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# "To preserve our heritage and our identity": the creation of the Chicano Indian American Student Union at The University of Iowa in 1971

Sandra Ellen Solis  
*University of Iowa*

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## Recommended Citation

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“TO PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE AND OUR IDENTITY”: THE CREATION OF  
THE CHICANO INDIAN AMERICAN STUDENT UNION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
IOWA IN 1971

by  
Sandra Ellen Solis

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Interdisciplinary Studies-Ph.D. degree in Critical Race Studies  
in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Aimee Carrillo Rowe

## ABSTRACT

The 1960s and 1970s represent a pivotal period in US history and there is a growing body of critical research into how the massive changes of the era (re)shaped institutions and individuals. This dissertation furthers that research by focusing its attention on the creation of the Chicano Indian American Student Union (CIASU) at The University of Iowa in 1971 from an Interdisciplinary perspective. CIASU as the subject of study offers a site that is rich in context and content; this dissertation examines the ways in which a small group of minority students was able to create an ethnically defined cultural center in the Midwest where none had existed prior and does this by looking at the intersection of ethnic identity and student activism. Covering the years 1968-1972, this work provides a “before” and “after” snapshot of life for Chicano/a and American Indian students at Iowa and does so utilizing only historical documents as a way of better understanding how much more research needs to be done.

I explore the way in which various social movements such as the Anti-War Movement, the Chicano Movement, the American Indian Movement, the Women’s Movement and the cause of the United Farm Workers influenced founding members Nancy V. “Rusty” Barceló, Ruth Pushetonequa and Antonio Zavala within their Midwestern situatedness as ethnic beings. My dissertation draws from and builds upon the work of Gloria Anzaldua in *Borderlands/La Frontera* by interrogating the ways in which CIASU and its “House” acted as a self-defined “borderlands” for the Chicano/a and American Indian students. I examine the ways in which the idea of “borderlands” is not limited to any one geographical area but is one defined by context and necessity. Also interrogated is how performativity of ethnic identity worked as both cultural comfort and

challenge to the students themselves as well as to the larger University community through the use of dress and language, especially “Spanglish”.

This dissertation examines the activism of CIASU within the University context and out in the Chicano/a and American Indian communities as liberatory practice and working to affect change. Specifically, presenting alternatives for minority communities through actions such as Pre-School classes and performances of El Teatro Zapata and Los Bailadores Zapatista and recruitment of Chicano/a and American Indian high school students. On campus, activism through publication is examined; *El Laberinto* as the in-house newsletter provides insight into the day-to-day concerns of the students and *Nahuatzen*, a literary magazine with a wider audience that focused on the larger political questions of the day, taking a broader view of the challenges of ethnic identity as a way to educate and inform. This dissertation views CIASU as a “bridge”; the students worked to create alliances between themselves and the larger University population as well as Chicano/a and American Indian communities. With the recent fortieth anniversary of CIASU it is evident the founding members’ wish “to preserve our heritage and our identity” (*Daily Iowan*, November, 1970) continues and the organization they founded, now known as the Latino Native American Cultural Center, still serves the needs of Latino and American Indian students at Iowa.

Abstract Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Sandra Ellen Solis

has been approved by the Examining Committee  
for the thesis requirement for the Interdisciplinary Studies Ph.D. degree  
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To my parents, Joe John and Guadalupe who have always been supportive and unwavering in their conviction that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. Thank you for the best example a daughter could ever ask for.

To Glenda Feinberg, you have been here every step of the way and have been the calm in whatever storm or battle I was raging in or against-that's true love and friendship and this accomplishment is every bit as much yours as it is mine. Thank you. And Tony, you always keep me grounded, thanks dude!

To Bedahbin Webkamigad, Tony Bardy and "the kids" Zhaawosh, Bess and Ewaaseset-my Anishnabe family. Being "auntie Sandi" is one of the greatest honors and joys of my life; thank you for the love and support.

To Teresa Garcia and Rachel Carreon Garza-mujeres, I would not be here without your unfailing support, incredible friendship and many hours in the kitchen laughing. A lot.

To my dear friends Kym Lundy and Patty Rowan-you two have always been my personal cheering squad and I love you for thinking that I'm smarter than I am. To the friends and family all over the country who have let me feel their support in words and deeds; I am a blessed woman to have you all in my life.

To the memory of those who have gone before me: my brothers, Richard and Michael Solis, I think this would have made you proud. To my beloved Tia, Irene Cruz-you always loved me and believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself-gracias for that, Tia. To my grandfather, Cosme Solis, Sr. who insisted on education and legible handwriting. Elizabeth "Betty" Pamp and Judy "Auntie Bear" Pamp; you both taught me what it truly means to be an Anishnabe gitchidaqwe (warrior woman) and to fight for what I believed in; Gda miigwichwiin to you both with much love and respect. To Winnie, Wendy, Linda and Amelia who all helped make me who I am.

To the memory of Gloria Anzaldúa who I never had the chance to meet but who has influenced my work by speaking to my soul and letting me see that who I am has worth.

To Professor Adrienne Katherine Wing who, finding me lost and confused opened a door that would lead me to answers, righteous anger, and hope.

And to the four-legged companions who have been with me every step of the way. Star girl, patient, long-suffering and loving, I miss you my little friend and I'm only sorry this took so long that you didn't get that "Bruiser Woods" mortarboard I promised you-you earned it and we did it, Nimoosh girl! And to Sirius Black Solis (who even now, sits beside me, patiently warding off any distractions), Regulus Black and all those who have blessed my life, I thank you one and all for being loving and true friends.

And finally, to the founders -Rusty Barceló, Tony Zavala and Ruth Pushetonequa-and the early members of CIASU; you all inspire and humble me. I am proof that the blood, sweat, and tears you all put into the organization survives forty years later. I know that this work might have been different in the hands of another but it is the best way I could say "thank you" for creating the space that saved my life and my sanity when I thought I was alone.

Once social change begins it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future and the future is ours.

Cesar Chavez  
1927-1993  
Founder, United Farm Workers



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to recognize and thank my long-suffering Dissertation Advisor and friend, Aimee Carrillo-Rowe, You have always trusted my vision in this project and I appreciate your years of support more than you can know. My Dissertation Committee members, Tarrell Portman, Michelene Pesantubbee, Joe Coulter and Nancy “Rusty” Barceló. Each of you has supported me in this project, offered sound advice and direction; I am incredibly grateful to you all.

A very special “thank you” to the staff of the Graduate College, especially Dean Eric Wurster-I would not be here without your support and generosity of spirit; you have made an enormous difference in my Iowa experience. To Caren Cox and Eunice Prosser, you two have saved my bacon (and my sanity) on many, many occasions, my eternal gratitude to you both. I am grateful to the staff members in the University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections and the Iowa Women’s Archives; their help has been invaluable to this project.

My thanks to the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program at Michigan State University where the staff and the guiding spirit of Dr. Ron McNair gave me the tools to understand that reaching for the stars could be more than a just a dream.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to the founders of the Chicano Indian American Student Union, Rusty Barceló, Antonio Zavala and Ruth Pushetonequa; the work you engaged in has inspired me; this work would not be done without your dedication to CIASU. My thanks to the students who keep that spirit alive as the Latino Native American Cultural Center where I found a sense of “home.”

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVE

“To preserve our heritage and our identity” it was with these words that the Chicano Indian American Student Union (CIASU) declared itself to the University of Iowa community. It sprang into the consciousness of the student population and the larger community as ethnic and cultural “other” in November of 1970<sup>1</sup>. The quote is from a news release put forth by the group in order to clarify what they were doing and why they felt the necessity to organize. The words capture their sense of urgency surrounding the need to raise consciousness and awareness of their history among Chicanos and Indians as well as the need for increased efforts at recruiting these minority groups around Iowa by the University administration. Given the politics and student activism that had swept across the country at this time, the creation of CIASU can be recognized as a Midwestern expression of the larger national experiences as well as that of minority college students within the social context of Iowa.

The 1960s and 70s have been recognized in recent years by scholars, historians and observers of popular culture as well as the media (as evidenced by Tom Brokaw’s recent book Boom!<sup>2</sup> for its massive social and cultural change amidst incredible turmoil in the American landscape; the war in Southeast Asia, the struggle for equality in regard to women, Blacks and Chicano/a populations to name a few. It has also been argued that

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<sup>1</sup> The Daily Iowan, November 6, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Brokaw’s 2008 book Boom! Talking About the Sixties: What Happened, How It Shaped Today, Lessons for Tomorrow, focuses on his experiences in San Francisco as a young journalist  
<sup>2</sup> Tom Brokaw’s 2008 book Boom! Talking About the Sixties: What Happened, How It Shaped Today, Lessons for Tomorrow, focuses on his experiences in San Francisco as a young journalist and how those experiences shaped him and the country as a whole.

this change was often driven and defined by the nation's young people—largely by students on college campuses. Much of the work that has been done to date by academics and journalists tends to focus on the “hotspots” and epicenters of the social movements such as California, New York, often, Chicago and at times, areas of the segregated South. On the surface it would seem that the nation's interior did not experience this turbulent period in quite the same explosive way that the rest of the country did. But that is far from the case. The students at the heart of this dissertation exemplified the ways in which several of the movements that define the Sixties—specifically Chicano/a, American Indian and to a lesser extent the Women's Movement—expressed themselves in a uniquely Midwestern setting that made it possible for minority student groups to become visible and to be counted as part of their university communities.

In the last few years we have begun to see the emergence of works that examine this period through placing analysis in the Midwest (and other interior, center regions of the country) and focusing on the perspectives of minority communities specifically. The interest in exploring this facet of the 1960s and 1970s can be seen in titles such as Brown, Not White: School Segregation and the Chicano Movement in Houston,<sup>3</sup> Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee<sup>4</sup> and Dissent in the Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University<sup>5</sup>. This regionally situated research makes it possible to see that the changes wrought through raised consciousness and political

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<sup>3</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and on a personal note, I am a product of the Houston Independent School District during the period that San Miguel is writing about.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Wynkoop.

awareness resulted in more than increased visibility and access and was not limited to only certain areas of the country. For the Chicano/a and American Indian students I study in this dissertation, the “movements” they were involved in and which influenced their thinking and activism empowered them in meaningful ways. The students learned to effectively articulate and share what they knew to be injustices in the public sphere while also acquiring organizational strategies to step into the leadership roles that were necessary to create a cohesive whole out of their small yet disparate fledgling group.

When the student revolution came to the heartland it lacked none of the passion or discontent expressed by students elsewhere in the country. It was distinct however in that it did so in ways that reflected the unique positioning of minorities in the Midwest. For Chicano/a people, that history might be one of seasonal family migration or life lived in mostly Mexican enclaves in and around Iowa. In the case of American Indians the defining history could have been one reflecting tribal upheaval and displacement and the struggle to maintain tribal/native identity be it in Tama or a more urban locale that might reflect governmental policies of the past designed to remove Indians from Reservations. For Chicano/o and American Indian students, their experiences and perspectives made them keenly aware of their position as “other” and contextualized their experience of the Revolution. Many of them came from other areas, different from each, from different ethnic groundings and often speaking different cultural languages, yet finding that despite those very differences in their place of origin, social standing and familial beginnings were enough for them to connect to each other. In part, it is this paradox of two different groups finding common ground and crafting an organization that respected their differences and made it possible for both to thrive, which fuels this dissertation. Another

motivation for examining the genesis of CIASU is my own personal experience with the Latino Native American Cultural Center (LNACC as it is currently known) is my own experience of coming to the University of Iowa in 1999 from East Lansing, Michigan where I had been an active member of the American Indian and Chicano communities where there was much social interaction between the two. Coming from an area rich with cultural diversity to Iowa City, into a new Graduate program with no previous students<sup>6</sup>, would prove to be culture shock. Unhappy, uprooted and feeling the loss of community added to a sense of alienation and I found myself daily fighting the temptation to move.<sup>7</sup> At that time someone mentioned the LNACC and suggested I attend the Open House; over the course of the next few months it was only my attending those weekly dinners at the House that kept me from leaving Iowa. As was the experience of many others who came to Iowa in the past, I found that the combination of a new course of vigorous academic work and a sense of ethnic singularity were often overwhelming; leaving would have been easy.

The House provided a haven albeit an often challenging one; despite the comfort of a space that was populated by student parents with small children, people who looked like me, shared many of the same ideals, values and goals. Despite the common ground there was often an unarticulated, underlying sense of having to choose between my

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<sup>6</sup> In the now defunct Women's Studies Ph.D. program where there were three of us in the initial class; an African American woman, a British working-class woman and myself.

<sup>7</sup> Until that point, it was only the long conversations I had had with "Auntie Bear" Judy Pamp in Lansing that had kept me in Iowa. Over months in her hospital room recovering from multiple Diabetes-related amputations, she told me I needed to go to Graduate School, and "set a good example" for the young ones of the community: we discussed my fears of losing connection to my Indian community and in her wisdom, she assured me I would find what I needed to survive in Iowa.

Mexican and American Indian identities; the situation was somewhat unexpected but given that I had never encountered an organization that focused on my mixed identity, I was simply grateful that the House existed and was inhabited by people with whom I could identify. This paper arises in large part as a means to better comprehend how the House worked to sustain myself and others and what it means that this particular space would have the power to sustain; how the House and this organization would come to be the glue that held so many of us together. I want to understand the intersection of (often conflicting) historical, social and cultural influences that worked to create the space as well as the students who brought it to life and the challenges they faced in making the House a reality. In this dissertation I am focusing on the students who would create the Chicano Indian American Student Union (CIASU) in 1971. The story of how these students encountered each other and founded this organization speaks to issues of community and identity as well as to those of the challenges of the era itself.

In this study I focus on a particular group of students and their activism at The University of Iowa. Specifically, I focus on the students whose efforts would create the Chicano Indian American Student Union (CIASU) in 1971. This dissertation will interrogate the ways in which the ethnic identity of the students shaped the activist endeavors they engaged in as much as it will work to document a particular history that has not yet been examined. The story of how these students encountered each other and founded this organization speaks to issues of ethnic community and identity as well as to those of the era itself. More importantly, this dissertation will utilize the words of the CIASU students themselves and will depend heavily on the historical record that they have left behind. Their story highlights one of the more defining points of departure from



that of groups or organizations made up mostly of dominant culture members; CIASU realized that recognizing cultural and ethnic differences was key in determining organizational goals and mission as well as the academic success of its student members. One of the primary criticisms that many minority student groups and activists' leveled at several of the movements (especially the Women's Movement) during this era was that they failed to take into account the historical contexts of minority identity and the role that (often) marginalized identities played in determining the type and scope of activism undertaken.

There was a sense among many Chicano/as, Blacks and American Indians that the act of overlooking or discounting the defining historicity of minorities and the communities they came from resulted in a contemporary form of assimilation; a new form of the old power systems that for all of the talk of inclusion resulted in yet another form of insidious exclusion. It was this realization that fueled the rise of student groups such as CIASU at Iowa and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A) across the country as well as groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM).

An important aspect-and one that gave visibility to all of the social movements of the time-was that of increased media coverage. For the first time, mainstream media allowed the American public to keep their fingers on the pulse of the nation; during a time when social mores and public policy were entangled and changing seemingly by the day, there was a constant stream of information available. Despite what may now be seen as the limitation of only three television networks, the evening news was filled with dichotomous images of a protesting citizenry and student rebellion set against the backdrop of "the American ideal" family in the guise of programming aimed at creating a

homogenous society<sup>8</sup>. American households were treated to nightly news reports from the war and for the first time we had the opportunity to see for ourselves just how bad things were in Vietnam; the fact that we saw the images contributed greatly to the anti-war movement. The daily newspapers were likewise filled with headlines and stories documenting the tide of change sweeping the American landscape; this was juxtaposed against the often-critical yet crucial viewpoints of non-traditional and underground newspapers and magazines that came to be called the “alternative press.”<sup>9</sup> Student newspapers on college and university campuses would often cover stories that had been overlooked by more traditional papers. The Chicano Indian American Student Union saw its first mention in the November 6, 1970 edition of *The Daily Iowan*. The brief article appeared the day after students, Antonio Zavala, Ruth Pushetonequa and Rusty Barceló applied for recognition as a chartered student organization. The students issued a statement saying that the union hoped in part

...to preserve our heritage and our identity, to raise a social consciousness among our people who for so long have been brainwashed, denied oppressed and murdered...<sup>10</sup>

What the article did not mention was that two of the three students-Zavala and Pushetonequa-had found each other not through their shared identities but instead through their work in the anti-war movement. It was through their common opposition to

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<sup>8</sup> For me, images of “The Brady Bunch” and the Partridge Family” along with “Father Knows Best” were at the front of what I thought families looked like. There was no menudo and no Quinceaneras. The message-for me at least-was that “real” families didn’t do those things.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 3 includes a further discussion of the “alternative” press and its importance to the movements of the 60s and 70s.

<sup>10</sup> *The Daily Iowan*, Friday, November 6, 1970

the Viet Nam<sup>11</sup> war that they began their discussions about the inequities and inequality that they felt and saw in regard to the failure of the University to encourage the attendance of other Chicano/a and American Indian students. Their alliance arose out of their mutual concerns regarding the situation in Southeast Asia but extended beyond that as well and their work in the anti-war movement was as much a reflection of student activity in the greater Midwest<sup>12</sup> as much as a reflection of student activism in Iowa (which had its first anti-war protest in 1967). It was this shared anti-war activism that acted as a springboard for Pushetonequa and Zavala; despite her somewhat rural grounding in the settlement in Tama and Zavala's in the barrio of inner-city Chicago, their shared positions as "outsiders" provided the foundation for the organization they would help to found.

The political atmosphere at The University of Iowa was similar to that on most other college campuses during the 1960s and 1970s with many students engaging in activist endeavors such as creating alliances and organizations of like-minded persons organizing protests against a varied array of social injustices, and resisting an unpopular war-time draft and the war. Some students sought to maintain the status quo, and even though there were those who might have preferred to stay above the fray, change was everywhere and it was near impossible to avoid being on one side or the other of (m)any given issue(s). In this respect, the students at The University of Iowa were no different

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<sup>11</sup> There has been some question as to whether the correct spelling is the one word version "Vietnam" or the two-word form "Viet Nam." In the Vietnamese language the two word form is used. Understanding that there is power in how we name ourselves-Ojibwa as opposed to Chippewa or Dine' instead of Navajo- I am choosing to use the form that the people of the country being discussed themselves utilize.

<sup>12</sup> Zavala came from Chicago where he had been an anti-war activist.

than those on other campuses-student dissent may have been alive and well but there was also a student element that supported the war; this divide worked to fuel dissension on campuses. In the case of CIASU, most of the members seem to have been active at least some of the time in protesting the war.<sup>13</sup> The internal point of tension for them was not whether to engage in the anti-war movement but rather, whether to expend the energy of their small numbers in protesting against the war or working to raise awareness of the political and economic realities of contemporary Chicano/a and American Indian existence. It was this point-whether to work against the war or spend more time focusing on Chicano/a and American Indian issues-that separated the student members of CIASU from the larger student body. It was the way in which they navigated their engagement with issues of social change contextualized by the challenge of identity as “other” that ultimately defined them and which provides insight into their distinctive Midwestern, ethnic experience of campus life during this period of national turmoil.

An important facet of the unrest was that many voices were being heard for the first time around the country. In most parts of the country admission into universities was being granted to minority populations for the first time. The situation in Iowa was quite different in a few key respects; some of the loudest voices of discontent were **not** being heard for the first time, rather, they were already present but were being understood differently and in ways that signified new alliances and shifts in the politics of power, place and personal identity. Two such cases were African American students and women.

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of Rusty Barceló, this was a very personal issue; coming from an active military family, her view of the war would work to create an intensely personal conflict.

### African American Students at The University of Iowa (1968)

The organizers of the Chicano Indian American Student Union had a model to draw upon when the time came to form an organization; the Afro-American Cultural Center had been organized a few years before and offered a loose blueprint for what could be achieved for a minority student population. African American students had been enrolled as students at the University of Iowa since the 1870s. Several collections housed in the Iowa Women's Archives<sup>14</sup> (IWA) provide evidence that through the very early-1960s students of African American descent modeled their appearance and organizational demeanor on that of the dominant student population. This can be seen through items such as the pamphlet distributed with information on the Iowa Federation Home, which provided housing for African American women while they were students at The University of Iowa since they were prohibited from living in the segregated dormitories. The rules for young women residing in the home were very much like those for white women living in the university dorms complete with curfews and standards of behavior and decorum. This pamphlet and other archived ephemera<sup>15</sup> provide evidence that until the rise of the Civil Rights movement, the goal of minority students on campus was to be seen as equal to, or no different from, the majority student population. Behaviors of "fitting in" despite institutional practices specifically designed to exclude African Americans, illustrates the assimilationist impulse among many minorities pre-1960.

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<sup>14</sup> One excellent example is that of African American Women in Iowa.

<sup>15</sup> Ephemera here used as an archival term referring to the collected materials that provide insight into the day-to-day activities which an individual or organization would be engaged.

The desire to be an accepted member of the dominant society was not an accident for those descended from slavery; for many African Americans, educational efforts post Reconstruction would focus on eradicating the image of the “shifless” and lazy slave dependent on others. While African Americans were learning (willingly and of necessity) how to assimilate, so were American Indian children. Efforts to assimilate the indigenous inhabitants of America were put in place as early as 1769 with the establishment of a non-reservation school in Hanover, New Hampshire but those efforts were redoubled with the founding of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The goal of the schools was to assimilate the children into the dominant society (“Kill the Indian, save the man”) but as with African Americans, the effort was not meant to make American Indians equal members of society; Indian children were trained to be skilled laborers and domestics. American Indians and African Americans were both encouraged to become contributing members of society despite not being fully included in society themselves. This would all begin to change with the increasing influence of the Civil Rights Movement.

There are photographs in several collections housed in the IWA and The University of Iowa’s Special Collections as well as filmed reports of some of the non-violent protests that took place during the struggle for civil rights within Iowa; these images collectively work to illustrate in part, a shifting in the ways that Afro-American students perceived themselves. The rise of the Black Power movement made it possible to dress and move through the world in ways that reflected their cultural heritage. Gone were the images of “proper” young African American women; these were replaced by modes of dress, hairstyles and choice of music determined the way one would be seen

and understood by outside observers. Bright clothing, often replete with African color schemes and color combinations, along with sky-high “Afros” could be used as radical, non-verbal statements that spoke directly to one’s perspective and politics. The use of the body and of dress as a means of marking oneself to convey ideas and politics constitutes an act of performativity of the cultural and ethnic self.

The concept of “performativity” is a defining act that I will refer to in several instances within this dissertation, especially when discussing the students of CIASU; the term is fluid and dependent on context thus I feel the need to offer clarification as to my usage of the term as it relates to CIASU. Performativity is an interdisciplinary term taken from Social Science, and is used within ethnomethodology to discuss “the daily behavior (or performance) of individuals based on social norms or habits.”<sup>16</sup> Performativity is used as a means to transmit and authorize social norms-verbally and non-verbally-within a group or society; in the context of this dissertation, I am using the concept to interrogate how the small society of CIASU utilized performativity as one element to define what it meant to be Chicano/a and/or American Indian. Performativity within the group is somewhat problematic when viewed from a post-modern perspective in that it essentializes “Chicano/a” and “American Indian” identity; however and despite that critique, it should be remembered that for the students involved in CIASU, performativity offered a visual mode for transmitting to others not only pride in culture but also as a means of illustrating their “other-ness” to a world in which (up until that point in time) they had been virtually invisible. In the case of Afro-American students and activists, the emergence of ethnic hairstyles and dress served as a visible reclamation of African roots

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<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia “Performativity” May 17, 2011

that had been stripped from their enslaved ancestors. Despite differing histories, political views and goals, performativity served many student and activist groups of the 1960s and 1970s as a means of visually transmitting to those outside of the inner circle their concerns and political views; whether it be members of a feminist group wearing blue jeans instead of skirts and stockings or Chicano and American Indian men wearing their hair in long braids, the non-verbal display would serve as a message that the individual/s being viewed were choosing to live outside what was considered the dominant culture “norm” but which was acceptable to members within the group. In this dissertation, performativity will often be seen to play a key role in the day-to-day lives of members of CIASU,

The influence of the Civil Rights movement was far-reaching and its message of justice and equality spoke to a broad cross-section of Americans; the leaders at the forefront of the movement were pivotal in influencing and guiding the direction and focus of events. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King (MLK) especially, were often seen as opposite ends of the politics of the civil rights spectrum even while both were working toward the same goal for African American citizens. The assassination of Reverend King in April of 1968 had the effect of creating the MLK Initiative through the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP). This initiative spoke directly to the lack of attention on the cultural needs and differences of Afro-American students at The University of Iowa (UI) and had the added effect of recognizing that the University needed more specific and targeted efforts at recruitment of minority students. The advisor to the students in the MLK program was a young graduate student named Phillip Jones.<sup>17</sup> Jones would come

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Phillip Jones ultimately held the position of Vice President for Student Services which oversees the operation of the Cultural Centers on the University of Iowa Campus.



into his Advising role as the Civil Rights movement transitioned into the social consciousness as the “Black Power” movement. The political and social influence of groups such as the Black Panther party worked to empower black students across the country and they began asserting their ethnic, cultural identity and heritage through activism. It was in the midst of this change that the Afro-American Cultural Center was established at UI in 1968; it was originally housed at 3 East Market Street in Iowa City, the former site of the University News Services, its establishment would be influential to the students arriving at Iowa who would go on to create CIASU.

#### Women, the Feminist Movement and the University (1971)

While Iowa became the first public university in the country to admit women on an equal basis to male students in 1855, mere enrollment of women did not mean equality for women. This early history of women on campus may explain in part to why the Feminist movement was able to flourish in Iowa City. As the feminist movement exploded across the country, Iowa City already had an established feminist community of women on campus; the focus of the feminist movement on equality fueled the quest for parity in all aspects of women’s lives among the women at Iowa. Women students who were actively involved in the leftist politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s came together to form the Women’s Liberation Front in 1971. They petitioned the University to become a chartered organization and then established The Women’s Center. The Center was originally organized as a feminist collective with decision-making based on group consensus and was housed at 3 East Market Street sharing space with the Afro-American Cultural Center. While there is no historical record of the groups supporting each other across lines of difference, given the tone and activist climate of the time, it

might be hoped that there may have at times been support one for the other.<sup>18</sup> The group changed its name to the Women's Resource and Action Center (WRAC) in 1974 and was moved into their current location at 130 N. Madison Street in 1976. One of the stated objectives of the group was to provide a safe space in which women could discuss, explore and begin to truly understand the nature and scope of sexism in society. That space, formerly known as the Alumni Records Building where the organization exists today, is a house that offers meeting space for large and small groups, WRAC staff and support members. A wide variety of ever-changing services and groups are offered depending on the needs, requests and interests of students and community members that keep the organization relevant and fresh. It is this ability to adapt to changing social needs that keep it current and make it an important on-going campus and community resource.

Another key feminist group that came out of this era and offers a related reflection of the times was the Emma Goldman Clinic for Women (EGC). Much like the WRAC, "Emma" was founded as a feminist collective and operated as such for the first few years of its existence.<sup>19</sup> While not affiliated with the University of Iowa, the young women who founded the organization were primarily students with ties to The Women's Center who were focused on issues of women's right to choose the option of abortion. In the

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<sup>18</sup> While it is true that women might often make gains at the expense of people of color and vice versa, the women of the center would go on to focus on racial equality within a few short years of their inception hosting National conferences and groups such as "Women Against Racism."

<sup>19</sup> Iowa Women's Archives. *Emma Goldman Clinic for Women*-Sealed records. As a Graduate Assistant in the IWA from 2000-2002 and as a former Board Chair at EGC, I had the privilege of doing the initial processing of the organizational records. Included among them are minutes of some of the early meetings of the collective. It is my hope that when the collection is opened to researchers these minutes will be available to the public as they provide an important glimpse into the politics and processes of a feminist collective of the 1970s.

archival record, some of the early members of “Emma” talk about helping women find safe and legal abortion services out of state in the days prior to the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* of January 22, 1973. When the Court handed down the ruling the women were ready; in the fall the Emma Goldman Clinic opened its doors. Like other feminist clinics that were appearing in the country, EGC operated under feminist principles with a staff of mostly lay women. They empowered women to take an active role in their own health care options and the services they sought out for that care and one of the services that EGC offered was abortion, often performed on a sliding scale according to financial means. Many of the young women involved in the early clinic were also involved in the Women’s Center and as a result there was quite a bit of crossing of organizational lines to assist one another. Those alliances exist to this day and each organization supports the other in their respective missions in ways that do not pull the University of Iowa into the pro/anti-choice politics but rather that seeks to empower both female and male students in reproductive awareness and choices.

The alliance between the two organizations under the shadow of the University reflects a distinctly Midwestern sensibility that in many ways reflects the rural nature of much of Prairie life itself, which fosters a practice of turning to ones neighbors and allies to survive in a region of often unpredictable atmospheric changes. The mostly rural nature of the Great Plains and Iowa itself would have worked to create recognition among the populace that there was great value in helping one another to survive the harsh climate changes. This willingness between two feminist groups to work co-operatively over the long-term appears to be uniquely Midwestern; there is no other such alliance in

the country.<sup>20</sup> This may reflect regional biases, low population numbers across harsh terrain in other areas and/or religious and political opposition. Despite many similar circumstances, the early pioneer spirit of survival that helped to settle the Midwestern region manifested itself again later, in symbiotic alliances during the storms of the Cultural Revolution. The changes and challenges of the '60s and '70s were often as unpredictable as the Prairie weather itself yet it was this ability to adapt to the social and cultural turbulence that provided a distinctly Midwestern consciousness to the Social Movement expressions of the time. While most of these groups and alliances would more than likely have occurred given the student activism of the day, they were hastened along their paths through their ties and/or alliances to the Anti-War Movement that permeated all aspects of college culture.

#### The Anti-War Movement and the University of Iowa: 1967 and a brief history

The Anti-War Movement was the most visible, volatile and divisive movement of the time, especially on college campuses. Student unrest was documented daily in the pages of mainstream media and was nightly splashed across American television screens; it was often the alternative press in and around college campuses that provided a perspective differing from that of the mainstream. The dissension created discord among families and friends yet would bind those who could agree on nothing else; the activism of the Viet Nam era was such that it haunts the American landscape to this day. Its nature was such that for most, there was no middle ground-you either supported the war or acted against the escalating numbers of the dead on both sides of the equation.

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<sup>20</sup> I have not been able to find any other such alliance in my personal research into feminist health care/abortion providers, in my time as a member of the Board of Directors at EGC or in my work at IWA in processing the Emma Goldman Clinic papers.

According to the journal Iowa Pathways:

The first major antiwar demonstration at the University of Iowa occurred in November 1967. Marine Corps recruiters were trying to sign up new recruits. A crowd of anti-war students blocked the entrance to the student union.

Anti-war sentiment did not cohere as a recognizable, unified movement in the United States until around 1966; it centered on college campuses and one of its earliest expressions was the teach-in, a non-violent means of spreading the word about Viet Nam. There seems to be consensus that the first teach-in happened at the University of Michigan on March 24, 1965 and it quickly spread from there. This particular non-violent form of protest clearly has its roots in the Civil Rights movement and illustrates that the tools acquired in the service of one movement could be and were utilized effectively. In this case, students who had marched with Dr. King and taken part in the non-violent protests in the South used their increased awareness of the need to educate their peers to the reality that was war. Teach-ins held sway for a very short while; by 1967 many of these student activists were frustrated that their efforts might be raising the consciousness of their peers and other like-minded individuals but not those of their elected officials. It is at this time that the counter-culture emerged and that non-violence began to give way to outright rebellion with ever-larger protests, sit-ins and acts of civil disobedience. This was the dawning of the “age of Aquarius” as it were and the emergence and the influence of Timothy Leary providing a backdrop of sex, drugs and rock n’ roll.

A new nomenclature of dissent emerged with the appearance of groups and organizations opposed to the war, many of them radical in their outlook and perspective. The term “New Left” was often used to describe students and sympathizers whose

politics and social sensibilities came out of involvement with the Civil Rights movement and social injustice issues as well as opposition to the war and the draft. While the youth culture and the counter-culture were certainly not the same thing, one each had a definite influence on the other and when the anti-war movement made its appearance in Iowa City in November of 1967 it did so with the same passion being expressed on other college campuses across the nation. The emergence of an anti-war presence at Iowa and other anti-war actions taking place in the heartland would provide opportunities for two of the students who would form CIASU to meet; they finally met at an anti-war protest in 1968. The Chicano Indian American Student Union was formed when the third student arrived from California in 1969.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Until very recently, most of the literature that addresses this particular period tends to focus on the larger national movements. Some offer comprehensive overviews of the movements themselves or of the people whose politics and actions defined the movement being examined. Within these emerging discussions there is a growing body of work that contextualizes the role of student activism on college campuses during the 1960s and 1970s by region as well as by race and ethnicity and how these points of identity of how these points helped to give shape and voice to the concerns and issues of minority college activists living in the Midwest. The value of my research lies in its specific focus both by its unique placement in Iowa City and in the identities of the students of CIASU themselves. The challenges they faced as Chicano/as and Indians In Iowa City were distinct; while other Chicano/a and Indian students organized on other campuses, it is only at the University of Iowa that they came together as a Union rather than as two independent groups. This joining together gave them strength of numbers (despite the fact that there were less than twenty of them in the first year); it also made it possible to explore issues of not only their own individual identities but also to question the meaning of indigenous identity and shared histories of assimilation and genocide, exclusion and resistance and to better appreciate the differences amongst themselves. Texts that focus on various student groups in the interior of the country, the social and cultural challenges they faced and the origins of the organizations are therefore of special interest to this dissertation since my own work is interdisciplinary in its scope and focuses on issues of diversity and access.

Centering on the founding of the Chicano Indian American Student Union at UI in 1971, the student organizers and the groups' early years, the texts that have informed and shaped this undertaking are quite diverse but few in numbers. The subject areas these texts focus on and that this research contributes to are Chicana/o Studies, American Indian Studies and to a lesser extent, Feminist Studies<sup>21</sup> with a strong focus on US Third World Feminism. I contribute to these areas of study by examining the intersectionality of ethnic student identity and activism through the context of the challenge of "place" and the challenge of creating an ethnically defined community in a space where none has existed before; it is about the "before" and the "after" of a distinct student presence on campus. My dissertation is as much about the definition of "home" beyond the borders of what was known and familiar to these students and it furthers existing research in that it explores what it meant for the students of CIASU to be the first of their kind at the University of Iowa to attempt a focused effort on maintaining identity and making it possible for others to follow their lead. These areas-Chicano/a Studies, American Indian Studies and activist endeavors in particular-are the foundational threads of my interest and research; binding these together is a strong personal and academic curiosity in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, specifically, the Chicano Movement and American Indian Movement (AIM).

As a further point of clarification, it should be noted that US Third World Feminism is grounded primarily in the works, words and theoretical frameworks of

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<sup>21</sup> I should make clear that the decision to use the term "Feminist Studies" instead of "Women's Studies" is a conscious one with reasons personal as well as academic. While I make no apologies for the personal, academically the use of Feminist Studies implies a focus on political intersections and cultural subtexts that reflects more of an interdisciplinary approach and which is more fitting to this project.



Chicana, American Indian and other US women of color and often comes from what writer Alice Walker would call a “womanist” perspective<sup>22</sup> rich with cultural subtexts and meanings which tend to focus not only on women’s issues but on how those issues relate to family and community as well as self. This genre of women’s writing utilizes the personal as well as cultural and historical specificity as the underpinning of analysis. This then places the individual lived experience front and center instead of regarding it as a footnote or passing over it totally as is often the case with many dominant culture feminist theoretical frameworks. I approach my analysis in this dissertation in a similar fashion; I focus on group identity from ethnic identity as the primary form of self-identification. This perspective permits me to look at the activist endeavors and group interaction of CIASU in a way that respects the ways in which they themselves saw themselves as a culturally defined organization and individuals. My approach makes it possible to better understand that their organizational consciousness that focused on the needs of community that is a thread that runs through their various endeavors. As an organization, the students focused on enriching the lives of Chicano/s and Indians outside of the Iowa City area as a way to stay connected to others like themselves and in the process, they made the world of the University more accessible to others like themselves. The desire to maintain connection to community can be seen in the use of language and art in the Center as well as in the newsletters and literary magazine the students produced. In the choice of the word “Chicano” in the organizations’ name, this reflects the politics of the day. An evolution of consciousness in self-naming can be seen in the name of the

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<sup>22</sup> Alice Walker from *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens*. Walker gives several definitions of this word but my favorite is no. 3: “Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.*”

group and within the Academe itself in the decision whether to use the terms “Chicana/o Studies” as opposed to Hispanic or Latino Studies, I choose to use the term Chicana/o in this study in part because there is and has historically been a political activism associated with this term of identity<sup>23</sup> and it reflects the choice of the students themselves. It is because of the act of political and activist endeavors of CIASU that I use the term instead of the broader (and somewhat more generic term) Hispanic. Even within the group the issue of what to call themselves would continue to come into question. In the case of indigenous Americans, terms of identity are often based on regional origin as well as the politics of the day (case in point; American Indian vs. Native American vs. First Nations). With the admission of students from Central and South American countries and changes in the political landscape and “political correctness” would result in a change of name. The Chicano Indian American Student Union would eventually become what it is known as today; the Latino Native American Cultural Center. The loss of the term “Student Union” would signify in effect that the group was not as politically involved as it had in the past. Significantly, the name change would also reflect a split within the organization; despite the stated goal of working together to create a space for other students like themselves, there was an underlying tension within the organization borne out of an imbalance of representation (majority Chicano/a) and differing goals that represented cultural and ethnic differences within the small group.

In Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, F.

Arturo Rosales identifies what he refers to as the Mexican American Civil Rights

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<sup>23</sup> As I have often told my parents, they have no one but themselves to blame for the activist streak I exhibit. After all, they are the ones who took me out of my third grade public school class to attend a *Huelga* or strike school where the nuns and volunteers awakened me to issues of social justice and empowerment...

Movement or “the movimiento” and situates his work within the context of the Black Civil Rights Movement. Rosales makes connections between the two movements and talks about the ways in which “*the movimiento*” was influenced by the Black Civil Rights Movement from both an ideological and a political perspective. His importance to my own work however lies in his delineation of how Mexican American student activists in the mid 1960s came to the realization that their own experiences of racism and exclusion were not only not being addressed by the focus on civil rights but also by the realization that their own experiences were often relegated to being “less than” in importance and meaning in comparison to those experienced by people of African descent.

In his analysis, Rosales touches on the ways in which Mexican American youth would often cast their parents and older members of their communities in the role of “the establishment” but he makes clear the historical and cultural distinctions between the Mexican American and dominant culture. I would suggest that this recognition and articulation of generational differences by Mexican American student activists would create a point of commonality and make possible bonds between themselves and those involved in other movements making it possible for them to connect to other students/activists with whom they might otherwise have very little in common except a desire to create change and a more just society.

While Chicano! is helpful in that it offers a broad historical analysis of Mexican American Civil Rights, for this dissertation I am primarily interested in Rosales’ analysis of the 1960s and very early 1970s; specifically the ways in which the larger national movement “spoke to” and helped shape the work, consciousness and activism of the students of CIASU within the social structures and climate at the University of Iowa

community. As with other texts, the limitation of Rosales' work is that it does not engage with what was happening with Chicano youth outside of urban and more metropolitan areas; his work is detailed in regards to the national movement and its movers and shakers but falls short in helping to make connections about what that meant to those who were working to make change in more rural or less metropolitan areas.

One such text is that offered by Mary Ann Wynkoop in Dissent In The Heartland: The Sixties at Indiana University in which she focuses primarily on the protest and practices of the African American students at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Her work provides evidence that the student protest movement of the 1960s was not limited to the larger cities or either coast but rather, that while the focus of the media may have been in those areas, issues of civil rights and social justice were being acted on by minority university students in the Midwest as well.

Wynkoop's work is helpful since she begins her analysis beginning in 1960 and looks at the roots of what would eventually lead to student discontent that would erupt into protest later in the decade. She lays important groundwork in that her focus is on student activism in mostly rural, small town Indiana by looking at the anti-war, Women's and Civil Rights movements. She demonstrates that the activism, protests and social unrest that was creating national headlines and taking place in mostly urban areas was also happening in the heart of the country and not just in Chicago. While the scope of her work is narrow only in the sense that it focuses on mostly African Americans and women, Wynkoop places the local concerns of Indiana student activists within the broader national conversation.

Terry H. Anderson focuses on the broader national context in The Movement and the Sixties: Protest In America From Greensboro to Wounded Knee. Much as Wynkoop does, he begins his look into the era by exposing the roots as a way of understanding how it is that what we know as “the sixties” came to be and it is through the naming of these root causes that the work ties into examination of the creation and rise of CIASU<sup>24</sup> and other student and activist organizations. He examines how the optimism ushered in by the election of John F. Kennedy would within a few short years turn into disillusionment. The assassinations of President Kennedy and later his brother, Robert and that of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. against the backdrop of an escalation in the Viet Nam war would lead the youth of this generation to question everything; these events were powerful reminders that they lived in a world that constantly contradicted itself. The election of leaders perceived to be “peacemakers” by some were gunned down by those with opposing views; the generation that saw the rise of “flower power” and the peace movement witnessed the self-immolation of Buddhist monks in protest to a war that saw flag-draped coffins being borne out of military transports on a daily basis.

Anderson posits that the answers to the questions he raises surrounding the rise of the movements and protest of the 1960s have their roots in the 1940s and 1950s connecting to what he calls the “Spawning Ground: Cold War Culture”<sup>25</sup>. Moving beyond this Introduction Anderson is useful to my dissertation in part because of the organizational approach he utilizes; he divides his work into two distinct sections. The

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<sup>24</sup> Even though neither the work of Wynkoop or Anderson ties into CIASU specifically, it is vital to understand where the roots of the discontent that led to student activism lie. In the case of my own work, context truly does define the frameworks I depend on.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, Introduction, pp. 3-39

first half he calls The First Wave: 1960 to 1968 and creates a backdrop that applies to most of the Chicano and American Indian students coming to Iowa since it relates to the larger national context which would have affected all of the students albeit in different ways depending on where they were coming from. The second half of the book he calls “The Second Wave: The Crest, 1968 to the early 1970s” and it is during this era in particular that CIASU was created and experienced an important series of activist endeavors that both connected to larger national movements and that reflected local issues of concern to the students of CIASU. Anderson provides me as a researcher an in-depth understanding of what was happening to the country and helps to make the connections between the endeavors of CIASU and the activities of the larger Chicano Movement as well as the American Indian Movement and the United Farm Workers. Anderson is helpful because he makes it clear that what was referred to as “The Movement” was not simply one movement but rather the coming together of several social activist concerns focusing not only on the groups named above but also including the anti-war movement and the feminist movement as well. The strength of Anderson’s work is that it stands back and looks at the bigger picture of an era and grounds it in an understanding of the particular historicity that gave rise to it as well as foundation and shape. What Anderson’s work misses however is a closer examination of regionality; his work is a solid over-view but fails to take into account the importance of identification and affiliations to specific communities. He does not delve deeply into the role of ethnicity in determining *how* situated identity shaped the form that protests by Chicano/a and American Indian people would take part. His analysis also fails to recognize that in this time of increasing involvement by Indigenous students, Chicano/as

and American Indians came from very distinct histories involving shifting borders and forced relocations; those events would inform their activism. My dissertation takes these histories into account and, especially in the case of the students of CIASU, I apply to my research the knowledge that creating a “homeland” of sorts within the confines of the foreign setting of the University is a key point of definition for the types of activism that this particular group of students would engage in and the communities they would seek out.

In comparison to the work of Wynkoop who situates her work in Indiana and Anderson who provides a good general background of the roots of the social movements of the 1960s, Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior focus on American Indian activism in Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement From Alcatraz to Wounded Knee. Smith and Warrior focus their work on three key events of the era that defined the American Indian Movement; the nineteen month occupation of Alcatraz that began on November 20, 1969, the take-over of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C., from November 3-9, 1972 and the shoot-out with FBI agents at Wounded Knee in May 1973. Another point they make in their work is that AIM was not without its interpersonal tensions at any point during this time; yes, there was an effort to get the work done but there were often disputes among those involved and sometimes the work was disjointed and the same can be said for the work and interpersonal relationships I am examining within CIASU. This period in particular would have influenced the students involved in CIASU for a number of reasons but especially the events at Wounded Knee.<sup>26</sup> They would have been of interest not only because of its close driving distance

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<sup>26</sup> As a member of “the house” I have had the privilege to hear stories of past events for which there is no academically recognized “historical” documentation. This includes the story of the

proximity but also because some of the American Indian students would have familial as well as tribal and social ties to Wounded Knee. Also, the Alcatraz occupation began in 1969 about the same time the CIASU founders themselves were arriving at Iowa and as the occupation was ongoing, it would have been in the news media throughout the foundation period for CIASU. The action off the coast of California would not have a direct effect on CIASU as it began its life as an official student group that fall yet it could not help but influence the students with its implications for activism as well as conflict. While Alcatraz and Wounded Knee are not directly connected to each other, I believe that one echoes the other as a display of the level of frustration with a long history of governmental policies and practices designed to marginalize and eradicate the American Indian; they both represent American Indians joining together to take a stand against the injustices of the past and what they perceived as tactics of harassment and intimidation in the present.

Smith and Warrior peripherally make connections between Indian concerns and the civil rights and Chicano Movements keeping the focus on the activities of the Indian communities. Despite this, it is clear throughout that other minority communities stood in solidarity with AIM; they offer the reader analysis based on their own understanding that despite any connections to the struggles of oppressed others, the motivation for the activism of AIM members was one based on issues of identity, tribal politics and sovereignty. For the students of CIASU, it is my belief that the actions of AIM would have offered ideas for how to affect change and work for the empowerment of their

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father of one of our recent graduate students' father who was a physician patching up wounded AIM members fresh from the shootout as they hid out in the area before passing through Iowa City.



various communities. This supposition can be seen in action by some of the work that CIASU engaged in such as the Prison Visitation Program, work with pre-school children in West Liberty as well as staging boycotts and marches.

Whereas Smith and Warrior focus on three key events and engage in personal analysis of those events, American Indian Activism: Alcatraz To The Longest Walk edited by Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel and Duane Champagne uses the occupation of Alcatraz as its center. They use “the Rock” as Alcatraz is called, as a focal point for examining the role of Indian activism, its effectiveness and long term effects on American Indian policy and activist endeavors through the voices of 16 essayists. Some of the writers are native and others are not; they represent different viewpoints, some are in agreement and others are not. What the editors do in this work is to de-romanticize the occupation and show that the action was not without controversy and that it had and still continues to have, an effect on the American Indian psyche and federal policies.

The authors and the writers they have included illustrate the political and academic scope of the issues and each brings a unique perspective to the text. Despite the fact that this is a “looking back” and analyzing, many of the writers speak to the activism of the day and were themselves involved in the student movement of the period. These writers then speak to the ways they were affected by the occupation as students and the way their activism related to their fellow Indian students; knowing the power of the “moccasin telegraph” then and now, it would make sense that news of what was happening on Alcatraz would affect indigenous students throughout the country.

One of the strengths of this text for a researcher is the organization of the sixteen chapters as well as the variety of approaches and foci. The first twelve chapters focus on

personal reminiscences; some from writers directly involved and others from those who watched from a distance but were affected by the events including the editors themselves. The last four chapters are written from the larger picture and speak to how Alcatraz has come to affect Indian activism as well as the true price and meaning of this pivotal event. The editors fully acknowledge that there were protest activities that may have had a larger impact on the national consciousness but they point out that rightly or wrongly, there was, and to this day remains, a perception of Alcatraz as the beginning point for the protests that were to come in the following years. My study illustrates that the creation of CIASU as well as the activism of its student members, connects to and reflects the consciousness that arose from the occupation of Alcatraz that came to an end in June of 1971.

In addition to social movement literature, my study draws upon and extends the interdisciplinary field of Chicana feminism. Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldua writes about the importance of identity, culture and language in Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza and situates “Mestiza consciousness” in the context of *place*. That is, she argues that, especially for indigenous people, political identity and consciousness are shaped as much by a deep sense of connectedness and relationship to land as much as by language and historical events. Anzaldua’s use of “mestiza” refers to the mixed race offspring of the indigenous Mexican Indian population and the Spanish conquerors and writes of them as a hybrid race-something never seen before and genetically equipped to handle the Old World diseases that would later decimate other indigenous populations (such as measles, typhus and small pox)<sup>27</sup>. Anzaldua equates this hybrid identity with the ability to adapt and survive in often challenging realities and experiences of social and cultural duality. Her work centers on the emergence and shaping of Mestiza consciousness borne

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<sup>27</sup> Anzaldua, pg. 27, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed.

from the twin pillars of her own lived reality and the experiences of family and community based in the sharing of a common stream of historical specificity. Anzaldua describes “mestiza” as “a consciousness of the borderlands.”<sup>28</sup> She builds on the work of Mexican philosopher Jose Vasoconcelos (1882-1959) who envisioned mestizo identity as one that mixes racial identity but which does so not as a way to blend and create hegemony but instead saw *mestizaje* in its guise as difference that results in the ultimate inclusion. While Anzaldua builds on his ideas of mestizo identity, she develops a notion of “borderlands” that is bound to the place of the US/Mexico border and her own experiences but is not limited to only that geographical location. I concur that her definition of “borderlands” is not confined to any one specific geographical place or even one indigenous history and expand what constitutes “borderlands.” My concept of borderlands builds on and is in part, derived from, the histories of indigenous people in the Midwest and especially those that shaped the consciousness of the student founders of CIASU. Two dynamics that influence my theory specifically are the experience of belonging to a minority community within the context of a large urban setting (such as Chicago or Minneapolis) and that of the Reservation system that has defined so much of American Indian identity in the last century.

An important element of the American Indian reservation system that contributes to my theory is the reality of “border towns” which surround many reservations and contribute to a very real sense of two very different worlds existing side-by-side in a relationship that is often as parasitic and damaging as it is symbiotic. In the past (and still in a few areas) these towns were filled with businesses owned mostly by non-Indians that preyed on Indians and the disparity of Reservation living such as liquor stores and pawn shops that exploited the social realities of high unemployment, alcoholism and the breaking down of traditional social structures often resulting in the loss of culture and language. In small part, the actions of CIASU can be seen as an effort at pushing back against the social realities that the border towns represent and the activism of the

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<sup>28</sup> Anzaldua, p. 99, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed.

students in establishing the organization itself can be seen as a way of claiming a psychic or spiritual space of one's own.

Anzaldua's concept of "borderlands" as being an ethnically, culturally, linguistically and socially defined space with boundaries determined by the inhabitants of the space itself informs my dissertation. I build on her work through my argument that the students of CIASU deployed that concept in a manner that expanded on the embodied concept of "borderlands" as spaces that *forced* segregation; my dissertation demonstrates that the Chicano/a and American Indian students at Iowa subverted social structures that were designed to either assimilate or exclude those who were "other." My dissertation illuminates how the students of CIASU, whether consciously or not, would have been aware of "borderlands" (especially those coming from the settlement at Tama as well as those coming from Reservations). I build on Anzaldua's work by showing that the students of CIASU situated themselves within the idea of a "border" as a space that would become one of their own making rather than one designed to exclude them; it was open to those of the dominant culture only through invitation. This maneuver allowed CIASU to create for them an empowering space where cultural identity and historical specificity were recognized as essential elements in the lives of the students as individuals as well as for the group inhabiting the space.

Coming a few years after the creation of the CIASU La Frontera informs this dissertation in part because of the notion Anzaldua puts forth that borders are fluid and shifting, internal as well as external, socially constructed and culturally determined. This interstitial positioning means that it is then possible for these borderlands to serve as sites for social transgression and transformation that ultimately leads to change. Anzaldua describes a border as

...a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.<sup>29</sup>

In the context of the students involved in CIASU, her work speaks to the necessity of a few individual students finding each other and seeking out others like themselves for personal as well as cultural survival within an environment that was mostly unknown to most of them. Anzaldua's work makes it possible to see how the students of CIASU carved a culturally defined space for themselves and why it was important for them to do so once they connected to each other. A clear example of this creation of "space" can be seen in early photographs of the Center. The walls were covered with posters of "Chicano Power"<sup>30</sup> and images of the Aztec Calendar as well as a mural that took up one wall of the living room.

It is clear that through the use of language, music and iconic symbols, the Chicana/o and American Indian students were creating a visibly distinctive space for themselves within the context of the University; in effect, they themselves *were* the border between the cultures they came from and that of the larger university community. The students of CIASU were in essence reconfiguring "white space" through cultural images and sound into a borderland of their own making. I use the term "white space" intentionally for its various interpretations; it refers to the fact that the university population was (and remains) primarily dominant culture as well as in the artistic sense of

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<sup>29</sup> Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* p.25

<sup>30</sup> Many of these are currently in my possession; a gift given to me by Teresa Garcia who had rescued them before they were thrown away. Many of them still have the tape that held them on the wall and some of them were deemed unusable by the inhabitants of the Center because they were considered "dated."

a blank canvas. The space they carved out for themselves became one in which Chicano/a and American Indian identity became home-within the Center they were able to express ethnic and cultural pride without being “other.” Those who came into the Center would find that Chicano/a and American Indian existence was the norm; food, music, dress and the various languages that the student members brought with them were commonplace at the Center. Those who were other than Chicano/a or Indian were faced with the experience of having to adapt to being the outsider once they crossed into “the borderland” defined by CIASU. Because Anzaldúa’s work paves the way so that it becomes possible to understand that CIASU students could *be* the border and also the definers of its parameters; it becomes possible to look into the group on deeper levels and from different perspectives. By realizing that those who make up the border are both in and outside of it, it becomes easier to see that issues such as the gender tensions that may have existed inside the house had very real cultural and personal/political components that complicated any racial and gender tensions that may have existed with the larger community. As Anzaldúa points out early on

...the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third county-a border culture.<sup>31</sup>

In this respect, Anzaldúa’s work in Borderlands/La Frontera informs this dissertation from another important aspect as well; that of the issue of hybridity.

While many of the texts I engage with speak to various levels of social or academic knowledge, Anzaldúa articulates recognition of the Mestiza as a new creature-one born of ancient roots and modern consciousness. It is in her discussion of the hybrid,

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<sup>31</sup> Anzaldúa, p.25

the different, the new identity steeped in culture and tradition that, for me, she speaks about and echoes the experiences of, the students of CIASU. Anzaldua calls forth indigenous identity-in the guise of the new Mestiza-borne of Mexican and Indian identity<sup>32</sup>. In a very real sense, “the house” and the students of CIASU represent a new and different being as well. They represent the coming together of Mexican and Indian, of beings defined by cultures that were mostly unknown to those in this place they found themselves in called Iowa City. This group of individuals who connected to each other carved out a space for themselves that was different from-not necessarily separate but different from-that of most of those around them.

Anzaldua’s work illuminates the importance and the depth of the intersection of culture and identity as a survival tactic for indigenous people. She makes it possible to look at the activities of CIASU through the lens of identity and provides insight as to how culture and language not only comforted but also provided motivation for the students of CIASU. The endeavors the students chose to focus on as a group was a reflection of their concerns and traditions not only as a group but also as individual cultural beings, each bringing with them experiences that would inform their choices and activism while at Iowa.

The era of the 60s and 70s represents a period in which student activists expressed ideals of equality and justice steeped in identity with an insistence that the larger society recognize the importance of cultural sovereignty and self-definition. Many writers have

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<sup>32</sup> In large part this recognition of the hybrid, the “new Mestiza” is where I personally come into this discussion. As a two-spirit, traditionally raised Mexican American woman of Kickapoo descent, finding “the house” was a revelation. Even though there were at times undercurrents of homophobia, it was clear that my indigenous identity was what was valued above all else; it was the only place I felt “at home.”

addressed this particular intersection of experience, history and identity in their own voices and in edited texts with the words of other writers. Key to my own dissertation, some of these texts illustrate the ways in which “theory” is often produced in non-traditional formats that confound and in some cases defy, the narrow forms favored and legitimated by the Academy<sup>33</sup>.

There are several elements these texts have in common that separate them from what has traditionally been recognized as “theory” and while each of these elements is important, no one is more meaningful than the other. These all have in common an insistence on the power of personal narrative and an understanding that “voice” comes from a body that is often a site of contention and often contempt.<sup>34</sup> There is also an insistence on historicity as a backdrop and foundation that shapes the now. An overview of some of these texts illustrates that the students of CIASU were actively living theories of resistance, subversion and empowerment in their everyday lives.

Anzaldua is the editor of another key text for me, Making Face, Making Soul Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspective by Feminist of Color. In this work she includes American Indian, Chicana, Asian, and African American women who write about their existences as mothers, lesbians, sisters and wives. This incredibly diverse gathering of women writing about their lives includes essays, short stories, short poetry

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<sup>33</sup> It has long been my belief that theories which look at the lives of (especially) people of color and are written in “leaned language” that means nothing to those being written about in journals beyond the reach of the subject is the ultimate form of exclusion and “othering.”

<sup>34</sup> I am reminded of a news cast during my first semester at UI in the early days of the “English Only” movement. A local farmer/spokesman for the group was being interviewed and asked why he disliked the Mexican people in his small very rural town. With his wife silent and nodding beside him he replied that he had nothing but language against them since “I see them at the Wal-Mart and their kids look clean.”



and long-form songs that talk about challenges to survival as cultural, raced and gendered beings. There is strength in the individual recounting of stories that honor roots from this assortment of daughters of the Academy as well as immigrants, vegetable sorters and theory makers. This collection includes the words of former CIASU members Joy Harjo<sup>35</sup> and Papusa Molina and Sandra Cisneros alongside those of Audre Lord, Pat Mora, Janice Gould, Chela Sandoval, Maria C. Lugones, Beth Brant and Paula Gunn Allen to name just a very few. The power of this collection of words is not only that it exists but that for many learners such as myself it was and often continues to be, an introduction to the writers themselves and to the concept of theory making as being something other than an inaccessible abstract concept out of the reach of less academic beings.

Anzaldua performs an interesting maneuver that illustrates the power of liberatory practice in the way that the six sections are organized into three areas—a beginning, middle and an end (of sorts) that is really the jumping off point to another beginning. The first two sections focus on the observations of the writers of their different experiences of a shared racism and exclusion in larger society. The writers delve into experiences of betrayal and denial looking within their own communities and relationships often naming their own complicity in shared oppressions. The middle area centers on transformation; sections three and four focus on the discovery of the voice and the power of giving name to all manner of injustice and exclusion. The third area focuses on political alliances, subversive acts and solidarity; it is here where liberatory practice is manifest and it is here that Anzaldua's perspective ties into that of writers such as Chela

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<sup>35</sup> Harjo, "I Send You Back" from She Had Some Horses.

Sandoval whose work is also very influential to my dissertation. The value of this last area lies in the fact that not only does Anzaldua move theory into practice with this maneuver and she does so by utilizing the words of women of color themselves.

In a similar vein, American Indian women have been writing on their experiences of exclusion and racism through the personal as well as through institutional structures designed to eradicate Indian identity. Reinventing The Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America is a text edited by Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird with Patricia Blanco, Beth Cuthand and Valerie Martinez. In some respects, I see this anthology as a sister companion to Borderlands/La Frontera and Harjo makes reference to this herself in the Introduction where she makes connections and distinctions between Mestiza identity and that of American Indian women.<sup>36</sup>

This collection of essays, stories and poetry focuses on the voices of American Indian women and as the title implies, there is a political undercurrent running throughout the text and an activist edge to many of the writings. While many of the pieces are very short as in Making Face, others are more traditional essays and well-crafted short stories, many of them speaking of the physical, psychological, social and psychic effects of contemporary and historical displacement while others speak to cultural survival, resistance and the power of *being here*. Harjo, Bird and their sister editors make a meaningful connection to Anzaldua through the voices of the women whose work is included in the anthology and in the way that each of the writers connects her personal experiences to the complicated history of individual tribal/US governmental relations based in on-going attempts at eradication and erasure.

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<sup>36</sup> Harjo, p.27

American Indian women of all ages and from many tribal groups, some living urban lives and others rural, speak as mothers, daughters, wives, lovers, friends and community members in a brief statement before each of their works. In this way the editors make it possible for the writer to give context and depth to her own work; the writer, the woman inhabits and names her world in ways that are meaningful to her. Through this maneuver the editors' open doors between the writer and the reader; instead of acting as gatekeepers they make it possible for the border, the boundary between writer and reader to diminish according to the comfort level of the writer herself.

In Methodology of the Oppressed Chela Sandoval examines methodologies employed by oppressed groups to situate themselves within and to overcome/navigate oppressive social and institutional structures. She develops a complex and multi-layered theoretical framework she calls 'oppositional consciousness' that is synthesized out of five distinct categories used by US Third World Feminists<sup>37</sup> and other oppressed groups to transform "dominant power relations." She characterizes these five categories as: "equal rights," "revolutionary," "supremacist," "separatist" and "differential." These five categories represent strategies for navigating and subverting institutional and social structures that disempower groups that have traditionally not had access to mechanisms of power and often functioned on the fringes of society. Sandoval's work brings to light the ways in which these groups have utilized each of these categories with limited success; in developing her theory of oppositional consciousness, she illustrates that by taking the strongest element of each of the strategies and synthesizing them into a new

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<sup>37</sup> US According to Sandoval, the term Third World Feminism arises out of the fact that women of color in the US are situated more closely with Third World women than with American feminists.

form-oppositional consciousness-oppressed people are able to access power structures in ways that are meaningful to *them*. It shows that those who have historically operated outside traditional power structures and institutions have been able to make social progress through their own efforts by navigating social and power systems in a manner developed out of their oppression. Her work is meaningful to my dissertation because it makes it possible to recognize the tools that the students of CIASU were able to utilize in their efforts to make progress for and beyond themselves.

Sandoval's work informs my examination of CIASU primarily because her theoretical frameworks focus on the ways in which people of color navigate dominant culture defined institutions and structures with strategies that have come out of their own experiences of oppression and exclusion. One of the more important features of Sandoval's work is that she offers context for this theoretical grounding that springs from, and which leads to, a pedagogical evolution that results in an effective, culturally defined praxis. She illuminates the often hard-to-see complications and speaks of the implications of intersectionality in a way that satisfy the quantifiable standards of the academe as well as those who often accuse people of color of "imagining" injustices or over-reacting.

Sandoval makes one argument that focuses primarily on women and the second that looks at group dynamics. In the first case, she discusses the ways in which women of color would often push against the insistence by white feminists on the use of gender as the primary site of theory, resistance and analysis during the early days of the second wave of feminism. The second is her analysis of power structures and institutions and the ways in which oppressed groups navigate these contested sites and create strategies for

empowering themselves within them; while Sandoval applies her lens to (mostly) women, I would argue that her points apply to the larger social and cultural group as well.

In regard to issues centering on second wave feminism, Sandoval makes the observation that U.S. women of color

...have long understood, however, that especially race, but also one's culture, sex, or class, can deny comfortable or easy access to any legitimized gender category, that the interactions between such social classifications produce other, *unnamed* gender forms with the social hierarchy (italics mine)<sup>38</sup>

Sandoval's work focuses on specific forms for resisting the often subtle and invisible strictures that serve to keep the majority in power, seemingly without intent or malice. She identifies four distinctive ideologies and "topography of consciousness"<sup>39</sup> that lead to a fifth form that springs from them. It is this fifth or "differential" form which has evolved from and incorporates aspects of, the earlier forms and synthesizes them into the new or fifth form that defines what Sandoval comes to call "Oppositional Consciousness."

By uncovering and naming a mode of analysis that recognizes, respects and articulates a framework applicable to a particular generational period that often focuses on the importance of culture, Sandoval provides my own work with an important new lens. This new tool not only gives voice and concrete shape to questions that arise about why CIASU came to be but also make it possible to understand some of the unspoken (or in the case of this study undocumented) reasons/motivations for several of the activist projects that were often at the core of CIASU.

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<sup>38</sup> Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed U.S. Third World Feminisms* 44.5

<sup>39</sup> Sandoval, *ibid.*, 54.6 The four forms that Sandoval identifies are 1)Equal Rights Form, 2)The Revolutionary Form, 3) The Supremacist Form and 4)The Separatist Form.

Sandoval's work offers a theoretical framework within which it becomes possible to simultaneously expose both oppression and oppositional consciousness that might not otherwise be seen. What her work is missing is concrete examples of her theories; however, the lived realities of the student activists and the history of CIASU provide a clear illustration of the dynamics Sandoval is describing and the tools she exposes.

Feminist theory has also contributed to this dissertation through the work of Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Collins work is derived from her own experiences as a Black woman yet the theoretical framework she develops has implications for most other oppressed groups despite differences. Collins' theory of multiplicative oppression postulates that in discussions of race, class, age, gender and/or sexuality (I would suggest that history is also often a component of oppression), it is necessary to recognize that they intersect with each other and it is at this point that each multiplies and complicates the other; these become more complex and further nuanced when age or sexuality become a part of the discussion as each of these brings with it oppressions specific to itself.

While Collins applies her theory to the lives of African American women, I use it to better understand the challenges faced by the students of CIASU; when the founding members arrived at Iowa they did so not only as minority students but two were women and another came with experience of poverty and street life and each brought with them their own historical specificity that would give shape to their activism. Collins multiplicative theory gives depth to my dissertation in that her work makes it possible to see that the student members of CIASU were not simply dealing with life in a new environment but that they were brown and red students building a site (the Center) for

their own empowerment. Further, the place they were building the organization was like many other institutions; it was open to them but that did not mean it would make them feel welcome or offer the types of support they needed as students to succeed (institutional racism) and they would have to create their own structures for creating a space that would serve their needs. By utilizing a key concept of “Black Feminist Thought” (and not simply appropriating it)-that of multiplicity of oppression-it becomes easier to understand that the creation of CIASU was not only an act for survival but also a way of bringing liberatory theory into practice in a concrete and meaningful way that would affect all who became a part of the organization.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This interdisciplinary dissertation is to my knowledge the first to focus specifically on the creation of the Chicano Indian American Student Union at the University of Iowa in 1971, and approach this work from the perspective of the student founders and members themselves. I intend to focus on the students involved in this organization, their activist endeavors and the ways in which they brought issues of identity to the fore at Iowa against the backdrop of the turmoil and social movements of the time. My focus interrogates CIASU with the Student Movement a backdrop and as Iowa as the foreground. This approach presents a challenge at the intersection of the pedagogical and the personal. Pedagogical difficulties arise in that there are gaps in the organizational and historical record of CIASU; these “gaps” are in part what lead to the personal challenge. In the case of CIASU, there is little or no documentation as to the inner workings of the group; there is no written record of actions were planned, how decisions were made and whether or not there were disagreements involved in the process among the individuals. Much of the information that I have is the result of private conversations with Rusty Barceló as well as conversations with other members from those first years. These conversations have taken place at gatherings to commemorate organizational anniversaries as well as at two of the first Chicano/Indian alumni organizational meetings. As with other groups’ who deemed their activities subversive or beyond the boundaries of administrative bodies, some of the work that defined CIASU was not something they wanted documented or that they wanted to have



to account for in the “official” record.<sup>40</sup> My challenge is two-fold: to walk the line between reporting and respecting the secrets and stories that I have been privy to and that have been shared with me in such a way that makes it possible to illuminate a hidden history so that it is not lost while doing so in a way that maintains academic integrity and expands our knowledge of how one group of minority students managed to survive and thrive in a world completely foreign to most of them since they were first generation college attendees and there was not an organizational structure in place for them to call upon. In order to do this I look to the work of writers such as Anzaldua and Harjo who take the words of those who have lived a history (specifically their respective edited texts This Bridge Called My Back and Reinventing the Enemy’s Language) then contextualize those words by extending frameworks recognizable to academicians; not by taking rigid frameworks and attempting to make them fit where they do not. My work is also informed by the work of black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins’ work on multiplicative oppression which illuminates some of the complexities encountered by CIASU members in establishing the organization and navigating university life as minority students.

My methodology is one that utilizes a variety of sources working in concert with each other in order to produce a deeper understanding of the dynamics leading to the creation of the CIASU in 1971. I utilize primary source material from archival collections as well as interviews and personal recollections and secondary sources such as newspaper reports and fairly recent texts that examine the impact that issues of identity

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<sup>40</sup> One example of this is a certain road trip that the members of El Teatro and Los Bailadores took to Texas to perform. It involves a University vehicle, a sanctioned driver and under-age drinking.

and culture injected into the turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s. The history of CIASU is contextualized by placing its creation in the historical record questioning and understanding the students themselves, providing a rich sense of how the events taking place in the larger society were translating into the fabric of Midwestern existence from the perspective of minority students.

The use of this theoretical grounding makes it possible to recognize the ways in which different threads of meaning change each other at the intersection of student activism, social unrest, history and culture. My work is firmly seated in an understanding that at this intersection these threads do not initially seem to relate to each other in ways that impact and change each other. It is the use of the multiplicative perspective my analysis is based on that takes each individual element and recognizes that none of them can remain unchanged in relation to each other but rather, that each reality is changed and magnified *because* of their shared interaction in relation to each other. Utilizing this theoretical form creates a deeper meaning and a richer context of each phenomenon at this intersection; for example, in a discussion of race and gender, neither can remain unchanged in relation to the other. The multiplicative perspective complicates both, in this case gender is now racialized and race now becomes gendered; in trying to understand discrimination we are better able to see that that there are layers to discrimination. As an example, in an analysis of oppression and female Mexican domestics, it is not sufficient to say that their discrimination happens simply because they are women or because they are Mexican or of a lower (working) class; a thorough analysis must recognize that her discrimination occurs because they are female, Mexican *and* domestics. Utilizing this approach means that in this dissertation, an examination of

the student activism of CIASU brings with it the understanding that their work was based on their lived experiences and shared histories of racial, social and gender-based inequality stemming from socially and institutionally sanctioned exclusions and efforts at genocide as well as their shared ethnic identities as “other” be they Chicano/a or American Indian. This intersectional dynamic not only illuminates the negative and long-term aspects of exclusion but also allows me to examine the ways in which culture and ethnic identity worked as factors to empower and sustain the students of CIASU. Focusing on the realities of these students and the ways in which they navigated new and unknown institutional structures permits the reader access to those realities; using the social movements of the day provides a rich context in which to better understand the depth of the accomplishment of creating a vibrant and viable organization where none had existed before.

Changing social realities, creating community within chaos and connecting to and through activism were all factors that made it possible for the Chicano and American Indian students at Iowa to come together as a unified group to affect change. The act of finding and connecting to each other was not only the starting point for the early members but also worked to create a space during this turbulent era in which they could safely explore what it meant to be Chicano/a or American Indian; it allowed them to discover the possibilities open to them that had never existed for minority students in the past. As individuals, the students might be lost among the masses due in large part to their small numbers; in coming together they were able to create a cohesive whole made up of “the other” that set them apart from their dominant culture peers. They were able to accomplish this in part through their insistence on the importance of the role of culture

and history in their identity as student members of the University community. The texts that I employ focus on the social movements that informed the activism and students of the 1960s and 1970s; many of them focus on the ways in which minority identity shifted the approach to activism giving it a meaning often outside the boundary of mainstream, student activism. The documents that I utilize focus on the words and actions of the Chicano and American Indian students at Iowa themselves; they highlight the motivations and concerns of the students in their own words for the most part and provide local and regional context for their activism.

One of the problems that my research method has revealed is that reliance on the printed records of CIASU's founding skews to bias the perspective of the Chicano/a students and renders the American Indian students invisible. This occurs due to several factors, some relate directly to culture and some may be attributable to individual personalities; no matter which though, the end result is the same-there is little evidence of the involvement of the American Indian student members of CIASU, especially in the early days. It initially appears to be a case of the Chicano/a students excluding or sidelining the American Indian students' perspective because of their greater numbers and while numbers do indeed have some bearing, my suspicion is that the true cause is a combination of reasons. American Indian cultural modes of transmission of knowledge and information rely heavily on the tradition of oral history and storytelling; both are now long-recognized aspects of most American Indian tribal groups pedagogy and for most, there is rarely a record of written words. The oral method coupled with the disparate proportion of Chicano/a to American Indian CIASU members would have the result of disadvantaging the American Indian students.

This limitation in perspective has consequences and in the case of my dissertation, I was left looking for the “voice” of founding member Ruth Pushetonequa; incredibly, it is all but silent in the historical record as it currently exists. Despite the lack of Pushetonequa’s active presence in the existent historical record (as compared to that of Zavala and Barceló), evidence of her work for the group can be seen as soon as the following year; she helped to recruit enough American Indian students so that they were finally a discernible presence within CIASU. By 1973, two years after its founding, American Indian students were still in the minority in the organization but there were enough of them to begin adding their voice and concerns to the CIASU newsletter *El Laberinto* and to begin hosting conferences and pow-wows. Further research into the early days of CIASU would be more productive with the inclusion of more information on the thoughts and concerns of the American Indian students; a future dissertation collecting the oral histories of members from those first years would give greater depth to the information and provide insight as to the concerns and activism of the voices that are currently missing.

#### Archival Collections

The two collections I am primarily using are housed in the University of Iowa Libraries system as these collections document the voices, concerns and actions of the CIASU students themselves in a way that no other collections provide. These collections make it possible to interrogate the group dynamic as well as some of the conflict of a fledgling organization struggling to define its role in the context of a larger, mostly unknown University community. The papers relating to the **Chicano Indian American Student Union** are in Special Collections under the current organizational name, the

Latino Native American Cultural Center (LNACC). The collection-which has not been completely processed-is made up of organizational records, correspondence between the CIASU students and the University Administration as well as record of the group's activist endeavors. It includes the planning records for national conferences focusing on Chicano/a issues as well as American Indian issues of the 1970s. I also use the collection of **Nancy "Rusty" Barceló** housed in the Iowa Women's Archives. The collection is extensive and covers her years at Iowa as a student and as an Administrator. Her collection is invaluable to my dissertation because not only is she one of the founding members of CIASU but she was also the Advisor to the group. It was in her role as Advisor that she was able to procure many of the services that the group would need to make their activism effective as well as a working knowledge of how the system worked so that CIASU could cast a wider net in reaching out to minority students outside the Iowa City area. Her collection also demonstrates her own involvement with other groups in the University and documents the ways in which she personally would often work as an advocate for Chicano/a and American Indian students in her early career and later would also work with women's groups as well as gay and lesbian organizations. It is clear in her papers that, while she was an integral part of the organization, it would not have evolved in the way it did or have thrived in the way that it did without her direct involvement. Barcelo's understanding of the administrative side of the University insured that the activism of CIASU went beyond the boundaries of Iowa City; she helped the group access the tools necessary to travel and reach out to communities that might otherwise have never been exposed to the work of Chicano/a and American Indian students outside the University itself. Despite the fact that in her papers there is the

constant reference to her co-founders and the combined and sustained efforts of the CIASU students themselves, there is no doubt in my mind that her influence and ability to access the institutional structures cannot be discounted; it is clear from my research that CIASU would have been a very different organization without her efforts.

A study of these archival collections provides insights that are possible only through the words and actions of the students themselves. In both of these collections I focus on the early papers from 1970 through 1974; this time period provides insights into the challenge of setting up CIASU as well as the struggle to define the organizational identity and goals. In this dissertation I focus on the activist work of the group and look for how they gave shape and meaning to the students and to the group itself. While I will focus on the organization aspect of the group, one of the primary components of my work will be to focus on the written record produced by the students, specifically their newsletters and the literary magazine. It is within these documents that they articulate their concerns and express themselves as culturally and ethnically defined members of the activist community in Iowa City; it is in these that they develop as an organization and delineate the ways in which identity separates them from their activist peers.

#### Newspaper Articles

From each of these collections I utilize the newspaper clippings from local sources such as the *Daily Iowan*, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* and the *Iowa City Press Citizen* from 1970 to 1974. I focus on these texts because they provide an insight into how the group was perceived by the larger, outside community and how their work was seen by the majority population during this turbulent period in Iowa and nationally. The articles that have been saved and collected by the students in the early years of the

organization may be seen not only as a reflection of the interests and dissertations the students were taking on but also permit a glimpse into the image of themselves that they were trying to put into the public consciousness.

#### Interviews and Recollections

Rather than conduct interviews for this endeavor, I am choosing to use interviews that have been conducted by journalists, other researchers and/or historians as well as personal recollections by the founders and early student members of the organization that are found within the collections. The LNACC and Barceló papers contain files with newspaper articles, many of which include interviews with student members of CIASU as well as the three founding members. The collections also contain correspondence between the members in which they reminisce specifically about the “early days” and the challenges of starting up the organization. This is especially true in the cases of Zavala and Barceló; but for Barceló especially, as an administrator she would often speak about the role of CIASU and how it came to be. Her papers contain the texts of speeches she gave and talks in which she discusses the importance of the organization to Chicano/a and American Indian students at Iowa. Additionally, the recollections/reflections/recuerdos that I am drawing most of my information from have been submitted by the founding members and some of the early student members of CIASU, usually as part of a celebration marking major milestones in the organization such as anniversaries.<sup>41</sup> The value of using these correspondences lies in two different areas; those that were submitted for “official” events (CIASU anniversaries) speak to the

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<sup>41</sup> The recollections include notes from Rusty Barceló’s remarks and in the case of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a letter from Antonio Zavala that Rusty read during the proceedings.



“public” record of the organization. Then there are the private correspondences that tend to be more informal and in which personal memories are mentioned. Examples of both can be found in each of these collections and it is within the correspondence that a record of the challenges and how they were overcome can be discerned.

Some of these recollections are also included in the notes from speeches and talks given by Rusty Barceló in her various Administrative positions over the years at the Universities of Iowa, Minnesota and Washington working with minority student populations. I have found very few interviews with Tony Zavala but there are letters from him in the archival record as well as some of his writing in *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto* during his days as a student. In the case of Ruth Pushetonequa, I have yet to encounter any kind of formal interview or remembrance. What I have found are references to her and her activism by the other founding members and some of the early student members of CIASU. The lack of information on her is an illustration of the limits of using only historical documentation; the references to her and the work she engages in illustrate that Pushetonequa was involved and an active member of the organization but it is only through the voices and perspectives of others that it becomes evident of just how active a member she was in CIASU. By utilizing the interviews and correspondence, I am making a conscious effort to focus on the words of the students of CIASU themselves; the interviews, newsletter and literary magazine provide insight into what the students were focusing on at that particular moment in time without the filters of time or hindsight. The correspondence that lies mostly in the Barceló Collection in support of the Center as well as their private correspondence gives me an idea of how the founders

and early members saw their accomplishments and what they themselves saw as their triumphs and failures.

CIASU Publications: El Laberinto, Nahuatzen and Café Chicano

Within the LNACC/CIASU papers are collections of publications that the students produced. In the early years of the group, within the climate of engaged activism, the members of CIASU were prolific and profound in putting their message and concerns out into the larger U of I community.

*El Laberinto* (also called *Laberinto*) was the monthly newsletter that went out to students. It carried news of events within the group and served to communicate information to the student members as well as the larger community. *Nahuatzen* was a literary magazine produced by the students to showcase the original art, poetry and essays of the students. It would often include the work of established Chicano and American Indian artists and writers as well as reprints of articles that the students would have come across in other publications. It was common for *Nahuatzen* to have articles written in English as well as in Spanish; for those in Spanish, sometimes a translation was offered but at other times none was given.

Of the publications I found in the collections, *Café Chicano* is the one that appears to be incomplete. In the LNACC collection I found only one issue; Vol. 1 No. 4, Sept.-Oct 1972 and it is not included in the Barceló collection. This single issue of *Café Chicano* included original artwork and original poetry as well as cartoons that can be seen in other issues of *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto*. Also included is a lengthy “man on the street” interview conducted by Antonio Zavala with a man who wanted to remain anonymous in an urban location that is also undisclosed. Despite the fact that the

interview is anonymous, the interview is noteworthy because it touches on many of the issues that were being discussed in urban Chicano communities around the country.

#### Other Source Material

Newspaper reports from local papers in the Iowa City area as well as some reports from national news sources have been employed. I also utilize the 1991 dissertation of Linda Yanney, PhD, *The Practical Revolution: An Oral History of the Iowa City Feminist Community* that focuses in part on the founding of the Emma Goldman Clinic for Women in 1972 as well as the Women's Center among other feminist groups. The Yanney document adds social, cultural and historical depth to my investigation into the creation of CIASU in that it illustrates other activist endeavors taking place in Iowa City at the same time that CIASU was being founded. Further, it places the work and concerns of this group of activist Chicano and American Indian students into the context of the larger Iowa City community. In true interdisciplinary fashion I have culled information from sources that have opened up to researchers as a result of the digital revolution. I utilize archived on-line media from a range of sources such as Pacifica Radios' special project: *1968 Revolution Rewind* [www.pacificaradioarchives.org/projects/revolution](http://www.pacificaradioarchives.org/projects/revolution), a collaborative teaching effort called *Radical Times: The Anti-War Movement of the 1960s* [www.thinkquest.org](http://www.thinkquest.org)<sup>42</sup> and *Iowa Pathways: Iowa History Resources for Students and Teachers*.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In conjunction with Oracle Education Foundation

<sup>43</sup> This is a project of Iowa Public Television.

## CHAPTER 4: KEY FIGURES AND EVENTS OF 1968 THROUGH 1970

The Chicano Indian American Student Union was officially founded in 1971 but the heart and soul of the organization can be found in the political climate and events of 1968 as much as in the social movements, student activism and protests of the time. One way of understanding the significance of the creation of CIASU through its founders and early members is to remember that they are in effect, a *Mid-western centric grounding and experience* that reflected that of many Chicano and American Indians across the US in communities large and small, urban and rural. CIASU was a uniquely Iowan expression of the social movements and activism that was sweeping across the fire.

This chapter seeks to understand what national events and movements influenced the student founders and how those influences affected the activism of CIASU; further, I will be looking at how that activism was shaped by its Mid-Western roots and how it informed the activist endeavors the group would engage in and with. I will begin by looking at post World War II America and the ways in which a changing political climate intersected with rising consumerism and the influence of television and how these phenomenon shaped the movements that were the most influential to the founders of CIASU: the Chicano, American Indian, Women's Movements and the Anti-War Movement.<sup>44</sup> Looking at the movements establishes context and I will then "shift gears" and take a chronological approach spanning 1968 to 1972 to better understand the events that worked to help the student union become a reality. Moving from historical context

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<sup>44</sup> Involvement in the Anti-War movement was pivotal for the founding members and it would be an important part of life on college campuses throughout the time period I am examining. Despite the fact that I have not given it its own section in this chapter, it figures prominently in those that follow.

and describing the movements to a chronological account allows me to establish the grounding that shaped the organization and using a linear chronology makes it possible to better understand the ways in which the organization was able to grow and adapt as it moved from an idea into a student defined organization.<sup>45</sup> This will require a brief historical overview that will include how the founding members encountered each other and I will be looking at the events that were shaping the activism of CIASU.

When thinking about the movements that were reshaping the country, a troubling aspect is that most of the images available to mainstream Americans were typically of events taking place in urban areas or on reservations and most coverage tended to focus on violent actions; the real work of helping to create change in these same areas was often overlooked. Because CIASU was not large and their impact tended to be primarily local and regional, they escaped the attention of the broader, national media which was focused on typically urban or inner-city events that were more sensational and at times more violent but which provided better “copy”. In the case of Chicanos, happenings that garnered media attention would often be focused on those taking place along the states bordering (or near) Mexico itself and urban areas such as Chicago, Illinois and Houston, Texas. The exception was that of covering the agricultural regions where Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers were involved. In the case of American Indians, attention was focused on those areas where Chicano and American Indian populations existed in more concentrated numbers such as Minneapolis/St. Paul in Minnesota, or where activism/protest had turned to violence. Examples for this argument

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<sup>45</sup> Utilizing a chronological approach also gives me an organizational tool that prevents me from being overwhelmed; it allows me to look at different events as strands of influence and then take those, weave them together and examine the whole as well as the individual places where they touch and interact with each other.

include the takeover of Alcatraz in November 1969<sup>46</sup> or the incident of a shoot-out with Federal Officers at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in February 1973.<sup>47</sup> Both of these events, which were pivotal in creating awareness of the American Indian Movement (AIM) brought attention to the state of modern Indian affairs by sensationalizing the most militant of acts but that ultimately led to an interest in the true state of American Indians.

It was during this explosive and dynamic period of American history that Antonio “Tony” Zavala first met Ruth Pushetonequa during their freshman year at University of Iowa. They were joined the following year by the arrival of Nancy “Rusty” Barceló from California. Zavala had come to the University of Iowa from Chicago where he had been an anti-war street activist. In discussing the early encounters between the student founders, it needs to be reiterated that the historical/archival record gives some indication of the work that Zavala was engaged in and includes some reminiscences from him but there is not very much in regard to Pushetonequa other than very brief references to her involvement in the founding of the organization. (As discussed in the previous chapter, the lack of specific information on her activism or involvement is not a true reflection of her commitment to the early organization but instead speaks to the bias perpetuated by the “official” history of CIASU as measured by the written histories that have been collected and which disadvantages many indigenous pedagogical methods.) Most of these

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<sup>46</sup> The incident on Alcatraz Island lasted 19 months. It received much media attention and attracted the support of celebrities such as Jane Fonda and Marlon Brando and the group Credence Clearwater Revival who donated \$15,000 for a boat to safely transport occupiers on and off the island.

<sup>47</sup> Wounded Knee was occupied for 71 days. There has always been a dispute as to how the occupation occurred; it was during this action that many Americans became aware of the existence of AIM-the American Indian Movement, an urban organization that came out of the streets of Minneapolis. Some see the work of AIM as radical, others as heroic.

are found in interviews, letters and articles where Zavala, Barceló and other students recount the early days of CIASU.

### Influential Events and Movements in Forming CIASU

In order to understand where the many root influences of CIASU lie, it is important to remember that this dissertation is grounded in the political climate creating social change nationwide in the late 1960s that made it possible for student groups such as CIASU to emerge. The goal of this chapter is to examine the influences that gave shape to the activist choices of the group; to better understand for instance, why CIASU would choose to focus its energy on dissertations such as recruiting and a pre-school as well as the United Farm Worker's grape and lettuce boycott. It examines how Chicano/a and American Indian students understood, reacted to and interacted with, the events and figures that were taking center stage on the national scene from their Midwestern positionality. While the intersection of influences that helped to shape CIASU has its historical genesis in the migration of (mostly) Mexican families into the Midwest from the Southern and Western regions of the US, this p will begin with those influences that were key influences in the lives of the members of CIASU; for the purposes of this dissertation the Civil Rights, Chicano and American Indian Movements must be at the fore yet I must also acknowledge the influence of the Youth Movement and Women's Movement. The Youth Movement in particular provided the underpinnings of CIASU; it was student defined and centered mostly on college campuses (although there were some high school students involved in advocating for change in their schools, primarily in Los Angeles) and it often rose out of support for anti-war actions. The Women's Movement provided a different voice nationally; locally, an early alliance of mutual support was

established between CIASU and emerging Iowa City women's organizations. The Women's Movement in the years covering the scope of this project (1968-1972) was still seen as mostly radical with many minority women's involvement consisting of the criticism that it was mostly a "white women's movement"<sup>48</sup> and as such, the focus was not yet on communities but on solely on women themselves. The Women's Movement would change and grow in a relatively short amount of time and more women would be drawn to the movement, but at this point in time it could be politically divisive. Ties would be established between CIASU and the Women's Movement early on in Iowa City but those early ties would be among allies working for social change.

#### The Courts and Civil Rights-Crafting a Legal Basis for Change

This section briefly examines the Civil Rights Movement and decisions at the Supreme Court level that would affect the student founders of CIASU before they arrived at Iowa in an effort to understand why and how they believed they could create a Chicano and American Indian union. The Civil Rights Movement's influence can be traced back to the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>49</sup> and *Hernandez v. Texas* both in 1954. The *Hernandez* case was decided on May 3, and was the first Mexican American Civil Rights case heard by the Supreme Court. In it, the Court ruled that Mexican-Americans and all other racial groups have equal protection under the

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<sup>48</sup> This is an overly-simplified statement but for the purposes of this paper my focus is where the shaping influences for CIASU lay; the Women's Movement which has had such a tremendous effect on society was, at this point in time, problematic for many minority identified groups.

<sup>49</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* the US Supreme Court decision that mandated integration of public schools for African American students on May 17, 1954.



Fourteenth Amendment<sup>50</sup>. The *Brown* decision was handed down two weeks later ending school segregation and while *Brown* is the better known of the two cases, the fact remains that the Supreme Court was aware of the scope of discrimination and was taking actions that would have implications for years to come. The founding members of CIASU were school aged children at that time and would have been at least somewhat aware of the ruling and even if they did not understand that laws which might affect them had changed, they would have been aware of the various reactions to the forced integration of public school systems throughout the United States.

The refusal of Rosa Parks to relinquish her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama city bus on December 1, 1955 and the ensuing Montgomery Bus Boycott would provide an example of non-violent civil disobedience and offer a demonstration of the power of the group dynamic and organization to bring practical social change to discriminatory institutions and practices. The Bus Strike led to other civil rights demonstrations and actions that were prominently, and constantly, in the national spotlight; whether these acts of civil disobedience had a direct influence on the student founders of CIASU is unclear. What is clear though is that the grade school children who would become the founders of CIASU could not help but be influenced by the images and the discussions that were taking place all around them.

**The Civil Rights Act of 1964** was the culmination of overcoming several ineffectual acts (the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960) that were designed to protect

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<sup>50</sup> Pete Hernandez was a farm laborer convicted of killing Joe Espinosa and sentenced to death in Jackson County, Texas. His legal team argued that he could not get an impartial trial from a jury made up entirely of White Caucasians (Jackson County had a 25-year history of “whites only” juries) and were able to convince the court as to the discrimination. The historical value of *Hernandez* at that point in time is that it extends to **all** racial groups equal protection, extending beyond the White/Negro dichotomy.

Black Americans (primarily in the southern states) from violence and accessing schools, churches and voting sites. The 1964 Act outlawed segregation in public spaces and in many ways, was seen as honoring the memory of John F. Kennedy whose assassination had shocked the world and the nation. Although Kennedy's administration is not remembered for having championed Civil Rights causes because of the White House's attention to the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy was on record as being a strong proponent of equality for Black Americans. Upon ascending to the presidency, Lyndon Johnson made the passing of the Act one of his priorities.

The following year saw the passing of the **Voting Rights Act of 1965** which outlawed practices designed to disenfranchise Black Americans through the use of poll taxes and "literacy tests" whose sole purpose was to stem the increasing numbers of Blacks brave enough to try to exercise the right to vote. This Act came about for many reasons including the violent reaction and continued resistance of southern white supremacists to the enacting of the Civil Rights Act as well as the increased presence and non-violent activism of Reverend Martin Luther King. The increased levels of violence had the effect of mobilizing and creating militancy among mostly urban Black Americans and one of the most vocal proponents of that militancy was Malcolm X. His position was one of more direct action against the white establishment and in many ways his political stance was the opposite of Dr. King's. In many respects they represented both sides of the same coin in the struggle for equality and access.

#### The Movements, Rising Consumerism and Television

By the time the founding members of CIASU made their way to Iowa they had seen and more than likely felt, the many forces for change being exerted on American

society. One of those forces would have been a student led and student defined activism that erupted on college campuses all across the country and that was constantly being covered by television news programs. The rise of activism and social movements helped to expand television programming away from its staple of providing entertainment and suggestions for what to buy next into programming that would report news and world events as well as placing the viewer in the position of asking why and how social realities were changing so quickly at the hands of America's young people.

Known as the "Youth Movement," or "Student Movement" this phenomenon arose in part out of the coming of age of the children of World War II veterans in conjunction with the influence of the presidency of John F. Kennedy. His youthful outlook combined with his progressive approach to social issues along with his call to the nations' young people to get involved and make a difference would act as a spark to ignite the interest and involvement of the younger generation in a way that had not been seen before. The election of Kennedy coincided with a rapidly changing world grappling with the aftermath of McCarthyism and "The Red Scare". The "Baby Boomers" as they would come to be called were a testament to the post-World War II optimism the United States experienced as well as a burgeoning consumerism based on a solidly middle-class economy. Others have written about the phenomenon that is the "baby boom generation" and the ways in which this group of offspring changed society then and who still continue to change the social and fiscal fabric of the US. This specific demographic group re-shaped society through "strength in numbers" and the momentum that arose out of their social consciousness and activism of the 1960s and 1970s. These changes can be seen most clearly through the advances gained by the Civil Rights Movement, which, in its

turn, gave rise to the Youth, Black Power, Chicano, American Indian and Women's Movements. Elements from each of these movements contributes to the creation of the Chicano Indian American Student Union at Iowa in one form or another; the importance of the influence of any one movement over another was determined largely by the individual members themselves and how the concerns of that movement resonated in their own lives. Understanding the motivation for the student members provides some insight into the activist groups they chose to embrace and work for within CIASU.

As with any movement that challenges conventional thinking and the status quo, each movement had its adherents as well as its detractors and the movements of this era were no different in that respect. What was different from activism of the past was that for the first time people had the ability to actually see news events as they happened. A generation earlier the adage "a chicken in every pot" had expanded to include the idea of "a television in every living room." Marketing strategies aimed at increasing soap and cereal sales opened the door for the broadcasting of news and exposed many Americans to a world they never realized existed beyond their own front doors. In the context of social change and the social movements that erupted in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the struggle for school desegregation, viewers were now able to witness exactly what the social struggle for equality looked like. They were also witness to who was affected by the struggle and in some respects, television held up a mirror that forced many white, middle class Americans to examine their own attitudes and positions. School segregation was no longer just an abstract idea but a black and white reality that needed to be addressed. Tensions surrounding organizations was now visible but so were those within the movements themselves.

The argument can be made that the very effective marketing of the day helped to make the point that consumerism was the birthright of every American and that consumerism was patriotic as well since it helped put many returning war veterans to work. The counterpoint which would be made by the Youth Movement as well as those seeking social justice was that by indulging in this middle class fantasy, women and everyone marked as “other” were pushed to the side in service to the perceived national greater good or greed as the case may be. It was the middle class fantasy that objectified women while keeping people of color in oppressed, subservient positions that would motivate many young people in the following decades. One of the myths that the Youth Movement challenged was that of “the good old days”; they may have been great for some but only at the expense of others.

Increasing television coverage made it possible to focus on the organizations within the movements themselves. This in turn helped to shine a light on the evolution of groups and the reality that there was often internal bickering and dissension within even the most radical organization. One case in point is that of the Civil Rights Movement which gave rise to the Black Power Movement<sup>51</sup>; the original focus on legislation and institutional equality expanded to include organizations whose cause was that of cultural and social equality, justice and inclusion. Groups taking center stage in this quest included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Black Panthers, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). It was the belief

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<sup>51</sup> It can be argued that the Civil Rights Movement paved the way for all those that would come after; the Anti-War Movement, Chicano Movement and Women’s Movement all took note from the success of the Civil Rights Movement and used it as a way to avoid pitfalls and to move ones’ cause ahead.

by the NAACP that SNCC was their “youth arm” when in reality, SNCC acknowledged their roots in NAACP but saw themselves as a separate organization with their own agenda and concerns. These were the type of organizational “cracks” that were now being seen by television viewers; in the days of print interviews with both groups would not shed much light on the fissure within the group but on television the dispute was visible to any who cared to watch. Illuminating and challenging generational, social/class, racial and gender based differences of the day, the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the power of the medium of television forever changed the American landscape.

#### The Chicano Movement

This movement was especially important to the work of CIASU because of the impact it would have on the organization’s overall identity and the ways in which the activism of the movement influenced the activist endeavors within CIASU.

The Chicano Movement as it came to be known had its roots deep in the history of the colonization of the Americas and the long history of conflict and struggle between the indigenous inhabitants and the colonizers. Those involved in the Chicano Movement would point to the negative effects of that history and delineate the ways in which it contributed to the low status and regard for Chicanos in contemporary culture and society. While the term “Chicano” is quite problematic in an era where those of Mexican, Central and Southern American ancestry are now referred to as “Latino” or (even more problematic) “Hispanic”, the Chicano Movement was among the first efforts by the indigenous peoples of the Americas to come together in an effort to raise awareness of the social and class inequalities of the modern American era. Many in the

Chicano Movement were among the first to point out that the term “Chicano” was meant as an all-encompassing term to include the different nationalities of indigenous America.

The Chicano Movement included many fronts and a broad focus but its genesis as a cohesive and identifiable movement should be understood to have come out of the struggle for the rights of migrant farm workers in the fields of Delano, California with the United Farm Workers (UFW). The work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers moved beyond the agricultural fields in a very short time and motivated other Chicano/a activists. The cause of exposing injustice and racism would expand to include the concerns of the parents of students in inner city schools such as exposing ethnic classifications that worked to perpetuate systemic, institutionally embedded inequalities<sup>52</sup> aimed at perpetuating an unequal system. The Chicano Movement much like the Black Power Movement, advocated for social and institutional change firmly based in ethnic identity with a firm grounding in cultural sensitivity; in the case of Chicanos however, this would often include the additional component of the recognition of the importance of language. “ElMovimiento” as it was called insisted on the inclusion of the recognition of the Spanish language as a central part of that identity and would often rally members around Spanish language events and as a means of creating unity and common ground among urban and rural Chicano/as.

As with other movements of the era, El Movimiento had as its leaders key figures who gave it definition and identity nationally. While the Civil Rights and Black Youth Movements had Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Rosa Parks, there was one figure identified with the Chicano/a Movement perhaps more than any other one; an

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<sup>52</sup> San Miguel, Guadalupe. Brown, Not White pp.56-59

advocate for the rights of California's migrant farm workers, Cesar Chavez quickly became the central symbol in the struggle for equal rights and access for the indigenous workers, most of whom were not of US origin. As co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union along with Dolores Huerta and Gil Padilla, Chavez utilized the non-violent approach of Mahatma Gandhi and drew on his deep roots into union organizing, Catholicism as tools in affecting change for workers in the fields. Chavez' weapons of choice were those learned in the 1950s while working as a union organizer for Community Services Organization (CSO) including organizing boycotts as well as those of the personal fast and non-violent protest marches. Chavez was known as a man of humility and his pacifist approach to highlighting the plight of the less fortunate won him and the movement the support of many outside the Chicano/a community. At the end of his first fast, Presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy was at his side and accompanied him to the Mass he insisted on attending before breaking his fast. Chavez and Kennedy had much in common beyond their strong Catholic roots including their firm belief in the importance of being of service to community and mankind and in the power of the individual to make a difference; shared beliefs both men tried to exemplify in their daily lives. Both men had an impact on the nations' consciousness and in the case of Chavez, his living example would spread from the fields to University campuses and the streets of the urban barrios throughout the country.

The founders and student members of CIASU would engage in activist endeavors that emulated and supported the work of Chavez and the United Farm Workers from their earliest days. They actively worked to support the lettuce boycott on campus and worked with UFW activists' locally to support the boycotts of local markets and to make sure that



the larger community was always aware of the situation for farm workers. Within the first two years the student members would engage in organizing boycotts, reaching out to and teaching the children of migrant and non-migrant Mexican immigrants in eastern Iowa, raising awareness of the situation of Iowa's immigrant population and working with prison inmates of Chicano/a and American Indian descent as well as organizing national conferences aimed at both ethnic populations. CIASU lived the Chicano Movement and worked to make sure that the goals of the larger movement were understood by local communities be they Chicano or not through ongoing outreach, education and through boycotts and protests. The student members worked to create awareness of the diversity of issues and concerns within the Chicano Movement such as labor and educational disparities, especially as they were experienced in the context of Iowa and the Midwest.

#### The American Indian Movement

During the earliest beginnings of CIASU, American Indian identity as the center of a social movement had yet to be defined, at least in the eyes of non-Indians. The American Indian Movement (AIM) came into being in Minneapolis, Minnesota in July of 1968. There is no historical evidence that Ruth Pushetonequa as the "Indian American" part of CIASU was affiliated with AIM but given the political involvements and interest of Pushetonequa and Zavala it is not out of reach to believe that they knew about the organization. The influence of AIM was key to the identity of CIASU because even if the numbers of American Indians involved in the first two years were miniscule, AIM was already part of the national discussion as a result of the Alcatraz takeover and the groups' tactics and politics were *simpatico* with those of the Chicano Movement. Several factors would have made the student founders of CIASU aware of the creation of

the new organization; the proximity of Minneapolis to Tama, Iowa<sup>53</sup> and the existence of “the moccasin telegraph.”<sup>54</sup> Especially during the summer months of powwow season, news of the fledgling group would have been passed along from one weekend to the next as students travelled from one powwow to another via word of mouth and flyers.<sup>55</sup>

AIM did not make its way into the larger, national consciousness as an organization or a Movement until November 20, 1969 with the takeover of Alcatraz Island by seventy Indian people<sup>56</sup> calling themselves “Indians of All Tribes”. The success of the November 1969 occupation was the culmination of two prior attempts at occupying the island. The occupation itself worked to shed light on some of the concerns of Indian people and was orchestrated by mostly Indian young people. There were many motivations for their actions and one in particular was to bring to light the many inequities in the lives of Indian people. For all of the good intentions they might have had, media coverage of the occupation also highlighted conflicting intentions and motivations among the occupiers and as a result, they were not seen as an effective

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<sup>53</sup> The Mesquakie settlement is the home of Ruth Pushetonequa; it is also the closest thing to a reservation in the state of Iowa and as such, is the center of much of the focus of Indian events and happenings in the state.

<sup>54</sup> “The moccasin telegraph” refers to the phenomenon of Indian people to get news and information out to each other without the use of technology.

<sup>55</sup> In the days before cell phones and instant messaging, travelers going from one powwow to another were long-established carriers of messages, goods and news. This illustrates another aspect of the “moccasin telegraph” and it is one that ties back to the Oral Tradition of many indigenous groups. The handing out of flyers at powwows as a way of passing along information has also been a part of the culture for some time; in my own papers I have political and informational flyers I was given at powwows in the late ‘70s.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, Paul Chaat and Robert Allen Warrior. Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee. p. 18

unifying force.<sup>57</sup> Despite disagreements and personal disputes during the occupation, there were none the less individuals who emerged from the action as leaders and spokespersons who would give shape and voice to the needs of American Indian people.

It is worth noting that I believe that the disjointedness and “in-fighting” of those involved in the occupation of Alcatraz (the members of “Indians of All Tribes” as well as members of AIM) can be traced to a history of national anti-American Indian policies aimed at eradicating Indian identity. This is not to discount the role that drugs and alcohol had in the disagreements as they were certainly a factor but they represent only one facet of the disagreements that emerged among the activists on the island. While many non-American Indians might have interpreted the internal struggle as “in-fighting,” looking beneath the surface of those points of tension illustrates that some issues can be traced back to federal legislation designed to weaken and erode American Indian social and familial bonds as well as culture and identity. Federal interventions going back more than a century and continuing on through the 1950s worked to eliminate, discourage and dismantle tribal communities, ties to the land<sup>58</sup> and their indigenous languages. The points of disagreement at Alcatraz (such as how much violence was acceptable, what forms their protests should take and for how long) illustrated manifestations of governmental policies designed to “divide and conquer” the original, indigenous inhabitants’ relations to each other from within their own context of what it meant to be Indian. When Reservation dwellers were at odds with Urban Indians, when Reservations members are divided into “Traditionalists” and “non-Traditionalists” when “pure bloods”

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<sup>57</sup> Smith and Warrior, p. 23

<sup>58</sup> Legislation such as the *Dawes Act* of 1887 worked to diminish and eventually extinguish, the traditional bond of many Indian people to the land with each succeeding generation.

and those of mixed descent are engaged in who is the “true” or “more” Indian than the other-these all represent the culmination of governmental policies that *by design and intent* work to separate and divide Indian people from each other and their Native heritage. To those unaware of the depth of this darker history of practical and political legislation (and that includes most non-Indians) of what must be called institutionally sanctioned genocide, it would appear that the in-house disagreements at Alcatraz were nothing more than petty, personal dissent instead of the expected result of social engineering.

As a movement, AIM members engaged in actions and activities that put them squarely in the public eye and in many ways made the larger society aware of the fact that some American Indians were in fact, not dead, defeated or totally assimilated. The media recognized AIM leaders such as Clyde Bellecourt, John Trudell and Russell Means and they worked to ensure continued exposure to the situation that contemporary Indian people found themselves in as the result of historical acts of institutionalized racism such as the Dawes Act.<sup>59</sup> Each of them went on to continue work within AIM after Alcatraz and in their own distinctive way each worked to create awareness of issues focusing on concerns in Indian country and the role of the US government in either helping or hindering their cause.

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<sup>59</sup> The Dawes Act of 1887 was named for Sen. Henry Dawes of Massachusetts; its intent was to aid in the assimilation of Indian populations by allotments of land to *individuals* as a means of eradicating traditional, communal ways of thinking and relating to other tribal members and the land itself. “Excess” lands were then opened up to settlement by whites and also to the railroads. The effect on tribes was devastating and long-lasting and its effects can be seen on many reservations to this day.

### The Women's Movement

The Women's Movement arose at about the same time as CIASU and in its earliest years there was not much interaction between the Chicano/a and American Indian students and Iowa City feminists. They would eventually become allies in their struggle for greater inclusion but in 1971 there is very little evidence of interaction. Despite that, the Women's Movement could not help but influence some of the members of the house- especially the women-who would challenge the attitude of *machismo* that would occasionally raise its head in the house and make an appearance in the pages of the literary magazine or the newsletter. The message of empowerment coming from the Women's Movement and the spirit of activism would work to create an environment where women were free to question male authority, something that many of the women of CIASU had never had the freedom to do before.

The Women's Liberation Movement in some respects arose out of the intersection of, and frustration of many women with several movements including the Sexual Liberation Movement, the Anti-War Movement and the Youth Movement. The discovery of effective birth control in the early '60s made it possible for women to express themselves sexually in ways that were simply not possible before; the passage of *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court in 1973 further removed the specter of unwanted pregnancy. With these developments, women had the freedom of expanded personal choices and the ability to engage in behaviors that had never been available to them before. This new liberation though, came with the price tag of sexual objectification for many women.

Before the end of the decade, the Sexual Liberation movement gave way to the Women's Liberation Movement, shifting the focus from merely sexual freedom to political, social and economic equality and access to institutional power. The burgeoning

movement was, and still is, described as “the second wave” of feminism-the first wave being defined as that period in the 1920s during which (mostly white) women came together in the struggle for suffrage. In the climate of the various 1960s and 1970s movements for justice, access and equality, and the involvement of women in those various movements, it was only a matter of time before women realized that even within those movements for equality they were often treated as “less than” the men. One of the most infamous sexist quotes of the era came from Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who, upon being asked what the role of women was within the movement replied that it was “on their backs”. It was comments such as Carmichael’s which provided proof to activist women across all Movements that the work they did was under-valued and more often than not, taken for granted. Utilizing the tools that they had acquired from working in grass roots organizations, women took their fledgling feminist movement and moved it beyond the limited sphere of the Universities. They formed “consciousness raising” groups and attempted to engage women from all walks and social strata. They reached out to stay- at-home mothers, working women from all walks of life, black women and Chicanas as well as students. Within the often violent period during which the Second Wave was born, some women’s groups engaged in protests or actions that garnered much media coverage and these were very often labeled as “radical” by the press and by women who felt themselves outside of, and often opposed to, the goals of the movement itself. At times the negative coverage had the effect of alienating many of the very women the movement was trying to reach.

There were key ways in which the Women’s Movement differed from the Chicano, Black and American Indian Movements; the latter typically gained support

within their communities based on shared experiences of exclusion and inequality based on racial and/or ethnic and at times class, identity. The Women's Movement based its work on the belief that there was a shared commonality of gender oppression. Despite its best efforts at proclaiming that "sisterhood is powerful"<sup>60</sup>, the Women's Movement none the less failed to truly speak to the realities of women of color who saw their oppression as more than one of gender politics. Women of color-as they began to identify themselves-would often point out that the Women's Movement was primarily a white women's movement and that it failed to take into account their historical oppression not only as women but as ethnic and racial beings and that it failed to recognize the ways in which the oppression of women of color was magnified by this multiplicity. As a result, a chasm arose between dominant culture feminists and women of color; white women would often accuse women of color of being traitors to their gender for not being active in the women's movement and women of color would argue that white feminists would often ignore the realities of white privilege and access. If there is an upside to the chasm, it is that women of color began to interrogate and write about the multiplicative nature of their oppression. Within a short time there arose theoretical frameworks focusing on Chicana, Black Feminist and Indigenous Women's Theory.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the struggle for a unified Women's Movement on the national front, there was much being accomplished locally in Iowa City during this period. Women could and

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<sup>60</sup> Morgan, Robin Sisterhood is Powerful. This would prove to be one of the key texts of the early Feminist Movement; in it Morgan issues the call for women to come together around their common oppression and the title became a sort of rallying cry for the movement as a whole.

<sup>61</sup> Writers such as Beth Brant, Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval and Joy Harjo would write from their perspectives as women of color and in the process

often did, overlook their cultural and racial differences to work on intersecting points of interest and concern. The on-going national discussion surrounding the importance of adequate and appropriate access to childcare whether women worked or stayed at home or student parents was also an important issue in Iowa City. One of the successes of feminist activism in the community was the creation of the Dum Dum School.<sup>62</sup> As documented by Linda Yanney in her dissertation “The Practical Revolution: An Oral History of The Iowa City Feminist Community, 1965-1975” the daycare represented a collaboration among different women’s groups and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church where all the labor was volunteer, the space was donated and the children were well-cared for. While the founding of a feminist daycare was not unique to Iowa City, its creation illustrates the productive alliances that existed within the community.

Other endeavors that brought women together included the founding of the Women’s Resource Center<sup>63</sup> on campus in 1970. Initially a “women only” collective where women would come to interact with each other, engage in consciousness raising, political activism and work at creating a community of like-minded women. For many, including some of the women from CIASU, the Women’s Center would offer a space that allowed them to speak to their differences as Chicanas *and* as women.

Another group that reached out to a broad spectrum of Iowa City’s women was the Emma Goldman Clinic for Women (EGC). Initially organized as a feminist collective, “Emma” as it is still referred to, sprang up officially in 1973 with the passing

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<sup>62</sup> Given the politics of the day, the children themselves were allowed to name the school and voted on calling it The Dum Dum School after their favorite candy treat, the Dum Dum Pop.

<sup>63</sup> The center would become the Women’s Resource and Action Center by 1973 and expand its scope of services and activities within the U of I community and the larger Iowa City community.



of *Roe v. Wade* with the intent of training lay women to provide abortion and reproductive health services to women on a sliding scale/ability to pay basis. Many of the methods that Emma made available were alternatives to “the pill” and allowed women to exercise their own power in reproductive decision-making. In this respect, Emma was part of a larger national attempt by women’s health collectives to empower women in such a manner as to take their reproductive health into their own hands as well as to de-mystify medical processes thus making women active participants in their own health care. An important facet of women’s health collectives was to provide women with the information that would make them informed medical consumers and to shift some of the power over women’s health care away from medical professionals who at that point in time were mostly male.

The group of young women who founded Emma had functioned as a feminist collective for several years and only became an officially recognized organization in 1973 soon after the passage of *Roe v. Wade*. Prior to that, they had been helping women from Iowa-where abortion was banned-travel to states where the procedure could be legally performed. Due to the fact that many of the records from Emma’s early years are sealed and will remain so for years to come due of the sensitive nature of the clinics’ operation in its early years, it is not a far stretch to imagine that some of the women of CIASU may have availed themselves of the information and/or services available through Emma and they may have taken part in the work of the clinic but that will have to remain an unknown for several years. What is known however is that the Women’s Movement sought equality for women and became a new and distinctive voice in amongst social movements in the U.S

1968: Zavala and Pushetonequa, Seeds of CIASU  
*Vietnam War and the Draft*

The beginning of 1968 brought with it the news of the My Lai massacre in which American soldiers had massacred women and children in the village of My Lai. Reports of the massacre served to highlight the challenges of the Vietnam conflict itself as well as the unfathomable position in which American soldiers were placed often unsure of who was and was not “the enemy.” By the end of winter and into the beginning of spring, anti-war protests were taking place in every part of the country and college campuses very often found themselves the focal point for those protests. This was due in part to the compulsory military draft; young men were required by law to register for military service upon reaching their eighteenth birthday. Begun during the 1940s, the Selective Service Act allowed the government to “draft” young men into military service based on age and ability; this action was mostly referred to as “the draft” and that is how I refer to it in this dissertation. The Draft was in effect during World War II and the Korean War but the need for a standing military force was somewhat diminished during the late 1950s and early 1960s until Vietnam erupted into the public consciousness.

Several factors contributed to anti-war sentiment including the largest influx of students attending colleges and universities in American history in the very early 1960s. This infusion of students intersected with two other factors; students whose middle class parents had the means to put them in college and the rising Civil Rights Movement with an awareness of the need for personal action in order to craft social change. The children of World War II veterans flocked to institutions of higher education in droves, full of the idealism that found its seed in the hope of the new decade with a youthful, inspirational president, John F. Kennedy who spoke of service to each

other and the larger world. All of these factors came together to create change much as a lightning strike in a forest causes the fire that leads to devastation and ultimately, new healthy growth.

The idealism that many of these college students brought with them masked what can be thought of in very **broad** terms as the American paradox of the time: the struggle for equality and justice among mostly white young people working with Black students and organizations against many older, mostly white citizens dead-set against integration and equality, striving to protect the status quo with its clearly delineated worlds of Black and White, Us and Them. This tension between both of these groups illustrates the intersection of anti-war activism and the on-going struggle for civil rights. This fissure in the American landscape occurred along the line between the unquestioned tried-and-true versus the unknown and different, which questioned everything and everyone.

There has long been concern and belief that soldiers from minority populations and those lower on the socio-economic scale disproportionately populate the US military in part because of limited opportunities within their home communities. The Vietnam War can be seen as the first war that put viewers at home on the front lines; the number of Black, Chicano and other socially disadvantaged soldiers was made visible and became part of the national discussion. In theory, the Draft should have leveled the playing field for all young men, being based on random drawing of birthdates but, there have long been accusations made that White soldiers families would often find ways for their sons to evade going to Vietnam be it through National Guard service (as in the case of George Bush who was a “fighter pilot” for the Texas Air National Guard) or postings that kept them close to home and out of danger. In the case of the Vietnamese war,

young men were able to put off serving in the military by appealing to their Draft Board for a Draft Deferment if they would be attending college. In a time before Federally funded student loans and grants aimed at students historically disadvantaged through racist exclusion, it was mostly upper and middle class families that could make the case for Deferment although those with scholarships also had access to the option.

CIASU co-founder Antonio Zavala makes the connection between his own experience as a student and as an anti-war activist in a 2001 interview at the University of Iowa. When asked about his own concerns about the draft and his involvement in the anti-war movement (among others) he responds

Since high school I was involved with the anti-war movement, because it was a...it was a time when there were a lot of objections to the war on different issues. And Mexicans and Latinos and poor, young men from the neighborhood, poor neighborhoods, were also dying in great numbers in Vietnam. But besides that, the war was a national issue that affected the lives of so many people...feeling that the draft disproportionately drafted young blacks, young Chicanos, Latinos and poor Whites to serve. And where the more influential Americans, they could get...they could go to college or other situations. Remember, before, they still had draft boards where you could go and talk to the draft board and plead your case.<sup>64</sup>

Some conscientious objectors stayed to fight the system head-on through protests and political action while others fled to Canada. The sentiments surrounding the racial/socio-economic make-up of the military were such an issue that they further became a part of the popular culture through song. The band Credence Clearwater Revival had a hit single called “Fortunate Son” in which they gave voice to the concerns many were expressing in regards to the makeup of the military

yeah, some folks inherit star spangled eyes

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<sup>64</sup> Zavala. Oral History Interview. July 7, 2001, Iowa City, Iowa

Ooh, they send you down to war, Lord  
 And when you ask them, "How much should we give?"  
 Oh, they only answer, more, more, more, yoh  
 It ain't me, it ain't me  
 I ain't no fortunate one, no, no, no  
 It ain't me, it ain't me  
 I ain't no fortunate son, no, no<sup>65</sup>

This song was the sound one band echoing the youth culture's disillusion with the government and concern with the continuing situation in Southeast Asia. Despite the seeming disparity in numbers and general cries of outrage at the inequality of the Draft, the situation for American Indians was often quite different. Many American Indian cultures had a heritage of warriors-those who saw it as their duty to protect "the people."<sup>66</sup> Many young Indian men went to Viet Nam before their numbers came up in order to fulfill what they saw as a moral obligation to honor their own warrior traditions as well as their duty to their communities. Their decision was not always understood by those who stood in opposition to the war and American Indian veterans returning from Viet Nam were often subjected to the same derisive treatment that their White counterparts received upon returning home.

The draft was universally unpopular and provided a rallying point for the young men directly affected by it; it provided a point of tension between them and those who supported the war and believed that it was "the duty" of all young men to serve the nation. Vietnam was a politically murky war and as such, it was nearly impossible to

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<sup>65</sup> Fogerty, John C. "Fortunate Son." Fantasy, November 2, 1969.

<sup>66</sup> Evidence of this can be seen at any Pow Wow or traditional gathering; Military Veterans are always recognized with a "Veterans Dance" and the Grand Entry, which signals the beginning of the event, is always led by veterans (usually from different wars) carrying in the US flag as well as the flags of various Indian nations and an Eagle Staff and often, the Missing in Action/Prisoners of War flag. At spiritual gatherings, the Veterans are accorded places of honor and are often placed at the front of lines as continuing thanks for their service and sacrifice.

find a concrete reason to support continued US involvement. As the number of deaths increased, and the ages of those coming home in the flag draped coffins decreased, it became more evident that there was no end in sight. The Johnson administration continued escalating the numbers of soldiers being sent to Vietnam as the nation became more and more disillusioned about the possibility of resolution to the conflict without more loss of life. By the second Nixon administration in the mid 1970s, the writing was on the wall, the troops were withdrawn and Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital city, fell.

In April, as the situation in Vietnam continued to escalate and the anti war protesting became increasingly violent, there were voices calling for calm and reason, among them Civil Rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the slain President. Of all the factors that went into shaping 1968 it was the influence and the events in the lives of these two men that had the most profound emotional effect on the nation.

Early in the evening of April 4 Reverend King was assassinated. The loss of King came as a shock and had a profound effect on his followers, the Civil Rights Movement and the nation. His untimely death spurred rioting, anger and a loss of faith in the system among a Black population that had begun to believe in the promise of change. It would shape the activism and passion of activists and politicians for decades to come-black and white alike.

A mere two months later, after a speech celebrating his winning of the California Primary, early in the hours of June 4<sup>th</sup>, Robert F. Kennedy was shot in a hotel kitchen, dying from his wounds a few hours later. So quickly on the heels of the King

assassination, the nation was left reeling and the movements asking themselves, what comes next? It was against this backdrop of the draft, anti-war protesting, loss of beloved leaders and cynicism-fueled rioting that Zavala and Pushetonequa found kindred spirits in each other in Iowa. They had many common interests but it was here, in their work against the war that they made their initial contact and it was from this foundation that the seed of a Chicano and American Indian Student Union was formed.

If 1967 was the Summer of Love, then 1968 very much represented the summer of a national sense of anger, loss and despair, which gave way to violence and cynicism.<sup>67</sup> That summer did bring with it one note of hopeful optimism however; the United States won the race to the moon with the success of Apollo 11. As the nation mourned and burned, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took “one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind” as Michael Collins hovered overhead and for a brief moment, the burning and rioting stopped to marvel at the accomplishment.

The jubilation was short-lived however. The Democratic National Convention took place in Chicago that year and Mayor Daly made it known that he would not tolerate any protesting in his city; according to Time magazine, his mantra was “law and order will be maintained.”<sup>68</sup> The violence that erupted in the streets of Chicago was televised nightly on the news. Protesters were vocal, mobilized and willing to be arrested. The police (who outnumbered the protesters by roughly three-to-one) did not hesitate to use all means at their disposal to disperse the crowds-tear gas, mace and billy clubs seem to

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<sup>67</sup> It was at this point-with its sense of loss and trauma-that much of the idealism of the time was lost and that the Movements took on darker, angrier tones. It is at this point that cynicism became a part of the activism for many involved in the movements and it would forever change the way that many people viewed and interacted with governmental institutions.

<sup>68</sup> “The Nation: Dementia in the Second City.” Time Magazine, September 6, 1968.

have been the preferred methods of crowd control. Protesters were taken away by the bus-full whether their limp passive resistant bodies had to be carried by two or more policeman or, if their bodies with bleeding broken limbs and faces were dragged handcuffed. There was no tolerance for protesting of any kind and the message was met with increased resistance by protesters desperate for change and that had been denied protesting permits or permission to camp in the city parks. They understood that there was no hope of change coming from the politicians or activities of the Convention and so felt they had nothing to lose by protesting and making their thoughts known.

Fall 1968

This then was the atmosphere in the country as Barceló arrived in Iowa. The Black Student Union had been a part of campus life for several years and the University had seen its first Anti-War protest in 1967. Zavala and Pushetonequa had arrived the previous year and connected to each other through their activism in the anti-war movement. The historical and archival record does not give a clear indication of how and where the two met up and began discussing the need for an organization that spoke to their needs as Chicano and American Indian. In a 2001 interview Zavala is asked specifically about connecting to Pushetonequa. His answer points to his own growing understanding of the connections between Chicano/as and American Indians and how he saw them related to each other

I always see the Indian Americans as our cousins, not very far from who we are...So when I was trying to organize the students here, there were very few, and then I saw Ruth so alone, and I thought that our kindred spirits and solidarity and brotherhood, we'd make her our sister, too. And then-but understanding that they have their rights and stuff-but it would be sort of saying that our house is their house, too; not just thinking of us, but of other people.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Zavala. Oral History Interview: 4. 2001.



In this statement Zavala is making an important point in the way that he first thought of Pushetonequa-that American Indians were “kindred spirits” to Chicanos in solidarity yet making clear that American Indians are **not** Chicano/as. In essence he is acknowledging similarities of (historical) oppression but he makes clear that despite the fact that one is not the same as the other, in their shared experiences of ‘other-ness’ there is enough common ground within which to come together. What is clear is that it was during this pivotal point in time that they came to the conclusion that their realities, experiences and cultures were not being represented on the campus at the University of Iowa. As Zavala says in the same interview, everyone was organizing at that time,

The gays were getting organized, the blacks, the women, what society calls fringe groups-before, we were all fringe. Now we’re part of the society, but before we were outsiders. So we were not unique in that respect. Everybody was trying to organize.<sup>70</sup>

In November of 1968 Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey for the Presidency; while certainly not a fix for the country, Nixon did represent change. His election was truly the end of “Camelot” as many perceived the era of the Kennedys, and as much as it represented the end of the Johnson debacle in Vietnam, it was also a new day in the Civil Rights era. For inasmuch as Johnson was a supporter of Dr. King, Nixon had no ties to him and could move forward with the goals of the civil rights movement without the political baggage that Johnson carried with him.

The archival record does not provide any information on either Zavala or Pushetonequa for the winter or spring of the academic semester but during this time the

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* 5: 2001.

efforts of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta working for the cause of the United Farm Workers interests were not far from the public consciousness. There were student protests taking place throughout California and the southwest in support of the UFW as well as in opposition to the war in Vietnam.

The protests that were taking place highlighted several realities. One was the fact that most of those taking place in actively working to create social change were, for the most part, America's youth. The Youth Movement as it came to be called drew its strength and its energy in part from the sheer numbers of young people-the baby boomers-who were reacting to the shifting political landscape around them during a time of what can be described as economic stability and affluence with a strong middle class. That middle class was primarily white middle class and did not extend to black Americans or other minorities. It should also be noted that America's youth were not only reacting **to** the situation around themselves, they were also reacting **against** the systems and institutions of their parents, enacting youthful rebellion to separate themselves as different from the generation that came before them. Working towards the civil rights of minorities was one way of creating a new society. The inclusion of women was another. And while the country was enjoying a period of economic stability in the early 1960s, as the decade was drawing to an end there were signs of economic instability and shortages, many of which the middle class saw as affecting it more profoundly than other social groups.

There were counter-cultures and sub-cultures that found their roots in rebelling against the social and gender constraints of the staid and conservative 1950s with its

climate of repression amid the era of McCarthyism with its “Black List” and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. As Zavala recalls of the time

I remember women’s collectives here, hippie collectives, and SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), and all kinds of groups, here being a big university...we were part of the same convulsions that the country was going through, so we could recover our identity and determine a little bit of our own destinies. Because as you know, before, in the ‘50s and before then, there was a lot of conformity; people just followed a straight path...You never raised your voice, you never said no...You never question anybody, and as you know, now everything’s up for grabs. Everybody questions everything, which is a good thing in a democracy. Things should be questioned; if it relates to the needs of different people’s values, then why not? It’s a free society. *Question the things that need to be questioned.*<sup>71</sup>

In this passage he is offering insights into the changes that the Movements were making on society and he makes the connection between what was happening at the University and what was happening around the country.

The Youth Movement spawned changes that had long-term effects on both the movements themselves and society as a whole, some not always for the better. The drug culture and Dr. Timothy Leary-a Harvard professor doing research on Lysergic acid diethylamide but commonly referred to simply as LSD-on students and soldiers famously issued what would become the mantra of the drug subculture; “turn on, tune in, drop out.” There emerged an Anti-Establishment Movement that was willing to create havoc in order to affect social change. The Flower Power Movement, made up of hippies and free spirits embodied principles of free love and advocated lifestyles outside of the more conservative mainstream. Their insistence on loosening of strict social structures gave way to far reaching changes that are still felt decades later.

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* pp. 5-6: 2001.

1969: Barceló Arrives; Creating and Laying Organizational Foundations  
 Pushetonequa and Zavala had already connected to each other in 1968 but it wasn't until Barceló arrived a year later that the foundation would begin to fall into place for the organization to come. For as little documentation as there is for the interaction between Zavala and Pushetonequa during their first year at Iowa, there is evidence in their reminiscences that their talk would begin to take a concrete form with the arrival of Nancy "Rusty" Barceló in the fall of 1969 as a graduate student. This would prove to be a central moment for the dream of an organization as well as for the individual students themselves.

As Zavala and Pushetonequa continued their activities in the anti-war movement, Barceló found herself struggling to find her footing at Iowa. Coming to Iowa from California, she was intensely aware of the lack of any Chicano community and she has often spoken and written about, her sense of total alienation upon her arrival at Iowa:

During my first winter when the thermometer over the Iowa State Bank read -5 degrees, I knew I did not belong there. I was already miserable from missing my family and friends. Knowing I did not have the money to fly home for any of the holidays and the experience of the extreme cold added to my pain.

I called my parents that night to tell them I would be returning home at the end of the semester because it was too cold and I missed them. I thought for sure my parents, being good Mexican Americans who made certain that we understood our identity as Mexicans, would tell me to pack my bags right then and there and come home. But they did not. My mother responded with, "Rusty, where there is one Mexican, there is probably another one."<sup>72</sup>

This quote is significant for many reasons but here, in the context of CIASU; it gives insight into Barceló's struggle to adapt to her new, alien environment. Her struggle gave

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<sup>72</sup> Barceló, Nancy "Rusty" from *Chicana Scholarship: Empower and Community*" NACS Conference Presentation, April 16-19, 1997

her first-hand knowledge of what others would face upon coming to Iowa. It was her own experience that would give shape to the personal and professional activism that would in large part define her time at the University of Iowa. In an as yet unpublished interview<sup>73</sup> during a visit to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organization, Barceló speaks of her mother sending her a care package that included

...freeze dried *pan dulce* which is Mexican sweet bread, some chorizo, and some cultural icons like a serape for my wall, the Virgen de Guadalupe for my neck but no note.

On receiving that care package from her mother, Barceló began actively looking for other Mexicans at Iowa and was shocked to discover that there were large pockets of Mexican Americans with a long history in Iowa. She found that there were communities where the language, the food and the customs that were as familiar to her as “home.” Barceló’s quest to connect to a community speaks to more than simple homesickness though; it also points to the need for connection to cultural context in the alien country known as Iowa. Without putting words to her search, Barceló was looking for a sense of “home” away from home and in a very real sense, that search for home would give shape to the function of CIASU in the lives of its student members. In the following chapter I will be exploring what this quest for “home” said about Chicano/a and American Indian student survival at the University and how theorist Gloria Anzaldua provides insights into the mechanisms developed by CIASU members in creating a space of their own.

According to the aforementioned unpublished interview (hereafter referred to simply as the 2001 interview), Phillip Jones, a graduate student who at the time worked

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<sup>73</sup> Barceló, unpublished interview, Iowa City, 2001. I wish to thank Rusty for her generosity in allowing me to utilize this in-depth interview; this project would fall far short without the information and insights the interview provides. *Muchisimas gracias.*

for the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) introduced Barceló to Zavala<sup>74</sup>. After meeting her, Zavala and Pushetonequa, realized that Barceló's presence was exactly what was needed in order to create and carve a space that could be defined by and for, Chicano and American Indian students. They convinced Barceló to take on the position of Executive Administrator, which was necessary for all University recognized student organizations. They recognized that Barceló had the leadership talents and organizational skills to help make their organization a reality. In the essay he wrote for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization looking back at the creation of CIASU, Zavala states that

We made Rusty our advisor because she had great skill with understanding and listening to people. Besides she always kept her head. Ruth and I were much too angry during those days to be nice to people and of course I turned off a lot of them.<sup>75</sup>

As the three students came to know each other better and to move forward with making plans for their organization, there were other events happening on and off campus that would lend resolve to their cause.

During this time the Black Student Association had a Graduate Advisor who had received the first appointment in Minority Student Affairs and he was not a stranger to CIASU. Many of the students from the early days of CAISU recall the importance that Phil Jones played in making it possible for them to remain at the University. His stated role was to retain minority students and stories are told of university bills that would

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<sup>74</sup> EOP would eventually become Special Support Services.

<sup>75</sup> Zavala, Antonio. "Lookin' Back" essay written to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of CIASU.

mysteriously-and suddenly-have a zero balance and of “small scholarships” that would take care of tuition for a cash-strapped student.<sup>76</sup>

Jones would have been responsible for disbursing the funds but his access to those funds was made possible through University channels. Whatever the source of those funds, the influx of cash points to a quiet, unofficial support from unnamed University sources willing to assist minority students. Once the institutional bureaucracy was established there were “official” channels for the provision of funds to minority students but prior to those systems of increased technical accountability, there were indeed efforts to make University attendance accessible to Black, Chicano and American Indian students even if those efforts were done without leaving an “official” paper trail.

As the 1969 semester was drawing to a close, there was a situation developing off the coast of California that would have long-term implications for American Indians. A group calling itself Indians of All Tribes staged an occupation of Alcatraz Island and raised awareness of the situations for many Americans of Indian descent. The take-over would last nineteen months and its long-term legacy is that it raised awareness that helped bring about the end of Federal Termination and Relocations programs. The action would have been one to touch and influence the students working to create the new student organization and strengthened their resolve to make a difference for their community.

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<sup>76</sup> While this could never happen in this age of computers and direct deposit, there would never be evidence of how these funds were come by-they simply *did*. This information is such that, while there is no “official” record of it having happened, those who benefited from this phenomenon are very clear to make sure that the credit for their being able to continue attending U of I goes to Dr. Jones. It has been very interesting to be privy to these conversations given Dean Jones’ current stance in favor of razing the Cultural Centers. It often seems as though the bureaucratic administrator has nothing in common with the involved, activist graduate advisor who was so central to the creation of the Centers in the past.

### Spring 1970: Planning amidst Upheaval

Spring of 1970 saw massive violence and political upheaval nationally.

Beginning with the rise of Black Power movement actions across the country<sup>77</sup> with an insistence on access to political power, and race riots that were an ongoing in many cities that summer. There were large protests taking place across the county in response to the US invasion of Cambodia in April and at a May 4 anti-war rally at Kent State University in Ohio, 4 students are killed and 9 others wounded at the hands of the National Guard. Ten days later, May 14-15, two more students were killed while twelve others were injured by police during a somewhat violent demonstration at Jackson State College (now University) in Jackson, Mississippi. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 100,000 people joined together to protest the war in Washington, D.C.

These events would have been very influential for the founders of CIASU with their involvement in the anti-war movement Locally Barceló, Zavala and Pushetonequa were planning to apply for official recognition of the Chicano and Indian American Student Union even as they continued taking part in the on-going protests against the Viet Nam war. Student protests continued escalating at Iowa and at most other Universities around the country, as had the level of violence involved in the protests themselves. The May 4<sup>th</sup> Kent State and May 14-15<sup>th</sup> Jackson State killings served to highlight the vast divide between those opposed to the war and those in support of it (who often carried guns). The shootings and the deaths would force the country to re-examine the extent to which "the Establishment" would go to stop American youth from protesting and voicing its opposition to the war. Proponents of the war were shocked by the shootings and many

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<sup>77</sup> Anderson, pp. 344-345.



of them began to question the lengths officials would go to in order to stem the tide of protesting. The events of that day would shake up the foundations of what it meant to identify as either one or the other. Those lines would be drawn not in California, Texas or New York but in Ohio on the campus of Kent State University. Terry H. Anderson in The Movement and the Sixties writes:

...On May 4, Ohio national guardsmen fired over 60 times into a crowd of about 200 students wounding nine and killing four. "My God, they're killing us!" cried one coed, as blood ran from the wounded. May turned red. The nation erupted into the most revolutionary mood since 1776. In "ten terrifying seconds" *Time* reported, the usually placid campus was converted "into a bloodstained symbol of the rising student rebellion against the Nixon Administration and the war in Southeast Asia."<sup>78</sup>

At this time, CIASU was still in the planning stages and I have found no documentation of the reactions of (especially) Zavala or Pushetonequa but given their involvement in the anti-war movement it must be assumed that it would have affected them as it did most Americans. Regardless of whether one supported or opposed the war, most were shocked and outraged by the actions of the Guardsmen; protesters might be used to being arrested or having objects thrown at them by their opponents but no student protester expected to be shot for taking part in a protest-, injury or maiming was a real threat-but death simply had not been a consideration. Events at Kent State and Jackson State changed that with chilling effect.

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<sup>78</sup> Anderson, p. 350 (1995)

Fall 1970: Declaration of Intent

On November 6, 1970 *The Daily Iowan* reported that the Chicano Indian American Student Union formally applied to be recognized as a chartered student organization at University of Iowa. One of the stated intents of the new organization was

...to unite University Chicanos and Indians to preserve our identity and our heritage<sup>79</sup>

The article also discusses the focus of the student founders on reaching out to and recruiting, Chicano/a and American Indian High School students, encouraging them to attend the University of Iowa. As Barceló, Zavala and Pushetonequa were working to find other Chicano/a and American Indian students, events in the Movements across the nation were taking place that would continue to help shape and influence the small band in Iowa.

The rise of the Brown Berets in Los Angeles, the increased activity of AIM as well as the on-going efforts of Chavez and the UFW and the continuing escalation in Viet Nam would all impact the activist work that would give definition and direction to CIASU and its student members. There were many other actions taking place that would impact CIASU such as the rise of La Raza Unida Party. Coming out of a small conference in New Mexico in 1967, La Raza Unida was driven by the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in response to the belief that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties understood the plight or the needs of their Mexican descent constituencies.<sup>80</sup> MAYO worked for educational reform and its members were visible

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<sup>79</sup> *Daily Iowan*. Nov. 6, 1970.

<sup>80</sup> Munoz, Carlos Jr., Youth, Identity, Power pp.123-125

and active in Texas; this would have a direct impact on CIASU in the very near future. Despite the fact that none of the founding members were from Texas, their efforts at having the University recruit more minority students would bring in Chicano/a students from many parts of Texas; they would have been familiar with the organization as well as with La Raza Unida. La Raza would eventually have chapters in the Midwest and even though it would not reach the same numbers as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Iowa, those coming from the Southwest would know of it and many were influenced by MAYO actions as students in Texas.

#### 1971 Chicano Indian American Student Union

1971 was the year that saw the creation of the Chicano Indian American Student Union and it was a busy one for the students involved. Zavala and Pushetonequa were still somewhat involved in the anti-war movement but they were also working with Barceló to recruit students to the University and the fledgling organization. In his Oral History, Zavala also speaks of his early work for the Lettuce Boycott in support of the United Farm Workers. Whether it was by accident or design, the work that the political and activist work that the founding students were engaged in helped ensure that incoming students would have connections to the activism of the larger University community when they arrived.

The following chapters will focus more closely on the actions of the students themselves during this time but there were events nationally that were working to shape their sensibilities and their priorities. This was the year that saw the last of the “Marlboro Man” as television advertising of cigarettes was now banned; the Supreme Court ruled in the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education* that busing could be used as a

way to achieve racial desegregation in public schools and needless to say, there was protesting against this throughout many pockets of the country.

On the Anti-War front, Washington, D.C. saw an anti-war rally of five hundred thousand people; opinions were still greatly divided but anti-war sentiment seemed to be growing as the number of losses increased. Feminists were also raising awareness of the plight of women and becoming a greater presence in the national debate about access, equality and power and young women at the University of Iowa would become aware of a new Women's Center. In September the country hears about the Attica Prison riots in New York; whether directly or indirectly, Attica has the effect of forcing the American public to look at the way prison systems are run in the US. For the students of CIASU, it brings awareness of inequalities in prison and the students begin a Prison Visitation program as a part of the organization.

#### 1972: Challenges

The beginning of the 1972 academic year saw CIASU as a more firmly established student organization with a leadership determined to make its presence on campus known. A marker of the success of CIASU activist endeavors in its first year is that most of the incoming Chicano/a and American Indian Freshmen arrived having been recruited by CIASU members to the University. The new students arrived with an awareness of "The House" and with the knowledge that there was a space for them amongst others like themselves. The House and its inhabitants were in many ways a reflection of the concerns and sensibilities of the 60s and 70s. 1972 was a year rife with both hope and cynicism; on one hand the message was that change could-and would-happen if individuals became involved in issues that were important to themselves and

their communities; on the other hand, the students were living in a country that was grappling with continued and ever-growing anger at the war in Vietnam and an increasing pessimism and distrust arising out of the “Watergate Break-in” fiasco on June 17<sup>th</sup> of that year. As the student members came to the university that fall it was with images of the events of summer; growing casualties in Southeast Asia, “Bloody Friday” in Belfast and the escalating “troubles” in Ireland, rampant hijackings of jetliners and the July 25<sup>th</sup> admission by US Health officials surrounding the issue of the “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male” whereby African American males were used as guinea pigs for the study of untreated Syphilis without their knowledge or consent. Comedian George Carlin was arrested in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for his skit “The Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.” The Iowa Caucus found itself in the national spotlight; 1972 the Caucus was the beginning of the political events in the run-up to the Presidential Election and The Bijou opened its doors on campus for the first time. In the midst of a taxing water-only fast in May, aimed at Agri-business and Governor Jack Williams of Arizona, Cesar Chavez lifted his head from a pillow and uttered the words “si se puede”<sup>81</sup> (yes it can be done) when everyone around him said it was impossible. His words would become a flame that would light the way for everyone engaged in the struggle for dignity and equality for farm workers. That would include the students of CIASU who would continue to educate the University community about the on-going lettuce and grape boycotts.

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<sup>81</sup> This story has been told in many forms but this version is directly from the “Si Se Puede History” section at the United Farm Workers website: [www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org) and recounts that it occurred in May 1972 (Jan. 2010).

What all of the events going on in the larger world during the fall of 1972 meant for the students of CIASU was that there was much work to be done and on many different fronts. The student members of the Union had tools at their disposal to help them get their messages out: *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto* allowed them to produce print media while Los Bailadores and El Teatro made possible artistic, creative expressions of culture. These venues were just the beginning point from which the students could make their priorities visible; they quickly set goals for themselves regarding what it was they wanted to accomplish and these can be seen in the various publications as well as in the *actos* of El Teatro and the music and dances of Los Bailadores.

## **CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONALIZING RESISTANCE: RESISTANCE AND INSTITUTIONS**

One of the hallmarks of the 1960s and 1970s was resistance in a society where conformity was the ideal. The rise of the various social movements signaled resistance to many things; to social norms which had up to that point been accepted without question, to socially prescribed gender, class, racial and ethnic roles as well as a war with seemingly no end in sight with no clear purpose and with a high cost. In the context of the 1960s and 1970s and the formation of CIASU, resistance had multiple meanings and could take on many forms. Resistance could be a “pushing against” in some cases and a “pulling away” from, in others, from established social patterns, norms and expectations. In the case of the University, resistance can be seen as a rejection of past social systems that failed to recognize the specific needs in the lives of Chicano/as and American Indians. With the creation of CIASU, the act of insisting on the recognition of the difference of Chicano/a and Indian students was a resistance to a past where the integration of this particular student population had rendered them invisible. The organization itself would come to represent a living, evolving resistance and as with most living things, change was often complicated; these next two chapters will look at some of those complications. This chapter considers these varied and multiple forms of resistance in the formation of CIASU in order to better understand how they became a part of the fabric of organization and what the group was saying about themselves through those actions.

“Resistance” could often take confrontational form as it did at many anti-war protests or it could be an actionable project with positive results such as a Pre-School program aimed at giving children the tools needed to succeed academically and CIASU engaged in both forms as well as many others. For this particular organization as well as for others, activist measures to enact social change often began with the work and commitment required for the creation of grassroots organizations that could be based on anything from points of common concerns to shared pasts of exclusion and discrimination or trying to create an awareness of ones’ own history and existence. The movements were often organized to attract like-minded individuals; members often created their own groups within that movement and at times, those groups would then reach out to each other to form coalitions and to work toward common goals. This chapter will touch on some of the alliances that CIASU was engaged in to enact change and attract new student members. As Antonio Zavala pointed out in his oral history, at this time everyone was organizing and working for their causes and he makes the point that “...we were not unique in that respect. Everybody was trying to organize.”<sup>82</sup>

CIASU was organizing on various fronts in its mission to bring Chicano/a American Indian students to the University and to make them a part of the university community. This chapter will interrogate those actions by focusing on the challenges faced by the young organization and contextualizing them within the larger social activist atmosphere.

This chapter examines the way in which CIASU was able to institutionalize resistance as Chicano/a and American Indian students and bring about positive change; I

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<sup>82</sup> Zavala. Oral History Interview with Linda Yanney, pg.5



am examining what form their resistance took and what tools were available to them as students. For this student organization, ethnic identity was a cornerstone of how they moved through the world around themselves; they wished to be a part of the larger University community but not at the cost of their ethnic identities—they were constantly resisting being a part of the hegemony. They were able to live and convey this sense of the “ethnic self” privately and publicly—the public being displays of culture and modes of dress that marked them as Chicano/a or American Indian. Privately, in the House they would cook and share their indigenous foods, speak in Spanish, “Spanglish” or any one of several native languages<sup>83</sup> as well as gatherings for specific purposes such as *Cinco de Mayo*, *Dia de Los Muertos* events or *Ghost Suppers*.<sup>84</sup> What mattered and what defined the members of CIASU was that the students were living their cultural heritage and identities within the context of University life. In this chapter we will see that resistance was not always about carrying a protest sign or taking part in a boycott; resistance could be something as radical, as simple and complex as living with one’s culture in a place where one had to carve out that space in the first place.

With a few rare exceptions, my research has failed to uncover much concrete, documentable evidence of the actions or activities of the student founders in their endeavor to get the organization started after the official announcement of the creation of CIASU in *The Daily Iowan*. I believe that this speaks to several realities facing any new

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<sup>83</sup> This would depend on the tribal affiliation of the current Native members; when I came to Iowa there were several Dine’ students and it was not unusual to hear it being spoken at the House.

<sup>84</sup> The Ghost Supper my first year at Iowa was a young woman, her three children and myself; there were no other folks with Anishnabe’ connections. She was happy to have the Feast and share its meaning with her children and I was comforted knowing that I was not alone in connecting to my culture and Elders.

organization and that it reflects only in small part on the nature of CIASU itself. In the first instance, there were no official mechanisms in place for the keeping of documents or records in the period between the announcement of the organization and its’ “official” beginning. Since Barceló, Zavala and Pushetonequa were students just getting a new organization off the ground there was no secretary or manager in place to keep track of each of the principal members’ schedules and because all three were themselves students, there would be a need for each of them to focus on their academic studies. The result is that as a researcher, I have been unable to find any record of this period but that does not mean that there is no record; what exists today are oral histories that were gathered twenty years or more, later.<sup>85</sup> While I am extraordinarily grateful that the oral histories have been gathered, the recollections of both Barceló and Zavala, even if clear, are missing the passion and sense of immediacy that would have shaped and informed their thinking and reflected their concerns at that point in time. The few interviews I have found have that sense of excitement that can only come in the moment itself, but even the reality of a lack of records says much about the student founders of CIASU. Primarily, they were simply engaged in doing the work that needed to be done to establish a new organization and they were more concerned with setting up CIASU than documenting their own involvement in that work. This lack of “official” documentation also speaks to their continued involvement in other activities such as the anti-war movement and in Zavala’s case, editing the CIASU literary magazine, *Nahuatzen*. In some respects, the student founders were “flying under the radar” in regards to being monitored by the

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<sup>85</sup> The Oral Histories of Zavala and Barceló have been invaluable to me in this project and I am very grateful to have them. It is possible that there are more primary documents buried within other University collections; it is hoped that as other researchers find them they are also added to the LNACC collection in Special Collections.

Administration: their small numbers, in conjunction with the initial lack of forms and official structures, allowed them the space within which to reach out to other students' on-campus and beyond the boundaries of the University. In the early days of CIASU the structural accountability they would be dependent on was not yet in place; there are stories told among the early students of CIASU meetings held at parties and at protests; more "flying under the radar" and reaching out to others in every and any way possible.<sup>86</sup> Despite this lack of tangible historical documentation, it is clear that they were busy laying the groundwork and putting plans in place for the arrival of new students in the fall of 1971.

This chapter examines the tools the organization utilized to shape its resistance, and in some instances, where the influence for those tools comes from. Several of the subjects discussed here will be examined more carefully in the next chapter where the focus will be the activism of CIASU, how it evolved and the ways in which the organizations activist endeavors were carried out. Here though, the three areas I examine are 1) recruitment and the role it played in the activism of CIASU; 2) the ways in which ethnic culture, personal identity and the creation of personal and organizational space helped to strengthen the group and how contestations for definition of the space helped the students to grow and finally, I look at 3) performativity as a means of expressing culture be it in public or private space be it through performance or protest and what that

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<sup>86</sup> These are the types of stories I have heard at gatherings like organizational meetings for the Alumni Association or at LNACC anniversary events. Sometimes the stories are told at a breakfast, sometimes over Margaritas after the official business is concluded but they also come with the caveat, "if you use my name I will hunt you down." Most of the characters that were involved in the youthful escapades are now "respectable" and they are not willing to lend their names to the tales. Yet, I suspect that as they get older and begin to retire we may be able to document many of these stories that as yet have no names attached to them. In some respects, this can be seen as another form of oral transmission of our histories; hopefully it will be one that we can bring with us into the future for the next generations of researchers.

said about how the students saw themselves in the context of the house and the larger communities.

#### Recruitment

For CIASU, the starting point of institutionalizing resistance was insuring that there would be a Chicano/a and American Indian presence on campus; that could only happen if the number of students who identified themselves as Chicano/a or Indian increased significantly. This section explores how recruitment happened and the ways in which it represented resistance to systems that attempted to keep recruitment from occurring because in part, Chicano/a and American Indian students were not expected to attend University in greater numbers. (as evidenced by their near non-existence on campus up until that point in time). The founding members understood that it would fall to them to actively seek out students to come to the University and become members of the new organization. Their efforts at recruiting would utilize conventional methods such as going into high schools to speak to students however, they would often reject conventional recruitment methods to reach out to communities and connect to their intended audience. Both Zavala and Barceló discuss recruiting in their oral histories and in hers, Barceló talks at length about some of the early experiences of recruiting

We went to cornfields, literally, in Moline and at the end of the day all the farm workers would come with their kids, or the migrants would come with their kids, and we would put on a teatro for them... We were in the community more than we were in the classroom.<sup>87</sup>

She makes the point that these unconventional venues were often the only ones open to them as some of the high schools refused to let them in to recruit because of the fear that

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<sup>87</sup> Barceló. Unpublished interview, pp. 24-25

they were not qualified to recruit or worse yet, agitators. In this she is also making the point that as recruiters, they were able to resist and circumvent the roadblocks that existed to prevent them from recruiting; even the students they sought out (the children of migrant farm workers and farmers) were not the students that most recruiters would consider trying to attract to the university.

One of the intentions specifically articulated in the November 1970 *Daily Iowan* article was about the desire to recruit and increase minority enrollment at UI. A news clipping found in the records of the Latino Native American Cultural Center (LNACC) dated June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1971 and attributed to the *Daily Iowan* addresses the efforts of Zavala and Pushetonequa and is rather unique in that it is one of the few articles where she is interviewed (she is never quoted directly but her work with Zavala is referenced often). The article reports on their visits to High Schools in Davenport as well as a Migrant Workers Center in Muscatine and the Mesquaki settlement in Tama and how their work yielded 13 of 20 minority applicants being accepted by the University. The work of recruiting new students is one example of the ways in which CIASU worked to fulfill their stated mission to increase the presence of Chicano/a and American Indians on campus and it demonstrates the firm resolve of the recruiters to create a more visible presence. Their continued and sustained efforts at recruiting exemplifies a resistance to dominant culture thinking that students were found only in the classroom; CIASU would go into communities that had been overlooked by the University establishment-they worked diligently for, and with, each of the students who would eventually come to the University.

CIASU members were often invited to go into the homes of potential students and meet with their families where others would not have been extended the trust. They were able to speak to their audience in the language that was comfortable for them and in a more comfortable and casual setting, which allowed for more open discussion. As importantly, The CIASU members were living proof that there was a place within the University where incoming students would be among others who shared their heritage and language who understood their values and cultural identity.<sup>88</sup>

Most parents' concern about the protests and unrest on college campuses, presented a challenge to the recruiting of high school students to Iowa City but there was an added component of challenge that dominant culture recruiters generally did not encounter was the traditional grounding of many Mexican descent families. In their own way, the student recruiters were working to shift the deeply embedded, gendered attitudes of most Mexican-American parents, especially in regard to their daughters; where sons were expected to leave home be it for work, marriage or school, daughters were expected to remain at home until the day they married.<sup>89</sup> The Feminist Movement had not yet had an measureable impact on the lives of women of color but where it failed in the beginning, the Student Movement and the Chicano Movement had a more direct impact

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<sup>88</sup> There are many, many stories (usually shared when CIASU/LNACC alumni gather together and trade war stories and *recuerdos* or remembrances) of Rusty and Antonio meeting with parents in Spanish-speaking homes and allaying the concerns of some of the more "traditional" parents

<sup>89</sup> This is an incredibly common story I lived out first-hand. As the oldest I was first to graduate from high school and married exactly a year later. I spent that year in college but only because my soon-to-be husband was also a student. As a "good" traditional daughter I married out of my parents house and upon my divorce six months later, returned to their home; there was never any discussion about what I would do, it was simply understood that this is how things worked. It was often the same for many Chicanas; who and what we were expected to be was decided by others; when recruiters like Zavala or Barceló came along, parents usually required assurances for our well-being.

in part because they were more focused on progress for the community and family instead of on the gain of the individual.<sup>90</sup>

Barceló recounts one story in particular that addresses the concerns of many parents as expressed by one father. He asked her to promise that his daughter “would you guarantee that if my daughter goes to your school that she will not get pregnant or do drugs?” She looked him in the eye and guaranteed the daughter would be safe. As Barceló described it, she had no way of knowing how the young woman in question would comport herself or the type of company that she would keep but she realized that it was what had to be done in order to bring this bright, young woman to campus.<sup>91</sup> This story also illustrates that resistance does not only apply to systems that existed at the university but (especially in the case of young Chicanas) sometimes those that exist at the intersection of sexuality and race. While I have focused on changing resisting systems that limit opportunities for underrepresented populations within the University context, the reality is that the institutionalization of resistance occurs whenever we attempt to transform the systems of power that have been used as a means to limit or narrow, our definitions of the self. In this instance, Barceló had absolutely no way of controlling the young woman but she also understood that by giving this father a misrepresentation of the truth<sup>92</sup> it was the only means by which the potential student would have the

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<sup>90</sup> Women of color have long complained about the failure of the Women’s Movement to address their issues and I reference this subject when speaking of the work of Latina writers Chela Sandoval as well as that of Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga in Chap. 1

<sup>91</sup> Barceló. Unpublished Interview. June 2001, pg.25 The young woman in question-who remains unnamed in the interview-ended up attending another school but did go on to accomplish much just as Barceló suspected she would.

<sup>92</sup> I cannot call Barceló’s response a lie when any other response would have resulted in the father’s refusal to allow his daughter to apply to college. To call it a lie implies intent to deceive;

opportunity to step into the public sphere and to interact with and question, the larger world as well as the world in which she was raised. The response to the over-protective father was as much a resistance to institutions of machismo-defined gender roles as was the act of recruiting the children of migrant farm workers to the University.

Speaking in an article in the July 22, 1971 edition of the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* in her capacity as an Associate Director in the Special Support Services Program Rusty Barceló specifically addresses the need to not only recruit but also to retain those students and “help them adjust without losing the Chicano or Indian identity.” In the space of those few words, Barceló illustrates that the consciousness and concerns of CIASU have attracted the attention of the University administration as well as their support in their continuing efforts to recruit students to the University. Her words also highlight the reality that CIASU exists to help students as they navigate the world of the university and to help them maintain their Chicano/a and American identity; CIASU provided the support necessary to maintain ethnic identity and to not allow them to be subsumed by the dominant culture because of their small numbers.

Early efforts at recruiting new Chicano/a and American Indian students to the University yielded impressive results. Page 4 of the November 1, 1971 *Daily Iowan* carried a headline that proclaimed: *Recruiting efforts double Chicano, Indian Enrollment*. The article recounts that during fall of 1971 Barceló approached Phillip E. Jones in his capacity as the Director of Special Support Services to discuss the benefits of bringing together all the Chicano/a and American Indian students together into a cohesive

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there was no malicious intent to deceive but the father was asking for the impossible perhaps not realizing that he was looking for the impossible. The question here then, is if a lie of omission is as damning as an intentional untruth given that the stakes were so high and would forever change the life of one young woman.



union-but the article has the dates wrong; by the fall of 1971 CIASU was already a reality. The article points out that enrollment of Chicano and American Indian students rose from 19 in 1970 to 35 in 1971 and Barceló points out that the number was probably greater but that some of the students more than likely did not realize that CIASU even existed on campus.<sup>93</sup>

#### Culture, Space and Identity

One of the most important, amusing and informative aspects of the CIASU would prove to be the space that the organization called “home” and which was most often referred to as “the House” or “the Center.”<sup>94</sup> Establishing a self-defined space for activism and organizing was necessary to institutionalizing resistance because the students of CIASU needed a safe space that reflected their interests and concerns, a space in which they had the freedom to express and explore ideas and thoughts that non-Indians or Chicano/a might find offensive or disturbing. Both Zavala and Pushetonequa expressed the desire for more than simply an organization; in the June 1971 *Daily Iowan* article they reference the need for a Cultural Center to act as a “counterpart of the Afro-American and International Students houses.” In its earliest days when its membership was relatively small, the group would meet at each other’s apartments or around campus and there was a recognition that there was a need to have a more central location, easily accessible to the targeted students, which would also make them more visible. According to remembrances shared by some of the early CIASU members at a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary

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<sup>93</sup> . Ann Schrader. “Recruiting Efforts double Chicano, Indian enrollment” *The Daily Iowan*, 4: 1 Nov. 1971.

<sup>94</sup> Contemporarily, the Latino/Native American Cultural Center is referred to simply as “the LNACC” (pronounced “ehl-nak” by most of us who use the space.

gathering, they described the actions taken to acquire the Cultural Center as “claiming squatters’ and Barceló has described<sup>95</sup> getting the House as staking a claim;<sup>96</sup> these actions may be seen as not only necessary but also as actions that made a radical political statement. The steps taken to acquire the Cultural Center are best described as a somewhat unorthodox guerilla tactic to make a statement and by-pass the University bureaucracy. The tactics employed by CIASU to acquire the house also served to make the point that they were not willing to engage in the usual, time-consuming process of institutional channels in order to get what they needed. As will be seen, they forced the University to examine the unintended-yet unquestioned) unequal distribution of resources that favored one institution (the Spanish Department) over another (CIASU). In this instance, resistance meant to challenge the status quo and the establishment within the University. Some of the student members of CIASU discovered that the Spanish Department had a house they did not use on Clinton Street and the students of CIASU moved themselves in without official permission or notification to either the Spanish Department or the administration and claimed the space as the “Chicano-Indian House.” Once they were in the house they petitioned the administration for the use of the house; this sequence of events created ill will between the Spanish Department and CIASU that lasted for many years.<sup>97</sup>This act of taking over the house is important not only for what it

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<sup>95</sup> Barceló, unpublished Interview, 2001. pg.20

<sup>96</sup> These conversations often happen in private, as reminiscences of how the organization found a way to survive and have their needs met. These conversations often carry a tone of pride that the manner in which they got “the house” was in many ways subversive and circumvented the University bureaucracy.

<sup>97</sup> Barceló recounts in her Oral History that CIASU was quite rude in their tactics and that the whole situation could have been handled better.

says about the nature of CIASU as an organization but also for what it says about the way they were seen within the University community in general and the Spanish Department in particular. In many respects the demeanor of the Spanish Department is indicative of some of the stereotypical attitudes held about Mexicans/Chicano/as. Barceló recounts that in the dispute with the Spanish Department

...it wasn't just us challenging them, but they certainly had a stereotype about us as being lower class, you know, speaking inappropriate Spanish, you know, grammatically incorrect and we represented everything they didn't want to be. I mean they were speaking the Spanish of Spain...so you know, immediately there was a struggle...there were allies...but there were other people there who really made life difficult for us (laughs). You know, telling the President and telling the Dean that...we were just these crazy radicals and...the lower class of Mexican society...<sup>98</sup>

This quote is significant because in it we see an expression of the intersection of racist and classist attitudes held by those who believed that Chicano/a identity did not belong at the University. We see voice given to the belief that the students of CIASU were “less than”-the name calling and posturing by some in the Spanish Department illustrate why it was so necessary for CIASU to stake their claim to space as a way to begin changing the institution from within; it presents an important step in institutionalizing their resistance to the attitudes that would, if not challenged, continue to give them the message that they were “less than.” Taking the house was as much a psychic and spiritual victory as it was an institutional coup because for the members of CIASU, the battle for the house was also a means of proclaiming pride in their tenacity and determination to remain a presence on campus.

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<sup>98</sup> Barceló Oral History, pg.7

The recounting also points in part to the struggle of those of Mexican descent who chose to identify themselves as such and to resist the hegemonic impulse of generations past to identify as having European roots. This tension signals an internal social struggle based on preconceived notions of class, culture and racial purity; of the ruling class over the serving class, of struggle between the “pure blood” and the mestizo, the landowner versus the squatter. The disagreement over the use of the house did get nasty and CIASU won its petition to the University to use the house but the question needs to be asked why getting the house—a space of their own—was so important to the organization. The simple answer is that it was a physical marker that proclaimed, ‘we are here and we are staying.’”

Writer Gloria Anzaldua’s work speaks to the importance of spaces that are “home” to those who are “other” and at Iowa, most of the student members of CIASU could not help but be “other.” Many of those coming to the Midwest came from places where there were others like themselves, who shared a common value system, food and language. For those coming from other parts of Iowa, many of them were the first in their family to attend college. For those coming from other parts of the country, they were often coming from Mexican or American Indian communities and were, for the first time, living in a place where the sights and smells that make up “home” were non-existent. For all of them, it was vital to create a sense of “home” and of belonging and it was this being a part of a like-minded group that made it possible to begin changing the institution, to begin institutionalizing their resistance to the negative attitudes that existed in much of society in regard to Chicano/a and American Indian identity.

The act of laying claim to the House was very much in keeping with the meaning of Anzaldua’s borderlands. Taking the House without seeking permission from any

“authority” was in a very real sense an act of birthing or creating a borderland where none had been before. As Anzaldua said of the borderlands, “the prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.”<sup>99</sup> And as she acknowledges in the preface to the First Edition

...borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. <sup>100</sup>

“The House”-especially the original Clinton Street location-became a quasi-homeland for the members of CIASU-and the House *became* and embodied for them the true meaning of “Borderlands” as conceptualized by Anzaldua. With the students using the front porch of the House to congregate and listen to their music, to fly a flag bearing the image of Che Guevara and the banner of the United Farm Workers, it became a visual, constant reminder that those within the house were different from the rest of the University community. It was no longer the respectable neighbor that it had been during its incarnation as the Spanish House; in this evolutionary turn the House was loud-aurally and visually- and like the students themselves, demanded to be recognized as something new and different. It resisted blending in to the landscape and being seen in the same light as the former inhabitants; the house itself represented resistance to any assimilation into the larger University culture.

Perhaps more importantly to the students themselves was the role that the House would play in their lives during their time at Iowa. In an undated personal document,

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<sup>99</sup> Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* p.25

<sup>100</sup> Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Third Ed., pg. 19

Barceló includes an excerpt from a letter she had received from Zavala where he calls the House a “sort of a cultural first-aid station” where “Pete became Pedro and Joe became Jose.” It was within the safety of the House that many of the student members were able to (perhaps for the first time) grapple with their own changing self-image and for many, to embrace that which made them different from the larger population<sup>101</sup>. If the house underwent a change, so did the students. The shift from their home communities to the CIASU community presented an interesting paradox for many of the student members of CIASU. Despite leaving their families and coming from communities they were comfortable in, the political awakening many of them underwent highlighted the ways in which racist attitudes were embedded in dominant cultural institutional structures that shaped their own self images. The knowledge they were acquiring helped them begin to understand the ways in which institutional patterns of exclusion manifested in their own lives; it became easier to understand how Jose became Joe in the first place. The house was a space where it was safe to question and interrogate the social mechanisms that had given shape to each of their lives. Discussion in the house and in the classroom as well as interaction with other minorities and activists made it possible to move beyond simply talking about feeling racism to finding the tools with which to help change those systems they and other minority students encountered on a daily basis. Their increasing understanding of the systems they were surrounded by helped the students of CIASU to acquire tools for creating institutional change and they were able to more effectively manipulate those systems into acknowledging that they were not serving the needs of the

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<sup>101</sup> Zavala, Antonio. “*Lookin’ Back.*” Essay to Rusty Barceló for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CIASU, 17 Aug. 1981. This document will be discussed again later on in this section with a bit more detail from the document provided.

students themselves. In a very short time students began to see an increase in services being offered in the Center (such as counseling) that illustrate the ways in which CIASU's efforts to institutionalize their resistance to hegemonic patterns is beginning to be better understood and addressed by the administration.

Some of the most telling elements of the direction the students wanted for the organization can be seen not only in manner in which they acquired the house itself but also in the ways in which the house was utilized to represent resistant and in a very real sense, a revolutionary and culturally defined space. In claiming the space as their own, CIASU flaunted the ways in which it was *different* and *other than* the students in the majority but still a part of the student body<sup>102</sup>. Ironically, the John Pappajohn Business Building is now in the space where the original house stood; what was once home to loud and raucous "radicals" who saw themselves as activists working for more access and equality is now producing the next generation of bankers and economists.

Language usage within its four walls was also a marker of its inhabitants- "Spanglish" as it has come to be known-the blending of Spanish and English-was used in everyday conversation as well as in most of the printed flyers, papers and periodicals put out by the fledgling student group. Drawing from Anzaldua's essay "*How To Tame a Wild Tongue*" explores language and what it says about those who use it. She makes it clear that it is fitting that Spanglish would be the language of the house; it is a hybrid, bastardized language born of necessity by people thriving in a space between two cultures where one is often at odds with the other.

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<sup>102</sup> "flaunted" is indeed a strong word but it is a fitting one for this group, especially given that their public personae was such that they would not apologize for what or who they were.

Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally... Chicano Spanish is... a living language. For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English. What recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español* ni *inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages.<sup>103</sup>

The use of Spanglish within the house offers insight into another resistance by the members of CIASU; whether they were aware of it or not, the use of this living, changing language was a linguistic resistance to assimilation. The very spirit of the house reinforced the ability to resist loss of culture and identity by providing a space in which self-expression was possible. Even if the academic papers they turned in were perfectly correct, within the house they used a language of resistance and revolution. What is telling though is that even within this small, closed community, the American Indian students were still in the minority; it is not until the 1973-1974 academic year that any native language usage makes an appearance in either *El Laberinto* or *Nahuatzen*.<sup>104</sup> Given the number of American Indian languages in existence and the vast diversity of tribal affiliations it is easy to forget that American Indians still make up a very small percentage of the population and this was reflected among native CIASU members. They have always been few in numbers and those that do come to Iowa come from a variety of

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<sup>103</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera* third edition, pg. 77

<sup>104</sup> Even though language was used within the house as a means of maintaining and developing cultural identity, there is no record as to how the American Indian students felt about being surrounded by Spanish or Spanglish.



communities. There are rarely more than a handful of American Indian students at Iowa, so few that it is not surprising that most do not share a language in common.

The many ways in which the house itself was used and the gatherings for which it was utilized, says much about how the students saw themselves in relation to the larger University population and their collective identity as “other.” The members of CIASU were not only carving out their own place on campus, they were also re-making that which was alien to many of them (the larger, dominant culture) into a world that was more like that from which each of them had come. In her work on “borderlands,” Gloria Anzaldua speaks of the fluidity and changing nature of borders as well as what “borders” mean to those who live with them, especially in the lives of indigenous people for whom borders often have no fixed boundary points.

In ways both concrete and spiritual, the students of CIASU treated “the house” as a distinct area; their culturally defined and comforting world *within* the larger, alien world that they had to cross into on a day-to-day basis. The house became the place in which the foods from “home” were cooked, consumed and enjoyed with others who needed no explanation as to *why* the comfort foods of choice might be fry bread or tamales. There was no need to explain the significance of “el grito” on September 16<sup>th</sup> or why it was a given that elders and Pipe Carriers from Tama or other Indian communities would be invited on the occasion of special feasts or gatherings.<sup>105</sup> It was a given that children would be included and were welcomed as part of the community.

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<sup>105</sup> September 16<sup>th</sup> is Mexican Independence Day and “el grito” is the traditional “cry (or call) for freedom. For Indian people, no feast would be complete without including respected Elders and having a Pipe Carrier to bless the feast and the foods themselves.

In her introduction to the third edition of Anzaldua's Borderlands/La Frontera Sonia Saldivar-Hull makes the observation that "Anzaldua stages her writing within the larger context of the continent and its layered histories."<sup>106</sup> In other words, Anzaldua is writing her truth and her experiences from within the borderlands and the complex intersections of history, resistance and liberation that define her life and her work. In many ways, the house and its inhabitants provided a living exemplar of that point; be they from California, Texas or Tama, the student members of CIASU brought with them the world of the familiar and acted to re-create their cultures and traditions in new ways that helped them carve their own distinct identities into the unknown world of the University. Given the climate of upheaval and change that personified the 60s and 70s, the creation of culturally defined space also represents a political strategy which made it possible for ethnic identity to survive for some and to thrive for others. To paraphrase Saldivar-Hull, they are staging their work and their activism from their contexts and their many, layered histories.

In her work, Anzaldua refers to the ways in which people of indigenous descent often see themselves (be it consciously or unconsciously) as being border crossers- belonging to one world and moving into another. In many ways the student members of CIASU were crossing borders on a daily basis with the house acting as the world of their own making and the psychic (or spiritual) beginning point of the daily journey. On leaving the house they were venturing out into the world that was for them, "other" or foreign but they could do so with the knowledge that there was a safe place waiting them no matter what challenges they encountered. Throughout the newsletters there are

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<sup>106</sup> Saldivar-Hull. Introduction: Borderlands/La Frontera. Pg.9, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

references to the House Manager<sup>107</sup> as well as notices of meetings and groups meeting on a regular basis and these are also mentioned frequently in the letters, essays and remembrances of Zavala and Barceló. For the students, this meant that there was always a safe, culturally meaningful place where they could indulge in their own brand of humor or vent in the language(s) of their choice.

As time progressed and they became more accustomed to the larger outside world, the students made a conscious effort to take some of “their” world out into the larger community. As stated in the June 1971 news article, one of the goals of the organization was to expose the greater University community to the realities of what it meant to *be* Chicano/a or Indian. As much as the University may have been unknown and alien territory it was simultaneously filled with other like-minded students, allies who encouraged the presence of CIASU and who welcomed the new organization. The willingness of CIASU to share their differences speaks to the fluidity of borders and boundaries that Anzaldua continually refers to; it highlights the fact that the borders-internal as well as external-could be stretched to extend beyond the four walls of the house itself.

In this way, the house itself was as much a living example of praxis as were those who inhabited the space. The “meaning” of the house itself was by no means static; it would come to mean different things to each individual and those meanings would change significantly over time. At times the house would be a place to study while at other times it was the place to gather and socialize. It was here that political actions were

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<sup>107</sup> The position of House Manager would be for the academic year, much as the LNACC Manager’s position exists today. The role of House Manager would take on more importance after the first two years (putting it beyond the scope of this project) as CIASU became more established and as the number of students using the house increased.

planned and where activist strategies were discussed and debated. The house then, was more than simply a culturally specific and accommodating site within the University for these students who saw themselves as outside of the majority; within its walls the borders and boundaries of what it meant to be Chicano/a and American Indian were being stretched amongst those who counted themselves among its familiars. Within this space of their own creation they had the freedom to disagree with or come to terms with the ways in which the changes in society was creating shifts in the way they related to each other as gendered, culturally defined individuals.

Some of the ways in which these social negotiations took place can be seen in part in an undated memo contained in the LNACC collection.<sup>108</sup> This short, two page document written by Barceló to Teresa Sierra, contains reflections on the history of the house and the need to keep that history in the minds of students as to *why* it is that the Cultural Center is of importance.<sup>109</sup> It is too easy for those using the Center contemporarily to forget the meaning of the house itself-because they are not a part of the history that brought it into being. The temptation is there to forget the roots of the founding of the house and the organization itself. The document ends with the words “initial thoughts” to Sierra and a handwritten message at the bottom to “edit at will”, the documents itself offers great insight into the thinking of the three founders as Barceló includes her own reminiscences as well as some from Tony Zavala and Ruth

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<sup>108</sup> . Despite the lack of a specific date, it can be surmised that Barceló wrote it in preparation for the tenth anniversary of the Center; she uses terms such as Latino and Native American, which did not come into common usage within the organization until the 1980s. Further proof can be found in the passage from Tony Zavala that states the Center “has had ten good years.”

<sup>109</sup> The LNACC collection was still in the process of being organized when I found this; since this document is undated it was found among a group of other undated clippings, memos and LNACC office records.

Pushetonequa. This is meaningful because their reminiscences present an opportunity for highlighting not only that the house has always been important to many students but that it has served students for many years in many capacities. In this short rumination Barceló asks (and offers her own answers)

What is the Chicano Native American Cultural Center? For some it is merely a structure filled with Native American and Indian art work, for some it is a place to cook one's native foods, for some it is a place to discuss the current status of Hispanic and Native American peoples, for some it is just a place to party. But for me the Center is more than all those things...I fear that some of us take the Center for granted and we really do not know the spirit that it represents. Our presence on this campus is not an accident. There are many who came before us that struggled hard to guarantee that educational opportunity became a reality...They left behind a legacy, a legacy to be found in the Cultural Center. Occasionally many of these former students will call and inquire about the Cultural Center and I am sad to say that it does not rock with the emotion or the interest that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. But I am proud to say also that students do use the center as a place to study and as a place to party.<sup>110</sup>

One line in particular "Our presence on this campus is not an accident" speaks powerfully to the determination of the three founding members to create an organization that would exist for new, as well as future, students. When she says "But for me the Center is more than all those things..." she acknowledges that it is greater than the sum of its parts and in this she points to the malleability of function of the Center and the fluidity of the place it holds in the lives of its student members. The student members of CIASU-in the beginning, during the period of this document, and today-embodiment the aspect of Anzaldua's definition of borderlands as "...in a constant state of transition."<sup>111</sup> The goal

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<sup>110</sup> Barceló. Undated note to Teresa Sierra with a handwritten message at the bottom.

<sup>111</sup> Anzaldua. Borderlands/La Frontera, pg.3

of having a house<sup>112</sup> was to provide a “safe haven” for Chicano/a and Indian students but through the creation of such an entity comes the responsibility of allowing those who use the space to define what it means for them in their particular situation and place in time. The house/Center was not only the starting point of transformative change for many students but it would often undergo transformations of its own; another reflection of the fluidity of borders that Anzaldua spoke about.

In this same document, Barceló makes reference to a “recent letter” from Zavala in which he looks back and offers a perspective that focuses on the specifics of the various ways the Center functions for students. He talks about how the space would often act to bolster identity in a positive way that offered tools to strip away the vestiges of a history that worked to create both internalized and institutional assimilations. He states that

The Center has been sort of a cultural first-aid station where Chicano and Native American students can cure themselves of accumulative hang-ups. I found many students change from Joe to Jose and from being publicly embarrassed of being Mexicano and being proud of it so I know what I am talking about. Sometimes culture is as necessary as food to survive. The Center provided shelter, friends, music, theater, dance, art, poetry, books and many, many discussions which were useful to balance the one-sided education most Chicanos and Native Americans receive elsewhere.<sup>113</sup>

The imagery of a “cultural first-aid station” is very telling; Zavala’s description goes a long way towards helping to define the house as a space in which the students were able to heal. In a manner, the house acted as a place where it was possible to fuse back

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<sup>112</sup> As Barceló notes in her June 2001 interview, the house on Clinton Street became something different when it took on the title “Cultural Center” and was moved across the river. It became an altogether different entity than it had been for its population up to that point.

<sup>113</sup> Zavala. “Lookin’ Back.” Pg.2

together the parts of the self that had become compartmentalized and fractured through attempting to live in a society where those identifying as Chicano/a or American Indian were seen as having little or no value. He speaks to the power of culturally defined, social interaction centering on music, art and the sense of “home” that existed in the house that would bring a (almost spiritual) sense of positivity and balance into the lives of many who had only ever experienced a negative self-image. The House became a focal point for many of the Chicano/a and American Indian students but it was not without its issues<sup>114</sup> or any of the problems that are the bane of any beginning organization’s existence.

As a way of understanding some of the early issues in the House, not much has survived (or is open to researchers at this time). I can share that in my personal research collection of CIASU papers I have several pages of handwritten notes, much of it pertaining to the early days of the House and shared with me by Teresa Garcia<sup>115</sup> from her own collection. The handwritten pages are from conversations with other CIASU members; the copy of the Post-It® on the top reads

Notes from Conversations  
w/Miguel Ojeda  
Sylvia Ramirez  
Darlene Wind  
Antonio Zavala  
re the CIASU/CIACC (Sometime between fall ’76 and spring ’82)<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> I discuss some of the dissension in the section entitled “CIASU and Performativity” later in this chapter.

<sup>115</sup> Garcia attended the University of Iowa from 1976-1982 and was recruited to UI by Rusty Barceló. These are notes that she wrote and kept for herself and are not meant to be included in any “official” collection. They are simply the act of a student writing down what she hears to go over again later. I thank Teresa for allowing me to use them here.

<sup>116</sup> Even though this period is outside of the time frame of my project, some of the students had been there since the early days of CIASU and thus their input offers insight into the House.

The notes are private thoughts from private conversations and much that is contained in these pages will remain just that, private. It is possible however, to glean information without breaking confidences; the information sheds light on some of the day-to-day challenges CIASU students faced. These conversations are not simply criticisms of the house but rather, observations on contestations of how to use the house, who was using it and if those usages were effective. One student includes commentary on several Center Managers including one who attended Student Support Services (SSS) meetings out of budgetary concerns but otherwise chose to focus on the needs of CIASU members and the House itself. There is criticism of a Manager who mismanaged the position before it was well-defined and whose lack of involvement in CIASU activities put off some members; for a group as involved as CIASU, this was considered a serious breach and many students were privately critical of the individual they saw as lacking in commitment to the house and to the students themselves. Much of the information comes after the scope of this dissertation but there are references to the first two years; the names are those of students and some of them were a few years older than Garcia and had been there just after the beginning but Zavala's involvement was of course, well understood.

In the same collection of conversations, one member reminisces about her or his early interactions with CIASU and recalls meeting Antonio Zavala in 1971 after just having moved to Iowa City and was asked if they were a student. When the individual responded that he/she couldn't afford it financially Zavala put this person in touch with



SSS and the student was enrolled in the fall of 972<sup>117</sup>. This person quietly became involved in CIASU<sup>118</sup> and goes on to note that

...it took several attempts to enter the group and become involved, that is, students already involved in the CIASU had formed cliques and had unconsciously built up a barrier against new students. They wanted and needed new students for as a mass they could do more for their cause but as a group they were not yet willing to accept outsiders into their personal cliques...

The student does not define what those “cliques” were but does go on to say that the group began to realize that they needed the strength of increased numbers and that they were personally moved by the power of the student revolution. The students’ own conservative, middle class upbringing left him/her unprepared for the power and passion of the students encountered in the House and in the end, the experiences were good ones and helped to shape his/her work. This students’ experience suggests that the members of CIASU were evolving and growing, willing to become more inclusive as they moved forward.

Despite the limitations of citing this particular document<sup>119</sup> there is no doubt as to the value that it has to me as a researcher for an organization that has a very limited historical documentation. Through the words of several CIASU members it becomes clear that in its early years the group faced a struggle between its progressive ideals, the biases of its members and navigating a new and alien landscape. In spite of these

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<sup>117</sup> This student has shared reminiscences before but given the nature of Garcia’s notes, it seems as though it would be breaking a confidence to divulge the students’ identity.

<sup>118</sup> She had been discouraged from getting involved with them by some of her relatives; this was not an uncommon reaction to the activism of student organizations.

<sup>119</sup> While I will not allow any copying of the document itself, I am more than happy to allow it to be viewed by my committee members if necessary.

challenges, the House was still the place to safely discuss points of contention and to challenge each other's notions and ideas.

The Center may have been the creation of the students who conceived the idea and those who utilized it but the truth of the matter is that it would not have become reality without the assistance of individuals such as Dr. Phil Jones and the administration itself. While the house may have been attained without going through "proper" channels, it was still University property and the cost of day-to-day expenses and staffing of the Center were provided by the University. Other Centers such as the Afro House and the Women's Center were already entities on Campus and provided a model for the Chicano/a and Indian students in the quest for ways to define their own space. The most important aspect of the House though, is what it came to mean to the students for whom it provided that sense of separation from the large University community. Perhaps Rusty Barceló said it best when she remarked

It was because of the cultural center that I and others survived as students, because of the important space we were provided with-a space which embraced who we were without explanation.

#### Publications

The students of CIASU worked diligently to get the message out about the organization and to make their presence on campus known. The publications they produced were another pillar or aspect of their resistance, whether that be specific political or social issues or to the single-dimensional image that some still had of the Chicano/a and American Indian students. They produced a newsletter that went to all the student members and a literary magazine that went beyond CIASU members to a wider

audience in the larger community and into local Chicano/a and American Indian communities and a literary magazine with a broader scope.<sup>120</sup>

*El Laberinto* was the “house” newsletter for the student members; here they would find out what was going on within the organization, its goals and what opportunities CIASU was creating for its members. This is where information was disseminated regarding classes, meetings for the various CIASU groups and what was going on in “the house.” It is within the pages of *El Laberinto* that the students spoke in their own voices and issues addressed could range from whose house the party was at to where to meet up for a protest or discussions about the personal and political ramifications of the current boycott. It was also a site where members could, and often would, challenge each other’s political positions and personal politics; it functioned as much as a place to air CIASU laundry as it did a newsletter.<sup>121</sup> The decision to name the newsletter “Laberinto” is addressed in what I can only assume to be the first issue-like so many other CIASU publications, there is no specific date except for “1972”-in the opening article titled “Definition of our Paper”

Labyrinth...represents a maze or sort of mixed up angles from which their (sic) seems no end or beginning. The name was chosen to represent the Chicano people, not that we are mixed up and or crazy, but that we live in a society where the people we live with formed a maze trying to keep us from getting out of confusion and frustration which we have lived with for the last 200 years. Mazes have appeared frequently in Asia and Europe, but for our purpose the meaning or outcome of a Labyrinth is the same, for the purpose over there was conceived to lure devils (Chicanos) into them so that they may not escape, therefore the maze

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<sup>120</sup> I will be examining these publications in greater depth in the following chapter to better understand how the publications functioned as activist endeavors.

<sup>121</sup> This is further addressed in the section on “CIASU and Performativity”

had a certain fascination for which the anglo could and does use today, that of putting us in until we are no longer.<sup>122</sup>

I have chosen to include most of the text because it speaks not only to the purpose of CIASU to break stereotypes and limitations but also because it demonstrates the innate streak of resistance to dominant culture strictures to which the organization as a whole struggled against. This quote shows that the students are aware of and attempting to shed light on, the complicated mechanism that is the intersection of historical oppression and on-going systemic exclusion.

*Nahuatzen: a Chicano Literary Magazine* was the publication that would ask the big questions and look at the larger picture in the lives of its student members and in the lives of Chicano/a and American Indian communities. It would often present interviews and essays and also allowed for a greater degree of performativity and self-exploration in the works produced by the students. Its format allowed for expanded forms of self-expression and rumination yet it would also often cull news articles and political cartoons from various sources to include in its pages. Subject matter varied greatly with each issue; some might focus more on Chicano/a history but always, it contained original poetry and stories and drawings. Much of the poetry contained in the magazine was personal in nature but the political always took center stage. Antonio Zavala was the Editor in the beginning and the early issues worked as a means by which to help the CIASU members learn their own contemporary histories and to keep them aware of what was happening in the larger world of the Chicano Movement.

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<sup>122</sup> This is at the end of the paragraph: By Albert J. Olvera with help of Professor Richard Skinner-Spanish Department.

The CIASU publications offer a view into the ways in which the student members approached the world of the University and their Chicano/a and American Indian communities. It is clear on the pages that they are working to foster a strong sense of identity for those just learning to claim their identity as well as providing a forum for those already in touch with their “inner Chicano/a.”

#### CIASU and Performativity

During the 1960s and 1970s ethnic and cultural identities were put on display and performativity of identity became a part of every college campus by many and varied groups. Be it hippies and flower children with their long hair and love beads or most Black or African American groups with their dashikis and ‘Fros, performativity was everywhere; it presented a means with which to make a non-verbal statement about the way one sees the world and one’s place in it, or in the case of CIASU and other minority students, the inner, ethnic self. In this period of cultural and social revolution the manner of dress one chose was also recognized as a non-verbal articulation of alliances as well as influences and institutions that were being resisted. A classic example of performativity as resistance is the issue of facial hair and hair length for young men; dress codes were a part of virtually every institution of learning with shorter hair being the standard. Allowing ones’ hair to grow out became an often contentious statement of resistance to the rules and rejection of standards that many saw as having no relevance in the quickly changing social and political dynamic. For women, it became the wearing of pants and of trousers that often signaled resistance to the strictures of the very recent past. Theories

of performativity<sup>123</sup> or “performative utterances”<sup>124</sup> that have evolved since the 1960s take into consideration the ways in which speech along with non-verbal methods of transmitting ideas or concepts, work to create change. In the case of the students of CIASU, performativity was a part of daily life in the house, in the classroom, on the street and in public performances of El Teatro or Los Bailadores. For CIASU students, language and dress were major contributors to the performativity of what it meant to be Chicano/a and American Indian. An example of this could be seen in the “Spanglish” that was heard frequently and was an accepted facet of the student-produced publications as well as everyday usage in the house. Within the pages of *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto*, Spanglish was heard constantly; merging together both Spanish and English, its use was (and still is) considered an affront by many speakers of classical Spanish. But if the House presented a *Frontera*, then the hybrid language was very much a part of that borderland, a linguistic merging of two cultures, it can be seen as another facet of *mestizaje*. It added an element of depth to the performativity of CIASU; the verbal element to complement the non-verbal element of dress and it was another way in which to mark oneself as part of the group. The addition of Spanglish to “the look”-headbands, army jackets, bell bottoms and Zapata tee shirt-said that one was part of something beyond one’s self; it spoke to a group consciousness, shared ethnicity and similar political leanings. Spanglish, when used in the house was the sharing of a created language based in similar experiences; Spanglish in the context of performativity outside

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<sup>123</sup> Most of these arose as response to the work of J.L. Austin with feminist gender theorist such as Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*) have taken his work and explored its implication for gendered communication.

<sup>124</sup> Austin, John L., “Performative Utterances” in “Philosophical Papers”, p.235

the house served several purposes depending on the make-up of the audience. It could either help to connect to the audience linguistically as in the case of performing for migrant farm workers or it could help the audience realize that the performers were coming from an entirely different set of lived experiences based on racism and exclusion. In both cases, the use of language could convey an important thread of meaning that would otherwise have been missing

Performativity serves multiple purposes and is fluid; meanings adapt to, and are defined by, location, context and audience. Performativity of the “ethnic self” in speech, mannerisms and non-verbal communication can act to separate oneself from one group and to stand with in solidarity with another.<sup>125</sup> In the case of CIASU members, that translated into standing in solidarity not only with each but also standing in alliances with others who supported like-minded social causes and concerns while completely rejecting others. Code words and phrases found in CIASU publications like “ese”<sup>126</sup> or “bato”<sup>127</sup> and phrases such as “viva la causa”<sup>128</sup> or “mi raza primera”<sup>129</sup> immediately marked one as not of the dominant culture; the use of certain words or phrases could open doors to discussion or work to create tension and conflict depending on the circumstances in which they were used. Performativity is easily recognized in situations that engage the use of costumes and/or props (as in the case of Los Bailadores and especially El Teatro)

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<sup>125</sup> “Performativity.” [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) 17 May 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Used primarily by Mexicans. “The one I’m speaking with” “homeboy” “dude”

<sup>127</sup> Man or dude

<sup>128</sup> Long live the Cause

<sup>129</sup> My people first or My race first

and it offers a way of transmitting ones self-image and world view to an audience or ones' political leanings when used with ones' peers such as when used within the confines of the house.

The problem with performativity is that it can be a double-edged sword; it can divide as easily as it can unite and also work to essentialize identity. In the case of CIASU in its' early days-a very young organization made up of young people trying to find themselves in the midst of change and turmoil-performativity would sometimes work to alienate the very people the group was trying to reach. An example of this can be found in the copy of *El Laberinto* dated "2-10-72" and titled "Open Letter."<sup>130</sup> This was only the fourth edition of the newsletter to go out and it addresses emerging conflicts of who belongs and feels welcome at the house. Written by Elisa M. Sanchez, the letter shines light on the fact that there are divisions emerging within the house, between the ideal of reaching out to other Chicano/a and American Indian students and the reality that not everyone is at the same point in their journey. She writes

This house was to have been a haven of sorts-one that a person could go to; to be understood; helped, and be welcome. Funny, fewer people came after the first few months. I wonder why? It was rumored that those people who didn't come anymore were "too white", that the men weren't "macho" enough or that the women were apathetic... Perhaps the people were a bit "white" but given time to recover from the abrupt and initial shock there could have been a strong coalition of ideas from all.<sup>131</sup>

I address the use of language in Chapter 4 and the ways in which it acts as a tool of solidarity that cements relationships and can act to create pockets of culturally defined refuge. What Sanchez refers to in her letter is the opposite of that; she is discussing

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<sup>130</sup> Sanchez. *El Laberinto*. "An Open Letter." 1:4 (1972): Pg.2-3.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.* pg. 2



language as a means to create a hierarchy in a space where neither hierarchy nor discrimination (no matter how subtle or un-intentioned) was ever expected to exist and further, creates a climate where members of the potential group are labeled as “less than” or inauthentic. Sanchez takes the house members to task when she states that

A person cannot be forced to change his or her way of thinking overnight. In order to want to change his or her outlook one needs time and along with time a feeling of acceptance with equality.<sup>132</sup>

Sanchez is accusing the members of CIASU of whom she is being critical of in essence, “blaming the victim” for not knowing their language or their culture. Many Chicano/a students coming to the University of Iowa were the products of an upbringing that encouraged them to assimilate and emulate the Anglo/Gringo/White culture around them; this was seen as a means of moving up in the world and to living the American Dream of being more successful than one’s parents. These same students came from homes where (sometimes, in the extreme) Mexican first and surnames were changed in an effort to “blend in” and to be not, or perhaps less, Mexican.<sup>133</sup> The assimilationist 40s and 50s left a scar on many ethnic people and it was the only way in which many of the incoming Chicano/a and American Indian students knew to move through the world. Talking about the ways in which the very ideals the house has been founded on are being used to exclude and in some respects, denigrate, those it sought to invite into the organization.

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132 *ibid.*

133 I vividly remember my father coming home from work one day and talking about a new employee at the Machine Shop. The man’s surname was Martinez yet he insisted that he be called “Martin Ehz.” My dad didn’t hesitate to talk bad about what he called the idiocy but he also felt bad for the man; all of his white co-workers were laughing at him behind his back. My father used it as a cautionary tale at the dinner table to never be ashamed of who we were.

Sanchez truly points to, and calls out those responsible for creating the dissension in the House when she makes the observation and then asks

Being told over and over again that one does not belong, can only alienate a person from that which he or she wishes for foremost. Granted, it is a shame that you have to learn to be a part of your culture, but in the process of learning does that mean that you can never belong to this house?<sup>134</sup>

The significance of the letter is that it was printed openly in the newsletter and brings to light important emerging issues as well as situations that the group may not have been aware it was creating. While the utopian ideal for a Chicano/a and American Indian group was admirable, this letter shows that as people began to actually become interested in the group and started to use the house, the students were faced with issues such as who “belonged” or had a right to be there. Those issues would have to be dealt with and resolved if CIASU was going to survive; based on the student experience that I relate from Teresa Garcia’s notes and which were experienced during the same academic year, it would appear that members would eventually resolve some of the internal conflicts. That this issue was raised early on may have been a contributing factor to the long-term success of CIASU; they had to decide as an organization of individuals just how open or closed their society would be and whose voices would be heard. Any peace that was eventually achieved had to be based on the realization that not everyone would be comfortable with the level of performativity, that is, dress, speech or manner, or the varying degrees of non-conformity in some cases, as that engaged in by the more radical or active members of the organization.

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<sup>134</sup> Sanchez. *El Laberinto* 1:4, pg. 2

Performativity for the members of the house worked on several levels; it might let others know just “how” Chicano/a one thought oneself to be or how politically involved one was. For others, performativity allowed one to explore one’s culture through modes of speech or dress that had not been used before and which may have even been discouraged. What we see from the Sanchez letter is that performativity had the possibility of being either a positive or a negative even within the confines of the house. On the positive, it presented the opportunity for personal growth by learning to re/claim some of the more public aspects of Mexican culture such as language and music as well as the exploration of culture as a way to discover whatever the individual student believed to be the “ethnic self.” On the negative however, especially for a time in the early day, those new students deemed as not Chicano/a “enough” (be it for lack of knowledge of one’s history or language, or conservatism) were put-off by the judgmental attitude of some of the House members. Consciously or unconsciously, as we see in the unnamed students’ recollection, CIASU members were sabotaging their own attempts to build a strong organization by discouraging new students due to the emergence of a subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) form of performativity that encouraged internal cliques. This development pointed to the fact that the act of institutionalizing resistance on any given front was not enough; those attempting to change the system had to remain vigilant and work to ensure that in their work they were not perpetuating or even creating new forms of the old exclusions they were working to end. Fortunately, they seem to have been able to overcome the cliques and became more welcoming of new students. As we see from the open letter, Sanchez was brave enough to broach the subject and there was enough trust in the individuals in the House and the organizational process to examine an

uncomfortable situation to air the situation publicly, to believe that it would be dealt with in a way that moved CIASU forward and to know that posturing or performativity at the heart of the issue would be resolved.<sup>135</sup>

*Los Bailadores Zapatista*

Los Bailadores was an active group within the organization that in many respects was the “public” and/or non-threatening face of CIASU. It was a form of resistance seated in positive (and “feel-good”) cultural images; most who observed Los Bailadores would not recognize that this form of performativity that was often more effective than boycotts or protesting at changing attitudes. This dance group would perform traditional Mexican dances in the brightly colored folk-dress on campus at cultural events as well as around the state. They were often invited to perform at conferences and gatherings beyond the University and outside the state as well. The group was following in the footsteps of other Chicano/a student groups throughout the country; their performances would shine a light on the importance of cultural heritage. Los Bailadores illustrated the way that music, dance and costume could be used as activism; their performativity was a source of individual and group pride. The local, national and regional recognition that the group received made it clear that the Chicano/a and American Indian students at the University of Iowa were thriving and moreover, their performances were a powerful tool used to recruit other students to the University; they would often perform at high schools as well as LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) functions and other

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<sup>135</sup> At the end of the letter Sanchez states that she’s not running away and will deal with the issue head-on. This led to a series of conversations and even though there is nothing further in the newsletter regarding the issue, Sanchez contributes news articles in newsletters later in the year.

gatherings where their grasp of the traditional folk dances would give them credibility. This was especially important when recruiting in rural areas with migrant workers and when dealing with older, more traditional, Mexican families or communities wary of, sending their young men and women into the unknown world of Iowa City and the University. Barceló's unpublished interview touches on this briefly, discussing the fact that since she was the Graduate Advisor, she would be responsible for the University vehicle used to transport the dancers and she points to the importance of having the group to use as a tool for recruitment. Having a group such as Los Bailadores was one way of offering proof that cultural heritage and identity would not be lost in the transition to the foreign world of University and Iowa City.

Los Bailadores began early in the organizations days but due to the small numbers of students on campus, it did not start to become a cohesive performing group until about 1973 but the seeds were laid early on. The use of Los Bailadores as a recruitment was presents an interesting twist on the issue of CIASU resistance. The student recruiters were able to utilize the strength they derived from their culture and use it in a way that no dominant culture recruiter would be able to; instead of talking *at* students, CIASU members would hand out applications and information while feet were tapping and hands were clapping; they recruited using the gifts of song, dance and spirit of community which spoke to their audience on a deeper level than a lecture.

#### *El Teatro Zapata*

El Teatro Zapata at the University of Iowa was based on an organizing tool devised by El Teatro Campesino in support of Cesar Chavez' United Farm Workers in

the mid 1960s and utilized by the Chicano Movement in the 1970s<sup>136</sup>. Born in the fields of California and performed as El Teatro Campesino, this powerful and effective approach displayed the militancy of the day and was used to educate migrant farm workers as to how to combat the inequities they experienced at the hands of agri-business and ranch owners with the end message focusing on the need to organize and join the UFW. The Teatro Campesino would go into the fields and perform socially pointed skits or *actos* on the backs of flatbed trucks whenever and wherever there was an audience to be found. It presented a powerful tool for enlightening and organizing farm workers; its use of simple everyday settings and objects made it portable and accessible to anyone with a message and a little creativity-it definitely had some of the early seeds of “guerilla theater”<sup>137</sup>; it was easily adapted by many Chicano/a college groups as a way to reach out to communities. At Iowa, the teatro was a part of CIASU almost from the beginning.

The September 1972 (Vol. II, no. 1) issue of *El Laberinto* reports on the September 14 performance by El Teatro “in an isolated farming region southwest of the Quad Cities” as part of the fiesta and festivities “to celebrate a birthday-el cumpleaños de Mexico.” It should be noted that in this article the group is referred to as El Teatro de La Raza even though it is usually referred to as El Teatro Zapatista<sup>138</sup>. Since this

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<sup>136</sup> Broyles-Gonzalez, Yolanda. El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement p.55

<sup>137</sup> Guerilla Theater surfaced in the 1980s as an activist “event” employed by many feminist and AIDS activists to raise awareness for their causes and to illustrate their outrage at slow-moving and seemingly uncaring institutions. “Guerilla” because the actions were always thrust upon the public; busy intersections and street corners would be transformed into a makeshift stage. Sometimes the performers would be gone before the police could arrive, at other times the performers would lid down and wait for the police, pretending to be corpses as a way to illustrate the numbers dying from AIDS. Having lost a brother to AIDS in 1989, the connection between Teatro and Guerilla Theater was not lost on me.

<sup>138</sup> Since the organization itself was so small that first year, it’s not hard to see that a name change would come with the input of more students the following year. I have not found

performance took place very early in the organizational history, I surmise that the name most likely evolved (it is also likely that it was already in use by another group at another school). The March 1972 issue dated Vol. 1, No. V has a small notice on the Teatro's February 24<sup>th</sup> performance at the Scott Community College in Davenport for the Chicano Cultural Class; the article goes on to say that the teatro has already been invited back and that there are planned performances in Ft. Madison and Des Moines. It ends by inviting those interested to become involved in Teatro by attending the weekly meetings at the Center. The fact that CIASU at this early stage in its existence invested the time in teatro and reaching out to the larger Chicano/a community speaks to its earliest commitment to community outreach. Through Teatro, CIASU was able to enter into a symbiotic relationship of the best kind—one that feeds both parties equally; the community gained by exposure to the larger ideas and challenges of the Chicano Movement and their own histories and the students gained by being able to maintain a connection to communities that welcomed them and gave them a sense of “place” and of belonging. Teatro made it possible to extend the fluid boundaries of “home” so that the members of teatro were not alienated or “other” from their audience when they performed.

The group of CIASU members who performed in El Teatro Zapatista modeled themselves after El Teatro Campesino, as did other Chicano/a student organizations around the country. El Teatro Zapatista, much like Los Bailadores, performed in the Center, in and around campus, during special events around the state and both groups would often be invited to perform at Conferences. The two groups would travel together and many CIASU members were involved in both Los Bailadores and El Teatro but there

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evidence of when the name changed but suspect that is in an issue of El Laberinto that is missing from the archives.

were vast differences in the intended messages to audiences and in the manner that message was conveyed. Los Bailadores performances would appeal to audiences in a non-threatening manner meant to invite the observer into the Chicano/a experience through music, costume and dance into an appreciation of Mexican culture and history. El Teatro on the other hand used their *actos* (sketches) to inform and disrupt stereotypical thinking in regard to Mexican identity, culture and history; the *actos* were a form of performativity specifically designed to raise the consciousness of the audience. The range of *actos* performed would have different effects on different audiences and sadly, I have been unable to find any remaining scripts or directives. Depending on the subject matter, the intent of the *acto* performed might be to radicalize, educate, mobilize and motivate the target audience to become more involved in issues within their own communities or to question long held beliefs as well as to inspire pride in Chicano/a history and identity.

The performativity of Los Bailadores and El Teatro presented a transformative, living, engaged, multi-purpose and multi-layered activism within CIASU and it represented a resistance to negative images of what it meant to be Chicano/a. Those involved in them were not only presenting a message to the audiences they performed in front of but it was also a way of empowering themselves through creative thought processes that honored their cultural and ethnic identity as well as their political and activist identities.

#### Pre-School Program

CIASU as a group committed themselves to recruiting others like themselves to the University of Iowa; they also knew that they had an obligation to help others attain



the dream of college. In the January 1972 issue of *El Laberinto*<sup>139</sup> an article talks about a Pre-School class on Saturdays taking place in Muscatine and inviting University of Iowa students to take part. An on-going project for the group would be that of working with children in Pre-Schools; specifically one at West Liberty which had (and still has to this day) a sizeable Chicano/a population and one in Muscatine which catered primarily to the children of migrant farm workers. In West Liberty, many of the families settled in the area after having found it through their experiences as migrant farm workers while others came from families who had lived in and around the area for many years (much like the Mexican communities of Madison and Muscatine, Iowa for instance). For CIASU, working with the Pre-School in Muscatine presented an opportunity to influence and reach out to future University students and was also a hands-on activist endeavor that made it possible to disrupt dominant culture pedagogical practices with a history of failure to recognize or celebrate cultural difference. One of the early issues of *Nahuatzen*<sup>140</sup> contains an article on the operation of the Muscatine Pre-School and its emphasis on providing Chicano/a children basic skills while still maintaining their sense of culture and their native Spanish language. There is mention of the fact that the Pre-School was started in 1971 through the efforts of U of I students and Muscatine community members and the Centro de Migrantes; the entire two-column article is written in Spanish and there is no translation offered. While focusing primarily on the Pre-School, the article does mention on-going tutoring for older children and the dream of an “escuela” (school) that would work with 6-12 year olds, citing the case of a girl in

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<sup>139</sup> Vol. 1, no. 5 pg. 5

<sup>140</sup> “Vol. 2. No. 2” pp 22-23

West Liberty who had not received the help she needed and who at the age of ten was just being passed into the second grade. It ends talking about the positive impact the five University students are having on the children through their willingness to share their time, their culture and being examples of what it means to be of service to La Raza.

The effects of the Pre-School was multi-level, extending beyond the teaching of rudimentary English and basic knowledge of ABCs; it allowed the members of CIASU to reach out to the young ones and instill in them an early sense of pride in themselves as cultural beings in a bi-lingual setting. In this respect we see that the impulse to institutionalize resistance was one that took into consideration the multi-generational effects of creating change. This is an important point because it was one that would have long-term implications for the presence of Chicano/a and American Indians at the University. The pre-school had the effect of planting the idea of higher education among the Pre-School children while helping them learn the basics of the English language and providing simple tools for success in these all-important formative educational years. The CIASU teacher volunteers' demonstrated theory moved into reality not only through direct action but also by offering themselves as living examples of what was possible. CIASU was in effect practicing transformative teaching as well as performativity (in their guise as college students) and were employing some of the tactics that Chela Sandoval has discussed in Methodology of the Oppressed.

The student members of the organization employed tools beyond the basics of education during their time in the pre-school; their work helped the youngsters to situate their own histories into the concept of "school". The *Nahuatzen* article talks about the fact that the U of I students would sometimes teach through field trips to Fiestas or other

celebrations. Helping the children to recognize that who and where they came from was a factor in their identity as students, CIASU provided them the first tool of Sandoval's "oppositional consciousness" which gave the youngsters the ability to "see" that they moved not only through a school system (institutional bureaucracy) but might, if they wished, move through it without the loss of sense of self. In her work, Sandoval uses Anzaldua's description of weaving "between and among" oppositional ideologies<sup>141</sup> that work to splinter the soul in the quest for hegemony. Sandoval has developed her theory of oppositional consciousness as a means for better understanding and more clearly articulation, the ways in which those from oppressed groups (most often communities of color) navigate through institutions and systems designed to assimilate everyone one in them. Sandoval's work is key to understanding any success of the Pre-Schools because her work is based on her demonstration that dominant culture (feminist and socialist in particular) theoretical frameworks tend to disregard the importance of the histories of dealing with disproportionate power relations and allows room for disparities not only of history but also of race, class and culture. Her work clarifies how it is that, in the case of those seen as "other" by the dominant culture, it is nonetheless possible to move through a system designed to eradicate difference by maintaining those differences. In this way, her work illustrates that the efforts of CIASU with the children was *transformative* as well as empowering. Sandoval writes about five forms of what she calls "oppositional consciousness" that can be utilized to create social change; the first four modes are the equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist and separatist. She details each in her work, looking at the possibilities and limitations of each one. But in looking at the work that

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<sup>141</sup> Sandoval, p. 57

took place at the Pre-School it becomes clear that the CIASU members were practicing the fifth mode, *differential consciousness* which Sandoval describes as

The differential represents the variant; its presence emerges out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises. Yet the differential depends on a form of agency that is self-consciously mobilized in order to enlist and secure influence; the differential is thus performative...it functions as the medium through which the equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist and separatist modes of oppositional consciousness become effectively converted, lifted out of their earlier, modernist, and hegemonic activity.<sup>142</sup>

By this she means that activism, resistance and performativity are all tools for creating change but that differential consciousness makes it possible for each tool to become more than it was originally intended; thus, performativity allows the student teachers to become living examples of resistance, activism and the value of education. The students of CIASU were not simply helping pre-school children prepare for their school experience, they were transforming and empowering themselves as much as they were the children. Taking part in the pre-school was a way to resist and help turn back the tide of Chicano/a children falling through the social and academic cracks and it was a way to learn first-hand the challenges that many of the children (and the families they came from) faced daily. As Sandoval points out in the same passage

When enacted in dialectical relation to one another...each oppositional mode of consciousness, each ideology-praxis, is transformed into tactical weaponry for intervening in shifting currents of power.<sup>143</sup>

In this regard the work that was being done at the Pre-School was radical, revolutionary and resistant to dominant culture models that did not serve the needs of Chicano/a youth.

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<sup>142</sup> Sandoval. pg. 58.8

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

The use of differential consciousness permitted the student teachers of CIASU to creatively engage all the tools at their disposal in an effort to empower the children of the pre-school; their bi-lingual, culturally meaningful way reached the children in ways that were meaningful to them and which empowered them in their “regular” classrooms.

Barceló relates the story of how, in the midst of Orientation season during the late 1990s she was walking to a meeting and happened to pass the Iowa Memorial Union when she heard someone call her name. The person who called out to her was an incoming freshman who asked if she was Rusty who used to come to the Pre-School. Upon answering in the affirmative, the new student informed her that she had attended the West Liberty Pre School and that Rusty and the other students had inspired her to finish High School and go on to apply to the University of Iowa.<sup>144</sup> Barceló rightly offered this as proof of what a small group of determined students could accomplish. Due to the lack of precise records asking where in-coming students might point to their motivation is for attending the University, there is no way of ascertaining how many of the youngsters who attended that little Pre School went on to go to colleges or Universities at Iowa or elsewhere, but there is evidence that the efforts of CIASU went on to bear fruit in which the group could take pride. It should be noted that working with Pre-School aged children started out in Muscatine working with the children of migrant farm workers. My dissertation does not extend beyond 1972 but it should be mentioned that in looking over 1974 issues of *Nahuatzen*<sup>145</sup> there is an article by contributor Jose’ Reynaga. In it he talks about the Teacher’s Corp and its inception at the University of Iowa in May of 1972

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<sup>144</sup> 2001 Barceló. Unpublished Interview, 2001.

<sup>145</sup> Vol. 4, No.1 (of course there is no date anywhere in this issue. I’ve ascertained the date roughly because the article refers to a lecture at a conference earlier in the year).

as part of a national program aimed at providing pre-school classes for bi-lingual communities; Teacher Corps was one of the ways in which the Pre School in West Liberty was made possible; the beauty of the program was that it focused on bi-lingual teaching and respected ethnic diversity and identity.

### Boycotts

For the new student members of CIASU, protesting and boycotts were already a part of the group consciousness and were part of the national psychological make-up<sup>146</sup>; they were living in a time during which protest was a part of the psyche of the American college campus. The students of CIASU would find themselves involved in many protests and on the front lines of numerous boycotts; especially in those having to do with convincing The University of Iowa to support the lettuce and grape boycotts. The scope and range of their involvement is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 but it should be noted that the students were constantly involved in protesting the war along with other social causes and were usually willing to support other organizations such as the African American students and the Women's Center. It is in the arena of boycotts and protests that we see clear evidence of the alliances CIASU made across campus with other student organizations and with community organizers; it was in this arena that we can see connections made across differences and a working knowledge that social injustice

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<sup>146</sup> I remember being taken to my first protest at the ripe old age of 7; mothers were protesting the rising cost of milk in the public schools and my mom took my (then)three brothers and I to march with her in the stroller brigade.

affected everyone-not just members of the targeted group-and that change could only come about by cooperative support for each other's causes.<sup>147</sup>

There are photographs in the *Daily Iowan* of various students at protests, holding posters or marching, but the student is not usually identified individually but as a member of CIASU. It can be surmised that there were likely flyers made for different protests (because it is not an exaggeration to say that everyone made flyers for every event at that point in time) but I have found none of them in the archival record; I suspect that some may exist in unprocessed boxes but none have been catalogued in the LNACC collection to date. The evidence of the group's activities are found once again, in the pages of *El Laberinto* as well as in the Oral History of Zavala and interviews of Barceló. In his 2001 interview<sup>148</sup>, Zavala mentions that he probably attended his last anti-war protest in 1970; he was still with the movement in spirit; the implication is that he was busy concentrating on CIASU and more Chicano-centric issues and his work on *Nahuatzen* certainly reflects his interest in the larger Chicano/a community as well as a more pronounced political awareness. When asked about his involvement with the lettuce and grape boycotts he mentions picketing a grocery store on Dubuque Street in Iowa City and touches on the fact that those boycotts had wide support from the larger community.

We used to picket the store so they would remove the grapes and the lettuce. And not only that, a lot of white students supported us. Helen Duffy and Dana Schumacher, who were white, they were one of our coordinators for the UFW, United Farm Workers, so it was something beautiful to see white students

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<sup>147</sup> While many tend to idealize the '60s and '70s-and I have been guilty of that at times-I believe that it is here, in this space of cooperation that many of us base our remembrances of that time on. The cooperation that would often take place with unlikely allies coming from the most unexpected places; this is how I remember that time; that, and so many talented people dying (senselessly) due to heroin overdoses.

<sup>148</sup> Zavala Oral History interview, pg. 6

working along side Chicano students, black students for the the same purpose, : getting empowering farm workers, helping them. It was beautiful!<sup>149</sup>

Zavala also discusses an interesting tactic that the university's administration adopted in regard to the serving of non-union lettuce and grapes on campus. CIASU and other activists were unable to convince the University not to purchase non-union lettuce but a compromise was reached; two salad lines were offered to students and visitors-one with union picked lettuce and the other used non-union. Student volunteers supporting the boycott would position themselves at the head of the lines to direct the diners to the line with union picked lettuce.<sup>150</sup> The September 1972 issue of *El Laberinto* (Vol. 2, No.1) reported on page 4 that the university student senate had passed a "resolution supporting the UFW lettuce boycott and urged the University to abstain from purchasing non-union lettuce" after a brief presentation from Zavala and other CIASU members on the goals of the UFW. The same article cites a quote from an undated editorial the *Daily Iowan* discussing the lettuce boycott

We can live without lettuce, but the United Farmworkers cannot live without justice.

The lettuce and grape boycotts were one of the largest across the country and the United Farm Workers found much support on college campuses and among social justice activists. Much of this can be attributed to the leadership in UFW but much credit has to be given to Cesar Chavez who Zavala referred to in his 2001 interview:

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149 *ibid.*

150 *ibid.*



Cesar Chavez, a great inspiration for everybody. Like Mahatma Gandhi on a smaller scale, but he still inspired a lot of people to help those that needed helping, those who cannot speak for themselves.<sup>151</sup>

The influence of Chavez cannot be quantified but his efforts on behalf of the UFW would inspire those working for him and alongside him and many would carry that influence on to continue working for social justice issues long after his passing.

While the grape and lettuce boycotts were indeed front and center in the national consciousness, the power of the boycott was not lost on those with other social justice concerns. Boycotts of wine and Farah pants were organized; the message had been received that the boycotting of a product had powerful fiscal implications and the power of the purse could be used as a mechanism for social change. The students of CIASU were able to see that dynamic first-hand; they were able to refine their ability to organize and in the process, made powerful allies campus and community-wide.

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<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

## CHAPTER 6: ACTIVIST ENDEAVORS

### Overview

The activist projects of the CIASU would take on many forms in the early years of the organization; this chapter will take a look at some of the ways in which the founding concerns of the organization expressed themselves through the groups' activist endeavors. One of the most interesting aspects of this dissertation is that it forced me to ask the question "what constitutes activism?" In the case of CIASU, the answer is as complex and interesting as the organization itself. As answered by the historical records, I have been able to find to date, that activism for CIASU could range from the easily recognized activities such as organizing boycotts and reaching out to various communities to something as simple yet significant, as daily performativity of indigenous identity. It is useful to remember that in the early days of the organization, an act as simple as speaking a common language amongst peers in the house constituted an act of radical self empowerment that worked to create a sense of community and home. The historical record shows that the variety and range of the organizations' activist endeavors was often undertaken with a long term view towards what might be called for by future students; one of the most far-reaching actions that would impact the group for years to come was that of recruiting other students to attend The University of Iowa. Recruiting was done in the hope of having them become active members of CIASU and to provide an outlet within which the students could re-connect with their cultures in a positive, meaningful and *transformative* way. This chapter argues for a definition of activism that is engaged as much as it is engaging and that transforms both the giver and the recipient

in a sharing/exchange of knowledge of information.<sup>152</sup> This worked toward creating a sense of connectedness between them with an understanding that the transmission of knowledge is a sharing of information and that knowledge is a tool for the betterment of not only the individual but the community as well. The definition I am advocating is “w-holistic”<sup>153</sup> in its scope and based on an equal valuation of community, organization and individual, with an element that recognizes the ideal of *balance* is a key concept in indigenous thinking.

In the case of CIASU specifically, my study is undertaken from a foundation cognizant of the fact that prior to the period covered within the timeframe of this study, there was *nothing* that was student-directed or student-defined at The University of Iowa that spoke to the specific needs and concerns of Chicano/a and American Indian students. The student founders of CIASU were creating for themselves and others like themselves the proverbial “something out of nothing.” In hand-written notes made for the preparation of the organizations tenth anniversary, Rusty Barceló begins with the observation that in the academic year 1969-1970

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<sup>152</sup> And it is here that we come to **my** resistance to limiting academic processes: I refuse to name the two individuals or entities in this exchange as being either “subject” or “object”-to do so implies power relations that groups like CIASU were attempting to circumvent and/or change them from the inside to make room for others like themselves. Refusing to indulge in “subject/object” thinking is also my personal rejection of thought forms that assume there must always be a dichotomous paradigm in place; it is my engagement with Anzaldua’s *Frontera* and Sandoval’s differential consciousness and my honoring that impulse among the students of CIASU. Even if they didn’t realize that is indeed what they were doing.

<sup>153</sup> It is hard to say where/when I first saw this concept. Somewhere in the last twenty years-it could be feminist, New Age or American Indian or it could have come from one of my friends in a twelve-step recovery program. None the less, I have seen it many times and in many places and it has always been meaningful to me because it embraces a worldview that is not fractured but harmonious and acknowledges that **all** the parts are necessary to make a cohesive, functional, *whole*.

Two Chicanos on campus:  
 Antonio Zavala-Chicago, Ill.-under grad  
 Rusty Barceló-grad, California  
 And one Native American: Ruth Pushetonequa-Tama, IA, under grad.

In a very real sense, the creation of CIASU presents a good example of Chicano/a, American Indian and student activism in that the two cultures built an alliance across their differences and the alliance was based in part on shared realities of living the effects of those differences as well as their shared student identity and social concerns. They would, in the very near future find themselves working towards the creation of a space and system that would help others like themselves survive and thrive within a University system that up until then had failed to even realize that it had overlooked their existence.

One of the goals of this chapter is to interrogate how the student founders of CIASU were able through their activism, to make concrete the dream that the university would include Chicano/a and American Indian students. I will examine the student literary publications as activist vehicles for creating change as well as CIASU activism through boycotts, protests and the planning of the first CIASU conference. That the organization continues its existence to this day stands as a testament to the tenacity and foresight of the students involved in making that vision come to life.

If the University had any doubt as to what the recruiting efforts of CIASU would yield, they had their answer by the beginning of the fall 1971 semester. In a *Daily Iowan* article entitled “Recruiting efforts double Chicano, Indian enrollment” and dated Monday, November 1, 1971. In it, Rusty Barceló is interviewed and talks about the ways in which CIASU has actively worked to bring more Chicano/a and American Indian students to campus. She is quoted as saying

35 Chicano students are enrolled at UI this year compared to 19 students last year. But the number of American Indian students rose only from one to two she claimed.. The figures aren't definite because they represent the number of Chicano students who belong to the student union she said. <sup>154</sup>

This disparity in numbers speaks to two different situations that existed (and continue to exist) at Iowa. The first is that Chicano/as and American Indians represent a small portion of the population demographically in Iowa; the 1980 census shows that the Latino population is roughly 1.14 % of the total population (this number has increased to 5% according to 2009 records) of the state and American Indians appear not to have been counted at all. <sup>155</sup> The second is the stigma that might come from identifying as being aligned with the Chicano/a or American Indian students; in the personal notes I have from Teresa Garcia, there is one student who speaks specifically about the warnings her family had given her to avoid the students involved in CIASU because of their radicalism and fears that the student would end up in trouble if there was any interaction with this organization. <sup>156</sup> Another component to this second circumstance is that despite the fact that change was coming, there were those students who chose to keep their identity to themselves and not to publicly identify as Chicano/a; it might have been wanting to avoid the label of radical, heavy academic loads or simply wanting to “blend in” or “pass” among the majority student population. Regardless of the reasoning of the individual

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<sup>154</sup> Schrader, Ann. *Daily Iowan* Staff Writer. Pg. 4

<sup>155</sup> I was not able to find any comparable estimates for 1970 and I was also not able to find any statistics for “American Indians” or “Native Americans” for those years; I believe that this is due in part to the fact that it was not until the 1990 census that records began to be kept on the ways in which we identify ourselves.

<sup>156</sup> Again, I will gladly share this document with my committee members but will keep the confidential nature of this out of the public record.

students, Barceló's statement points to the fact that not all Chicano/a students are active participants in CIASU.

Barceló goes on to describe the process of recruiting high school students as mostly a "one to one" process where the recruiter answers questions and lets the student know what to expect. She laments the fact that "we don't have much to offer incoming Chicano students except the Cultural Center" but ends the interview with the promise that "we won't be satisfied until there is a significant number of Chicano and American Indian students here so we can finally accomplish something."<sup>157</sup> The article was important because it illustrated that recruiting efforts were working and that there were students actively working to ensure a Chicano/American Indian presence on campus. And while the increase in numbers was not as great for the American Indian students, that would also change within a very short amount of time<sup>158</sup> as Ruth Pushetonequa became involved in actively recruiting American Indian students and as Rusty extended her recruiting efforts as well.

In my analysis of the activist projects of CIASU, I argue that the activism they engage in reflects many of the points that Gloria Anzaldua makes in regard to what constitutes a "frontera" and as well that the projects the students engaged in helped to create a space that provided cultural and social support. The support network the student members established helped to diminish the sense of alienation beyond that fluid space of frontera, offering a sense of the "known" in unknown territory. As much as CIASU and the house were tools for recruiting, they were also possibly an element in student

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<sup>157</sup> Daily Iowan, Monday, Nov. 1971

<sup>158</sup> While it is outside the time boundary of this project, there would be a significant increase in the number of American Indian students enrolled by the 1975-1975 Academic year.

retention-as much as community interaction was and the house that provided a place to which they could return from their forays into the larger world. The borders and boundaries on which Anzaldua shines her light refer to the boundary between Texas and Mexico specifically but which also extends beyond the physical definitions of what historically and traditionally defines boundaries and borders. Her definition can be applied to those whose consciousness traces back to roots in that long border with Mexico; “La Frontera” has a long reach and its roots run deeply in the Chicano/a psyche. It can also be applied to those who are familiar with Reservations and border towns. This is one of the strengths of Anzaldua’s work; her focus makes it possible to acknowledge and articulate the multi-layered and complex intersection of the physical, the psycho-social, emotional and historical aspects<sup>2</sup> of “la Frontera” which gives many Indigenous people their sense of identity and place in their world. Anzaldua’s work is helpful to understanding the grounding of many of the student members of CIASU and how it shaped their activism as much as it also validates my belief that her theory extends beyond the Texas-Mexico border; it has relevance and meaning beyond her original and very personal positioning and perspective. Her theoretical frame has practical meaning outside of delineated geographical borders within the continental US where groups of indigenous people exist. As Anzaldua describes borders, they are

...two worlds merging to form a third country-a border culture...It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados*<sup>159</sup> live here;: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Literally, “those who cross”

<sup>160</sup> Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., P.3

This definition brings to mind the response of the Spanish Department in the discussions over whether or not CIASU should have access to the house on Clinton Street; those wishing to keep them out of the house painted the students as troublemakers and radicals. Anzaldua's articulation also speaks to the internalized boundaries which give definition and meaning to how those people see themselves moving within spaces that have historical definitions that may limit and even oppress, those whose lives straddle borders. The activism of CIASU can be seen as border crossing in that the house was the base-Anzaldua's "third country"-from which activist endeavors were launched and the space to which the ever-changing membership<sup>161</sup> returned but my primary point is that they were constantly coming and going from what was a safe and self-defined space.

Since its inception CIASU was focused on multiple, inter-connected goals that centered on attracting students to the University of Iowa and building relationships; between themselves, the Chicano/a and American Indian communities<sup>162</sup> and also the larger University community. Their focus was based on several factors including the small number of American Indians and Chicano/s-or those who willing to identify as such. The growing Chicano movement and the increasing visibility of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers influenced the students to work beyond their own concerns and to reach out to their Chicano/a and American Indian communities as part of their

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<sup>161</sup> The CIASU membership was by the nature of student existence, transient ever-changing which provided an extra element of dynamism to the organization.

<sup>162</sup> Although it is not evident from the activism of the first two years, as the American Indian student membership increased, so did the involvement with those communities.



activism. This chapter will look at some of the ways in which the student members of CIASU accomplished their activist intentions.

A very concrete situation that worked to give the group its identity was the reality that for those coming to The University of Iowa, the number of students enrolled from either group was very small; their shared interests and common points of identity made it possible for the two groups to come together as one. Despite the fact that this was not an uncommon situation among minority students in the Midwest, The University of Iowa is the only university where I have found evidence of the two populations merging in this that allowed their numbers to contribute to their strength.

It is interesting as well as somewhat bewildering that even though one of the three original founders of CIASU-Ruth Pushetonequa was from the Meskwaki settlement at Tama-there is very little evidence of her activities to be found in early editions of either *El Laberinto* or *Nahuatzen* but as discussed previously, I believe that is due to the bias favoring the written word over that of oral traditions. In comparison, there exists a trail of interviews with Zavala and Barceló, but the same cannot be said for Pushetonequa. Despite a lack of firm evidentiary proof, it can be surmised from the interviews with Barceló and Zavala that she (Pushetonequa) was busy recruiting other Native students; in that first year she was the *only* American Indian member of CIASU. This idea has some merit, as there is a more pronounced visibility of Indian students beginning with the 1973 academic year. This change can be seen in the pages of the student publications, especially in *El Laberinto*. There are more activities and articles on issues of concern to the American Indian students; many of those articles focus on the local as well as national American Indian issues. Another explanation for the lack of more information

on Pushetonequa might be found in the early roles and personalities of the three founders themselves. As the Graduate Advisor, Barceló would easily be seen as the public face of CIASU and Zavala was a vocal and visible opponent to the Viet Nam war and as a result, already well versed in public speaking. Even though the public record does not provide much information on the work that she was engaged in, the increased American Indian student members of CIASU are a testament to her efforts at recruiting.

As a researcher, there are practical challenges when attempting to understand the activist endeavors of CIASU, beginning with a historical record that does not include many “official” documents; this should not be seen as negative but as a sign that the students were focused on their activist work rather than on book or record keeping. The information that I have found is rich in content as well as context; issues of *El Laberinto* and *Nahuatzen* provide insight into the thinking of the members of CIASU and offer information on the social concerns that the students were engaging with as an organization. It is the activism of the student members of CIASU is what ultimately defines the organization in its early years and that provides real insight into the issues they believed strongly enough that they warranted an investment of the group’s time and efforts.

#### Working to Create a Presence: Recruitment

Recruitment was always one of the primary focuses for the members of CIASU; as a group they were determined to increase the presence of Chicano/a and American Indians on campus and were just as determined to make sure that they felt welcomed once they arrived on campus. Their efforts offer an illustration of 1970s activism at work; the student members worked through “officially” recognized channels as in those

engagements when Barceló, and Zavala would speak at schools in their capacity as University of Iowa employees. The students were also engaging in constant efforts to increase the number of members involved in CIASU; the numbers of those identifying as Chicano/a or American Indian might increase with the Office of the Registrar but that didn't necessarily mean that those students were involved in the organization, especially if they came from other parts of the country and were not familiar with CIASU. On-going efforts at recruitment can be seen in the pages of *El Laberinto*; there is a short notice in one of the fall 1972 issues<sup>163</sup> stating that Rusty and Armando are to be the recruiters but that they will be accompanied by interested students.

The "official" recruiters might very well go out in the field to recruit (and as we see in Barceló's account, it very often *was* in a field that they would recruit!) but bringing in new members was the goal of many of the activist endeavors CIASU engaged in. As we will see upon closer inspection of the newsletter and the literary magazine, there were always classes or discussion groups on culture or history being offered in the house; this method of sharing information presented living examples of putting theory into practice. Actions such as this sharing of knowledge not available anywhere else on the University campus represents a living, breathing *praxis de la frontera*. Those students considering coming to the University would have been told of the impromptu classes and those

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<sup>163</sup> Like so many issues of CIASU student periodicals, this issue has no clear date. It is fall because of the October meeting dates listed for meetings and the only clear date on the front page says "1972." The cover says "IN HONOR OF RUBEN SALAZAR/EN HONOR DE RUBEN SALAZAR" and a drawing of Zapata. Salazar was a mainstream journalist and a former Bureau Chief for the *Los Angeles Times*; he had recently moved to KMEX television station, focusing on Chicanos and was at the time of his death, covering the Chicano Moratorium March in LA on August, 29, 1970. When riots began, Salazar stepped into a bar for a quiet beer; an LA County Sheriff's Deputy went into the bar and shot a tear gas gun into Salazar's head at short range and he died instantly. The Coroner's office ruled the death a homicide but the Deputy involved, Tom Wilson, was never charged and many believed the killing to be an assassination. After his death, Salazar's name became symbolic for the mistreatment of Chicanos by legal authorities.

already on campus might be enticed to come to the house in order to acquire the information not available through any other means. Whether it was to recruit a student to the University or to the house, recruiting had many guises and the students of CIASU were willing to do whatever was necessary to bring more students into the organization.

To increase the numbers of those involved with the organization, the student members would take a more “hands on” approach; they would attend gatherings such as dances and political actions hosted by groups in other areas and hand out flyers or answer questions. They would attend meetings held by other organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to hand out information. The article in *El Laberinto* also mentions follow up visits to potential students; CIASU recruitment efforts were perhaps the single most important form of activism in those early years; without the conscious efforts to bring in new students, the organization would have collapsed after the first year or two without in-coming students to replace those who had graduated or moved on to other schools or other endeavors.

#### Liberatory Practice through the Written Word

From its earliest days, the activism of the members of CIASU included the production of newsletters and literary magazines. Some of these, such as the newsletters, were meant for the student members themselves while the literary magazines were primarily designed to appeal to a wider audience both within the University community and in the larger community beyond the confines of Iowa City. It is in the pages of these publications that the student members of the organization express themselves as being conscious of the importance of proclaiming, and in many instances re-claiming their identities as culturally defined, ethnically identified and in some cases, gendered beings.

It is also in the pages of the publications that the student members can be seen learning their own history as well as sharing it; the printed pages may be understood as offering proof of an on-going effort for them to transform their own consciousness while demonstrating pride in their cultural heritage and at times demonstrating a defiant activism that some might construe as militant.

During the first years of existence, the students of CIASU produced an interesting array of in-house publications that provides us with insight as to the thinking as well as the changing political focus and consciousness of the group. The *Café Chicano* is the first item I found evidence of but *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto* are the publications that seem to have enjoyed the most prolific production and distribution in the first years. *Nahuatzen* refers to itself as “a Chicano literary magazine” on the cover of the issue numbered Vol. iv no. 1 (1974) but at times there does not appear to be much difference between it and *El Laberinto* as far as content is concerned. Both contain original student poetry and artwork as well as articles gleaned from other sources and they both often contain articles pertaining to Chicano/a history and activism in other parts of the country. Despite their similarities, *El Laberinto* (especially in its earliest incarnation) seems to have functioned more as a newsletter. Issues would often contain information that would be of relevance to the members of CIASU themselves in regard to their everyday lives and the activities they were engaged in and with. Very often though, they also contained information regarding what was going on in the larger context of the Chicano Movement and this can be seen by the inclusion of articles that reporting on events and happenings such as the state of the United Farm Workers Lettuce Boycott and news releases and information from groups such as M.E.Ch.A-Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán.

(M.E.Ch.A is a national, activist organization of Chicano/a students founded in during the Chicano Youth Movement Conference in Denver, Colorado in 1969 whose stated goals are raising awareness and pride amongst Chicano/a students).

Most copies of *El Laberinto* appear to have been distributed and/or mailed to students primarily as photocopied (or mimeographed) pages and this presents an interesting contrast to issues of *Nahuatzen* that have more substantial construction and/or cardboard paper-type covers. Because the newsletter was intended primarily for CIASU members and contained information that would soon be outdated, it is possible that it did not see the same level of care or expenditure in the materials because of the nature of most newsletters; they are read, kept for a brief period and discarded as the information is rendered obsolete over the course of weeks or days. The information in *Nahuatzen*, as the literary magazine did not have the immediacy of the newsletter and included types of information that one might want to access again and again<sup>164</sup> and it also was aimed at a wider audience both on campus and off.

It should also be mentioned that in the first two years of these publications the focus often seems to center on Chicano/a identity and politics even though most issues do include one or two articles or images of interest to American Indian students. While there is no concrete proof as to why this might be, it is clear from the articles that the primary focus remains on indigenous identity and the recognition of similar oppressions resulting from those identities. That the focus on Chicano/a issues begins to change somewhat can be seen on the front and back covers of *El Laberinto* from the issue dated

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<sup>164</sup> We will examine *Nahuatzen* more closely further on in this chapter.

“Enero 1973.”<sup>165</sup> The issue features the covers of recent publications including Dee Brown’s Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee and Alvin M. Josephy’s Red Power: The American Indians’ Fight For Freedom that focus more on American Indian issues and identity. The lack of coverage on American Indian issues for the first two years can be attributed to the sparse numbers of CIASU members who identified as American Indian; it was only after the first couple of years that efforts at recruiting American Indian students began to bear fruit. The more significant “presence” of American Indians on the pages of CIASU points to a growing diversity within the organization itself but there is a subtext is that the book titles highlighted in the newsletter point to an emerging interest and growing scholarship on American Indian issues. The texts that the students have chosen to include on the covers are what many of us in Native Studies think of as classics but at the time, these were considered radical-they were for the most part the first articulation of challenges to a history that had (up until that point) been accepted without question. The students of CIASU were using their newsletter to encourage others to look into the new ideas that were coming out of Indian country; they were offering tools for resisting the comfortable lie that they had all been taught as children. The arrival of American Indian students made it possible to pose such questions and it would serve to expand the activist endeavors of the group, moving them beyond focusing on only the Chicano/a communities but now the Indian communities as well.

The earliest of the publication of CIASU that I found<sup>166</sup> was called *Café Chicano*-a collection of art and writing; the copy I found is on mimeographed pages.

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<sup>165</sup> January 1973, Vol. II, no. 3

<sup>166</sup> This may be due in part to the fact that I was not able to track down the very first issue of *El Laberinto* or, that it came to be called *El Laberinto* by the second issue.

One of the most interesting discoveries of my research has been the difficulty of finding any other existing copies of this particular publication.<sup>167</sup> This issue is the only one included in the archival collections and can be found in the LNACC papers housed in the University Archives<sup>168</sup>. I believe that this may be due to two separate yet related issues that might have affected any beginning student organization. The first is the transient nature of student existence itself; most of the students did not plan on being involved in CIASU long-term—they anticipated being at UI long enough to get their degree and begin their lives. Their entire reason for being there was not centered on the long-term or the permanent and *Café Chicano* appears to have been a victim of that line of thinking.<sup>169</sup> The second reason I suspect for finding no copies of any other issue is that this particular publication simply went away and ceasing to be published, to be replaced by *Nahuatzen* which presented itself as a “literary magazine.” *Nahuatzen* contained more material and was a cleaner, more professional version of *Café Chicano*; it seems to have been simply the case of the first being the experiment and the second was the idea perfected. Both of these point to an organization attempting to find its true direction and in the case of CIASU, they were also trying to produce the most effective vehicle for their activist and social concerns.

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<sup>167</sup> As with many other grassroots organizations of the time, there is a sense of immediacy to not only this publication but to others as well. There is a feeling that the publication exists to convey current information. Sadly, it seems that they gave no thought to future researchers who might have an interest in the day-to-day activities that the group was engaging in!

<sup>168</sup> It should also be noted that the Barceló collection is rather extensive and at the time of my research, there were no copies of this publication amongst her papers. Barceló however has said that she has other items that are not yet in her collection; it is possible that there are other issues of this publication that she has not yet donated to the Iowa Women’s Archives.

<sup>169</sup> I am hopeful that when this project comes to light past members of CIASU will realize the value of the papers they have and consider donating them to Special Collections at U of I.



The issue I found of *Café Chicano* is dated “Vol. 1 No. 4 Sept-Oct 72” with Emiliano Zapata on the cover. The twenty-page issue is composed of 9 drawings (each one takes up the entire page), all of them making political statements centering on the ways in which “gringo” culture is used to stifle Chicano identity. An editorial in Spanish-with no translation offered-by the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) dated “Summer 1972” appears as well as a two page interview titled “Silveros, Thoughts on La Raza” conducted by Antonio Zavala as well as several poems by the student members.

The introduction to the interview is quite revealing of the thinking of many in the Chicano/a Movement in that it demonstrates how many of those involved in “El Movimiento” considered themselves to be working to change the system for themselves by remaining outside of it. In his introduction Zavala writes

“...it is the voice, the odyssey in words, of a man, a Chicano. Because he wants to remain anonymous and only wishes the interview to reach the Chicano ‘out there in the barrios’ we will honor his request and simply call him Silveros.”<sup>170</sup>

The approach to the interview and the usage of “Spanglish” illustrate the way that language could be used as a form of activism in a multi-faceted manner; to raise the consciousness of “the Chicano in the barrio” (or in this case the University) and to expose them to the usage of language as a marker of involvement in cultural reclamation, resistance to cultural domination and in some cases, outright defiance.

This was the only copy of *Café Chicano* that I found during my research but is possible that this publication may have seen more than the printing of just the one

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<sup>170</sup> Zavala. *Café Chicano*. “Silveros: Thoughts on La Raza.” 1:4 (1972): 5.

issue. I have no proof of the nagging suspicion that this publication went on to see a new incarnation as *Nahuatzen*.<sup>171</sup> I believe (and sincerely hope) that as more and more CIASU alumni learn that projects are emerging based on their experiences, the archival collections at U of I will benefit from the donations of more materials from the early days.

*Nahuatzen* was also a literary magazine but one that in contrast seems to have been directed at a larger audience (mention is made to members of LULAC and other organizations about how to get copies for themselves and other members of their organization). Filled with artwork and poetry, it would also often include articles focusing on Mexican/Chicano/a history. This version of a literary magazine was published and sold to other students; in one particular instance, the inside cover lists suggested “donations.” The size of the donation would be determined by who the student was in relation to the group. In the 1974 Vol. 3 no. 1 edition this little tidbit is on the inside cover

The Nahuatzen is 50¢ o nada<sup>172</sup>  
 depending on who sells it to you  
 If you would like to receive Nahuatzen  
 In the future when we can come up with another  
 issue, pues, esa Raza, send us your address  
 pa’ poder loca/lisarlos.<sup>173</sup>  
 ... We try not to sell the ‘magazine’ but we do need the money  
 so help us out if you can; Mandenos sus nikles y daines a<sup>174</sup>:  
 NAHUATZEN, 308 Melrose Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52242

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<sup>171</sup> The notes in talking about *Nahuatzen* will clarify where my suspicions come from in part.

<sup>172</sup> o nada means “or nothing”

<sup>173</sup> in order to find you.

<sup>174</sup> Send your nickels and dimes to:

This statement at the beginning of the text, before the reader even begins to engage with the material, is a literary illustration of the frontera/borderlands nature of CIASU and its members. The liberal use of “Spanglish” and (for lack of a better descriptor) border humor alongside the very real request for donations speaks to an existence that encompasses the best that both worlds have to offer and provides at least one illustration that the students are finding a way to survive and thrive on their own terms.

The disclaimer that “we try not to sell the ‘magazine’” is very much in keeping with the cooperative, open and sharing attitudes of the 60s and 70s but the reality was (and always is) that in American culture, most endeavors require the exchange of money for goods and/or services. There is almost a sense of apology for the request of monetary donations; for some organizations and publications of the 60s and 70s, it was often the lack of money or dependence on “donations” that forced them to close their doors or cease distribution. Despite the sense of apology, the request is there none the less; by this point in time (1971-1972) there was an understanding that the pure idealism that had been such a hallmark of the 1960s might have been a goal but it did not pay the bills. Like many other groups, CIASU was learning that in order to be an effective site for social change, money was a necessary evil.

*Nahuatzen* illustrates a living, engaged activism meant to *include* those outside of the group rather than to exclude; if a poem or article was written in Spanish, a translation would most often (but not always) accompany it for non-Spanish speakers. This lack of translation speaks to several different points. First and foremost, it is another illustration of the ways in which the members of CIASU would utilize language as part of their Frontera state—those spaces which were strictly for them and those they chose to allow

into that space. But it also speaks to the dichotomous position the students placed themselves into; in much the same way that they were accused of forming cliques and unconsciously excluding others, the use of Spanish without translation might be seen as excluding those outsiders they were trying to include-the very people they were entreating to send them their “nikles y dimes.”

In the case of *El Laberinto*, similar articles on history and culture would be included as well as information for the students themselves as to events happening in and around the Center. In the November 3, 1971 issue numbered Vol. 1 No. 2 there is information on the results of recent recruiting efforts, a meeting on the guidelines for tutoring students in Muscatine and an agenda for Chicano classes (which met every Monday evening) at the Center. The same page also includes information on Counseling available at the Center through the Office of Special Support Services with Counselor Anthony Zavala. The reminder points to support for those needing assistance in adjusting to the realities of college life; U Bills, class notes and dorm issues telling students “Don’t let it bring you down...Call anytime.” This suggests that there was an understanding that the transitions many students were going through (be it high school to college or coming to a state where one was clearly in a minority) were difficult; the offer of assistance in getting through the challenges was another means by which to retain the students who had chosen Iowa. It also points to an understanding that some of the challenges faced could not (or perhaps should not) be dealt with in the larger context of the house; for some, counseling sessions held in the house would have been one more layer of safety and protection in an otherwise unknown situation.

In the following issue (Vol. 1 No.3) the evolution of the paper is evident on the first page; Editor Albert Olvera writes a two-page article critiquing an article he found in a paper calling itself *The Educator* penned by Gabe Aguilar and clearly disparaging Chicano/a politics, activism and identity. This issue also contains “A Note of Thanks” to all who make ‘Laverinto’ possible and Olveros describes it

as designed for expressing ourselves—La Raza—Expressing ourselves in poem, short story, essay, etc...So, Raza, we want to hear from you—what do you think, what you feel.

This issue has some original poetry by A. Zavala and Arturo Ramirez as well as information on the Blood Bank, the Iowa City Free Medical Clinic and updates on the on-going Chicano class and Counseling and an article on the issues and concerns facing 1,000 Puerto Rican and Chicano delegates meeting in Washington, DC. An Update on recruiting mentions that Rusty (Barceló) has already been to two schools in Chicago and that there are recruitment dates set for Davenport, Sioux City, Fort Madison and Mason City. There is also a request for everyone to light candles for Rusty as she will be taking her Comprehensive Examinations the following week.<sup>175</sup>

The diversity of information contained in this one example of the newsletter works to highlight the scope of the activism, interest and level of engagement CIASU had with local and national issues. They were focuses on working to create change in their corner of the world but not at the expense of neglecting the struggles that were going on for Chicano/as in the larger world. Seeing their own endeavors in the pages of the

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<sup>175</sup> As the first Chicano/a to attain the Doctorate at Iowa, the students were very supportive of her in her quest; at gatherings more than thirty years later, it is clear from the tone and the pride with which this is discussed that in many ways Rusty’s success was seen as the success of the group itself.

newsletter was also an affirmation that they were on the right track; where they had not been able to gain access to high schools in the past, true progress could be seen in Barceló's recruiting itinerary. Another affirmation can be seen in the request to "light candles for Rusty"-she was their Graduate Advisor *and* a student member/founder; where in another organization the call might be to come help her study, for CIASU it was to light candles and this, this simple call for prayers (because that is what lighting a candle truly is) speaks to the identity of the organization and is an articulation of border existence. In the borderlands the spiritual exists side-by-side and also within the academic. The newsletter was in many respects the voice of the frontera-it reported on issues outside itself but was willing to focus on the issues at home that needed tending to such as counseling sessions or supporting a friend during an important examination.

Also mentioned in this issues is the Lettuce Boycott in which many members of the group were involved in and taken as a whole, it provides a context with which to better understand the thinking of the students themselves. The information in these early issues of *El Laberinto* point to the on-going activism of the students of CIASU; their attempts as staying informed as to issues not only in their immediate space but also concerns regarding the continuing quest for equality and justice for others like themselves. These issues also point to the recognition of the need to reach out to other young Chicano/as and American Indians be it through tutoring or recruitment; the efforts to reach High School age students outside the state also speaks to the casting of a wide net in order to add diversity to their community by reaching out to urban areas. The support of the Administration can be seen in the pages of the newsletter as well through continued mentions of Antonio Zavala as a SSS Counselor and by allowing him to be

accessible to the students not only in an office but also at the Center. It can also be seen in the willingness to pay for the distribution via mail of the newsletter itself (since it went out to the student members off and on-campus).

One of the most powerful aspects of both of the publications is the inclusion (some might even say insistence) of the voices of the students' themselves on the printed pages. The poetry by the students runs the gamut from the intensely personal to the very political and could show up in either or both publications and could be written in English, Spanish or "Spanglish". The use of language as a force for (re)claiming identity has been a hallmark of indigenous writers; editors Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird address it in the Introduction to Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America. Harjo writes

But to speak, at whatever the cost, is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction. In our tribal cultures the power of language to heal, to regenerate, and to create is understood.<sup>176</sup>

Harjo speaks to the power of reclamation through the medium of language and parallels can be drawn between tribal culture and border cultures with respect to language as a way to connect to others like ourselves. There is safety in a shared tongue as there is safety in the space of the tribal or border community; we are among our own people and the speaking in our language of choice is a connection not only to each other but to those who have gone before us. Among tribal and border people there is an understanding that language has the power to make us whole despite living in a world that attempts to fracture us individually and collectively.

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<sup>176</sup> Harjo, p. 21-22

Gloria Bird observes as well that,

“Reinventing” is a good word. The “enemy” was determined to control the language of real life and in that process manipulated how we, as native people, perceived ourselves in relation to the world. Often our ancestors were successfully conditioned to perceive native language as inferior or defective to the English.<sup>177</sup>

Bird refers to the assimilation of indigenous people and the efforts at eradication of language through subjugation and erasure of culture. “Successfully conditioned” is a very polite term and it is a loaded term that whitewashes the horrors that led to the loss of hundreds of native languages (I believe Bird is leading us to this irony intentionally-she understands that it is only when we re-act that any real change can begin to take place). The students of CIASU were very familiar with the idea Bird is speaking of; if there was any doubt remaining that they were seen as “less than” their interaction with the Spanish Department with its criticisms of the students as being “the lower class of Mexican society.”<sup>178</sup>

Writers such as Ana Castillo and Anzaldua echo these sentiments and also address the power of words and of the claiming of language itself as acts of resistance, subversion and activism. In the essay titled “How to Tame A Wild Tongue” Anzaldua writes of how “Chicano” Spanish has often been deemed an inferior form of Spanish, “illegitimate-a bastard language”

*Deslenguadas. Somos los del español deficiente.*<sup>179</sup>We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*...Because

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<sup>177</sup> Bird, p. 24

<sup>178</sup> Barceló. Unpublished Interview. pg. 7

<sup>179</sup> Women without language/tongues. We are of the deficient Spanish.



we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally and linguistically *somos huérfanos*<sup>180</sup>we speak an orphan tongue.<sup>181</sup>

Anzaldúa makes the connection between language and identity as an ethnic and cultural being no matter which border one resides along, in or on whether that border be the Texas-Mexico border of her own life or the borders between Tama and the spaces outside the settlement or the safety of the Chicano Center and the larger world outside its doors. For the student poets/writers, the sharing of the power of their words may also be seen as a powerful form of activism; the opening up of self to others, the naming of wrongs, sharing the power of memories and longing for home and family-these were often the themes in their work that would bridge the gap between their differences of gender, region, class and/or language. The ways in which the writers use language in the pages of their publications are as much about an (at times militant) unwillingness to be assimilated or subsumed by the dominant culture, as they are declarations of soul, identity and individuality among a group made up of “others”.

*Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto* while of significance to their target audience were not unique in and of them selves, but offered a local interpretation of a movement that had been emerging since about 1965. *Nahuatzen* and *El Laberinto* in many ways reflected the underground press movement that was a hallmark of 1960s and early 1970s student activism across the country. On most college campuses and in many urban areas where activism and protest were part of the thread of daily life, there was a proliferation of “undergrounds” (so called because those who identified with them felt themselves as

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<sup>180</sup> We are orphans

<sup>181</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* “How to Tame A Wild Tongue” p. 80

“under” or outside of-the mainstream) in production. Various publications were being produced by members of a sub-culture who found themselves in a place where, according to Terry H. Anderson, “youth culture, civil rights and student issues were merging”<sup>182</sup>- an apt description for the position the members of CIASU found themselves in upon arrival at Iowa. Flyers, magazines, posters and newspapers were widely produced and liberally distributed by groups and individuals as a means to put forth their messages that often conflicted with or contradicted the “official story” of the more traditional mainstream press which was slow to come to term with the rapidly changing culture around them. Flyers could turn up overnight announcing a concert, a sit-in, a protest or a party; the intent was to broadcast the message as widely as possible without spending dollars which represented the *status quo* and what was viewed by many as a corrupt system that oppressed many and rewarded very few. The underground press was an alternative means of transmitting information as much of the work was done by volunteers or co-operatives with one group helping another to get the word out. I have found no evidence that CIASU took part in this aspect of activism but it is likely that some members did through their involvement with other groups. The underground would have offered a way for CIASU to get its messages about protests and boycotts out to groups and individuals who would already have had an interest in issues such as worker’s rights and to create coalitions based on those common concerns.

The underground press thrived in Iowa City during this period and there was already a vibrant counter-culture (some called it the “hippie movement”) by the time CIASU came to life. Already in production were *Ain’t I A Woman* (published by AIAW

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<sup>182</sup> Anderson, The Movement and the Sixties p. 111

Press-Ain't I A Woman Press) had announced in its pages during August of 1971 that a new Women's Center would be opening on campus-and *Middle Earth* that began publishing in 1967. The Iowa City Feminist Press and an active lesbian press soon joined these. CIASU was a reflection of the underground press movement; the paradox of needing money for publication yet preferring not to charge for (in particular) *Nahuatzen* speaks to the dilemma of many other groups and organizations of the period which often created a conflict between the need to pay for supplies and the need to get the word out about upcoming actions or events. The spirit of cooperative effort and collaboration were one of the tenets of most of the movements that were fueled by the desire to share. The impulse was to barter or engage in fair exchange so that no money actually changed hands so that everyone had a chance to take part in everything. The utopian ideal was very Marxist in nature; it was a rejection of the burgeoning consumerist society and an acknowledgement by American youth that equality had been an empty dream up that point. The desire to share and disseminate information on one hand yet being bound by the necessity of paying for publishing services on the other in many ways illustrates why it is that so many of the "underground" presses and periodicals of the time were not very long-lived. The ideal was noble but in most cases it was a dismal business plan. My research into CIASU does not extend beyond 1972 but I can say that neither *Nahuatzen* nor *El Laberinto* was in existence when I arrived at Iowa in 1999.

#### Protests, Boycotts and A Conference

The Chicano Indian American Student Union existed to attract and retain

Chicano/a and American Indian students to The University of Iowa and the house existed as a safe space within which students could be themselves in a new and unknown

territory. But the CIASU strove for much more than simply being a safe space for students to “be.” It was also the launching point for protests, and the site for the dispersing of information on boycotts and other actions taking place locally and nationally. This chapter will examine some of the ways in which CIASU was able to live its activist intent through engagement with protesting and will look at the role they took in supporting the boycotts of the United Farm Workers Union. I will also look at how their activist impulse presented itself through the planning of the groups’ first national conference and also raise questions as to why the focus seems to have been solely on the Chicano population of the organization while failing to acknowledge this disparity of focus.

Protests and boycotts were facts of everyday student life on college campuses across the country during the 1960s and 1970s; be it pro-or-anti-war sentiment, the lack of equality for women, the high number of Chicanos fighting in Vietnam<sup>183</sup> or the latest unfair police attack on a black person, there was a never ending call to arms to highlight injustice and speak out against it. The students of CIASU took part in protests and staged some as well; the first two years of *El Laberinto* bear witness to the actions of the students. Boycotting-the act of refraining from purchasing goods or products as a means of transmitting one’s displeasure and thus monetarily punishing owners/operators-was one of the many weapons used by student groups during this period. CIASU involvement would come after a boycott had been called to support the strike of labor organizations such as the United Farm Workers who were in dispute with lettuce and

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<sup>183</sup> National Chicano Moratorium March, August 29, 1970.

grape growers<sup>184</sup> or the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in their disagreement with Farah Manufacturing Company, a producer of men's slacks. CIASU was actively involved making sure that their fellow university students were aware of the boycotts and their implications for workers.<sup>185</sup>

Throughout the early years of CIASU the war in Vietnam was never far from anyone's consciousness. The printed press and television news were filled daily with images and reports of the escalation in troops and the rising death toll. The question of whether or not, or how actively, to support the anti-war movement was a question for every student and every group on most college campuses across the nation. The political climate was such that everything could be questioned (and some would argue that everything should be). In the case of CIASU, the issue of whether or not to take part in Anti-War protests was very personal for some as in the case of Rusty who came from a military family and others for whom involvement in the anti-war movement would have consequences be it financial, legal or academic<sup>186</sup>.

The May 1972 (Vol .I, no. 6) issue of *El Laberinto* offers a view into the on-going activism of CIASU and hints at issues which would most definitely have been topics of discussion within the Center. There was also another way in which CIASU would work

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<sup>184</sup> The strikes and the boycotts the UFW was involved in have become legendary over time; this very brief synopsis does not do the organization or their accomplishments, justice at all.

<sup>185</sup> One of the items I have come across is a leaflet/flyer from an organization calling itself **People's Alliance**; it is dated October 26, 1973 and as such is outside the parameters of this project. I point to this because despite the date, it talks of **past** actions such as picketing outside of Iowa City A&P's as well as Roshek's and Ewers mens stores. What this says to me is that the students of CIASU had been involved in boycotting and striking since the early days of the organization despite the lack of clear evidence.

<sup>186</sup> The disapproval of family members could result in loss of financial support and more than one politically active student had to drop out of classes because of poor grades when their involvement took precedence over course work.

to insure that information was being transmitted as widely and successfully as possible, through Conferences and workshops. The limits of this dissertation allow me to look at the first of these events, the

“5 DE MAYO CONFERENCE  
CHICANOS IN THE MID-WEST: “A CHICANO PERSPECTIVE”

It should be noted that this event was listed as being sponsored by the “*Chicano Student Union*”, The Anthropology Department and The Division of Extension and University Services. Rusty Barceló was quite involved in her position as Associate Director for Social Services, Special Support Services and also making an appearance was President Willard Boyd<sup>187</sup> whose presence gave the proceedings the University stamp of approval. This Conference presented a very public face of CIASU activism; the inclusion of workshops, film, dance and music made it accessible to a wide range of attendees. From University of Iowa students to high school students and activists from other organizations, they would all have had something of interest to take part in during the two days.

The question must be asked then, where were the American Indian students in this Conference and why are only Chicano issues addressed? For an organization based on inclusion, this seems like a glaring omission; all of the presenters of workshops or discussions are Chicano/a (with the exception of President Boyd) and all of the subject

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<sup>187</sup> While President Boyd’s presence might have lent credibility to the event, he won the approval of the CIASU students themselves on April 7<sup>th</sup>. There is brief mention in this issue about a Luncheon and the students engaging in conversation with another attendee; they spoke of family and made polite small talk. The article speaks of “the jolt” of discovering that the unknown person they had been speaking with was introduced as President Boyd. The writer says: “What impressed me was that Mr. Boyd didn’t introduce himself as Willard Boyd President, University of Iowa. But just as a man named Sandy Boyd. Cool.”

matter centers on Chicano/a experience. In the issues of *El Laberinto* leading up to the two-day conference, there is no mention of planning meetings or of how the final agenda was reached. It is possible that because this was so early in the groups' history that there were not enough American Indian students to take part in the planning but that in and of itself does not seem like reason enough for the total lack of visibility of the CIASU Indian population. The question that remains despite the lack of any sign of American Indian involvement in this conference has to be "where are the Indian students and why aren't they involved in this conference?" Despite this lack of inclusion of American Indian students or concerns, this was nonetheless, the first of many national conferences that CIASU would host over the next few years. The conferences would attract nationally known speakers and performers and within a year or two, the American Indian students would begin hosting a Pow Wow at U of I.

The same May 1972 issue of *El Laberinto* is of note for several reasons; not only the inclusion of the 5 de Mayo Conference schedule but also for the dissenting voices it includes. There is an article on an airplane hijacking<sup>188</sup> that criticizes the Associated Press (AP) for the way in which they covered the story of a hijacker who held an airplane over seven hours (he released the passengers immediately upon landing). The hijacker was a Mexican national with an unloaded gun; he spent three hours talking to Spanish media newsmen and spoke about inequalities that all minorities were faced with. The AP did not see fit to mention the concerns he addressed but did refer to him as someone with "a history of psychological disorder." CIASU took the AP to task for dismissing the

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<sup>188</sup> These were not uncommon in the 1970s; it was a way to garner international attention for one's political cause and often raised awareness. In too many instances innocents lost their lives but in some cases, injustices were brought to light.

man out of hand without giving readers the whole story; on the face of their story he was just a disgruntled Mexican national when in truth, he was the victim of ongoing racist oppression. CIASU recognized the tactic for what it was—a dismissal and denigration of the man’s complaints—and called that dismissal to light for what it was; the oppressor (in this case a powerful new reporting agency) once again telling the oppressed that their alleged oppression is “all in their head.”

In the same edition, there is an editorial (found on page 5) is entitled “Should Chicanos Strike?” that offers an illustration of the ways in which the issue of Vietnam affected this one, very small community and it also shows that there was not total agreement within CIASU itself. It points to the fact that this small group could be at odds with each other over an issue as large as the war itself. . The editorial begins with the words

War, war, war, when is this thing in Southeast Asia going to end? What Should Raza do about it?

It goes on to relate a rally at the IMU with about 300 other students and as well as President Willard (Sandy) Boyd. The piece was written as a reaction to a national call for a student strike in support of the opposition to the war. The very short, three brief paragraph editorial ends with

Hold it right there, now I don’t know if I want to go along with that. I spent all this money to go to this place and now I’m supposed to strike. Chicanos are here to get an education, if you want to strike, let’s do it on the racism in this country. I’m not defending the war, but let’s be realistic. Finals are not too far away, so I’ll be damned if I boycott classes. Raza strike, hell no!

What is telling and interesting about this editorial is that there is no name attached to the piece and there is no opposing opinion articulated. Given that Zavala and Pushetonequa



were involved in the anti-war movement and are silent about the subject in this issue is intriguing in and of itself especially since the students of CIASU eventually did become involved in the anti-war protests on campus. That there is contestation among the members of the organization points to the powerful emotions involved in the anti-war movement and many of the boycotts taking place and the editorial speaks to the divergent feelings among students themselves. It also points to the inclusion of students who were perhaps not as interested in all forms of activism and who chose a less confrontational mode of protest than the original group of students.<sup>189</sup> More importantly though, it illustrates the fact that there were varying degrees of involvement within the members of the house; there were no clear-cut lines and this ambiguity of involvement is another manifestation of border existence; the boundaries may be fluid and that works to insure that there is diversity among the inhabitants-it may not always be harmonious but it is always thriving with the power of new ideas. The problematic lack of claiming the editorial content seems somewhat cowardly and is not in keeping with the openness found in past issues of the newsletter<sup>190</sup>; in some respects it feels as if this was included as a “rogue maneuver” for lack of a better term as it is not in keeping with the past actions of the organization or of the students themselves.

It may be that Zavala was occupied putting together the 24-page issue of *Nahuatzen* that came out that month. There is no record of where Pushetonequa was or

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<sup>189</sup> The writer of the editorial comes across like a “sell-out” or at least someone not heavily invested in the same ideals as most CIASU members and I have to question why they became involved in CIASU in the first place? The organization clearly had a history of engaged activism and the thought of sitting out a boycott does not sound like it would have gotten much support.

<sup>190</sup> In its failure to include the name of the writer, this editorial feels the opposite of the Sanchez “Open Letter” which was brutally honest and open.

what she might have been engaged in during this time. While Zavala might not have been “heard” as an opposing voice in the newsletter, there are several of his poems included in *Nahuatzen* along with one that fails to credit the writer. Called “Chicana”

Love will  
 come  
 someday  
 for you  
 and I.  
 After a riot  
 or  
 Two.

In its own way, this poem points to the fact that protest and rioting were simply an accepted part of student life and identity. Even without any context or background, this poem speaks to the putting aside of the personal, in the service of the greater good.

Boycotts were an on-going fact of college life for many students on campuses throughout the county. In the case of Chicano/a students, the boycotts were not simply about doing “the right thing” because of pesticide use in the fields or low wages paid to the mostly migrant farm workers; the involvement in the boycotts was also about raising awareness within the larger community about the political and humanitarian link between buying choices locally and the implications nationally. It was also that most of the workers involved were Chicano/a (or Raza) and thus, family. The grape and lettuce boycotts were often personal for the students of CIASU; some of them had come from farm working families and others often had extended family members working in the fields. The October 1972 issue (Vol. II, no. II) of *El Laberinto* is dedicated to the on-going lettuce boycott and stands as a sign of the ongoing support of, and standing in solidarity with, Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. The cover is a collage of news articles from various sources including one from the *Des Moines Register* (dated

Friday, October 13) with the headline “1,600 Students at U of I Support Lettuce Boycott”. The inside front page contains only the dedication itself

*This issue of El Laberinto is a tribute to the continuing United Farm Workers' Lettuce boycott. The U.F.W. Student Support Committee in Iowa City is headed by Antonio Zavala and Helen Duffy. They are to be commended for their success in bringing about a Genuine consciousness of the boycott. The responsibility for supporting a successful boycott, however, rests with all of us who believe in the decent wages, housing and health standards that the United Farm Workers are asking. Support them by signing a pledge and contributing what you can.*

*ARRIBA CON EL BOICOTEO!*

*October, 1972*

This issue of the newsletter says much about the ways in which CIASU was beginning to evolve in its second full year as well as focusing on the boycott. It includes the entire article from the *Register*, information on organizers in the state and in Chicago and a report on the Resolution by the U of I Student Senate urging University Food Services to refrain from buying the boycotted Iceberg head lettuce. By these inclusions we see that there is a willingness to invest in deeper understanding of the issues beyond the reactionary; there is now an interest in understanding the underpinnings of issues and their implications. This willingness to dig a little deeper into issues can also be seen as a natural progression as the organization matures; in this, its second year it has established itself beyond issues of simply surviving; there are now mechanisms in place to deal with day to day issues and this makes it possible to really concentrate on the activism that has been at the heart of the organization.

Other issues addressed in this volume include the first “Chicano Cultural Institute” hosted by CIASU, a request for books to be included in the Chicano-Indian Library at the Center and a performance by *El Teatro*. One of the signs of the

organizations' evolution however can be seen in the article entitled "American Indian Movement" by Robin Youngbear who would go on to be very involved in the group. It speaks of a caravan going to the march on Washington, DC October 27-29<sup>th</sup> and of a Pow-Wow in Minneapolis. The article ends with this

*Editor's Note:*

*Since 1966, formal organizations have been working toward a deeper respect and mutual understanding between Chicanos and Indians. It is hoped that these efforts can be continued, and that they will be the basis of an everlasting alliance.<sup>191</sup>*

By virtue of the presence of these words it becomes clear that there is now a larger American Indian presence among the group itself and there is now someone involved enough in *El Laberinto* to give voice to that presence. A greater American Indian influence has helped to shift information; to become more expansive and inclusive; there is information on the lettuce boycott **and** of a pow-wow. For perhaps the first time, the articles and issues included in the newsletter reflect the symbiotic duality of the Chicano and Indian American in the organizations' name.

The arrival of Youngbear would bring to the group a greater involvement in the American Indian Movement (AIM); it would also lead to the first Pow-Wows organized by the group as well as conferences and workshops that would attract national attention and attendance. The increased focus on American Indian issues would open the group to different types of activism; whereas Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers engaged in non-violent protest, AIM would often engage in more militant forms of protest. Over the course of a few years, these differences would have long-term effects on the way that the Union saw itself and its members.

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<sup>191</sup> Youngbear, Robin. "American Indian Movement." pg. 4

The Chicano Indian American Student Union began, and has remained, a small group of students within a very large institution. Despite its seemingly negligible numbers, they were visible and vocal in their activism. The support that they enjoyed from the University was the result of the influence of Rusty Barceló and Dean Phil Jones in the Office of Special Support Services as well as the Student Senate and President Boyd. The support came in the guise of funds for the position of House Manager and paying the bills to keep the house running as well as by making accessible tools for the students to achieve success such as the placement of Zavala in the house as a Counselor. While the students made full use of these resources, they none the less carried on activities which might best be described as “biting the hand that feeds you”-the pointed nature of some of the *actos* of El Teatro being a case in point. Another might be the use of University vehicles to travel to areas far away when they were invited to perform; there are many, many stories of the scrapes that they got into and behavior that the University might not have approved of if they were made aware of all the details.<sup>192</sup> The publications that the students produced says much about what was important to them collectively and individually, politically and personally; the activism that they engaged in was one that was defined by cultural and political realities of the day and were approached in a manner that was meaningful to them as Chicano/a and American Indian students.

The activist endeavors of the student members of CIASU accomplished several things simultaneously. One of the most important was that their activism worked to give

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<sup>192</sup> That particular trip by Los Bailadores and El Teatro to Texas is one that the members still talk about and details which I am not at liberty to disclose; suffice it to say it's a good thing that Rusty was the “responsible” one in the group!

the organization an identity; other students, groups and entities such as the local newspapers, all realized that if the issue in question centered on Chicano/a struggle for equality or the grape/lettuce boycotts, CIASU would be a good source of information. Another accomplishment in those first two years was the creation of alliances both in, and outside of, the University. Alliances were made with student groups such as those focusing on workers' rights or the anti-war movement; some off-campus us might be seen in connections to groups such as LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) who helped them find high school students to recruit and the Pre-School Program.

The activism of CIAUS was by no means static; as we have seen through changes documented in the newsletter, each new academic year brought with it new students with fresh ideas and concerns important to them. The emergence of a stronger American Indian presence in the second year is proof of that. The examples of the publications as well as the ongoing activist endeavors illustrate that no matter how far the students travelled, the house was still central; it was the place to which they always returned and it was within the space of the house that issues or disagreements could be discussed and resolved. It was the place where they had the freedom to express themselves within a cultural context of their own making and not one that was being forced upon them.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The Chicano Indian American Student Union was created in 1971 as the result of several important factors and influences converging at the same time at The University of Iowa. This dissertation has focused on how the organization became a reality through the efforts of a small, but passionate and dedicated group of students determined to see Chicano/as and American Indians represented on campus; Nancy “Rusty” Barceló, Antonio “Tony” Zavala and Ruth Pushetonequa. This group of founding members saw a common need amongst them for a space in which they would have the freedom to explore and express their ethnic realities in this changing world and recognized that there were other students like themselves looking for the same thing. My dissertation has arisen out of the very personal questions of “how in the heck did I get here?” but much more importantly, “why did I stay when I wanted to leave?” My own need to answer those questions and to understand the answers in conjunction with my own interest in activism as a life-choice and my fascination with the 1960s is what prompted my interest in the history of the Chicano Indian American Student Union. I wanted to understand how they were able to tap into the spirit of the 1960s and 1970s Social Movements which were changing and re- shaping the world at that time and how the group utilized the dynamism, the challenges to old ideas and the energy of those pivotal movements of the time, understanding that the challenges, victories and failures were all factors that made many things possible. I especially wanted to better understand how those challenges were overcome within the context of the Midwest.

### Filling in the Blank Spaces

I started this dissertation in part because there is a serious lack of acknowledgement by Social Movement theorists into the ways that the heartland was touched by this era of change, upheaval, trauma and progress much the same as the rest of the country. This lack of knowledge by most scholars about how Midwestern college students and many minority communities responded to this period has been the equivalent of an academic “black hole”; the knowledge has not been missed because most theorists do not realize that they **are** missing and most of the stories from, and of, the Midwest, have not yet been told.

This dissertation has sought to rectify that situation by shining a light on how Chicano/a and American Indian students at the University of Iowa responded to the call for change; this dissertation examines how they worked for social change from their unique position as Chicano/as, American Indians, students and Midwestern dwellers mostly transplanted from other places and how that affected their activist endeavors. Social Movement theory to date has made for an incomplete history- there are gaps in the body of “popular” or “common” knowledge when it comes to examining and understanding the role of place and identity and the importance that they had in the activism of Midwestern minority students. We cannot truly begin to understand the scope of the changes brought about by the 1960s and 1970s if we do not take into account the work, concerns, challenges and accomplishments of a group such as CIASU.

There is steadily more and more information emerging that looks at the effects the Movements of the 1960s and 1970s have had on American society as a whole and how those Movements worked to change our culture. One of the points that I have found the most alarming is that most texts in this emergent body of information examine the



Movements from the perspective of those perceived as living in the middle of the “action” which typically means California, Texas, New York and to an extent, Chicago. There has barely been a mention of the activism of the Student Movement in the Midwest and most of that which does exist centers on the experiences of those involved in the Anti-War Movement, the Women’s Movement and in a few (very few) cases, the Black Power Movement. Very little, if any, of the focus has to date, been on the activism or the accomplishments of Chicano/a or American Indian college students who were just as engaged and just as driven-if not more so-as their counterparts in the media “hotspots.” I understand that there have been “practical” reasons why the activism of minority students in the Midwest has failed to get the coverage that other regions did; one was the number of students involved-CIASU in its most active years, membership may have numbered in the mid-to-high forties, certainly not the thousands of brown faces that could be seen marching in Los Angeles or in Delano<sup>193</sup>. Another reason was the location itself; Iowa is still mostly rural and the members of CIASU would often travel to reach their intended audience be it for El Teatro to perform an *acto* or to tutor Chicano/a children at a pre-school in Muscatine and to be frank, those may be acts that change the lives of individuals but they do so quietly, without creating headlines and that was another reason CIASU has remained mostly unnoticed outside of Iowa. Another reason is the very nature of student existence, at least in the case of CIASU; most students came from other places and left when their education was completed. Or, in the case of someone like Rusty Barceló, her work as an administrator was such that she could tell the stories of how the organization began but her focus has been on recruiting and retaining students.

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<sup>193</sup> Thousands of marchers would take part in strikes with Cesar Chavez for the United Farm Workers in Delano, California.

In the past few years I have encountered very few texts that examine the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s through the effect that they have had on communities in specific areas such as Indiana or Chicago, but I have been most troubled by what I perceived to be missing information, especially in regard to The University of Iowa and CIASU. There was no “history” or critical analysis of how CIASU or any similar groups had come to be and why it was that it had been created in the first place. This missing piece of information means that any analysis of the 1960s or 1970s that does not take this region or these students into account would be inaccurate and incomplete.

#### Anzaldua’s “La Frontera” in Iowa City

One aspect of CIASU that I was especially interested in examining was that of the way the students created a culturally defined, safe space in the midst of what a fictional Frida Kahlo<sup>194</sup> might have referred to as “Gringo-landia”. The work of Gloria Anzaldua on *Borderlands/La Frontera* has been invaluable as I struggled to understand how it was possible for Spanglish, “grito” contests and *corridos*<sup>195</sup> to exist in the shadow of the Old Capitol. Anzaldua’s work on the role of the borderlands and their importance to those that create/inhabit them informs much of the work I have produced as a result of my interest and membership in CIASU.<sup>196</sup> Anzaldua’s work illuminates the interests and

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<sup>194</sup> Yes, yes it is a popular culture reference to the 2002 bio-pic “Frida” starring Salma Hayek and directed by Julie Taymor but the sentiment is fitting none the less.

<sup>195</sup> Corridos are Mexican folk songs or ballads that often have themes of oppression, a villain, a brave hero and a form of justice. This is an old form and was especially popular during the Mexican Revolution and saw resurgence with the movements of the 1960s.

<sup>196</sup> I remember my first visit to the LNACC; I was ferociously unhappy with Iowa until that dinner. Small children were running around, yelling their heads off from too much sugar and “Sponge Bob” videos, the potluck was on the table and I took a deep breath, it felt like the Indian Center at home. Of course within the next two hours I was voted in as Co-Chair and had already gotten the feeling that I would have to decide between my Indian identity and my Chicana

accomplishments as well as the conflicts and challenges that CIASU dealt with internally within the organization and externally in the larger, often unfamiliar world of the University. I believe that doing this has had the effect of expanding the way that Social Movement theorists think about minority students and their use of space as a means to define ones' self in relation to similarly situated others and the larger world. Anzaldua's work on borderlands offers an explanation for how it is that those identified as "other" find strategies for survival.

#### Motivations

I undertook this dissertation in large part because of the way in which several of my own personal interests and life experiences collided upon my arrival at Iowa. As a small child during the turbulent 1960s and have always been fascinated with how groups and individuals work to create social change and how they work for justice; being pulled out of public school in the third grade to attend a "Huelga"<sup>197</sup> left me with an understanding that through solidarity, many things are possible. Coming to Iowa from places like Texas, Florida and even East Lansing, Michigan<sup>198</sup> (with a sizeable American

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identity and realized that there were several Dine' students for whom my sexuality might present problems. Still, I was happy to be there; it wasn't perfect but it was perfect enough.

<sup>197</sup> Huelga or "strike" school. This was throughout the Houston Independent School District. We attended school at Resurrection Catholic Church and I distinctly remember the nuns teaching us about what it meant to be Chicano and about Mexican history; this was the first time I had heard these things and was forever changed by those three weeks.

<sup>198</sup> In an effort at full disclosure, I was also the Executive Director of the Lansing North American Indian Center for two years. This full-time 70 hours per week position was completely unpaid. I left to return to school when I couldn't afford to stay any longer and had my heart broken thirteen months later when the Center closed its doors; no one had stepped up to do the work and the Center wound into disuse and the building lease was lost. This was also a personal lesson on the power of the individual **and** what happens when a community becomes apathetic.

Indian population and an active MECHA group), Iowa felt like an alien nation. Until the day I found the LNACC.

Like so many others before me, finding the Center was the only thing, the **only** thing that kept me from leaving that first semester. The Thursday night dinners in a house full of brown faces, familiar foods and a sense of home and *familia* kept me sane. Within a short amount of time I realized that there was a very rich history to the place and to the organization itself; being curious and wanting to know the history, I discovered that one did not exist except in the oral tradition.<sup>199</sup> This work has been my attempt to collect the information that is available and bring it together so that others can fill in the many, many missing blanks.

#### The Next Steps/Future Projects

This dissertation has succeeded in only being a beginning point for investigative work on CIASU; I liken it to the framework needed to create a rug or a weaving. What I have done here is to construct a basic frame, collected and dyed some of the wool and started the first couple of lines of the rug. The audience has an idea of what it is but a clear picture has not yet emerged; other work is needed to get a clearer picture of the project; I think of it as a cooperative effort much like CIASU itself. I have chosen to build my project on the information that exists in the archival record; this is my personal bias having spent two years in the Iowa Women's Archives. One of the on-going early discussions in preparation for this project was whether or not to conduct interviews,

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<sup>199</sup> Coming from such strong indigenous roots, I understand the value of Oral Histories. The trouble with a student population trying to pass along a history is that by our very definition our time in this one space is pre-determined; if the University does its job and we do our work, then success equals moving on into ones' chosen career. But that does not leave a comprehensive history in place for the students who come after us; that has been one of the motivating factors for me. This project is a "thank you" and a love letter to the spirit of the LNACC.

especially since all the principle members are still alive. I truly appreciate the value of interviewing those who were there first-hand but I wanted this beginning project to be based in information any student could find if they were only willing to do a little digging. Having been there myself, I know that finding this particular history and these documents has been reassuring if somewhat challenging; there have been others like myself and they found a way to survive, to thrive and to make a positive difference. It has academic as well as deeply personal meaning when a Chicana student is doing research in the library and discovers that she's not the only one to have faced some daunting challenges.

The next step would be a project that focuses on collecting oral histories and interviews with the founders, Barceló, Zavala and Pushetonequa as well as some of the early student members of CIASU. As a researcher and as a learner, it would be incredibly helpful to hear the stories that no one wants to claim; I believe that the students of CIASU realized very early on that there were ways to manipulate and circumvent the bureaucracy of the University; how they were able to do that is a story that will say much about their resistances and successes, more so than my more academic attempt at looking at the group's beginning. I imagine a future project where a student will be well funded enough to travel and collect those histories. I was also aware that much of the information I was looking for was non-existent; interesting information is shared when alumni gather together but most of those stories are such that they do not want them recorded. I am hopeful that in the very near future enough time will have passed that former CIASU members will understand the value of the histories they carry with them and how their input will make for a more complete (and colorful) history. It is in those

unrecorded stories I have heard that I saw the subversive nature of CIASU and their willingness to do whatever was necessary to accomplish their goals. It is in those tales that we will have a more comprehensive idea of what the organization truly accomplished.

Another future project could center on looking into the official, public, University record as in when CIASU members addressed the Student Senate or had interactions with the administration. A project focusing on the official documentation would illustrate the ways in which CIASU interacted with the administration and it would also help to show the growth, development and, in some cases, the devolvement of the organization.

A truly important history would be one that follows the ways in which the group went from the Chicano Indian American Student Union to how it became the Latino Native American Cultural Center. The story of how both groups have strived to work together, where they have succeeded and where the outcome has been less than cordial, that is a story that needs to be documented. As far as I can tell, this is the only place where this particular alliance occurred and it has not been without its successes and its tensions.

Future research will follow CIASU through the years when the organization was vibrant and took its place on the national stage. There were huge conferences later in the 1970s and early 1980s that attracted important activists and garnered national media attention. A project that looks at the impact of the CIASU (and later) LNACC conferences will show the growth of the organization and offer insights into why and how that influence would eventually decline.

There is still much work to be done in understanding how this small organization has survived and at times thrived and there are many areas that offer rich possibilities for

research. One that seems very interesting would be centered on a close reading of all of the covers of *El Laberinto* and *Nahuatzen*. What determined the focus on the artwork and the quotes that were used<sup>200</sup>. How does the art reflect what is included in that particular issue and why was the decision made to use those particular images and what do those images mean? Whose interests do those choices serve? The link between art and politics goes very deep with CIASU; the imagery and the language used in conjunction with them points to connections with the larger movements that the students were surrounded by.

Another area that holds great research promise is in the arena of sexuality, sexual politics and the role of Machismo in defining those realities. The rise of the Women's Movement worked to create more open attitudes toward sexuality in the country as a whole. Most of the Chicano/a members of CIASU would have come from backgrounds steeped in a tradition of *machismo*; what did this sexual revolution mean for them and how did the new freedoms and attitudes affect their interactions with each other as men and women? I have come across several references to CIASU men taking the women of the House to task for dating "gringo" men. What was the response to Rusty's lesbianism? Was there any? Given the sexual politics of the time and the cultural leanings of the community outside of the University, how did the students move among the more traditional people? Another area that will yield much information will be an investigation into how the University structure worked to support the CIASU. Is there any documentation of how the administration felt about the work that the students

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<sup>200</sup> I am ashamed to admit that I did not know who Ruben Salazar was until I read his name on the cover sheet of *El Laberinto* dated only "1972"; the issue contains the text of Salazar's essay "What is a Chicano?"

were doing? Whereas CIASU has left behind almost no records, the bureaucracy that is a University will have an abundance of documents that will show another aspect of the continued survival of the organization. These potential projects are important in part, because they will show that even in the Midwest, relations between men and women faced the same power struggles and the challenge of coming to terms with shifting power relations and definitions of what it meant to “be” man or woman with the added component of cultural identity. These projects would be an additional strand of meaning for those doing research in Women’s Studies, Social Movement Theory and Sexuality Studies in that this is an area that has not seen much work as yet.

Doing the research on the early days of CIASU has expanded my understanding that identity often plays a role in the activist endeavors of an organization. This has meaning because the work CIASU engaged in was defined not only by their interest in social change but by their desire to create social change for specific communities that reflected the students own identities, ethnicities and value systems. This marks the work of CIASU as different from most other student organizations in that they focused on issues of concern to Chicano/a and American Indian people. CIASU affected change for their communities in a way that dominant culture groups could not; in effect, they reached out from the halls of the University to reach others like themselves in an effort to make room for them and to make the idea of the University a reality for them as well.

This dissertation has been interesting, frustrating, illuminating and inspiring. It has also been tiring. And it has not been enough. This project has only scratched the surface of the beginnings of CIASU and in that, it is limited. One of the goals of this dissertation was to seek out and bring together the existent documentation for the



organization and to try to understand it as a whole in order to further our knowledge of how CIASU lived and expressed the concerns of the larger Social Movements. I have read through information across several archival collections and interpreted that through the filters provided by Anzaldua. If I have succeeded in this it is because of her help in the clarity she has provided; if I have failed to interpret CIASU experiences adequately, the failure is mine alone.

In many respects, my work on this dissertation has mirrored that of the Chicano Indian American Student Union-it has often felt as though I were crafting “something out of nothing.” But that is not necessarily the case, the students of CIASU always had each other and that meant that they had someone (even if it was only one or two early on) who was sensitive to the position they found themselves in, feeling like aliens in a strange land. I have had supportive academics as well as the history of CIASU to spur on the work; it is with the knowledge that they succeeded that I have been able to complete this work. I am simply leaving a trail of *fry-breadcrumbs* and *chicharrones* for the next person who decides to pick up this work.

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