and comprises all of District 5 and most of the area I have defined as Eastside. The three terms are used interchangeably throughout the chapter.



## Blanca Alvarado and District 5

Passing Measure F and district elections in 1980 provided opportunities for more San Joseans to run for local office, with ten council seats on the ballot plus the at-large election of the mayor. Primaries would take place in June and in districts where there was no majority winner, a run-off would take place in the November election that coincided with state and national election day.

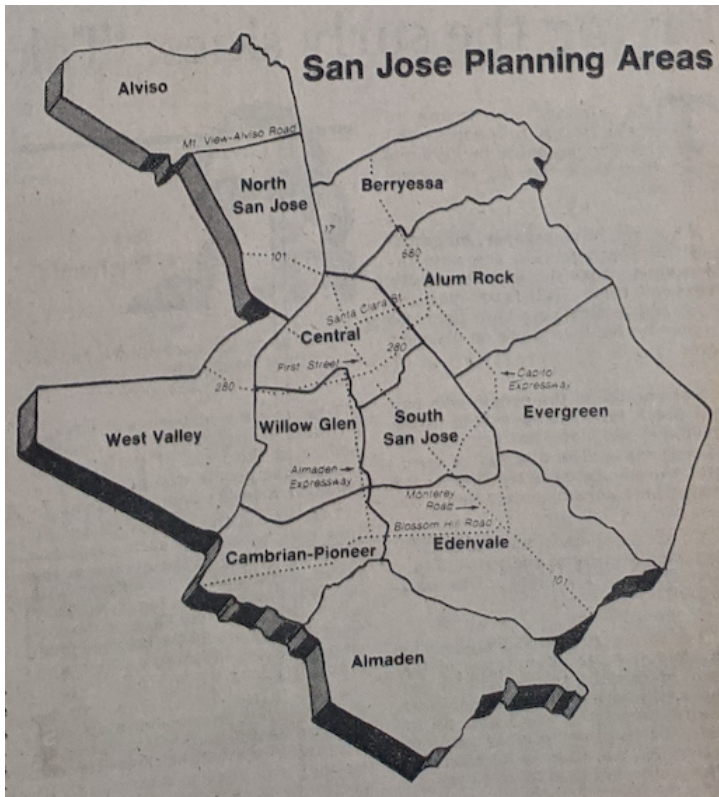
San Joseans showed enthusiasm for the district elections early on. Nearly a full month before the filing period for San Jose City Council elections, local political analyst Philip J. Troustine reported that “more than two dozen candidates already are lining up money, volunteers and endorsements for the city’s first district elections since 1916.”<sup>357</sup> In late January, Alfredo Garza expressed his intent to run for a council seat. However, he was under investigation for two bribery charges in 1977 and 1978 where he was accused of accepting money from developers in exchange for favorable zoning requirements in the Alviso and Evergreen planning areas. He soon thereafter decided not run but, unfortunately, damaged the image of another candidate: Victor Garza (no relation to Alfredo Garza), who was running for District 4 (Berryessa) located just north of Eastside’s District 5. According to Victor Garza, “having the same name Al Garza, the councilman who was indicted on bribery charges and who resigned in August was [his] ‘biggest obstacle.’”<sup>358</sup> Victor Garza would go on to lose in the November election.

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<sup>357</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Council District Election: S.J. Candidates Tune Up to Race,” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 21, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University. See Map 7.

<sup>358</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Council District Election: S.J. Candidates Tune Up to Race,” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 21, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Philip J. Troustine, “Berryessa City Council Candidates Fight Misconceptions,” *San Jose Mercury News*. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University;  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=wCfTOMEPykc&pg=PA8&lpg=PA8&dq=alfredo+garza+san+jose+>

Map 7



Description: Alum Rock was a San Jose planning area since the 1950s and comprised all of District 5 and most of the area I have defined as Eastside. These are San Jose's planning areas in 1978.

Source: Philip J. Troustine, "Why it happened: an analysis of voting patterns," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 12, 1978.

In Eastside's District 5, three Mexican Americans attempted to stake their claim as the area's representative early in 1980 (a Portuguese-American and an American-born Palestinian also showed interest in running for the Eastside position).<sup>359</sup> Notably, the San Jose Mercury News focused its racial analysis of the election on District 5 and the Mexican American vote. But this area of the city was also home to the largest

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[bribery&source=bl&ots=tq3p0a4z\\_U&sig=ACfU3U2ZDTc5LoZlxmRuB\\_dLVog-DdMtdA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiCIKCS1Kz0AhUKIjQIHSZoADkQ6AF6BAgjEAM#v=onepage&q=alfredo%20garza%20san%20jose%20bribery&f=false](https://www.san-jose-mercury-news.com/alfredo-garza-san-jose-bribery) [accessed November 22, 2021]

<sup>359</sup> Philip J. Troustine, "Council District Election: S.J. Candidates Tune Up to Race," *San Jose Mercury News*, January 21, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Jesús Martínez Saldaña, "At the Periphery of Democracy: The Binational Politics of Mexican Immigrants in Silicon Valley," (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 1993), 96;

concentration of Black people in the city and no Black San Josean appears to have gained much support in District 5 or elsewhere; the paper never mentions efforts by a Black person to run for a council position during the 1980 election. In many other cities across the country, the push for district elections came primarily from direct action and lawsuits by Black urbanites. But San Jose's large Latino population made it into a different kind of bellwether of the nation's changing demographics.

While the number of Mexican American candidates in the Eastside demonstrated a commitment to Latinos' long-standing desire to elect one of their own to city council, it was also cause for hesitation. Many people feared that offering too many candidates for Latinos to choose from in the district might dilute their votes and help other candidates—not of Mexican descent—win the district. “Privately,” explained a *San Jose Mercury News* political reporter, “some Hispanic candidates and community leaders are worried that the race for the seat designed to represent the barrios could become a nasty battle that splits the Mexican-American vote.”<sup>360</sup> Latinos in San Jose were all too familiar with the possibility of electing one of their own and falling short, leaving the community with the bitterness of loss and feelings of frustration and “not again.” Collaborative efforts made by younger Chicanos and older Mexican Americans, as manifested through voter registration drives and voter participation rallies co-sponsored by lowrider car clubs and the CVA in 1978, demonstrated a growing commitment to combining non-establishmentarian political activity with the more traditional tactics associated with civic engagement.

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<sup>360</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Council District Election: S.J. Candidates Tune Up to Race,” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 21, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

The fervor and excitement behind district elections kept gaining momentum as the months passed. By March, forty-four people were in the race and by the time elections were held in early June, the total number of people running for one of the ten districts totaled fifty.<sup>361</sup> No fewer than twelve of the fifty candidates had Spanish surnames, with three running in both Districts 4 and 5. These two districts were the most Latino-dense areas in the city and a high number of candidates was expected. However, one of the major intentions behind districting was more opportunity for candidates and with one Latino running in seven of the city's total ten districts during the June primaries, the new government structure appeared to address the issue. Making the issue of representation more poignant during the primaries was the fact that the twelve Spanish-surnamed candidates were almost exactly proportionate to Latinos within the city population.

San Jose's District 4 included the Berryessa neighborhood and the highly Latino-populated area of Alviso that was annexed to the city in 1968; the district was located just north of San Jose's Alum Rock (Eastside) District 5. In May, the *San Jose Mercury News* ran an editorial with their recommendations for the upcoming June primary elections, supporting Latino candidates for both districts. In District 4, the *Mercury News* backed 40-year old Ruben Flores, who worked as the project director for the Center for Training and Careers, a government-funded jobs-training program. He also possessed prior political experience, having served one term on the city council in Del Rio, Texas where

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<sup>361</sup> Gary E. Swan, "Candidates Turn Out In Drove to File for City Council Races," *San Jose Mercury News*, February, 12, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; John Spalding, "44 Candidates in race for 10 S.J. City Council Seats," *San Jose Mercury News*, March 7, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; "A Word About the Figures," *San Jose Mercury News*, June 1, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

he was born; and worked as an administrative assistant to Ted Tedesco, the city's former City Manager.<sup>362</sup>

In District 5, the newspaper endorsed 48-year old Blanca Alvarado, who had served on San Jose's Bicentennial Commission as well as on the city's Charter Review Committee that helped advocate for district elections. Alvarado ran on a "limited growth" and revitalization campaign that called for better police and fire services, more job opportunities and training, and more affordable housing across the city. Alvarado had been a resident of San Jose for 34 years, having moved to the city from Colorado with her parents as a teenager. While she was the paper's number one choice at the time, the editorial also expressed interest in Victor Aljouny, the American-born Palestinian, who also happened to be "the only Republican in the race" for District 5.<sup>363</sup>

Leading up to the June primaries, three candidates emerged as viable winners with financial support. The three competitive candidates in District 5 were Aljouny, Alvarado, and small business owner Anita Haines-Duarte. Aljouny and Alvarado fundraised the most but nearly four thousand dollars separated the two. Aljouny, who got the better of Alvarado, managed to receive just over thirteen thousand dollars of support with large contributions from development and labor interests. Both candidates received support from development but Aljouny collected one-thousand two-hundred dollars and Alvarado only collected five hundred. Alvarado's largest income came from donors who

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<sup>362</sup> "Flores for San Jose District 4," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 27, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; "Alvarado for San Jose District 5," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 27, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>363</sup> "Flores for San Jose District 4," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 27, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; "Alvarado for San Jose District 5," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 27, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

contributed over one-hundred dollars (\$4,830) while Ajlouny's nearly doubled that number from donors giving under one-hundred dollars (\$8,218) to his campaign. Duarte nearly fundraised as much as Alvarado, receiving more from almost two hundred dollars more from business interests than Alvarado. However, Duarte took on over three thousand dollars in loans where Alvarado and Ajlouny avoided loans all together to finance their campaigns through the primaries.<sup>364</sup> In the District 5 race, the extra four thousand dollars raised by Ajlouny appeared significant, given that amount accounted for nearly 30% of the total amounts collected by Alvarado and Duarte.

Despite the disparity in money raised, the June primaries in District 5 proved closer than the finances might have indicated. Spanish-surnamed people made up 43% of the area's 14,752 registered voters and just over three out of four votes favored either Alvarado or Duarte. In the district's least-Hispanic precincts, Ajlouny garnered a slight majority over Alvarado with 32.4% and 31.9% of the vote where Hispanics averaged 26% of registered voters, respectively. In the district's most-Hispanic precincts—where Hispanics averaged 58% of registered voters, the results were starkly different. In these mostly Latino precincts, Alvarado and Duarte received the most support with 43% and 23%, respectively. Ajlouny while close to Duarte, came in distant third to Alvarado, only garnering 20.1% of Latino precinct votes. While Alvarado was the clear winner, Ajlouny forced a November run-off, barely beating Duarte by a three votes. Political analyst

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<sup>364</sup> *San Jose Mercury News*, June 1, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; At the time of this news article there were still some early ballots that had not been counted and he was only ahead of Duarte by a single vote; it was still uncertain if Ajlouny had, in fact, beat Duarte. However, In a later news article it was reported that he beat Duarte by three votes. Philip Troustine, "Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny," *San Jose Mercury News*. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

Philip Troustine commented on the results, “District 5 voters, 75% of whom chose a Hispanic candidate, have begun to make their voice heard in San Jose.”<sup>365</sup>

The candidates certainly shared their platforms with their prospective constituents leading up to the primaries. With the race now narrowed to two candidates, the messaging coming from the Ajlouny and Alvarado camps needed to be clear how they differed from one another. Ajlouny was a 29-year-old transplant from Detroit who moved to San Jose in 1975 and had only recently relocated to Alum Rock sometime in 1978. Alvarado, on the other hand, was twenty years older, moved to San Jose with her parents as a teenager from Colorado in the late 1940s and had resided in Alum Rock since 1954. They both agreed that addressing housing and crime associated with youth delinquency were the major issues facing Eastside residents. However, their approaches to these solutions were very different. To address housing, Alvarado’s number one concern, she planned work “toward getting other council members sensitive to the problems of East San Jose.”<sup>366</sup> By educating other council members on Eastside issues, she hoped to gain empathy and understanding from them to avoid future development of high-density housing in Alum Rock. Ajlouny agreed that high-density apartment buildings were overly concentrated in the area and needed to be controlled. However, he believed Alvarado’s approach—opposing all high-density development—was too extreme and he supported a “variety of density developments” in Alum Rock.<sup>367</sup> Regarding crime, the Palestinian-

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<sup>365</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Breaking Down the Vote: Some Emphatic Differences,” *San Jose Mercury News*, June 8, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, June, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>366</sup> David Jacob, “District 5 Candidates focus Attention on East Side Crime,” October 30, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; Philip J. Troustine, “Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>367</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Alum Rock Candidates Tackle Sensitive Police-Review Issue,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 23, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

American's number one priority, Ajlouny cited high rates of burglaries committed by juveniles during the day. He believed implementing a truancy program modeled after one practiced in Fresno would address youth criminal activity. By working with schools to reduce truancy, school attendance would increase and translate to higher funding for schools and help improve safety in the district.<sup>368</sup> Alvarado's emphasis on youth delinquency focused on cruising at the intersection of King and Story Roads in the heart of Eastside San Jose. She critiqued Ajlouny's solution to cruising as "limited" and charged that his solution was too stiff. "My position," she stated, "is we have to work with parents, kids, property owners, the police and the churches" to provide a community solution where her leadership would "bring these groups together."<sup>369</sup>

While no scandalous remarks were made between the candidates they certainly took the opportunity to provide some personal critiques of their opponent. Ajlouny celebrated his "newcomer" status and touted his knowledge of other cities as a positive quality that gave him "the background to be an effective councilman."<sup>370</sup> Alvarado disagreed, and viewed his "outside perspective" as detrimental to addressing local issues. She was rooted in Alum Rock and worked to improve the social, economic, and political positions of ethnic Mexican San Joseans for over two decades. In her eyes she had already earned the right to represent the Eastside because of her long history of activism in organizations like the San Jose Housing Service Center, the Charter Review

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<sup>368</sup> Philip J. Troustine, "Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny," *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; David Jacob, "District 5 Candidates focus Attention on East Side Crime," October 30, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>369</sup> Philip J. Troustine, "Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny," *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>370</sup> David Jacob, "District 5 Candidates focus Attention on East Side Crime," October 30, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.



Committee, the Mexican American Political Association, the Chicano Employment Committee, and serving on the advisory board of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission. She even charged that Ajlouny only recently moved to Alum Rock to win the council seat in a politically disordered district. She made both these points clear, “I think Victor Ajlouny moved into the district a year or so ago because he saw Alum rock as the least politically organized district in the city. I find it unfortunate that people tend to seek elected office without paying their dues.”<sup>371</sup> Ajlouny’s criticized Alvarado for her close relationship with David Runyon, her former employer, who once served as a council member. Alvarado shrugged off the criticism by simply stating Runyon was a close friend.<sup>372</sup>

As the election approached Ajlouny gained momentum and it appeared he might have a chance to win. Despite barely defeating Duarte in the primary, his camp felt optimistic. By late September he found the support of several Hispanic voters who worked on his campaign, most notably, Darlene Marquez who had previously been a part of the American G.I. Forum Auxiliary. Additionally, in late October, the *San Jose Mercury News* changed their endorsement to favor Ajlouny. Alvarado’s campaign had distributed the paper’s previous editorial that recommended the Mexican American business woman for the council seat. However, the reprint neglected to provide a statement clarifying that the flyer was being passed out by the campaign and not directly by the paper—a direct legal violation. With counsel by two former city employees, the paper insinuated that Alvarado’s campaign purposefully misled voters. Alvarado claimed

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<sup>371</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>372</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

the mistake was an oversight. The editorial concluded with the following statement, “We’d like to recommend a Mexican-American again in District 5, which of all 10 districts has the largest Mexican-American voter concentration. But given the choice on the ballot, we believe the district itself, and the city, would be better served by Ajlouny.”<sup>373</sup> Regardless of the exact reason for the mishap, the support of Hispanics for Ajlouny and his endorsement by the San Jose Mercury News might have worried the Alvarado camp. Support for Ajlouny by Hispanics in District 5 also demonstrates Mexican Americans political interests as more complex than simply voting in “one of their own.”

Despite the San Jose Mercury News pulling their endorsement for Alvarado and what appeared to be an increase in Hispanic support for Ajlouny, the November election was not even close. With just under 9,000 people voting, Alvarado won in a landslide with 65% of the vote.<sup>374</sup> After thirty years of organizing and utilizing a variety of strategies Mexican American San Joseans finally succeeded in electing the first minority to city council without first being appointed to the position. District elections had promised to add more ethnoracial representation to city government and the new system had delivered. The occupancy of one council seat by a Mexican American was still a disproportionately low representation of the city’s racial makeup. However, Alvarado’s victory, coupled with the District 4 loss of Victor Garza—with 49.4% of the vote—

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<sup>373</sup> Philip J. Troustine, “Alum Rock Race Tough for Ajlouny,” *San Jose Mercury News*, September 4, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University; David Jacob, “District 5 Candidates focus Attention on East Side Crime,” October 30, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

<sup>374</sup> “San Jose City Council,” *San Jose Mercury News*, November 5, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University.

revealed the appeal of Mexican American candidates in highly populated Hispanic districts.<sup>375</sup>

Perhaps more significant, Alvarado's election to District 5 solidified and institutionalized the Eastside as the center of Latino political, social, and cultural activities. Downtown and El Ganso were now an afterthought, at best, when considering the needs and interests of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose while the Eastside became synonymous with the city's Latino population.

## **Conclusion**

The arrival of district elections and Alvarado's victory to represent ethnic Mexican interests in Eastside's District 5 marked a turning point in city politics. The movement towards district elections in San Jose was a long and arduous process. Identifying distinct clusters of neighborhoods to make up what eventually became the ten districts in the city took over two years. Work by city leaders, community groups, and individuals from diverse social, racial, and economic backgrounds came to fruition after a decade of earnest organizing efforts. And even then, Measure F, the 1980 ballot issue calling for districting, only passed by a slim margin. With a white majority in San Jose, the shift from at-large to district elections never would have passed without their involvement and support. Indeed, white homeowners concerned about growth and the adverse effects on their own neighborhoods and how city government represented their

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<sup>375</sup> "San Jose City Council," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 5, 1980. San Jose: Elections, 1980, November, Clipping Files, California Room, San Jose State University. It is also worth noting that Santa Clara County was dubbed the "Feminist Capital of the Nation" during the late 1970s and this label was solidified in 1980. With the arrival of district elections, women made up a majority of San Jose's City Council and a majority was also elected to serve on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors that same year. For more information see: "The Valley as 'Feminist Capital of the Nation'" in Glenna Matthews, *Silicon Valley, Women, and the California Dream: Gender, Class, and Opportunity in the Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

interests spread the districting gospel. Their involvement in the movement helped tip the scale of public opinion but ethnoracial minorities played an indispensable role. Early efforts by groups like the CRU demonstrated the political awareness of Latinos as they recognized how the status quo was rigged against them. Individuals and organizations representing San Jose's Latino, Asian, and Black communities showed their support for district elections early on because they realized—more than white residents—the unfairness imbedded within the system.

San Jose's Latino and other ethnoracial minorities were not alone in seeking better political representation at the municipal level. In fact, minority groups in San Jose were part of a larger movement across the state, and the country demanding more political power at the local level. By pushing for ballot measures (direct action) or utilizing the courts (indirect action), minority groups demanded to see themselves represented in city councils across America. Black and Latino groups, in particular, were at the forefront of city movements that transformed the way local elections were conducted, moving away from at-large to district elections. Direct and indirect pressure was placed on municipalities by Black and Latino groups to abandon a prejudicial electoral process that, more often than not, excluded them. Minorities called for a more egalitarian process where they stood a more realistic chance at electing themselves to local decision-making tables throughout the United States. The decisions made by municipalities throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s to repudiate at-large elections in favor of an election process by districts changed the color and politics of cities across the country.

## Coda

District elections continue to take place in San Jose to this day and the city's minoritized people have certainly gained more of a voice and visibility in local government. Latinos in particular have fared well. A Latino has represented District 5 since the election of Blanca Alvarado in 1980, and five of the ten city council seats in 2021 are occupied by Spanish-surnamed officials. In the city hall executive branch, San Jose elected its first Latino Mayor in more than 150 years, Ron Gonzalez, back in 1998 (no Latino had occupied the seat since 1845).

The political victory in 1980 for Latinos in San Jose marked a watershed moment not only in their community history but the city's history as well. While Latino efforts to seek representation became institutionalized in city hall and embedded in the political structure with district elections it's also worth highlighting that their success might never come to fruition without their political coalition with the city's white population who, in fear of losing local power in their neighborhoods, also pushed for districting in the 1970s. The approval of district elections in 1980 provides a clear moment in the city's political and Latino history to conclude my examination of Latinos in San Jose.

However, there is also an obvious social-cultural reason for ending my investigation of the city's largest minority group in 1980. San Jose's longest sustained chronicle of Latino social, cultural, economic, and political activities in the city, *El Excéntrico*, stopped publication in April 1981 after scaling back production and distribution in 1980. Humberto Garcia Sr., founder of *El Excéntrico*, had passed away in late November 1974, after which his eldest son, Humberto "Bert" Garcia Jr., worked to keep the newspaper in circulation. In an interview, Garcia Jr., recounted the desire to

keep his father's legacy alive but, ultimately, making the difficult decision to close the doors of San Jose and Santa Clara County's most popular and longest lasting Spanish-language newspaper. Spanish-language and bilingual newspapers like *El Observador* and *La Oferta*, respectively, emerged as popular newspapers in San Jose, reporting on issues pertaining Latinos at the local, state, and national levels. These two papers are still in circulation today, but have moved to a primarily online platform. The closing of *El Excéntrico* coupled with the institutionalization of Latino political representation in District 5 help highlight how the center of Latino social, cultural, and political life moved from the city's downtown-core neighborhoods to the more peripheral area in Eastside neighborhoods.

However, these could also serve as reasons why I could have continued; after all, the end of every decade marks the beginning of another. We are now forty years removed from the beginning of district elections and the final publication of *El Excéntrico* and a lot has happened in San Jose since then. Indeed, two of the most-recent, published, historical monographs that analyze San Jose into the second half of the twentieth century bring the narrative to the early 2000s. Stephen Pitti's Latino-centered discussion of San Jose during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s is covered only in a single chapter that provides a broad analysis and explanation of events in Santa Clara County and San Jose. Glenna Matthews's gendered approach does a more detailed job of covering these decades and describing the development of the tech industry and how women fit into the narrative—but she also falls into the trap of writing only generally about the subject in her last chapter. These broad analyses reflect the trappings of time; both monographs were

published in 2003 and, therefore, I believe they were still too close temporally to make more specific contributions to the historical conversation.

Now, twenty years after Pitti's and Matthews's publications, I have combined the former's racial analysis along with the latter's urban focus in my research on San Jose. I therefore encourage historians to include a more in-depth examination of the 1980s and 1990s. Throughout the 1980s, the Eastside was derided as a "ghetto" and many Latinos took issue with the label. Ethnic Mexicans living in the El Ganso neighborhoods of Gardner, Washington, Alma, and Mid-town were often forgotten or ignored by the local media as coverage of the Eastside dominated public discourse of Latinos in San Jose and Santa Clara County. At the national level, Reagan agreed to do right by Latinos when he signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, thereby providing amnesty to millions of "illegal" aliens across the country, including thousands in the South Bay. How did this immigration legislation affect the social, cultural, and political environment in San Jose during the late 1980s and into the 1990s? Part of the answer lies in how the city and county responded to the campaign for elimination of immigrants' rights with the nativist push coming from Orange County for Proposition 187 in 1994. These are major topics in Latino history that have yet to receive substantial attention and I intend to tackle them when continuing this project.

A major finding of the RAND Corporation study of 1970 that outlined major issues plaguing San Jose and its Latino population was never fully addressed. The finding that income inequality between Latino and white residents was increasing rings true today but also has national implications. A shift in Santa Clara County's local economy from agriculture and canning to high-technology and electronics required higher

education and training that most Latinos lacked, leading to a socioeconomic declension for the comunidad at large. The de-industrialization of the U.S., the decline of many labor unions, and the proliferation of neoliberalism that encouraged U.S. corporations to export manufacturing also led to what some are calling a Second Gilded Age. Here, the majority of U.S. residents who lack a college education (and to a growing degree a graduate education) find themselves struggling to make ends meet while a small number of people control a wildly disproportionate share of the country's wealth. Notably, three of Fortune 500's ten largest and most wealthy corporations in the U.S.—Apple (2), Amazon (3), and Alphabet (9)—are in the high-tech industry, based out of the South Bay.<sup>376</sup>

The solidification of Santa Clara County as a hub for electronics, tech, and internet industries, slowly eradicated the canning industry in the area and dramatically impacted job opportunity in San Jose. Eleven major canneries used to operate out of San Jose and the last one, Del Monte, ceased operations in 1997.<sup>377</sup> The closure of the canneries, and proliferation of tech outside of San Jose diminished the city's economic prowess in the county as the region's major industry no longer operated out of the South Bay's largest city. More people in San Jose leave the city during the day to work in the northern "suburbs" of Santa Clara County, "The Peninsula" in San Mateo County (nestled between Santa Clara County and San Francisco) or in the "East Bay" in Alameda County. Since the 1970s, most start-up and major tech companies have generally headquartered in Santa Clara County's northern suburbs or within San Mateo County.

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<sup>376</sup> <https://fortune.com/fortune500/> [accessed December 14, 2021].

<sup>377</sup> Leonard McKay, "The Canning Industry in San Jose," *San Jose Inside*, February 20, 2006 [accessed online, December 14, 2021: [https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the\\_canning\\_industry\\_in\\_san\\_jose/](https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/the_canning_industry_in_san_jose/)]



While software and application development has primarily settled in these two regions, hardware, manufacturing, and assembly for tech companies has found a home in Alameda County. The home-building and annexation campaigns between 1950 and 1970 set the stage for San Jose to transition from a center of industry to a bedroom community. Despite being home to over half of Santa Clara County's residents, San Joseans travel out of the city for work in the tech industry because most tech companies never made San Jose their home.

While tech companies avoided San Jose, immigrants from Asia and Latin America settled in what has become the country's tenth largest city. Today, Asians and Latinos make up roughly about a third, each, of the city's total population. Latinos still represent the city's and county's most economically vulnerable group susceptible to the inequalities of the tech-driven economy. While major companies in tech have stayed away from San Jose, Google's announced interest in opening a hub in the city's downtown next to the train station, connecting San Jose to San Francisco, has many people in a frenzy. Many welcome the long-awaited arrival of a tech giant in the "Capital of Silicon Valley" but others, many coming from minority communities, are voicing their concerns. Conversations regarding income inequality, the dominance of tech in the economy, along with the industry's association with gentrification across the country are clearly beginning to play out in San Jose. Many Latino activists are speaking out against the move in fear of high displacement due to increased rent and home valuations, the lack of opportunity for employment in well-paid positions for people of color, and the erasure of culture. Whatever the final outcome, with a more demographically representative city council, with members from each of the city's ten districts, one hopes community

concerns will be heard and considered when deciding how Google will fit into engage with city residents, especially the most vulnerable.

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