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## Chicano Labor and Multiracial Politics in Post–World War II Texas

### Two Case Studies

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In late 1963 a group of Dallas political operatives left its campaign headquarters and staged a sit-in at El Fenix, the city's first Tex-Mex restaurant and the economic foundation of the influential Martinez family. The protesters in this case were not students, and the restaurant was owned by Mexican Americans. It was also a holdout in a city where virtually all downtown lunch counters had already desegregated their seating. The sit-in featured an alliance of white, black, and Chicano/Chicana trade unionists and working-class community activists who left their storefront office, walked to the restaurant, and sat down as a group at a large table. The manager, a member of the Martinez family, asked them to leave and then promptly closed down for the day.<sup>1</sup>

The sit-in at El Fenix bubbled up from a larger underground reservoir of multiracial, working-class political activism that took place beyond the gaze of most historians, journalists, and social scientists. In the two decades following World War II, African American and Chicano/Chicana working people across Texas quietly and tentatively approached one another as well as white laborers for support in their efforts to counter discrimination at work, in their unions, and in the cities in which they lived. By the mid-1960s such collaboration had gradually expanded from its origins in the barrios, ghettos, union halls, and shop floors to become a broad-based coalition in support of liberal politicians and an expansive civil rights agenda.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars of the post–World War II black and brown freedom struggles have traditionally privileged the middle-class, public leadership of the most visible civil rights organizations.<sup>3</sup> Yet working-class activists such as the protesters at El Fenix represented the lifeblood of the effort to democratize Texas. Their story remains particularly obscure in the case of Chicano/Chicana



Figure 5.1. “Pancho” Medrano at the strike headquarters of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, Rio Grande City, Texas, ca. 1967. For activists such as Medrano, labor rights and civil rights were inextricable. (Courtesy F. F. “Pancho” Medrano Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, AR55-2-6.)

historiography. Most accounts of the “Mexican American Generation” suggest that activists in the postwar period sought to improve their condition through court cases and quiet diplomacy alone, by disavowing confrontational tactics, and in some cases by embracing a white racial identity that separated them from black civil rights advocates.

Yet many ethnic Mexican working people in postwar Texas developed a political praxis that did not depend upon a white racial identity but instead encouraged fierce, constant resistance to Jim Crow in both the workplace and the community. They did so—critically—through constant conversation and collaboration with like-minded African Americans. In many cases, distinctions of class and political philosophy mattered at least as much as did ties of ethnicity. A detailed examination of the biographies of two working-class Chicano organizers reveals the central importance of shop-floor conflicts and trade unionism to the development of the larger ethnic Mexican civil rights struggle. Their life stories highlight the decisive role of coalition building across the color line and suggest a wide range of continuities that link the

so-called Mexican American generation to the more familiar “Chicano movement” of the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

### The Survival of the Generational Model

The success of that movement in giving birth to the discipline of Chicano/Chicana Studies has, ironically, obscured a clear historical accounting of the movement’s immediate antecedents. Although historians now know much more about the experiences of ethnic Mexicans in North America from the conquest through the present, many of the scholar-activists who emerged from the movement and began searching for its roots initially overlooked the first two decades following World War II.

Published in 1989, Mario T. García’s *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* authoritatively filled this gap. In this foundational study, García joined other early Chicano/Chicana historians in proposing a generational approach to the field, a perspective that remains the dominant scholarly paradigm. It holds that most Mexicans emigrated to the United States during the late Porfiriato and Revolutionary periods (the decades before and after 1910). Like many other immigrants, these new arrivals formed social clubs based on their towns or states of origin and looked southward in order to celebrate *lo mexicano* (Mexicanness). But their children, who came of age during and after World War II, instead looked northward to Washington, seeking to fulfill the promise of their U.S. citizenship and participate fully in American society. This “Mexican American generation” is generally understood as composed of first-generation “ethnic” Americans who developed a hybrid identity and culture. They promoted patriotism and served in the U.S. military, but they continued to observe Mexican Independence Day and refashioned the Cinco de Mayo celebration for inclusion on the civic calendars of the Southwest. They were bilingual but desired assimilation into mainstream America. They advanced integration and in most cases supported the New Deal liberal impulse of expanding the role of government in order to ensure civil rights and social provision for all. They organized civic groups aimed at overturning the obstacles that stood in the way of exercising their rightful first-class citizenship. All of these characteristics distinguished them sharply from their own children, the so-called Chicano/Chicana generation of the 1960s and 1970s, who advocated militant tactics, developed a cultural nationalism that rejected whiteness, demanded recognition as a nonwhite racial (rather than ethnic) group, and abandoned Johnson-era liberalism for a range of radical alternatives.<sup>5</sup>

Most scholars of the Chicano experience, including García, debate the finer points of this portrait, but most agree that the political evolution of the

ethnic Mexican community in the American Southwest developed in a linear, teleological fashion best described in generational terms. Nonetheless, many of the distinguishing features of this telos remain obscure, starting with the exact chronology. García originally proposed that the Mexican American generation spanned both sides of the war, from 1930 to 1960. Cynthia Orozco, in contrast, identified Mexican American activism occurring as early as the 1920s. George J. Sánchez detailed the emergence of a Mexican American community in Los Angeles before and during World War II, while an earlier wave of scholars, including Carlos Muñoz, posited that Mexicans became Mexican Americans only after 1945. Ignacio M. García, the author of several volumes on the group, posits a subtle transition between the activism of the prewar era and the more absolute demands of returning veterans during and after the war. Still, he argues that both groups made up a single generational predecessor that fell short of and gave way to the “militant ethos” of the Chicano movement.<sup>6</sup>

If the chronology is inexact, the defining political characteristics of this cohort are even less clear. Most studies support Ignacio García’s 2009 conclusion that the leadership of the Mexican American civil rights movement passed from the hands of workers and radicals to the offices of the more tentative, middle-class leaders of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum, the two dominant civil rights organizations of the era. In Texas, men such as attorney Gus García, University of Texas education professor George I. Sánchez, and G.I. Forum leader and physician Hector García supposedly held the reins of the struggle until the rise of the Chicano student movement.<sup>7</sup>

A growing body of research suggests that this approach fails to account for myriad sharp and protracted intra-ethnic differences, disagreements that frequently divided ethnic Mexican political sentiments throughout the twentieth century even as other forces sought to create common ground. David Gutiérrez, for example, has shown that the great men of the movement advanced diverse opinions concerning ongoing immigration from Mexico into the United States.<sup>8</sup> Emma Pérez decenters those great men, arguing that paying attention to the experiences of working-class ethnic Mexican women “means to transfigure questions that have been assumed to be universal.” She adds: “Statistically, the majority of women were not assimilating into the institutions of dominant culture; that would have been a luxury and a privilege. Instead, they were working in the factories of Houston or in the fields of the surrounding rural areas during the first decades of the twentieth century. . . . The voice of an emerging middle class was not the single voice of the community. Conflict coexisted. Contradictions arose. Race wars, gender wars, class wars—all were

characteristic of diasporic communities in the early-twentieth-century United States.”<sup>9</sup>

Pérez’s assertion highlights the critical importance of broadening ethnic Mexican civil rights history, yet scholars still know surprisingly little about the lives of ordinary working people among the Mexican American generation. Zaragosa Vargas, Mario García, and others have outlined the rise and fall of radical—at times Communist—labor organizations in the 1930s and 1940s, but cold war repression stamped out even the last holdouts from this movement by the early 1950s.<sup>10</sup> According to Cletus Daniel and Emilio Zamora, a broader, less partisan fight during World War II included thousands of ethnic Mexican workers who appealed to both the U.S. federal government and the Mexican consulate to gain access to employment in defense industries. In the process, Zamora adds, they forged cross-class alliances with Mexican American professionals who led LULAC and the G.I. Forum, groups that have long been considered too conservative to engage in such advocacy.<sup>11</sup> Irene Ledesma and Vicki Ruiz have drawn attention to several strikes waged by ethnic Mexican women workers in the postwar period, showing how their struggles both diverged from and were often misunderstood by their male counterparts. At the same time, their work highlights the existence of a wide range of civil rights activism that took place outside the bounds of LULAC and the G.I. Forum, not in the courtroom but on the job and in the community.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, scholars’ efforts to unpack the racial politics of the Mexican American generation have produced conflicting conclusions, with at times incendiary and in all cases revealing implications. Neil Foley, Thomas Guglielmo, and others have shown that Mexican American litigants for a decade before and after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) adopted a legal strategy which claimed that Mexican Americans were “other whites” who faced discrimination based on language and ethnicity but were legally white and therefore entitled to first-class citizenship, even within the confines of the Jim Crow South. Tying this legal maneuver to a handful of other local skirmishes led by LULACers and G.I. Forum activists, these historians further conclude that Mexican Americans self-identified as white and cast their lot with white supremacy in opposition to blackness.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Ariela Gross, Ignacio García, and others look at the same cases and contend that Mexican Americans used the “other white” or “class apart” argument only as an instrumentalist tool within the courtroom.<sup>14</sup> Carlos Blanton delved deeply into the career of educator and Mexican American civil rights activist George I. Sánchez and discovered that even this respectable, seemingly middle-class race leader forged significant if tenuous ties with the black freedom struggle, from the 1940s until his death in 1972.<sup>15</sup>

These texts, in sum, produce a diverse picture of the Mexican American generation, a portrait that defies easy categorization in terms of political philosophy, leadership, and even chronology. The biographies of the two working-class ethnic Mexican activists presented in this essay reveal that they often advocated confrontational political tactics, coalition organizing with African Americans, and engagement with trade unionism and the fight against poverty. These workers' experiences on the job and in their unions belie the traditional scholarly depiction of a quiescent, assimilationist, Mexican American civil rights movement, while their ongoing commitment to multiracial organizing clearly shows that they did not position themselves as "white" ethnics opposed to black civil rights. Their stories also add to the growing body of research that calls into question the generational model itself, suggesting that it may finally be the time to discard it.

### **Francisco F. "Pancho" Medrano**

Francisco Franco Medrano, better known as "Pancho," already had four decades of experience in the barrio, shop floor, and black and brown civil rights movements when he helped instigate the sit-in at the El Fenix restaurant. Born in 1920, Medrano was raised in the Dallas barrio known as Little Mexico, where intense poverty and discrimination defined his childhood. He grew up without indoor plumbing and electricity and was urged to drop out of high school by his principal, who helped him find work. By sheer luck, Pancho ended up in a New Deal training program and landed a job at North American Aviation in nearby Grand Prairie in 1941. He dominated the company boxing league, gaining the respect of his white co-workers. An organizer from the United Auto Workers gave Medrano a pamphlet in which the union highlighted its commitment to non-discrimination, so he joined the drive to organize a local at the plant. The UAW won recognition and a contract, and Pancho served as shop steward while also working full-time and boxing professionally. After retiring from prizefighting, he became a delegate to the state and local labor councils and volunteered as an ad hoc organizer of both African American and Mexican American workers for myriad Dallas-area unions.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1960s, Medrano jumped headlong into the black and brown civil rights movements in Dallas. He served as an officer for a chapter of the G.I. Forum, joined the NAACP, and aided the sit-in demonstrations of black students at downtown department stores. Such community organizing went hand in glove with mobilizing for electoral politics. Pancho alternated between collecting poll taxes for the Progressive Voters League, an African American organization, and organizing ethnic Mexicans into first a local Viva Kennedy

club and then the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO).<sup>17</sup>

Two decades of labor, civil rights, and political organizing had already garnered Medrano a sizable reputation in activist circles, but nobody who knew him could have anticipated the opportunities and dramatic changes that lay ahead. In late 1963 or early 1964, UAW president Walter Reuther offered Pancho a full-time position working directly for the international union's Citizenship Department, a job that gave him *carte blanche* to travel the country assisting local civil rights struggles and political candidates "wherever it was needed."<sup>18</sup> He personally participated in and in many cases brought delegations of local activists to many of the iconic events of the 1960s. Medrano attended the "March for Jobs and Freedom" in Washington, D.C., in August 1963, the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march in March 1965, and the multiracial Poor People's Campaign encampment in May 1968. He joined Chicano/Chicana activists from across the country in walking out in protest from a hearing of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Albuquerque in 1966 and then from a subsequent summit of the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican American Affairs held in El Paso the following year. In June 1968 he stood a few feet from Senator Robert F. Kennedy when the latter was assassinated following his victory in the California presidential primary victory. He returned to Los Angeles in 1970 to march in the Chicano Moratorium demonstrations against the Vietnam War and then assisted local activists in denouncing the sheriff's deputy who murdered Chicano journalist Ruben Salazar during the protests.<sup>19</sup>

Pancho traveled far and wide for the UAW, but his presence at these many public demonstrations did not detract from his commitment to assisting local organizing efforts among black and ethnic Mexican workers. A closer look at his long and far-flung career makes plain the intimate relationships between labor, civil rights, and political activism; the black and brown freedom struggles; and Mexican American generation advocacy and the rise of the Chicano movement.

Medrano's expansive political vision and practice stemmed from and reflected the longtime aspirations of many black and brown workers: access to good jobs, an end to discrimination, and meaningful, independent political power for their communities. Pancho was intimately familiar with such goals. Life in the barrio and on the job had taught him both the depth of white supremacist resistance to civil rights and the central importance of economic justice issues. As a child, he ventured with his siblings and mother to white sections of Dallas, where the family was frequently refused access to

restaurants, movie theaters, and public swimming pools and parks. When he got his first lucrative job, at North American Aviation, Pancho was one of only a half-dozen Mexican Americans among the tens of thousands of workers in the plant. Discrimination was rampant. Although he held the title of jig builder, a skilled trades position, Medrano had trouble acquiring tools from the “crib attendant” who readily supplied them to white workers. Many white workers saw him as racially inferior and initially refused to be paired with him for two-man jobs. Like all workers in the plant, Pancho also knew that African Americans remained strictly confined to janitorial service. He probably did not know that white union officials had depended upon black workers for help in organizing the union local—the highly mobile janitors distributed and collected union cards across the sprawling North American compound—but he could plainly see that they then ignored the UAW’s non-discrimination policy and negotiated a contract with separate lines of seniority, cementing the company’s preexisting practice of reserving the best jobs for whites.<sup>20</sup>

Thanks to his boxing prowess, Medrano managed to integrate himself into the white-dominated union, becoming a shop steward and later an international representative. Nonetheless, he still made common cause with the less-fortunate black and brown workers on the shop floor. Despite resistance from both the company and the local union, he helped both groups of workers achieve upward occupational mobility. In 1962, Vice-President Lyndon Johnson visited the plant as part of his duties as chair of the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, a predecessor to the EEOC that worked to curb racial employment practices by encouraging voluntary action on the part of government contractors. With no hope of achieving compliance with their own “voluntary” commitments, management asked a number of black janitors to put on mechanics’ coveralls and stand by the machines as the vice-president toured the facilities. Several agreed to do it; others resisted participating in the deception. The trick worked, and Johnson believed what he saw and returned to Washington without incident. But when Pancho met LBJ for the first time shortly thereafter, he told him the truth, and Johnson was furious. The company soon abandoned its strategy of misleading federal authorities and instead began to take affirmative action to reverse the plant’s long-standing employment discrimination practices.

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Pancho remained an ally of black and brown workers at the plant as they took advantage of Title VII to win skilled jobs for the first time. Shop foremen and white union officials continued to resist integration, so Medrano helped the African American workers organize independently of local union leadership in order to demand (and gain) access to skilled, mechanized jobs. At the same time, Pancho worked

with the Texas Employment Commission to bring over more than five hundred ethnic Mexican skilled workers north from the Rio Grande Valley and into a new training program at the plant—finally desegregating it nearly twenty-five years after the wartime FEPC first promised to do so.<sup>21</sup>

The company cooperated with Medrano, but the president of UAW Local 848, Nova Howard, resisted his efforts. In a 1969 letter to UAW regional secretary H. A. Moon, Howard complained that “an unknown stranger has ridden into our town, spreading seed[s] of discontent, uneasiness and fear among my people.” Medrano, with Reuther’s blessing, “came into my local’s hall . . . drew out portions of my membership,” and held a “special meeting” for “minority groups,” even conducting some business in Spanish. Howard felt that Pancho, an international representative, should be reprimanded for violating protocol and meddling in local union and company affairs. Yet Howard’s protest ended up backfiring. Not only did Medrano in fact have Reuther’s support, but he also made Howard’s letter into a leaflet and distributed it on the floor of a UAW convention, embarrassing the local union chief and helping garner support for rival white union leaders who supported the cause of civil rights.<sup>22</sup>

As this story suggests, Medrano brought resources, clout, and technical expertise to the broader struggle for racial equality and economic opportunity. On the shop floor and in electoral politics, he formed coalitions between black and ethnic Mexican workers and then sought allies among a wide range of partners, from white workers and liberal politicians to African American and ethnic Mexican civil rights activists. Although he was a lifelong unionist, Medrano never shied from confronting injustice within the labor movement itself. He relentlessly tied his own fortunes to those of ordinary black and brown workers, generally outmaneuvering his opponents along the way.

Experiences in the barrio, at the aircraft plant, and in the union all proved pivotal to the development of Medrano’s organizing praxis. His close ties to ordinary workers and decades of experimentation in multiracial coalition building tied black to brown and “Mexican American” civil rights to “Chicano” militancy. Born in 1920 and becoming active during World War II, Pancho followed a path from barrio to barnstormer that was a product of New Deal opportunities and the rising civil rights movement of the postwar Mexican American generation. He became an organizer in the labor movement, cut his political teeth in the Viva Kennedy clubs, and built close ties with local chapters of LULAC and the G.I. Forum.

As an international representative, Medrano strategically used his position to spread the gospel of community organizing. From rural New Mexico to small towns in West Texas, from the borderlands of the Rio Grande Valley to the piney woods black belt of East Texas, Medrano crisscrossed the

countryside in a car filled with leaflets and a film projector. He made connections with local chapters of LULAC, the G.I. Forum, and the NAACP and joined the campaigns of countless senators, congressmen, and state legislators throughout the West. Even in towns where he had no local contacts, he found a white wall in a poor neighborhood and began projecting movies, often popular feature films with no political content. Once the crowd grew around him, Pancho introduced his audiences to the possibility of making change through electoral politics. At every stop on his journeys, he recruited local poll-tax deputies and precinct captains, talked up the benefits of trade unionism, and highlighted the critical links between labor, civil rights, and political activism.<sup>23</sup>

Yet these activities among the Mexican American generation did not preclude Pancho's early and protracted involvement in the rising Chicano movement that took root in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In fact, in some cases Medrano's organizing highlights the direct continuities between earlier activism and the supposedly new, separate, and youth-led Chicano movement. In 1963, on assignment from UAW headquarters in Detroit, Pancho traveled to Crystal City in South Texas to aid the campaign of Juan Cornejo and "los cinco candidatos," five working-class ethnic Mexican candidates for local office. In this landmark municipal election, a coalition of PASO, ethnic Mexican workers at the Teamster-organized Del Monte packing plant, and high school students led by José Ángel Gutiérrez combined to overthrow the all-white conservative government that had dominated for decades. Teamster representative Carlos Moore invited Pancho to stay and join the unprecedented effort. Medrano brought not only his organizing skills but the all-important seed money from the UAW, funds that allowed the town's ethnic Mexican working people to pay their poll taxes and vote. Cornejo and *los cinco* won the election. It was the opening salvo of the Chicano movement in Texas, the first time a majority-ethnic-Mexican jurisdiction had cast off the minority white government and replaced it with ordinary, uneducated Chicano workers. What came to be known as the "first Chicano revolt" at Crystal City served as a symbol and example of Chicano/Chicana empowerment that resonated nationwide, and the young Gutiérrez later became a principal spokesman of the larger movement. Yet Pancho's story points to the centrality of older activists like Medrano, Moore, and the leaders of PASO, all of whom drew upon years or decades of experience in the trenches of organized labor or electoral politics.<sup>24</sup>

Pancho also played a significant role in another enduring symbol of Chicano liberation, the effort to unionize farmworkers. Like the Crystal City revolt, the farmworker struggle did not represent a sharp break from the past but rather an outgrowth of prior Mexican American civil rights and labor

activism. César Chávez’s United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC)—itself the product of the Fred Ross’s Community Services Organization of the 1950s—decided to send organizer Gene Nelson to Rio Grande City in South Texas in 1966. Melon pickers went on strike within a month of Nelson’s arrival. The UAW’s Walter Reuther, who was the first union or liberal leader to aid the farmworkers’ efforts in California, sent Medrano to join the strike in the Rio Grande Valley. Pancho had visited Delano with Reuther the previous year, so it made sense that it was he who brought the money from the UAW to the Texas strike. As in California, the Texas walkout turned into a protracted civil rights battle, culminating in a five-hundred-mile, two-month-long march from the Valley to the state capitol in Austin. Meanwhile, a delegation of African Americans from East Texas, led by a local chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, staged its own march to the capitol. Labor activists from across the state joined both groups at the Austin rally on Labor Day, calling on the legislature to enact a \$1.25 hourly minimum wage and demanding that Governor John Connally make good on his campaign pledge to support civil rights for all blacks and Chicanos/Chicanas.<sup>25</sup>

Medrano walked in many segments of the march and aided with daily campaign activities, serving as what one organizer called a “diplomat” between UFWOC organizers, the Texas labor movement, and the UAW’s vast network of lawyers and political connections.<sup>26</sup> In May 1967, several months after the march, Pancho returned to the Valley to mount a picket line aimed at convincing unionized railroad workers to refuse to load produce that originated at the struck farms. Members of the Texas Rangers accosted and arrested him and a dozen other pickets, adding them to the long list of ethnic Mexican unionists and their allies who had suffered physical abuse and detention by the Rangers in the first year of the UFWOC campaign. Medrano used his position on the UAW staff to secure bail and the release of his compatriots before launching a multi-year lawsuit against the state police force. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually sided with the union in *Medrano v. Allee*, issuing a landmark ruling in 1974 that forced a complete overhaul of the agency and struck down Texas laws against mass picketing and free assembly. Pancho also joined a number of UFWOC activists who testified against the Rangers before a subcommittee hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare held in Rio Grande City on June 29, 1967. Between witnesses, the audience of farmworkers cheered “Viva justicia” (“Long live justice”) and “Viva Kennedy”—the latter phrase celebrating not only the political awakening spurred by the clubs carrying that name during the presidential campaign seven years earlier but also the presence of Senator Edward M. “Ted” Kennedy as an advocate for farmworkers on the Senate subcommittee panel.<sup>27</sup>

The UFWOC's Texas campaign captured the imagination of Chicanos and Chicanas across the state, serving as an example of militant self-empowerment. But it gained critical support from a coalition composed of the UAW, the Texas AFL-CIO, sympathetic elected officials, and black civil rights activists. Veteran organizers like Medrano mobilized their preexisting networks of labor activists and political connections for the farmworkers' cause. Such ties served as the invisible, multiracial, and intergenerational infrastructure behind the widely publicized Chicano uprising.

Medrano's community organizing within his hometown of Dallas further demonstrates the importance of interracial organizing while cementing the link between his "Mexican American" activism and the so-called Chicano generation. Pancho's work in Dallas politics began within his own family and neighborhood and ended with mass demonstrations and finally the acquisition of formal political power. After growing up in a *barrio*, Pancho moved to a nearby public housing project named, without irony, Little Mexico Village. In the early 1950s, Pancho's wages at the aircraft plant allowed him to buy a house in a previously all-white neighborhood a mile to the north, on the edge of Oak Lawn. White residents objected to the new arrivals and soon began moving away, while other upwardly mobile ethnic Mexican families gradually replaced them. The proximate *barrios* continued expanding over the next decade until the Medrano household was again sandwiched between the growing ethnic Mexican enclaves located just north of downtown and in West Dallas (immediately across the Trinity River).<sup>28</sup>

Pancho responded to this change by attempting to organize his new neighbors. Rather than flee the poverty enveloping him, Medrano helped his son Ricardo purchase a small neighborhood grocery store around the corner from their house. Along with Pancho's wife, Esperanza, Ricardo opened Kiko's grocery in 1964. The store sold some food and other conveniences, but its main business was performing the functions of a community center. Esperanza offered informal day-care services, and Kiko's bustled with children each day after school. The kids attracted the parents to the store, and Ricardo took advantage of their presence to provide them with political education materials. Kiko's became a social and political clearinghouse for the surrounding *barrios*. In 1967, when the Rangers arrested Pancho in Starr County, family friend and union printer Joe Landín helped Ricardo make a leaflet to raise money for the farmworker struggle. Ricardo spread the news and distributed information from the counter at Kiko's.<sup>29</sup>

The Medranos' other children also received a political education from their earliest childhood days. Pancho Jr., the eldest, followed his father into the aircraft industry and became a union steward. In the late 1950s and early 1960s he

joined his father in helping African American and ethnic Mexican workers organize a local of the carpenters' union at Scotty's Aluminum and the William Cameron Company. The family's second son, Robert, was the first to attend college. After graduation he took a job in the War on Poverty and eventually advanced to the position of director at the West Dallas Community Center. Just as Ricardo used Kiko's as an informational clearinghouse, Robert made the provision of social services part of a broader project of political education and community organizing. Together, the two political hubs brought the Medrano family into direct contact with countless barrio residents.<sup>30</sup>

Over the course of the 1970s, this sustained contact transformed into mass mobilization. In late February 1971, Dallas city, county, and surrounding law enforcement agencies conducted a general reign of terror in the barrios, ostensibly seeking the murderers of three slain sheriff's deputies. They arrested ethnic Mexicans at will and physically abused those who dared to resist. In the early morning hours of February 19, a group of plainclothes police officers kicked down the door of the East Dallas home of Tomás and Berta Rodríguez and opened fire on the terrified couple sleeping inside. Tomás returned fire before being shot, beaten, chained to a hospital bed, and charged with assault and intent to murder. Berta, who was pregnant, was hospitalized with gunshot wounds, and one of their children was also injured in the melee. The policemen initially claimed that they had received a tip that their colleagues' slayers were inside, but they later tried to discredit Tomás by filing what turned out to be false drug charges against him.<sup>31</sup>

The assault on the Rodríguez family galvanized the city's growing Chicano movement and also heralded the emergence of a militant multiracial coalition for social justice. The Medranos stood at the center of this new citywide mobilization. Police brutality was also a chronic problem in the black neighborhoods of South Dallas, but common grievances did not automatically produce cooperation across ethnic lines. Rather, Pancho and his family drew upon decades of contact with black civil rights activists to begin organizing a partnership immediately after the Rodríguez assault and arrest. Pancho had served on the board of the local NAACP; his children grew up in the association's youth chapter led by renowned activist Juanita Craft. He had collected poll taxes and registered black Dallasites while serving on the board of the Texas Council of Voters, and he was now participating in the long-shot mayoral candidacy of black community organizer Al Lipscomb.<sup>32</sup>

Beginning at Kiko's and the West Dallas Community Center, the Medranos connected student leaders of all races to barrio residents and reached out to a wide range of established Mexican American, Chicano, and African American civil rights organizations. Robert and Ricardo proved critical to reaching out

to Chicano youth. About a year earlier, Pancho had visited Los Angeles and brought home the idea of organizing a chapter of the Brown Berets, the stylish paramilitary Chicano counterpart to the Black Panthers. Ricardo had taken the lead in creating the Dallas unit and had become an outspoken, flamboyant, and well-known critic of the city's school board and city council. In contrast, Robert quietly spread the word of upcoming events through his contacts from the War on Poverty, using his position at the West Dallas Community Center to mobilize the service agency's clients. While his kids reached out to Chicano students and barrio residents, Pancho activated his networks in the labor movement and among elected officials to bring political pressure to bear upon the Dallas Police Department.<sup>33</sup>

All of this spadework remained outside the public view, causing most journalists to marvel at the depth of multiracial collaboration that seemed to emerge suddenly when the coalition finally took to the streets.<sup>34</sup> On March 6, 1971, Pancho led a small group of "Latins, Blacks," and "a few Anglos" in staging a vigil for Tomás Rodríguez at the Kennedy Memorial Plaza.<sup>35</sup> A week later, a multiracial group of more than 150 protesters attended another rally at the same site, featuring two principal speakers. Pancho spoke on "how we have been suffering from bad government in Dallas," while Fred L. Bell, an African American leader affiliated with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), railed against police brutality meted out to blacks.<sup>36</sup> The next afternoon, on Sunday, March 14, some three thousand mostly ethnic Mexican people assembled in Reverchon Park for a benefit dinner designed to raise funds for the Rodríguez case. The nonconfrontational, private nature of the Mexican food picnic benefit likely brought many middle-class, respectable Mexican Americans into the campaign, allowing these activists to quietly show support and donate to the confrontational Chicano cause without taking to the streets in protest.<sup>37</sup> The next Saturday, March 20, a column of two to three hundred demonstrators—"blacks, whites, and Mexican-Americans," according to the hostile *Dallas Morning News*—tacked themselves onto the annual Shriners parade, taking advantage of the occasion to march down the already-blockaded streets with a police escort. The marchers chanted slogans and carried signs as they wound their way to a rally on the steps of City Hall, where Pancho addressed the assembled crowd. "The coalition between minorities became stronger," one paper reported, "as the chicanos [*sic*] expressed solidarity with the Rev. Peter Johnson, a black man, who was in the second week of a hunger strike to dramatize the plight of the city's poor" at the same location.<sup>38</sup> *El Sol de Texas* optimistically declared, "What countless injustices have not achieved, the Rodríguez case accomplished—it united Mexican Americans, Anglos, and Negroes." One photograph in the Spanish-language

weekly shows Pancho standing side-by-side with black mayoral candidate Al Lipscomb and Ed Polk, Tomás's long-haired white defense attorney. The caption reads: "Three different skin colors in defense of a single cause . . . justice."<sup>39</sup>

By the end of March 1971, the black and Chicano/Chicana struggles were indeed becoming one, and African Americans' support for the Rodríguez cause was clearly reciprocated by Chicanos/Chicanas. Photographs of the rallies show ethnic Mexican protestors lifting placards reading "Lipscomb for Mayor" alongside posters of the UFWOC eagle.<sup>40</sup> According to *El Sol de Texas*, several Chicano/Chicana, black, and white organizations were planning a broad selective-buying campaign at downtown grocery stores that would be a "combined protest of the [United Farm Workers'] Lettuce Boycott, the Hunger Strike, and Police Brutality."<sup>41</sup> It appears that such plans were postponed, possibly inevitably—one week later the paper reported plans for yet another march and rally, this time with a twist. On March 27, Pancho led a delegation on foot from Fort Worth, some thirty miles west of Dallas. In the end, a diverse group of more than seven hundred protestors from throughout the region arrived at City Hall. The protests appear to have fizzled out soon after this demonstration, but at least some of the momentum was channeled into electoral politics. Organizers urged supporters of the Rodríguez case to not only vote for Lipscomb but to "Vote 'NO'" to all of the incumbents and their allies on the City Council.<sup>42</sup>

Many historians point to multiracial collaboration and militant protest tactics as innovative strategies first developed by the Chicano movement, a set of key departures that separated the younger activists from the more moderate advocacy of their parents. Yet the Rodríguez case in Dallas suggests that such seemingly new organizing actually grew out of the earlier networks established by more senior activists. To a remarkable degree, Pancho brought older Mexican American groups together with the new Chicano organizations, and he placed both in conversation with black activists (also elderly and young) and liberal white labor leaders, students, and politicians. Although the conclusion of the Rodríguez campaign remains murky, it is clear that these diverse activists achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation and public visibility in March 1971. At the same time, Pancho's pivotal role cautions that the coalition, though newly vibrant, was less a break from the past than a product of it.<sup>43</sup>

The Rodríguez case built on earlier organizing efforts, but it also raised the already-substantial profile of the Medrano family to new heights in the arena of electoral politics. After the protests subsided, the Medranos continued their work of building a local electoral machine based upon tireless advocacy for

civil rights and the provision of basic services for the ethnic Mexican residents of Dallas. Both Kiko's and the West Dallas Community Center performed these functions. If the Madranos' clients needed help with their power bill, their plumbing, a streetlight, or a school principal, they came to Kiko's and got help from Esperanza and Ricardo. If they needed a job or food stamps, they went to visit Robert in West Dallas. In this way, the family gained what Ricardo called "political clout."<sup>44</sup>

Many of the Medrano children, who had been at Pancho's side in various campaigns throughout the 1950s and 1960s, became local leaders in their own right. In 1974, Robert ran for and won a seat on the Dallas Independent School District board, a post he held until 1988. The Citizens' Charter Association, a conservative nominating body led by white businessmen, had long dominated the city's at-large municipal elections, and only one ethnic Mexican (and no African Americans) had ever won a City Council seat without the group's support. But in 1975 the door swung open when the courts sided with a suit filed by former mayoral candidate Al Lipscomb, ordering the city to create district elections in compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Ricardo gained a spot on the Dallas City Council from 1980 to 1984.<sup>45</sup> Lipscomb joined the council as a representative for a South Dallas district in 1984, and he remained an ally of the Medranos both on the council and in the community.<sup>46</sup> For nearly two decades, the ethnic Mexican precincts of downtown and West Dallas were in permanent campaign mode, always littered with yard signs, posters, and bumper stickers that read simply "Medrano"—first names were omitted to keep the ads current. Before Little Mexico's destruction owing to urban renewal, local journalists gave it a new nickname: Medranoville.<sup>47</sup> As late as 2010, Pancho's daughter Pauline served as the city's deputy mayor pro tem, while Adam, Pancho's grandson, chaired the school board.<sup>48</sup>

When Pancho Medrano led the sit-in at El Fenix in 1962, he probably had few clues that his daily civil rights and labor activism would eventually result in a political dynasty. Yet many of the puzzle pieces were already in place. When Pancho first visited the restaurant as a young man soon after World War II, "Papa Martinez," the founder, recognized him from news reports of his prizefighting and invited him in with open arms. Meanwhile, the owners forced other ethnic Mexican workers to eat in a hallway and flatly excluded all African Americans. By the early 1960s, Medrano frequently made common cause with black and white laborers and liberals, and they combined to stage a bold protest that nonetheless was immediately forgotten by all but the participants. After the sit-in, Pancho and his fellow campaign staffers continued to work in obscurity, registering and mobilizing voters outside the public eye until a seemingly new multiracial, militant coalition exploded onto the streets

and into the newspapers during the Rodríguez affair of 1971. They demanded that the city take action to curb police brutality, but the City Council defended the officers' actions. Among the council's ranks was Anita Martinez, the daughter-in-law of the restaurant's founder, elected on a conservative ticket in 1969. Many Chicanos and African Americans in the flowering coalition to her political left denounced her, setting the stage for the transition to independent representation embodied in the electoral victories of the Medrano children.<sup>49</sup>

Pancho Medrano's life and legacy points to the need to finally cast away the generational terminology that dominates the historiography of the Chicano/Chicana experience in the postwar period. Although middle-class leaders of the so-called Mexican American generation have dominated scholarly treatments of the era, ethnic Mexican workers waged their own distinctive struggles for both racial and economic justice. At the same time, working-class organizers like Pancho connected and blurred together the two groups, as working people helped animate a wide range of the more familiar, mainstream "Mexican American" activism. Medrano's activism also linked the older cohort with the young Chicano/Chicana militants of the 1960s and 1970s. He played a pivotal role in founding a G.I. Forum chapter and a Viva Kennedy club in Dallas and participated in PASO and other electoral campaigns and community organizations across the Southwest. Yet he also contributed significantly to several "Chicano" struggles, including Crystal City, the United Farm Workers, the Rodríguez campaign, and independent electoral politics.<sup>50</sup>

Medrano's career began at the work site and centered upon organizing all working people—black, brown, and white. These two traits proved central to his success. They also open up an entirely new perspective on ethnic Mexican political history in the three decades after World War II. By beginning the story at work and focusing relentlessly on multiracial coalitions rather than strictly monoracial activism, his narrative suggests the need to replace the generational model with a new interpretation that is more sensitive to the nuances of class and political philosophy. Medrano's work site and multiracial organizing also clearly demonstrate the limits of "whiteness" as an explanation of ethnic Mexicans' racial positioning, highlighting instead the importance of studying not simply rhetoric but the nuts and bolts of on-the-ground community activism.

### **Arnold Flores**

Medrano's case may at first appear extraordinary, but Pancho was just one of many working-class civil rights activists throughout postwar Texas. In San Antonio, nearly three hundred miles south of Dallas, an otherwise ordinary veteran turned civilian base worker followed a remarkably similar trajectory.

Born in the Rio Grande Valley in 1936, Arnold Flores grew up in relatively comfortable conditions within San Antonio's ethnic Mexican Westside enclave. His father's success as a small businessman did not shield Arnold from the rampant racial discrimination that dominated the city in the years after World War II. Flores attended Lanier High, an all-ethnic-Mexican school, until he dropped out to join the air force in 1954. He served at bases in Texas and Germany but decided not to reenlist after an officer called him "a greaser." Flores returned to civilian life in 1959 and quickly developed an interest in electoral politics and civil rights, serving as a block walker for the Viva Kennedy effort and local campaigns beginning in 1960.<sup>51</sup>

For the next several years Arnold continued to support and participate as a foot soldier in the flowering Mexican American civil rights struggle, yet he probably would have remained in historical obscurity had he not agreed to spearhead a fight against employment discrimination at Kelly Air Force Base. San Antonio's several military installations offered some of the best civilian jobs available to ethnic Mexican and African American workers in the area, but nonwhites rarely advanced beyond menial positions. Flores did not initially plan to rock the boat when he was hired into a permanent position at Kelly Field in 1964. Yet in 1967 he grew fed up with widespread, routine ethnic favoritism at the hands of the base's German American supervisors, and he filed a complaint denouncing a wide range of discriminatory working conditions, from the assignment of overtime and daily tasks to compensation and promotion practices.

Arnold's complaint transformed him into a leader among ethnic Mexican workers at the base and then catapulted him into the center of the civil rights movement and a career in organized labor and politics. His experiences on the shop floor at Kelly Field served as ammunition for the most militant activists among the so-called Mexican American generation, while his own participation helped link that older group to the emerging Chicano/Chicana youth movement. In 1969, after winning his case at Kelly, Flores accepted an offer to serve as an organizer of the Service Employees International Union, a position that for the better part of the next decade allowed him to fuse shop-floor activism with the civil rights struggle.

Like Medrano, Flores searched for and found allies both within and outside his ethnic group. He drew strength from other activists—black, brown, and white—who shared his expansive vision of combating both racial discrimination and economic exclusion. Flores's story, like Medrano's, illuminates the critical importance of both workplace activism and multiracial collaboration in the development of ethnic Mexicans' civil rights struggle. It underscores the

continuities between the historiographically separate activism of the Mexican American and Chicano generations and further questions the salience of “whiteness” among ethnic Mexican working people.

Looking back at his early activism fifty years later, Flores cannot remember exactly why he became involved in electoral politics. He likely followed the same path as thousands of other ethnic Mexicans in Texas who first participated during the 1960 presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. In Texas, one of the state chairmen of the Viva Kennedy clubs was Albert A. Peña Jr., the firebrand San Antonio civil rights attorney who first won election to the Bexar County Commissioners Court in 1956. Peña served as the leader of a loose “liberal” faction among ethnic Mexican activists from the mid-1950s through the late 1960s. Stymied by the business-friendly Good Government League and the at-large electoral system in municipal politics, Peña helped organize a coalition of white, black, and ethnic Mexican liberals who slowly won control of the Bexar County Democratic Party (the Republican Party was barely beginning to organize in Texas at this time, and it was often led by conservative registered Democrats). Flores began working for Peña around 1960 and eventually became the commissioner’s “unofficial assistant.” A passion for politics also cemented Flores’s marriage to his wife, Gloria, that same year, and the young couple attended countless civil rights seminars together throughout the early 1960s. Evening workshops and all-day meetings on weekends became routine for the pair. “That was our social life,” Flores later remembered.<sup>52</sup>

Yet unlike Peña and most of the professionals who led early ethnic Mexican civil rights organizations, Arnold and Gloria also had to find and hold down jobs. Gloria got a clerical position at Kelly, but Arnold struggled to find a trade. He drove a mixing truck for a concrete company, where he helped his fellow drivers unionize by putting them in contact with the Teamsters—a connection doubtlessly forged thanks to the Teamsters’ periodic support for liberal politicians like Peña. The work at the concrete company was seasonal, so Flores also worked at odd jobs and found time to attend political rallies and to coach a local boxing team—like Pancho, Arnold had been a prizefighter in his youth. Flores worked briefly for an insurance company, where he again attempted to organize a union among the agents. Then in 1964, after years of unsuccessful attempts, he finally gained admission to a training program for a permanent position at Kelly Field, and he quickly joined Gloria at the base.<sup>53</sup>

Arnold was doubtlessly aware of the discrimination that dominated work at Kelly, but the base still offered the best blue-collar work available. He looked forward to stable employment by the federal government and hoped that he could rise up through the ranks and enjoy some degree of upward economic

mobility. The couple bought a house and began to settle down. They likely planned to continue to their political activism in the community while slowly advancing into the ethnic Mexican middle class at work.

But the daily indignities of ethnic favoritism, a series of conflicts with supervisors, and the realization that he was working a dead-end job with no possibility of promotion set Arnold on a collision course with base management. He had begun his work at Kelly along with a training class of twenty-four new hires. They entered a rotation in which trainees could in theory sample work in several posts before receiving their permanent assignments, but in practice the schedule did not rotate all of the trainees equally. Ethnic Mexicans never worked upstairs in warehouse offices, nor did they have opportunities to work directly on the aircraft. Instead, they worked as “gofers” with no possibility of advancement. Flores became a “parts expediter,” a job that required taking parts from one plane to another. Meanwhile, supervisors placed white workers in positions that would prepare them for promotion. Networks of kin often combined with ethnic favoritism, as German American managers elevated their distant cousins to serve as foremen, regardless of qualifications.<sup>54</sup>

Flores did not initially protest, preferring instead to keep his head down and do his work. But as Christmas approached in 1965, he noticed that white managers routinely gave weekend overtime hours and thus the opportunity to earn extra income to two white workers whom they favored most. Arnold chafed at this unequal assignment of overtime work, but he might have still stayed quiet had he not directly observed the resulting inequity. One Saturday he visited a downtown department store and encountered one of his white co-workers. Flores initially thought nothing unusual about the encounter, but he learned a week later that the man, Andrew Wharram, had been given credit for working overtime the previous weekend. Flores discovered that Wharram was on the clock and drawing pay. He had slipped away from work at the base to go shopping—using money he hadn’t earned during an extra overtime shift won through favoritism!<sup>55</sup>

Arnold had had enough. In early 1966 he approached his manager and reported seeing Wharram downtown. The manager initially threatened Flores, reminding him that he was making a serious charge and that propagating unfounded rumors would be met with severe punishment. But when Wharram joined Flores in the manager’s office and admitted going absent without a leave (AWOL), the boss did not punish his favorite employee. Instead, he transferred Flores to another department. Facing discrimination at Kelly Field had been a bad enough indignity, Arnold later explained, but this blatant stealing and favoritism contradicted his belief, honed in civil rights seminars, that the

federal government and especially the armed services should treat all people fairly.<sup>56</sup>

Flores's work environment continued to deteriorate until it resulted in a formal discrimination complaint. Arnold and his new manager, John Cronk, immediately differed over his job description. Nearly a year after the AWOL incident, Cronk assigned a foreman to follow Flores around the base as he worked. Arnold interpreted this as an act of harassment and in December 1966 filed a grievance through his union, the International Association of Machinists. The case eventually failed when union officials missed a deadline for appeal.<sup>57</sup> In July 1967, Arnold approached another foreman and discreetly asked for permission to see the base's equal employment opportunity (EEO) officer, hoping the latter would help him close the ever-widening rift with his new boss. The foreman promised to quietly forward Arnold's request to the EEO department but then promptly took it to Cronk instead.<sup>58</sup>

Arnold decided it was time to take matters into his own hands, and he quickly called upon his colleagues in the civil rights movement for support. In 1965, a group of ethnic Mexican professionals had formed the Federation for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (FAMA), a civil rights group that aimed to quietly contribute funding and other support to the more militant activists who were engaged in public confrontations with conservative whites. The group's logo featured a pair of roosters and the slogan "FAMA is not for chickens." Through FAMA, a wide range of ethnic Mexican professionals could pool their resources to support the student-activists at local universities, who in turn pushed the elders to support an ever broader array of causes. In 1966 FAMA organized a series of caravans to bring food and other aid to the UFWOC campaign in the Rio Grande Valley. Erasmo Andrade, a language interpreter at Kelly Air Force Base, chaired the Valley Workers Assistance Committee before serving as FAMA's sole staff member. Arnold Flores never formally joined the group—FAMA's ten-dollar monthly membership fee proved far too expensive for even the relatively well-off workers at Kelly—but he traded service in lieu of dues. Virtually every Saturday, Flores arrived early and stayed late at the FAMA office, preparing and cleaning up the conference room before and after the group's day-long weekly meetings. As a result, he gained informal membership in FAMA and became a regular participant, bringing him into contact with a wider range of leaders in San Antonio's large ethnic Mexican community. Meanwhile, the FAMA offices Flores maintained gradually became a gathering place for countless ethnic Mexican civil rights organizations. Arnold befriended Joe J. Bernal, a World War II veteran and teacher who became a state representative in 1964 and a state senator in 1966;

Matt García, a wealthy attorney with a growing concern for civil rights; Father Henry Casso, a local Catholic priest and activist; and countless leaders of the city's LULAC and G.I. Forum chapters.<sup>59</sup>

In the summer of 1967, coinciding with Arnold's attempt to see the EEO officer, FAMA leaders began to discuss the problem of employment discrimination against ethnic Mexicans, and the problems at Kelly put the base at the top of their list of potential targets. Most FAMA members were lawyers who wanted to build a well-documented case in order to take a polite but pointed appeal to Kelly management. They needed to gather concrete data, and Flores, the group's only blue-collar employee at the base, emerged as the obvious choice to coordinate the effort. Arnold began to talk with other ethnic Mexican workers at the base about their own experiences of discrimination, and more than twenty came to him with complaints. In coordination with FAMA, these workers began to file complaints with the base EEO office as part of a collective attempt to gauge and document the department's lack of responsiveness to problems. The workers' testimony provided vital information to FAMA's aspiring civil rights activists, and Arnold served as a *de facto* diplomat who connected the professionals with a constituency among blue-collar workers at Kelly Field.<sup>60</sup>

In August 1967, Flores filed a formal discrimination complaint. After his own boss refused to allow him to visit the EEO office, Flores called state senator Bernal, who in turn called Kelly management and demanded that Arnold be allowed to submit his complaint. The next morning the EEO officer summoned Flores and interrogated him for more than five hours.<sup>61</sup> His case detailed the numerous ways in which ethnic Mexicans faced discrimination in the area of promotion, but his main complaint centered on the capricious disciplinary actions and harassment he faced in the wake of reporting the AWOL incident. He did not demand a raise but called for punishment for his supervisors and a wholesale rooting out of discrimination at Kelly. He hoped to end the practice of assigning ethnic Mexicans to dead-end jobs while simultaneously improving daily working conditions. Mostly he wanted respect.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, Senator Bernal asked the Texas State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to investigate employment practices at the base. Ernesto Cortés, who later gained renown as the Texas head of Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation, served on the committee's staff and interviewed Flores as part of its preliminary investigation. In November 1967 the committee held widely publicized hearings on discrimination at the base. Forty people testified, with Flores emerging as the spokesman for the ethnic Mexican workers. The state committee published its report in June 1968 and forwarded its findings to the federal Commission on Civil Rights. It charged

that widespread, systemic discrimination prevailed at the base, that nonwhite employees had no faith in the EEO procedures, and that base management had failed to address the inequities despite being made aware of them.<sup>63</sup>

Even before these findings were made public, Kelly officials responded to Arnold's complaint, the broader FAMA campaign, and the committee hearings with a mixture of harassment, intimidation, and bribery on the shop floor. Flores was relegated to sweeping a warehouse, stolen property was placed in his car in order to frame him, and even Gloria became an object of constant surveillance. Other complainants received discipline or transfers and dropped their cases, while still others were offered promotions in exchange for renouncing the cause and its proponents. Meanwhile, Kelly officials investigated Arnold's complaint. In December, a month after the Advisory Committee hearings, the commanding general at Kelly wrote to Flores to inform him that his complaint lacked merit and would be dismissed.<sup>64</sup>

Arnold appealed the verdict and won a hearing beginning in February 1968. Three FAMA members served as his representatives: Senator Bernal, Father Casso (who also served as vice-chairman of the state Advisory Committee), and attorney Matt Garcia, who led the effort despite having no experience with civil rights litigation. Working pro bono, Garcia dominated the six-week-long hearing, while the presence of Bernal and Casso kept the case newsworthy. Management continued to harass and intimidate Flores, but Arnold documented each instance and brought it to Garcia, who then used the evidence of retaliation to further embarrass base officials. Garcia discredited management's key witness by showing that he had stolen scrap materials from the base. Then, Arnold remembers, "Their whole case broke down." The commanding general personally offered Flores a promotion to end the case, but Arnold saw it through its resolution. Numerous ethnic Mexican complainants won promotions as a result of the case, and several managers faced reprimand, quit, or retired under pressure.<sup>65</sup>

Still, the case's successful conclusion did little to change Arnold's immediate working conditions. He faced ongoing harassment, and Kelly management continued to drag its feet with regard to ending discrimination at the base. A second Texas State Advisory Committee report, published in 1970, noted "some improvement" in promotion procedures and results over the previous two years but added that there remained "much room for improvement in equal employment opportunities at all levels at Kelly AFB."<sup>66</sup>

Already a seasoned civil rights activist and a leader among ethnic Mexican workers at the base, in 1969 Arnold jumped at the opportunity to leave Kelly to work full-time for a local labor union. The organizing department of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) hoped to revive San Antonio's

Local 84, which had been created in 1937 but by 1968 was nearly dormant. Composed of about thirty members, all head janitors for the San Antonio Independent School District, the union had devolved into what Flores called a “*compadre* club” that also ran a credit union and remained cozy with management (*compadre* can refer to a godfather or tie of fictive kinship, or to a close friend). The union members doubled as officers in the credit union, and they all enjoyed supervisory positions and harmonious relations with the school district as long as they ignored the grievances of rank-and-file employees. The credit union safe sat in a district office, and the leaders refused to lend money to workers who rocked the boat. Membership was stagnant, and monthly meetings were dominated by drinking.<sup>67</sup>

In early 1969 Arnold took the job and began reorganizing the union. Earning a small stipend from the international union, he formed a committee of about ten entry-level janitors whom he paid to recruit new members. Several months later, he presented the union’s board meeting with 130 mostly young ethnic Mexican workers ready to be sworn in to the local. The longtime leaders chafed at the influx of new members, but Arnold pointed to his assignment from the international union, and the workers were added to the rolls. At the next annual membership meeting, a group of new, younger members formed a slate to oppose the head janitors of the *compadre* club. The current president, Joe Estrada, called on an old friend, Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez, for support. Gonzalez had proven himself a stalwart supporter of both labor and civil rights, but he advocated gradual change and above all civility. He had disapproved of Flores’s discrimination case at Kelly and had feuded with Arnold’s mentor, Albert Peña. In front of the membership, Gonzalez branded Flores a “Communist-trained” organizer who had “infiltrated the labor movement.” Flores recalls that these tactics proved effective and turned some of the new members against both him and the other insurgent candidates for union office. When the ballots were cast, the members did elect the new leaders, but they also offered Estrada the ceremonial post of “chairman emeritus.”<sup>68</sup>

The election validated Flores’s approach to both union organizing and electoral politics. Under the new leadership, the union quickly grew to nearly five hundred members. It expanded beyond the San Antonio schools to include the Harlandale and Edgewood districts and added cafeteria workers and bus drivers to its traditional base among janitors. In addition to his local duties, Flores traveled the state organizing new SEIU locals. At the University of Texas at Austin, he won recognition for a bus drivers union led by long-haired white student activists, including a former chairman of the Young Communist League. In Houston, Arnold aided a strike of white and black steelworkers at the Hughes Tool Company. Students at the historically black Texas Southern

University, including local SNCC leaders and an ethnic Mexican law school student from San Antonio, helped Flores persuade the janitors to honor the steelworkers' picket line. Once they got their new contract, the blue-collar workers threatened to strike again in order to support the janitors' bid for recognition of their new SEIU local.<sup>69</sup>

Multiracial collaboration represented a critical component of Flores's labor activism. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, union organizing brought Arnold into sustained contact with the African American civil rights movement. As early as the late 1940s, Rev. Claude Black Jr. of Mt. Zion First Baptist Church, funeral home director G. J. Sutton, and photographer and publisher Eugene Coleman had led African American residents of San Antonio's Eastside in a sustained offensive against Jim Crow. Like Bernal, Peña, and Flores, these activists demanded immediate social change and did not shy away from engaging in sit-ins, rallies, and other contentious tactics. They too faced opposition from within their own racial group, as many other African American leaders preferred to work for inclusion through cooperation with the conservative Good Government League rather than the liberal Bexar County Democratic Coalition. In 1948 Sutton and company had formed temporary coalitions with the more militant ethnic Mexican civil rights activists, and by the mid-1960s leaders of both groups depended upon one another for support. In 1967, for example, Sutton joined Flores on a picket line outside the Kelly Air Force Base Anniversary Ball. The duo carried signs denouncing "50 Years of Discrimination" at the base. Coleman's *SNAP News* publicized Sutton and Black's civil rights activism directly alongside a front-page column written by Albert Peña. Flores joined all of these men and a wide range of white liberal activists at informal monthly meetings of the "lunch bunch," sessions of planning and coordination that began in the mid-1960s and continued into the twenty-first century.<sup>70</sup>

Arnold drew upon his relationship with African American leaders to build multiracial solidarity within his union. Although ethnic Mexicans constituted the vast majority of the union's membership, Flores had been working with Rev. Black to bring African American workers into the local as well. School district supervisors at times attempted to play the racial groups off of one another, telling ethnic Mexican men that the black janitors wanted to seduce their wives, or vice versa. In other cases, black or brown workers would complain about working under the supervision of a member of the other race. Flores invited Rev. Black to come to monthly membership meetings to urge interracial cooperation, and Black's oratory proved effective at helping the two groups better understand one another as well as their common cause in the union. For example, the newly elected officers of the local initially resisted

when Arnold suggested that they create new posts on the board of directors in order to include an African American and a woman. Though they had recently rejected the old *compadre* club, Flores feared, the new officers now stood in danger of replacing it with an equally unrepresentative monocultural clique. Arnold noted that he had no formal power to make demands on the board, but he threatened to resign publicly and denounce the union's bigotry if they did not comply. Rev. Black spoke in support of the measure, and the two then left the meeting. Soon after Flores returned to his house, the new chairman called him and said that they had elected as directors both a black janitor and a white woman cafeteria worker. Arnold continued to work for the union. The San Antonio chapter of the NAACP, of which Rev. Black was an officer, later honored Flores for taking this stand in support of racial inclusion.<sup>71</sup>

Flores sought to create a local that closely resembled a social movement organization like FAMA rather than emulating the heavily bureaucratic and generally unresponsive unions that had surrounded him at Kelly Air Force Base. Local 84's monthly membership meetings represented the critical tool for fostering an activist culture within the union. While most contemporary unions had little rank-and-file participation except in times of strikes, contract negotiations, and other crises, Flores drew upon the community-based organizing of the United Farm Workers, a group he had personally encountered through FAMA beginning in 1966. Using the service centers established by United Farm Workers leaders in California and South Texas as a model, Arnold created classes and recreational programs for women and children. Thus, even if a man did not want to come to the union meeting, his wife and kids would still want to go to their respective activities and would drag the man along with them. The meetings themselves included a diverse set of speakers who reported on the black and Chicano/Chicana civil rights movements as well as political developments and union activities. In addition to Rev. Black, Commissioner Peña, attorney Matt Garcia, Senator Bernal, G. J. Sutton, and other black, white, and ethnic Mexican "lunch bunch" activists would rotate through the agenda. In a given month, Rev. Black might attend to encourage black members to seek common cause with their ethnic Mexican counterparts. Peña would then appear at the following meeting to ask the latter group to support their black co-workers and the larger civil rights struggle. The monthly meetings concluded with tamales, a keg of beer, and a fiesta for the entire family.<sup>72</sup>

Such spadework paid dividends for the union. In December 1970, Flores organized a mass march protesting the school district's decision to end the automatic payroll deduction of dues for union members. The predominantly

white San Antonio Central Labor Council rented Flores a small office, but the council rebuffed Local 84 members from assembling in the building's parking lot prior to the demonstration. Flores and the mostly ethnic Mexican union membership instead gathered at a park in the historic King William neighborhood, where Rev. Black, G. J. Sutton, and a group of black schoolchildren joined them. The group marched through downtown and rallied at City Hall. Peña and young Chicano movement activists also attended the march, as did Father Sherrill Smith, a Catholic priest who had formerly coordinated the social justice activities for the San Antonio archdiocese.<sup>73</sup>

While Flores worked to foster multiracial collaboration and social movement style dynamism within Local 84, he also used his post as a staff organizer to offer the union's support for a wide range of ethnic Mexican civil rights activism. He did so by using the personal ties he had forged with movement activists during the previous decade of work in electoral politics and through his complaint at Kelly Air Force Base. In 1968, even before he began working at SEIU, Flores attended the first meeting of the Mexican American Unity Council, a body that coordinated numerous activist efforts in San Antonio. In March 1969, Flores participated in a march of more than three thousand Chicanos/Chicanas in nearby Del Rio in support of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). Protestors nailed a list of grievances to the Val Verde County courthouse door. The document later became known as the "Del Rio Manifesto," a Chicano/Chicana declaration of independence that reverberated across the country. In late 1969 and early 1970 he traveled to Crystal City to help José Ángel Gutiérrez and MAYO members organize a school boycott and voter mobilization effort. The campaign completed the South Texas agricultural town's transition from all-white political dominance to representation by the majority ethnic Mexican population—a process that Gutiérrez had begun in 1963 with assistance from the Teamsters, PASO, Peña, and Pancho Madrano. Flores later served on the board of the Southwest (now National) Council of La Raza and, in 1974, co-founded the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project.<sup>74</sup>

Through the union, the "lunch bunch," and this constellation of ethnic Mexican organizations, Arnold helped bridge the gap between his early days in Viva Kennedy and FAMA—the Mexican American generation—and the rising Chicano movement. Such connections ranged from his support for MAYO, the most militant of Chicano/Chicana groups in Texas, to his mentoring and friendship of Willie Velásquez, another young Chicano and MAYO member who directed the staff of first the Unity Council and then Southwest Voter.<sup>75</sup> These multigenerational and multiracial ties are particularly clear in

the case of the crisis created when Chicano/Chicana activists staged a series of protests against San Antonio mayor William McAllister. When McAllister questioned the ambition of ethnic Mexicans in a nationally televised interview in June 1970, young Chicano/Chicana organizers called a boycott of the San Antonio Savings Association, a community bank owned by the mayor. At one particularly contentious rally during the conflict, police detained dozens and arrested some thirty pickets, including not only Velásquez and other “young Turks” but also older activists such as Peña, Flores, and their “lunch bunch” collaborator G. J. Sutton, an African American leader. Robert de León, a Texas Southern University law student who had helped Arnold organize janitors at Hughes Tool in Houston, was also arrested.<sup>76</sup>

The city’s Chicano movement and Chicano-led unions increasingly overlapped. The first Crystal City coalition in 1963, the farmworkers struggle beginning in 1966, and the demonstrations of 1969 and 1970 all highlighted the growing union between the movement and organized labor. The fusion found its apogee in San Antonio Chicano Organizers (SACO), a body founded by Flores around 1970. SACO created a network of union organizers that allowed members to ask one another for help, whether that meant seeking technical expertise with negotiations or getting assistance with turning out workers to support a particular picket action or rally. It also doubled as a Chicano caucus within the white-dominated San Antonio Central Labor Council. The combined membership of the unions that SACO activists represented—the Service Employees, Amalgamated Meat Cutters, International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and United Auto Workers—never gave the group an absolute majority of votes at labor council meetings, but their combined numbers did give them sufficient clout to block the two-thirds supermajority vote needed to endorse political candidates. In 1972, Arnold and company wielded this power when SACO threatened to prolong a labor council meeting all night in order to force it to support Peña’s bid for reelection. Their tenacity forced the all-white building trade unions to endorse the firebrand Peña, while SACO agreed to the endorsement of a slate of white candidates. By the mid-1970s, SACO served as the key bridge between organized labor and the often youthful leaders of the Chicano movement. If a particular voter registration campaign or protest demonstration needed money or picket signs, Velásquez, Gutiérrez, or other community activists asked a SACO member, who in turn took the request to his fellow union organizers for fulfillment. SACO members also helped advance African American causes both in unions and the community. In 1967, for example, IUE organizer Paul Javior, a SACO activist, recruited Clarence “C. J.” Littlefield to serve as the city’s first black union president, while in 1975 Franklin García of the Meat

Cutters spoke at rallies with local SNCC activists in the national campaign to free political prisoner Angela Davis.<sup>77</sup>

In 1977, Flores resigned from the union and moved away from San Antonio, temporarily leaving behind the multiracial, working-class activist civil rights struggle that he had helped lead for nearly two decades. Local 84 had grown from 30 to 1,800 members. The “lunch bunch” coalition had elected Rev. Black to the City Council and G. J. Sutton to the post of state representative, although Peña and Bernal both lost their reelection bids in 1972. For his part, Arnold went to Washington, D.C., to join the Carter administration as a special assistant to the commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Leonel Castillo of Houston.<sup>78</sup>

Like Pancho Medrano, Arnold Flores followed an unusual path from the barrio to political prominence. A child of immigrants, Flores sought upward mobility through government service, working in the military and then at Kelly Air Force Base. He developed an interest in politics that eventually led him to challenge the base’s systemic employment discrimination. He built ties across occupational and ethnic lines and helped connect FAMA to ethnic Mexican workers and the latter to the labor, Chicano/Chicana, and African American civil rights movements. Like Medrano, Flores aligned himself with community organizers and elected officials that encouraged street protests and other unruly tactics in the name of sweeping social change. He faced opposition from members of his own ethnic group and drew upon a durable coalition with black activists—a collaboration that far exceeded its counterpart in Dallas in terms of size, longevity, and political power.

Arnold’s story, like Pancho’s, suggests the need to rethink the defining characteristics and cleavages of ethnic Mexican political history. Multiracial alliances, distinctively working-class experiences and grievances, trade unionism, a commitment to confrontational politics and direct action—all of these mattered far more to Flores than did simple generational divides. Instead of making a “Faustian pact with whiteness,” Flores helped forge a multiracial coalition that dovetailed seamlessly with all of his activities at the workplace, in organized labor, in electoral politics, and in the Chicano movement. His activism connected several struggles long understood as separate. It brought trade unionism together with the older “Mexican American” campaign for equal rights, the younger “Chicano/Chicana” struggle, and the “long” African American civil rights movement. And he was not alone, either within or beyond his ethnic group. Rather, he joined Albert Peña, Joe Bernal, Rev. Black, G. J. Sutton, and countless others to demand a complete, immediate end to racial discrimination, a complete opening of future economic opportunities, and a significant share of independent political power.

## Conclusion

The lives of Pancho Medrano and Arnold Flores may appear exceptional, but their expansive visions and dedication to social change clearly struck a chord among ethnic Mexican workers in Dallas and San Antonio. Leaders like Medrano and Flores by definition had followers. Unfortunately, very few primary sources illuminate the lives of ordinary ethnic Mexican workers during this period. Most surviving union records overlook the rank and file of all races, and workers of color appear only sporadically in the archives—usually on a single piece of correspondence related to a grievance and at time in letters and press coverage during a rare strike. The best available documentary evidence on the day-to-day work of ordinary ethnic Mexican workers centers on the small handful among them who managed to rise up the ranks of their respective unions and eventually land staff jobs as union organizers. While their careers are not statistically representative of the masses they organized, the lives of these workers-turned-organizers offer the clearest—if still not transparent—window into the political perspectives and tendencies of the people they quite literally represented.

By examining the lives of organizers over a protracted period, scholars can at least glimpse the world of the organized. One quickly discovers that Medrano and Flores represent but the most visible tip of a much larger iceberg. Other working-class ethnic Mexican organizers similarly combined labor and civil rights advocacy and worked to build coalitions of black and brown workers across postwar Texas. Many more supported their efforts. And they had their counterparts in the black and white communities. Franklin “Tortillas” García, Mary Salinas, Jaime Martinez, Moses and Erma LeRoy, George and Latane Lambert, and dozens of other ethnic Mexican, African American, and white unionists built multiracial coalitions that similarly blended labor, political, and civil rights activism—as did the many community-based organizers and elected officials who collaborated with them.<sup>79</sup>

If the careers of Medrano and Flores offer any indication, future research into the lives of such organizers will likely uncover a radically different picture of ethnic Mexican activism in the postwar period, one that replaces familiar assumptions of generational teleology and white racial positioning with detailed accounts of the on-the-ground organizing at work and in the community. This more representative group of activists draws attention away from the courtroom and from traditional “Mexican American” leaders and instead focuses it squarely on the barrios, shop floors, union halls, political clubs, and even across the tracks into black working-class communities. After all, these were the places where the vast majority of brown and black people lived, worked, and raised hell—the sites at the very center of the civil rights

movements. On-the-ground organizers like Medrano and Flores bridged the gap between “Mexican American” and “Chicano,” black and brown, and workplace and community-based activism. In so doing, they connected the so-called race leaders to the people they aspired to represent.

## Notes

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1. José Ángel Gutiérrez, Oral History Interview with Francisco Medrano, CMAS 37, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, *Tejano Voices* collection [hereinafter Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA], (Dallas, June 27, 1996), 56–58; author’s typed field notes on conversation with Ricardo Medrano, Dallas, November 2, 2008; author’s interview with Robert Medrano, Dallas, September 24, 2009 (audio recording). On the middle-class Mexican American leadership that included the Martinez family, see Carolyn Barta, “New Brown Leaders Emerge,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1972; and Gilbert Bailon, “Quiet Effort Opened Doors for Hispanics,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 15, 1987.

2. This paragraph draws on my Ph.D. dissertation, “Labor, Civil Rights, and the Struggle for Democracy in Texas, 1935–1975” (Duke University, 2011).

3. For a summary of the “master narrative” of the black civil rights movement, see the new introduction in Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Many scholars, including Payne, have since added “local people” to this narrative, often decentering the church-based, middle-class leaders of older studies. For an antiquated overview of the movement, see Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984). For a new interpretive framework, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233–63.

Hall's depiction of the "classical phase," roughly 1954 to 1965, points toward the presence of working-class activists in the "short" civil rights movement, but much research remains to be done.

4. I use "Chicano/Chicana" and "Mexican American" to refer to subgroups of the umbrella "ethnic Mexicans," separating them on the basis of their political philosophies rather than age alone: "Chicano/Chicana" describes those who advocate militant, confrontational politics, while "Mexican American" refers to those who adhere to traditional assumptions of that so-called generation, including tendencies toward assimilation, patriotism, white racial identity, and a rejection of radicalism. I use "black" and "African American" interchangeably, and "white" instead of "Anglo" in all cases (except quotations). I use "Chicano/Chicana" and the plural "Chicanos/Chicanas" to denote the presence of both men and women among this activist cohort. I use the phrase "Chicano movement" without quotation marks only in reference to the scholarly labeling of that particular phase of the struggle, while understanding that the phrase's emphasis on youth and male leaders obscured the contributions of women activists of all ages.

5. Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). The metaphors of looking southward and northward and the reference to Cinco de Mayo paraphrase the observations of Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 80. For additional works from the traditional scholarly perspective, see Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 6th ed. (New York: Longman, 2006); Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso, 1989); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., "Let All of Them Take Heed": *Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910–1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987); Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); and Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

6. M. T. García, *Mexican Americans*; Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: the Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*; Ignacio M. García, *Hector P. García: In Relentless Pursuit of Justice* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2002); Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson: MASRC, the University of Arizona, 1989); Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Ignacio M. García, *Viva Kennedy: Mexican Americans in Search of Camelot* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000); Ignacio M. García, *White But Not Equal: Mexican Americans, Jury Discrimination, and the Supreme Court* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009).

7. In addition to the sources cited above, see Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Craig Allan Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Henry Ramos, *The American GI Forum: In Pursuit of*

*the Dream, 1948–1983* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1998); and Patrick James Carroll, *Felix Longoria's Wake: Bereavement, Racism, and the Rise of Mexican American Activism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

8. David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

9. Pérez, *Decolonial Imaginary*, 82. Stephen J. Pitti has also rehabilitated the broad activism of the “Mexican American generation” in and around San Jose, California. Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

10. Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); M. T. García, *Mexican Americans*; Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

11. Cletus E. Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: The FEPC in the Southwest, 1941–1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics During World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

12. Irene Ledesma, “Unlikely Strikers: Mexican-American Women in Strike Activity in Texas, 1919–1974” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1992); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994); Pitti, *Devil in Silicon Valley*.

13. Neil Foley, “Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian Pact with Whiteness,” in *Reflexiones 1997: New Directions in Mexican American Studies*, ed. Foley (Austin: University of Texas, 1998); Neil Foley, “Straddling the Color Line: The Legal Construction of Hispanic Identity in Texas,” in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); Neil Foley, “Partly Colored or Other White?: Mexican Americans and Their Problem with the Color Line,” in *Beyond Black & White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker (College Station: Published for the University of Texas at Arlington by Texas A&M University Press, 2004); Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas,” *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006): 1212–37. See also Brian D. Behnken, “Fighting Their Own Battles: Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Civil Rights in Texas” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 2007); Brian D. Behnken, “Elusive Unity: African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Civil Rights in Houston,” in *Seeking Inalienable Rights: Texans and Their Quests for Justice*, ed. Debra A. Reid (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 123–45.

14. Ariela J. Gross, “‘The Caucasian Cloak’: Mexican Americans and the Politics of Whiteness in the Twentieth Century Southwest,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 95 (2007): 337–92; Ariela J. Gross, “Comment: Texas Mexicans and the Politics of Whiteness,” *Law and History Review* 21, no. 1 (2003): 195–205; Steven H. Wilson, “Brown over ‘Other White’: Mexican Americans’ Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits,” *Law and History Review* 21, no. 1 (2003): 145–94; Ignacio M. García, *White But Not Equal*. Also see Lisa Y. Ramos, “A Class Apart: Mexican Americans, Race, and Civil Rights in Texas” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2008).

15. Carlos K. Blanton, "George I. Sánchez, Ideology, and Whiteness in the Making of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, 1930–1960," *Journal of Southern History* 72, no. 3 (2006): 569–604.

16. An extended version of this biographical sketch can be found in my unpublished conference paper "A Faustian Pact?: Mexican American Workers and Civil Rights in post-World War II Texas," presented at the Organization of American Historians, Seattle, March 27, 2009. This sketch draws on a wide range of printed sources as well as two principal oral history interviews: George N. Green and Carr Winn, Oral History Interview with Pancho Medrano, Dallas, August 4, 1971, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas, Arlington [hereinafter TLA-UTA]; and Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA. Many of the written sources are housed in the Pancho Medrano Papers, 1946–1971, AR55, TLA-UTA [hereinafter Medrano Papers].

On Pancho's childhood, boxing, and early work history, see Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, pp. 1–21; Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 1–44, 52–53; Tony Castro, "The Medranos: Family of Activists," *Dallas Times Herald*, November 22, 1970, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; "Unionists' Reunion—25 Years Ago They Were Barefoot Buddies in Texas," unidentified newspaper, ca. 1968, in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; Barta, "New Brown Leaders Emerge"; Sharon Cobler, "Unidad: Family Fights Inside Establishment," *Dallas Morning News*, July 11, 1976; Carol Trujillo, "Dallas' First Barrio-Hispanics Started Out, Struggled in Little Mexico," *Dallas Morning News*, September 13, 1987; Ellen Sweets, "Everyone Was Scared to Death—and Anyone Who Says They Weren't Is Lying," *Dallas Morning News*, March 25, 1990; Rosanna Ruiz, "A Lifetime Struggle for Rights—Champion of Many Causes Was Shaped by Unjust Times," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 27, 1995; Nora Lopez, "Board Delays Historic Status for Pike Park—Resident Says Racist Past Should be Acknowledged," *Dallas Morning News*, September 8, 1999; Nora Lopez, "Panel to Back Landmark for Pike Park—Questions Answered about Segregated Past," *Dallas Morning News*, September 10, 1999; Joe Simnacher, "Francisco Medrano Sr.: 1920–2002—Political Patriarch Mourned," *Dallas Morning News*, April 5, 2002; *Francisco 'Pancho' Medrano Post Office Building*, HR 4561, 109th Cong., *Congressional Record* 152 (April 5, 2006): H1493–4; "Pancho Walked and Talked Union," *Texas Aerospace* (United Aerospace Workers Local 848: May, 2002) [in author's possession, courtesy Ricardo Medrano]; Bill Deener, "Hispanic Leaders Debate Ways of Solidifying Power," *Dallas Morning News*, September 17, 1986; Gene Lantz, "Milestones in UAW Local 848 History," *Labor History from Texas*, <http://www.labordallas.org/hist/848miles.htm>; Gene Lantz, "Dallas, and I, Remember Pancho Medrano," *News for Activists*, <http://www.labordallas.org/panch.htm>; Gene Lantz, "Pancho Medrano Honored Again," *News for Activists*, <http://www.labordallas.org/medr9.htm>; "Union Body Names Chief," *Dallas Morning News*, May 17, 1957; list of delegates to Texas AFL-CIO convention proceedings (year unknown), photocopy, in UAW Local 848 Records, 1941–1989 (includes Local 893), unprocessed collection, Accession 91-42, Box 1, TLA-UTA. Also see various campaign posters and leaflets for Pancho's union elections in the Pancho Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, TLA-UTA.

17. Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 55, 63–65, 75–76, 81–85, 90–92; author's field notes on Ricardo Medrano, November 2, 2008; Clarence A. Laws, regional director (NAACP), to Glover Pettes of Las Cruces, New Mexico, July 22, 1964,

Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; Roy Reuther to Ted Hawks, September 24, 1964 (citing a Roy Wilkins letter that vouches for Pancho), Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; Gillespie C. Wilson, President of Texas Conference of NAACP Branches, to Medrano, April 10, 1969, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; “Interest Mounts in Effort to Abolish Poll Tax on November 9th,” October 12, 1963, *Dallas Express*, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8. The article lists “Pancho Medrano, U.A.W. Staff member, and organizer, Labor P.A.S.O.” alongside a group of leaders of the predominantly black Texas Council of Voters, including Dallasites A. Maceo Smith and W. J. Durham of the NAACP. Also see Simnacher, “Francisco Medrano Sr.”; Bob Ray Sanders, “Activist’s Life Was a Fight for Justice,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 10, 2002; “Medrano Was Force in Dallas—He Was Political, Civil Rights Leader,” *San Antonio Express-News* (Associated Press), April 6, 2002; “Congresswoman Johnson to Unveil the Francisco ‘Pancho’ Medrano Post Office,” *Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX 30) Press Release*, [http://www.house.gov/list/press/tx30\\_johnson/102606a.html](http://www.house.gov/list/press/tx30_johnson/102606a.html); *Medrano Post Office Building*, H1493; Castro, “The Medranos”; American G.I. Forum National Convention program (San Diego, 1966), Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; “Excerpt from a Bulletin Sent Out by the New Mexico Chapter of the American GI Forum,” 1965, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; “Pancho’s Qualifications,” Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 3. Also see scattered invitations for G.I. Forum and LULAC meetings in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; and Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841–2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 129–30; “Trujillo Heads Kennedy Group,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 11, 1960.

For general background, see Michael Lowery Gillette, “The NAACP in Texas, 1937–1957” (Ph.D. diss, University of Texas at Austin, 1984); W. Marvin Dulaney, “Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?” in *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, ed. W. Marvin Dulaney and Kathleen Underwood (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 66–95; and I. M. García, *Viva Kennedy*.

18. Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, pp. 28–29, 31; Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 48–49; Castro, “The Medranos”; author’s field notes on Ricardo Medrano, November 6, 2008. The exact date of Reuther’s hiring of Pancho remains unclear. Writing in 1970, Castro states that Pancho joined the international staff in 1962, while in his 1971 interview with Green and Winn, Pancho seems fuzzy on the year of his hiring, switching back and forth between 1963 and 1964. The flyer “Pancho’s Qualifications” lists his work as a shop steward and volunteer organizer as late as April 1963. Pancho’s participation in the first Crystal City revolt suggests that he began working for Reuther later that month, though it is probable that he initially did so on an ad hoc basis before becoming a permanent staffer. Medrano also served as a Public Information Officer for the state AFL-CIO during the 1963 poll-tax campaign, though it is also unclear whether or not this was a full-time position. See F. F. Pancho Medrano file, Texas AFL-CIO Records, Mexican American Affairs Committee, AR110-7, Box 2, Folder 3, TLA-UTA.

19. Medrano served as an ad hoc organizer prior to his permanent appointment to the UAW staff; he was probably classified as temporary at the time of the March on Washington. Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, pp. 29, 38; Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 67, 69, 71–75, 87–88, 95–96, 121–29, 138; Douglas Domeier, “Torrent of Sympathy Pours Out Here for Dr. King,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 6, 1968; “Dallasite among Rights Marchers,” n.d.; “Waiting,” n.d., both unknown newspaper

clippings, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; Sweets, “Everyone Was Scared to Death”; “Pancho Walked and Talked Union”; “Congresswoman Johnson to Unveil . . .”; Sanders, “Activist’s Life Was a Fight for Justice”; Jim Lane, “Civil Rights Legend Pancho Medrano Honored,” *People’s Weekly World*, <http://www.pww.org/article/articleprint/10139>; Thalia I. Longoria, “Escuela lleva nombre de activista hispano—Nombran escuela del DISD en honor a latino que luchó junto a César Chávez y Martin Luther King Jr.,” *El Día*, December 8, 2008; “UAW Representative Medrano Deplores Violent Tactics of Los Angeles County Sheriff,” press release from UAW-CAP, September 2, 1970, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; photographs and clippings in Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folders 4 and 6; Castro, “The Medranos.” On the Moratorium and Salazar, see Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Si! Guerra No!?: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

20. See note 16 on Pancho’s childhood and experiences of discrimination on the shop floor. On the experience of African American workers at North American Aviation (later renamed Temco, then LTV, and now Chance-Vought), see author’s typed field notes on UAW 848 Black Retirees, Grand Prairie, November 13, 2008; and Davis West, Clarence Barrett, Larond Daniels, Roosevelt Love, Douglas Smith, oral history group interview with author and Joseph Abel, Dallas, November 20, 2008 (audio recording); “Transcript of Tape on ‘History of Local 645’ Made by Jack Anderson in 1994,” collected and transcribed by Gene Lantz, UAW Local 848 Records, 1937–1994 (includes Locals 645 and 390), unprocessed collection, Accession 95–66, Box 1, TLA-UTA; e-mail from Gene Lantz to author, November 2, 2008; Lantz, “Milestones in UAW Local 848 History”; author’s typed field notes on conversation with Gene Lantz, Dallas, November 12, 2008; and *Medrano Post Office Building*, H1493.

21. Author’s typed field notes on conversation with Ricardo Medrano, Dallas, November 2, 2008; author’s typed field notes on UAW 848 Black Retirees, November 13, 2008; West et al., oral history group interview with author and Abel; e-mail from Gene Lantz to author, November 2, 2008; author’s notes on conversation with Gene Lantz, November 12, 2008; “Vice President Johnson Lauds Employees,” *LTV News*, December 21, 1962, copy in UAW Local 848 (893) Records, 91-42, Box 1 (features a photograph of black worker Fulton Plouche meeting LBJ); G. L. Bearden to George F. Dull, July 24, 1964, UAW Local 848 (893) Records, 91-42, Box 1 (cites grievance concerning black shop steward M. C. Shelton); Texas State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights in Texas* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 30–31.

22. Nova Howard to H. A. Moon, February 7, 1969, UAW Local 848 (893) Records, 91-42, Box 6. This letter is unusual in that nothing like it survives in this collection. This copy likely exists because Pancho turned the letter into a pamphlet and distributed it on the floor of a UAW convention. Author’s notes on conversation with Lantz, November 12, 2008.

23. Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 92–93; Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, p. 33. Carlos Conde, “Poll Tax Campaign Launched,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 21, 1964; *Medrano Post Office Building*, H1493. Governor Anne Richards gained some of her earliest political experience in 1958 stuffing envelopes for the Young Democrats at Dallas NAACP headquarters, along with her friend Pancho Medrano. Wayne Slater, “Let Me Tell You about Mama,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1989. On Pancho’s role in the Progressive Voters League, see Emmet Whitman

to Whom It May Concern, January 4, 1964, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. On Ralph Yarborough's senatorial campaign, see William D. Bonilla, National President of LULAC, to Walter Reuther, September 16, 1964, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. See also untitled clipping from *El Sol de Texas*, December 12, 1970, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8. On New Mexico, see U.S. Senator Joe Montoya to Medrano, November 17, 1965, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; "Excerpt from a Bulletin"; and Laws to Pettes, July 22, 1964.

24. Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, pp. 32, 34–35; Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 74, 100–102, 139; Cobler, "Unidad"; Lawrence Goodwyn, "Los Cinco Candidatos," *Texas Observer*, April 18, 1963, 3–9. See also John S. Shockley, *Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); José Ángel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

25. Medrano, interview with Gutiérrez, CMAS 37, TV-UTA, pp. 67–68, 102–21; Medrano, interview with Green and Winn, TLA-UTA, pp. 37–44, 49–51, 62–99; "Mexican-American Farm Workers in Texas March for Minimum Wage," *Region 5 UAW News*, September 1966, p. 1, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; Paul Schrade to Medrano in Rio Grande City, telegram, June 2 [1967], Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; "Sons of Zapata," leaflet, 1967, Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folder 2; "The Union Fights On in Texas," *El Malcriado*, June 10, 1968, 10, Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folder 2; Richard Medrano, "Pancho Medrano," leaflet, May 29, 1967, Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folder 2. Also see Castro, "The Medranos"; Cobler, "Unidad"; Sweets, "Everyone Was Scared to Death"; Ruiz, "A Lifetime Struggle for Rights"; "Medrano Was Force in Dallas"; *Medrano Post Office Building*, H1493; "Congresswoman Johnson to Unveil . . ."; Lantz, "Dallas, and I, Remember Pancho Medrano"; and the clippings files in Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folders 3–5.

On the participation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, see Behnken, "Fighting Their Own Battles," 224–25, citing reports from the *Texas Observer*, September 2 and 16, 1966.

The best secondary study of the United Farm Workers is Margaret Eleanor Rose, "Women in the United Farm Workers: A Study of Chicana and Mexicana Participation in a Labor Union, 1950–1980" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1988). On the Texas campaign, see, for example, Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, "'Better to Die on Our Feet Than to Live on Our Knees': United Farm Workers and Strikes in the Lower Rio Grande Valley," *Journal of South Texas* 20, no. 1 (2007): 56–103.

26. The characterization of Pancho as a "diplomat" comes from the author's interview with Gilbert Padilla, Fresno, California, October 12, 2009 (audio recording). Both Padilla and campaign co-coordinator Bill Chandler suggested that Pancho did not do much spade-work in this campaign, but he always popped up when he was needed and offered his assistance, charisma, and UAW funds whenever he was in town. Author's interview with William Chandler, Jackson, Mississippi, February 15, 2010 (audio recording).

27. *Medrano v. Allee*, Case No. 67-B-36, 347 F. Supp. 605; *Allee v. Medrano*, 416 U.S. 802 (U.S. Supreme Court, 1974); U.S. Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, "Migratory Labor Legislation Hearings before the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor," Rio

Grande City, Texas, June 29, 1967 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), part 2 (pp. 337–700a). Chandler says that the UFWOC leaders asked Pancho to serve as lead plaintiff in order to ensure ongoing support from Reuther and the UAW (Chandler interview). Also see note 24; Robert M. Utley, *Lone Star Lawmen: The Second Century of the Texas Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 242–47; “Pancho Walked and Talked Union”; Simnacher, “Francisco Medrano Sr.”; and reports in the *Dallas Morning News*, May 28, 30, June 1, 9, 11, 30, August 13, 1967, and June 13, 14, 1968. Former attorney general and U.S. senator Robert F. “Bobby” Kennedy became an outspoken supporter of the farmworker cause during his 1968 presidential campaign, but he did not serve on the Labor Committee with his brother Ted, and I have not found any evidence that he came into contact with the UFWOC in Texas.

28. This spatial history is difficult to reconstruct, since urban renewal has destroyed much of the Medranos’ neighborhood. The house at 2346 Douglas Street sits between Harry Hines Boulevard (a multi-lane expressway) and Interstate 35-E. See note 16 on Pancho’s childhood and relocation to the edge of Oak Lawn. Contemporary newspaper reports confirm both the upward mobility that the move signified for the Medranos and the gradual transition of the neighborhood into *barrio*. See, for example, “Unionists’ Reunion—25 Years Ago They Were Barefoot Buddies in Texas,” unidentified newspaper, ca. 1968, in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 8; and Castro, “The Medranos.” Also see Robert Medrano, interview by author.

29. Ricardo Medrano, interview by author, Dallas, September 23, 2009 (audio recording); Pauline Medrano, interview by author, Dallas, September 25, 2009 (audio recording); Robert Medrano, interview by author. On Mrs. Medrano, also see Dallas Independent School District, “Esperanza ‘Hope’ Medrano Elementary School Dedication Ceremony” program, May 20, 2000, and “Esperanza Medrano,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 8, 1983, clipping, both in author’s possession, courtesy Ricardo Medrano. Landín printed numerous pamphlets for Medrano, including “Pancho’s Qualifications” and the bulletin on the UFWOC: “Pancho Medrano,” letter from Richard Medrano, Mission Texas, May 29, 1967, in Medrano Papers, Box 2, Folder 2; Ricardo Medrano interview.

30. Author’s oral history interviews with Ricardo Medrano (September 23, 2009), Robert Medrano (September 24, 2009), and Pauline Medrano (September 25, 2009); Castro, “The Medranos”; Lantz, “Dallas, and I, Remember Pancho Medrano” and “Pancho Medrano Honored Again.”

31. “Latins, Blacks Hold Vigil for Rodriguez,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 7, 1971; Dave McNeely, “Rep. Moreno Visits Dallas to Ponder Rodriguez Case,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 12, 1971; Marilyn Schwartz, “3,000 ‘Help’ Rodriguezes,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 15, 1971; Merikaye Presley, “Probe Asked for Lawmen in E. Dallas,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 17, 1971; Terry Kliever, “Rodriguez Rally: Protesters March in Shrine Parade,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 21, 1971; Barta, “New Brown Leaders Emerge”; telegram from Rudolfo Corky Gonzales to Thomas y Berta Rodriguez, care Pancho Medrano, March 17, 1971, Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; U.S. Senator Birch Bayh to Medrano, March 16, 1971, Bayh to Attorney General John Mitchell, March 15, 1971, and Congressman Bob Eckhardt to Señor y Señora Tomas Rodriguez, March 12, 1971, all in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. Also see the large files of clippings in Box 1, Folders 5–7, including Lupe Elizondo, “Black

Monday Slayings in Dallas,” *Papel Chicano*, n.d. [February 1971], in Folder 6. Shirley Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978), 106–8.

32. See note 17 on Medrano’s history of close contact with black civil rights organizations in Dallas; author’s field notes on Ricardo Medrano, November 2, 2008; author’s interview with Robert Medrano, September 24, 2009; voice memo on author’s phone call with Al Lipscomb, September 23, 2009. On black grievances regarding police brutality, see, for example, the statements of Fred L. Bell in Pedro Vasquez, “Raza Rallies against Repression,” *Papel Chicano*, n.d. [March–April, 1971], 8, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 7.

33. Ricardo Medrano, interview by author; Robert Medrano, interview by author; “Brown Berets,” *Dallas–Fort Worth Chicano*, June 17–24, 1971, 5, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 7. Pancho also reached out to students, including white antiwar organizers at Southern Methodist University. See “Draft, Vietnam, Police Hit by Student Group at SMU,” *Dallas Times Herald*, March 18, 1971, clipping in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6. Prodded by Medrano, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana sent a letter of sympathy to the Rodríguez family immediately after the incident and asked Attorney General John Mitchell to launch a full investigation of police brutality in Dallas. Congressman Earle Cabell of Dallas responded by denouncing Bayh for seeking publicity in advance of his 1972 presidential campaign. See Bayh to Medrano, March 16, 1971, Bayh to Mitchell, March 15, 1971, and Eckhardt to Señor y Señora Tomas Rodriguez, March 12, 1971—all in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 2; and McNeely, “Rep. Moreno Visits Dallas”; Presley, “Probe Asked for Lawmen in E. Dallas”; “El Senador Bayh Pide Investigacion: Sobre el Trato Policial Que Aterroriza a Mexicanos,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 19, 1971, 1; and Margaret Mayer, “Cabell Says Bayh Seeking Publicity,” *Dallas Morning News*, undated clipping—all in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6.

34. An exception to this trend was the reporting in *El Sol de Texas*, which highlighted the Medranos’ role on the front page alongside its first reports of the shooting. Pancho and his family paid the \$2,000 bond (an exorbitant sum at the time) to free Tomás from police custody. “La Familia Medrano Deposita Fianza,” *El Sol de Texas*, February 26, 1971, 1, clipping in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6.

35. “Latins, Blacks Hold Vigil for Rodriguez” (first quotation); Vasquez, “Raza Rallies against Repression,” 8. Frances Arredondo of the Mexican-American Progressive Association and Pete Martinez of Barrios Unidos (United Neighborhoods) are listed as co-organizers along with Pancho.

36. Vasquez, “Raza Rallies against Repression,” 9.

37. “Mas de 3 Mil Chicanos en La Cena a Beneficio de la Familia Rodriguez,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 19, 1971, 1, in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6; “They came from everywhere,” the author in *El Sol* adds, “from poor families, from the middle class, and yes, even rich families, nearly 4,000 people.” Blacks and whites also attended the dinner, but it was dominated by this cross-class ethnic Mexican mobilization. Organizers planned to set the minimum donation at \$1.25 each. “MAPA Organiza Cena a Beneficio Flia. Rodriguez,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 5, 1971, 1, in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6. Also see Schwartz, “3,000 ‘Help’ Rodriguezes.” All sources credit the Mexican-American Progressive Association and Robert Arredondo with organizing this dinner, though Pancho Medrano also spoke at the event.

38. Johnson led the local chapter of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Quotation in Vasquez, “Raza Rallies against Repression,” 9; Kliever, “Rodriguez Rally.”

39. “El 6 de Marzo: Chicanos, Anglos, Y Negros Protestaran” and photograph “Tres Colores de Piel Diferente en Defensa de Una Misma Causa . . . La Justicia,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 5, 1971, 1, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6.

40. “Lest We Forget . . .,” photo by Phil Garcia, *Dallas–Fort Worth Chicano*, June 17–24, 1971, 5, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 7.

41. “Chicanos y Negros Preparan Fuerte Boicot,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 19, 1971, 1, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 6.

42. “Dallas y Ft. Worth Se Unen a Una Gran Marcha de Protesta Este Sábado,” *El Sol de Texas*, March 26, 1971, 1, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; Vasquez, “Raza Rallies against Repression”; copy of clipping on “Rep. Moreno” with handwritten note reading “Ya Basta Vote ‘No’ to All C.C.A. Candidates. April 6 Tuesday. Vote Vote Vote,” Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 5. The CCA is the Citizens Charter Association, a nominally nonpartisan slating body controlled by white elites that dominated city politics until the late 1970s. See Phillips, *White Metropolis*.

43. Outrage over police brutality against ethnic Mexicans reached a new peak when a police officer playing Russian roulette in a squad car shot and killed twelve-year-old Santos Rodríguez (no relation to Tomás) in 1973. The multiracial dimension of the protests in the wake of this episode have yet to be explored. See Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio*. It is already clear from my preliminary research that Rev. Peter Johnson was intimately involved in the Santos protests as well. Author’s interview with Rev. Peter Johnson, Dallas, February 23–24, 2010.

44. Author’s field notes on Ricardo Medrano, November 2, 2008; author’s oral history interviews in with Ricardo Medrano (September 23, 2009) and Robert Medrano (September 24, 2009).

45. Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 161; Ricardo Medrano interview with author, September 23, 2009, file 2, 23:30; Robert Medrano interview with author, September 24, 2009, file 3, 24:15; author’s interview with Johnson.

46. Ricardo Medrano interview with author, September 23, 2009, file 2, 23:30; Robert Medrano interview with author, September 24, 2009, file 3, 24:15; voice memo on author’s phone call with Al Lipscomb, September 23, 2009. NAACP youth organizer Juanita Craft, who had instructed the Medrano children in the youth group, was the first African American woman elected to the council when she won her seat in 1975. Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 168–69.

47. Castro, “The Medranos”; Barta, “New Brown Leaders Emerge”; Cobler, “Unidad”; Deener, “Hispanic Leaders Debate Ways of Solidifying Power”; Ruiz, “A Lifetime Struggle for Rights”; Sanders, “Activist’s Life Was a Fight for Justice”; Simnacher, “Francisco Medrano Sr.”; author’s field notes on Ricardo Medrano, November 6, 2008.

48. Author’s interview with Pauline Medrano, September 25, 2009. The one ethnic Mexican who was elected without the support of the Citizens’ Charter Association was Pete Martinez (no relation to the El Fenix owner). On March 2, 2010, Adam’s brother (and Pancho’s grandson) Carlos Medrano won an election to serve as justice of the peace, marking the arrival of yet another Medrano to public office. In the late 1980s the Medranos lost a series of elections and were accused of widespread voter fraud. No charges were ever filed against the family, but nearly two decades passed before another Medrano ran for elected office. See, for example, Richard Connelly, “Medrano Says Loss Won’t End

Activity—Family to Repair Political Machine,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 20, 1987; Henry Tatum, “Fall of the Medrano Family,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 1, 1988; and Mark Edgar and Carol Trujillo, “Vote Fraud Targeted in Medranos’ District,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 15, 1988; Gromer Jeffers Jr., “Medrano Political Tree,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 2006.

49. “Mexican Shirley Temple Turns Off Chicanos,” *Dallas–Fort Worth Chicano*, June 17–24, 1971, 3, copy in Medrano Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; José Ángel Gutiérrez, “Oral History Interview with Anita Martinez,” CMAS 129, *Tejano Voices*, TV-UTA, Dallas, June 10, 1999. Mexican American conservatism represented one branch of another, separate multiracial political coalition, one in which white elites offered various forms of patronage to black and brown “race leaders” in exchange for their electoral and cultural support. One type of patronage, used sparingly in Dallas but more frequently in San Antonio, was the symbolic and material benefits associated with inclusion on elite slates of candidates for local office. Martinez was nominated by the Citizens’ Charter Association.

50. The same can be said of California activist Bert Corona. M. T. García, *Memories of Chicano History*.

51. Author’s oral history interview with Arnold Flores, San Antonio, October 18, 2008, file 1, 0:00–17:35, and file 2, 11:05–15:45; author’s oral history interview with Arnold Flores, San Antonio, March 11, 2010 (audio recording).

52. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 30:20, 1:12:00; Flores interview, 2010; Rodolfo Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion: The Untold Political Story of San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

53. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 11:05–19:10.

54. *Ibid.*, file 1, 19:10–21:45; “Discrimination Hearing of Mr. Arnold Flores,” transcript, pp. 592–99, Boxes 91 and 92, Joe J. Bernal Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.

55. “Discrimination Hearing” transcript, 602–3.

56. *Ibid.*, 603–6.

57. *Ibid.*, 609–15, 945–46; Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 23:40; Howard G. Nickles, Special Grand Lodge Representative, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and Arnold Flores to Grievance Examiner, December 13, 1966, appended to “Discrimination Hearing” transcript as Complainant’s Exhibit 6.

58. “Discrimination Hearing” transcript, 629–32.

59. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 33:00–36:55; author’s interview with Arnold Flores, San Antonio, September 1, 2009, file 1, 2:10–6:05; FAMA advertisement in *Inferno*, October 5, 1967, copy in author’s possession, courtesy Arnold Flores.

60. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 23:40; Texas State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Employment Practices at Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas,” June 1968, reporting on hearings held November 7 and 8, 1967.

61. “Discrimination Hearing” transcript, 632–33, 950–51.

62. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 21:45–24:20, 25:15–26:10; “Complaint of Discrimination in the Federal Government, as amended from original CSC Form 894,” September 11, 1967, appended to “Discrimination Hearing” transcript as Examiner Exhibit 1. For a good summary of the myriad issues involved, see García’s closing argument, beginning on 945.

63. Texas State Advisory Committee, “Employment Practices at Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas”; Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 26:10–29:30.

64. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 30:20–32:20, 41:10, 50:15; Major General Frank E. Rouse, USAF, to Arnold Flores, December 18, 1967, Subject—Summary of Investigation—Complaint of Racial Discrimination, appended to “Discrimination Hearing” transcript as Examiner Exhibit 2.

65. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, quotation at 48:00, 29:30–30:20, 37:25–48:55, 51:25–54:50, and 1:09:20; Arnold Flores to Frank E. Rouse, December 26, 1967, RE: Request for Hearing, appended to “Discrimination Hearing” transcript as Examiners Exhibit 3.

66. Texas State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights in Texas* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 27–28.

67. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 1:02:05–1:04:50, quotation at 1:03:45; author’s interview with Arnold Flores, San Antonio, September 9, 2009, file 1, 30:15. I have not yet been able to verify all of Arnold’s claims about his work in the union using SEIU records, but I have quizzed him on many of the details and cleared up murky areas through a series of four interviews over a period of nearly two years. His claims on other subjects (including the case, the Chicano movement, the “lunch bunch,” and SACO) have all been corroborated in other oral and/or written sources, so I believe he is a reasonably credible source.

68. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 1:19:25 to end, quotation at 1:21:50; Flores interview, September 1, 2009, file 2, 25:40–28:05.

69. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 29:15–34:50, 44:30–49:50; author’s interview with Robert de León, San Antonio, September 3, 2009.

70. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 1:17:50 to end and file 3; copy of clipping, *Inferno*, October 5, 1967, featuring a photograph of Flores and Sutton at Kelly AFB with caption, in author’s possession; author’s interview with Rev. Claude William Black Jr., San Antonio, October 27, 2008; author’s interview with Eugene Coleman, San Antonio, September 2, 2009; Rev. Claude W. Black Jr. with Taj I. Matthews, *Grandpa Was a Preacher: A Letter to My Grandson* (Bloomington, Ind.: Authorhouse, 2006). A vast but incomplete run of *SNAP News* can be found within the San Antonio Black History Collection, 1873–1996, MS 139, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

Sutton won a single term on the community college board in 1948, while his counterpart Gus Garcia won a term on the school board. See Leonard B. Murphy, “Sutton, Garlington Jerome,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/fsu11.html>; author’s interview with Charles Andrews and Jeffrey Sutton, San Antonio, September 8, 2009; author’s interview with Oliver Sutton Jr., Seguin, Texas, March 11, 2010. Charles Andrews and Oliver Sutton Jr. are two of G. J.’s nephews; Jeffrey Sutton is one of his daughters.

Robert A. Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960–1965,” *Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 3 (1983): 349–74, still serves as the authoritative scholarly work on the poorly studied San Antonio black civil rights movement. He accurately divides the black community’s leadership into “traditional” and activist camps, but he downplays the activities of the latter. Further, his concept of the “southern periphery” fails to explain the persistence of Jim Crow in the city as well as the militant resistance to it.

71. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 25:30–29:15, 38:05–41:30, and especially 56:25; Flores interview, September 9, 2009, file 1, 57:45–1:03:35. Rev. Black did not speak specifically of

this incident in his 2008 interview with the author, and he has since passed away. Still, his reverence for Flores was obvious when we met. See author's interview with Black.

72. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 25:30–28:20, 51:25. On the United Farm Workers generally, see Rose, “Women in the United Farm Workers.” On Texas, see author's interviews with Gil Padilla and Bill Chandler.

73. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 34:50–38:05; Flores interview, September 1, 2009, file 2, 19:40–21:40; “Sherrill Smith Returns to Help March,” undated clipping, probably December 1970, in author's possession (courtesy of Arnold Flores).

74. Flores interview, 2008, file 1, 1:12:00–1:17:10; Flores interview, September 1, 2009, file 1, 1:23:10. Flores's friendship and collaboration with Peña as well as his service on various boards of directors can be verified in the correspondence and clipping files housed in the Albert A. Peña Jr. Papers, MS 37, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections. Also see José Ángel Gutiérrez's forthcoming biography, *Albert Peña, Jr.: Dean Emeritus of Chicano Politics* (Texas A&M University Press). On Crystal City and Del Rio, see I. M. García, *United We Win*; Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*; and Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment*.

75. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 23:30–25:30. For more on Velásquez, see Juan Sepulveda, *The Life and Times of Willie Velásquez: Su Voto es su Voz* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2003).

76. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 59:15; clippings in Peña Papers, Box 9, Folder 4; clippings in Bernal Papers, Box 98; author's interview with Coleman; Rosie Castro, interview by author, San Antonio, September 8, 2009. According to my 2010 Flores interview, the police initially detained many more people than the thirty-one who were officially booked. Arnold was surprised to learn recently that he was not officially booked and that therefore no record exists of his arrest in court or newspaper records.

77. Flores interview, 2008, file 2, 57:55–1:17:50, and file 3, 6:40; Flores interview, September 1, 2009, file 1, 38:40–46:35, 57:15, 1:10:05; Flores interview, September 9, 2009, 1:03:35; photograph of SACO members with Senator Ralph Yarborough, n.d., in author's possession; copy of open letter motion from SACO to San Antonio labor council, March 23, 1972, in author's possession; letter to Joe Hernandez signed by SACO members, n.d., p. 2 (in author's possession); author's interview with Paul Javior, San Antonio, September 4, 2009, esp. 37:15; author's interview with Roy Hernandez, San Antonio, September 8, 2009; author's interview with Jaime Martinez, San Antonio, March 10, 2010; author's interview with C. J. Littlefield, San Antonio, September 2, 2009. The informal group became the model for the national AFL-CIO when it created the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and Flores served on the national body's board. See “A New Awakening,” n.d. [1975], and “Franklin Garcia (Left) Talks to LCLAA Committee,” 1975, both in author's possession. On the Angela Davis rally, see Mario Marcel Salas Papers, 1968–2009, MS 142, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections, Box 15.

78. Author's interview with Bernal; Murphy, “Sutton, Garlington Jerome”; Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery”; author's interview with Black; Castro, interview by the author; Flores interview, file 2, 5:35 and 1:17:10 and file 3, 7:55; Office of the City Controller, “Office History Page,” <http://www.houstontx.gov/controller/section3.html>.

79. For more information on these individuals, see Krochmal, “Labor, Civil Rights, and the Struggle for Democracy in Texas.” The story of Moses and Erma LeRoy and other

black organizers also highlights the continued vibrancy of working-class African American activism in the postwar period, demonstrating that the rise of repression during the cold war and the subsequent decline of the Communist Party did not entirely destroy efforts to build “civil rights unionism” (author’s conference paper on the LeRoys, “Black Texans and the Struggle for Jobs and Freedom, 1945–1970,” Southern Historical Association, Charlotte, North Carolina, November 7, 2010). For the significance of this intervention and a summary of “civil rights unionism” during the Great Depression and World War II, see Hall, “Long Civil Rights Movement.”