

A CHAMPION FOR THE CHICANO COMMUNITY: ANITA N. MARTÍNEZ AND HER
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CITY OF DALLAS, 1969-1973

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2011

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Cloer, Katherine Reguero. A Champion for the Chicano Community: Anita N. Martínez and Her Contributions to the City of Dallas, 1969-1973. Master of Arts (History), August 2011, 119 pp., 19 illustrations, bibliography, 139 titles.

Much has been published in Chicano studies over the past thirty to forty years; lacking in the historiography are the roles that Chicanas have played, specifically concerning politics in Dallas, Texas. How were Chicanas able to advance El Movimiento (the Mexican American civil rights movement)? Anita Martínez was the first woman to serve on the Dallas City Council and the first Mexican American woman to be elected to the city council in any major U.S. city. She served on the council from 1969 to 1973 and remained active on various state and local boards until 1984. Although the political system of Dallas has systematically marginalized Mexican American political voices and eradicated Mexican American barrios, some Mexican Americans fought the status quo and actively sought out the improvement of Mexican barrios and an increase in Mexican American political representation, Anita N. Martínez was one of these advocates. Long before she was elected to office, she began her activism with efforts to improve her children's access to education and efforts to improve the safety of her community. Martinez was a champion for the Chicano community, especially for the youth. Her work for and with young Chicanos has earned her the moniker, "Defender of Dreams." She created a chicano recreation center in Dallas, as well as various poverty programs and neighborhood beautification projects. Although she has remained relatively unknown, during her tenure on the Dallas City Council, between the years 1969 and 1973, Anita Martínez made invaluable, lasting contributions to the Chicano community in Dallas.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Citizens Association
CCA	Citizens Charter Association
CPIL	City Plan and Improvement League (Dallas)
DCC	Dallas Citizens Council
DISD	Dallas Independent School District
LNA	Ledbetter Neighborhood Association
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens
MALC	Mexican American Legislative Caucus
MALDEF	Mexican American Legal and Educational Defense Fund
NAA	North American Aviation Company
NALEO	National Association for Latino/a Elected Officials
NSO	Neighborhood Stabilization Overlay
NYA	National Youth Administration
OMB	Office Management and Budget
OSA	Order of the Sons of America
PIP	People's Independent Party
SMU	Southern Methodist University
TEMCO	Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Corporation
UAW	United Auto Workers
UNT	University of North Texas
WPA	Works Progress Administration
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
ZONTA	Women's service club (term means "honest and trustworthy" in Lakhota [Teton Dakota])

A BRIEF NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms Hispanic, Mexican American, Latina, and Chicana are often used interchangeably. According to Chicano historian, Raúl R. Morín, different nomenclature stemmed from the desire of Spanish-speaking people born in the U.S. to separate themselves from Mexican immigrants. The terms Spanish, Mexican, and Latin American are misnomers for American-born people of Mexican heritage because these people are not from Spain, Mexico or Latin America; to be called Americans would not suffice because of the different cultures, languages, and complexions. Though it is a longer term, “Americans of Mexican descent” is also used.

Throughout this thesis, the term Chicana is the predominantly used term. This term refers to women of Mexican ancestry who were born and live in the United States. It is usually seen as a political term, as is the case in this thesis. The terms La Raza, Mexican American, and Latino/a are also used throughout this work to denote peoples of Mexican ancestry. The term Hispanic is only used here if a source is quoted directly. In 2005 *The Journal for Hispanic Higher Education* published an article titled “Why We Like to Call Ourselves Latinas.” According to its authors, Christina González and Patricia Gándara, use of the term “Hispanic” denotes uniformity, whiteness, and Spanish roots. Conversely, “Latino” connotes diversity, brownness and Latin American roots. Use of the term “Latino” over “Hispanic” signifies the want to shift focus from a pan-ethnic, historical identity to more modern times. “Latino” is used to project a struggle for equality. This thesis seeks to convey the latter. It must be noted however that Anita Martínez has referred to herself as a Hispanic and a Mexican American, not as a Chicana. This paper defines a

Chicana by actions and results, rather than personal preference. Because Martínez advanced El Movimiento, this paper refers to her as a Chicana.¹

¹ For more on ethnic terms of self-identity see Raúl R. Morín, *Among the Valiant* (Alhambra, CA: Borden Publishing Company, 1966); Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) ; Víctor Mendoza-Grado and Ricardo J. Salvador, “Are Chicanos the Same as Mexicans?,” University of Dayton. <http://academic.udayton.edu/race/01race/chicanos.html> (accessed March 22, 2010). See Sara Deutsch *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Christina González and Patricia Gándara “Why We Like to Call Ourselves Latinas,” *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4, no.4 (October 2005): 392-398.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1925, Anita N. Martínez, at age 44, stepped out of her role as homemaker and wife and entered the realm of city politics. She noted that Dallas had 2,000 historical landmarks, but not one reflected the presence or history of its Latino residents. She thought that Dallas history had excluded and underrepresented people of Mexican heritage. She sought to remedy this by running for a seat on the Dallas City Council. While serving on the council from 1969 to 1973, Martínez championed the Chicano community and diligently pushed through \$8,000,000 in legislation to implement lasting improvements in the living conditions of Mexican Americans in West Dallas and Little Mexico. Martínez was a conservative republican for her day, yet still lobbied for park beautification projects and barrio improvements. Her actions challenged the idea of what a conservative republican should be. Her time on the council demonstrated that Republicans as well as Democrats advanced the rights of and improved the living conditions for Mexican Americans in Dallas. Although she was not a resident of West Dallas, she represented its people in a beneficial and constructive manner and worked hard to make Dallas a thriving metropolis.²

Chicanas, including Martínez, actively started entering city and state politics in the 1960s. In 1977, in El Paso, Alicia Chacón was the first woman and Mexican American elected to the Ysleta Independent District School Board. In 1983, Chacón became the first Mexican American woman elected to the El Paso City Council, and in 1991 she became the first woman elected county judge. In 1981, in San Antonio, María Antonietta Berriozábal became the first Chicana ever elected to the San Antonio City Council. At the state level, in 1976, Irma Rangel

² Anita N. Martínez, interview by José Ángel Gutiérrez, June 10, 1999, interview 129, transcript, *Tejano Voices*, Center for Mexican American Studies Oral Histories, Arlington, Texas, p.26, <http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/gallery.jsp> (accessed September 24, 2009).

became the first Latina elected to serve in the legislature. Representative Rangel, a former educator and attorney, served for over twenty-seven years in the House; she died in 2003 after a lengthy bout with cancer.³

In 2004 sixty women were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, twenty-two of these were Chicanas/Latinas. According to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), in 1996 Chicanas/Latinas represented 32 percent of the 1,661 elected positions held by Latinos in the country. By January 2001, Chicanas represented 38 percent, or 1,952 out of the total Latinas elected that year. This was a significant increase in political Chicano/Chicana representation overall.⁴

Today, Chicanas comprise a large portion of the overall Latino leadership in the United States. Beginning in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Latinas were elected at higher rates than were Latinos throughout the country at all levels of government. These political victories were significant for Chicanas because they occurred at a faster rate than they did for Anglo women. Between 1996 and 2007, the number of Latina elected officials grew faster than the number of Latino elected officials – the number of Latinas increased by 74 percent, while Latinos increased by 25 percent. As a result, Latina elected officials increased to 31 percent in 2007 as compared to 24 percent in 1996. This represents a 7 percent increase over a ten-year period.⁵

³ Sonia R García and Marisela Márquez, “Motivational and Attitudinal Factors Amongst Latinas in U.S. Electoral Politics,” *National Women’s Studies Association Journal*, 13, no. 2 (2001): 112–122.

⁴ Wagner Rios, “Raise of Latino Political Power in the U.S.,” *Boston Examiner*, August 3, 2010 <http://www.examiner.com/business-commentary-in-boston/raise-of-latino-political-power-the-u-s> (accessed May 1, 2011).

⁵ NALEO, “A Profile of Latino Elected Officials in the United States and Their Progress Since 1996,” <http://www.naleo.org/downloads/NALEOFactSheet07.pdf> (accessed on April 21, 2011). For more sources on early Chicano history see Paul Schuster Taylor and Lyle Saunders. *Mexican Migration to the United States*. New York: Arno Press, 1976.

Much has been published in Chicano studies over the past thirty to forty years; missing from the historiography are the roles that Chicana women have played, specifically concerning politics in Dallas, Texas. Were there any Chicana women political pioneers in the Dallas area? What years did they serve and in what capacity? Did they make any specific contributions or changes to the Chicano community? What effect did their tenure have upon the Chicano community and the city as a whole? Are these effects, if any, still visible today?

A historiography of Chicanas would be remiss if it did not encompass a discourse on Chicanos. Before the emergence of Chicana studies in the 1970s, scholars concentrated mainly on men in the field termed Chicano studies.. The following works provided a history of Chicano studies and have been used in this thesis to provide historical context for the migration of Mexicans into Texas as well as the development of El Movimiento.

One of the works that broke ground in Chicano studies was Carey McWilliams's *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*. McWilliams's book was the first published English-language survey history general monograph devoted to an examination of Spanish-speaking peoples. It was published in 1948, and McWilliams argued that Mexican communities were among the lowest portion of the working class, especially following World War I. He cited large-scale discrimination as major obstacles to the political, economic and social upward movement of Chicanos in the United States. He argued that this unequal treatment made it nearly impossible for Mexicans to recover from the Great Depression of the 1930s. His work focused mainly on agricultural workers, but it spoke to the plight of Chicanos everywhere.⁶

Another pivotal work was Rodolfo F. Acuña's book titled *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, first published in 1972. It has often been used as the cornerstone for Chicano

⁶ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1948).

studies. In his work, Acuña documented the fifty-year long struggle of the urbanization of Mexicans in Texas, first to the country, then to the cities. He described how Chicanos were finally able to lay down roots. Acuña theorized that the Mexican push from the South to the North was riddled with Anglo-domination and Mexican exploitation. He lamented the lack of a Chicano consciousness. Many historians have since found fault with the book, including its lack of Chicana contributions, as well as labor and agricultural studies; despite its shortcomings, *Occupied America* was still one of the first books to discuss the “Mexican problem,” therefore it has remained a valuable part of Chicano historiography.⁷

In Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, historian David Montejano argued that Mexicans in Texas were systematically denied political autonomy and that patterns of settlement and land ownership shaped racial policies throughout South Texas. Montejano asserted that changing class structures, due to ongoing economic development, contributed directly to the varied quilt of social patterns for Mexicans in Texas, Montejano specifically showed how economic racial policies led to political subordination of Mexicanos.⁸

Chicano history itself is divided into what some have called “old Chicano” history and “new Chicano” history. The delineating line between these two begins in the 1970s, when scholars examined more closely contemporary social history, rather than concentrating on colonial political roots. Chicano history is not a revisionist history; rather it is rooted in past history with its own contributions to the overall mainstream historical record. The move toward

⁷ Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (San Francisco: Cantfield Press, 1972).

⁸ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 3 and 306.

Chicano civil rights has been termed El Movimiento by most Chicano historians. El Movimiento began in 1969 and climaxed in the 1970s.⁹

Prior to the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican American policy had been one of assimilation and American pride, as seen in the founding of the Mexican American civil rights group, Order of the Sons of America (OSA), following World War I. The OSA was founded as a means to inspire activism and became the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in 1929. LULAC addressed issues like racism and segregation, all the while stressing the importance of patriotism and citizenship. By the 1970s, many activists, primarily students, had grown weary of the politics of accommodation and turned instead to more outspoken, militant groups like the Brown Berets. These activists created a socio-economic and political movement centered on the notion of Chicanismo or Chicano-ness which emphasized pro-barrio over earlier pro-American attitudes. This new notion blended what it meant to be American with what it meant to be Mexican and attempted to incorporate this new identity into American society, while fighting racist rhetoric.¹⁰

Many works have documented El Movimiento, but few have included a discourse on the role of Chicanas During the explosive years of the 1960s and 1970s, Chicana feminists searched

⁹ Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Luis Leobardo Arroyo, "On the State of Chicano History: Observations on Its Development, Interpretations, and Theory, 1970-1974," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 : (1976): 155; Albert Camarillo, *Observations on the 'New' Chicano History: Historiography of the 1970s* (Palo Alto: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1984), 4.

¹⁰ For more information on El Movimiento see Carlos Muñoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989); Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 65-66; Miguel David Tirado, "Mexican American Community Political Organization: The Key to Chicano Political Power," in *La Causa Política*, ed. F. Chris García (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 105-127; Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 134-135; Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 6-8; Francisco Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996). The latest publication on the Chicano Movement is David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

for a voice. Chicanismo/a's focus on cultural pride and unity served as a rallying cry for Mexican Americans to obtain political gains. Chicanas/Mexicanas have traditionally faced a life of exploitation, oppression and silence. In the last twenty to thirty years, Chicanas have begun to find a voice. In 1994, María Apodaca wrote a PhD dissertation where she illustrated how Chicana women have found autonomy and political power by organizing into groups and by running for public offices. Anita N. Martínez is an example of this type of woman.¹¹

If the documentation of Chicanas within El Movimiento has been sparse, the discourse on Chicanas in Dallas is even harder to locate. What little history has been published on Dallas has tended to marginalize or render invisible its Mexican American inhabitants. This historiography has tended to focus on Dallas as either one large metropolis or as two separate entities, Dallas and the “other”; Anglos representing modern Dallas and minorities representative of the “other”. The following books provided a sketch of the history of Dallas, including the role women have traditionally played and the development of exclusionary politics in Dallas.

In *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* historian Michael Phillips argued that the white elite leaders of Dallas were instrumental in the erasure of racial conflict in the Dallas historical record. The white Dallasites controlled the records and were successful for a time in obscuring the racial tensions in Dallas. Phillips pointed out that this “white-washing” of Dallas history led many to believe that Dallas had no ethnic history at all.

¹¹ María Linda Apodaca, “They Kept the Home Fires Burning: Mexican-American Women and Social Change” (University of California, Irvine, PhD dissertation, 1994); *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. García (New York: Routledge, 1997); *Essays on La Mujer*, eds., Rosaura Sánchez and Rosa Martínez Cruz (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, University of California at Los Angeles, 1977), 3, 48.

Phillips repudiated this myth and instead argued that Mexicans and blacks played a vital role in the formation of Dallas as a thriving metropolis.¹²

Historian Elizabeth York Enstam argued that through their volunteerism and politics, women were pivotal in the making of Dallas and helped change gendered ideas about gender roles in society. Her book *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* argued how during the Progressive era women in Dallas are normally left out of historical accounts, but these women were active in city politics and businesses. She explained the goals and activities of club women and argued that it was the white elite women who determined the place of non-white women in Dallas society. Enstam devoted some time to black-white relations, but chose to omit Mexican Americans. Her research reflects the years 1848 to 1920, so she thought during this time Mexican American women played little to no part in the formation of Dallas. Even with this omission, the book provided examples of public participation of women in Dallas.¹³

Historian Patricia Hill's *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* provided historical background on politics in Dallas, including the formation of the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC) and documentation of its dominance over Dallas as well as the role of its political arm, the Citizens Charter Association (CCA). Hill examined the role of club women in the Progressive era and later. She ascertained "Organized womanhood – often the wives, mothers, and daughters of prominent businessmen-sought to refine ostensibly laissez-faire capitalism through environmental reform and increased spending on cultural institutions and social services." Hill

¹²Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 3-4, 178.

¹³Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998), xvii.

claimed that through these various activities elite Dallas women affected civic affairs and began to change gender-based roles and ideologies.¹⁴

Hill provided detailed information on the DCC and CCA. She demonstrated how the DCC was an elite white males' club in which women were offered no place. Hill dispelled the myth that women were powerless in the Progressive era in Dallas. Women's clubs were active and influential in Dallas and made strides in areas such as business and politics. Hill discussed the role of black women in organizing, however, she did not include any discourse on Chicanas. The account she provided was basically black and white. When she did mention Latinos, it was mostly in response to white policies and not as active autonomous agents.¹⁵

Social and cultural historian Harvey J. Graff has written the most recent publication on Dallas history. In *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* Graff asserted that in the past Dallasites have claimed to be without a history. Graff contended that this was a false assumption and that Dallasites have continually substituted myth for reality. This myth enabled Dallas to keep hidden its underlying racism and discord. Far from being the cohesive city it likes to project to the outside world, Graff claimed:

There is no "city as a whole"; fractured along lines of class as well as race and ethnicity, the cityscape is composed of a myriad of non-communicating fragments. The near-invisibility of this characteristic, at least to the privileged is a measure of the degree to which it distorts Dallasites' vision.¹⁶

Graff's work is one of the few accounts of Dallas history that discussed Mexican Americans and Little Mexico. He devoted chapter two to the plight of Mexican Americans and blacks in Dallas. Though he correctly described the disparity that existed between whites and non-whites and

¹⁴ Patricia Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xxvii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 43, 55, 99, 123, 126.

¹⁶ Harvey J. Graff, *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), preface, xxiii.

provided evidence of what he termed “the other Dallas,” he marginalized the role Mexican Americans played in politics in Dallas in the 1960s. He rightly postulated that segregation was used as a political and economic tool. The reasoning was that physical separation of races and ethnicities diminished the likelihood of violence and turbulence. This separation was used as a strategy all over the Southwest, to minimize the visibility and upward political mobility of Latinos. Graff then stated “Dallas leaders also attempted to maintain control through accommodation, sponsoring political careers of selected minority candidates and negotiating and managing change.” He demonstrated that these political appointments were more of a token gesture and rarely amounted to much change. This assertion was correct, however Anita Martinez’s achievements illustrate there were exceptions to this rule. Though nominated by the Citizens Charter Association (CCA), Martínez was not a token appointment. Instead she effected real change in West Dallas. Graff’s account of Dallas history is one of the few to give voice to Mexican Americans in West Dallas.¹⁷

In order to understand the history of both Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas, several works were consulted, including books and theses. The following works dealt specifically with Dallas and Dallas’s Little Mexico. These histories provided much needed information of how Mexican and Mexican American barrios formed in Dallas and what effect Dallas politics has had upon them.

In her 2008 University of North Texas MA thesis, titled “With Their Hearts in Their Hands: Forging a Mexican Community in Dallas, 1900-1925” Bianca Mercado documented the formation of Little Mexico in West Dallas and proved that far from claiming “whiteness,” as historian Michael Phillips has asserted, Mexican Americans formed their own communities

¹⁷ Graff, *The Dallas Myth*, 168-169. See Rodolfo Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion: The Untold Political Story of San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

with their own identities. Mexican Americans were not supine actors in the making of Dallas, instead they actively sought out rights and privileges the city did not want to afford them.

Mercado relied heavily on census data and articles from the *Dallas Morning News*. Although her study concentrated on early 1920s Mexican Americans in the now non-existent Dallas barrio called Little Mexico, her study has proven helpful for this work in providing historical documentation of Mexican Americans in Dallas in the 1920s.¹⁸

The newest work on Dallas's Mexican American community, *Little Mexico*, was published in 2011 by Sol Villasana, titled *Dallas's Little Mexico*. The book is an illustrated history of the Dallas barrio, Little Mexico. Sol Villasana is a civil right litigator. He has been instrumental in several cases of racial discrimination and was a part of the legal counsel that fought to save St. Ann's Catholic School in the 1990s, that was very important to Anita Martínez. The book traced the roots of Little Mexico in Dallas, and Villasana spent over three years interviewing former residents of Little Mexico. He explained that Little Mexico started out as Little Jerusalem and was home to Jewish immigrants. By the 1920s, it consisted primarily of Latinos. Through oral history and over two hundred photographs, Villasana related the struggles and triumphs of this community/neighborhood and explained how it has been erased from the Dallas map today, but still remains a vibrant, important part of Dallas's past. Villasana concluded the book with a look at current development and asserted that progress will continue.

¹⁸ Bianca Mercado, "With Their Hearts in Their Hands: Forging a Mexican American Community in Dallas, 1900-1925" (MA thesis, University of North Texas (UNT), 2008), abstract and 14. For more information on Little Mexico, see Ethelyn Clara Davis, "Little Mexico: A Study of Horizontal and Vertical Mobility" (MA thesis, Southern Methodist University (SMU), 1936); Robert Ryer Schermerhorn, "An Occupational History of Mexican Americans in Dallas, 1930-1950" (MA thesis, SMU, 1973); Jane Bock Guzmán, "Dallas Barrio Women of Power" (MA thesis, UNT, 1992); and LeighAnn Robinson Ellis, "The Place of Borders and Between: Little Mexico, 1900-1950" (MA thesis, University of North Texas at Arlington, 1996); René Martínez, "A Look at Mexican Immigration into Texas Since 1910" Manuscript, History Department, (SMU, 1968).

In an April 20, 2011 lecture, Villasana asserted “We cannot impede progress, but it is just as important to remember the past.”¹⁹

Another pivotal work was anthropologist Shirley Achor’s *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio*. Achor lived in a barrio in West Dallas throughout the 1970s. She interviewed and documented the experiences of Mexican Americans. She also utilized city directories, public documents, archival material, aerial photos, and 1970 census data. She discovered that people in the barrio lived in substandard housing and rarely received city services and attention. She documented that people in the barrio tended to be young or elderly. As such, most residents lived in households where they fell below the poverty line. She ascertained that far from being migratory, Mexican Americans in the barrio forged their own sustainable communities. Achor stated “a devout and supportive religious life, warm and close-knit family relationships, beloved children and honored grandparents...all are as real a part of the barrio experience as its crowded housing.” Achor successfully personalized the barrio. Missing was a discourse on history and the role of Chicanas outside the home in this neighborhood.²⁰

In 2004, director Sergio Arau released the movie, *A Day Without a Mexican*, which portrayed what would happen to society if one day all the Mexicans in California disappeared. The film was part satire, part political commentary. In the film Arau asked the question “How do we make the invisible, visible?” This became known as the “Mexican Question.” Arau’s definitive answer was that in order for Mexican Americans to weave themselves into the overall United States historical record they must tell their stories. They must document their achievements. They must find their political, social and economic voice and make themselves be

¹⁹ Sol Villasana, *Dallas’s Little Mexico* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 7-8; Sol Villasana, “Transitions of an Urban Neighborhood: Dallas’s Little Mexico,” lecture, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, April 20, 2011.

²⁰ Shirley Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), 154.

seen. Where in all of this do Chicanas fit? To understand this, an examination of the existing historiography on Chicana studies is necessary.²¹

The field of Chicana studies is ever changing and growing. Though much has been written on Chicano studies and El Movimiento, what is missing is the political role women played. Although many historians and other scholars have emerged in the last twenty years, the field remains relatively untapped. Within Chicana studies, regional and local studies and biographies have been lacking. Biographies specifically, are needed in order to strengthen the argument that Chicanas have been influential in changing small and large metropolises around the nation, and that Chicanas traditionally have been subjected to a political/socio-economic system of triple oppression; gender, race, and class. The following works provided information on Second Wave Feminism as well as Chicanas within El Movimiento.²²

In *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*., Cynthia Orozco explored the role of Chicanas in the 1920s and 1930s and the founding of LULAC. Orozco challenged the notion that LULAC was comprised of people who practiced accommodation. She explained that though LULAC did have some conservative policies and excluded women, for its time, it was a progressive organization. She broke down her chapters thematically, and specifically addressed Chicanas in chapter eight. She asserted that even though Chicanas were excluded from LULAC, they did find ways to contribute to the fight for Latino civil rights. Orozco stated that although LULAC was officially founded by men, women were a part of its heritage as well. Scholars have tended to concentrate on male leaders in politics, thus rendering women invisible. Orozco asserted that Chicanas were not apolitical or

²¹ John-Michael Rivera, *The Emergence of Mexican America: Recovering Stories of Mexican Peoplehood in U.S. Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1, 5, 20 and 21.

²² Beatriz M. Pesquera and Adela de la Torre eds., *Building with Our Hand: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, 1.

submissive as previously believed. Instead, Chicanas participated in women's auxiliary groups such as the female counterpart to LULAC, Ladies LULAC. Women organized in clubs and auxiliaries. These groups recognized the needs of women within the Latino community and sought to define women's roles independent of men. LULAC men neglected to acknowledge Chicanas as the other half of La Raza, but women were vital to the quest for Mexican American civil rights.²³

One of the most influential works on Chicana studies was Adelaida Del R. Castillo's *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*. The book argued the important distinctions between Chicana and women's history in general. In her book, she examined Chicana women from homemakers to working-class laborers. She argued that gender discrimination and Mexican cultural norms kept Chicanas oppressed in their homes and workplace. Castillo also stressed the importance of oral history for weaving Chicanas into the historical record. [much of this current thesis is based on oral history]. Her book was a rallying cry for more Chicana scholarship and many historians have used Castillo's work to shape the field. This current thesis endeavors to extend existing scholarship by including the effects of Chicanas within El Movimiento.²⁴

Another pivotal early book in Chicana studies was Martha Cotera's *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* Cotera asserted that Chicanas made enormous contributions in education, journalism, politics, and labor. She documented Chicana studies from colonial Mexico (before the field was even given the title of Chicana/o studies) to the 1970s. She provided examples of successful Chicana women in the fields of education, politics, and

²³ Orozco, *The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, 217-219.

²⁴ Adelaida R. Del Castillo, ed., *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (Encino, CA: Floricanto Press, 1990) ; Alfredo Mirandé and Eva Angelina Enríquez, *La Chicana: The Mexican American Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 14-24.

business. Her book has been used as a starting point for many articles concerning Chicanas in the United States, including those by Vicki Ruiz and Antonia Castañeda.²⁵

In 2007, Antonia Castañeda (the first Chicana to earn a PhD in history from Stanford University), edited an anthology of Chicana stories. *Gender on the Borderlands: The Frontiers Reader* was based on papers, presentations, and oral histories given at St. Mary's University in July 2001 in Yanaguana/San Antonio. In the introduction, Castañeda asserted that the reason she wrote the book was because of the absence of gender studies. Each of the chapters presented a discourse on gendered political domination on the borderlands. Castañeda used the war in Afghanistan as evidence of this type of thinking. She claimed that using gender to justify war, to "liberate" women in Afghanistan, reinforced the gendered hierarchies that exist. She stated: "The gender and sexual politics of religious fundamentalism, whether in the name of contemporary Christianity, Islam, or Judaism, continue to reify patriarchal, misogynist, and heterosexist structures of domination worldwide." By describing the violence these women have endured, Chicanas have been given a voice, a sense of agency and autonomy.²⁶

In 1987 Vicki L. Ruiz wrote the first published Chicana history monograph titled *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950s*. In it Ruiz chronicled the lives of Mexican women in California in the food-processing business in the 1930s and 1940s. She demonstrated how Mexican American women organized into unions with white women workers. Once their grassroots organizations were formed, they were extremely successful in areas such as equal pay for equal work and paid vacation time. Though she did not include a discourse on racial constructs and

²⁵ Martha Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976).

²⁶ Antonia I. Castañeda ed. *Gender on the Borderlands: The Frontiers Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), ix.

self-identification of these women, the book did serve as a jumping-off point for her follow-up monograph titled *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* in which Ruiz ascertained Latina women were pivotal in the formation of the Southwest. Through grassroots activities and later public offices, Latina women redefined gender roles in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁷

In 1997, the anthology *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* offered various stories about women as homemakers, laborers, and protestors. It explored issues of sexuality and gender roles. Alma M. García edited and provided the introduction to this important work. The bulk of the stories in this volume dealt with sexism within El Movimiento and Chicana's struggles to carve out a space for themselves within the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Chicanas fought racism and classism while simultaneously breaking down gender walls within the movement. As García asserted, "Chicana feminist thought reflected a historical struggle by women to overcome sexist oppression, but still affirm a militant ethnic consciousness. As they forged a feminist consciousness, Chicana feminists searched for the elusive 'room of their own' within the socio-historical and political context of the Chicano movement. (See chapter six of this work for a more comprehensive discourse on Chicana history/literature).²⁸

Chicanas have fought for and continue to fight for change, for rights for La Raza (the Latino people) in the neighborhoods, schools, and city politics. Once these individual contributions are made known, it will be easier to insert Chicanas into the overall historical

²⁷ Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁸ Alma M. García, ed. *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

record of these various cities. These biographies would then further research on Chicanas, which in turn would lead scholars to create new niches for these histories, whether that be in the mainstream records or in classes that specialize in Chicana history. Much remains to be written in Chicana studies, and any papers, theses, articles, anthologies, and monographs will enhance the field and allow for its integration into other fields of history. Chicana historian, Cynthia E. Orozco, claimed that the contributions of Chicanos/as within the realm of politics have yet to be chronicled. According to historian Michael Phillips, generally, women, and Mexican Americans have historically been left out of the history of Dallas. One manner in which to insert Chicanas into the historical record is through local studies and biographies.²⁹

²⁹ Coteria, *Diosa Y Hembra*, 176; Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 55.

CHAPTER 2

DALLAS THEN AND NOW, 1900-2011: NOTHING CAN IMPEDE “PROGRESS”

In her book *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, historian Patricia Evridge Hill stated “Dallas, now more than 150 years old, still hesitates to inquire into its past.” In truth, Dallas has had a vibrant past rife with economic, political, social, and racial struggles. Even the naming of Dallas has been a point of contention as no one has been completely sure of where the name originated. This chapter investigates the founding, development, and future of West Dallas and illustrates how the political system of Dallas has systematically marginalized Mexican American political voices and eradicated Mexican American barrios.¹

According to historian Harvey Graff and author Roy Williams, Dallas’s history is based on myths. Dallas was founded in 1841 by Tennessean John Neely Bryan. Various historians have claimed that when Bryan arrived in North Texas he encountered an unsettled vast territory. According to Roy Williams, this is “one of the many myths told during the justification process of the white race’s genocidal policy towards Native Americans.”²

Where the name “Dallas” came from is still a source of contention, another myth. According to a 1906 *Dallas Morning News* interview, John Neely Bryant Jr. asserted “My father named the city and the county for George M. Dallas, vice-president under James K. Polk...he was always a Democrat as I have been...we are Methodist too.” In the 1920s, students and

¹ Patricia Evridge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas, 1996), xx.

² Roy H. Williams and Kevin J. Shay, *Time Change: An Alternate View of the History of Dallas* (Dallas: To Be Publishing Company, 1991), 29; See John Henry Brown, *History of Dallas County, Texas: From 1837-1887* (Dallas: Milligan, Cornett & Farnham, 1887), microfilm, for further explanation of this myth.

academicians questioned this claim. Having conducted local history studies, they concluded Dallas was named in 1843, a year before the politician was nominated.³

A friend of the family, Frank M. Cockrell claimed the town had been named for a friend of theirs called Dallas. George Dallas was a lawyer from Philadelphia. The problem with this explanation was that Dallas had never been very far west, and Bryan had never been very far east, so it is doubtful they ever met. Another theory was that the town was named for George Dallas's brother, Commodore Alexander Dallas, who was fighting pirates in the Gulf of Mexico. A final theory was that the town was named for Walter Dallas, who fought in San Jacinto, or his brother, James, a former Texas Ranger. The source of the name is still not known today, nor is it thought that its true roots will ever be known.⁴

In 1854 French, Swiss, and Belgian utopian settlers, led by Victor Considerant, settled La Reunion, a colony where everyone had equal rights. Women were allowed an equal political voice with men in the colony and was one of the first cooperatives in Texas. People shared duties as well as food in the colony. The colony contained highly educated professionals, artists, and scientists who were determined to make their cooperation a success, winters and summers were harsh, and they lacked agricultural expertise to sustain the colony. On January 28, 1857, one of the leaders of La Reunion, Allyre Bureau, announced that the colony was officially disbanded. Some of the colonists stayed for a few more years, but by 1860 the colony was considered a failure and was abandoned. Many of its inhabitants moved to Dallas.⁵

At the turn of the twentieth century, the land upon which La Reunion sat later became Cement City, one of four barrios settled by Mexican immigrants. Cement City was founded by

³ Sam Hanna Acheson, *Dallas Yesterday* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1977), xv and 3.

⁴ Dallas Historical Society. <http://www.dallashistory.org/history/dallas/topics.htm/> (accessed April 11, 2011).

⁵ Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, xx.

former La Reunion colonists Emil Redmond and Philip Frichot and was located three miles south and west of the Dallas County courthouse. Cement City was founded as a place to produce and export cement. It was incorporated on March 30, 1908. Cement City was just one of the four barrios later settled by Mexican Americans in Dallas.⁶



Figure 2.1. Aerial view of Cement City, 1925. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

Though not a lot has been written on Mexican Americans in Dallas, they comprise the largest and fastest growing population group in Texas. According to the 2010 census neighborhood reports, people of Mexican-origin currently comprise 38 percent of the Texas population and 42.4 percent of the Dallas population. Railroads were the first industry that attracted permanent Mexican settlers to North Texas, but later generations of Mexican

⁶ Incorporation Papers, folder 7, box 1, Cement City Incorporation Collection, Texas/Dallas History (Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas). For more information on Cement City see Bianca Mercado, “With Their Hearts in Their Hands: Forging a Mexican American Community in Dallas, 1900-1925” (MA thesis, University of North Texas (UNT), 2008), chapter 2.

Americans soon found new trades, work, and niches. Little Mexico, also referred to as La Colonia, was one of those niches.⁷

Settlement patterns of Dallas Mexican Americans illustrate that they formed tightly knit social groups that tended to congregate in specific barrios, such as Little Mexico, a vital neighborhood for the narrative of Mexican Americans in Dallas.⁸

By the 1900s, Dallas, along with most of the Southwest, underwent great economic expansion. Burgeoning industry and new factories brought low-paid unskilled laborers to the Dallas area. Between the years 1890 and 1910, the population in Dallas more than doubled from 38,067 to 92,104, while the Mexican American population quintupled from 106 to 583. This was the period during which Mexican American communities formed in Dallas.⁹

Many historians use the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as the starting point for Mexican American history. Gilbert G. González and Raúl A. Fernández in *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration* contended the Chicano roots lie in late nineteenth century U.S. economic domination over Mexico that led to Mexican migration, which received its impetus from U.S. imperial economic expansionism following the Mexican-American War. Yet according to historian Alex Saragosa, Chicano history predated these events. Saragosa asserted:

Chicano historians err if they relegate the pre-1848 period to a perfunctory preface to the United States – Mexico War. The actual ‘conquest’ commenced with the signing of the

⁷ US Bureau of the Census, *2010 Census Population by Race and Hispanic Origin and Occupancy Status for Dallas, Texas*, 2010. <http://www.nctcog.dst.tx.us/ris/census/2010/PL.asp?geo=city&area=19000> (accessed April 7, 2011); Gwendolyn Rice, “Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas,” *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas* 4 (Fall 1992): 21. For more information on Mexican Americans in Dallas in the 1920s, see Mercado, “With Their Hearts in Their Hands”, chapter 2.

⁸ Rice, “Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas,” 21-27.

⁹ Ibid.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In this respect, a full understanding of this period must extend beyond an emphasis on the sources of American imperialism.¹⁰

Though Saragosa considered the pre-conquest to be the starting point for Chicano history, he argued that the 1930s depicted a transition to a decisive period in Chicano history. In this respect, he agreed with other leading Chicano historians that consider the 1930s a watershed for Chicanos. The depression years were a pivotal point for Chicanos that manifested in anti-Mexican sentiment and practices.¹¹

These dates notwithstanding, the Mexican Revolution from 1910-1920 has most often been stated as the reason for mass migration of Mexican nationals into Dallas. These political refugees sought asylum throughout various barrios in West Dallas and quickly formed their own communities. By 1915, Mexican nationals had founded at least four discernible Mexican American barrios in Dallas. Little Mexico was the largest of these, and where Anita Martínez's parents settled and started a family, but a substantial neighborhood had formed on the East side of Dallas and two smaller ones in South and North Dallas.¹²

Historian Mario T. García examined the Coordinating Council for Latin American Youth of Los Angeles in the 1940s. This group had been formed to alter the image and behavior of Mexican American youths. In his study on Mexican Americans, García concluded that by the 1930s Mexican Americans had begun to change. They no longer viewed themselves as

¹⁰ Gilbert G. González, and Raúl A. Fernández, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration* (New York:Routledge, 2003), 182; Alex M. Saragosa, "Recent Chicano Historiography: An Interpretive Essay," *Aztlán* 19:1 (Spring, 1990): 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹² This was Saragoza's starting point, for a different interpretation see González, Gilbert G., and Raúl A. Fernández. *A Century of Chicano History*.

temporary immigrants, but rather as permanent residents chasing the American dream. By 1930, two new barrios had formed in West Dallas, Juárez Heights and Cement City.¹³

The 1935-36 Dallas school census showed that 49.2 percent of registered Latino children had been born in Dallas. The number showed that Mexicans had settled in Little Mexico and raised children to at least the age of six. Anita Martínez was a part of this demographic.¹⁴



Figure 2.2. Homes in Little Mexico, circa 1949. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

Anita Martínez along with most Mexican Americans, faced segregation and discrimination on a daily basis in Dallas. Even within the Mexican American barrios, people lived segregated lives. People were segregated by class and culture. Mexican Americans tended to congregate on the south and west sides of Dallas. People in Little Mexico held ethnic roots in different segments of Mexico, and while they often spoke the same language (Spanish) they did not share much else in common. This made Little Mexico far from homogenous, yet in city politics it was treated as one uniform community.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 25-26; Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans : Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)*, 15-16; Mercado, “With Their Hearts in Their Hands,” 29.

¹⁴ Rice, “Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas,” 22.

¹⁵ Ibid., 23; Mercedes Olivera and Bill Deener, “Hispanic People Aren’t Homogenous Group,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 14, 1986; Rachel H. Adler, *Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas: Breaching the Border, Bridging the Distance* (Boston: Pearson, 2004), 30.

Within Martínez's birth-place, Little Mexico, living conditions were wretched. Streets were left unpaved which led to frequent flooding during the rainy seasons. Hot water was non-existent. Three-fourths of the population did not have access to heating or indoor plumbing. Almost 60 percent did not have electricity. In 1935, the Dallas County Relief Board conducted surveys and investigations that concluded that out of 357 homes in Census Tract Nineteen, most of Little Mexico, 40.4 percent were not livable, 25.5 percent were in disarray and in need of emergency repairs, while only 1.9 percent classified as "in good condition." Above all of that, 4 percent of the homes carried the classification of "overcrowded." All of these degenerative conditions led to high instances of contagious diseases. Between the years 1934 and 1937 Little Mexico had the highest mortality rate in Dallas from tuberculosis, 50 percent higher than the second highest tract. Out of 1,000 people in Little Mexico, 12.69 died of tuberculosis or almost six times the city average of 2.33 per 1,000 people. Tuberculosis affected Anita Martínez's family directly as tuberculosis infected her sister Tomasa. Her sister Beatrice had polio.¹⁶

Little Mexico was finally rehabilitated in 1956 when the Dallas City Council approved a measure that supplied federal funding for urban renewal. This provided the financial means for 390 homes to be brought up to code. The renovations in La Colonia were watched by the entire nation. Although Dallas was applauded for its speed in initiating the improvements, it was this so-called urban renewal that eventually led to the devastation of La Colonia. As La Colonia was "improved," its residents were pushed out. This was not unique to Dallas. In *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning and American Cities*, David R. Díaz spoke to this trend throughout the Southwest. Díaz asserted that while urban expansion occurred in the barrios, its residents were

¹⁶ Rice, "Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas," 24; Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 67; José Ángel Gutiérrez, Michelle Meléndez, and Sonia Adriana Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge: Texas Women in the Public Arena*, (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), 29. See Richard Griswold del Castillo, *North to Aztlán: A History of Mexican Americans in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 59-82.

transplanted and for the most part never realized an economic gain. The trend seemed to be that middle-class Chicanos transitioned from the barrios into suburban areas, while Euro-Americans tended to experience “white-flight” and migrated even further outside of the city proper.¹⁷

West Dallas had become an unsanitary and overcrowded place to live by 1945. West Dallas was virtually ignored. Not wanting to deal with the flood-prone Trinity River and Interstate 30, Dallas looked elsewhere for growth and economic development. People within West Dallas were in desperate need of city services, and there was a demand for West Dallas to be annexed. The Dallas City Council finally addressed the issue in 1950, but West Dallas was not incorporated until 1955.¹⁸



Figure 2.3. West Dallas, May 18, 1949. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

By the 1960s the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (El Movimiento) had reached Dallas. In the late 1960s Frito Lay, a Dallas-based company, launched an advertising

¹⁷ Rice, “Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas,” 25; David R. Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 270-274.

¹⁸ Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio*, 1; West Dallas Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.westdallaschamber.com/trcp.html> (accessed March 3, 2011).

campaign based on a character called “The Frito Bandito.” The character was made to look like Pancho Villa, in a sombrero with bandoliers across his chest. People were irate at the depiction of Mexicans as dirty, sneaky and thieving. Mexican Americans began to take note in their own neighborhoods of discrimination and racism. In 1969 Anita Martínez won a city council seat and was exercising political influence on behalf of Mexican Americans¹⁹ as a means to combat this discrimination.

Mexican Americans began to voice their political concerns and realize with their numbers they could wield power that would affect political, social and economic change in their barrios. In 1977 *D Magazine* named Frances Rizo as a “likely to re-emerge” woman of interest in an article titled “The Most Powerful Women in Dallas and Ft. Worth.” In 2007, Professor of History at the University of North Texas, Roberto R. Calderón conducted an oral history interview with Frances Rizo in which she stated, “We started talking about what the neighborhood needed. Why were we treated as second-class citizens? Just because we were Mexicanos in a low income barrio didn’t mean we shouldn’t have what everybody else had.” Community-centered politics in the period from the 1960s to the 1970s reflected the heightened activism in Mexican American barrios in Dallas and wherever Mexican American communities occurred.²⁰

In her oral history interview Rizo asserted she had been a part of a Mexican American civil rights group named the “Dirty Dozen.” Essentially they constituted a blue ribbon committee that investigated police abuse and discrimination. In the 1970s they were instrumental in the Santos Rodríguez case in Dallas. Though a conservative, by being the first Mexican American on

¹⁹ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 163.

²⁰ Rice, “Little Mexico and the Barrios of Dallas,” 25; Lee Clark, “The Most Powerful Women in Dallas and Ft. Worth,” *D Magazine* (March 1977): 65-71; Frances Rizo, interview by Roberto R. Calderón, Dallas, Texas, University of North Texas, October 16, 2007, 54.

the Dallas City Council, Martínez was able to pave the way for some of the more radical groups', like the Dirty Dozen, successes.

In July 1973, twelve-year-old Santos Rodríguez was murdered by Dallas police officer Darrell L. Cain in the backseat of a squad car. Santos and his thirteen-year-old brother David had been detained on suspicion of robbing a gas station. Cain had pointed his gun at the back of Santos's head in order to scare him. He pulled the trigger once, nothing happened. He pulled it again and the boy was dead. It was later found out that the fingerprints in the robbery were not his. Santos Rodriguez and his brother were innocent. The Mexican American community was outraged. They held a March for Justice on July 28, 1973. Cain was later tried and served five years. The incident and light sentence became a rallying cry for Latinos in Dallas.²¹

The Dirty Dozen was a grassroots organization composed of barrio activists, as well as educated Mexican American lawyers, doctors, and small business-men. According to Rizo, Anita Martínez was not a part of this group. Rizo asserted, "We tended to be more activists, Democrats, because if you had enough money to be a Republican back then, you were not an activist. You were in business or—you made money, you didn't get dirty in the grass roots." Martínez would prove her concern for Latinos and her activism through her actions while on the Dallas City Council from 1969 to 1973.²²

²¹ Dallas *Morning News*, July 25–30, November 14–20, 1973. New York *Times*, October 18, 1973. Newspaper Clippings, Vertical Files, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

²² Frances Rizo, interview by Roberto R. Calderón, Dallas, Texas October 16, 2007, 81. Among the members of the Dirty Dozen, there were several "firsts" for Latinos, Catalina García was the first female to graduate from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and Frank Hernández was the first Mexican American to graduate from Southern Methodist University School of Law's Day Program in 1964 and was appointed the first Mexican American judge in the history of Dallas County in 1976.

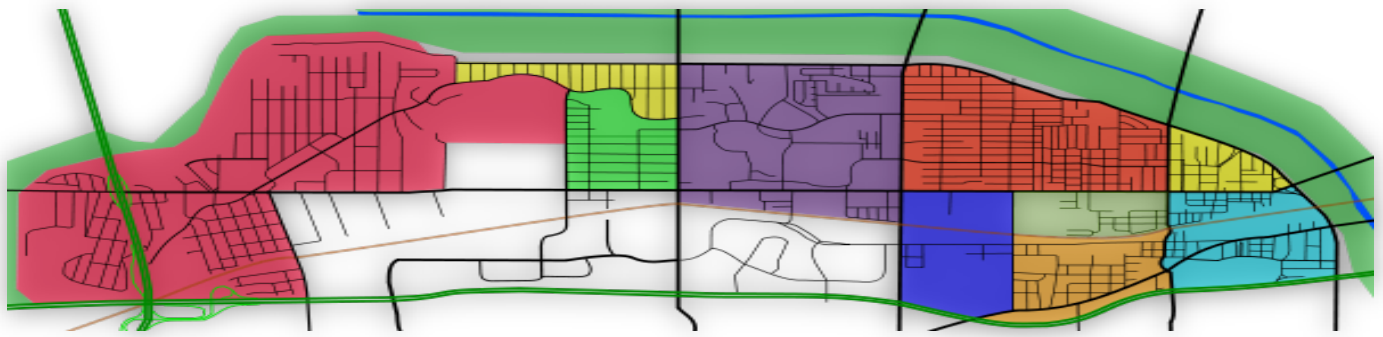


Figure 2.4. Map of West Dallas, 2011, by author.

Frances Rizo was from the barrio Ledbetter in Dallas, but the Dirty Dozen were from all over West Dallas, which included Ledbetter, Los Altos and La Bajada. Anthropologist Shirley Achor spent the 1970s living in a Dallas barrio she fictitiously named “La Bajura,” meaning the lowland. Though she never stated the real name of the barrio, she did claim that La Bajura reflected the meaning of its real name. Achor stated the physical location of “La Bajura” was on low-lying land within the Trinity River floodplain. This is the exact geographic location of La Bajada in West Dallas.²³

Even though Martínez was born in Little Mexico, during her time on the Dallas City Council, she represented Place 9, which included all of West Dallas. Various Mexican neighborhoods are located in West Dallas, among these is La Bajada. During Martínez’s time on the city council, she proposed park beautification and neighborhood improvements for La Bajada. Though she successfully allocated funds for barrio improvements of La Bajada in the early 1970s, because of the political desire to do what is “best” for the improvement of Dallas, also called the “Dallas Way,” La Bajada was left to decay in the 1980s and looked to as a place for development in the 1900s and 2000s. La Bajada is bounded by the [Trinity River](#) to the east and north, and the Trinity River's West Fork on the west and is located north of Singleton

²³ Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio*, 1.

Avenue. According to the US 2000 [census](#), there were 1,133 people residing within the neighborhood. [Latinos](#) comprised 93.5 percent of that population. Today, La Bajada remains an area of controversy and struggle.²⁴

In 1994 the city of Dallas released a plan in which it highlighted future projects for the city. Included in this was a section concerning West Dallas and La Bajada:

For neighborhoods in transition and decay, resources must be carefully concentrated to achieve the maximum possible improvements in the quality of life, to create an environment in target neighborhoods that will attract stakeholder investment, and that will facilitate the continued maintenance of that neighborhood.²⁵

In May 1998, under the leadership of Mayor Ron Kirk, Dallas voters approved bond for \$246,000,000 to install parks, trails, roads, a lake and improved flood protection along the Trinity River. In 2000 the *Dallas Morning News* began running a series on La Bajada and the Trinity River Corridor Project. Residents of West Dallas explained they had asked for curbs, paved roads, grocery stores, banks, a stronger police presence to deter drug dealers, not the massive development and change the project proposed. Residents knew that Little Mexico had been subjected to the Kessler Plan, which was development that led over a period of years to the erasure of Little Mexico as well as desegregation. This caused some Latinos to move out of predominantly Mexican American areas. As with many Mexican barrios across the Southwest, city “progress” and improvements were made at the expense of Mexican inhabitants. In accordance with the “Dallas Way,” by the 1970s, La Colonia was eventually demolished to make way for Uptown redevelopment and its residents were subjected to eminent domain laws that

²⁴ Brian D. Sweeny, “History : A River Runs Through It,” *D Magazine*, December 1, 2004, http://www.dmagazine.com/Home/2007/01/22/HISTORY_A_River_Runs_Through_It.aspx (accessed April 21, 2011); Texas. West Dallas Chamber of Commerce. 2010. Trinity River Corridor Project, <http://www.westdallaschamber.com/trcp.html> (accessed October 15, 2010).; U.S. Census Bureau, *Twenty-Second Census of the United States, 2000: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data* from <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/expf1u.htm> (accessed March 19, 2010).

²⁵ Dallas City Commission, *The Dallas Plan* (Dallas: Dallas City Plan, Inc., 1994), 6.

forced the sale of their homes. Residents of La Bajada were fearful their neighborhood would meet the same fate.²⁶



Figure 2.5. Dallas's Victory Plaza, 2011. This photo looks south down Houston St. in what was once Little Mexico. Photo courtesy of Sol Villasana.

In September 2000, the project took an important step toward implementation of the proposed plan. A House-Senate conference committee approved \$3.1 million for the Trinity River Corridor. It looked as though ground was about to be broken, but the Sierra Club and Audubon Society intervened and put a stop to the project, claiming the current plans were not the ones voters had approved in 1998. The case went to state court. In September 2001, state District Judge Anne Ashby upheld the bond election and the project was ready to progress. By October 2001, the president's Office Management and Budget (OMB) ruled that the plan was not cost effective. The OMB then argued for the buyout of Latino neighborhoods in West Dallas that had

²⁶ Ibid., 7; Bianca Mercado, "With Their Hearts in Their Hands," 133.

reported cases of lead contamination. The House and Senate passed the bill in November that overlooked the recommendations of the OMB. In June 2003, the plans for the Calatrava Bridge were released. For the first time Dallas citizens got a real look at the revisions of what the 1998 bond had promised. On December 8, 2003, the council adopted the new plan with the first phase to be completed sometime in 2012.²⁷

In February 2011, Dallas city planners introduced a bill that pictured West Dallas as a highly populated, modern area of Dallas. The Trinity River Corridor Project intends to erect office buildings, apartments, condominiums, and townhomes, without destroying the low-income neighborhood of La Bajada. Residents of La Bajada were relieved to hear that their neighborhood would be left intact. When interviewed by the *Dallas Morning News*, a long-time local resident, Felix Lozada stated: “My wife and my father passed away in our house. We raised our children and our grandchildren there. Money cannot compensate for that.” City planners ascertain they have learned their lesson from Little Mexico, a once thriving Mexican American neighborhood in Dallas that was torn down to make way for Uptown and Victory Park condominiums and businesses. The intent is to leave La Bajada intact and to allow the city to grow around the neighborhood.²⁸

At first residents were hesitant about this plan, and groups of activists banded together to gather measurements of La Bajada to enable the neighborhood to qualify for Neighborhood Stabilization Overlay (NSO) status. This meant the neighborhood could only be used for single family housing units, thus preventing the Trinity River Corridor Project from coming to fruition. The plan focused on preserving La Bajada, while developing the area south of Singleton into a

²⁷ Sweeny, “History : A River Runs Through It,” *D Magazine*, December 1, 2004.

²⁸ Rudolph Bush, “Plan Commission Approves West Dallas Vision,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 3, 2011.

modern neighborhood complete with wide sidewalks, landscaping and modern conveniences. The area is currently occupied by warehouses and outdated industrial buildings.²⁹

On February 3, the City Planning Commission unanimously passed the proposal to redevelop West Dallas, and on March 2, 2011, the Dallas City Council approved the plan for the redevelopment of West Dallas along the Trinity River. Council members were pleased that most of the working-class residents of La Bajada were in support of the plan. The next step is to propose a bond to finance the project. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, at first residents of La Bajada were terrified they would not be able to afford the property taxes if the area were developed or that development would require their homes to be torn down. The plan is to develop the area along the Trinity River where the soon-to-be-opened Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge will meet Singleton Avenue, right through the middle of West Dallas. The team at City Design Studio has assured La Bajada residents they have nothing to worry about as the intent of the project is to attract jobs and build new businesses while simultaneously preserving the neighborhoods of La Bajada and Los Altos. Various Mexican American neighborhood groups have been working to ensure that homes within La Bajada are preserved and updated and that zoning for La Bajada remains inclusive of single-family homes and not large condominiums, townhouses, or large upscale redevelopment on the outer portions of the city. The main concern for these residents is that they are not forced out their neighborhood and family homes.³⁰

Whether or not La Bajada will face the same fate as Little Mexico remains to be seen. According to journalist Darwin Payne, Mexican Americans were fundamental to the rise of Dallas. Their labor helped form the foundation of a thriving metropolis. Díaz asserted Chicano urbanism has placed and will continue to place pressure on planning, redevelopment projects,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Rudolph Bush, "West Dallas Plan Wins Approval," *Dallas Morning News*, March 10, 2011.

and federal bureaus. Díaz claimed Chicano communities have experienced three demographic stages; he argued that the first stage consisted of segregated barrios inhabited by refugees from the migration away from the Mexican Revolution, like La Colonia. The second stage occurred after barrios like La Colonia were devastated and middle-class Chicanos migrated out of the inner-city barrios to the suburbs. The final stage, the one currently in progress, is the moving of middle-class Chicanos into all regions of metropolitan areas, including outer suburbs. Where does that leave La Bajada?³¹

La Bajada was a part of West Dallas where Anita Martínez implemented neighborhood improvements. During her time in office, Martínez strove to keep the neighborhood intact and thriving. Will La Bajada suffer the same fate as Little Mexico? Only time will tell if the residents of La Bajada will be forced out of their homes and the neighborhood wiped off the map. Dallas has called it “progress” and the “Dallas Way,” most barrio residents have considered it a suppression of minority culture and socio-economic position.³²

³¹ Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism*, 307.

³² Mercado, “With Their Hearts in Their Hands,” 35; “City Council Pleased With West Dallas Plan,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 2, 2011.

CHAPTER 3

THE DALLAS WAY: DALLAS AND THE BUSINESS OF BUSINESS, THE POLITICS OF RACE

Dallas has had a turbulent history. How the city was run, including means to exclude women and minorities from power are all a part of Dallas history. According to historian Harvey Graff, the history that does exist for Dallas is a skewed version. People of Dallas do not like to remember racism, hatred or segregation. Thus, the people who have controlled the telling of Dallas's history have tended to be white male elites. In order to understand Martínez's role in El Movimiento in Dallas, a basic understanding of the development of Dallas politics is necessary. The following chapter discusses city governance in Dallas, including the founding of the Citizens Charter Association (CCA) and the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC) and how its politics worked to exclude minorities from political offices, including the utilization of gerrymandering to redraw district lines and lessen the strength of minority votes. Dallas's DCC structure denied membership to women, African Americans, and Mexican Americans regardless of whether they were part of the business community while claiming that the DCC and Dallas politics in general was composed of benevolent business professionals who only wanted what was best for Dallas and whose leadership was necessary to Dallas becoming a thriving metropolis.¹

Between 1856 and 1900, Dallas leaders changed the system of city governance in Dallas six times. In 1856 the Dallas City Charter set up a council of six councilmen (aldermen) who were elected via single district voting with the mayor elected at-large. In 1858, Dallas governance consisted of a mayor and a marshal, and nine aldermen, all elected for one year. In

¹ Roy H. Williams and Kevin J. Shay, *Time Change: An Alternate View of the History of Dallas* (Dallas: To Be Publishing Company, 1991), 46; Harvey Graff, *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xix-xxviii.

1871, the charter was amended to a mayor and eight aldermen, by city-wide elections. The term for an alderman was two years; the term for a mayor was one year. In 1875 it was amended again and consisted of a mayor and eight aldermen, but the alderman term was two years and one alderman and the mayoral term was one year. In 1876, aldermen were increased to twelve, with two seats chosen per district or ward. In 1897 the number of aldermen was reduced to one alderman per district; there were twelve districts at the time. In 1899, Dallas voters approved the Dallas City Charter of 1899 in which twelve aldermen, four of these elected at-large, served as the city council. The mayor was the chief executive, but had limited executive powers. The mayor had the power of a veto, but this veto could be overridden by a two-thirds vote of the council. A three-man commission composed of the mayor, a fire commissioner and a police commissioner were also a part of the charter. The *Dallas Morning News* claimed this new system consisted of departments which “make [their] own rules and regulations...all presumably without much concern as to the doings of other departments or as to any general policy for the well-being of the city as a whole.” The commissions proved inadequate in dealing with issues like sanitation, roads and utilities. At the time, Dallas’s most prominent socialist was George Clifton Edwards who believed the charter prevented Dallas from fixing things like inadequate water and sewage services. Others said it was a patronage-based system that was not representative of the population.²

In 1902, Mayor Ben Cabell appointed a committee to address charter reform. Its purpose was to place city government “upon a proper business basis to be conducted solely as a proper business institution.” The Sixth Ward alderman, Charles G. Morgan then proposed the city

² Robert B. Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole: Planning, Politics and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 15-17. See Fairbanks chapter 1 for an explanation on how the city commission was implemented in Galveston. See Appendix for a listing of Dallas’s City Charter amendments.

adopt the experimental commission form of government. The city manager-commission was the system of government that had been implemented in 1900 in Galveston following its devastating hurricane and ensuing catastrophic flood. It had been given such accolades that Dallas was anxious to institute it. Under this system, subordinate officers would be appointed by commissioners, rather than elected by the public, and commissioners could fire these people if they did not perform well. The city governance consisted of four commissioners and a mayor. The commissioners were of finance, waterworks, public works, and the police. These officials managed and supervised all operations pertinent to their departments, including maintenance, repairs and improvements. Morgan claimed this approach was solid as it was based on “business principles.” The plan had the full support of the *Dallas Morning News* which ran a series of articles on the successes in Galveston. The *Dallas Times Herald* called the commission form of government a “peoples’ government, run on business principles.” Though many people supported the new system, its constitutionality was in question and civic leaders decided to wait for a court ruling on Galveston before continuing with reform ideas. On March 25, 1903, the state court ruled that this form of government was unconstitutional because the governor had appointed several of the commissioners. This lessened the popularity of the change to a commission form of government in Dallas, and Dallas continued to be run under a council-mayor city governance.³

In 1905, Dallas officials realized they could not accomplish all they wanted to with limited time and resources. On April 26, 1905, a board of park commissioners was created as an amendment to the city charter. Its job was to develop the Dallas park system. The council discovered running the city’s two parks as well as city services was too time consuming and so

³ Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole*, 19-21.

pushed for the council-mayor governance system. Once Dallasites noticed how well the system worked in Galveston and Houston, people rallied to implement the new form of government.⁴

On April 3, 1906, the council agreed by a vote of six to five to have a citizens' charter convention with delegates from each of the wards in attendance. Each of the wards supported reforms mainly in their own districts and not overall change for the city of Dallas; as a result, the convention was unsuccessful. The city council then banded together with the Commercial Club (Dallas's most influential business club) and began to work out a new charter.⁵

By 1906 it was apparent Dallas needed a new form of city governance. At this time Dallas was run via a "ward" or alderman system wherein ten aldermen were elected from ten different areas of the city and two men were elected at-large to represent the city as a whole alongside the mayor at the time, Curtis Pendleton Smith. Dallasites clamored for an improvement over the ward system.⁶

By 1906 it became evident that Dallas had grown far too big with issues like sewage, sanitation, education, police and fire safety that a ward system could no longer handle. Smith accepted this fact when he pronounced that he would not impede progress and that he was in support of any plan that would benefit Dallas. The voters of Dallas looked for a new way to govern the city.⁷

Voters approved a commission form of government which was comprised of a mayor and four commissioners in 1906. The city was to be run like a business with the mayor serving as its president and the commissioners the vice-presidents. These positions would be decided by at-

⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 7-8; Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole*, 17.

⁷ Ibid.

large city-wide elections, meaning commissioners were elected by the voting population of Dallas, regardless of the region or neighborhood in which a candidate resided. In this manner Dallas was primed for elite manipulation.⁸

In 1907 citizens decided Dallas needed a group of business-minded men to more efficiently run the city. According to journalist Sam Acheson, the concept of the Citizens Association arose from the turmoil at city hall that resulted in the replacement of the ward type of government. Thus, on March 4, 1907, powerful businessmen in Dallas banded together and formed the Citizens Association (CA), with Southwestern Insurance's president Henry Dickinson Lindsley as its leader. According to author/politician Roy Williams, the CA was backed by the *Dallas Morning News* and carried the slogan "Imagine a city without graft and almost without politics." Elite white male voters approved the formation of the CA because at the time white women did not vote, and poor people of all races were disfranchised via the poll tax. The state legislature approved the change, and the CA was created on April 19. Included within the charter was the provision that racial segregation could be used in housing and public services.⁹

Lindsley stressed that the CA was a non-partisan group whose sole purpose was to make the city of Dallas a better place to live. Though this was the rhetoric used, to be certain, the CA did not take the welfare of all Dallas's residents into account, indeed the notion of making Dallas a better place to live was coded language that meant the CA would do what it deemed necessary for the "progress" of Dallas. The CA ran itself like a business and addressed issues like public utilities and sanitation. The CA dominated Dallas politics from 1907 to 1917. The Citizens

⁸ Ibid., 8-12.

⁹ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 48.

Association was the forerunner to the 1931 CCA, the same organization that supported Anita Martínez in her campaign for Dallas City Council in 1969 and 1971.¹⁰

On May 25, 1908, Dallas suffered a devastating flood of its own. It had been raining continually for three days, finally on the fourth day, the Trinity River reached its flood-stage of 31.1 feet. All of Dallas was affected by this flood, but West Dallas, not having paved roads, was hit the hardest. It took weeks to clean up the debris and to get city services restored. It became obvious something needed to be done about the Trinity River basin. People became apprehensive that the Citizens Association could not handle such a large undertaking and searched for alternative means to manage the Trinity River basin. George B. Dealey of the *Dallas Morning News*, and Chamber of Commerce officials L.O. Daniels and John R. Babcock created the Dallas City Plan and Improvement League (CPIL). These men then encouraged Mayor Stephen J. Hay to hire landscape artist George Kessler to develop the first city plan for Dallas.¹¹

Adopted in 1912, The Kessler Plan, as it came to be known, included economic, aesthetic and environmental improvements for Dallas, though the aesthetic and environmental aspects were largely ignored in practice. His proposals included a gateway civic center, parkway and greenbelt and a system of boulevards. These were not all fully implemented as functionality was stressed over the aesthetic. According to historian Harvey Graff, the Kessler plan helped alleviate problems like flooding, dangerous railway tracks, inadequate roads, traffic congestion, and blight near downtown.¹²

¹⁰ Sam Hanna Acheson, *Dallas Yesterday* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1977), 188-189; Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19-25; Patricia Evridge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas, 1996), 10.

¹² Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, 10-11; Graff, *The Dallas Myth*, 222.

In the 1915 election, the CA backed Lindsley. By this time an independent ticket, the People's Independent Party (PIP) had formed. The progressive group accused the CA of "bossism" and of establishing an elitist government at city hall. Again, the *Dallas Morning News* backed Lindsley and the CA, claiming Lindsley was a middle of the road progressive, concerned about poverty. Lindsley won the election.

In 1921 a series of Ku Klux Klan atrocities were perpetrated upon African American men. Whippings and tarring and feathering were common in Dallas. By 1922 the KKK boasted 13,000 members, including elite businessman and future mayor, Robert L. Thornton, the man referred to as "Mr. Dallas." The Citizens Association took a stand against the Klan, but by 1923 the Klan succeeded in exerting control over local politics. Such success was short-lived though, and the KKK lost control of city politics in 1924. Still a hard blow had been aimed at the CA. Some Dallasites asserted the CA was incapable of governing Dallas.¹³

By the late 1920s, the people of Dallas knew the present system of city government was no longer effective. The alderman plan of 1907 had been abandoned, but the commission format in use had brought its own set of problems. Four separate all white male elite commissioners from four separate departments had created municipal strife and gridlock. Voters desperately searched for a yet another new way to govern the city.¹⁴

In 1927, Mayor R.E. Burt appointed a fifteen-member committee to draft a new city charter. Included within the charter was the adoption of a non-partisan city manager plan of governance. Beginning in 1927 the *Dallas Morning News* extolled the virtues of a council-manager plan of city government. News reporter Louis P. Head wrote a series of articles

¹³See Payne, *Big D*, chapter 4 for a full account of the KKK in Dallas in the 1920s; Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

highlighting the fact that the Dallas city charter was almost twenty years old and outdated. At this point, the Dallas City Charter had been revised nine times since its inception in 1856. On June 16, 1928, Head asserted that a council-manager plan would place authority within a centralized body which would then be held accountable to the people of Dallas and not to a secret ballot box they could then hide behind. Head claimed this was the most democratic form of government possible. On the day before the election, the *Dallas Morning News* asserted the council manager government would allow the businessmen of the city to take control and run Dallas the way it should be run, because “the biggest business in Dallas is Dallas itself.”¹⁵

The council-manager plan was of high importance in the upcoming 1927 elections, however the question was not decided until 1931. It took a referendum petition to force an election on October 30, 1930. The new system passed by more than a three-to-one majority. On April 7, 1931, the council-manager plan was adopted by the voters of Dallas. Key people in the creation of the CCA were Charles F. O’Donnell (former city attorney), Hugh Grady (former assistant city attorney and chairman of the committee) , and Louis P. Head. Head’s involvement illustrated how important the *Dallas Morning News* was to the organization. The first CCA was composed of one hundred members and was comprised of the city’s leading business, civic, and professional people with Hugh Grady as its first president. These men were not politicians; though they had a private agenda to enrich themselves, they had no public platform, and they gave no speeches.¹⁶

¹⁵ Adoption of a City-Manager Plan of Government, folder 12, box 1, Carl B. Calloway Collection, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, (Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas); Payne, *Big D*, 132.

¹⁶ Acheson, *Dallas Yesterday*, 189; Darwin Payne, ed., *Sketches of a Growing Town: Episodes and People of Dallas from Early Days to Recent Times* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1991), 180-184; Payne, *Big D*, 133.

In 1931 the CCA slated its first set of candidates. Dallas businessman T.L. Bradford was chosen to launch the new council-manager system of government. He was a non-political figure who embodied the kind of business-minded, successful men voters had wanted to run the city. Williams asserted Bradford was the first “weak” mayor on a council hand-picked by the CCA. John Edy became the first city manager, so-called “czar,” his biggest task was the handling of the Trinity River levee, which protected business interests, but did not extend to protect the neighborhoods inhabited primarily by minorities.¹⁷

In 1933, Dallas, along with the rest of the world, suffered from the Great Depression. The CCA ruled Dallas politics during the Great Depression. Under mayor Charles E. Turner and the CCA-picked city council, public soup kitchens were opened and Dallas began administering welfare to people in need. In 1933 federal funds were allocated to Dallas which Turner and the council insisted be used to build a new traffic facility in downtown Dallas; a triple underpass of the railroads by Elm, Main, and Commerce streets.¹⁸

Though many Dallasites received aid from the New Deal programs, the majority of aid went to Anglo people. Marzelle Cooper-Hill, an African American woman who worked at the Community Chest (the organization that dealt with welfare programs in Dallas) in the early 1930s, asserted most of the local recipients of food and welfare programs were Anglo. Indeed, historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder contended minority women suffered discrimination in class and caste when dealing with New Deal relief agencies. One ally for minorities during the 1930s was the African American newspaper *Dallas Express*, which backed minorities’ struggle for equality. During the 1920s and 1930s its writers and editors challenged the status quo. Though minorities

¹⁷ Acheson, *Dallas Yesterday*, 193; Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 61.

¹⁸ Ibid.

made some strides, such as small business-owners, lawyers and teachers, overall Dallas's Anglo elite males controlled Dallas.¹⁹

Though white, male elites controlled Dallas business and politics, within minority communities, some leaders emerged. One of the Mexican American radical leaders was Pancho Medrano . Medrano was born in Little Mexico a year after his parents, had fled revolution-torn Mexico. In late 1910 Mexicans fought back against the oppressive regime of Porfirio Díaz. La Revolución lasted from 1910 to 1920, causing Mexico's people to suffer through disease, starvation and extreme poverty. A great migration ensued. In order to escape this turmoil, Mexicans fled to Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and beyond, only to face stiff discrimination and segregation in the United States. According to Chicano historian, attorney and professor, José Ángel Gutiérrez, many people fled Mexico with the intent of returning "mañana" (tomorrow). For many, "mañana" never came, and Mexicans began to settle in the U.S. and raise families. Growing up in the U.S., the children of these refugees faced segregation and a crisis of identity. These people were born in America, yet they were called "Mexican." Thus, as an adult in Dallas, Medrano attempted to escape second-class citizenship and addressed issues such as discrimination in public restaurants and parks.²⁰

In reference to Pike Park (the Jewish park at the time, first called Summit Play Park), located in La Colonia, Medrano asserted:

The city built metal rails around Pike Park just to keep Mexican Americans and blacks out....We couldn't even walk across the park to go to our relatives' house. The police

¹⁹ Ibid., 60; Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929-1939: Women of the Depression* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1984), appendix A, 187.

²⁰ Raúl Morín, *Among the Valiant* (Alhambra, CA: Borden Publishing Company, 1966), 19-21; José Ángel Gutiérrez, "Paths to Power" (lecture, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, April 28, 2011). For examples of this segregation and discrimination in California see Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, Press, 1976). See Pancho Medrano Papers, 1946-1971, Special Collections, floor 6, University at Arlington.

threw us out of Pike Park if we even touched the pipe railing surrounding it as we watched the white kids play. We had no place to play – the only park we were allowed to play on was a vacant lot on McKinney Avenue.²¹

This was in stark contrast to Mexico in 1932. Medrano was astonished that Mexican Americans could eat anywhere and go anywhere in Mexico, a foreign country, yet faced segregation and discrimination in their own country. When told by some Anglos in Dallas to “go home,” Medrano sighed and replied “The sad part was that several Mexican families had lived (in Texas) since before Texas was formed and this was their home.”²²

Medrano’s father also faced discrimination when in 1939 he was told he could no longer work in Dallas because he was a “foreigner.” Having been born in Dallas, Pancho was able to secure a job at North American Aviation Company (NAA). He was the first person of color/ member of a racial minority to work at the West Dallas plant that later became Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Corporation (TEMCO).²³

Although he secured a job, Pancho faced discrimination in the workplace. He learned to box in order to gain respect. He then became a plant organizer and rallied for benefits such as pay, work-safety, and an end to discrimination. Medrano was eventually fired for unionizing. With the assistance of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 645, Medrano was rehired when NAA became TEMCO.

Mexican Americans and blacks made strides in the 1930s, yet the Anglo political domination continued. Anglo policies of ignoring poor neighborhoods and concentrating on

²¹ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 63.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 65.

wealthier areas of Dallas continued as well. The CCA remained in power, and in 1933 its president, Carl B. Callaway, resigned.²⁴

When Callaway left office he recommended the CCA should assign a twelve-person nominating committee in order to choose future slates of candidates. He also pushed for an expanded, more balanced CCA executive committee of one hundred and fifty members consisting of one male and one female from each district. Finally, he urged the CCA to welcome all groups of people from any section of the city so that everyone was represented on the committee. His suggestions were largely ignored and the CCA faced rising opposition in the 1935 election.²⁵

A disfranchised group of Anglo men, originally called “The Organization,” opposed the CCA. The group emerged in 1935 and met in secret much like catfish hid in the mud. For this the city’s white elite males derisively dubbed them the “Catfish Club” by. The leaders of the Catfish Club wanted political power, but they knew that the CCA’s non-partisan rhetoric had impressed Dallas voters. They formed the Citizens Civic Association, which mounted a campaign against the CCA in 1935.²⁶

Throughout the campaign, the Citizens Civic Association ran on a platform that insisted the CCA was insensitive to the people’s needs, undemocratic and far too political. The Citizens Civic Association was successful and swept all nine council seats. Historian Robert Fairbanks attributed this CCA loss to the large turnout of working and poorer class voters, among the 2,300

²⁴ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 6; Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole*, 89.

²⁵ Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole*, 89.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

voters who had not turned out for the previous election. The CCA met and regrouped, vowing to recoup their losses and regain control of the city.²⁷

In the late 1930s the debate over the Trinity River Levee District resurfaced. In his 1911 plan, adopted in 1912, George Kessler had included a proposal to control flooding along the Trinity River. By the early 1930s it became apparent Dallas needed a government entity that could handle the implementation of this part of the Kessler Plan.²⁸

Historian Patricia Hill contended the 1930s were watershed years for Dallas. In 1936, in the midst of the Great Depression, Dallas hosted the more than five month-long Centennial Exposition celebrating Texas's 100 years of independence from Mexico. At the forefront of this celebration was Robert L. Thornton, a bona-fide racist reflective of his era. Thornton was a self-made man who claimed he derived his education from "CC & M- corn, cotton, and mules." Thornton made his money in banking and served three terms as the president of the Dallas City Chamber of Commerce. Thornton vainly claimed that Dallas had no history, but it had progress and he wanted to showcase this progress to the world.²⁹

In late fall 1937 Thornton proposed the idea of a group of elite, non-partisan businessmen to run the city's affairs. He was tired of committees and men not being able to organize quickly to get things accomplished in Dallas. He shared his idea with elite bankers, Nathan Adams and Fred F. Florence. Together, they formed what would soon be referred to as the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC).³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 100.

²⁸ Payne, *Big D*, 133.

²⁹ Darwin Payne, *Dallas Citizens Council: An Obligation of Leadership* (Dallas: Dallas Citizens Council, 2008), 10-11.

³⁰ Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, 109; Payne, *Dallas Citizens Council*, 10-11.

The DCC was run like a business. Thornton's main concern was that the council had to be composed of men who could get things done for Dallas. He wanted "yes" and "no" men. He knew how to elicit money from wealthy men and how to get people to say yes, even when they meant no. Darwin Payne asserted:

In decades to come, the Citizens Council, with bankers always prominent, working quietly behind the scenes, endeavored to ensure progress for Dallas by putting its money and muscle behind the projects it deemed important for the city. While the organization had no official powers, it exercised far more influence over municipal and civic affairs than the elected city council, but without the publicity.³¹

The DCC was non-partisan. In its charter, signed on November 20, 1937 and enacted on November 22, 1937, the council exclaimed it had been created for the good of all of Dallas. It was formed to "study, confer, and act upon any matter, civic or economic in character" that pertained to the city of Dallas. Included in the by-laws was that membership was exclusive to the business community. Attorneys, doctors, educators, journalists, government officials, and labor leaders were barred from membership. Though there was nothing in writing, women, African Americans and Mexican Americans, no matter their social or economic stature, were denied membership as well. From its beginning, the DCC represented white business interests in Dallas and shelved proposals that entailed even minor disagreements. When prospective investors refused Thornton they received what has been termed the "Thornton Shakedown" which meant he would not take "no" for an answer and would volunteer peoples' money for them. In this manner he raised his operating budget to six figures.³²

In an article published in 1996 in *Fortune* magazine, Historian Patricia Hill asserted that as a whole, Dallas has believed the myth of "a city with no reason to exist." Meaning that the

³¹ Payne, *Big D*, 173.

³² Payne, *Dallas Citizens Council*, 15; Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, 123; John Bloom, "Fair Game," *D Magazine*, (October 1986): 33.

myth people have chosen to succumb to was that Dallas was created and brought to greatness by a small group of benevolent businessmen who only wanted what was best for Dallas and that without their influence and control Dallas would never have developed into a thriving metropolis. A look at La Colonia and other barrios with their abiding abject poverty shattered this illusion.³³

Following on the heels of World War II in 1947, “racial committees” were formed to help open up a dialogue between black, white, and brown leaders. Though the groups’ intentions were benevolent, due to lack of political influence, the groups ultimately failed. In 1943, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Texas Writer’s Project denounced the conditions in La Colonia, stating:

Movements inaugurated first in 1935 and again in 1938 to clear up this poverty-stricken district gained some momentum, but physical results were so meager as to preclude the gauging of effects upon the possible ultimate Americanization of the Mexican group in Dallas.³⁴

Another report issued by a St. Louis planning company, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, concluded in 1944 that Dallas was plagued by horrendous slums and that bad unsanitary conditions had created endless economic and social problems. Among the recommendations was the rebuilding of slum areas by utilizing local, state, and federal funds to provide facilities for low-income families and to provide free medical care. The DCC-led council largely ignored these recommendations.³⁵

This “Dallas myth” served the city of Dallas when it was faced with de jure desegregation in the 1960s, following the monumental 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision,

³³ Royce Hanson, *Civic Culture and Urban Change : Governing Dallas* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 16.

³⁴ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 69.

³⁵ Ibid.

Brown v. Board of Education Topeka Kansas, which federally mandated integration of public schools. The myth was used as a means to rally support for peaceful transition in the schools. Though Dallas experienced tremendous growth in the 1950s, this change was not evident in the minority populations. Dallas continued to pay little or no attention to its inner-city neighborhoods, especially the African American and Mexican sides of town. On April 6, 1961, a federal court finally ruled that Dallas must desegregate by the fall of that year. The DCC appointed a seven-man committee to study the issues of school integration. The group distributed pamphlets, posters, and a documentary film for public distribution designed to facilitate the transition to a desegregated school system. Civil rights attorney Parker Wilson asserted, “I never could figure out why with all the churches and religion in the city there were so many social problems here. In a city as rich as Dallas you would think much of those resources would go to alleviate poverty and suffering, but it obviously never has.” A decade’s long tradition of social and political neglect had produced the intended effect.³⁶

The myth began to dissolve following the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. People outside of Dallas started questioning who was running Dallas and how. The nation noticed that the DCC was composed of segregationist, misogynist, and homophobic white elite males who routinely excluded African Americans, Mexican Americans, women, homosexuals, and others. While Dallas claimed to be progressive and representative, the world saw its politics as elitist and discriminatory. This made the Dallas myth harder to retain. The

³⁶ Dallas Citizens’ Council, *Dallas at the Crossroads: General Information : Proposed City of Dallas, Bond Financed, Capital Improvement Program for 3-to-6 Year Period, 1967—1970-1972* (Dallas, 1961), 4. : See previous publication for a complete explanation of the integration program; Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 69; Roy Williams and Kevin J. Shay, *...and Justice for All* (Fort Worth : CGS Communications, 1999), 113.

DCC fought dilligently to maintain a sense of order and status quo all the while maintaining a façade of fairness.³⁷

Once elected to the Dallas City Council, city councilmen remained closely tied to the DCC. In this manner, the DCC retained control of Dallas city politics, and successfully excluded minorities from office, or when elected, minorities were hand-picked by the CCA and its successor the DCC and these individuals were considered “safe” or non-agitators in the community. Historian Royce Hanson asserted :

Blacks and Hispanics were excluded from elective office until the 1960s, and when some were finally elected, it initially was with the endorsement of the Anglo business leaders. Only “safe” minority candidates received endorsement and financial support from the entrepreneurial regime; a necessity for success in the at-large-election system.³⁸

When interviewed, activist Frances Rizo affirmed this belief when she said that minorities who were elected to city offices were conservative and affluent and had the backing of the CCA. Rizo asserted "...They got Anita to run, and all the Republicans, all the gringos voted for her."

Though the CCA did back Martínez as a conservative, her appointment proved to be valuable to the Mexican American community; she did not serve as a mere token minority representative.³⁹

³⁷ Payne, *Dallas Citizens Council*, 15. Roy Williams outlined the importance of Kennedy’s assassination to the Dallas civil rights movement. He asserted its importance in four facets, 1. It came about at a time when passage of civil rights legislation addressed the issues of racism and segregation. 2. It highlighted the immense suppression of minority rights. 3. It illuminated the connections between local officials, organized crime, and CIA members. 4. It led to the most civil rights legislation passed by any president. See *Time Change*, chapter 6.

³⁸ Warren Leslie, *Dallas Public and Private: Aspects of an American City* (New York: Grossman Publishing, 1964), 66; Payne, ed., *Sketches of a Growing Town*, 179; James H. Svara and Douglas J. Watson, eds., *More Than Mayor Or Manager: Campaigns to Change Form of Government in America’s Large Cities* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 184.

³⁹ Frances Rizo, interview by Roberto R. Calderón, Dallas, Texas, University of North Texas, October 16, 2007, 74. For a discourse on conservatives in Chicano politics see Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).



Figure 3.1. Dallas Citizens Charter Association candidates for the 1969 Dallas City Council: [left to right, Sheffield Kadane, Henry Stuart, Mack McKinney, Erik Jonsson, Douglas Fain, Anita Martínez, Abe Meyer, George Allen, Ted Holland, and Garry Weber]. Courtesy of Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

In the 1960s and 1970s minorities questioned the validity and fairness of Dallas politics and at-large elections. A. Maceo Smith, Walter McMillan, Pancho Medrano, and others fought against the poll tax. In 1964 the poll tax finally died due to the 24th amendment to the Constitution. Their efforts were finally successful. Also at issue was the court mandated integration of public schools. The Fifth Circuit Court and the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) agreed that all Dallas public schools would be desegregated by 1967. This did not come to fruition until the 1970s.⁴⁰

The summer of 1964 (Freedom Summer), thousands of civil rights workers were arrested and several died in the pursuit of civil rights across the South. This struggle did not escape Dallas. In Dallas, no less than twenty-eight demonstrations were waged at various restaurants and public places. The 1960s starkly illuminated the unfairness of segregation and discrimination and pushed minorities to fight for a voice in politics which could finally and systematically begin to enact changes through the existing electoral system with its varied levers of power. Martínez

⁴⁰ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 93.

was an anomaly as she was a conservative Mexican American who utilized the Dallas political system to enact change in Mexican American barrios and by extension, Mexican American lives.⁴¹

In 1968, Max Goldblatt, a white male, became the first person to challenge the at-large voting system Dallas had in place. Goldblatt had run for Dallas City Council in 1967. Even though he had garnered the most support in his district, he lost due to at-large voting. Following the defeat, he filed a suit against the Dallas City Council for discriminatory practices. From its inception in 1931 to the 1967 election the CCA had dominated Dallas city politics with only seventeen non-CCA endorsed candidates winning office. Goldblatt asserted the CCA and others imposed an at-large citywide election system that did not fairly represent minority communities in Dallas. In an interview in the *Times Herald*, Goldblatt contended that the CCA was comprised of “millionaires who use their power, influence, position and money to back their handpicked candidates.” He went on to say he did not think the CCA was evil. Goldblatt stated “I feel some of the most talented people in Dallas are in the CCA...it is the system that is evil. When you take government out of the hands of the people you lose the essence of democracy.” In 1968 the Supreme Court dismissed the case citing lack of jurisdiction; at-large voting remained intact.⁴²

By 1971, it became obvious to most minority leaders that the at-large system of voting was unfair and needed to be replaced. On March 10, 1971, eighteen minorities filed a suit, *Lipscomb v. Jonsson*, requesting a temporary restraining order to postpone the next council election, among the lead plaintiffs in the case were Al Lipscomb and Pancho Medrano. Lipscomb stated “...We know our problems better than anyone else. We will decide who will

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Carolyn Barta, “Dallas Loser in Goldblatt Case, Lawyer Says Staff Writer,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 24, 1969; Staff writer, “High Court Dismisses Challenge by Goldblatt,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 22, 1968; “Dallas Election Change Rejected,” *The Times Herald*, August 16, 1969.

represent us.” U.S. District Judge Joe Estes denied the request and on March 27 dismissed the suit for “failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted.” Estes said that the Supreme Court upheld at-large voting as a valid system of governance. The elections were held as before; nine CCA candidates won, including Martínez who retained her seat, however Wes Wise defeated CCA-backed Avery Mays.⁴³

Before the 1973 election, the CCA tried to broaden its base by selecting four Mexican Americans to run for city council; Pedro Aguirre, who replaced Martínez for Place Nine, Adelfa Callejo, Onésimo Hernández, and Trini Garza. These appointments were overshadowed by the tragic death of Chicano youth Santos Rodríguez. In the aftermath of the shooting, councilman Aguirre introduced a resolution recognizing that “unequal law enforcement, dual justice, and unequal treatment for the different segments of the community and different races (existed) in Dallas.” Following this, the new police chief promised to investigate police brutality. 1973 was the last year the CCA was politically significant in Dallas.⁴⁴

In January 1975, the Dallas Mexican American community petitioned U.S. District Judge Eldon Mahon to disallow at-large voting. Both the African American and Mexican American minority communities were strong supporters of single-member district voting. These minority groups claimed that at-large voting diluted minority votes within a given district. Judge Mahon had previously approved eight single-member districts and three at-large districts for the April 1, 1975 election, the first in Dallas history. African Americans asserted that in the overwhelmingly African American populated districts six and eight, the chance of an African American representing their community was drastically lessened by at-large-city-wide elections. Overall,

⁴³ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 103-105. For a summation of the case see <http://openjurist.org/459/f2d/335/lipscomb-v-jonsson> (accessed May 1, 2011).

⁴⁴ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 108.

Latinos were dissatisfied with the eight-three system and Aguirre claimed the system lessened the effectiveness of the Mexican American people. The election resulted in two African Americans and no Latinos elected to the council. Following the federal ruling, the CCA ceased to be a political force in Dallas politics. Historian Robert B. Fairbanks argued that by 1975 the CCA was no longer seen as a force for the good of all Dallas; instead it was perceived as a white business-dominated group that was not interested in Dallas as a whole, rather just downtown Dallas. The *Dallas Morning News* echoed this assertion, reporting, "...with the installation of the new election process in 1975, the CCA lost the majority grip it had held on the council for the past 30 years."⁴⁵

Onto the stage stepped the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) which was formed in 1968 in San Antonio as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization to assist Chicanos with their civic and constitutional rights. MALDEF handled cases for Chicanos dealing with employment discrimination, immigration, voting rights, Chicana rights, police brutality and other racial issues. In the 1970s MALDEF assisted Mexican Americans with a multitude of discrimination cases on local, state and national levels. The Mexican American community finally had sustained legal support in its ongoing battle to make good on its civil rights.⁴⁶

In 1978, MALDEF agreed to represent Mexican Americans who had filed suit against the Dallas City Council and its at-large citywide elections. Mexican Americans petitioned the council for redistricting which would help ensure Latino representation on the council. The

⁴⁵ Fairbanks, *For the City As a Whole*, 245; Henry Tatum, "CCA's Fall From Power Spreads Fear of Demise," *Dallas Morning News*, February 22, 1976. www.Dallasmorningnewsarchives.com (accessed December 10, 2010).

⁴⁶ Staff Writer, "MALDEF President, Ms. Martínez, To Be Honored," *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1976. www.Dallasmorningnewsarchives.com (accessed November 1, 2010).

original suit was filed in 1970 by African Americans, and Mexican Americans filed as intervenors. Mexican Americans had not had Latino representation on the council for two years because incumbent Pedro Aguirre lost his 1976 reelection bid. At the time eight city council members were voted by single districts, the mayor and two places were at-large. The case was appealed to the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The claim was overturned in May 1978, stating the eight-to-three system was still discriminatory toward minorities. Dallas officials were then ordered to devise a plan which would consist of ten single districts and one at-large. The City Council refused the changes and appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The case *Wise v. Lipscomb* went to the Supreme Court in 1978.⁴⁷

On June 22, 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the decision of the Fifth Circuit Court. The Supreme Court ruled that the court erred in its view of the eight-three system as a “court-ordered plan instead of a legislative plan,” and the City Council was not in violation of the Constitution. The only dissenting opinion came from U.S. Justice Thurgood Marshall who felt the eight-three system was inappropriate. The case went back to the Fifth Circuit Court where it was sent back to the lower district court on November 6. It would take eight years to finally settle this matter, when in 1990 Judge Buchmeyer stated that the eight-three system could not be legally implemented until it received preclearance dictated by Section Five of the Voting Rights Act. The policies of gerrymandering district lines and at-large voting continued.⁴⁸

Minorities filed another lawsuit on February 1, 1979, titled *Heggins v. City of Dallas* in an effort to delay the April election. It was successful and the election was postponed until city officials made the system legal. The city council and the attorney general debated for six months

⁴⁷ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 113.

⁴⁸ Williams and Shay, *...and Justice for All*, 156; Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 114. For a summation of the case see <http://openjurist.org/437/us/535/wise-v-l-lipscomb> (accessed March 1, 2011).

before a resolution was passed. The attorney general insisted that the eight-three system meet the Voting Rights Act standards and that there be needed to be three districts with at least a 68 percent minority population. During a public hearing on September 5, MALDEF submitted an eleven-zero plan in which four districts had over a 65 percent minority population. The council ignored this suggestion and chose an eight-three system that created a third minority district.⁴⁹

The early 1980s did not fare much better for the fight against at-large voting. In 1987, African American Roy Williams ran for a seat on the city council under an at-large campaign. He lost and became convinced the only way minorities would have fair representation on the council would be to sue. As various Dallas grassroots activists claimed, the only way to make substantial inroads in civil rights in Dallas was through the federal courts, thus, following the 1987 campaign, Williams and civil rights activist Marvin Crenshaw decided to file a lawsuit. The West Dallas Mexican American group, the Ledbetter Neighborhood Association (LNA) joined Williams and Crenshaw in the lawsuit. Instead of challenging the city charter, the suit argued at-large voting violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Section Five. Though the 1990 census redistricting was nearing, Crenshaw defended the purpose of the lawsuit when he stated, "Then when the 1990 census comes, the rulers and leaders will have designed a plan that suits them, and we'll be left in the same place as we are now. The only way we can get anything done is to take the city of Dallas screaming and kicking into court."⁵⁰ On February 2, Crenshaw and Williams filed a motion with Judge Buchmeyer to postpone the May 6 elections. The motion was denied.

⁴⁹ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 115.

⁵⁰ Williams and Shay, *...and Justice for All*, 21; Jeff Posey, "Politics: Enemies of the At-Large System," *D Magazine*, September, 1988. http://www.dmagazine.com/Home/1988/09/01/POLITICS_ENEMIES_OF_THE_AT-LARGE_SYSTEM.aspx (accessed May 10, 2011).

In the same year, Chicano political candidate Steven Salazar was refused admission on the ballot for District 2. He won the case, but not in time to mount a substantial campaign for a seat on the Dallas City Council. Pedro Vaca, the council told another Latino hopeful the petition to have his name placed on the ballot for Place 10 was invalid; he also did not run. Racial politics had come to the boiling point in Dallas.⁵¹

In 1988, Mexican American Al Gonzales ran for Dallas City Council under the eight-three system. When his detractors claimed he only won because he had been hand-picked as the minority candidate he became outraged, stating, “I don’t want to be anybody’s hand-picked anything....Everything I got, these two hands got me.” With the backing of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the DCC, Gonzales became the one and only Latino to win at-large under the eight-three system.⁵²

Racial tensions continued to mount. Dallas’s first female mayor, Annette Strauss, appointed a diverse, eighty-member committee to recommend ways to diversify Dallas and to denounce racial intolerances. The Committee, called “Dallas Together,” reported in January 1989 that one of the best ways to achieve racial harmony in Dallas was to enhance political opportunities for minorities. The committee then concluded that the eight-three system was insufficient in providing ample, equal opportunity for minority political representation.⁵³

The early 1990s brought a large influx of Latino and Asian immigrants to Dallas. Earlier in 1983, a group called Proyecto Adelante formed in Dallas as a legal association to offer aid to

⁵¹ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 143.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Payne, *Big D*, 391.

Central American refugees. The larger number of Latinos in Dallas began to organize and demand a political voice by the early 1990s.⁵⁴

In 1990, a watershed for racial politics in Dallas, Dallas voters approved a ten-four-one system of government that had been propounded by the same prior hegemonic, former CCA members. This consisted of ten districts, four at-large seats and one mayor elected at-large. Federal Judge Jerry Buchmeyer exerted pressure on the Dallas City Council to create a voting system that provided for more minority group representation on the council, which in turn disallowed the ten-four-one system and instead instituted the fourteen single-member, one mayor elected at-large system of city governance still in effect today. On March 28, Judge Buchmeyer declared that Dallas's eight-three system violated the requirements of one-person, one-vote mandates and ordered that Dallas create a single-member district plan immediately. In his lengthy 248-page decision Buchmeyer affirmed:

In no way will this court tell African-Americans and Hispanics that they must wait any longer for their voting rights in the city of Dallas. Therefore, an interim city council election must be held as soon as possible in order to remedy the adverse effects of the eight-three system- the denial of equal access to the city's political process- which African and Mexican Americans have suffered in Dallas for some ten to fifteen years.⁵⁵

Crenshaw and Williams were hailed as heroes. On April 27, the interim council selected a twelve-one plan to submit to Judge Buchmeyer. At a public hearing, most of the voters opted for a fourteen-member council with the mayor elected at-large. Fourteen councilmen were to be elected from fourteen separate wards. Though a twelve-one plan was favored by African Americans, the fourteen-one plan created at least one sure Latino district and so was supported by most of West Dallas. The fourteen-one plan was based on the 1990 census figures. The election resulted in over 90,000 voters at the polls. The fourteen-one system lost by only 372

⁵⁴ Williams and Shay, *...and Justice For All*, 182-183.

⁵⁵ Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 160.

votes; 70 percent of Anglo voters rejected it while 98 percent of black voters and 87 percent of Latinos supported it. Seven members of the council agreed to fight for the old ten-four-one system. Clearly mired in the foregoing era of unquestioned white political power and privilege, that same day, Williams and Crenshaw filed another motion asking for a fourteen-one or fifteen-zero election in May 1991.⁵⁶

On February 1, 1991, Judge Buchmeyer reasserted that minorities had waited long enough for political representation. He ordered the new election for a fourteen-one plan for May 4, 1991. Six council members refused to succumb to this judgment and filed an appeal to delay the election. The US Justice Department rejected the appeal. The council had little recourse left; they approved the fourteen-one plan. The election was held on November 5, 1991. Eight Anglos were elected, four African Americans, and two Mexican Americans, which made the 1991 council the most racially diverse in Dallas history. The Dallas City Charter dictates the creation of a Redistricting Commission every ten years when the decennial census figures for Dallas are released, thus in 2000 district lines were redrawn.⁵⁷

In referenda in May and November of 2005, the business-oriented community in Dallas favored the change to at large city voting while the minority communities strongly opposed it. The minority community won and change was not enacted.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁷ Tom Paulken, "Naked City Brown Power," *D Magazine*, October 1, 2000, <http://www.dmagazine.com> (accessed on March 21, 2011); Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 166; Dallas. Dallas City Hall, Redistricting 2011, <http://www.dallascityhall.com/redistricting/index.html> (accessed on March 21, 2011).

⁵⁸ Svava and Watson, eds., *More Than Mayor Or Manager*, 18; Paulken, "Naked City Brown Power," 57-59.

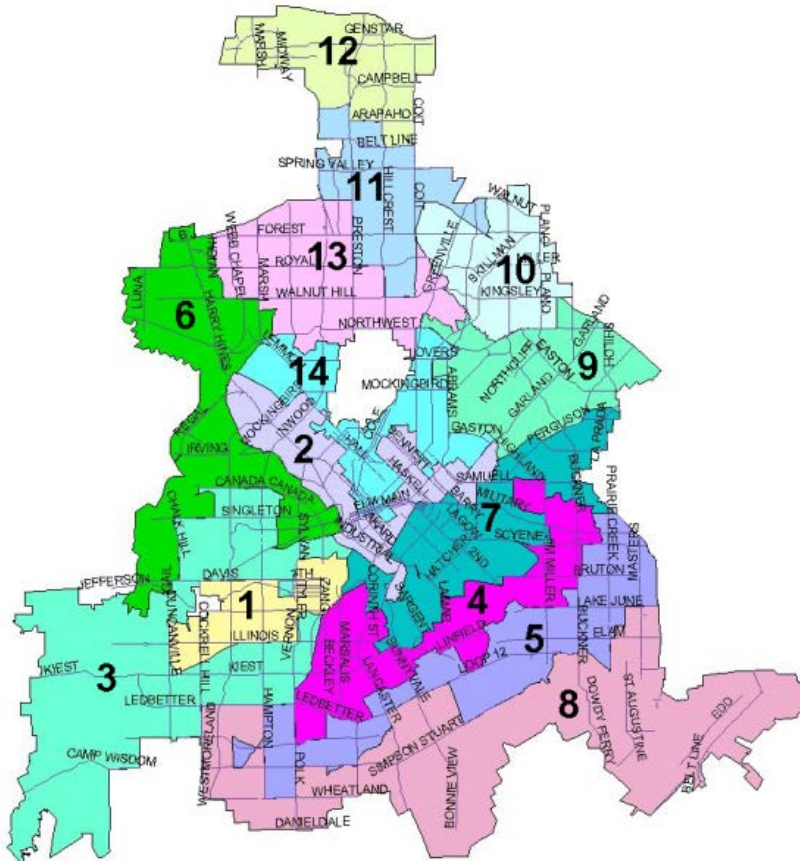


Figure 3.2. Fourteen districts in Dallas as of April 2011. Map courtesy of Alex Mendoza.

The 2010 census marked a decennial year, a redistricting year, as such, Dallas City Council at-large citywide voting is still in contention today. A public hearing is set for May 24, 2011 to discuss possible redistricting options. For the minority communities of south and west Dallas, this reapportionment is long overdue. The statewide civil rights group of Democratic party elected House and Senate members, the Mexican American Legislative Caucus (MALC), filed a suit on Monday, May 9, 2010, claiming that the 2010 census had failed to count as many as one-tenth of the Latinos living in Texas. The group is represented by José Garza, a San Antonio attorney, who has stated it is possible to draw five new Latino legislative districts based on 2010 census findings. Garza contended, “It’s easy to draw additional minority districts in this environment.” Garza maintained that Latinos accounted for 65 percent of the state’s growth in

the past decade, yet Latinos are sorely politically underrepresented. When questioned about the representation of minorities in city politics, Dallas County Judge John Wiley Price said: “Dallas County is a majority county of minorities.” He added: “We know what the numbers are. It’s going to be incumbent upon this body to try and do the right thing.” The next election will be vital in deciding whether Dallas will continue to operate under an at-large voting system and if redistricting will allow for more minority representation in city politics. Though Anita Martínez was elected via an at-large voting system, one of her main concerns was the underrepresentation of Latinos in politics. Perhaps a reapportionment would allow more Latinos to be elected to political offices, in this manner, one of Martínez’s goals would be addressed.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Staff writer, “Redistricting Hearings Kick Off in Dallas With Focus on Minorities,” *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, September 20, 2010, <http://blogs.star-telegram.com/politex/2010/09/redistricting-hearings-kick-off-in-dallas-with-focus-on-minorities.html> (accessed on May 5, 2011); Reuters, “Texas group's lawsuit: Census undercounted Hispanics,” *The U.S. Daily*, May 9, 2011, <http://www.theusdaily.com/articles/viewarticle.jsp?type=home&videoIdx=2&id=1488789> (accessed on May 10,2011).

CHAPTER 4

GROWING UP CHICANA: THE EARLY YEARS IN LITTLE MEXICO

Anita N. Martínez was born on December 8, 1925 in West Dallas in a small neighborhood, or *barrio*, called Little Mexico. Historically, Little Mexico was home to a multitude of Mexican immigrants who fled Mexico during and following the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

Though Martínez represented La Bajada while serving on the Dallas City Council, she grew up in Little Mexico. Her grandparents had immigrated to Texas in the mid- 1800s from Nueva España, Coahuila, Mexico, into Bandera, Texas. On her mother's side, Martínez's grandparents were Frank Treviño Mongarras and Tomasita Treviño, who settled in the Hill Country north of San Antonio. On her father's side of the family, her grandparents, the Nañezes, settled in Abilene and were sheep shearers. The Nañez's later settled in Dallas, in the westside neighborhood called Little Mexico.¹ According to Bianca Mercado, a large number of Mexicans fled the Mexican Revolution, settled in Dallas, faced significant amounts of discrimination and segregation, and eventually created a thriving Mexican American community in West Dallas. Martínez's family was a part of this legacy.²

Through research, Martínez discovered that her family had been granted 160 acres in land grants in 1854 in Privilege Creek, Texas, in Bexar County, by Governor Edmund Jackson Davis. Privilege Creek is located twelve miles northeast of Bandera in southeastern Kerr County. It runs

¹ José Angel Gutiérrez, Michelle Meléndez, and Sonia Adriana Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge: Texas Women in the Public Arena* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), 27.

² Bianca Mercado, "With Their Hearts in Their Hands: Forging a Mexican Community in Dallas, 1900-1925" (Master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2008), abstract.

south for thirteen miles, through Kerr and Bandera counties.³ It appears that the family forfeited the land when Texas joined the Confederacy and left the Union.⁴

Anita Martínez was the fifth child out of six. Her mother was Anita Mongarras and her father was Francisco (Franco) Nañez. Her mother had attended Marinello Beauty School in Oaklawn and opened up the first Mexican American-owned beauty shop in Dallas which she installed in her living room. Her husband did not approve. Franco was among the majority of Mexican American men who did not believe women should work for wages. Her success, however served as an example to Anita as well as other young girls in the neighborhood. A number of young Chicanas got their beauty operator licenses and became self-sufficient.⁵

Her father opened a small grocery store in Little Mexico but later closed it because he longed to be outdoors. He then drove migrant workers to the fields to pick cotton and onions. When Martínez was younger, six to eight years old, she picked onions and cotton with the rest of the workers. Eventually Francisco supported his family by running a successful small hauling business. Anita N. Martínez earned money to help the family with living expenses by cleaning houses in wealthy Dallas neighborhoods for 25 cents per day.⁶

Anita had five sisters and one brother; Norita Ramírez (now widowed) was the oldest, José Nañez and his twin Olivia de León were next, then, came Tomasa Cantú, then Anita, then

³ Texas Historical Association. Privilege Creek. Handbook of Texas Online. www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rbpdk (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁴ Biographical information, folder 10, box 6, series I, Anita N. Martínez Collection, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, (Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas); hereinafter cited as Martínez Collection.

⁵ Channel 13 Panel Discussion, folder 2, Box 37, Series III, Martínez Collection.

⁶ Family information, folder 9, box 6, series I, Martínez Collection; Anita N. Martínez, interview by José Ángel Gutiérrez, June 10, 1999, interview 129, transcript, *Tejano Voices*, Center for Mexican American Studies Oral Histories, Arlington, Texas, p.26, <http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/gallery.jsp> (accessed September 24,2009).

finally the youngest, Beatrice (Bebe) Rodríguez. José was killed in combat by a sniper in World War II while serving under General Patton in the 101st Infantry.⁷



Figure 4.1. José M. Nañez, 1944 New York City, just prior to being shipped out to the European theater of war. Photo courtesy of Sol Villasana.

Along with many other Latinos, José was exempt from service in World War II because of familial obligations, still he chose to fight. Mexican Americans earned proportionately the highest number of Medals of Honor in World War II of any ethnic group, yet a large number of them were not required to join the military. They joined for a variety of reasons, among these, a steady paycheck, but also to be entitled to a sense of being an “American.” In her book *Mexican Americans & World War II*, historian Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez compiled oral histories of Mexican Americans who served in World War II and found that Mexican Americans fought for money, respect, and family. One of her sources, Private Flores, said about his time in the military: “Nobody had ever called me an American until that time... wetback and spic, and

⁷ Gutiérrez, Meléndez, and Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge*, 1.

greaser...That was the first time in my life I had been called an American.” No matter their reason for joining, one common experience Mexican Americans in the military shared was racism and discrimination. Following World War II this racism, segregation, and discrimination became so rampant that it led to a battle for Mexican American civil rights at home. Chicano historian Raúl R. Morín asserted Mexican Americans returned from war and were angry they had played such a vital part in the victories overseas yet returned as second-class citizens. The war had made it clear Mexican Americans would no longer be deprived of all the rights that being an American citizen entailed. Prior to the war, young Anita demonstrated her assertiveness when she took the initiative to enroll herself in a private school.⁸

In 1938, Anita N. Martínez witnessed a group of Anglo American Catholic sisters, in their habits, walking along the sidewalk on Turney Street (now Harry Hines Avenue) in Little Mexico, in West Dallas. She was looking out of the window from the Wesley Community Center where they often held arts and crafts and plays for children, when she noticed the sisters. She was drawn to the look of their habits and was determined to find out more about them. She spoke with them and found out they were called the Sisters of Charity and were teachers at St. Ann’s Catholic School. Anita’s mother had raised her Catholic, so Anita was familiar with the school, but she did not know much about the religion or the school itself. Regardless, the habits the nuns wore fascinated her. The headpieces reminded her of angel wings and she thought they made the sisters look beautiful and serene. She decided she wanted to attend that school. She had attended Cumberland Hill Elementary School, in the Dallas Independent School District since kindergarten and was then currently there. It was built in 1889 and attracted children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The school opened with 400 students. By 1925,

⁸ Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, *Mexican Americans and World War II* (Austin: University of Texas, 2005), xvii.; Raúl R. Morín, *Among the Valiant* (Alhambra, CA: Borden Publishing Company, 1966), 277-278.

Mexicans comprised 95 percent of the school's student body.⁹

Martínez knew her family did not have the money to send her to a private school, but she wanted to wear a uniform and attend St. Ann's Catholic School more than she had ever wanted anything. She spoke with the sisters and told them how much she wanted to attend their school. Martínez was so determined that at age eight she enrolled herself in the school. The sisters then offered her a diocesan scholarship and even found her a uniform in the school's attic. The sisters referred to her as their "little flower." She was a very good helper for the nuns and endeared herself to them almost immediately. She stayed at St. Ann's Catholic School from the fourth to the seventh grades.



Figure 4.2. Nun in her habit reading to children, circa 1940s. Photo courtesy of Catholic Diocese of Dallas.

Her initiative in changing schools is just one example of how Martínez was a self-starter. When she was a child, the neighborhood children looked up to her and followed her lead, in childhood games and in school. She held the qualities of determination and assertiveness, and

⁹ Cumberland Hill School File, folder 22, box 1, City of Dallas Landmark Records, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division (Dallas Public Library).

independence all exhibited when she enrolled herself in St. Ann's School at age eight. She continued to exemplify these traits into her teenage years. At age fourteen she noticed the terrible condition of the roads in her neighborhood. "The buses used to pass our house, and the streets were rocky and chalky and covered with white powdery dust. So I asked, 'How do you go about getting streets paved?' Someone told me you need a petition to take to city hall. So I did." Even at a young age she was concerned about safety, and so she started a neighborhood petition to get street lights installed in her community. She also worked during Study Hall in high school with the National Youth Administration (NYA) under student counselor Mr. Baker at Crozier Technical High School. During the summers, while in high school, she volunteered at Parkland Hospital. In adulthood she was able to go from neighborhood boards to school boards to city politics, where she eventually became the first Mexican American ever elected to serve on the Dallas City Council.¹⁰

Martínez learned how to face hardships at age fifteen. In 1940, her father died and her mother suffered a stroke. Money was extremely tight without her father's income. This could have devastated the family, but Martínez came from a family of resilient, determined people. When she was a child, her mother used to say to her, "Quien no se aventura, no pasa el mar." (Whoever does not venture out, cannot cross the sea.) Education was not of the utmost importance to Anita Martínez's mother, and she encouraged Anita to drop out of school after her father died. Anita (daughter) refused to do so. She told her mom that she needed a high school education in order to get a better job than cleaning houses. She stayed in school and was the only

¹⁰ Marty Primeau, "Anita Martinez- Her Civic Achievements Range from Two Ground-Breaking City Council Terms to a West Dallas Recreation Center," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1987; Concise Resume, folder 1, file 6, box 4, Martínez Collection.

one of her siblings to graduate from high school. Anita's mother taught her to be self-sufficient, resilient, and persuasive. She has carried these traits with her throughout her life.¹¹



Figure 4.3. Crozier Technical High School, 1950. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

Martínez attended Crozier Technical High School (present day Dallas High School) from 1939-1943 where she joined the NYA that paid six dollars a month and enabled her to pay for her own school supplies. She knew if she were to support herself and go anywhere in life, she would need an education or a skill (so she took classes in shorthand and typing). Martínez always looked toward the future. Within the NYA, she volunteered to work as a dietician's aid at Parkland Hospital while attending classes at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas in the evenings.¹²

¹¹ Gutiérrez interview, June 10, 1999, p. 26; Channel 13 Panel Discussion, folder 2, box 37, Series III, Martínez Collection.

¹² Dallas-Tech High School Alumni, folder 20, box 6, series 1, Martínez Collection.

Her first job was in 1942 at the Owen Beer Company on Cedar Springs and Pearl, where she worked as a receptionist. She then took a civil service exam and began work with the 8th Service Command in 1944 where she worked as a World War II civilian employee as secretary to Major General Donovan. In 1945 she was promoted to bookkeeping clerk in the Finance Department. Like many Latinas, Martínez found work during World War II. Wartime conditions opened up jobs to women that might have been previously closed to them. According to historian Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, World War II was a watershed for Latinas. She stated:

This era proved to be especially significant to Mexican American women, whose new wage-earning status created a sense of self-sufficiency and intensified issues of self-identity. Although not all Mexican American women participated in the workforce during the war, those who did influenced the changing values and mores of their own and subsequent generations.¹³

Discrimination was still prevalent, however, in the World War II era Latinas were able to make strides toward equality in the workplace. Rivas-Rodríguez asserted the relationships Latinas were able to forge with Anglo women began to break down barriers that had previously kept them isolated from mainstream America. Anita Martínez was among these Chicanas who forged a new space for themselves in the workplace.¹⁴

Martínez was a part of the generation Chicano historian Mario T. García referred to as the political generation of World War II. According to García, a political generation was a group of people who came of age in the same time period and experienced their political and social awakening at about the same time, in this case, World War II. García also asserted that members of the same political generation did not necessarily share the same political viewpoints. For

¹³ Rivas-Rodríguez, *Mexican Americans and World War II*, 245; Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, and Emilio Zamora, eds., *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 89. For more information on Mexican American women in World War II see National Women's History Project. *Las Mujeres: Mexican American/Chicana Women* (Windsor, CA: National Women's History Project, 1991); Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women and the World War II Work Experience* (Long Beach: School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1983).

¹⁴ Rivas-Rodríguez, *Mexican Americans and World War II*, 246, 89.

instance Martínez's political views tended to run along conservative lines while many other Latinas/os views were much more liberal/radical. García claimed that no matter their political views, people of this political generation actively [made] history rather than passively [noted] history. Martínez was on the precipice of her true political awakening and was about to make history.¹⁵

Martínez met her future husband Alfred Martínez at a New Year's Eve party in 1942 when she was fifteen and he was seventeen. Alfred trained in Oklahoma to be an Army Air Force pilot. He flew a B-29 bomber during the war. Anita and Alfred conducted their courtship via letters during the war and agreed to marry once the war ended.



Figure 4.4. Lt. Alfred Martínez 1945 studio portrait. Courtesy of the Anita N. Martínez Archive.

The war ended in May 1945 and they were married on January 27, 1946. Anita was twenty years old at the time. She and Alfred moved in with relatives in Little Mexico and resided there until they moved to their own house in Oak Lawn. She gave birth to four children. As a

¹⁵ Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3, 7.

young mother in her twenties, she gave her time and charity to her children's school, church, and her community. She thought that her career was to rear her children and cater to her husband.¹⁶



Figure 4.5. Martínez wedding party, 1946. Photo courtesy of the Anita N. Martínez family archive.

Alfred and Anita had four children, two boys and two girls: Al Joseph, Steve Dan, Priscilla Ann, and René. Alfred's family owned the Mexican restaurant chain, El Fenix, which Anita's father-in-law had founded in 1918 in Dallas. This was the first family-owned Mexican restaurant in Dallas, and is also the oldest chain of Mexican food restaurants in the United States. Her father-in-law started as a dishwasher at the Baker Hotel in Dallas and moved his way up to cook before he ventured on to become a restaurant owner. Her husband, Alfred, was the Chairman of the Board for the restaurant chain. Martínez was devoted to her children while her husband ran the restaurants.¹⁷

¹⁶ Roberto R. Calderón, "Martinez, Anita N. (1925-)," in Vicki L. Ruíz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006 vol. 2), 426-428; Marty Primeau, "Anita Martinez- Her Civic Achievements Range from Two Ground-Breaking City Council Terms to a West Dallas Recreation Center," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1987.

¹⁷ Family information, folder 6, box 6, Series I, Martínez Collection.



Figure 4.6. The original El Fenix restaurant at 1608 McKinney Avenue in 1940. Photo courtesy of Sol Villasana.

Elizabeth York Enstam ascertained that following the Progressive era, women attained political power via Women’s Clubs. In 1906, Sarah Elizabeth Weaver, then president of the Dallas Federation of Women’s Clubs asserted, “Some say that she has overstepped her womanly prerogatives by going out beyond the home circle, but was it not for love of home and children that she was first prompted to do this work?” Though this was before Martínez’s time, the words rang true for her life.¹⁸

Because her family held traditional Mexican American beliefs, even though Anita made more money than her husband, she was not allowed to work outside of the home for pay. Martínez gave up her job as an executive secretary to remain in the home and care for her husband and children. Alfred insisted Martínez work solely in the home or through volunteer organizations. This was common among Latino males, as historian Martha P. Cotera asserted, “Chicano males, already in leadership and authority positions, challenged women’s participation

¹⁸ Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life, Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998), 136.

in activities outside the home.” Chicano males claimed that “everyone knew” that women belonged in the home, and that the history, culture and tradition dictated that Latina women were homemakers and wives.¹⁹

Martínez, however, became extremely active in volunteer work. She began her activism by working with school boards in order to ensure a better future for her children. Her activities included working with the Ursuline Academy (where her children attended school), St. Monica’s Catholic School (located in Little Mexico), and the Jesuit School in order to provide better nutrition and facilities to their students. At the Jesuit School she initiated the Big Brother Movement which enabled disadvantaged Mexican American youths to find mentors. With the Greater Council of Churches, she co-established the Mexican American Block Partnership to provide a liaison between Mexican Americans and various charities. She was a vital part of the St. Monica’s Spanish Literary Guild, an early proponent for bilingual education. She was honored in the “Who’s Who of American Women, 1969” and in the 1970 “Who’s Who, Personalities of the South” for her various city contributions. She eventually served on twenty-six boards and commissions.²⁰

Though Martínez was active in the 1950s and on, she still held onto the mentality of Dallas club women of the 1910s to the 1930s. Dallas club women strove for improvements in

¹⁹ Channel 13 Panel Discussion, folder 2, Box 37, Series III, Martínez Collection; Martha Coter, *Diosa Y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976). For an alternate view of Chicano male views and women and their roles in familial structures see Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez “The Woman of La Raza, Part II,” in Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte, eds., Dionne Espinoza

and Lorena Oropeza (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2006), 122-126; Jane Bock Guzmán, “Dallas Barrio Women of Power” (MA thesis, University of North Texas, 1992), 57.

²⁰ Family information, folder 4, box 6, Series I, Martínez Collection. Martínez had been active in the Jesuits, Ursuline Academy, and St. Monica’s for years preceding the 1969 election. Her volunteerism was what appealed to Dallas District Attorney Bill Alexander and was one of the reasons he recommended Martínez for the nomination to Candy Estrada on the nominating committee when she asked about a Latino to run on the council. Gutiérrez, June 10, 1999, interview, 2.

health, safety, and even morality. As her children grew older, Martínez fulfilled these roles through various positions on boards and councils, when she held the position of president of the Dallas Restaurant Women's Auxiliary, and as an active member of the women's organization, ZONTA, an international organization founded in 1919 and dedicated to the advancement of women in business and politics.²¹

As a club woman, along with other women of influence in Dallas, Martínez, worked to change the public culture of Dallas and to assert more rights and opportunities for Mexican Americans. Through ZONTA and the Women's Restaurant Auxiliary, she contributed to a network of female volunteers, mostly middle to upper class in status, and which helped to alter laws, create new and change existing administrative agencies, implement neighborhood improvements, and introduce health regulations in the Dallas area.²²

In 1966, she was the vice-president, then she was elected president of the Dallas Restaurant Association Women's Auxiliary. In this capacity, she helped found the now yearly "Taste of Dallas" festival, which allows attendees to sample food from vendors from across the Dallas - Ft. Worth metropolitan area. The proceeds benefited disadvantaged and underprivileged West Dallas youth. Since its inception in 1966, it has provided funds for countless charities, including the West Dallas Teen Age Club, the Episcopal School in West Dallas, and the West Dallas Boy's Club.²³

In 1968, the Citizens National Bank named Martínez the "Worthy Woman Award" for her outstanding volunteerism. In 1968, 1969, and 1970, the *Dallas Herald* named Martínez one of the ten outstanding "Women Newsmakers and News Shapers." In 1971, they named her to

²¹ Register 4, 1986, box 4, Zonta Club of Dallas Collection, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division (Dallas Public Library).

²² Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life*, 155.

²³ Biographical information, folder 1, box 1, series 1, Martínez Collection.

their highly prestigious “Honor Roll.” She was given the organization’s highest honor in 1972 when she was awarded the Zonta Award for the Constructive Voluntary Contribution to Community and Civic Affairs.²⁴

²⁴ *The Dallas Times Herald* and *Dallas Morning News* put out yearly issues highlighting women who have made positive contributions to the city in the previous year; Biographical information, folder 6, box 1, series 1, Martínez Collection.

CHAPTER 5

“DEFENDER OF DREAMS”: ANITA MARTÍNEZ AND THE DALLAS CITY COUNCIL

Martínez advocated for the increase in representation of Chicanos/as in Dallas city politics and for the implementation of barrio improvements. She vocalized the concerns of Chicanos in West Dallas and successfully implemented lasting changes in West Dallas, such as the addition and beautification of city parks, she was instrumental in the retention of Chicanos on various city boards and she was a proponent for Chicano youths in her support of leadership programs and recreation centers. During her years in office, 1969 to 1973, Martíñez gave a voice to Chicanos in West Dallas and helped paved the way for future Chicanas to hold political offices in Dallas city politics.

In the early 1900s to mid-1900s, Mexican Americans focused on working, earning money, supporting their families, and building communities. According to historian Michael Phillips, in the early-to-mid-1900s, Mexican Americans carried the designation of temporary residents in the United States. After World War II it became evident that Mexican Americans would reside permanently in Dallas. By the 1960s, Mexican Americans had made it apparent their neighborhoods were not temporary dwellings and thus deserved city services such as paved streets, street lights, and safe parks for their children. Mexican Americans needed to find their political voice. They needed representation in city politics. Anita Martíñez supplied this representation.

In 1992, Jane Bock Guzmán wrote a short chapter on Anita N. Martíñez in her University of North Texas thesis titled “Dallas Barrio Women of Power,” where she illustrated how some Mexican American women achieved success amid racial and economic disparities. In it, she sketched Martíñez’s contributions, without delving into what actual projects Martíñez helped

bring to fruition and Martínez's lasting contributions to Dallas. An examination of the tenure of Anita N. Martínez on the Dallas City Council from 1969 to 1973, and of her lasting contributions to the bustling metropolis of Dallas, adds to the insertion of Chicanas into the Dallas historical record. Though she has remained relatively unknown during her tenure on the Dallas City Council, Anita Martínez made invaluable contributions to the Chicano community.¹

Historian David Montejano listed two main reasons middle-class Mexican Americans were able to enter politics in the 1960s. First, he cited the defeat of Anglo-run city political machines, and second, he noted a militant movement initiated by both middle-and lower-class activists in the early 1960s. According to Montejano, it was the former that allowed for the defeat of Jim Crow in the cities and paved the way for Mexican Americans to enter city politics.²

In 1969, Candy Estrada, the only woman on the CCA nominating committee, called Martínez to ask her to run for a seat on the city council. Estrada had gone to Dallas District Attorney, Bill Alexander, and asked for the names of potential Mexican American candidates to run for Dallas City Council. He recommended Martínez for the position. He told Estrada that if she could get Martínez to run, she would win.³

Martínez accepted the invitation to run for Dallas City Council with the reasoning that she had worked in the community long enough to build a name for herself, that she had done a lot of non-profit, charitable work, and that in the position on the Dallas City Council she could really affect change in the Mexican American community. The lack of Chicano representation in

¹ Jane Bock Guzmán, "Dallas Barrio Women of Power" (MA thesis, University of North Texas, 1992), 55-63.

² David Montejano, "The Demise of Jim Crow for Texas Mexicans, 1940-1970," *Aztlán* 16:1-2 (1985): 50.

³ Gutiérrez, June 10, 1999, interview, 2. José Ángel Gutiérrez, Michelle Meléndez, and Sonia Adriana Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge: Texas Women in the Public Arena* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), 29.

politics has often been seen as the root of many problems facing the Chicano community.⁴

In her book, *Diosa y Hembra*, historian Martha P. Cotera asserted, if women were unwilling to run for public office, public boards and commissions, they could not complain about the laws being made to govern their family's lives unfairly. Therefore, as she herself has stated, Martínez "tossed her sombrero into the political arena and went out to win."⁵

In 1969, Martínez generated attention from one of her heroines, Connie Stathakos Condos, who was greatly admired in the community and had earned one of the city's most prestigious volunteer awards, the Zonta Award for Constructive Voluntary Contribution to Community and Civic Affairs in 1972. Previously, Martínez had served with Condos on the board of directors for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Martínez received the nomination to run for City Council with Condos's support. Condos was the only woman on the selection committee of the CCA in 1969. She picked eleven people to run for city council under the CCA banner. The CCA stood on a political platform that strove for city improvements in the areas of transportation, city beautification, and pollution.⁶

According to the 1968 City Charter, there were eleven council seats available each with a two-year term. In that year, twenty-eight people ran for seats on the city council. The CCA supported ten candidates. In 1969, the candidates met to form their political agenda and after three weeks of debates, the group devised its political platform. The all-encompassing idea for the CCA candidates was to "Maintain good, honest, efficient, government for the citizens who reside within its boundaries." Included in this vision were capital improvements, enlargement of

⁴ Ibid; Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 247.

⁵ Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.*, 177; Guzmán, "Dallas Barrio Women of Power," 57.

⁶ Guzmán, "Dallas Barrio Women of Power," 58.

the downtown area, beautification of the city via additions to city parks and the creation of recreation centers, urban rehabilitation, airport planning and construction. It also included revamping Fair Park, increasing public transportation, and police and fire protection, reversing juvenile delinquency, improving flood control, decreasing air pollution, and revising the city charter.⁷



Figure 5.1. Campaign posters in La Colonia, 1969. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division.

This was a city-wide at-large election, with the CCA paying for all fees and expenses incurred. In 1968, the charter election enlarged the Dallas City Council from nine to eleven members and eight of those members had to live in their districts, but voting was still city wide or “at large.” At age forty-four, Martínez agreed to run for place nine in Dallas and was up against three other candidates. Even though expenses were paid, Martínez campaigned rather aggressively speaking to any club she could think of. Her largest support came from the Dallas Restaurant Association Women’s Auxiliary. The *Dallas Morning News* was a staunch supporter of the CCA and actively endorsed its slate of candidates, including Martínez. The newspaper

⁷ Harry Jebson Jr., Robert M. Newton, and Patricia R. Hogan, *Centennial History of the Dallas, Texas Park System, 1876-1976* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1976), 17. Correspondence and City Issues, 1969-1972, folder 4, box 9, series 2, Martínez Collection.

claimed the CCA was “not without fault, but it [has] lived up to its principles and attracted an unusually high type of civic servant to serve on the council.” From its origin the *Dallas Morning News* had supported the CCA, and it continued to do so in the 1969 election.⁸

Martínez achieved a decisive victory with 21,984 votes, while her closest opponent Shirley Baccus garnered 7,025 votes.⁹ This was significant because she beat out an opponent endorsed by the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and she also won over a Mexican American male lawyer, Frank P. Hernández. According to historian Harvey J. Graff, Martínez was not going to lose with the backing of the CCA. Dallas leaders chose minority candidates to run for political office as a means to diminish the likelihood of rivalry and racial turbulence and as an avenue to control minority neighborhoods. Thus, Martínez was selected by the CCA over other more liberal Mexican American potential candidates.¹⁰

Martínez asserted it was a discouraging election. She was often labeled a “coconut” by her detractors. The term was used as a racial slur that indicated she was a Latino candidate with “white” views. Her critics accused her of living in an affluent North Dallas neighborhood, as such they claimed she would not be able to assist the Latino community with its needs. One of the residents of La Bajada, Pete Martínez (no relation) heckled, “You come here from your ivory tower, make a splash, and then you’ll go home and forget about us.” When interviewed in 2007, Frances Rizo confirmed that many Latinos viewed Martínez as a “token” representative. She asserted that Martínez beat Frank P. Hernández in the election of 1969 because she had the backing of the CCA, which she had received because she was an affluent Latina with conservative political leanings. However, in a 2007 interview with Roberto R. Calderón, Rizo

⁸ Editor, “It’s Your City,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 31, 1969.

⁹ Editor, “Two Scrappy Gals in Race,” *Dallas Times Herald*, March 4, 1969.

¹⁰ Harvey J. Graff, *The Dallas Myth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 169.

claimed that she had been approached to run for the Dallas City Council, but personal circumstances had made it impossible for her to accept. She stated:

I believed I would have gotten elected, because I had all the right networks, all the right connections. I believed that I would have been endorsed by the powers that be, you know, just to make a,--I would have been a token, but I still would have gotten elected.¹¹

This is not a disprovable claim as the CCA did not keep any written records of who they approached to run for city council seats. Based on the CCA's pick of conservative Martínez over more liberal Hernandez in the 1969 election, it seems surprising that the CCA would have approached Rizo to run for office, and even more surprising to believe she would have won. The CCA had made it clear by overlooking Pete Hernandez they were looking for a conservative to sit on the council, not someone who was active in barrio politics.

Even though Martínez may have been viewed by some as a token representative, the facts remain she was able to get things done for the Latino population in Dallas. She was able to utilize politics and her office to affect change in Latino neighborhoods. After initial fears and skepticism, Martínez earned their trust and proved her detractors incorrect.¹²

With this victory, she became the first Mexican American elected to a public office in Dallas. It was highly symbolic and meaningful that she was sworn in as the first Mexican American on any major U.S. city council. The swearing in took place at Pike Park, located, at 2807 Harry Hines Boulevard, in a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood, called La Colonia. The park was the cultural, political, and social center for Mexican Americans in West Dallas. Traditionally, Pike Park had been a gathering place for immigrants of Irish, German, Scottish, Swiss, and Polish descent. But by 1925, immigrants had established "Little Mexico" with Pike Park as its community center. By the 1930s nearly all its patrons were Mexican

¹¹ Frances Rizo, interview by Roberto R. Calderón, Dallas, Texas October 16, 2007, 132.

¹² Ibid.

Americans. After having won the election for place 9 on the Dallas City Council in 1969, Anita N. Martínez celebrated her victory at Pike Park in Dallas symbolically on May 5, 1969 (Cinco de Mayo)!¹³

Pike Park was considered the heart of Little Mexico (known as La Colonia in the Mexican community), a West Dallas, mostly Mexican American neighborhood. It has always held significance to Dallas Mexican Americans who celebrated the first *Días y Seis de Septiembre* (Mexican Independence Day) at Pike Park in 1926. In 1931, it became the first Dallas park to allow Mexicans to use its facilities. Today, Mexican Americans continue to use the park to celebrate Mexican holidays or to gather for political rallies. By 1969, the park had fallen into disarray. Martínez was outraged at its condition and vowed to procure the funds to update and improve the park. This was the first of her many accomplishments while in office. Martínez wanted a better life not only for the four children she had raised but also for all Mexican Americans in Dallas.¹⁴

Though she celebrated her inauguration at Pike Park and invited friends, family, and dignitaries to share in her joy, the park was a mess. “The park was in shambles, dim lights, no working water fountains or hinges on the bathroom doors, the commodes didn’t work, the swings were broken. It was just a scandal.” She was embarrassed and infuriated that the park was in this condition and resolved then to make Pike Park a safe and pleasant place for the people of Dallas.

¹³ Primeau, *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1987; Dennis Zamora, Jr., “Hispanic Beginnings of Dallas Into the Twentieth Century, 1850 to 1976,” Hispanic Beginnings of Dallas Project, Alianza Cultural de Artes y Letras de Mexico (Dallas: Dallas Independent School District, 1990), 26. In 1968, the charter election enlarged the City Council from nine to eleven members and eight of those members had to live in their districts, but voting was still city-wide or “at large”; African American Elected Officials, folder 18, Marion Butts Collection, Texas/Dallas History, Dallas Public Library. Editor, “Two Scrappy Gals in Race,” *Dallas Times Herald*, March 4, 1969. Voting Rolls, Elections History, City of Dallas, Municipal Archives, City Hall, Dallas, Texas, 1968-1972, p. 109; Zamora, Jr., “Hispanic Beginnings of Dallas,” 26; Amy Simpson, Pike Park, the Heart and History of Mexican Culture in Dallas; Pike Park, *El Corazón E Historia De La Cultura Mexicana En Dallas* (Dallas: Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic, 1981), 1 and 11.

¹⁴ Correspondence and City Issues, 1969-1972, folder 4, box 9, series 2, Martínez Collection.

She was told that the park was in such bad shape because the plan had been to tear it down to make room for commercial property. This broke her heart and she promised that she would not allow that to happen in her lifetime. Thus began her first crusade in office- Pike Park renovation.¹⁵

Pike Park was originally named Turney Play Park. It was given the name Summit Play Park in 1913 because the park sat atop a hill with a beautiful view of the city. The park's name was changed again in 1927 to Pike Park in honor of Edgar L. Pike who had served on the park board from 1909-1919. During the 1920s, people in the neighborhood tried to prevent Mexicans from using the park; a large number of Jewish immigrants had settled in the area. However, during the years 1910 to 1920, Mexicans had fled war-torn Mexico and settled in the area. Mexican children were forced to play in the streets for lack of playground space. The Mexican community had become so large it needed a park.

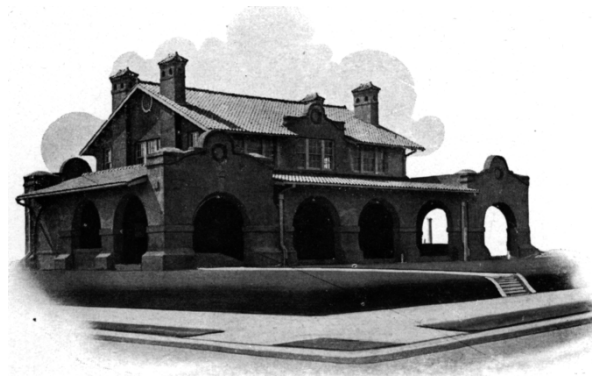


Figure 5.2. Pike Park, at the time Summit Park, circa 1914. Courtesy of the City of Dallas.

In the 1920s separate parks were designated for Mexicans. African Americans had been segregated, Mexicans were subjected to this as well. Though politics and prejudice were certainly underlying causes of this segregation, the official reasoning was that Latinos did not

¹⁵ Gutiérrez, Meléndez, and Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge*, 30.

like playing in the parks with Anglo children and that a form of de facto segregation was the reason for separate parks. Though de jure segregation did not exist that said Mexicans could only use this park, de facto segregation was practiced and Mexicans primarily used Pike Park. By the late 1920s, Pike Park was mainly used by Mexican Americans and fell into disarray. The city of Dallas no longer paid attention to the park and it was neglected. This was the Pike Park in which Anita Martínez celebrated her victory.¹⁶

Through lobbying and voting on the city council, Martínez was responsible for a plethora of safety and aesthetic improvements in the park. Some of these improvements included the installation of two lighted baseball fields, a large recreation building, new play equipment, a junior swimming pool, lighting for the soccer field, shower facilities, water heaters and air conditioning. All of these had been previously lacking in Pike Park. She led a drive to give the park a historic landmark designation. Thanks to the efforts of Anita N. Martínez, Pike Park, known as the “heart of Little Mexico,” received its historic landmark designation in 1981 and still stood as a thriving park in the predominantly Mexican American part of Dallas where it remained the cultural, social, and political center for the Mexican American community.¹⁷

Pike Park was just one of the many parks Martínez transformed during her tenure in office. Through her efforts and the cooperation of the other council members she ensured the installation of new parks and the renovations of older parks throughout Dallas. Martínez was adamant about the installation and beautification of parks and recreation centers throughout Dallas, especially in the Mexican American neighborhoods.

In 1972 she pushed for a bond to fund additional recreation centers throughout the city, demanding that two of them be placed in West Dallas. Dallas City Manager Scott

¹⁶ Simpson, Pike Park, 301,350-351.

¹⁷ Pike Park, folder 6, box 9, series II, Martínez Collection.

MacDonald said they would need an extra \$300,000 on the bond to account for these “other parks,” named “pocket parks.” According to Frances Rizo, pocket parks were created out of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty program.

The War on Poverty program was initiated in 1964 and was a way to address economic disparities. It was manifested in what were termed “community-action” programs and program directors were charged with allegations they had mismanaged funds and incited protests and even riots in inner-city neighborhoods. In 1961, \$10,000,000 was allocated to youth development projects intended to prevent juvenile delinquency and truancy. In her interview, Frances Rizo confirmed this purpose and said that the “pocket parks” were two-to three-acre parks where barrio children could go for sports and recreation. Part of the allocation of funds provided sports and playground equipment as well. Before pocket parks, throughout Dallas parks were unkempt, unsafe and in some cases, non-existent. Rizo was responsible for the implementation of several pocket parks and as such, the city of Dallas named one of the pocket parks in Ledbetter after her. Rizo recalled:

But, the War on Poverty really helped us get funds for things that we had not had, resources to do before that. I remember that we organized, that we became part of the JC Park Advisory Council, which was a Rec. [recreation] Center and Park behind JP Allen Elementary School.¹⁸

In 1972, when the Dallas City Council met to discuss these parks, Martínez let them know that she had no intention of supporting a bill that left no recreation centers or parks in the West Dallas areas. She was convinced that Mexican American children needed a place to explore and express their creativity. She walked out of the meeting on a Friday and by Monday the

¹⁸ Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 256-257; Rizo, interview by Roberto R. Calderón, 114 and 118.

council had revised the bond to include the additional money needed. One of these centers was later named the Anita N. Martínez Recreation Center.

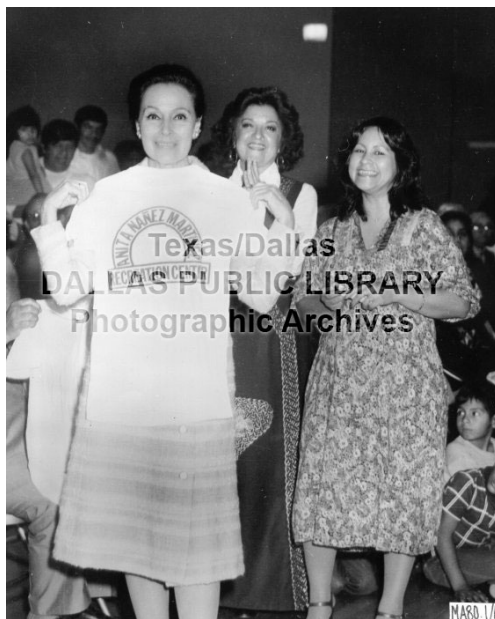


Figure 5.3. Dolores del Río holding up a shirt with the Anita N. Martínez Recreation Center logo, with Anita Martínez watching in the background. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

The creation of these recreation centers was one of her proudest achievements during her time on the council. Prior to the creation of these recreation centers, youths were often seen in gangs and were hesitant about crossing into other barrios. According to residents in La Bajada, after the implementation of the recreation centers, people traveled freely between barrios without fear. This was attributed to the Anita Martínez Recreation Center and the Bataan Center also located in West Dallas. According to eighteen-year-old María Lozada of La Bajada “When I was younger I used to be afraid to cross barrio lines...but now I feel safer here than anywhere. I think the centers got them (the gangs) to believe that there was more to life than street fights.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Some of the parks she helped renovate were Reverchon Park, Jaycee Park, Hattie Rankin Moore, Lake Cliff Park, Kidd Springs Park, Cole Park, City Park, Glencoe Park, Grauwlyer Park, North Hampton, Lee Park, Tipton Park, Cherrywood Park, Marsalis Park, Cummings Park, Buckner Park, Weichsel Park, Shaw Playlot, and Sylvan Playlot. Included in these improvements were the installation of play equipment, tennis courts, shelters, ball

Another issue Martínez pursued was an increase in the retention of Mexican Americans on city boards and commissions. She was responsible for a 700 per cent increase in the number of Mexican Americans on boards and committees from the years 1969 to 1973. She personally recommended over thirteen Mexican Americans to obtain positions on boards and committees who were then enabled to implement improvements to existing Mexican American neighborhoods. In 1971, there were thirteen Mexican Americans and Spanish-speaking persons on boards and commissions. In 1969, there had been Mexican American representation on only two boards. With Martínez's assistance, these Mexican Americans achieved a multitude of successes.²⁰

According to the 2010 census, nearly half (48 percent) of all Texans under eighteen are Latinos. The Executive Director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund stated: "Latino youth are the state's future leaders and electorate. In order to ensure the future prosperity and well-being of all Texans, the state's policies must promote the economic and civic progress of Latinos." This is something Anita Martínez foresaw, and consistently worked to make sure Chicano/Latino leadership endured.²¹

As evidenced in the archival resources, the youth were particularly important to Martínez. She viewed them as an avenue for change, thus she focused on safety and leadership. Included in her campaign platform was a promise to make leadership seminars available for Dallas youth.

diamonds, swimming pools, lighting, basketball courts, and showers. Partial List of Activities, folder 1, box 1. Series 1, Martínez Collection; Bill Deener, "Life in the Barrio-Residents Stay Close to Family, Work, and Church," *Dallas Morning News*, September 15, 1986.

²⁰ Anita N. Martínez, *El Sol*, August 10, 1971; Dallas City Council, Council Minutes, (Dallas, October 12, 1971), 14-18. Joe Montemayor on the Board of Adjustment, Dr. Cochita Hassell Muñoz de Winn on the Civil Services Board, Raymond Le Pere on the City Plan Commission, Pete Nuñez and John Zapata Gonzales on the Crossroads Community Center Board, Pete Nuñez. These positions provided Mexican Americans with votes on seven of the thirteen boards and commissions. Martínez's recommendations were crucial to these appointments.

²¹ National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) www.naleo.org (accessed March 5, 2011).

Martínez was able to fulfill that campaign promise in July 1971 when she joined with area business leaders to sponsor a trip to Austin for twenty Mexican American youth to attend the Texas Youth Leadership Institute at St. Edwards University. This seminar gave the children an opportunity and place to develop leadership skills to further elevate the Mexican American community. For her active participation and endorsements, the Institute awarded her the “Outstanding Adult Texas Youth Leader” trophy. Familial ties were essential to El Movimiento. By focusing on the youth, Martínez hoped to elevate the next generation of Chicanos. She hoped to empower young Chicanos and convince them they would one day make excellent leaders. This fell right in line with the goals and tactics of El Movimiento as it was a student-led civil rights movement. At the same time, Martínez’s position in politics threatened some men in El Movimiento who felt women should be involved in El Movimiento so much as it advanced all of La Raza and not just women or even youth. In this manner Martínez’s initiatives attacked traditional Mexicano gender roles.²²

Also found within the Martínez archive, in 1970, Martínez served as liaison to give progress reports on the Head Start Program. She worked with Director Sister Mary Williams to set up six centers to aid underprivileged neighborhoods and disadvantaged Mexican American neighborhoods. The Head Start program proved to be very successful.²³

By far, Martínez’s biggest successes were in neighborhood improvements. During her tenure on the council, Martínez was responsible for some major developments and gains in the predominantly Mexican American populated West Dallas areas. Martínez was passionate about improving Dallas, especially the political and socio-political status of Mexican Americans. In one of her speeches, she stated “For when you are able to elevate a segment of our community

²² Anita N. Martínez, “Echoes from City Hall,” *La Prensa*, July 3, 1971.

²³ Partial List of Activities, folder 1, box 1, series 1, Martínez Collection.

which perhaps has felt left out of the mainstream of community events, then the total strength of the chain that makes our city more relevant to all its people will be increased.”²⁴

Martínez noticed a lack of communication between Mexican Americans and local government offices. To alleviate this, in 1970 Martínez initiated an action center developed by the city council that provided a central receiving point to offer assistance in settling service contracts between people and government. Once established, this Action Center served as a means for better communication and a way to manage time and resources more efficiently.²⁵

As discovered in the Martínez archive, in August of 1971, Dallas awarded a city contract to the Tom Norton Construction Company for building water and sanitary sewer mains for Mexicana Road in West Dallas. After receiving a multitude of letters about the sanitation problems, Martínez wrote letters to other council members on behalf of her Mexican American constituents and was a large proponent for this implementation.²⁶

She also lobbied for cleaner air restrictions and to have industrial plants moved to another less populated part of town. Research in the Martínez archive revealed that in 1971, the Gifford Hill Cement Plant lobbied to have a plant installed at Singleton and Beckley in West Dallas. This would have created more pollutants in West Dallas, a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood. Most residents were against its erection, and a large number of people wrote to Martínez asking for her intervention and support. Due to her successful lobbying and suggestions, the council did not permit the city attorney to issue a permit to the Gifford Hill Cement Plant. She fought the pollution problem her entire time in office. Overall, more than

²⁴ Hispanic Issues, 1969-1972, folder 4, box 39, series 4, Martínez Collection.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Council Minutes, Municipal Archives, Dallas City Hall (August 16, 1971), 15-18.

\$100,000 in pollution controlling equipment was installed and a handful of companies pledged to clean up or close down by January 1, 1971.²⁷

Also found in the Martínez archive, in 1971, Martínez backed a budget proposal by City Manager, Scott McDonald, which increased Dallas property taxes to \$1.75 per \$100 valuation, at 54 percent of the assessed value. Six of the council members approved this hike, including Martínez, who stated it was a “very noble request.” Eventually, this increase led to the installation of parks, recreation centers, police and fire stations throughout Dallas, including Mexican American neighborhoods.²⁸

Crime was a definite problem in Dallas, and especially in Mexican American neighborhoods. One of the largest contributors to the level of crime in West Dallas was a lack of police presence. According to information discovered in the Martínez archive, in November 1971, Martínez organized to have a storefront police module moved from Westmoreland Street to an Eagle Ford Location, which gave West Dallas increased communication with the Police Department. The new location was opened at 2600 Bickers at Kingbridge in December, 1971.²⁹

In 1972, Martínez helped to secure funding and permits for a community health clinic in West Dallas. Martínez was a proponent of grassroots organizing and involved as many people as possible. Among these were Pete Martínez and John Zapata Gonzales, the president and vice president of the medical clinic in West Dallas called Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic a place for low-income people to receive quality medical care. Martínez recommended the construction of the clinic and was highly involved in its inception. Correspondence related to the

²⁷ Hispanic Issues, 1969-1972, folder 6, box 39, series 4, Martínez Collection.

²⁸ Dave McNeely, “17c Tax Boost Backed,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 31, 1970.

²⁹ City Issues, folder 1, box 10, series 2, Martínez Collection.

inception of the clinic as well as records for the clinic's inaugural year were found in the Martínez archive.³⁰

In 1972, Martínez was instrumental in a landmark decision that rezoned portions of Little Mexico for offices. After Martínez's consistent lobbying, the rezoning ordinance passed which stated that the property around Maple Avenue at the Stoneleigh Hotel and Maple Terrace would remain allocated for light commercial endeavors. More recreation centers were built, streetlights were installed, and more than 117 streets were paved in Mexican American barrios. With the help of community leaders and volunteers, Martínez was able to bring much needed services to Little Mexico.³¹

Though Martínez focused her efforts mainly on Mexican American neighborhoods, she also worked to ensure the well being of all of Dallas. She sought reform for all Dallas residents, and knew that an increase in funds equated to an increase in social services, thus ensuring the success of the city.

Martínez lobbied and was granted a budget increase to eight million dollars for 1971, compared to the existing two million dollar budget from the previous year. This money went to fund projects such as building a library, improving city streets, installing a better sewer system, improving bus services, and increasing safety in existing parks and building city parks.³²

Martínez thought that in order for Dallas to be a successful, thriving metropolis, discrimination in housing had to end. A review of the Dallas City Council minutes in 1971, revealed the Dallas City Council passed a resolution by a vote of eight, which placed the responsibility of local enforcement of non-discrimination in housing on the Dallas City Council.

³⁰ City Issues, folder 2, box 10, series 2, Martínez Collection.

³¹ Correspondence, Feb 2, 1972, folder 2, box 39, Series 4, Martínez Collection.

³² Correspondence and City Issues, 1969-1972, folder 1, box 10, series 2, Martínez Collection.

In the November twenty-second city council meeting, Councilman George Allen made the motion to accept the ordinance and Martínez seconded it. All were in favor excluding Councilmen Jesse Price and Doug Fain.³³

Martínez came up for re-election in 1971. Due to her past two years of service the CCA opted to endorse her for a second term. Erik Jonsson ran for mayor and garnered the most votes in the election. Martínez received the second highest number of votes. She won an easy unopposed re-election to the Dallas City Council with 53,600 votes. She relished her time and remained the only female on the council during her tenure in office. While in office, she was inexhaustible and invaluable in the efforts to increase the city improvement budget for West Dallas.³⁴

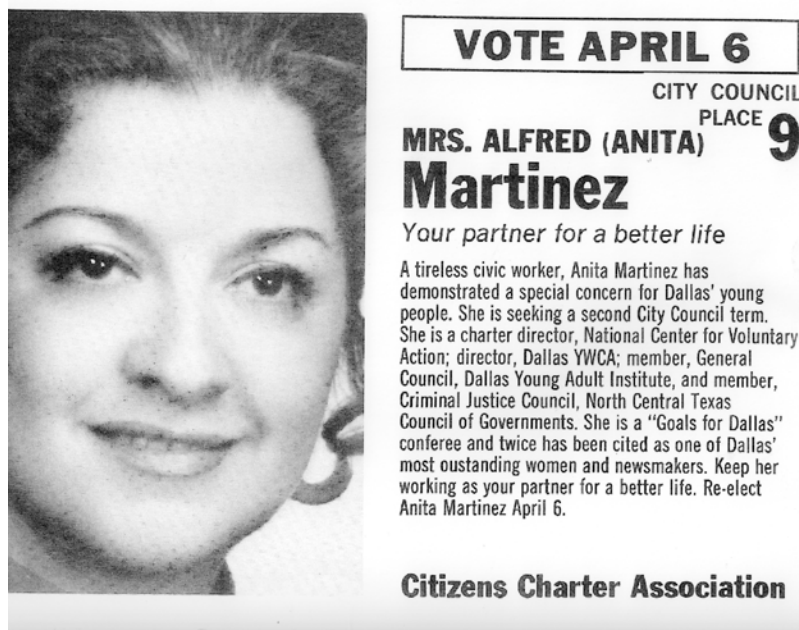


Figure 5.4. Anita N. Martínez political flyer, 1971. Photo courtesy of the Collections of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

³³ Council Minutes, Municipal Archives, Dallas City Hall (November 22, 1971), 9-14.

³⁴ Council Minutes, Municipal Archives, Dallas City Hall (November 22, 1971), 9-14; Carolyn Barta, "Council Strategy Mapped," *Dallas Morning News*, January 16, 1971.

The CCA's policy was to not endorse a candidate for a third term, but in 1972, the CCA suspended that policy and endorsed African American George Allen for a third term. Martínez was asked to run as an independent, but declined. Her husband, Alfred, insisted that she had spent enough time in politics and it was time to step down. When asked about her decision not to re-run she responded "I have a tremendously deep faith in God...I pointed out that God had always directed my action, and I felt certain He would continue to do so. Our lives can be as full and as boundless as we are willing to let them be." Therefore, Martínez served a total of two terms on the Dallas City Council between the years of 1969 and 1973.³⁵

From city office, she moved onto national volunteerism. While serving on the Dallas City Council, in 1971, she was appointed to serve on the Voluntary Action Council by President Richard Nixon. She was part of a council of six people assigned to evaluate Peace Corps activities overseas. This position took her to Ecuador, Honduras, Santo Domingo, Nepal, Malaysia, and the West Indies. The committee forwarded forty recommendations to the incoming President Ford on how to improve the Peace Corps. A 1973 study at SMU confirmed Martínez's earlier claim that the number of Latinos appointed to boards or commissions went up 700 percent while she was in office. While on the city council, Martínez also appointed a Blue Ribbon committee to help promote Latinos to serve on boards, councils, political office and other programs.³⁶

In 1973, Martínez started the Anita N. Martínez Ballet Folklórico in Dallas. Martínez had developed a fascination and love for Mexican folk dancing at an early age and she carried this passion with her throughout her later years. When she was a youth, her sisters were ill. Beatrice

³⁵ Office of the City Secretary, City of Dallas. Municipal Archives. 1968-1972, 112; Hill, *The Making of a Modern City*, 166; Channel 13 Panel Discussion, folder 2, Box 37, Series III, Martínez Collection.

³⁶ Gutiérrez interview, June 10, 1999, 33.

had polio and Tomasa was stricken with tuberculosis. These illnesses took up most of their mother's time and Martínez was left on her own much of the time. Since her mother was pre-occupied with her sisters, Martínez found a neighborhood woman, Rosita Rosales, who became her mentor. Rosales taught Martínez Mexican folkloric dances and Rosales's mother made dresses for her while Martínez danced on makeshift stages in her yard.³⁷

Though La Colonia has virtually been erased from the Dallas map, today Mexican Americans remember it fondly as a poor but close-knit neighborhood. The once-vibrant Latino community surrounding Reverchon Park that blossomed in the 1920s has now been replaced by Uptown redevelopment with businesses, Victory Park, and condominiums. Martínez's legacy continues today as evidenced by the excellent condition of Pike Park, the continued police and fire services in West Dallas, and the thriving Ballet Folklórico. Martínez began her activism as a teenager with efforts to improve her own neighborhood and later, as an adult, for her children's access to education and efforts to improve the safety of her community. She became the first Latina to serve on the Dallas City Council and the first Mexican American woman to be elected to the city council of any major U.S. city. She then remained active on various state and local boards until 1984. Martínez was an ally for the Chicano community, especially for the youth. She helped secure funding for several recreation centers in Dallas, one named in her honor. She also created poverty programs and neighborhood beautification projects. Her work for and with young Chicanos has earned her the moniker "Defender of Dreams." Anita N. Martínez made invaluable, lasting contributions to the Chicano community in Dallas. By the strictest definition one cannot correctly label Anita N. Martínez a feminist, however her actions spoke to feminism. She ventured out past volunteerism and entered city politics at a time when a group of Mexican

³⁷ Gutiérrez, Meléndez, and Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge*, 26.

American women activists, calling themselves “Chicanas” were taking a stand for equality within the overall civil rights movement. Martínez refused to maintain a traditional role within her household and instead sought political office to enact change, not only for the Mexican American community, but for all of Dallas. In this manner it is easier to view Martínez as an activist and a Chicana.³⁸

³⁸ Correspondence and City Issues, 1969-1972, folder 1, box 9, series 3, Martínez Collection. Gutiérrez, Meléndez, and Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge*, 26. Sam Merton, “Little Mexico Gets Squeezed Out,” *Dallas Observer*, January 31, 2008, 4.

CHAPTER 6

WHY STUDY CHICANAS?

Why study Chicanas in history? The role of Latinas in labor struggles have been documented by historians such as Vicki L. Ruiz and her discourse on cannery workers in California, Julia Kirk Blackwelder and her study of women laborers in San Antonio, Texas, and Antonia I. Castañeda and her studies of Chicanas in California. Women's roles, specifically in the political sphere, need to be inserted into the historical record and understood in the context of overall social and political movements. Why study the role of Chicanas in El Movimiento, the struggle for Mexican American civil rights? Any documentation of El Movimiento is incomplete if the role of women is left unexamined. Chicanas were active in the struggle for civil rights in the family, the neighborhoods, the cities, the states and the nation as a whole. Though downplayed in much of the historical record, Chicanas, even those who were politically conservative, played a vital role in the struggle for Mexican American civil rights. In order for biographies to be significant they must expand the model of picking and choosing "firsts" and "strong" women to instead encompass all Chicanas, regardless of class and or political views.¹

The 1960s marked the beginning of El Movimiento, also referred to as the Chicano Movement. The movement has been well documented over the years, but the role of Chicanas remains relatively unstudied. Women were deeply involved in the struggle for rights for La Raza, however, they have remained virtually invisible in the documentation of El Movimiento.

¹ Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). See Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929-1939* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1984) for more information on Mexican American laborers in San Antonio; Antonia I. Castañeda *The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Stereotypes of Californianas* (Davis, California : A.I. Castañeda, 1984). For a collection of Chicana essays that explain class, race and gender as modes of oppression see Teresa Córdova, ed., *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993). For a discourse on the social condition of Chicanas in the U.S. see Margaret M. Mangold, ed., *La Causa Chicana; The Movement for Justice* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1972).

Despite this, while Chicanas faced a system of triple oppression, race, gender and economic position, some Chicanas managed to make themselves visible and to contribute to the overall well being and improvement of all Chicanos. Beginning with family and moving onto neighborhood and school issues, Chicanas found their voice within El Movimiento throughout major cities in Texas.²

Nineteenth-century white women were expected to provide a moral compass for their children and spiritual direction for their husbands. At the same time, the role of government changed to encompass social welfare. Women exercised societal influence by working within the private sphere; the home provided a basis for political action. Women were active in politics via organizations that specifically worked toward better treatment for women and children. These early organizations included moral reform societies, and local charity groups, that emphasized the moral superiority of women. By the mid-nineteenth century these ideas shifted to expand women's roles. Women embraced science and the more progressive ideals of the Gilded Age. As feminist Paula Baker stated "They stressed how scientific motherhood, if translated into efficient, nonpartisan, and tough-minded public action could bring social progress." The new woman of the twentieth century rejected the ideals of domesticity and the power of the private sphere in favor of action in the public realm.³

²José Ángel Gutiérrez, Michelle Meléndez, and Sonia Adrianna Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), ix. For more on the history of the rise of the Chicano Movement see F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996); Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: a History of Chicanos*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1988); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1990); See Richard Griswold del Castillo and Arnoldo De León, *North to Aztlán: A History of Mexican Americans in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 125-147. See also the four-part television documentary, *Chicano!* Produced by the National Latino Communication Center in Association with KCET-TV in Los Angeles first aired in 1996; Hector Galán, and José Luis Ruiz. *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Los Angeles: National Latino Communications Center, 2007).

³ Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1790-1920," In *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in U.S. Women's History*, Vicki Ruíz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds., (New York: Routledge, 2008), 85-87, 91.

Twentieth century white feminists tended to be suffragists, reformists, or party women. Once woman's suffrage was achieved, more women moved into the public sphere and joined the political culture. By the 1920s women were less concerned with the home and even dismissed the notions of domesticity. Instead of creating a separate voting bloc as many anti-suffragists feared, women voted in the same patterns as men, affectively doubling the electorate, but not creating an equality between the sexes.⁴

For the most part, Chicanas did not agree with white feminists, nor did they follow the same paths. For one, the suffrage movement was not directed toward Chicanas. Women who had fled Mexico had never had the legal vote, so they did not expect it in the United States. In Mexico, women did not get the right to vote until 1953. Historian Martha P. Cotera asserted that turn-of-the-century white feminists helped create Chicana stereotypes as well as assisted in Chicanas' silence by not including Chicanas in the feminist narrative. In the book *The Chicana Feminist*, Cotera explained the system of triple oppression Chicanas faced (race, gender, and economic status) and not only from men, but also from white women as well. She cited Charlotte Bunch as evidence to this "privileged passivity," which documented how Anglo women achieved political power and were then afraid to take risks by including women of color in their agendas. For another, Latinas did not necessarily have the same values or experiences as white-middle class women, yet the mainstream feminist movement tended to reflect this notion that all women fought for the same types of rights.⁵

⁴Ibid., 99.

⁵ Martha Cotera, *Diosa Y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976), 157.; Fox-Genovese, "Texas Women and the Writing of Women's History," 4.; José Ángel Gutiérrez, "Closing Keynote Address," 3rd Texas-Jalisco Conference on Education and Culture, (lecture, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, April 28, 2011).

Anglo feminists were not the only opposition Chicanas faced. Chicanas also struggled with Chicano men within El Movimiento. Chicanos tended to relegate secretarial jobs and cooking and fund raising to women. At the same time, Chicanas challenged these gender biased roles. Chicanas questioned “machismo” that relegated women to second-class citizenship. Chicanas questioned this so-called “traditional” patriarchy. Civil rights activist Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez questioned the validity of paternalism as a true Mexican “tradition.” Vásquez argued that prior to European settlement (read as invasion), the women of Indian (Aztec) tribes held positions of power and respect both socially and politically. She served as doctor, lawyer, and even leader. Vásquez called for a return to these “primitive” values, she added: “Our Raza woman will take her place in the social and cultural struggle and this will be nothing new to her, it will be as natural as giving birth.” These conflicting ideologies left a rift within El Movimiento. Perhaps it is this rift that left Chicanas silenced for so long. Regardless of the reasoning, this divide left them to fend for themselves. Chicana feminist Anna Nieto Gómez argued that Chicanas had to realize that sexism was a major issue for them and that any Chicana feminist who refused to concede this post hindered all Chicana progress. Another leading Chicana feminist, Francisca Flores, said:

[Chicanas] can no longer remain in a subservient role or as auxiliary forces in the [Chicano] movement. They must be included in the front line of communication, leadership and organizational responsibility...The issue of equality, freedom, and self-determination of the Chicana – like the right of self-determination, equality, and liberation of the Mexican [Chicano] community – is not negotiable. Anyone opposing the right of women to organize into their own form of organization has no place in the leadership movement.⁶

⁶ Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez “The Woman of La Raza, Part II,” in Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte, eds., Dionne Espinoza and Lorena Oropeza (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2006), 122-126; Anna Nieto Gómez, “Sexism in the Movement,” *La Gente* 4 (1976): 10. Francisca Flores, “Comisión Femenil Mexicana,” *Regeneración* 1 (1971): 9. For further information on the role of Chicana feminists, including the contributions of and struggles faced by lesbian Chicanas see Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of mainstream Second Wave Feminism. By the late 1960s and early 1970s Chicana feminists began actively to question Chicanismo in El Movimiento. To Chicano men, the term Chicanismo reflected good manners, responsibility and leadership within and outside the family, pride in oneself, love of children and devoutness to religion. However, by glorifying men within the traditional Chicano family, Chicanismo provided a hindrance to the realization of many Chicana goals and self-autonomy. As a result, many Chicanas stepped outside of their familial roles and embraced the Chicana ideology. This left some Chicanas in a troubled place, one where their loyalty to La Raza was questioned. Chicana feminists had to find a balance between struggles with Chicanos within the movement and the fight against class and racial oppression outside the movement. It is this documentation that has been lacking.⁷

One manner in which Chicanas have successfully inserted themselves into the historical record is through journalism and literature. Chicanas wrote and edited civil rights periodicals, including *El Grito del Norte* from 1968-1973 in New Mexico, the California publications, *Regeneración* in 1969, and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* in 1970. Through these journals, Chicanas expressed concern for the Chicano community and created a space for discourse relating to Chicanas within and without the mainstream feminist movement.⁸

Literature was another avenue Chicanas have used to be socially pro-active and to challenge the dominant stereotypes that pervade historical accounts of Chicanas. Writers such as Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Denise Chavez, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Cherríe Moraga, and

⁷ Alma M. García, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997.), 18; Marcella Trujillo Gaitán, *The Terminology of Machismo* (Minneapolis: Chicano Studies, University of Minnesota, 1975), 1. For a discourse on the role of La Chicana in the Second Wave, see Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129-177.

⁸ Cotera, *Diosa Y Hembra*, 164. See Cotera, *Diosa Y Hembra*, chapter 5 for a more comprehensive list of Chicana publications.

Gloria Anzaldúa have written personal accounts of what it means to be Chicana, poor, and or lesbian. By reading these shared experiences, people began to understand the oppression to which Chicanas have historically been subjected.⁹

Historian Martha P. Cotera argued the 1960s were the decade for the Chicano; the 1970s belonged to the Chicana. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Chicanas began to find a voice. Chicanas were active in greater numbers throughout the nation. Chicanas addressed issues like poverty, education, and equality in the labor force. By the late 1960s and early 1970s Chicanas began to seek out political office as a means to enact change in their communities. Anita Martínez grew up in impoverished Little Mexico, but by the time she had reached adulthood, she was living in an affluent North Dallas neighborhood. Though her physical location may have separated her from “la gente” in the barrios, the plight of Latinos was still of concern to her. Martínez was an example of the political empowerment Chicanas sought in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰

Are all Chicana activists feminists? According to Martha Cotera, the answer is yes. Chicanas have been asked what they fight for, their race or their sex? Cotera argued Chicanas had to fight for both. One could not be a priority over the other. Sexism within El Movimiento was as damaging as racism outside the movement. Chicanas were charged to address both concerns. On the one hand, Chicana feminists addressed issues that mainstream Second-Wave feminists faced such as welfare, birth control and employment, but Chicanas also dealt with issues that were specific to Chicano communities such as discrimination in housing and

⁹ For more on Chicana literature, see Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanism* (New York: Plume, 1994); Denise Chávez, *A Taco Testimony: Meditations on Family, Food and Culture* (Tucson: Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2006); Manuel de Jesús Hernández-Gutiérrez, and David William Foster, *Literatura Chicana, 1965-1995: An Anthology in Spanish, English, and Caló* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997); Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

education. Chicanas were determined to make the feminist movement multi-cultural or not participate at all. Chicanas developed a discourse where race was a primary concern in determining political and economic status for Latinos in the U.S. Feminist Benita Roth argued that “Chicana feminism was thus also an organizationally distinct feminism in the second wave, rather than a mere racial/ethnic variant of general feminism in the era, or a simple reaction to white feminist racism.” Roth concluded that although Chicanas and African American women experienced a gender as well as racial oppression within their respective communities, they nonetheless developed a feminist movement with goals that allowed them to remain linked with other mixed-gender activist groups.¹¹

In 1992 Chicana historian Lillian Castillo-Speed published *The Chicana Studies Index: Twenty Years of Gender Research, 1971-1991*, which contained an extensive bibliography that evaluated the current state of Chicana studies. She included both fictional and historical writings to trace the discourse of Chicanas in U.S. history. Castillo-Speed asserted she compiled this bibliography because most studies of the implementation of mental health clinics, bilingual education, and socialization examine the Chicano family and the role of the Chicana. Since 1980, studies on La Chicana have focused on labor contributions as well as political contributions and how the role of Chicanas has shaped and will continue to shape Chicano communities.

It is not enough to selectively study Chicanas in El Movimiento. The historical record is enhanced by an examination of all Chicanas, not just traditional women of fame or merely politically liberal activists. In order to fully understand El Movimiento, it is crucial to understand the motives and goals of all Chicanas. Chicanas were not a homogenous group, nor did their experiences mirror white feminists. Chicanas faced a system of triple oppression,

¹¹ Ibid., 194; Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez “Soy Chicana Primero!,” in Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte, eds., Dionne Espinoza and Lorena Oropeza (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2006), 129-133.

economic, racial and gender. Some Chicanas were able to achieve middle-class status and thus escaped the first of these, the latter two were inherent and unchangeable. Regardless of class status however, these three factors shaped Chicanas lives, and by extension, El Movimiento. Though it would be easy to sum up all Chicanas utilizing the narrative of a few Chicana feminists, this would be incorrect. As historian Eden Torres asserted, no one woman in El Movimiento can speak to the actions and circumstances of all Chicanas, but these narratives can be used as a lens by which to observe, analyze, and critique oppressive behaviors and symbols. In this manner, the reader may discern how lives are shaped.¹²

¹² Lillian Castillo-Speed, *The Chicana Studies Index: Twenty Years of Gender Research, 1971-1991* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications Unit, University of California at Berkeley, 1992). See Barbara J. and J. Cordell Robinson *The Mexican American: A Critical Guide to Research Aids* (Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, 1980); Committee for the Development of Subject Access to Chicano Literatures, Chicano Periodical Indexing Project, and University of California, Berkeley, *Chicano Periodical Index*.(Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In 1991 Darwin Payne wrote:

A few misguided souls have expressed regret that Dallas is a city without an interesting or significant historical past. This is simply not true; a more apt description is that despite a recent burst of energy in the subject the city's past remains largely unexplored.¹

This work is a way to reject further that claim by providing evidence that Dallas contains a rich history and that Latinos are a vital part of that history. Even though the previous thesis discussed Martínez and her accomplishments, it is important to note, as Martínez asserted, “No woman speaks for all women. The sentiment that there may be a ‘representative or typical’ Mexican American woman is definitely erroneous.” Martínez may not have been representative of all Latinas, but she was and continues to be a proponent for the Latino community in Dallas.²

It was Martínez's charisma, non-threatening demeanor and her attitudes of accommodation that won her the support of the CCA, ironically it was these same qualities that enabled her to utilize the political system to achieve gains for the Mexican American community in Dallas. The Dallas Way left little room for barrio improvements or for the advancement of El Movimiento, yet conservative, Republican, Martínez was able to convince Dallas politicians to support her initiatives that enhanced the lives of Mexican Americans. Martínez's actions speak to the overall social movement for Mexican American rights. Martínez appeared to conform to the Dallas Way, while at the same time she championed the Chicano community and in so doing was able to implement barrio improvements and increase the retention of Chicanos in political offices.

Martínez was an advocate for the Chicano community, especially for the youth. She

¹Darwin Payne, ed., *Sketches of a Growing Town: Episodes and People of Dallas from Early Days to Recent Times* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1991), 1.

² Channel 13 Panel Discussion, folder 2, Box 37, Series III, Martínez Collection.

created a Chicano Recreation Center in Dallas, as well as various poverty programs and neighborhood beautification projects. Her work for and with young Chicanos has earned her the moniker, “Defender of Dreams.” Though she has remained relatively unknown, during her tenure on the Dallas City Council, from 1969 to 1973, Anita N. Martínez made invaluable, lasting contributions to the Chicano community in Dallas.³

Historian, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserted “It has become a cheerful commonplace that we have transcended our own recent naïve projects to recover women worthies and to restore women to the existing (male) models of history, primarily understood as the history of political power.” Martínez utilized the political system to affect change in lower income barrios as well as insert herself in Dallas’s historical record. Because of her position on the Dallas City Council, Martínez was able to improve neighborhoods and promote the retention of Latinos in city politics.⁴

In *Protest Is Not Enough*, political scientists, Rufus Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb asserted, “The most widely used indicator of a group’s position in a political system is the presence of members of that group in elective offices.” They concluded “A group that has achieved substantial political incorporation has taken a major step toward political equality.” Martínez was one of those steps taken.⁵

³ Correspondence and City Issues, 1969-1972, folder 1, box 9, series 3, Martínez Collection; José Angel Gutiérrez, Michelle Meléndez, and Sonia Adrianna Noyola, eds., *Chicanas in Charge: Texas Women in the Public Arena* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007), 26; Sam Merton, “Little Mexico Gets Squeezed Out,” *Dallas Observer*, January 31, 2008, 4.

⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “Texas Women and the Writing of Women’s History,” in *Women and Texas History: Selected Essays*, eds., Fane Downs and Nancy Baker Jones, eds. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1993), 3.

⁵ Rufus Browning, Dale Rogers, and David H. Taub, *Protest Is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19 and 27.



Figure 7.1. Anita Martínez boarding a plane with members of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce. Photo courtesy of the Dallas Public Library, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division.

To be certain, Martínez had her detractors, including West Dallas resident Victor Bonilla, who in 1974 petitioned the Dallas City Council to rename the Anita Martínez Recreation Center in favor of someone who had been or was currently a resident of West Dallas. Bonilla claimed that the people of West Dallas wanted the recreation center named for someone who was a resident of West Dallas and who had been involved in the sports program. The motion was denied. Bonilla left the chambers in a fury and the center retained the name Anita N. Martínez Recreation Center.⁶

Though her detractors have labeled her as a “token” Latina representative, Anita Martínez was able to utilize the political system in order to improve living conditions for Latinos in West Dallas. Activists come in all shapes, sizes and forms. In El Movimiento, some Latinos/as protested in the streets, some enacted change through neighborhood grassroots organizations,

⁶ Staff Writer, “West Dallas Man Urges Name Change for Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1974.

still others were able to use the political system to actively achieve gains for la gente (Latinos/as), Anita Martínez is an example of the latter.



Figure 7.2. Anita N. Martínez at a luncheon, March 8, 2011. Photo courtesy of the Peacemakers Incorporated, <http://www.peacemakersincorporated.org>.

Without local studies like this one, which include both liberal and conservative points of view, the historiography for Chicana studies will not grow and will not gain significance within other disciplines. Local studies are therefore essential to the integration and expanding of Chicana studies. Chicana historian Martha P. Cotera explained the need for Chicana studies when she argued that an understanding of the past is essential so that modern women may be better equipped to cope with the present and to determine their own future. History destroys stereotypes. Whether it be the myth of all Latina women as either virginal and pure, like the Virgen de Guadalupe or tempestuous and emotional like La Malinche, Latinas come in all forms, and it is only by studying history that Chicanas will be able to forge a place of their own in the overall historical record. It is not enough to study men in El Movimiento, nor is it enough to focus on liberals. As proven by the actions of Anita Martínez, conservative/Republicans were

able to utilize the existing political system to advance Mexican American civil rights. By evaluating the contributions of all people within El Movimiento, the quest for Mexican American civil rights is more easily understood and more easily placed within the overall context of Dallas history.⁷

⁷ Martha P. Cotera, *Diosa Y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976), 8.

APPENDIX
DALLAS CITY CHARTER AMENDMENTS

The Dallas City Charter has been amended twenty-two times since its induction in 1889. The following is a brief summation of Dallas' governmental history:

- Incorporation of Dallas, February 2, 1856, with a mayor and six aldermen, a treasurer, recorder and constable all elected for one year.

- Incorporation of Dallas under the General Incorporation Act of January 27, 1858; adopted by the people June 30, 1858, with a mayor and marshal, and nine aldermen, all elected for one year.

- Incorporation of Dallas, April 20, 1871, reincorporation, with a mayor and eight aldermen, a marshal and an assessor and a collector all elected. Aldermen term was two years; mayor, marshal and assessor and collector term was one year.

- Incorporation of Dallas under General Incorporation Laws March 15, 1875; adopted April 27, 1875, reincorporation, with a mayor and eight aldermen, a treasurer, an assessor and a collector, a secretary, a city attorney, a marshal and a city engineer; two year terms, but one aldermen and the mayor were elected annually.

- Incorporation of Dallas, August 9, 1876, with a mayor and two aldermen from each ward (probably still four wards thus have eight aldermen), a marshal, a city recorder, a city secretary, a treasurer, a city attorney, an assessor and collector and city engineer--all elected for two years.

- The Dallas City Charter of 1889 with a mayor, city judge and two aldermen from each ward elected biennially (12 wards), also an elected tax collector, a city assessor and a chief of police.

- Charter of 1897, with a mayor and one alderman from each ward, a city assessor, A chief of police, a health officer; a president and six members of the board of education--all elected for one year.

- Charter of 1899, with a mayor, one alderman from each ward and one alderman from each aldermanic district (10 wards and five aldermanic districts maximum).

- Charter of 1907, a commission form, with a mayor and four commissioners for a term of two years.

- Council-manager form of government; 1907 Charter with amendments up to and including 1927 was amended in 1931 to set up a council-manager form of government. The Charter was amended in 1945, 1947, 1949, 1952, 1956, 1965, 1968, 1973, 1976, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2009.

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