



Land, Race, and Poverty

Introduction

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Fundamental to the Chicano Movement's re-envisioning of American society and to Enriqueta Vasquez's aspirations for justice, was the land. As the preamble to the 1969 Plan de Aztlán proclaimed, "Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans." Similarly, in a column written the following month, Vasquez approvingly quoted the Mexican Revolutionary hero, Emiliano Zapata: "La tierra pertenece al hombre que la trabaja con sus propias manos (The land belongs to the man who works it with his own hands)." Underscoring the importance of land to the Chicano struggle, she ended the column, appropriately entitled, "This Land is our Land," with an even more famous saying accredited to Zapata: "Tierra o Muerte (Land or Death)."

Woven throughout her writings was the idea that the Chicano claim to the land was cultural as well as legal. Noting that, "we can be proud that our forefathers were here while the Pilgrims were landing on Plymouth Rock," Vasquez asserted in "Discrimination" that "Raza is the heritage of the Southwest." To Vasquez, Raza enjoyed "a beautiful way of life" precisely because Chicanos still were deeply connected to the land. "We have these strong roots and our families have been here a long, long time," she offered in "Welfare and Work." In the same article, she emphasized that the Chicano cultural inheritance included not only centuries of Spanish rule but also millennia of indigenous settlement in the region. "It is we, who come from the earth, the poor, who know the real secrets of endurance." To be certain, Vasquez was not about to forget that following the U.S.-Mexican War many Mexican families lost legal claim to their land despite the promises of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In "This Land Is Our Land," she summarized the effects of war and dispossession: "I have heard the Southwest called a 'colony of the U.S.'"

To make matters worse, a century after conquest, Anglo Americans continued to view themselves as "superior," according to Vasquez. Addressing critics of the Chicano movement who labeled brown power "racist," Vasquez in "Racism" posed the rhetorical question: "And who separated us to begin with?" Chicano cultural nationalism was a response, she argued, to the pervasiveness of racism directed against Mexican Americans. In several columns, Vasquez admonished her readers to recognize the pervasiveness of this phenomenon. Racism demanded that Spanish names be Anglicized.

Racism impelled prison guards to beat prisoners. Racism ignored the Chicano cultural contribution to the U.S. Southwest. Racism kept the best jobs for Anglos. All in all, she argued, Chicanos experienced a "second-rate" citizenship, except, she noted, when the draft called.

The combined result of land loss and racism was poverty for many Mexican Americans. Yet Vasquez insisted that the future could be different. In "Los Pobres y Los Ricos," she endorsed a twenty-hour work week without any companion decrease in pay, a radical idea that, she believed, would instantaneously double the number of jobs and the wages they offered. Vasquez also advocated that the United States spend less on military projects and more on domestic social programs to aid the poor. Why, she asked in another article, did Americans despise welfare recipients as "leeches," yet pay no attention to the fact that big corporations enjoyed fat subsidies from the U.S. government?

Vasquez's radical politics were likewise showcased in "'Communism,' Just a Word." In this article and others, she encouraged her readers to identify with the poor. Even those Mexican Americans who had reached the middle-class were economically vulnerable, she argued, because western industrialized society encouraged unrestrained spending on such things as cars, homes, and colored TVs. Consequently, many people owed more than they owned. Returning to the theme of the land, she proposed that communism and communal living were closely related. Granted communism was a political idea conceived in Europe, "communal living," Vasquez contended, was "nothing new" for Chicanos because of their indigenous heritage: "It was here for about 20,000 years before the wetback (crossing the ocean) arrived."

In several articles, Vasquez rejected consumerism and questioned the concept of private property. In fact, as she suggested in "Racism," the slaying of the "monster" of acquisition might be the answer for all Americans. "Certainly we [Chicanos and Chicanas] feel that if we can retain a humanistic way of life and change those mad social values of the Gringo, everybody will benefit," she wrote. In her attempt to change the economic status quo, Vasquez sought to untangle the interlocking issues of land, race, and poverty. Along the way, she tended to romanticize rural life and idealize the poor as rich in culture. Still, her sharp criticisms of materialism and militarism, of corporate greed and the political scapegoating of welfare recipients, continue to resonate more than thirty years later. So too does her insistence that Chicanos and Chicanas should together work for a more economically just future.

Discrimination

It is interesting to see what some people will say when the question of discrimination comes up. The other day I was speaking with a woman in Taos and we began discussing the situation in the Southwest. She is very light complected and married to an Americano. She mentioned that she is not in agreement with the various groups that are involved in civil rights movements. She is definitely convinced that there is no discrimination.

In the course of the conversation, she mentioned that she has an uncle who has a music group that went to Denver to play. They changed their names and were booked under an Anglo name in order to get the contract to play in this one spot. Then she mentioned that she has a nephew who also went to Denver to play and again he changed his name in order to get some playing jobs.

Can you imagine having to change your name to get booked to play and having these incidents happen in your own family and still say that there is no discrimination? You better wake up and see what is happening even in your own families and start admitting that this is discrimination and injustice. I can't see having to change my name for anyone.¹ And I can't imagine not admitting that this hurts our people. There is nothing wrong with us as we are, and if we have to become white and change our names it just isn't worth it. There is something very wrong when one has to do this in a country that is supposedly free. Wake up and see what is happening to you. Look around you and see what is happening even in your own families.

Here in New Mexico, for example, we have but to look at the population of the state. Who is taking over more and more of our jobs and

¹The irony, of course, was that Enriqueta's own name was changed to Henrietta when she started elementary school.

businesses? And where are these people coming (or running) from??? They think it is a quaint little place to live. They come here, but they do not want to become part of this land and live like the people here. They come here as superiors and are telling us that something is wrong. They say that there are changes to be made and the people that have lived here for generations are supposed to change to suit the superiors. These changes are supposed to condition you to become white. I think that if they want changes, they better stay where they are and come here to visit only. They better learn to accept us as we are.

It is hard to see the Welfare Department hiring a social worker from Los Angeles or some eastern city to come and work with the people here. They do this, you know. If you don't believe me, just look at the people that hold some of these jobs. Don't we have the qualified people here? Darn right we do, but our youth is forced to leave the area and go to other cities and states to look for jobs while the people here have some outsider telling them how to cope with their problems and telling them that they should change their way of life and the ways in which they believe. They tell us that we have problems but believe me we don't have nearly the problems they have as people. They are the ones with the problems and they push them off here and try to shift them on to us.

The Raza has a beautiful way of life and we have a lot to contribute to the majority. Goodness knows that they are going to need it more and more. If you don't believe this, watch them run around in circles in their materialistic, fast world that is made to build a greater tomorrow and they forget to enjoy today. They are so wound up building kingdoms all over the world that they forget about the kingdom that is within them. They forget their very soul. They forget to be people. They forget to have feeling toward their fellow man.

We can teach them these things, we can teach them to look at themselves for what they are and we can begin by teaching them that the Raza is the heritage of the Southwest. When they admit that the Raza is the founder of the Southwest and they put this in the books, then and only then are they headed for a different way of life. When they admit that Taos is not the town that belongs to Kit Carson, whom we cannot identify with and who was the biggest Indian and Mexican

killer, and say that it belongs to our Padre Martinez and others that fought for the people, *then* we can have the pride that the truth is being recognized, that the truth can be taught to our children and that we have mixed Indian-Spanish culture here.² We can begin to see ourselves for what we are. We can be proud that our forefathers were here while the pilgrims were landing on Plymouth Rock.

This will be but the beginning, but it will be the start for a better Southwest and for a better way of life.

Despierten mis hermanos, ya basta de vivir vidas hipócritas con precios anglos. Es tiempo de darle valor a nuestro modo de vivir y no dejar que nos echen al lado del camino como algo inservible. La cultura e historia del suroeste es herencia de nosotros. Defiéndanla, eso no se vende ni se compra. Es nuestra.³

²A popular parish priest in Taos, Father Antonio José Martínez was an ardent critic of American land acquisition even before the 1846-1848 war between the United States and Mexico. He was suspected of participating in the Taos Rebellion of 1846, an uprising against the American occupation. Kit Carson was an American frontiersman and trader who in 1843 married Maria Josefa Jaramillo of Taos, where the couple raised their family. During his own lifetime, Carson was idealized in the pulp fiction of the era as a hero of the Old West because of his extraordinary career as an Indian agent, trapper, soldier, tracker, and rancher. More recently, academics have criticized Carson as a genocidal killer of Indians. Short biographies of both men can be found in Richard W. Etulain, ed., *New Mexican Lives: Profiles and Historical Stories* (Albuquerque: UNM P, 2002) 106-28, 163-190.

³Wake up, my brothers and sisters, enough of living hypocritical lives at Anglo prices. The time has come for us to value our way of life and not allow it to be thrown by the wayside as if it were something of no use. The culture and history of the Southwest is our inheritance. Defend it; it is not to be sold nor bought. It is ours.

Translated by Herminia S. Reyes.

Los Pobres y Los Ricos

A while back, I attended a meeting where I heard a man speak about his experience in Washington on the Poor People's march. It was good to hear one of our Raza stand up and speak for the Raza and our life here and the way of the poor.

During the discussion there was a lady present (Raza) that spoke up and said, "I am not poor, I work." Here was a person who has a nice home (mortgaged), two cars (mortgaged) and many beautiful useless things (also mortgaged). If this woman's husband was to become sick and hospitalized for a few months and she was not able to work, you would end up with human beings who would lose all of their material wealth and find themselves quickly changed from "wishfully middle class" to the "poor class." The picture would be changed, but fast. . . . What would they be?

Let us first of all forget the idea that we will never be poor and by all means let us never look down on the poor. For that matter, the poor are often times better people in that, because they do not have money they know what to do with themselves and their time. Those with money and things are useless and have no real purpose in life. Take away their money and livelihood (I don't wish this on anyone) and you would find them jumping out of windows.

Now we come to the question, just what is it that we want? Do the poor want money? Do we want to be like the Anglo? What do we really value?

Just looking at the different government machines, I believe that probably the Department of Defense has the provisions for life that the poor people need. Do you know that they take care of their armies from cradle to grave? The entire family of a soldier is taken care of. Now, why can't everyone in this country have this? Isn't this an abund-

ant economy? We have food surplus. Anytime they want, they can solve the job problem by cutting the working hours in half. Really, the amount of money spent for the people of this country is very little. A drop in the bucket in comparison with that which we spend in war killing little people in little countries. Asking for a share of the wealth is not asking too much.¹

We should also unite with our people, all of us. This stuff about "I made it, you can too," does not sound good to me. It sounds too much like the higher-up talking to the down-theres. This competitive (playing one human against the other) way of life is what the "Americano" has given us. They build their lives around competition. And if you don't know what I mean, just watch that lousy TV and see what advertising is all about. They can make you want more fancy junk you don't need than you would ever believe. They have a way of making you build your lives around things and this, Hermanos, is what it is all about. The Anglo society is built on a value system of things, not humans. Once you begin to value things more than humans, it is like an alcoholic that craves more and more and there is no end to satisfying the thirst that wants more.

The Raza in the Southwest is not asking for things so much as being ourselves. Being human. We want our history back. We want our language and culture to be our way of life. We refuse to give in and submit to a hypocritical way of life. This Southwest was built on Indian, Spanish, and Mexican history, not English. Our cities, our mountains and rivers were explored and settled by Indians and Spaniards, not pilgrims and wagon masters. The first cattle raisers, cowboys and farmers were Raza, we weren't waiting here to be saved by the great white fathers. In Mexico, the Indians had big beautiful cities, they had mathematicians and astronomers and they weren't waiting to be "civilized."

We want to be treated with the dignity that is ours. In matters of jobs, law enforcement and business we are now second-rate citizens.

¹In 1968, U.S. defense spending constituted 46.0% of federal outlays, or \$81.9 billion versus \$96.2 billion on non-defense expenditures. See Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, eds., *Vital Statistics on American Politics*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly P, 1994), 361.

The only place where we are first-rate citizens is in the draft call and I sure don't consider it a compliment to be part of a useless machine. Let's all stop and look at ourselves for what we are. Let's wake up and help each other. Let's look at the issues, let's look at our country, let's look at our communities, let's look at ourselves and our families, let's look at our law enforcement agencies and let's look at this thing called justice. Let's not sit back and give up. We need YOU now. The time is NOW. Let's all stand up, beautiful people. Let's all stand up. LA RAZA UNIDA.

Despierten mis hermanos, no nos podemos permitir perdernos en la rueda de la vida hipócrita con precios anglos. Para que triunfe nuestra cultura e historia tenemos que hablar y gritar y cantar nuestra historia. La tierra es de nosotros. Defiéndanla, ella no se vende ni se compra. Es de nosotros.²

October 5, 1968

²Wake up, my brothers and sisters, we cannot lose ourselves in the hypocritical wheel of life with Anglo prices. In order for our culture and history to triumph, we must speak out, yell, and sing about our history. The land is ours. Defend it, it is not to be sold or bought. It belongs to us.

Translated by Herminia S. Reyes.

This Land Is Our Land

"This land is your land, this land is my land, this land was meant for you and me," those are some of the words of a beautiful song written by Woody Guthrie. Then we have the sayings of Zapata, Mexico's beautiful Indian revolutionary, "This land belongs to those that plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops," "La tierra le pertenece al hombre que la trabaja con sus propias manos."

Land is a beautiful part of man's relationship to nature. How does this refer to the Southwest? The Indians lived here in great freedom. The history books look upon them as primitive, I believe they were totally free humans living the way of beauty. Then the Spaniards came along. It was a turmoil, they made slaves of the Indians. They forced the Indians to work in the mines and then they would send the gold to Spain. The Spaniards did live near the Indian Pueblos and intermarry. From here come the mestizo.

The slavery of the Indian occurred all through the continent and Mexico fought for freedom from Spain. With this independence from Spain, the Southwest lived under the rule of Mexico. Mexico, having economic and internal problems after its war with Spain, was not able to defend its land and thus the Southwest became part of the U.S. I have heard the Southwest called "a colony of the U.S."¹

¹Influenced by events in Vietnam and elsewhere, scholars during the Chicano Movement, advanced a sociological and historical interpretation of Mexican Americans as constituting a colonized people. According to this internal colony theory, the long-term subjugation of Mexican Americans stemmed from the American conquest of the northern portion of Mexico. Although the internal colony theory had become less popular among academics by the mid-1980s, more recently, scholars have again incorporated some of its assumption into their work. See Mario Barrera, Charles Ornelas and Carlos Muñoz, "The Barrio as an Internal Colony," in Harlan Hahn, ed., *People and Politics in Urban Society* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972); Juan Gómez-Quinones, "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," *Aztlan* 2 (Fall 1971): 1-49. Also see Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), 179-185, and María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), 9.

Racism

One of the matters we have to consider as Raza speaking up is that of racism. We live in a racist society, we are victims of racism and many times people turn around and accuse Raza of being racists. From some of the Anglos one often hears how very much they would like to help us, but they feel that the Raza struggle does not include them. They are used to running the show and unless they can do this, it seems that many of them feel that they cannot contribute. They find it hard to accept our leadership and they feel that they are left out.

However, this should not be the case at all. It is as simple as the farm animals that were talking and heard that there was going to be a very important breakfast for the newly appointed governor. All the animals were excited and wondering what they were going to serve for the breakfast. The chicken was just tickled pink and jumping about with excitement. She said to the pig, "Oh, I am so excited and want to contribute to the breakfast, I hope that they serve ham and eggs." The pig looked at the chicken very seriously and said, "If that is what they have for breakfast you will be contributing, but to me it is a full commitment."

Let's face it, as Raza we need help and we need contributions, but to Raza the struggle for survival is still a full commitment. There is serious work and business at hand. When we talk of land grants, justice, bilingual education, civil rights, etc. we are talking of human survival and the heritage of the Southwest. We have found that by being ourselves as people of a different culture, a culture related to this land, we have been able to find self-identity. It is in this way that we have been able to look at ourselves. And who separated us to begin with? We certainly don't want to be racists, but then too, we must consider that we are born and live in a RACIST society. We have been educat-

ed in the Anglo way of thinking so much that we have looked upon ourselves with racist eyes. We have been racists against ourselves. We have been rejecting our very being, our own culture, our own parentage. If we learned to be racists it is only because that is what the Gringo taught us. And by the way, when we speak of Gringo, we do not particularly hate all white people, but we refer to their social system as "Gringo." That is what we don't like. We dislike their superior attitudes and their society that nurses those attitudes from cradle to grave.

I think there is room for everyone in the Mexican-American struggle. Certainly we feel that if we can retain a humanistic way of life and change those mad social values of the GRINGO, everyone will benefit. If the Gringo in the Southwest wants to find a better way of life based on true human values, he will listen to the minorities. This is the only way this country may be saved. The Gringo is kidding himself if he thinks that the whole world looks up to him. His glorious days are numbered and very few.

Another thing we hear quite often in our struggle is that question of nonviolence. Some people say, "Well, I do want to get involved but can you guarantee there will be no violence?" That is like asking the Gringo, "Can you promise me you will look at me with love and fairness, always?" How can one guarantee complete nonviolence when one lives in a completely VIOLENT country? How can I honestly raise a nonviolent family when I hear such things as "Join the Armed Forces and become a MAN"? They may flower the service up to look like a career, but basically everyone of our young men that goes into the service is completely BRAINWASHED and taught HOW TO KILL. With all of our youth viewing Vietnam and Latin America, and watching our troops there, we talk of NONVIOLENCE? The foundation of this country has been bloodshed. And with the violence committed against Raza, I cannot stand by and relinquish my right to violence when I may see my neighbors and friends beaten.

And yet some Raza don't want to face the issues. They don't want to look at all of the facts. They don't want to talk about some of the issues involved. Despite this, the problems are coming to light and we have to be honest with ourselves. We have to stop and think. We have

to stop and take a look at ourselves. There are fewer and fewer places to hide. We have to stop and to face the cold facts sooner or later. They are all around us.

So, whoever you may be, remember that you can make a contribution in the Raza struggle. You owe it to yourself to look at our issues. Weigh them carefully and understand the Raza when we speak. In this way you will better understand yourself. Listen carefully. Listen to the people. It is like listening to life. Can you hear it? The Raza speaks, **HARD, CLEAR, AND STRONG**. The heartbeat of humanity is coming from the little people. If you find you can contribute in understanding and supporting the Raza, fine and dandy. **TAKE YOUR PLACE AND BE COUNTED**. If not, understand us and realize that we have a **FULL COMMITMENT**.

September 14, 1969

“Communism,” Just A Word

Hijole, they're doing it again. Panic and hysteria are the order of the day for lawmakers and law-enforcers. I hear they are calling all kinds of people **COMMUNIST**. So, if you are a good Samaritan, and if you speak on issues, you are likely to get thrown into the pot with the rest under this **COMMUNIST** label, I am told. You have to be brave to practice your freedom of speech.

You know, I am getting tired of this label “**COMMUNIST**” being thrown around. I don't understand it too well. I guess that comes mostly because I need an explanation for things, I refuse to settle for just **ONE** word to justify persecution. But this particular word has been built into all of our institutions as a **BAD** word, a **DIRTY** word and a **BOOGYMAN**. Hummmm, I wonder. Like they say, I smell, (con su permiso) **PEDO**.

The way I see communism, it was really a serious thing planned by two Europeans named Marx and Lenin to combat a class structure that oppresses people. In this country, we don't seem to have the same class structure that they wrote about.

We do have the controlling rich, who are scared to death of communism because they have a lot to lose materially. As a protection, they have this huge middle-class with a real big, well-developed **EGO** that makes them **THINK** they are rich. Now these people are told that they must fight communism in order to be able to continue to possess and acquire their wealth and freedom. So they are to fight like heck, against this enemy, in order to keep their small acreage, their cars, colored TV sets, etc., oh yes, and their mortgages. So with this in mind, the institutions are teaching everybody to shiver with fear at the mere mention of the word communism.

Now, why is Raza particularly afraid of this word? Why are we afraid it may make us look like BAD people? I think we know that the word communism can be confused with the word communal. The institutions have also placed a taboo connotation on the way of life called COMMUNAL. Communal living is nothing new, it was here for about 20,000 years before the wetback (crossing the ocean) arrived. The people of the Americas knew this kind of living long before white man (and their laws) set foot on this continent. The people of Raza have a way of life that is able to adapt to any environment. In the Southwest we have been self-sufficient under different governments during our history. We have survived living in colonies, barrios, and villages. Always helping each other as brothers. So even COMMUNAL has been given a bad connotation in order to destroy a cultural way of life. With this image of badness, the power structure tries to make people reject a way of life. A little like trying to teach Raza to be WHITE. And I do know some Raza that think WHITE, but they just don't look it.

Now, back to the words COMMUNISM, COMMUNAL, and the Panic. Well, it seems strange to me that there would be any confusion on a way of life. Why don't we see communal for what it is related to? To COMMUNION, the partaking of a spiritual body. This has to do with living as brothers, not a thing to do with some political slavery. The Hermandad was a very good example of BROTHERHOOD being a spiritual body.¹

And while we are looking at a way of life, let's look at some beautiful people I know. I was born and raised in Colorado and lived among Mennonites. These are Protestants who also live a real brotherhood, much as the Hermandad here in New Mexico used to be. And you know what, I remember when I went to school we used to sing the "Oh, say can you see" song and place our hand on our hearts for the "pledge" and these beautiful Christian people would only stand with their arms crossed. When I asked them about it, and why they didn't

¹ Members of Los Hermanos Penitentes helped maintain Catholic traditions in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado starting when the region was an isolated part of Mexico. After the war with Mexico, the American Catholic Church sought to uproot the organization.

sing and say the pledge, they explained that they didn't swear or pledge to anything but to God. Not only that, but they don't have to go into the Army. They are called Conscientious Objectors and do not have to serve in the service of their country. I agree with their way of life, they have a brotherhood and help each other with their farms. AND, you know what? To this day I don't hear anyone calling them COMMUNISTS.

So why should anyone else be called communist? I don't fall for that label, no more. I don't wonder about that one, no more.

And, by the way, I have seen signs saying "AMERICA, LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT." The way I see myself, Raza, and the Southwest, the European foreigners are the wetbacks (they who crossed the ocean) and they are welcome to stay. If they just remember we want them to stay as brothers and sisters to us. We don't need white fathers. We don't need saviors. We just need equal BROTHERS and SISTERS.

March 28, 1970

Welfare and Work

WORK, WORK, WORK, dice El Patrón en Washinton. This seems to be the latest phobia from the Washinton politicos as they discuss the Welfare state, welfare and workfare programs. The European concepts of work and its puritan values are showing and the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) ethics are being legislated as a philosophy of life, a purpose for living, all for the almighty reward called MONEY.

To live for the joy of living and to work at home or anywhere for that matter, for pure joy is not recognized as honorable work. To the Gringo, work means leaving home, spending certain hours a day out of your house, being production-oriented and earning some kind of paycheck for your hysteria and ulcers. This is supposedly honorable and cleansing to the soul. That the work be perhaps meaningless and unfulfilling is unimportant.

This basic WASP concept is now getting to the point where it is being shoved down the throats of the poor. When legislation becomes a law to force the poor to go to work when there is no work, we must question the intent of this law. Is it designed to oppress the poor and make them guilty for not working, to make them get on their knees to beg for mere existence?

Let's look at the national figures on welfare recipients:

50% of the total welfare recipients are children under eighteen years of age.

25% of the welfare recipients are over 60 years of age. (Many of these are not eligible for old-age pension.)

15% are blind, disabled.

10% are mothers and other hardship cases.¹

OF THE TOTAL WELFARE RECIPIENTS, LESS THAN 1% ARE ABLE TO WORK AND LESS THAN 1/4 OF 1% ARE CHEATERS.

After looking at the figures as to welfare recipients one could ask, ¿qué pasa? What are the patrones políticos barking about? Let's consider something else. It takes \$133 to administer \$1 of welfare!² Somewhere between the big money and the poor there are people earning a living off the poor. When we take this into consideration, one can wonder why, when they speak of cuts to be made, do they pick on the poor to suffer the cutbacks? One could suppose that it is because: (1) You can control the poor, just threaten them with taking away their welfare; (2) They have the poor convinced that they are defenseless; (3) Most recipients are women, children and disabled people, that is, a safe group to whip into shape and make a lot of noise about.

The new welfare laws are called "incentive to work." Welfare recipients are required to go to work, whether the work be on-and-off jobs, or menial jobs with low wages (the minimum wage is not required).³ It seems that this is geared to create cheap labor from peo-

¹According to the National Center for Social Statistics, a data collection agency within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, in 1972 a total of 15 million Americans received welfare. These included 7.7 million children (52%), 2 million old people (13%), and 1.1 million blind and disabled persons (7%). In addition, about 3 million recipients were parents, although the data was not broken down into single-parent and two-parent households. NCSS Report A-2 (January 1972) was reprinted in Timothy J. Simpson, *Welfare: A Handbook for Friend and Foe* (New York: Pilgrim P, 1972), 68.

²In the wake of the War on Poverty and President Richard Nixon's announced plan to provide a guaranteed family income for the poor (never approved by Congress), social scientists in the late 1960s and early 1970s produced reams of materials studying welfare history and debating public policy. While we could not find the exact source of some of her statistics, Vasquez's vigorous defense of welfare recipients as being truly needy and her anger regarding the high costs of administration fit well within this broader context. See for example, Simpson, *Welfare: A Handbook for Friend and Foe*, 114; and Stanley and Glenn Esterly, *Freedom from Dependence* (Washington: Public Affairs P, 1971), 11-13.

³Congress passed the Work Incentive Program in 1967 in the hope of replacing welfare with "workfare." In December 1971, Congress passed a measure that "strengthened the more coercive features of the Work Incentive Program." Whereas before states decided which welfare recipients to refer to work or training programs, now participation in the program was mandatory for all recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, with the single exception of mothers with children under six years of age. In addition, states faced a loss of federal funds if they did not guarantee a sufficient level of employment among participants. See Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America* (New York: The Free P, 1979), 270.

ple who may need to stay home; they are being put on the market of humanity.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF all welfare recipients demanded jobs, right now? A welfare strike in reverse would put a lot of people on the spot, NO? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF there was no welfare and they erased the \$133 it takes to give \$1 to the poor? What would that welfare bureaucracy do for jobs? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF everybody demanded "justice and equality" and said: O.K. you have cut my check down 10%, so let's do it all the way across the board. We begin with you big welfare recipient administrators setting the example. A 10% cut across the board for *everybody*. One could have petitions and a court case on this and I wonder WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?

It looks like the poor of the country have been had again by El Patrón de Washinton. This is getting to be the history of our life. The other day a young Chicano said, "I just went to Washington, D.C., it's great, we should send a lot of our people over there, that's where the bread is, man." I must say, I don't dig you, man, I have a suspicion that that is where the crackpots are too, and if you want to trained to serve El Patrón, pues, go to it, hermano mío, learn the hard way. Just remember while you echo the bark of the top dogs, some of us better get busy and go about the business of building our own nation of Aztlán. Aztlán means we want and need technology, we want nothing but the latest and the best for our people. And we want to work, but what counts is, FOR WHAT? I still believe in being a person of principle, to work for my people and serve La Raza, not just for myself and a big fat check. We can't ignore the big Patrón en Washinton monster, but that doesn't mean that we have to fall to our knees and serve it.

Let us develop a new way of life among us, let's pool what little resources we have and learn to cooperate and share. It is in this sharing that we form un carnalismo that cannot be broken. From here we will learn that three and four familias can cook a big meal together and feed their children much cheaper and better than one little familia. So we get together, build friendships and close-knit ties, to us that is not hard, because we have these strong roots and our families have

been here a long, long time. Out of this will come interesting family living, learning, and singing together, enjoying life, traveling.

The pure spirit, the truths and philosophies of La Raza will come from Los pobres de la tierra. For it is we, who come from the earth, the poor, who know the real secrets of endurance; power with such potential that we have not yet begun to recognize it. We may be poor in money, but we have much wisdom that money cannot buy. It is this wisdom that we value so highly for *ése es el corazón* and the legacy of *mi raza*, y *ése es el espíritu de Aztlán*.

Ándele mi raza, despierte, viva, levante la cara con orgullo, aprenda a vivir sin temor a nada. Infórmese de todo lo que sucede con nuestra raza, ponga el oído a las voces de nuestra juventud y apoye a nuestros hijos e hijas. Vamos a unirnos. VIVA MI RAZA LINDA.⁴

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⁴Come on Raza, wake up, live, hold your head up high with pride; learn to live without fearing anything. Become informed about what is going on with our Raza, lend an ear to the voices of the youth and support our sons and daughters. Let's unite. Long live my beautiful Raza.

Translated by Herminia S. Reyes.

More Abuses at Santa Fe Pinta

More and more the New Mexico state prison at Santa Fe is seen exposed to the news as the dirty linen is being aired and the secret skeletons are being dragged out of the closets. These skeletons and closets seem to range anywhere from personal kingdoms to sadism and vendettas. These skeletons seem to become more numerous tied in with social concepts of morality as to humanity, punishment, and rehabilitation.

The penal institutions throughout the country are falling apart at the seams as are many "long standing traditions." Attica in New York began by leaving thirty-one dead.¹ The Florida State prison is announced as closing its doors and saying it can't handle any more prisoners. It is already overcrowded. In New Mexico, however, it seems that there has been a smug history of the establishment, the politicians and the news media working in harmony with each other and trying to lie to its citizenry, to shield them from the truth and keep them wearing rose-colored glasses.

¹The Attica prison riot of September 1971 and its subsequent investigation made the racism and violence of the U.S. prison system an issue of national debate. From September 9 to 13, twelve hundred inmates took control of New York State's Attica Correctional Facility and held thirty-eight hostages. The action ended violently when state troopers and correctional officers stormed in to retake the prison; the state's special commission to investigate the riot later found that, of the forty-three deaths during the riot, thirty-nine occurred during this fifteen-minute battle (eleven were prison staffers held as hostages). Additionally, over eighty prisoners were severely wounded. Although the commission found that the rebellion was not the result of careful planning, it pointed to the racism and insensitivity of prison guards, unfair parole policies, harsh punishment of prisoners, and uncompensated prison labor as having significantly contributed to an environment of resentment and frustration among the prison population. See New York Special Commission on Attica, *Attica: The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), xi-xxi, 105; and Richard X. Clark and Leonard Levitt, ed. *The Brothers of Attica* (New York: Links Books, 1973), v-vii.

Thus, on Feb. 3, 1972, when three prison guards came forward to testify as to the truth on the prison situation and to verify the beating of prisoners during the October riot, many good New Mexico citizens could hardly believe their ears. And many did not want to face the truth. The guards came forward to testify only after Gov. Bruce King promised that their jobs were protected.

Joe G. Montoya, 23, from Santa Fe, was the spokesman for the guards. Leroy J. Romero, 21, also from Santa Fe, testified and appeared with Mike B. Vigil, 35, from Española, who did not testify. Orlando Roybal decided not to appear. The essence of the testimony presented was to reveal what so many people feel to be undercurrent truths. The fact that prison guards were ordered to beat and tear gas prisoners during the October 7 riot at the New Mexico penitentiary.²

It was also made clear that Felix Rodriguez, prison warden, has given actual control of the prison to Eugene Long, Assistant Warden for Correctional Services and to Deputy Warden Horacio Herrera. Through all of the maze of what has happened and what has been revealed, it can be assumed that if before the riot there was fear and distrust which provoked action and brutality, it has probably doubled and tension runs rampant throughout cell blocks as well as throughout official administrative offices and certainly through questionably acquired political jobs and positions.

²See *El Grito del Norte* Vol IV #10, October 28, 1971. *El Grito del Norte* had run an article detailing the strike by prisoners at the New Mexico State Penitentiary earlier in the month. Whereas the prison administration and mainstream press presented the action as a childish and spontaneous imitation of the Attica riot, choosing to focus on property damage rather than on prisoner complaints, *El Grito* used testimony by a few candid guards to challenge this simplistic picture. According to the newspaper, prisoner support for the rebellion had been nearly unanimous, prisoner demands had articulated particular grievances with the Santa Fe prison and parole board, and excessive guard violence after the prisoners had surrendered had been the cause of most of the property damage. See "Hiding the Truth at the State, Prison Says: 'Only Necessary Force Used,'" *El Grito del Norte*, October 28, 1971, 2-4. Long-term problems evidently remained. In 1980, the New Mexico State Penitentiary was the site of a riot that cost 33 inmates their lives. No guards were killed in what was the second deadliest prison uprising in U.S. history after Attica. See Roger Morris, *The Devil's Butcher Shop: The New Mexico Prison Uprising* (New York: F. Watts, 1983; reprint, Albuquerque: UNM P, 1988).

Prison officials have repeatedly denied that beatings took place and this denial continues even after the guards as well as the prisoners have testified as to the beatings. The fact still remains that ten prisoners were beaten and hospitalized from Cell block 4 on October 7, 1971. It would seem that they were either beaten or they were critically hurt as they stumbled about in their cells.

Herman R. Buzbee testified, "No one was resisting. I saw twenty-four guys clubbed. Most were knocked down, I knew what was going to happen." "I heard one of the officers shout . . . 'You SOB's . . . you started it . . . you're gonna get it'."

In a recent development, 198 of the penitentiary's 500 inmates signed their names to a petition which was included with a letter from prisoner John Naranjo to Dr. John Salazar. The petition asks release from isolation for seven inmates and dismissal of Long and Herrera. The letter states that tensions at the prison are now greater than ever; that seven inmates held in isolation since the October riots are mentally affected by daily harassment; that Long and Herrera have been using inmates as informers; and that Herrera has been trying, so far in vain, to buy off the prisoners who filed civil suits by offering them partial damage payments and immediate release. Naranjo said that nothing has yet been made public about an incident on February 9 which may cost one prisoner his life.

Naranjo says more fellow inmates would have signed the petition had not fear of administration interception forced them to forward it hastily to Dr. Salazar. The letter warns that there may be another riot if things are not changed. The majority of Chicano prisoners are treated like animals, it says.

What would seem to be some of the solutions to these problems? Probably the first big step to be taken is that people have to quit lying. At one time we had the attitude of officers and politicians being honest and respectful and this is something that people will not buy anymore. We know now that if our streets are crime infested, these are but mere symptoms of the people in power. Which can bring us to the question of, "who is the real criminal?"

The basic attitudes of all of us and our views as to crimes and criminals must be re-evaluated. What are prisons for? Oppression,

punishment, or rehabilitation? Now, when we are speaking of rehabilitation it is not hard to know what the needs of rehabilitation are. Just ask the prisoners and they can more than adequately give the answers as to their needs. Surely this is just and humane, after all, they are locked up in a wall and wire fence. They are not going anywhere, so what is wrong with listening to what can better prepare them for the day they leave this confinement?

When speaking of rehabilitation we should also think of resources on the outside, people with answers. This is where an organization such as the Black Berets, which protested the prison situation and held a sit-in at the governor's office, is extremely valuable.³ The "qualified" people to work with rehabilitation are community-oriented people, many of which may be ex-cons. A portion of the parole board should be composed of these same persons.

These are but a few of the things to be considered by the prisons of this country. These are but a beginning of what may become a reality. A reality that can lead to sanity and humanity as well as to truth.

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³Less well-known than the California-based Brown Berets, the Black Berets of Albuquerque were another Chicano Movement organization with a quasi-military presentation. The organization combined an international focus with an attempt to organize such barrio-based programs as free health clinics and free breakfasts for children in need.