

## CHAPTER 4

# The Struggle for Xicana/o Studies in the Northern Borderlands: War of the Flea in [Azt]lansing Michigan

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“If we can’t read about our history, then you cannot read about yours.” —  
*Rosa Linda Salas, Tlataoni, MSU MEXA, 1998–1999*

During the 1990s, as an undergraduate student at Michigan State University (MSU), it was my privilege to witness and participate in the historic struggle for Xicana/o Studies. African liberationist Frantz Fanon wrote eloquently about colonized people gaining control of their destinies. The struggle at MSU, and others like it in communities across Aztlán are skirmishes in the five-century-old battle to end settler colonialism in the Americas and reclaim the cultural, political, and intellectual destiny of the people of Aztlán. Fanon’s powerful critique of the role of the indigenous intellectual, both traditional and organic,<sup>1</sup> in creating a new national culture to replace the colonial structure stated “there is simply a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shriveled up, inert, and empty.” His words are more relevant than ever.<sup>2</sup> This national liberation struggle is one where, as indigenous intellectual Taiaike Alfred, a Kanien’kehaka Mohawk, in his book *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* writes, “warriors battle against the political manipulations of their innate fears and repel the state’s attempts to embed complacency inside of them. They counterattack with a lived ethic of courage and seek to cause the reawakening of a culture of

freedom.”<sup>3</sup> The MSU students—my comrades—organizing and fighting “the state’s attempts to embed complacency inside of them” found voice within their demands for Xicana/o<sup>4</sup> Studies.

The first Xicana/o studies programs across the country were created in the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s, dozens of Xicana/o studies programs were established, functioning, and thriving in institutions of higher learning across Aztlán.<sup>5</sup> For Xicana/os living outside of California and the Southwest watching the struggles that exploded around Propositions 187 and 209,<sup>6</sup> along with the January 1, 1994, Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, in opposition to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), it was a time for serious reflection and commitment to the Xicana/o national struggle. The Zapatistas were at that time the most publicized indigenous response to capitalism and colonialism in the Americas. These struggles and their international dimensions had a profound impact on Xicana/o students across the country. This chapter examines how the news of these resistance movements influenced Xicana/o students at Michigan State University.

Documents gathered through Freedom of Information Act requests and personal student archives contrast the Xicana/o studies politico-cultural movement of the 1990s to its direct predecessor at MSU mainly through the application of militant bottom-up organizing and anti-authoritarian direct action tactics. These ideas and their implementation were still unique in the Xicana/o student movement of the 1990s. Direct action tactics aligned within a Third World organizing framework of heightening contradictions, along with the arrival of specific faculty, were key catalysts in the establishment of Xicana/o Studies at Michigan State University. This moment of reawakening, fueled by direct action, can be framed within specific watershed moments that created cohesion and momentum for the students and community. For the Xicana/o and non-Xicana/o community, a deeper commitment to social justice and a widening cultural-politico perspective evolved quickly from a Xicana/o-centric perspective to a broader visualization of indigenous identity.

Heightening contradictions is an organizing strategy that prepares communities to participate in confrontational tactics. By exposing the irreconcilable differences between the oppressor and the oppressed, organizers educate the community with the aim of involving them in

cultural-politico confrontations to win demands. This preparation is predicated on education and the development of critical thinking skills. Across the world, insurgents and liberation fighters use this educational tactic to heighten and dramatize differences between themselves and their colonialist oppressors. It is the basis of Mao's famous "war of the flea" so aptly described by Robert Taber (1964) in his book of the same title. "The flea bites, hops, and bites again, nimbly avoiding the foot that would crush him. He does not seek to kill his enemy at a blow, but to bleed him and feed on him, to plague and bedevil him, to keep him from resting and to destroy his nerve and his morale."<sup>7</sup> Metaphorically speaking, the heightening of contradictions is the breeding of the flea.

Any discussion about the political and cultural gains at Michigan State University in the 1990s must take into account the terms of tactic and strategy. How did the strategies and tactics of the Xicana/o Movement in the 1960s and 1970s inform or shape the actions of Xicana/o militants both on and off campus in the 1990s and beyond? At MSU, the frame of heightening contradictions was widened with the inclusion of environmental activists and white anarchists, along with their knowledge of direct action tactics. This collaboration with forces outside the small Xicana/o and Latina/o community also speaks directly to a sense of entitlement to higher education on the part of the Xicana/os of the 1990s. It is also important to keep in mind that in terms of creating a Xicana/o studies program it wasn't until the 1990s that the Xicano/Latino population at MSU reached a critical mass with sufficient numbers to carry out a direct action campaign needed to build enough pressure on the university to force the administration's acquiescence.

On September 9, 1994, a La Onda Latina (LOLA), a statewide network of Xicano and Latino students, organized a conference. White student activists at MSU agreed to teach the Xicana/o and Latina/o students the fundamentals of direct action protest and tactics. Nicole Newton, the director of MSU's Women's Council, produced an instruction manual titled "Don't Get Caught" that outlined practical information for organizing large protests, forming affinity groups, and interacting with the police, along with information on the arrest process, grand juries, and being contacted by the police and the FBI. This training, association, and conversations with more seasoned activists had a profound impact

on Xicana/o students at MSU and many of those involved with LOLA. It allowed them to begin thinking about the contradictions of a settler education and self-determinative solutions for Xicana/os, and how to organize around direct action campaigns within the Xicana/o and Latina/o community to make those solutions a reality.

Edward L. Katzenbach Jr., who served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under President John F. Kennedy, in his influential essay on the military theories of Mao Tse Tung, enumerated the three tangibles of warfare. First are “the weapons systems...instruments of war that have given a sole possessor a moment of military supremacy. Second, there is the supply system, logistics in the broadest sense...Third, there is manpower.” Katzenbach writes that Mao chose to develop his revolutionary theory focusing on the three intangible aspects of warfare: space, time, and will: “the basic premise of this theory is that political mobilization may be substituted for industrial mobilization. Mao’s military problem was how to organize space so that it could be made to yield time. His political problem was how to organize time so that could be made to yield will, that quality which makes willingness to sacrifice the order of the day...Mao’s real military problem was not that of getting the war over with, the question to which Western military thinkers have directed the greater part of their attention, but that of keeping it going.”<sup>8</sup>

Students at MSU focused on the intangibles of war. Their prolonged fight for the “space” of Xicana/o studies gave these students the time over the course of a decade to build the will of their fellow students to remain in the fight. Today, within the Xicano movement, organizers and activists suffer from unrealistic expectations about the role of reform and revolution in a Xicana/o national liberation struggle. Space + Time = Will is an important equation from Katzenbach’s analysis of Mao’s guerrilla theory that could help shape the Xicana/o movement with realistic expectations of what constitutes protracted struggle during this historical episode.

Divestment is a non-violent tactic that creates a process for removing material, cultural, and political support from someone, something, or some idea unacceptable to you. In the 1980s, MSU was one of the first major universities to divest from South Africa. In doing this, MSU took a moral and financial stance against South African apartheid, paving the way for other universities and corporations to do the same. Today with

the electoral elimination of affirmative action through state proposals, society faces a similar question around issues of tacit support for inequality and how to resist injustice. In his book, *Why We Can't Wait*, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated about non-violent direct resistance:

When, for decades you have been able to make a man compromise his manhood by threatening him with a cruel and unjust punishment, and when suddenly he turns upon you and says: "punish me. I do not deserve it. But because I do not deserve it, I will accept it so that the world will know that I am right and you are wrong"... You know that this man is as good a man as you are; that from some mysterious source he has found the courage and the conviction to meet physical force with soul force.<sup>9</sup>

These ideas—Mao's "war of the flea" and Martin Luther King's "soul force"—provided the theoretical basis for non-violent direct action at MSU during the 1990s, and inspired the depth of commitment assumed by the students to face continual confrontation, the burden of punishment, and the obligation to bear it under any circumstance.

Direct action and militant non-violence are the overarching lessons of the 1990s at MSU for Xicana/o students. Although the first evidence of this lesson was discovered by accident, it became quickly apparent the greater the amount of pressure brought to bear on an issue the more incentive there is to resolve that issue. Because universities and their administrators often work hard to project a very liberal and caring image, heightened levels of tension can and often do force a faster resolution to the matter. The job of the students then becomes exposing the contradictions between opposing groups. These practices must be based on the fundamental belief in the irreconcilable differences in values, beliefs, and most of all, interests of the two conflicting parties.

#### THE INITIAL REPORTS

Before the 1990s, several official university reports and studies indicate that the main concerns of Xicana/os and Latinos at MSU from the 1970s to the late 1980s were employment of Xicana/o faculty and staff, and Xicana/o student retention. The reports are summarized in a March 8, 1989, document titled "Report of The Task Force On The Hispanic American

Institute,” which identified five central issues impacting the Hispanic community: employment development, education, political empowerment, health and family welfare, cultural awareness and enrichment.

The opening paragraph of the report reads in part,

Since 1977, comprehensive reports have been prepared and submitted to the MSU central administration calling for modest action to improve the participation of Hispanics at all levels of the University community...however, while there appears to have been a serious effort in fashioning reasonable proposals for bringing Hispanics into more meaningful roles in the University, the University response has consistently been silence at best.”<sup>10</sup>

Later, the report clearly outlines the need for research faculty at MSU as a vital component for increasing campus participation, “the key missing element is a cadre of research faculty with a demonstrated commitment to orient and coordinate programs to Hispanic issues.”<sup>11</sup>

Taken out of context, the above quote might be misunderstood as assigning intent concerning the creation of a Xicana/o Studies program. When the authors speak about “programs” they in fact are referring to a number of university and academic programs:

The limitations among Hispanic faculty and the research interest of non-Hispanic faculty at MSU have precluded a Hispanic focus in University programs directly relevant to our areas of concern. For example, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Institute for Research on Teaching, the Institute for Family and Child Study, the Labor Program Service, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and the National Center for Research on Teacher Education are some of the programs and research centers which could be mobilized to attend more to Hispanic interests in their research and service agenda. Once again, the key-missing element is a cadre of research faculty with a demonstrated commitment to orient and coordinate programs to Hispanic themes.<sup>12</sup>

The authors of the report put forward the traditional rationale of building Xicana/o presence on campus by increasing faculty positions in existing departments. Their stated goal was not to create a new department that would oversee the development of Chicano Studies program but to

make their specific departments more responsive to Xicana/o/Latinos at MSU.<sup>13</sup> This is very different from the later demands of activists in the 1990s who wanted a dedicated Xicana/o studies faculty to lead and orient Xicana/o students for greater academic success within that specific discipline.

Another important aspect of the reports submitted leading up the 1990s was the conciliatory language used on the part of the Xicana/o and Latina/o community to convey their sense of engagement in the process of change. Consider this excerpt from the Task Force Report: "A more cynical view might interpret the regression which has occurred over the past decade in most areas of university participation as hostile to the inclusion of Hispanics... We trust the sincerity of the commitments which have been made to us to go beyond the rhetoric of the past decade and to begin to implement the many recommendations which have been made over this period."<sup>14</sup>

Another prominent thread present in the pre-1990s reports was the constant comparison with African Americans on campus. The use of African Americans in these reports as benchmarks for measuring the progress of the Xicana/o and Latina/o population on campus shifted in the 1990s as an increasing sense of Xicana/o nationalism and Indigeneity took hold among the students. The shift in the type of language used to engage the university provides one of the most dramatic ways of understanding the fundamental differences between the two eras and their approach to activism and campus organizing. In terms of creating programs or studies programs the situation at MSU before the 1990s was in many ways one dictated by numbers.

The culmination of the activism during this period was the creation of the Julian Samora Research Institute in 1989.<sup>15</sup> This accomplishment cannot be downplayed or underestimated in its achievement. Clearly, the Xicana/o and Latina/o population at MSU had not reached a critical mass dense enough to make demands from the "street." It also shows the demand for Xicana/o Studies was unique to the movement of the 1990s.

#### WHITENESS, MSU, AND THE XICANADA

The implicit lessons of my early life were resistance and survival in an overwhelmingly white world. I am half Mexican and no one (not even

those who loved me) ever let me forget this fact. I have lived my life with white people, eaten with them, called them mother, grandmother, and uncle. I know them in a way they do not know themselves. I understand how they think because I think the same way. I am one of you and of my own free will; I choose to be the other. This was my first lesson in contradiction.

Michigan State University casts a long shadow in Lansing, and growing up in that shadow I believed MSU was somehow different—a utopia of knowledge and learning. I learned, as we all do during our primary indoctrination, that education is the great equalizer. I believed that when I became educated the world would see me the same way I wanted to see it, with greater understanding and clarity. I did not understand how wrong I was.

I was stunned by first day at MSU by the explosion of white skin and blue eyes. It was not that I had never seen so many white people before, I grew up in Michigan; it was the deficiency, the absolute absence of other Xicana/os and African American people that crippled me as I struggled my way around campus. Just a few short miles from my childhood and the familiar streets of Black and Brown Lansing, Michigan, I realized something was drastically wrong with my utopia.

Between 1992 and 1993, a core of Lansing locals had come over from Lansing Community College (LCC) and we formed along with Rudy Hernandez (then a young graduate student from Detroit, now a professor of sociology at the University of Michigan, Flint) the nucleus of a discussion group about MSU and the space Xicana/os occupied on campus and in society. Members of this original group were: Anthony Spangler, Rainer Delgado, Magda Sanchez, Stephanie Rios, Francisco Lopez, Paulo Gordillo, and myself. We had several common denominators in that we were in our mid-twenties when we came to MSU (slightly older than most undergraduates), we had all attended community college together, and as residents of Lansing had recently lived through the community fallout from the brutal killing of Cipriano Torres Jr. on November 4, 1991, by Lansing Police Department Officers.<sup>16</sup> I met Rudy the year before while I was working on a local Xicana/o community newspaper named *El Renacimiento*. I was still at community college with dreams of becoming a newspaper reporter. Rudy quickly became one of my main



initiators into the La Xicanada (the Xicano community); through the 1990s, he literally kicked down the doors of Michigan State's admissions office for me and many others.

It was 1993, and at MSU the Coalition of Hispanic Student for Progressive Action (CHISPA)<sup>17</sup> was the only student group for Xicana/o and Latina/o students. Rudy suggested we form a new student group and in doing so introduced us to Movimiento Estudiantil Xicana/o de Aztlán well known across the country as MEXA (but entirely new to us) and we, trusting Rudy unconditionally, declared ourselves MEXista's.

#### M. PETER MCPHERSON AND THE GRAPE BOYCOTT

Early in 1992, these newly minted MEXistas compiled along with the Asian Pacific Student Organization and CHISPA their first list of demands, which they delivered to interim MSU president Gordon Guyer. Number seven of the thirteen demands reads, "MSU [must] instate a Chicano/Latino Studies Center (similar to Wayne State University's)... This program will do its own recruitment, retention and teach its own curriculum."

Central to that list of demands was the creation of a Xicana/o Studies program at Michigan State. One of the sub-demands was for the recognition of the United Farm Workers (UFW) grape boycott, this becomes important later with the October 1993 arrival on campus of new MSU President M. Peter McPherson, former director of USAID under Ronald Reagan, a group executive vice president at the Bank of America in San Francisco, and rumored to be the grandson of the first president of Michigan's farm bureau. He was white, rich, privileged, and from a farming background, the perfect foil for a bunch of cockroaches in revolt.<sup>18</sup>

We harassed him, followed him from meeting to meeting. Confronted him at places he never dreamt we would dare. It was brutal and he was not ready for it. As a rich and powerful man, he was used to being obeyed instantly and not challenged. Shortly after his arrival, McPherson started meeting with leaders from student-of-color groups.<sup>19</sup> When it was our turn, we delivered him our thirteen demands. As he was reading the list, he suddenly stopped. "Xicana/o studies? What do you do with a degree in Xicana/o studies?" McPherson asked us with a laugh. "What kind of

job can you get with that?" I asked him back, "What kind of job do you get with an English degree? The point is you do with a degree what you want to do with a degree." As we pressed him further on the subject of Xicana/o studies McPherson said, "I think ethnic studies programs tend to balkanize campuses." At the time, I was not even sure what he meant by that. Later, when we understood his meaning we took every opportunity to repeat his assertion to anyone who would listen.

Through the end of 1994, we pounded McPherson with protest after protest. Always in the forefront of our demands were Xicana/o studies and the UFW grape boycott. We had stumbled unwittingly on issues that not only heightened contradictions but also created an almost insurmountable ideological chasm. These two issues allowed us the freedom to educate the community about the plight of farm workers, pesticides, and self-determination through education in the classroom and protest in the streets. As the university administration reacted in defense of its own interests, the contradictions became more evident.

One particularly noteworthy action occurred Friday, February 11, 1994, the day that Dolores Huerta was visiting MSU.<sup>20</sup> MEXitas and their allies had been sending McPherson boxes of grapes every hour with notes reading, "These grapes were watered with the blood of migrant workers," and similar statements.

The day culminated with close to one hundred Xicana/o students and their white allies taking over the president's office and demanding to speak with him. Although he first refused, eventually he relented, asking us to join him in the board of trustees meeting room adjacent to his office. In we went; as we filled up the room McPherson took the seat at the head of the table, Dolores Huerta directly to his right, and the university-appointed advisor to Latino students Luis Alonzo Garcia directly to his left.

It was ugly. McPherson tried to defend what was in our eyes indefensible and he was clearly angry at being challenged. Dolores also criticized McPherson; that was beautiful.<sup>21</sup> The white kids in the room also challenged the president. But the *coup de grace* came when after about an hour of verbal bantering he began some long ramble about Native Americans, reservations, and manifest destiny. Across the table Anthony Spangler, a Lansing native and MEXA member, stood abruptly in the middle of

McPherson's last monologue, took a couple of bags of leftover grapes and slammed them down on the board of trustees table.

The room got loud, people started to move. McPherson called for order but the noise level in the room rose dramatically as RAZA and their allies stood and began to shout. Julie Salazar, a Xicana from the barrio of South West Detroit, and Cindy Cerda, another Xicana from Chicago, began ripping open the bags Spangler had hurled on the table and throwing grapes in all directions. The crowd reacted as crowds often do: chairs started to tip over as people stood, and this space, this center of European hegemony broke into bilingual pandemonium while Salazar, Cerda, and other Xicanas threw handfuls of grapes at President McPherson. For me the room froze. All around me people were shouting and throwing grapes. McPherson started pounding the table yelling, "Get her down!" I turned to see Salazar towering, both figuratively and literally, over the room, her laced Timberlines stomping grapes on top of the board of trustees meeting table like a Xicana/o version of an *I Love Lucy* episode gone wild. It all happened in about thirty seconds.

Minutes later in the hallway a second drama unfolded as Luis Garcia scolded some of the students about their behavior. In what was a prophetic moment, Francisco Lopez, a student at Lansing Community College, went up to Garcia and confronting him said, "Whose side are you on?" "What, what do you mean?" Garcia responded. "From where I was sitting," said Lopez to the low murmurings of the crowd. "It looked like you were with the man."<sup>22</sup>

Fanon tells us the colonizer equates the colonized to animals; makes them beasts of burden in order to justify their murderous exploitation. Fanon writes that the colonized, "knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at that moment he realizes his humanity and begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory."<sup>23</sup> We walked out of that boardroom victorious. The edge on our intellectual machetes was starting to sharpen. The situation had just gotten a little wild but that is expected when "two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature," meet.<sup>24</sup> As Fanon warns, decolonization is a process that begins with an intellectual rejection of the dominant colonizer paradigm and moves toward a physical challenge of that same system. It "sets out to change the

order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder.”<sup>25</sup> That was the winter of 1994, things were just getting started, and unknown to us help of a sort was about to appear on the scene.

#### ETHNIC STUDIES AT MICHIGAN STATE

Any account of the struggle for Xicano Studies at MSU would be incomplete without discussing the efforts of Dr. Refugio (Will) I. Rochin, who was hired in the summer of 1994 as the first permanent director of the Julian Samora Research Institute (JSRI). Rochin came from the University of California, Davis, where he had started and directed along with others one of the country's more successful and enduring Xicana/o studies program. A professor of agricultural economics, Rochin also served on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, and the board of the Rural California Housing Corporation, a non-profit builder of low-income housing for farm workers and other of rural communities.

A veteran of the Xicana/o studies struggles of the 1960s and 70s, Rochin immediately grasped the political situation and hit the ground advocating for Xicana/o studies as a component of ethnic studies. Rochin became the director of JSRI on September 1, 1994. He arrived at a critical time on campus. He was thrust by MSU administration, and his own history and personal beliefs, into the center of the fight for Xicana/o studies. Because of the upsurge in Xicana/o student activism after the grape-throwing incident and the ongoing direct-action organizing of the MEXA students, the demand for Xicana/o studies was becoming a rallying cry on and off campus. Far from trying to distance himself, Rochin immediately began trying different administrative ways to capitalize on the momentum created by Xicana/o students.

An interesting glimpse into his advocacy for Xicana/o studies can be found in an October 3, 1995, memo to then-Provost Lou Anna Simon (now MSU president) and the dean of Social Sciences, Kenneth Corey. Rochin, as part of his ongoing argument for the creation of a Latino studies program at MSU wrote, “Understand that I am firmly committed to Xicana/o/ Latino studies and “multiculturalism” because it is in my blood.”<sup>26</sup> In a November 10, 1995, memo to Simon, Corey laid out the agenda for the November 13 meeting:

In order to address and meet the expressed educational needs for our students, we want your mandate to have JSRI develop and implement an undergraduate specialization in Latino/Xicana/o Studies...

In order for JSRI to have a reasonable chance of successfully realizing its current and proposed expanded mission, JSRI should be authorized to appoint in the Institute, tenure and tenure stream faculty, and JSRI should be authorized to offer credit instruction and programming.

In order for JSRI to be successful therefore, it needs to be empowered to function across the mission of teaching, as well as research and outreach. Scholarly holism is essential.<sup>27</sup>

As the documents show, certain factions within the university were interested in creating an ethnic studies program, or as Rochin wrote in an email on November 13, Simon “acknowledge[s] the interest of [MSU professor] Chris Vanderpool and Ken Corey in establishing a specialization in ERGI [Ethnicity, Race, Gender and Inequality]”<sup>28</sup> and praises them for the work they had done up to that point.

The problem for Rochin was between his push for Xicana/o studies and a greater role for JSRI against Simon’s reluctance to create “new programs which would draw ‘political’ opposition.”<sup>29</sup> This struggle between Simon’s reticence toward Xicana/o Studies and Rochin’s advocacy came to center stage during the meeting mentioned above when Simon tells Rochin plainly that she “did not want JSRI to become a department.”<sup>30</sup> This statement by Simon is important in that Rochin was advocating for the creation of a Xicana/o Studies program with faculty lines that would lead to the creation of Xicana/o studies department within JSRI. Simon set clear boundaries for Xicana/o Studies and Rochin at MSU by making sure the merger between the two did not take place. (Some believe she is carrying on her legacy of limiting ethnic studies today as MSU president).

Rochin was clearly attempting to capitalize on the promises made by McPherson in the spring of 1994 and the momentum created by the aggressive activism of the MEXA students and their white allies. In a letter written to then-President McPherson on March 2, 1994, concerning their understanding of an earlier meeting, student activists from MEXA wrote, “the University has agreed to create some type of program for

Chicano/Boricua studies within the year. Especially in the area of hiring the faculty responsible for implementing the curriculum.”<sup>31</sup>

McPherson responded on March 29, 1994 with a two-page letter addressing the concerns raised by the MEXA students, noting,

We support the establishment of an ethnic studies program that would include Chicano/Boricau (sic) courses...As to an exact time line, none was given, however, Provost Simon has indicated that it would take from 12-15 months before significant progress would be achieved. However, the Provost is prepared to immediately invest resources in partnership with the colleges and departments to achieve this goal. Such resources may include some additional faculty hires and faculty support to begin this curricular development.<sup>32</sup>

Less than a year later, Simon, told Rochin (who had clearly demonstrated his experience at UC Davis), “that the problem for the specialization was leadership; someone to assume the responsibility for developing the specialization.”<sup>33</sup> She went on to “caution against approving high profile initiatives which were not developed through traditional processes.”<sup>34</sup> This conversation certainly is in part a reference to the activism of MEXA and Xicana/o community activists.

By the fall of 1995, Vanderpool, Corey, and Rochin had accomplished a significant amount of work along with others<sup>35</sup> in establishing the feasibility of Ethnic Studies (in which, under their model, Chicano/Latino Studies would be a component) at MSU. For unknown reasons Simon remained consistently against the idea of JSRI under Rochin’s direction as the spearhead for the ethnic studies movement at MSU.

Later in the email, Rochin expresses his concern that the intent of his proposal will be altered radically. He again echoes his belief that “students of Raza need computer experience and a way to address issues of Hispanic communities through research and investigation”<sup>36</sup> His concern for students and the efforts they were putting forward at the time is also reflected in his statement earlier “I am now wondering about the curriculum for Chicano/Latino students. They have made a plea for support and have gotten nowhere in terms of courses in the catalog.”<sup>37</sup>

Even though it was clearly his intention to act aggressively to create an Ethnic Studies program or at least the Chicano/Latino component

of it, Rochin received heavy criticism from the MSU MEXistas. After he released his first proposal in November of 1995, he received letters from MEXA student organizers questioning the direction of his proposal. In part, they wrote, "as we were not given a role in your formulation of a draft proposal for 'an Ethnic Studies Specialization' ...we [MEXA Students] feel as if we need to create our own role as a resource in putting together this area of study."<sup>38</sup>

The three-page letter goes on to outline three major concerns on the part of the MEXistas and begins this by acknowledging the unique role Rochin occupied at MSU during those times they wrote, "It is obvious Michigan State University looks to you to represent the Chicano/Latino opinions and needs on campus. But since you are in fact representing student opinion we would like to bring your recommendations into line with student needs and concerns."<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this letter is the tone. Unlike their correspondence with Anglo administrators, the MEXista's spoke openly of wanting to find a common ground with Rochin to promote Chicano/Latino studies. The students continued "obviously we cannot force our requests in this letter be followed word for word, but we do expect you will consider them and will be willing to go over these with us...we feel this is the least you can do, as we obviously should have a voice in this issue and you have not promoted this thus far."<sup>40</sup>

Rochin responded, assuring the MEXA students his proposal was a "draft to begin discussion with faculty and students on campus."<sup>41</sup> He goes on to tell the MEXistas that "[he] is serving as a coordinator for 'ethnic studies' ...that the true responsibility for 'ethnic studies' is the faculty."<sup>42</sup> What is interesting about Rochin's continued insistence (through most of his documents, emails, and memos) upon centering the responsibility of creation on the faculty, is the statement in the draft about faculty at MSU up to that point: "JSRI...identified only one Latino professor who is teaching a specific course on Chicano/Latino status and culture, Professor Joseph B. Spielberg in Anthropology. While there are currently and literally a handful of Latino professors with tenure line academic appointments, the fact of the matter is that their courses are more mainstream and not of the genre referred to as ethnic studies."<sup>43</sup>

In fact, white faculty working on ethnic studies at MSU had also identified this very same lack of minority faculty as one of the major blocks to establishing any type of program. In an April 7, 1994, memo to Dean Corey, Larry Robbins of the anthropology department spelled out this dilemma: "I am especially concerned about this [development of ethnic studies] in relation to the composition of our faculty. We only have one minority faculty member, Professor Spielberg. We have never had an African American faculty member in anthropology...I think the addition of an African American, who is linked to the ethnic studies program...would be a very exciting development."

The development of a core faculty would remain a problem for Xicana/o/Latino studies until well into the first decade of the new century.

The continuing policy of the provost (now president) Lou Anna Simon to act as a gatekeeper not only toward Xicana/o studies and the students demanding these classes, but tenured Xicana/o faculty with legitimate academic requests for ethnic studies programs, exacerbated the deeply contradictory nature of the relationship between Xicana/o students, their allies, and the universities administration. This hard line position against Xicana/o studies on the part of the university moved the Xicana/o community to a different level in terms of their methods of resistance and how to express those ideas.

#### HUNGER STRIKE/BROWN BERETS

The year 1996 at MSU and the greater Lansing area brought significant challenges and change. First, three men, two Mexicans and one African American, were killed by the police.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, a raid on a local community center resulted in hundreds of arrests.<sup>45</sup> Massive gentrification in the barrio of North Lansing and the reversal of the name of Chavez Avenue back to Grand Avenue was still fresh in everyone's mind.<sup>46</sup>

Feelings were running high and Xicana/os in Lansing were mad. On campus, multiple MEXA protests were successful beyond our wildest dreams. Under the direct tutelage of longtime activist Apaxu Maiz, the group was coming together as a tough cadre of organizer/activists dedicated to the idea of Xicana/o nationalism.<sup>47</sup> In the 1960s, Maiz had organized Brown Beret chapters around the state, with the exception of



the Detroit chapter. He is the author of two self-published books *Xicana/o: An Autobiography* and *Looking for Aztlán*. The murder of Cipriano Torres Jr. in Lansing had a profound impact on the Chicano community and it was during this episode that many of us first became associated with Maiz. More than once, tactical disputes in the 1990s were settled with the statement "Apaxu says..." It seems impossible to overstate his importance to the Xicana/o student movement at MSU in the 1990s. He unquestionably served as the source of courage Xicana/o students needed in the beginning to confront first the university, then the police, and later the local political structure. His unwavering nationalism, activist experience, and ability to communicate his beliefs and experiences in a blunt yet sophisticated manner, along with what was being learned from white environmental activists, created a thriving combination of theory and practice.

In early 1996, we were looking for a way to bring attention back to the grape boycott. The idea for a hunger strike came from Mark Anthony Torres, who would later become the Tlatonai<sup>48</sup> for MEXA de MSU. In the beginning, the idea was met with some resistance and healthy skepticism. After much discussion, we began to research the feasibility. Two community members Fenis Ibanez and Rose Castilla (later members of the Brown Berets de Aztlán) did the initial research. What we learned immediately there is little written about hunger strikes. Most of the literature centered on the hunger strikes of Irish political prisoners protesting British prison conditions. Each of those individual hunger strikes ended in the death of the striker.<sup>49</sup> Through this research, we realized that we had more time than we originally thought to be on a hunger strike. Everyone was in reasonably good health and we figured we could go at least two weeks without any real damage. So it was decided among ourselves that Maria Zavala, Mark Anthony Torres, Daniel Soza III, Andres Guerrero, Matthew Martinez, and Jose Romero Jr., would drink only water for an indeterminate amount of time (privately agreed upon not to exceed two weeks) and in doing so follow in the non-violent traditions of Jesus, Gandhi, Tolstoy, Dr. King, and of course Cesar Chavez.

The hunger strike began at dawn on February 13, 1996, with a sunrise ceremony honoring the four directions, a practice we would keep over the next seven days. The strike also coincided with President McPher-

son's third state-of-the-university address.<sup>50</sup> It was a concerted attempt to redirect media attention away from him and toward the issue of the grape boycott. It was moderately successful and another example of how we were coming to understand the power of media in publicizing our political agenda.

The hunger strike lasted for seven days. At the end of those seven days, it became apparent to us that McPherson was not going to yield. We had to find a creative way to pressure the university into some type of compromise—mostly because we had been reckless and over-confident by making the fast an all-or-nothing proposition. We sent Mark Torres to the hospital.<sup>51</sup> Mark's father and mother were longtime activists with the United Auto Workers and had both endured the brutal conditions of the U.S. agricultural fields in their younger days. When McPherson called them about their son, they promptly told him they were behind Mark all the way. Mark returned from the hospital declaring his intention to stay the course.

The hunger strike brought the white progressive community out in force to support the fasting MEXista. This was our first glimpse of the intra-Latino campus rivalry that would become so crippling later, as many of the Xicana/o and Latina/o students stayed conspicuously absent from activities supporting the hunger strike. The main support staff behind the effort to keep the seven hunger strikers alive was a young couple, Amy Cairns<sup>52</sup> and Kimberly Hauze. Veterans of the peace and justice movement, they turned the Centro de la Raza in the basement of Wilson Hall into a fast headquarters, sending out press releases and maintaining schedules for everyone involved. To maintain the integrity of the fast, all of the strikers lived in El Centro and after classes returned there immediately, accompanied by a volunteer. During those seven days, none of student protesters were ever alone. The end of the hunger strike came quickly.

Two white students, Jason Wade and Peter Nitz, were scheduled to begin indefinite hunger strikes. When this became known the university was ready to make a deal. We did not get the grape boycott but we did get a mechanism for removing grapes from the dorms and we got "No Grapes Day" every March 31. It does not seem like a lot, and maybe for a week of going hungry it is not, however, the greatest victory came from the sense of purpose. Our personal determination to create change at



Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano De Aztlan hunger strikers (left to right) Daniel Soza III, Maria Zavala, Mark Anthony Torres, Matthew Martinez, Jose Romero, (not pictured Andres Guerrero) hold a press conference in el Centro de La Raza located in the basement of Wilson Hall, MSU to announce Torres' decision to continue the hunger strike after he returned from the hospital.

MSU was renewed and strengthened. The hunger strike ended the grape boycott movement at Michigan State University. From there forward Xicana/o students turned their attention exclusively to Xicana/o Studies.

"If we can't read about our history then you can't read about yours"

Our next action, the book check out, was the most dramatic of the three watershed events. The action was a combination of all the skills we had learned over the past eight years. The book checkout took the demand for Xicana/o studies from wishful thinking to serious consideration.

As a large research university, MSU has strict rules about privacy in research. Workers at the library do not have the right to ask your intentions concerning books or deny you a book. At that time, the number of books any student could check out during a semester was unlimited. The stage was set. MEXA members descended upon the library and started checking books out by the hundreds. The library staff was livid. They wanted us to stop. The director of the library stomped around huffing and puffing, demanding explanations, alternately threatening and cajoling but to no avail. Like other actions, it always amazed me when what



Joaquin Ramos, Tomas Soria, Marcelina Trevino-Savala, Jennifer Thompson-Torres, Rosa Salas, David Khilji, and Detroit Brown Beret Joaquin Ramos stand guard while MEXA speaker Marcelina Trevino-Savala delivers the initial statement to the press on the purpose of library action.

we had planned actually worked. Brown Berets from Detroit (of which I was a member at the time) came and provided security for the students checking out the books. Dr. Lee June (retired) Vice President of Student Affairs walked by laughing. “Good one,” he said as he whisked through. “Totally within the rules.” June kept walking. We had won again.

The books were stacked on the floor in front of the checkout station in a rectangle about four feet tall, three feet wide, and fifteen feet long. It was mighty pile of books. Of the thirty or so students participating, we were divided into several groups. One group brought the books down from the stacks and piled them neatly on the floor. Another group took turns checking out books. Others then carried them out to the U-Haul we rented and the Brown Berets loaded them into the truck. All in all, we took over 5,000 books from the library that day and as we were shutting the door to the U-Haul, surrounded by panic-stricken librarians and dumbfounded news reporters, someone asked us the reasons behind our actions. “If we can’t read about our history, then you cannot read about yours,” responded Rosa Salas one of the Tlataonis for MSU MEXA.

This action was the last straw.<sup>53</sup> The next week we followed the book checkout action with “Operation Zero.”<sup>54</sup> The library checkout idea belonged to Rudy Hernandez. He originally came up with the idea early in 1994 along with the “Operation Zero—We refuse to be used.” In this action Xicano students would go to the registrar’s office and officially change our ethnicity to white with the university’s registrar. Since how you choose to identify yourself ethnically is a matter of personal choice and has no legal ramifications it stands to reason the only entity that benefitted from minority students was Michigan State. Since the university refused to make even the smallest concession in the form of Xicano Studies, why should MSU benefit from the presence of students to boast about their diverse student body? Personally, I thought this was a beautiful idea and we tried to implement it with varying degrees of success. Like most good ideas I saw “Operation Zero” as smart and to the point. However, the drama of the book check overshadowed the foundational philosophy of non-compliance and divestment represented by Operation Zero.

In the midst of all this activity, Dr. Teresa Melendez, a recent arrival from the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), was working to successfully create the structure for the current Xicana/o Studies undergraduate specialization. Dr. Melendez, like Dr. Rochin, was a product of the turbulent struggles to create Xicana/o studies. Unlike Rochin, Dr. Melendez had participated directly in student-led struggles at San Francisco State University and the University of San Diego as part of the Zapata Lumumba Collective.

We needed the break. Up to that point, none of the faculty at MSU had provided us the moral and personal support Melendez brought to the struggle for Xicana/o studies. Rochin had done his part in pushing forward a version of this Xicana/o Studies specialization, but in the end, he wanted his creation to dovetail into the Ethnic Studies program when it came to fruition. The internal documentation is very clear on this development—our Hispanic teaching faculty, with the exception of Rochin and Melendez, had ignored the idea of ethnic studies. For some it may have been apathy, for others a disbelief in the likelihood of success and for many a desire to protect their careers. Like so many events in life, timing is paramount. We could have gone on forever and I am sure despite the promises and documents, MSU in the 1990s was

counting on graduation to silence student voices, and continued inaction by present faculty.

There is no question Melendez is the faculty hero of this story. She paid the price for her collaboration with MEXA rabble-rousers, as she was ultimately denied tenure. The MSU administration did not count on the fact she saw service to her community as the greater calling; they quickly learned the error of their ways. Melendez simply would not back down and it was her resolve to continue that carried the day.

The new Xicana/o and Latina/o Studies undergraduate specialization immediately grew to well over one hundred participants. By 1999 what we had been clamoring for had arrived, and just in time, because after eight years of struggle, morale was running low. Even the younger students who had participated in the early protests of the 1990's were graduating. Many had run a marathon and sacrificed a speedy undergraduate education for something most would never experience—enrollment in a Xicano studies program. The program began to grow administratively and more importantly as a fixture in the minds of the MSU Xicana/o/Latino community at MSU. The Xicana/o and Latina/o Studies undergraduate specialization served an important purpose: There are those in our community who lack an ability to imagine success. It was impossible for them to see how we could create a Xicana/o Studies program from the ground up. The responsibility of struggle is too much for most students, staff and faculty, but once it is there, and usually in the interests of their own careers, they become an integral part of its structure. Nothing co-opts a movement more than its own success.

## CONCLUSION

Rudy Acuña writes in his decisive book on the state of Chicano studies, *Sometimes There is No Other Side: Chicanos and the Myth of Equality* (1998), "The threat of Chicano history is its political dimension," a dimension that could provide, when allowed or encouraged, an oppositional paradigm to white hegemony. Acuña reminds his readers that it is human nature "to participate in history." Xicana/os are and should be the creators of their history and that the "acquisition of historical consciousness means learning the 'discipline of memory'...identifying

your personal and community interests.” Acuña warns, “A false collective memory facilitates subordination.”<sup>55</sup> It is this call to intellectual action that characterizes Acuña’s writing on Chicano studies and creates the context within which he situates the real purpose of the discipline. Drawing from Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Acuña explains the necessity of understanding paradigms and their importance to the struggle for Xicana/o studies when he writes, “Kuhn...popularized ‘paradigms,’ the theory that in every field of study the established order sets structural guidelines that influenced the thinking and actions of its scientists and social scientists. The concept holds in this context, existing paradigms restrict the growth and expansion of the new and competing models.”<sup>56</sup>

It is only through physical, social, or intellectual struggle that existing paradigms can be eradicated. Since struggle of any kind is not unique to any one group of people or scholars, it is safe to say identification with oppositional paradigms within Xicana/o Studies is not generational but situational. The generation of the 1960s was not inherently more radical or challenging than subsequent generations. Examining the record of oppositional paradigm politics at MSU in the 1990s clearly bears this out. The choice both generations of students made to fight for Xicana/o studies was made based on their situation. Others chose a different path. Fanon discussed this internal conflict between colonized people when he wrote, “The last battle of the colonized against the colonizer will often be that of the colonized among themselves.”<sup>57</sup> Certainly, the political crisis of a colonized people moving toward national liberation, while building political structures to facilitate that change, is the inevitable violent outcome of drawing borders and deciding on some level, who is in and who is out.

Fanon describes the phases of intellectual development native or colonized people must pass through before they arrive at the moment of national liberation:

The first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power...second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is...Sometimes this literature of just-before-the-battle is dominated by humor and allegory; but often it is symptomatic of a period of distress and dif-

ficulty...the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people.<sup>58</sup>

The portrayal of Xicana/os politically, in mass media, academic literature, grassroots activism, and intellectualism helps to shape our vision of our community and is becoming increasingly important as our community struggles and maneuvers itself through the minefield of decolonization. There is a growing understanding within the Xicanada that our goal is not to struggle with white Americans about reform or whether we belong in Anglo society as a part of a greater American multiculturalism, but facilitating an internal dialogue that awakens the people to their own destiny. This is the ultimate destiny of Xicana/o studies.

Xicana/o/Indigenous scholars working within a frame work of national resistance are clearly situated within the context of Fanon's work when he writes, "at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnic or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people."<sup>59</sup> The Xicana/o and Indigenous scholars are once again "addressing" their own people, moving toward a period of intellectual development in opposition to their colonization that Fanon calls the "literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation."<sup>60</sup>

Mainstream Chicana/o scholars continue to turn away from the reality of the Xicano nation by using liberation rhetoric strictly in terms of identity, literature, and literary criticism. The role of the intellectual and the nation in creating culture and resistance is important writes Fanon, "Because the nation by its manner of coming into being and in the terms of its existence exerts a fundamental influence over culture. A nation which is born of the peoples' concerted action and which embodies the real aspirations of the people while changing the state cannot exist save in the expression of exceptionally rich forms of culture."<sup>61</sup>

This is the core concept so many scholars fail to comprehend—nation and culture go hand in hand. They are dynamic processes that move the people toward their goal of liberation. The fate of our people, the



struggle of our Meso-American Xicana/o nation is not summed up by the lives of a few men and women held up by this system as examples of individualistic attainment but by the collective actions and accomplishments of us all. I believe the true lessons students of color and Xicana/o communities can take away from this story are summed up in the words of Sun Tzu, the Chinese sage of war, "The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable." All who undertake the creation or defense of a Xicana/o Studies program would do well to remember his advice.

### Notes

1. "Organic intellectual" is a term coined by Marxist writer Antonio Gramsci imprisoned by Benito Mussolini. This person is an intellectual that develops from the working class (not a traditionally trained academic) who uses their ability to motivate and guide the working class in what Gramsci called the "war of positions," an ideological battle/war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.
2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 238.
3. Taiaike Alfred, *Wasase: The Warriors Dance* (City: Publisher, 2008), 29.
4. "It must be remembered the word MeXicana/o (meh-shee-cano) was given birth by the Spaniards in the 16th century in attempt to pronounce Mexicatl (meh-shee-cottle). During this time period the letter X was pronounced with the *sh* or *ch* sound...it is becoming common practice to use the letter *x* to spell Chicano as Xicana/o. Very simply it stresses the historical and emotional connection to MeXicana/o and it *screams* of Indian pride and rebirth." Apaxu Maiz, *Xicana/o: An Autobiography* (City: Publisher, Year), 52.
5. Traditionally Aztlan is defined as the Southwest United States.
6. Passed by California voters in 1994, Proposition 187 required public workers to turn in illegal or suspected illegal immigrants. Proposition 209, the California Civil Rights Initiative, was passed by California voters 1996. It amended the state constitution to prohibit state governmental institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity in the areas of public employment, public contracting, and public education, and was the first electoral test of affirmative action policies in the United States. [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org).
7. Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*, (CITY: PUBLISHER, DATE).
8. E. L. Katzenbach Jr., "Time, Space and Will: The Politico-Military Views of Mao Tse Tung," in *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him* (Quantico: Marine Corp Gazette, 1962), 11–19. Katzenbach uses the word yield here as you would talk

about a harvest—we planted four acres and it yielded three metric tons. Mao needed time and China is big, so he traded space for time—some people call it retreating. Mao retreated until he was ready and the time that was yielded allow him to increase will. This idea has become the basic formula for revolutionary warfare or what experts now are calling asymmetrical conflict.

9. Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet Classics, 2000).
10. C. Caguiat, G. Cornell, R. Gonzalez, J. Martinez, J. Figueira-McDonough, R. Navarro, L. Nelson, D. Rivera, J. Spielberg, (chair), M. Thullen, J. Dahomey, F. Kaptizke, *Report of the Task Force on the Hispanic American Institute*, Michigan State University, 1988.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. The Julian Samora Research Institute (JSRI) is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest. The Institute has current research/outreach initiatives targeting the needs of the Hispanic community in the areas of economic development, education, and families and neighborhoods. A database is also being developed to serve as a resource on and for Hispanics. JSRI has organized a number of publication initiatives to facilitate the timely dissemination of current research and information relevant to Latinos. See [jsri.msu.edu](http://jsri.msu.edu)
16. Cipriano Torres Jr. was shot dead by three Lansing Police department officers in the parking lot of the Motel Six on the corner of Washington and Business Loop 496.
17. By the end of 1993 CHISPA had become Culturas de las Razas Unidas (CRU) partially in response to the creation of MEXA. This effort was spearheaded by Chris Delgado, a Puerto Rican student who worked diligently on advancing the Latino student agenda while he was at MSU.
18. Many years later after the second invasion of Iraq and the downfall of Saddam Hussein, McPherson would be called upon to provide the technical expertise in restructuring the economy of that shattered country.
19. J. Haake, "Hispanic Groups Ask for Representation," *The State News* (Michigan State University), January, 31, 1994, 3
20. J. Haake, "Chicanos Deliver Grapes, Demands," *The State News* (MSU), February 11, 1994: 1.
21. To see parts of this meeting on YouTube, search "MEXA 1994 Grape Boycott." The video created by MSU students Maria Zavala, Robert Patino, and Francisco 'Tenoch' Lopez, is in four parts.
22. Garcia went on to become (and still is) the director of MSU's College Assistance Migrant Program. My own experience with Garcia is mixed. To illustrate the dynamic and controversial nature of Xicana/o politics in the 1990s at Michigan

State University one story stands out. I was visiting Garcia in his office one day and he asked if there was something I wanted to tell him. He then told me a friend of his who worked for the Lansing Police Department had called to tip him off that I was being targeted as a drug dealer and that my house (which I shared with several other MEXistas) was going to be raided soon. He asked me point blank if I was selling drugs. I told him no. We continued our conversation and Garcia reassured me that he would call his friend in the police department and tell him I was not a drug dealer. Nevertheless, I should probably take it easy on the activism and lay low for a while, Garcia said. I was so freaked out by the whole thing I went and told my mentor, Apaxu Maiz. He told me not to worry about it and asked me if it was okay for him to talk to Garcia about this. A few days later, I stopped by Garcia's office again and discovered him and Apaxu sitting there; Apaxu had his boxing gloves in his coat pockets. Apaxu said, "We were just talking about you son, come in and sit down." Apaxu looked at Garcia and said to him, "Tell him what you just told me." Garcia balked but told me he had made up the whole thing about the police. He had never gotten a call and there was no one asking if I was a drug dealer. He tried to tell me how I had to understand that all this political activity was very dangerous and he just did not want to see me caught up in something. I learned from that and other incidents that no matter how hard authority try to convince you of your own insignificance—they are watching.

23. Fanon.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Refugio I. Rochin, memo to Lou Anna Simon and Kenneth Corey, October 3, 1995.

27. Kenneth Corey, memo Lou Anna Simon; November 10, 1995.

28. Refugio I. Rochin, memo to Robert Aponte, Ken Corey, and Chris Vanderpool, November 13, 1995.

29. R. Rochin, 1995, personal communication,

30. Ibid.

31. Ernesto Todd Mireles, letter to M. Peter McPherson, March 2, 1994.

32. M. Peter McPherson, letter to Ernesto Todd Mireles, March 29, 1994.

33. Rochin, email to Aponte, Corey, and Vanderpool, 1995.

34. Ibid.

35. It would be a mistake to not mention the contributions of Professor Linda Jackson during the 1990s in preparing the groundwork for an Ethnic Studies specialization at MSU. She was the author of at least two reports, one from September 1994 titled "An Ethnic Studies Specialization at Michigan State University: Criteria for Course Inclusion," and another to Dean Corey on April 1995 titled "Report on Discussion with the Faculty and Administrators about an Ethnic Studies specialization at MSU."

36. Rochin, email to Aponte, Corey, and Vanderpool, 1995.
37. Ibid.
38. Maria Zavala, letter to Refugio Rochin, 1995.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Rochin to Maria Zavala, December 11, 1995.
42. Ibid.
43. Refugio I. Rochin, Draft, Ethnic Studies Specialization Proposal, Michigan State University, 1995, 14.
44. The three men killed were Cipriano Torres, Jesse Tijerina (the uncle of Rose Castilla, a MEXA member and Brown Beret), and Rex Bell. Torres had been shot to death by the Lansing police a few years earlier but the emotion surrounding his "execution" was still fresh in the minds of the community.
45. Local officials claimed that Latin American Cultural Center director Juan Beltran was running a "Blind Pig." This was the first attempt by members of MEXA de MSU to organize in the Lansing community. There were 120 people arrested and with everyone requesting a trial by jury, the court system became so backlogged that the Ingham County prosecutors dismissed the charges for everyone but Beltran. He was found guilty and placed on probation.
46. Eleanor Templeton, "Vote May Rename Chavez Avenue," *The State News* (MSU), 1.
47. Xicana/o nationalism has long been the subject of intense debate within Xicana/o activist circles. The student activist at MSU would define Xicana/o nationalism as a belief in Xicana/os as a unique grouping of people with a common heritage and belief system. They did not believe that a land base was necessary for the creation of a national grouping. Examples of these stateless nationals are present here in the United States are the Amish and the Mormons. Their own twist reflecting the strong anarchist tendency present at the time was the term Anarcho-Nationalist, which was in use for a while during the late 1990s and early 2000s.
48. This Nahuatl word means "speaker". It was the title/honorific of the ruler of the Mexica.
49. The ten IRA hunger strikers who died in 1981 were Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Tom McElwee, Kieran Doherty, and Mickey Devine.
50. Heather Johnson and Rachel Perry, "McPherson Reviews Successes: Activists' Hunger Strike to Continue 'Until We Win,'" *The State News* (MSU), February 14, 1996, 1.
51. H. Johnson, "Fasting Hospitalizes One Activist, Spurs Protest," *The State News* (MSU), February 19, 1996, 1.
52. Cairns has spent years working in the peace and justice movement, specifically with the Michigan Peace Team, which trains individuals to be observers at

demonstrations around the world. Cairns has worked with observers all over this continent and in middle of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

53. Mary Sell, "Protesters Check Out Books to Prove Point," *The State News* (MSU), February 19, 1999, 1.
54. Mary Sell, "Students Battle for a Full-Degree Program," *The State News* (MSU), February 25, 1999, 1.
55. Rudolpho Acuña, *Sometimes There is No Other Side: Essays on Truth and Objectivity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).
56. Ibid.
57. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.