Spring 2013

We Are Here Because We Belong Here - The Grassroots Student Movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder

Renee Roberts

University of Colorado Boulder

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses

Recommended Citation
Roberts, Renee, "We Are Here Because We Belong Here - The Grassroots Student Movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder" (2013). Undergraduate Honors Theses. 477.
https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses/477

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Honors Program at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
“We Are Here Because We Belong Here” — The Grassroots Student Movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder

Renee Roberts

Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Ethnic Studies Department

Thesis Advisor:
Dr. Daryl Maeda

Defense Committee:
Dr. Bianca Williams, Ethnic Studies
Dr. Celeste Montoya, Women and Gender Studies

April 5, 2013
University of Colorado at Boulder
# Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................... 3  

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ 4  

Introduction..................................................................................................................... 5  

Overview .......................................................................................................................... 8  

Methods and Research .................................................................................................... 11  

Literature Review............................................................................................................. 17  

Chapter 1: The Political Moment and Institutional Structures on Campus that Supported Diversity......................................................................................................................... 30  

Chapter 2: Escalation with UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE........................................ 60  

Chapter 3: The Student Movement – The Alliance .......................................................... 95  

Chapter 4: Working with Difference & Reflections on the Movement’s Success .......... 125  

Conclusion......................................................................................................................... 155  

Appendix........................................................................................................................... 158  

References......................................................................................................................... 159
Abstract

In the spring of 1994, SCAEP (Student Coalition for the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality), along with UMAS (United Mexican American Students) y MEChA (Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) worked together to form what they called “The Alliance.” This coalition of passionate and dedicated young people led the way to the creation of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB). This thesis examines this grassroots student movement for racial justice and equity by using oral history interviews and archival research to explain how and why coalitions bridging differences were formed and maintained. It pays specific attention to how race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender and sexuality informed and impacted the student movement.

This thesis finds that the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB was part of a long-lasting struggle for racial justice and equity that escalated when three Latino faculty confronted discrimination in their department. UMAS y MEChA mobilized to protect them and simultaneously, SCAEP organized to fight for an Ethnic Studies Department. The Alliance between UMAS y MECha and SCAEP organized rallies, marches, sit-ins, and a six-day hunger strike. I argue that the political moment of the early 1990s, institutionalized support structures on campus for students of color, mentorship of staff and faculty, and an ever-present legacy of radical student activism were key to the movement’s success. My study reveals both the challenges faced by social movements that attempt to create coalitions across racial and ethnic divides, and the power generated when those alliances are successfully built. By studying the case of CU Boulder, this thesis contributes to understandings of coalitional social movements, coalition building in the early 1990s, and the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies as a discipline.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mother, Elizabeth Roberts for her continuous support and love as I wrote this thesis. I think that you are incredible womyn and I am so proud to call you my mom. Thank you for making this thesis possible for me and for all that you have given to me that has led me to this point in my life. You are my inspiration!

I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Daryl Maeda. Thank you so much for your patience and guidance! This has been a life-changing opportunity, so thank you for believing in my capabilities, this research project, and me. Your consistent positive attitude was so wonderful to have during this challenging journey. Thank you!

I would also like to thank my defense committee, Dr. Bianca Williams and Dr. Celeste Montoya. Thank you for your commitment to this project! I appreciate it very much.
Introduction

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”— Lilla Watson, indigenous Australian artist and activist

My interest in alliances and coalitions comes from my experiences as a queer, hapa (mixed race) womyn engaged in academics and activism that center around achieving social justice, equity, and inclusion through building alliances and coalitions. Many of the stories shared by the people interviewed for this thesis resonated deeply with me. A common thread that ran throughout many of their narratives—and my own—pertained to experiences with a campus climate that was hostile towards people that deviate from the privileged homogeneity here. I could relate to participants who spoke about growing up in a more diverse and less affluent community prior to coming to the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB) and experiencing discrimination based on race, class and culture.

Coming to UCB was definitely a challenge for me. The lack of inclusion and the racist, classist, homophobic attitudes that seemed to permeate this campus, made me feel isolated. When I sought out community, I was not accepted because I didn’t into any of the “boxes” available to me. I wasn’t fully welcomed in communities of color because of my light-skinned privilege, and I felt frustrated by the racism and classism in the LGBTQ community. I considered transferring to a more diverse school, but I hesitated, feeling I deserved access to the excellent education and enriching opportunities available at UCB. I refused to be pushed out, and stayed. I threw myself into my studies in the Ethnic Studies and Women and Gender Studies Departments. However, the simultaneous
theoretical realization of the strength of interlocking systems of oppression paired with my personal struggles with these systems, took a toll on me.

It seemed that the weight of the world pressed more and more heavily on my shoulders as I continued learning about the tremendous systems of oppression that damage us all, such as capitalism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, imperialism, and homophobia. Mourning the loss of my idealistic innocence, I stumbled, and was caught by a small community called Queer People of Color (QPOC). It was a student group that provided support for students that identified as such, and it also engages in various activist efforts. The thing that was different about QPOC for me was that it allowed me to bring my full self into that space. It was a group of people with whom I could be myself, while engaging in efforts to educate communities of color about homophobia and teach the LGBTQ community about racism. It was through QPOC that I became heavily involved in coalition activist work within the progressive, underrepresented community here at UCB. It has also been through QPOC that I have been able to find a space to belong, and bring not just parts of myself, but my complete being.

As I learned about the ways that systems of oppression interlock and reinforce one another, I struggled to maintain my belief that creating transformational and sustainable change is truly possible. Through my personal journey, I have found a great sense of peace and inspiration in the ways in which marginalized communities have worked to create alliances and coalitions that strive to liberate themselves and each another. I found that for me to continue to do social justice work meant that I needed to invest in creating and fostering inclusive community. We all need places to belong, and this is why this project is personally important to me.
Like the student activists who I was fortunate enough to speak with, I believe that those pushed to the margins and often erased from history are just as important as those who are visible. Ethnic Studies as a discipline is powerful, placing people of color in a position where their lives, challenges, celebrations and contributions are valued. It is an important and exciting area to research because very little has been written about the movement I am studying and this local history needs to be explored and documented through a lens that gives voice to all races, ethnicities, genders and sexualities.

Through oral history interviews and archival document analysis, this honors thesis uncovers the events, student organizations and individuals behind the grassroots student movement that demanded a curriculum that would value the histories and lives of people of color. In the spring of 1994, three student groups, each pursuing separate paths to achieve similar goals, formed an alliance that was imperfect but powerful. This coalition of passionate, dedicated, people paved the way toward the creation of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder.
Overview

When exploring what contributed to the success of the student movement for Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB), there was not a clear-cut equation; it was a culmination of various factors that came together at the right time and in the right place with the right people involved. While there is no recipe for the movement’s success, general conclusions of this research paper point to the tensions of the political moment, institutionalized support structures on campus for students of color, mentorship of staff and faculty, students access to education of histories and skills useful or pertaining to social change movements and activist experience, as factors that contributed to the success of this movement.

The first chapter of this honors thesis explores how the political moment and support structures on campus, including mentors nurtured and training the students’ activists. The tensions of the political moment were high in regard to race relations in the U.S. and on campus. With the L.A. riots occurring just two years prior to the movement, the nation and the students at UCB felt frustration with racial justice and equity. This moment provided a climate in which students were ready to act. Institutionalized support structures on campus for students of color were another factor that were important for the student movement’s success. Because the existing structures were providing empowerment and guidance for students of color and students that were progressive white allies, these students were able to utilize what they offered.

Mentorship of staff and faculty was another important aspect of the movement that made it successful. Mentors within the academic and non-academic realms of the UCB campus played a large role in working with the institutional support structures give
students the support and resources necessary for the movement’s success. Student’s access to education of histories and skills useful or pertaining to social change movements and activist experience as factors that contributed to the success of this movement should not be understated either. Learning about the histories and contributions of people of color, as well as leadership skills and organizing skills and tactics were instrumental for the movement’s success.

Chapter 2 delves into how activism on campus in UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE increased the level of efficiency the student movement was able to achieve. UMAS y MEChA arose for this movement from decades of Chicano student activism on the UCB campus. The activism within the more Caucasian organization ACHANGE came from a focus on how systemic inequity nationally and internationally worked to empower/disempower the environment and marginalized communities. The second chapter examines how these organizations histories, missions, internal structures, experiences organizing, and ideologies impacted their activist efforts.

Building on the discussion about how the climate and resources accessible to students allowed for a successful student movement to occur, Chapter 3 documents the series of events within the student movement. Taking the climate and resources available on the UCB campus, with the activism within UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE into account, this chapter provides readers with an intimate understanding of how the student activists utilized their situation and resources to launch a powerful student movement.

Chapter 4 then delves into examining how the diversity and difference within the movement were handled, and how coalitions were constructed. The students commitment to work across difference instead of eradicate it was a factor that was critical to the
students success. Their training in social movements, communities of color and organizing skills provided them with the tools to contain this difference and deal with it in productive ways that allowed the movement to remain inclusive.

As students questioned the university’s commitment to racial justice and equity, they included the formation of an Ethnic Studies Department as a central aim because it not only empowered communities of color, but also provided legitimacy and a place for people of color to belong. It was the conviction that this validation and space to belong on UCB’s campus was needed, that fueled students to fight for racial justice and equity that included their struggle for the establishment of the Ethnic Studies department.
Methods and Research

My research began with the Ethnic Studies Department’s copy of a binder, labeled “The Formation of the Ethnic Studies Department- Archived by Umas y Mecha’s Leslie Wong,” in my hands. As I leafed through the pages, suddenly I realized that I was sifting through pieces of a story that needed to be told. How does one go about telling a story that places the voices of students, women, LGBTQ-identified folks and different communities of color in the center of the narrative? I chose to use document analysis, archival work, and oral history interviews. Over the span of one year I engaged with the iterative process that has produced this work.

Beginnings

Allowing my natural interests to lead me, I found myself asking numerous questions. Why was this particular movement so successful? How were the preconditions for this movement? What was the dynamic between the different groups? What was the motivating factor behind these student’s actions? What was their organizational structure like? What role did different marginalized groups look like? Given my experiences with and interest in community organizing and activism, the questions arose from a genuine curiosity and passion for learning about how to better affect social change.

Archival Work and Research

The archival documents that I used for my research included flyers for events, informational fliers to raise awareness about issues, meeting notes, personal statements, press releases, newspaper articles from a variety of sources, photographs, bills passed
within student government, reports on retention and recruitment of students of color, sing-up sheets and attendance sheets for meetings and events, copies of email correspondences, letters that were sent, academic program newsletters, papers given at conferences and more. The archival documents that I examined primarily pertained to events occurring before and during the movement that led to the formation of UCB’s Ethnic Studies Department.

I first utilized the binder of documents that Leslie Wong compiled when she was a student during the movement. I made my own copy, and coded it, so that I could easily identify names, events, dates, organizations and themes. From these I drafted a timeline and tried to fill in the gaps with additional documentation. In addition to this binder, I gathered my archival material from the Norlin library archives, the unorganized boxes in the Student Government office, and from participants that I conducted oral history interviews with.

I utilized the Norlin Library archives to obtain newspaper articles and academic program newsletters with the assistance of the archivist. I gathered more information from the unorganized boxes of documents in UCB’s Student Government office. The personal documents that participants were kind enough to let me borrow and photocopy were also very helpful. Obtaining access to people’s personal papers ongoing process because as I would interview new people, they would feel comfortable lending me their personal documents and I would then analyze them and add in pertinent information.

The relationship between the archival documents and the oral history interviews was fluid and changing throughout my research process because each informed me of the
other. For example, I would find a document, find something within it relevant for my research, and ask an interview participant about the document. By weaving these two methods together, I found the approaches created a strong fabric from which I could create a succinct and in-depth understanding of the movement. Because I planned to conduct oral history interviews, the next step I took was to create a list of names of people repeatedly mentioned in the documents or that I wanted to learn more about.

**Oral History**

The participants that I interviewed were all involved with the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB. I wanted to place student perspectives at the core of my research since it was a student movement. However, as my data revealed the importance of staff and faculty that were mentors, I decided to include their voices as well.

Participants entered the interviews with only a broad understanding of my research focus. I made this decision with hopes that it would make the oral histories reflect the participants less censored thoughts. I was trying to ensure that the participants did not enter the interview with already prepared and polished ideas and answers. The one exception I made was for participant Michelle Foy, who explicitly asked for more information about my research project.

I began each interview by thanking the participant for their willingness to participate. Noting the date, time and location I proceeded to describe the ways in which I would act to ensure that the research would be transparent and reciprocal. I told participants that anything could be omitted or altered at any time. I also tried to make a point of asking if I could contact them at a later date to ask clarifying questions to avoid
misrepresenting them. I also made an effort to share things about myself such as my majors, hometown, and my personal interest in the study. Before beginning my questions I also asked if the participant would feel comfortable in helping me to connect with other people to interview.

I started off with basic questions about their backgrounds such as where they are from, what they do now, when they attended UCB, and what they studied. I inquired into their involvement during their time on campus and asked about what inspired their involvement with the student movement for an Ethnic Studies Department. Other questions examined how they perceived organizational structures of the student groups they were involved in, and how inclusive they were for different ethnic groups, women, and the LGBTQ community. After discussing the internal dynamics, I then asked about tactics and strategies, mistakes that were made, why they believed the movement was so successful, and what it felt like for them to be involved. Giving them the opportunity to say some last words and offering to send them a copy of the final paper, I thanked the participants once more. While conducting the oral history interview, to create space for flexibility, and for the data to lead the interview, I revised the questions as different themes emerged. I also asked certain people specific questions that I thought they might have information, insight or an opinion I was particularly interested in hearing about.

To gain new participants I utilized ‘snowball’ recruitment. Asking the people that I interviewed to connect me with other individuals involved in the movement yielded successful results in finding more participants. If their contacts were open to doing an oral history interview, I sent an initial email and we corresponded. Next we usually exchanged telephone numbers and made plans detailing the conditions under which we
could speak. I conducted one Skype interview, 10 in-person interviews, and three phone interviews. I recorded the interviews with a small digital recorder. I uploaded the interviews into my iTunes on my laptop and I transcribed them as the project unfolded.

In an effort to include a variety of voices, I also sought out participants who were students involved with the Alliance and held different identities. I interviewed a total of 5 people that had been/are staff or faculty on campus, and the remaining 9 were students during the movement. I interviewed 3 Asian Americans, 6 Latina/o/Chicana/o’s, 1 Caucasian, and 4 African Americans of which 3 identified as being both African American and Latina/o/Chicana/o. Of the participants 8 were females, and 6 were males and 0 were transgender. None of the participants expressed that they identified themselves as a member of the LGBTQ community.

**Limits and my location in the work**

Limits of research include only conducting oral history interviews with a handful of people involved and my recruitment method in which I gained new participants by those I had already spoken to contacting others that they were still in touch with. Locating myself within a discussion of my methods, I am aware that my position of privilege and life experiences will inevitably impact the way that I represent this social movement. Being a very light-skinned hapa (person of mixed race), who is often perceived as only white, or a mix of white and Asian/Latina, my perceived race probably also affected how my research participants interacted with me. I would assert that my white privilege and class privilege might have especially impacted what some participants discussed in terms of race and class. I am also aware that this research paper
is inherently partial; I can never fully remove myself from my passions, commitments and interests that define this body of work. Yet, my observations and conclusions are significant; they bring an important local history out of the dark and highlight how student activists were able to accomplish what seemed impossible.
Literature Review

Theory and Methods

In their piece “Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Compositional Research,” Gesa E. Kirsch and Joy S. Ritchie build off what Adrienne Rich coined as “a politics of location,” which is the idea that theorizing begins with claiming the personal within research. Gesa and Kirsch argue that one can “never fully step outside our culture in order to examine our assumptions, values and goals,” and that this postmodern feminist perspective leads them to continually question their ability to locate themselves within their work. This is something that I have placed as a priority as I conduct my research, and I explicitly locate myself in my “Methods” section. In addition, they suggest that feminist writers can avoid the “political and ethnical problems involved in writing about them [their research subjects], speaking for them, or attempting to represent their experiences.” They invite their research subjects to help them co-author an article so that they would be “allowing them to speak for themselves.” In response to Kirsch and Ritchie’s charge, I selected oral history as a way to ensure that the voices of the people that I represented were central to the study.

Audre Lorde’s discussion of difference and how it should be dealt with also informs my study and my interest in coalition building. Lorde advocates for people to approach difference as something to acknowledge and appreciate as forces that can be utilized as tools for social change. Her position that community is necessary for liberation and difference must to be acknowledged in community speaks directly to my research studying a multiracial social movement. She states, “We have been taught to either ignore our differences or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as
forces for change.” Continuing, she says, “Without community there is no liberation… but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, not the pathetic pretense that those differences do not exist.” Studying the movement for educational liberation at UCB necessitates careful consideration of difference, as Lorde demands.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the rhizome theory as an alternative approach to knowledge that accounts for difference, and indeed valorizes it, much like Lorde does. They compare this model to that of a tree, which has one centralized point (the trunk) from which all knowledge stems out. Quite the opposite, in a rhizome, there is point of origin or end. Deluze and Guattari argue that the rhizome as a theory of knowledge can often be an improved alternative, because it is not centralized in one point and therefore is stronger and more resilient to change and damage. I interpret the social movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB in rhizomatic terms, for it was a movement with no single point of origin, and the process that led to the movement was not linear, but instead multifaceted with people joining at different times for different reasons, in different ways, and then diverging in the same way.

Oral history is often subject to interrogation on the basis of its legitimacy. In *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Valerie Yow explores the definition of oral history, its benefits and drawbacks as well as the general nature of this method of research. Yow discusses the limitations of oral history such as the inability to draw broad conclusions from a single person’s perspective. She also discusses how this can be misused to create gross generalities, when one narrative is applied to a larger community and how this can possibly lead to inaccurate conclusions. Another limitation she explores is the challenge that any historical research utilizing oral
history faces, in how memory can affect the consistency and accuracy of research. Yow also provides concrete methods for preparing for an oral history project, collecting oral histories, and processing and analyzing interviews.

Nancy Naples book *Feminism and Method, Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Research*, explores different feminist theories of methodologies and how they are practiced. She discusses the contentions and conflicts within feminisms and by drawing from research issues including welfare reform, rural economic development, racial formation and more, highlighting the dilemmas in feminist research. Her ideas about democratizing the research process, practicing reflexivity and blending different aspects from were practices she discussed that I incorporated into my work.

**Writings on social movements and coalition building**

As a history of the student movement for Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, this project draws on literatures on social movements and especially builds on works on multiracial coalition building.

**Coalition building**

Laura Pulido’s *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* examines multiethnic and multiracial organizing among radical people of color during the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on the Black Panther Party, El Centro de Acción Social y Autonomo, or Center for Autonomous Social Action (CASA), and East Wind, a Japanese American collective. She explores how these groups interacted within and across intersecting identities and how class, gender and race functioned within their coalitions.
Pulido reveals the complexity of multiracial coalition building among people who are racialized in different ways. Although Pulido provides an admirable discussion of racial difference, she is less attendant to gender and sexuality and their impacts on coalitions. Furthermore, she is more interested in interactions between different groups of people of color than in the role of white allies and white privilege within their coalitions.

Kimberley Springer addresses black feminist organizations from the late 1960s through the 1980s in her book *Living for the Revolution, Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980*. The piece explores five black feminist organizations: the National Black Feminist Organization, Combahee River Collective, Third World Women’s Alliance, National Alliance for Black Feminists, and Black Women Organized for Action. Springer discusses how factors such as historical and organizational influences, date of emergence, number of core members, estimated number of members, leadership structure and date of decline all contributed to the successes and limitations of these organizations (Springer, 66). Springer emphasizes “identity aspects,” and how these influenced the organizations that she studied. For example the Combahee River Collective was the organization that put strong emphasis on race, gender, class and sexual orientation, while the National Black Feminist Organization had an emphasis on gender and race primarily, and touched on class and sexual orientation less often (Springer, 115). She provides specific and detailed examples of how different organizations employed internal structures that dealt with difference and worked towards inclusivity to different degrees and in different ways. The book reveals how taking these structures and strategies either benefited or hindered to their organization and their work.
In their groundbreaking anthology, *This Bridge Called my Back*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga include writings by women of color who share their experiences and challenge the boundaries of early 1980s feminism. The authors provide personal testimonies that often leave them vulnerable as they discuss how they are marginalized by society and the mainstream feminist movement. By exposing their pain and rage, the women illustrate the limits of feminism that is not intersectional and call for feminists to become more inclusive. With visual art, poetry and pose, the pieces presented in this anthology, this book pertains to my research because the authors look at intersectionality across boundaries of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Deconstructing what these narratives say about movements and coalition building will was a great asset for my research during this project. Springer, Anzaldua and Moraga’s insist that we must attend to both structures of organizations and interpersonal dynamics in order to understand the efficacy of coalitional organizing. Thus, in conducting oral history interviews, I aimed to collect data on infrastructures of organizations, individual experiences, and interpersonal relationships.

Daryl Maeda’s in-depth analysis of the multiplicity and complexity of the Asian American movement relate very closely to my topic. *Reconsidering the Asian American Movement* provides an often overlooked perspective on the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s by highlighting key events, the trajectory of social movements and the politics of coalition building are very relevant to my research. Since I sought to tell a history from a certain perspective that shed light onto often-erased voices, while also providing a general overview as well, this book was very informative. More importantly, he argues that coalition building was a foundational principle of the Asian American
movement and illustrates the difficulties posed by a commitment to coalitional work.

Maeda’s *Chains of Babylon* provides an in-depth examination of how different Asian ethnicities were politicized and mobilized with the construction of a multiethnic coalition focused around an Asian American identity that was committed to solidarity with other racial and ethnic groups during the late 1960s. As he shows, the work of creating coalitional social movements both draws upon existing identities and creates new identities. In this book Maeda also discusses the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), at San Francisco State University, that was comprised of a multiracial alliance of African American, Asian American, Native American and Latinos that demanded open admission for all students of color and an autonomous Ethnic Studies Department. Rallying thousands of students, they were successful in shutting down the university at times, and ultimately succeeded in establishing the first Ethnic Studies Department in the nation. The TWLF’s strike from 68-69 was the longest student strike in U.S. history, and like in the student movement at UCB, the protests for Ethnic Studies were a culmination of radical student activity.

Like Maeda, Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar examines radical social movements by people of color in the 1960s and 1970s. In *Black Power; Radical Politics and African American Identity*, Ogbar traces the creation of the social movements of Civil Rights and primarily Black Power. In particular, Chapter 4, “Swimming with the Masses, the Black Panthers, Lumpenism and Revolutionary Culture,” discusses fissures within the Black Panther Party around issues of cultural nationalism, machismo and homophobia. However, he also shows that the Los Angeles chapter in particular embraced gender and sexual inclusivity, “arguing the liberation of women and homosexuals is intrinsic to the
lateral of all oppressed people.”¹ Ultimately Ogbar argues that while the Black Panther Party reflected the gender politics of the misogynistic society in which they lived but did transition away and work to challenge these social norms.² Ogbar also argues that cultural nationalism “was a distraction from the more serious problems with the fundamental political and economic order in the United States.”³ Cultural nationalism and white privilege certainly impacted the movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB. Ogbar concurs with Maeda that the Black Panther Party served as a model for how nationalism could function as an empowering organizing force. He explicitly discusses Chicano nationalism, particularly in Colorado, showing how “Denver-based ‘Corky’ Gonzales cultivated a Mexican-American brand of cultural nationalism that helped popularize the term Chicano, which supplanted Mexican-American.”⁴ Comparing this act of self-naming as proudly affirmed self-determination, he asserts, “Chicano cultural nationalists insisted that they were a ‘bronze people, whose native ancestors built great monuments and civilizations, such as Aztlan’” and “revered the Aztecs for their cultural and material achievements.”⁵ According to Ogbar, Chicano cultural nationalism did not advocate for separatism but instead advocated that Chicanos take power of the existing educational and political systems to “carve out their own space” within white-dominated society. This articulation of cultural nationalism was essential for my understanding of the cultural nationalism within UMAS y MEChA, and how this force was both empowering and also limiting. He then goes on to discuss the founding of the Ethnic Studies Department in

² Ogbar, 104.
³ Ogbar, 115.
⁴ Ogbar, 161.
⁵ Ogbar, 162.
1968 at San Francisco State College due to the success of organizing done by the Third World Liberation Front. Ogbar suggests that this model inspired other activists across the country to also mobilize around ethnic identity and the create alliances with other ethnic groups to advocate for resources and support they needed and wanted, such as Ethnic Studies Department. Ogbar’s work is particularly useful for this project because it discusses cross-cultural and ethnic coalitions by people of color.

Social Movements

Jose Gutiérrez’s book *The Making of Chicano Militant* was also very informative for my research. This autobiography was rich in historical details about the important political and social events within the Mexican American communities in South Texas in the 1960s and 1970s. Providing me with a history of how Chicano identity and activism in the Southwest were created and unfolded was very informative for me and I directly related the information to UMAS, and how the historical legacies in the Southwest and Colorado were also very influential and inspiring for them. The book also gives an overview of the social movement that Gutiérrez was a part of, so this added additional insight towards possibilities and differences between social movements.

In researching the academic contributions of Daryl Maeda, Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, and Jose Gutiérrez, I found a great framework that I applied to my research on the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB. Strengthening my understanding how the Asian American movement, Chicano/a movement in Texas and the Southwest, and the Black Power movement respectively unfolded, I entered my research considering factors such

---

6 Ogbar, 166.
as historical context in which specific communities are located, the workings of identity formation, how ideas such as cultural nationalism have emerged and shifted their shape to meet the needs of the community they served. Applying this framework and understanding of social movements and how they relate to identity and coalitions and then expanding the analysis to include new voices and construct the history of a social movement that had yet to be narrated before I did, I build off of their work.

Movements for Ethnic Studies Departments

George Mariscal’s chapter in his book Brown Children of the Sun, titled “Chapter 6: To Demand That the University Work for Our People,” focuses specifically on the struggle for the formation of an alternative education college called ‘Lumumba-Zapata College,’ at the University of California, San Diego during 1969-1970. Mariscal writes that the movement embodied “one of the most radical attempts by students and faculty of color to transform the elitist and Eurocentric university into an inclusionary and democratic space that reflected the concerns for traditionally excluded communities.”

Mariscal traces the trajectory of the movement from Angela Davis, who was at that time a graduate student at the university realizing that due to the low number of students of color, to achieve an kind of social change students of color would have to pursue a multiethnic coalition. This occurred when a Chicano/a student organization called Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA) and the Black Student Council (BSC).

---

The initial objective as Davis put it, was to provide students of color with “the knowledge and skills we needed in order to more effectively wage our liberation struggles.”

This story resonates with the one that I tell about the University of Colorado at Boulder, except that the demands did not seek to create such a democratic structure, and that while there was one group of Chicano students involved in the coalition, at Boulder the organization they allied with was not BSC/BSA, but instead a group of white student activists concerned with racial justice and equity. However, what is relevant to my research is that the tension within this alliance is described as sectarian nationalism and internationalist perspective advocating that the best way to achieve success was to work together to submit one proposal. Unlike UCB’s student movement where white students sought to be accepted as allies to the Chicano community, at San Diego, both black and Chicano student activists wanted to work separately. Another similarity is the centralized involvement of faculty in the movement. At the time Carlos Blanco Aguinaga was “instrumental,” in his role as faculty advisor for MAYA and intellectual mentor to students. My studies compel me to parallel his role to the role that UCB’s Professor Elisa Facio played. However, the outcomes that the respective movements saw was different and Mariscal describes how it appears that the FBI may have been involved in destroying the student coalition. He also describes how the student’s vision for the school ultimately failed in achieving their radical dream. This account informed my understanding of how grassroots student movements and ethnic/racial coalitions on college campuses have been inspired and how they have functioned. Learning about the

---

8 Mariscal, 221.
9 Mariscal, 223.
10 Mariscal, 242.
11 Mariscal, 246.
different circumstances under which this effort took place, and it pushed me to consider
the role that a university’s history, demographics, the political climate, the role of
administration play in the success of a student movement. Overall, the piece informed my
understanding of the Southwest, coalitions between ethnic groups, student movements
demanding alternative educations that they want are provided.

Jason Ferreira’s “All Power to the People: A Comparative History of Third World Radicalism in San Francisco, 1968-1974” also provided my work with a valuable
understanding of how struggles for racial and social justice have functioned on different
college campuses. He begins discussing how the late 1960’s continue to be
misrepresented by liberal writers that often erase the significant contributions that
organized ethnic communities achieved, and encourages the re-visioning of this time
period and our understandings of “Third Worldism,” to gain a more complete
understanding. Another point that stuck me was his discussion of “cross-fertilization of
people and ideas took place that contributed to the construction of a radical Third World
culture.”12 This had great implications as it pertains to my paper because I also suggest
that the support structures that were institutionalized on campus allowed for a kind of
“cross-fertilization of people and ideas,” through the proximity that the University
Memorial Center provided. His analysis of how students in the Bay Area were politicized
and developed “communities of resistance” from “an expanded sense of identity through
both political struggle and the articulation of a new set of transformative politics”13 has
been central to my understanding of the movement here at UCB. He argues that Third

13 Ferreira, 20.
Worldism saw “the interconnections between different racialized communities, noting that any freedom to be attained for one community of color was intimately bound up with the freedom of other communities- white and nonwhite alike,”\textsuperscript{14} While I do not argue that the student activists in my research had the same radical political ideology, some did have an understanding of the multiracial movement as expressing the interconnections of oppression.

While much as been written about the social movements of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and some has been written about student movements for Ethnic Studies and alternative histories, a surprisingly small amount has been written about the student movement that fought for the formation of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1994. Taking into consideration the things that Ferreira and Mariscal examine in their pieces, I zoom my focus into a campus movement that had been overlooked.

Nothing has been written about the student movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder, besides brief mention in a few articles, so I am contributing a great deal of knowledge to an area that needs academic work. This thesis is significant because while filling the void of research done on this student movement, I give voice to not only the students and faculty that were involved with its formation. My scholarship draws from all of these texts, pulling from Pulido’s examination of how different racial and ethnic groups worked together in the larger Los Angeles area during the 1960s and 70s, Springer’s analysis of black feminist organizations from the late 60s to 80s taking into account how historical influences,\textsuperscript{14} Ferreira, 29.
leadership structure and identity impacted their internal structures, and from the work of Maeda and Ogbar delving into the complex ways that ethnic identity was formed in the late 1960s and how this effected coalition building, and from the works of Ferreira and Mariscal’s studies of student movements on college campuses and the political and cultural factors that led to their successes and limitations. However, many of these texts do not highlight women and most neglect to treat members of LGBTQ community as valued lived experiences that need to be heard. In this way, I build on these scholars work while simultaneously contesting the invisibility of these voices.
Chapter 1: The Political Moment and Institutional Structures on Campus that Supported Diversity

“It was just a very, very crazy time in race relations, I mean this was right after the L.A. riots...this is right after the O.J. Simpson trial, the Cosby’s are still like the only black people on TV, there were just no other races on TV... it was just like... It was a very tense time. It seems like it was the last generation that felt like for real, for real, for real...were going to set off a revolution.” – Carlos Kareem Windham, a biracial African American and Latino former student activist involved with UMAS y MEChA, ACHANGE, INVST, UCSU, and the Alliance

The grassroots student movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB) was not an isolated incident. It wasn’t a random occurrence. It was part of an ongoing struggle that continues today on the campus, for racial justice and equity. This chapter will examine how the political moment during the spring of 1994 provided fertile soil for the students to be successful in their fight for accountability from the university. It also explores how existing structures at UCB gave students support to demand that the university work for their needs. Non-academic included the Cultural Unity Student Center, the Environmental Center, the Cultural Events Board, University of Colorado Student Union, and the University Memorial Center. Academic structures included the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America (CSERA), INVST Community Leadership Program and the leadership class offered through the Cultural Unity Student Center. Many events and circumstances led to the tipping point when students decided go on a hunger strike to try to force the university officials to listen to their calls for justice, and the political moment and structural support for diversity that were on campus at the time are important components to explore.

15 Carlos Windham, interview with Renee Roberts, January 03, 2013, Skype, transcript.
Just two years before the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB, the L.A. riots took place. Racial tensions exploded in April of 1992 in Los Angeles, California. The video footage of the police brutality involving Rodney King was played over and over, and eventually spread across the globe, outraging millions. The six-day riot that ensued consisted of widespread looting, assault, arson, and murder, with estimates of property damage exceeding one billion dollars, 51 dead and thousands had been arrested.\(^\text{16}\) Student activist Raquel Lopez remembers the politicizing effect the riots had on campus. She shares, “When I started off in Boulder the end of my freshmen year was when the Rodney King verdict happened…I think that just caused a lot of students to become more active, because that just really showed how the lives of people of color weren’t respected and weren’t valued.”\(^\text{17}\) Events such as these become relevant to recall when looking at struggles for racial justice in the United States, because while countless people felt tremendous racial frustration and anger, and were critically questioning race relations around the world, students at the University of Colorado at Boulder were asking similar questions of their country and in particular, their university.

This chapter will discuss how the larger political moment prompted students to examine UCB’s commitment to ethnic and racial equity, and how its existing institutional support structures for diversity empowered students on the UCB campus in 1993–94 to demand accountability from their university.

---

\(^{16}\) Darnell Hunt, *Screening the L.A. “Riots”: Race, seeing and resistance*, (New York, NY: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1997) http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9AY_y9Y8zMwC&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=l.a. riots deaths&ots=PUuPCuu0x &sig=wdDzhzoN7Y0HrGZ8K2yMoFrW9aU.

The Political Moment at the University of Colorado–Boulder

The statistics on UCB’s recruitment and retention of students of color provide a concrete starting point for an exploration of the relationship between UCB and the issue of race. The University of Colorado at Boulder published a report in September of 1991, called “Persistence and Graduation Rates of Fall Freshmen 1980–90.” It was published as a part of the “Report on the University of Colorado at Boulder Institutional Accountability Program,” for Academic Year 1990–1991 and was submitted to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. The report included a table detailing the number of students in various ethnic groups, following them from initial enrollment to the time they left UCB.

During the fall semester of 1984, of the total number of students enrolling as freshmen, 2,872 were white. Of these white students, 33% graduated within 4 years, 57% graduated within 5 years, and 63% graduated within 6 years. In contrast, the data shows that in 1984, only 57 black students entered as freshmen during the fall semester. Of those 57 students, 18% graduated within 4 years, 32% graduated within 5 years, and 39% graduated within 6 years. The remaining 21% of the black students transferred to another school, did not graduate, or left for other reasons. That same year, a total of 133 “Hispanic” students entered as freshmen. Of those students, 14% graduated in 4 years, 31% in 5 years, and 35% in 6 years. Again, the majority of an already small fraction of Hispanic students (65%) transferred schools, did not graduate, or left for other reasons.

---

19 Office of Research and Information, "Persistence and graduation rates," 5.
The data also reveals that only 15 Native American students entered as freshmen during the same timeframe. Of these, 13% graduated in 4 years, 27% in 5 years, and 33% in 6 years. To paint a picture, imagine 15 Native American students were Native American, compared to 2,872 white students. The racial disparity becomes more striking after six years. After six years, less than five of the fifteen Native American students graduated, compared to 1,089 white students. The disparity between students of color obtaining degrees from UCB, and white students doing the same, is clear. Both enrollment and retention rates for students of color were dramatically lower than those of their white counterparts. The disparities between students of color and white students were immense. In 1993, student activists at UCB were asking, “Why?”

Another report titled, “Tracking CU–Boulder Undergraduates Through Their Careers,” by Lou McClelland was published by the Office of Research and Information in October of 1991. This preliminary report traced basic factors that looked at undergraduates from matriculation through graduation or last enrollment. “Display 1: Fall Freshmen entering 1980–1991: Characteristics at Matriculation—Inputs,” demonstrates low numbers of enrollment for students of color as well as low GPAs once they entered.

For example, the study illustrated that between 1988 and 1991, a total of 14,034 students were enrolled at UCB. Of that number, only 10% were students of color (Black, Hispanic or Native American were included). In addition to enrolling in low numbers, these students achieved less academic success than did white students. The data revealed

20 Office of Research and Information, “Persistence and graduation rates,” 5.
that 73% of black, Hispanic and Native American students had GPAs over 2.27, as compared to 97% of white students. Furthermore, only 31% of black, Hispanic and Native American students had GPAs over 2.75, as compared to 66% of white students.\(^{23}\)

Moving forward a few years, with a study titled “Building Community Through Diversity,” by CU–Boulder Student Affairs Research Services, data showed that in the fall of 1994, students of color represented about 15% of incoming undergraduates.\(^{24}\) Of these students of color, 40% were Hispanic, 40% were Asian American, 14% were African American, and 5–6% were Native American.\(^{25}\)

This report also found that “substantially lower numbers of students of color are positive about the situation at CU–Boulder for students in their racial/ethnic groups than are positive about the situation for themselves personally, and many students of color report encountering bothersome stereotyping. As Display 2 shows, African Americans are clearly less satisfied than and most different from the other groups.”\(^{26}\)

Display 1 shows that the first of the “Top 5 Reasons for Recommending CU–Boulder to a Friend” is the “academic experience.” The category listing “people, students, staff,” as a reason for recommending CU to a friend, ranked significantly lower, with black students in particular giving especially low rankings in this category. This sentiment from black students was consistent throughout the report in various displays and statements. To summarize the brief report, the authors state, “Students of color are less positive on some

---

\(^{24}\) CU–Boulder Student Affairs Research Services, “Building Community Through Diversity,” 1, CU Student Government Records, in CUSG office.
dimensions than whites; and African Americans are least satisfied and least similar in attitudes to other groups.”

During the 1980s and 1990s the University of Colorado at Boulder was neither recruiting nor retaining increasing percentages of students of color, and those that did stay at the university performed more poorly than their peers. The statistics demonstrate widespread dissatisfaction among students of color with their experiences at UCB Boulder. However, some students of color did not simply remain dissatisfied. Instead, they found programs and mentors that helped them to understand their experiences as part of structural inequalities at the University of Colorado, and more generally, in U.S. society.

Structures Providing Support for Diversity on Campus

Non-Academic:

Cultural Unity Student Center

When the people interviewed for this thesis were asked where they found support on campus, what is now known as the Center for Multicultural Affairs (CMA) was mentioned repeatedly. For this reason, some contextual background information into the organization is included here.

The history of the Cultural Unity Student Center stretches back farther than most other resources for underrepresented students at UCB because it was one of the first institutionalized support structures for students of color at on the campus. On April 23, 1968, UCB President Joseph R. Smiley and the University Senate discussed a seven-point

---

program of action to expand educational opportunity to “disadvantaged” students.\textsuperscript{28} One program involved increasing outreach efforts to minority students, and the drive to seek them out began in May of that year. By June of 1968, UCB provided funds to the Students’ Tutorial Program to increase the number of students of color on campus. This program changed in June of 1969, with the creation of five Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) divisions. “Students are able to work with their respective groups and get assistance from everything from counseling to financial aid.” The five EOPs included: UMAS-EOP (United Mexican American Students), Asian-EOP, BEP-EOP (Black Education Program), Native American- EOP, and MAP- EOP (Migrant Action Program). During the first year, 78 students of color enrolled through an EOP.\textsuperscript{29}

During the 1970s, these four units combined into one program with components that included Access and Recruitment, Counseling Academic Affairs, and Program Research. This merging “begins the “down-sizing” effect of services available for students of color.”\textsuperscript{30} From this point, Cultural Unity Student Center shifted into various fluctuating shapes depending on the political and economic situation of UCSC. In the 1990s the Cultural Unity Student Center staff decided to drop the word ‘student’ and the department became known as Cultural Unity Center. The summer of 2004 brought about their most current name; the Center for Multicultural Affairs.\textsuperscript{31}

In 1996, the aims and actions taken by the Center to achieve its goals were articulated by stating that the Cultural Unity Student Center was “a home away from

\textsuperscript{28} “Enduring Legacy, A Legacy Across the Nation,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
\textsuperscript{29} “Enduring Legacy, A Legacy Across the Nation,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers.
\textsuperscript{30} “Enduring Legacy, A Legacy Across the Nation,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers.
\textsuperscript{31} “Enduring Legacy, A Legacy Across the Nation,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers.
home for students of color” that “provides direction and opportunities for intellectual, 
personal, and social growth, promotes understanding and belonging, provides a place 
where students relax, talk with others and study, and offers information on student 
services and activities, multicultural materials, use of computers, a lounge, and a small 
meeting area.” The Center discussed how they also provided academic planning, career 
development, advocacy and personal counseling” as well as the “core services offered to 
students of color. In addition, a variety of programs and activities are available.”

Among these additional resources, was the “Faculty-Student Mentorship 
Program” that fostered community through quality one-on-one mentoring partnerships 
and both academic and cultural affirmation and empowerment. Most of the former 
students interviewed for this thesis believed that the Center had reached its goals. 
Almost all of them spoke either about the important mentorship that UCSC provided. Of 
the participants in this research project, former student activists Leslie Wong, Raquel 
Lopez, and Maria Gabriel all held positions at the Cultural Unity Student Center as peer 
counselors. “CMA was a place for me to find as a supportive environment as well as 
looking beyond into empowering you in your own identity but also looking at 
multicultural ‘allyship’ (the term ‘ally’ refers to an individual who is not a member of a 
particular group but works for the rights of that group; e.g., a white person who works 
against racism) as an important value,” Leslie Wong, a student activist affiliated with 
many ethnic and progressive student groups, stated. “A lot of people worked at the 
Cultural Unity Student Center… and at the center there were African Americans, people

32 “Enduring Legacy, A Legacy Across the Nation,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. 
33 Leslie Wong, interview with Renee Roberts, September 11, 2012, Wong’s office in the 
Center for Multicultural Affairs in Center for Community on the UCB campus, transcript.
from Oyate, people from the Asian Pacific groups...so I think that also helped build The Alliance, because we were already working together in different capacities,” said Raquel Lopez.34

Additional evidence of the valued support that the Cultural Unity Student Center provided to underrepresented students can be found in a booklet that UMAS (United Mexican American Students) created for 1994’s Cinco de Mayo Celebration. In the booklet, the center paid for three separate ads. One reads, “The Peer Counselors would like to wish everybody a Happy Cinco de Mayo!”35 The ad then listed the current peer mentors. At the time, the supervisors were Michelle Trevino and Cleo Estrada. The fact that several people interviewed for this thesis either explicitly mentioned the Cultural Unity Student Center, Trevino or Estrada as sources of support, and that their support is also documented in the booklet provide additional evidence of the importance of the Cultural Unity Student Center and the support that the staffers in the center provided.

**Cultural Events Board (CEB)**

During the early and mid-1990s, the Cultural Events Board (CEB) functioned as a progressive, liberal, and sometimes radical force on campus, due to the political nature of the events that the organization funded. The organization consistently succeeded in bringing a variety of speakers to campus that regularly drew capacity crowds. Darin Quintana, who served as the Speakers Coordinator while attending UCB remembers that under his leadership, the CEB board brought nationally known black feminist Angela

34 Lopez, interview.
Davis to campus. Raquel Lopez also mentioned CEB as a politicizing force on campus at the time. “CEB would put a lot more funding into speakers that were vying for social change and people of color.”

A letter from Toneê Mwamba, executive director of University of Colorado Student Union (UCSU) in 1993–94, states, “USUCB’s Cultural Events Board (CEB), brings many influential speakers, talented performers, vivid exhibits, and various other kinds of cultural events to the campus. CEB has brought Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, and Kwame Ture (formerly Stokley Carmichael) to help raise awareness for and of African-American people.” Nikki Giovanni is a world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator. Kwame Ture rose to prominence during in the civil rights and Black Power movements, first as a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and later as a leader of the Black Panther Party. Initially a proponent for integration, Carmichael later became affiliated with the Black Nationalism and popularized the term “black power.” The impact that these speakers had is noteworthy. The opportunity to attend talks by these well-known figures that worked for radical and progressive racial justice gave students a chance to learn about the speakers’ experiences and political positions.

The Environmental Center

---

37 Lopez, interview.
38 Letter from Tonêe Mwamba, CU Student Government Records, in CUSG office, document in author’s possession.
The Environmental Center was another organization that helped politicize students in the early to mid-1990s. At the time, it housed five different student groups that organized events highlighting various environmental issues, a few of which were critical in the student organizing for the department. The Environmental Center, which was located on the third floor of the UMC served as a central hub for these student groups. Other groups found the UMC to be a similar structure, which housed various different student groups. UCSU was one of these.

**University of Colorado Student Union/Student Government (UCSU)**

Research indicates that the student government administration during 1994 was progressive and used their position of influence to work towards creating a campus climate where the issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice were valued. The three executives at the time were Tonëe Mwamba, Ali Vogt, Michael A. Kester. and USCU President Pro Tempore was Benjamin E. Naasko. On June 30, 1994, their administration issued “The University of Colorado Student Union Diversity Action Plan.” The introduction of this document states, “The University of Colorado Student Union’s (UCSU) purpose is to serve as the student body’s voice and link to the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB) administration, faculty, and staff and to serve the students.” To accomplish this task, the administration created a plan. “Therefore, it is

---

40 “University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
41 “UCSU/CUSG PAST EXECUTIVES,” CU Student Government Records, in CUSG office, document in author’s possession.
UCSU’s belief that only through a consolidated effort among students, faculty, staff, and administration will UCB achieve its vision of becoming a ‘multicultural institution and [a] community committed to the principles of excellence in diversity and diversity in excellence.’”

UCSU’s diversity plan goes on to define terms required to have a common understanding when discussing issues of social justice. By doing so, UCSU ensured there was no confusion or lack in accountability. “The UCSU Committee for Diversity will conduct an annual assessment of the diversity of UCSU-proper early each fall semester. This assessment will provide a basis for refining and improving the diversity of UCSU and for determining which groups are underrepresented in UCSU-proper. The Committee for Diversity will present an annual report summarizing the assessment to the Tri-Executives and to the Legislative Council and solicit input from these groups.” As a part of reaching this goal, UCSU required each cost center “to present semesterly reports on the progress of its diversity plan. These reports are to be submitted to the Committee for Diversity, which will then convey its findings to the Tri-Executives and Legislative Council.” From these statements one can understand that UCSU made diversity and inclusion a top priority and was willing to try different approaches to ensure that their goals of increasing inclusion and diversity on campus were met.

After stating this requirement for the structure needed to implement their new plan, UCSU then provided an example of a diversity plan, with three concrete and measurable goals and a minimum of three action steps to reach these goals. After the administration of UCSU passed the proposal for their diversity action plan, they then

---

changed the existing “Committee for Diversity” to the “Diversity Commission,” with the power to enforce policy. The bill states, “To allow for the execution of the UCSU Diversity Action Plan the Diversity Commission will act as a join entity between the UCSU Legislative Council and the USCU Executive. This will allow it to act as an enforcement body and a policy recommendation body.”

The mission of the Commission begins by stating, “The mission of the Diversity Commission shall be: To create a multicultural university and to provide a more positive social environment on campus, in which diversity is encouraged, understood, celebrated and respected.” The document goes on to discuss how the commission will act as a vehicle to promote communication across different areas of campus so that “the concerns of every student of color, ethnic group, gender, creed, religious affiliation, abilities, or sexual orientation,” were adequately addressed.

In what appears to be a part of an ongoing outreach effort for this new commission, Executive Mwambda wrote a letter, which stated, “The University of Colorado Student Union is one of the most influential student governments in the nation and has an operating budget of over $18 million…If you are interested in running for executive or representative, or would like to work with the 25-member paid staff, stop by the office or call the number above.” Tonêe Mwamba was a very active and visible organizer on campus at the time. He wrote at least two pieces that were published in UCB newspapers. One piece he wrote was titled “Time for the University to Work for

---

46 Michael Kester, Brandon Nicholson, “41 Executive Bill #1.”
47 Michael Kester, Brandon Nicholson, “41 Executive Bill #1.”
48 Letter from Tonêe Mwamba, CU Student Government Records.
Pluralism.” He stated, “This is what pluralism is about—the acknowledgement of all ideas, of all points of view, of all peoples…It’s about time for us to start promoting universality within this university.” 49 These documents are significant because they demonstrate the high value that Mwamba, and the administration of which he was a part, placed on diversity and equity.

The “Fall 1994 UCSU Proper Annual Assessment,” presented by the UCSU Diversity Commission states, “This is the first year in which UCSU has conducted a diversity assessment of its own programs and day-to-day operations.” 50 It discusses how it will provide a structure for regular assessment of diversity goals, and notes that since it is the first time that UCSU has “conducted such a thorough investigation of its own internal affairs, it should be noted that the Commission had no data against which to compare this year to previous years.” 51 Therefore, even though some of the results may prove to be a ‘rude awakening,’ it is because of its diligence and dedication to diversity that UCSU is finally examining itself.” Overall, the assessment found that UCSU needed to make greater efforts to include and inform underrepresented groups of available programs and opportunities. “The percentage of underrepresented persons remains relatively low, and the amount of outreach done to make their services and programs readily available to underrepresented groups is scarce.” 52 Following this introduction, the assessment provides a detailed account of how cost centers reached the goals they set and

51 “Fall 1994 UCSU Proper Annual Assessment.”
52 “Fall 1994 UCSU Proper Annual Assessment.”
how the Diversity Commission suggested that they improve their performance for the next assessment. From learning about some of the efforts that UCSU engaged in to increase diversity and inclusion on campus, one can see that their progressive policies contributed to an environment where diversity was discussed and prioritized.

**University Memorial Center (UMC)**

The University Memorial Center (UMC) was another structure on campus that provided support to underrepresented students. This building was and continues to function as a central hub on campus. In the early 1990s the spatial arrangement of the building served as a central meeting place, but also created to opportunities for community-building and politicization. At that time, the first floor of the UMC held student group offices and there was a small half-moon shaped space where different political and ethnic groups were located. The architecture and placement of offices provided a space for organic relationships among these different student groups and their unique constituencies to grow. The importance of the close physical proximity between many student groups that were organized around issues related to underrepresented identity or social and political issues cannot be over-emphasized.

In relation to the UMC, Quintana stated, “We were all in the same area, so it was easy to mobilize together and I think they were all involved. Say, when we did the march, we tried to get as many people to support us as we could.” Encinias remembers the UMC’s architecture and office placement as being important to building community and

---

53 Michael Encinias, interview with Renee Roberts, January 4, 2013, Woody Creek Café and Bakery in Denver, Colorado, transcript.

coalitions as well. “You talk about coalition-building, the way that the Student Union was set up, there was Oyate and then the UMAS MEChA office, and BSA, and then directly across the hall was the Democratic student group. They were mostly white but they were more left-leaning. So that helped to bring us together.”

Data from the 1993–94 “University of Colorado 1993 Student Club Guide” included information provided by each student group. Some groups offered a mission statement, and others did not. For this paper, the student groups that were political or identity-based are listed by office number to show some semblance of how the student groups interacted within the physical spaces of the UMC.

The Muslim Student Association and Arab Student Club shared UMC 173. The Arab Student Club was “a social/cultural group aiming at informing the student body about the Arabs and Arab world.” UMC 174 held UCB Model United Nations, Cosmopolitan Club, and International Relations Forum. The Korean Student Association, described as “a group organized to introduce Korean culture and customs to students and communities,” was house in UMC 175. UMC 176 held the Arts and Sciences Student Government, and UMC 178 housed Democrats, Pre-Law, and Students of Israel. UMC 181 housed the Black Student Alliance (BSA) and the historically black Greek organizations. The BSA was described as “a support group for black students, faculty and staff dedicated to increasing cultural diversity and sensitivity.” Other organizations housed in this office included Alpha Phi Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, Sigma Lambda Beta

---

55 Encinias, interview.  
56 “University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
(Latino). The historically black sororities housed in UMC 181 included Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, and Zeta Phi Beta.

MEChA had just moved during the 1991–92 school year to share an office with UMAS in UMC 182. The description of MEChA states that it is “a national student organization that promotes the culture of Chicano/a students on campus, political issues on campus, and political issues of people of color in institutions of higher education.” UMAS is described as “a support group for students of Latino descent, whose activities include organizing a Cinco de Mayo celebration and attending local, state, and national conferences.” UMC 183 housed the Wilderness Study Group and next door, UMC 184 housed the Oyate Indian Club, described as an organization that “provides education and financial support for Native American students.” APAC (Asian Pacific American Coalition) was in UMC 185. Its blurb states, “APAC is a support group for Asian/Pacific American students. APAC addresses political and cultural issues and concerns of Asian/Pacific Americans, on and off campus.” UMC 186 housed Indian Culture, CI World Citizens, and Amnesty International. UMC 187 housed ACHANGE and several other progressive political groups. The booklet states, “ACHANGE is dedicated to pursuing a vision of environmental and social justice. Our work has focused on educating the campus community on the impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and addressing environmental racism.” The proximity that so many identity-based student groups shared was important in their efforts to work together and to build alliances.

---

57 “University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
A group called the Ethnic Student Coalition developed an ad that appeared in UMAS’s 1994 booklet for Cinco de Mayo. The statement in this ad demonstrates that students were working together around their racialized identities. It reads, “The Ethnic Student Coalition is a combination of several student groups on campus. We have joined together to combine our influence on campus affairs. We represent over 14 different ethnic groups, but are not limited to student organizations. If you are an ethnic student and wish to make a difference on campus, join us! Anyone of any ethnicity is welcome. Don’t just sit there and let the University system alienate you; make it serve your needs.” This statement is signed by Tonée Mwamba chair of the Ethnic Student Coalition and an Executive of UCSU, which speaks to the level of progressivism within student government. Mwamba then lists the groups that participate in this coalition: United Mexican American Students, MEChA, Korean Student Association, Arab Student Club, Vietnamese Student Association of Boulder, Munta*, Black Student Alliance, Asian Pacific American Coalition, Hillel, Hmong Student association, India Culture Association. From this information we can see that the first floor of the UMC created a diverse community that valued social and environmental justice.

When recalling how the Alliance first functioned and how this related to the UMC, Maria Gabriel stated, “Early on I remember being in the UMC, and in the office spaces, and sometimes we would pull out, because there were all the office spaces, BSA, Oyate, UMAS y MEChA, the environmental club, they were all right in the center there, in a half circle. Early on we pulled chairs out, and said ‘Ok, common space, common

58 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
59 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
60 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
from her words, one can see that having this space in the UMC for progressive and/or identity-based groups to gather was instrumental in the building of activism that would ultimately escalate into the student movement with the Alliance.

Non-academic services and resources provided great support for students of color. Although there were few available, the students utilized what they did have. Wong recalls, “At that time we had a lot less student groups, a lot less of the advocacy centers… a lot of the resources and services that we have now weren’t in existence, so it was tough.”

From the Cultural Unity Student Center, to the Environmental Center, to CEB, to student government, to the UMC, one can clearly see the positive impact on diversity that these organizations made on the campus during this time.

**Academic:**

**Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America**

As stated on the UCB Ethnic Studies Department as of March 10, 2013, in 1988, the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America (CSERA) was formed at UCB, incorporating the Black Studies and Chicano Studies programs and adding American Indian and Asian American programs as areas of interest. It was established with the help of founding Director Cordelia Candelaria, and a Steering Committee that included Ron

---

62 Wong, interview.
Billingsley, Ward Churchill, Patricia Limerick, Charles Nilon and William Wei.63

Dr. William King had been teaching through the degree-granting Black Studies program for several years and his recollections are that “when they created the Center for the Study of Race in America, it was an organization that was led primarily by Hispanics, because they were concerned that given the financial changes that were taking place on the campus, they would not be given the opportunity to become degree-granting, something that Black Studies already had.”64 He continued, sharing that he was among the people that opposed the creation of CSERA because, “it was clear that CSERA was formed primarily for financial and political reasons. It also made it easier to administer one program that had five tracks in it, than to have an associate administer five different programs. I asked the Vice Chancellor Bruce Ekstrand what would happen if Black Studies chose not to participate in CSERA... I was told in no uncertain terms that if Black Studies did not participate and become an active member of the center, then it would receive no further funding from the university.”65 King’s articulation of his experience with the university’s approach to diversity and inclusion casts doubt on UCB’s commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive campus.

In the fall of 1993, CSERA offered 22 different courses, all of which were housed in different departments. Nine pertained to Afro-American Studies, three to American Indian Studies, two to Asian American Studies, and eight to Chicano Studies.66 The themes of these classes ranged from protest movements; to examining race, class and

63 Steven E. Medina, “CSERA NEWS.”
65 King, interview.
gender; family structures; black women; Chicana women; and folklore; as well as how different communities exist within the education system, political system, and other areas. A review of the titles of classes, such as “Women of Color—Chicanas in U.S. Society,” taught by Professor Elisa Facio through the Sociology Department and CSERA, illustrates that what was being taught was intersectional.

Those who taught courses through CSERA that semester included Olivia Arrieta, Dennis Brutus, Jualynne Dodson, Lane Hirabayashi, CSERA Chair Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Annett James, Deward Walker, George Junne, Leticia Williams, William King, Charles Henson, G.Q. Huftaker, Ward Churchill, Salvador Rodriguez del Pino, José Martínez, and Rodney Hero. The three the Latino faculty that would later play a central role in the student movement also taught in CSERA: Estevan Flores, Elisa Facio and George Rivera.

The courses offered in the spring of 1994 were similar to those offered in 1993, but a new category was added to the four subsets: Ethnic Studies. Seven courses were offered that were a part of Afro-American Studies, there were four courses offered under American Indian Studies, three under Asian American Studies, and seven under Chicano Studies. New professors that semester included Kamala Kempadoo, Adrienne Anderson, Maria Montoya, and Rose Ann Renteria. Churchill offered a class titled, “The FBI on Pine Ridge” and a class titled, “Environmental Ethics: Race, Class and Pollution,” which appears to have discussed the intersection of environmental and racial issues. This seems to suggest that the student movement largely dealt with issues related to the

---

environment and also issues pertaining to race, class and intersections with other social issues. Having access to these informative classes was one of the factors that inspired students to later take action.

**INVST Community Leadership Program (CLP)**

In the spring of 1994, Dr. Polly McLean had created a course through the INVST Community Leadership Program (CLP) called Implementing Social Change. “It was a course where students read for example, *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky and varying textbooks that were about empowering people to do something to make a change for the betterment of something or another,” McLean said. “And it was both very theoretical but it also had a strict applied side to it.”

Many of the students who took the class were involved with the Alliance. These included Jennifer Allen, CarolLynn Boender, Anna Davidson, Jeffrey Schwartz, and Carlos Kareem Windham. Together these students represented five of the 11 students that founded SCAEP, which would later become part of the Alliance. Carlos Windham said, “Pretty much everyone in INVST got down. I mean there were the exceptions… because again we were pretty revolutionary. We weren’t about some compromise… it was about messing up the entire system.” This INVST class in particular gave the students the knowledge base to organize and implement much of the activism activities the Alliance engaged in.

---

71 Polly Mclean, interview with Renee Roberts, February 6, 2013, telephone, transcript.
72 Windham, interview.
73 Windham, interview.
“In terms of learning how to deal with the press and all that, we learned that in INVST! We learned that in our classes!” recalls Windham.\textsuperscript{74} He also mentioned how their class spent time studying successful liberation movements across the globe. When asked if this was true, McLean confirmed, “Right. I was involved with the Grenada situation; my dissertation was on Grenada when they tried to create a socialist government. So I taught them about that, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Mozambique, Frelemo Movement in Angola, Tanzania, which was also a socialist movement put in place by a school teacher—actually imagine that—who became their first prime minister, and we talked about Cuba.”\textsuperscript{75} Learning about successful social movements likely inspired students, and when combined with conversations about organizing strategies such as how to utilize media in a movement, also informed them about how different organizing tactics and strategies could be utilized under varying circumstances.

McLean stated that her class played a “fundamental role in helping to get the students the training and teaching them the organizing role that they can employ and the strategies not to get themselves into problems and to help implement social change.”\textsuperscript{76} By providing students with a strong knowledge base and skill set that was both theoretical and practical, and by inspiring her students to take hold of their power and act, McLean provided direct impact that helped the student activists with their organizing efforts in SCAEP and the Alliance.

\textbf{Cultural Unity Student Center’s Leadership Class}

\textsuperscript{74} Windham, interview.  
\textsuperscript{75} Mclean, interview.  
\textsuperscript{76} McLean, interview.
An “Independent Study” was offered through CMA that provided a service-learning experience for one to three credit hours. In addition to this academic opportunity, CMA also provided a three-credit-hour course based on a transformational leadership cultural competency model called the “Leadership Institute.” Its intention was “to prepare and guide students towards effective leadership roles on campus and the broader community.” These academic opportunities that developed cultural competency as well as leadership contributed to the educational training that students involved in the movement for UCB’s Ethnic Studies Department were given, enabling them to organize effectively. Lopez recalls, “I remember they would do a leadership class…I want to say it was that same year. And that just really helped us to build bonds with different students and also challenge ourselves as leaders to really look at ourselves as leaders and to really look at the bigger picture.”

The leadership training by CMA, the training and exposure to community organizing skills and successful revolutions in INVST, and the array of courses on racial ethnic communities offered through CSERA were a contributing factor in preparing students to organize the movement for UCB’s Ethnic Studies Department. Each simultaneously inspired students and provided them with skills that they put to use in the strike that was to come.

Mentorship by staff, faculty and students

77 “The Cultural Unity Student Center- A home away from home for students of color!” CU Student Government Records, in CUSG office. Document in author’s possession.  
78 “The Cultural Unity Student Center- A home away from home for students of color!”  
79 Lopez, interview.
The majority of the mentors that research participants mentioned were either staff in the Cultural Unity Student Center, faculty in CSERA, or student leaders. When asked if there were specific teachers that were involved in personally politicizing her, Wong shared that within CSERA, “Evelyn [Hu-Dehart] was a strong person… Lane Hirabayashi… he was pretty strong for me in terms of articulating my own Asian American identity.”

She also mentions how Facio was influential and stated, “The other teachers and mentors that were really strong for me were from CMA.” Naming those mentors as Deb Raybon, Dale and Michelle Trevino, Cleo [Estrada] and Leslie Cabarrero, she talks about how her first year she was so unhappy at UCB that she “was seriously just trying to leave because I hated it so much.” Continuing she shared, “I think without having that connection to CMA [Cultural Unity Student Center], I don’t know if I would have been as successful or as happy.” She elaborated discussing how the mentors in CMA would “really affirm and validate,” her by saying things like, “This is the institution for you. You need to be able to talk about your experiences and take a hold of your voice. What does it mean when you’re feeling like this?”

A narrative of students involved in the Alliance initially wanting to leave UCB but then staying due to support structures and mentors was a continuous thread in the oral histories. Discussing CSERA and CMA together, Wong shares how she found the combination very effective. “I think jointly, it was a really nice, comprehensive support system.”

When asked about her involvement in the student movement for Ethnic Studies, McLean reflected on her teaching philosophy. “You see, students don’t understand their

---

80 Wong, interview.
81 Wong, interview.
82 Wong, interview.
power on campus and that is what I preached in the class with Carlos,” McLean said. She discussed how the nature of academic institutions leaves students feeling disempowered because they are not usually within the same academic institution for long enough to achieve sustainable change. “But,” she stated, “you’re in life long enough and that’s where I think my impact is, to teach life skills in order to make change wherever you go.”

In addition to working to help students to realize their power, McLean also shed light onto how social dynamics such as gender could be approached so that the outcome was increasing empowerment for all. “In INVST we had been working in particular…about women being represented more. The men tended to try to dominate with intellectual flex and braggadocio. Luckily, because Polly McLean was part of INVST at the time, she wasn’t having that.”

Talking about the INVST class that she taught, McLean stated, “They brought the issue of a hunger strike…. I took the class to teach them how they ought to go about doing … a hunger strike. Now at the same time that this is going on, I was the Faculty Associate to the Chancellor and the Chancellor’s Office… I was hearing what the administration was hearing about more than anything else.” Here McLean shared how she offered her thoughts and knowledge about how to organize a hunger strike when the class asked her. She also shared how her role at that point was limited because she was not initially directly involved in mentoring the student activists about their actions with the Alliance. She stated that this changed when Windham asked for her help.

---

83 McLean, interview.
84 Windham, interview.
85 McLean, interview.
“Carlos decided that I needed to be brought into the inner workings of what was going on, and I said, ‘Well in order to do that, it cannot be on campus. It has to be off campus.’” Once Windham agreed, McLean recalled how they met at one of her friend’s houses in the back yard for what she seemed to suggest were security and privacy concerns. “Carlos and I met to map out where they had their problems, what they needed advice on, and how to move forward. I recall that after we had that meeting we finally started to discuss the issues in the class and I started to visit the tents to give advice.” Throughout the interview she stated, “This part of the story has never been told to anyone.”

From McLean’s statements it seems that she may have been using her position among administrators to inform Windham and the Alliance about how best to strategize. Windham’s memory seems to support this idea. “She was key to my being able to navigate the system and find the right pressure points in order to illustrate what we wanted to illustrate,” he stated. Although one is left to wonder exactly what role she played, it is clear that she was influential in inspiring and providing the INVST CLP class with tactics and strategies to strengthen their student movement.

Describing how she became a teacher, Facio stated, “I always had teachers that talked about social change and revolution. And I believed in that potential. Learning about socialist projects in Europe and Cuba, a lot of that knowledge really made me feel empowered, and excited to share with my students. That’s how I began to teach.” Continuing she shared, “I came here wanting to share with them things that had empowered me. Wanting to let them know they could define and organize their

86 McLean, interview.
87 Windham, interview.
education. So, I continued with that and then, that is sort of the background, how students got to know me and why I taught the way I did.”

Student testimonies provide compelling evidence that she achieved her goal and inspire and empower her students with her teaching. Elisa Facio, Cleo Estrada and Dale and Michelle Trevino were people mentioned a great deal when asked about mentors they had during the movement. Lopez stated, “Elisa Facio for sure.” She elaborates describing how going to Cuba with Facio was an event that seemed to have been very inspiring. “In January of 1994 when Elisa Facio set up a brigade to go to Cuba… a number of us went. And I think that really opened our eyes as to how a revolution really could be successful and it was just really amazing to see how full of pride the people were.” Lopez’s words express how important it was that Facio led the brigade to Cuba. Stewart mentioned the student activists that she encountered and Elisa as mentors for her. Describing “the cohort right before I got on campus,” as “hyper-activists,” Stewart talks about how the older student activists were what could be described as mentors. She states, “Were able to sort of learn from them.” When asked about other mentors she says, “the only person that I really believed in as a mentor was Elisa Facio. We all became really close with Elisa.”

Quintana shares, “Elisa was really good, she was real supportive.” He also spoke highly of the support that Estrada provided. “Cleo was amazing. She was a great support. If there had twenty Cleo’s there, that would help everyone. She was so helpful my first year.” Encinias echoed other students by sharing how inspiring and influential Cleo

---

88 McLean, interview.
89 Lopez, interview.
90 Bernadette Stewart, interview with Renee Roberts, January 10, 2013, her office in Old Main in the UCB campus, transcript.
91 Quintana, interview.
Estrada, and Dale Trevino were. He also articulated that the upper class was important when it came to mentoring. “We had a very strong upper class there.” Foy stated, “Ward Churchill certainly was really influential for me, his classes, curriculum and working with him… He was very much a mentor and kind of an advisor in the Alliance work, the lead up to the hunger strike and the actual hunger strike.” Each of these quotes illustrates the significance of the mentors during the movement that were often found as student leaders, in CMA, or in CSERA.

The high racial tensions of the early 1990s within the larger political moment prompted students to examine UCB’s commitment to ethnic and racial equity, and by utilizing UCB’s existing institutional support structures for diversity. During this time, there were not many resources available to students of color, but those that were in existence were important to recruit, retain, and empower marginalized students. These structures such as the Cultural Unity Student Center, the Environmental Center, the Cultural Events Board, University of Colorado Student Union, the University Memorial Center, the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America (CSERA), INVST Community Leadership Program and the leadership class offered through the Cultural Unity Student Center provided support for creating an inclusive campus and were instrumental in providing opportunities for support, education, and politicization.

The next chapter will highlight the key student groups that worked together extensively within the Alliance to fight for the formation of the Ethnic Studies Department. Using the resources available to them, they began seeking out additional opportunities to continue to educate themselves about successful organizing strategies.

---

92 Michelle Foy, interview with Renee Roberts, February 6, 2013, telephone, transcript.
gaining organizing experience through putting these skill sets into action, and continuing community- and coalition-building. Inspired and empowered by their mentors as well as academic and non-academic experiences, these factors fueled the student activists to take a stand.
Chapter 2: Escalation with UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE

“We had a broader mission around anti-neoliberalism and internationalism, but also looked at the impact of these economic and social policies at home.” – Michelle Foy, a Caucasian student leader involved with SCAEP, ACHANGE and the Alliance

“UMAS was a place for all of us to belong and feel like we had strength in numbers and feel like we had other people to share our problems with or just have fun with. That was our way to belong in Boulder.” – Raquel Lopez, a Latina leader in UMAS y MEChA and the Alliance

Three student groups that were primarily responsible for organizing and leading the grassroots student movement for an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder in the Spring of 1994 were UMAS (United Mexican American Students) y MEChA (Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) and ACHANGE (Action Coalition Helping Achieve A New Global Equity). The groups would eventually join forces to establish “the Alliance,” which demanded that the university be accountable to its claimed commitment to racial diversity. ACHANGE consisted of primarily white members that organized around fighting for sustainable development in the U.S. and abroad by fighting against globalization and neoliberalism and the destructive consequences these systems have on people and the environment both nationally and internationally. UMAS organized around their identities as Chicano students with a rich legacy of Chicano activism at UCB and the goal of remembering, celebrating and taking pride in the Chicano culture through cultural nationalism. MEChA also organized around their identities as Chicano students advocating for Chicano

93 Michelle Foy, interview with Renee Roberts, February 6, 2013, telephone, transcript.
empowerment and wider aims social justice with a more radical set of politics than UMAS. UMAS y MEChA worked together intimately and while they were separate organizations, they usually organized together.

This chapter examines how these student groups utilized the opportunities and resources available to them to strengthen their commitment to activism. The students sought ways to continue community-building on and off campus through alliance work and informative conferences. They educated themselves about successful organizing strategies for social change, and then put their newly gained knowledge into practice, gaining invaluable experience. Taking these steps increased the student’s politicization and provided opportunities for empowerment and inspiration to act. In addition, these were some of the factors that accumulated into the base from which the students mounted a successful struggle for an Ethnic Studies Department. The amazing result would be that with their vastly different ideologies coalesced into a united front with the Alliance. Examining each student group sheds light onto how this was able to occur.

**Action Coalition Helping Achieve a New Global Equity (ACHANGE)**

**History, Mission and Internal Structure**

It is important to focus on the student group ACHANGE (Action Coalition Helping Achieve A New Global Equity) because it was from this group that the student group that Student Coalition for the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality (SCAEP) would later emerge. SCAEP is important to explore because this student coalition was one of the three student groups that struggled for justice with UMAS y MEChA during the student
movement. Together, these three organizations achieved a great deal by joining forces to create ‘the Alliance’.

A large number of members and leaders within SCAEP were first involved with ACHANGE. Former student activist Michelle Foy recalls, “More or less everyone that was involved in ACHANGE ended up being a part of… ACHANGE was interesting because we were kind of an alliance. That’s how we [SCAEP] had built relationships—through people in UMAS y MEChA, through ACHANGE, but also through the African Student Alliance and other groups. I think at that time, ACHANGE was predominantly white, Carlos [Windham] and Leslie [Wong] had come to us to talk about forming SCAEP.”  

Responding to the clarifying question, “So Carlos and Leslie proposed the idea to form a separate group called SCAEP and then most of the members of ACHANGE became members of SCAEP?” Foy responded, “That’s how I remember it.”

An exploration of ACHANGE’s history and mission will provide a foundation from which to discuss their internal structure and activism, and how this influenced the student movement for racial justice and equity. A document in Foy’s possession with no date appeared to be an informational flier. It showed that ACHANGE underwent a name change in its earlier stages, and that it also shifted its mission. The document was titled, “An Introduction to ACHANGE, or Who Are We Anyways?” It provided insight to the origins and ideas behind ACHANGE. The document stated:

95 Foy, interview.
96 Foy, interview.
97 “An Introduction to ACHANGE, or Who Are We Anyways?” Michelle Foy Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.
“The Action Collective Hot to Achieve a New Global Equity, (or Anarchist Comrades Hot for a New Global Ecstasy) was born in the fall of 1992 with the immediate aim of raising awareness about the dangers posed by the trade agreements (GATT and NAFTA) for the environment and social justice. We soon realized that it was impossible to separate trade issues from general issues of international justice, such as north/south debt relations, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, racism, militarism, etc. We also felt it was important to look at political and economic repression in our own back yard.

What emerged was a dual focus on sustainable international development and a commitment to support the struggles of those communities in the U.S. that have been victimized by inappropriate development (e.g., indigenous communities, the urban poor, and immigrants).”

Besides illustrating how the group initially came together with a sense of playfulness and fun with their original quirky name, the statement released by ACHANGE reveals that the organization came into existence to address how problematic trade agreements such as GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) were. It also shows how ACHANGE then evolved into an organization that had a broader interest in how systems of power impacted people not only internationally but also locally. The 1993–94 “University of Colorado at Boulder Club Guide” described ACHANGE as follows: “ACHANGE (A Coalition Helping Achieve a New Global Equality) is dedicated to pursuing a vision of environmental and social justice. Our work has focused on educating the campus

98 “An Introduction to ACHANGE, or Who Are We Anyways?”
community on the impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and addressing environmental racism.” Both mission statements illustrate how as white allies, their mission of working for social justice explicitly included combatting racism.

Rich oral histories and archival documents inform this discussion about these student groups, and from these analysis can reveal the ideologies behind ACHANGE, and what issues they were motivated by. For example, Foy’s elaboration provides additional insight. “It felt like we were trying to understand the root causes around social, economic and environmental injustice and understand those connections,” she states. “That the root cause of the challenges at UCB Boulder around lack of support for tenure for faculty of color is connected to what’s happening in the Maquiladoras in Mexico. There are similar and interconnecting forces at play.” Committed to struggling against national and international destructive development that harmed the environment and marginalized communities, they addressed these inequities by engaging in various forms of activism. Not only did ACHANGE’s activist efforts exhibit a group value of inclusion, but their internal structure also reflected their commitment to inclusion.

Documentation from a daylong meeting that ACHANGE held on March 14, 1993 provides details on how ACHANGE functioned internally and the efficiency of its democratic organizational structure. However, the group did acknowledge that some areas needed improvement. The document, titled, “ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993,” gives a basic recap, in which introductions and announcements were made first, followed by a poem by Assata Shakur, discussion based in a commitment to consensus about long- and short-term goals, the review of areas of improvement, a

99 “University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
100 Foy, interview.
brainstorming session for future projects, and how the group would organize the logistics for these projects.101

The notes begin with a reminder about the importance of the role of facilitator. “Accept the facilitator role as a serious responsibility: listen for repetition, keep folks on topic, watch for people who talk too much, or those who just listen. Arrive at meetings on time and be prepared for the topics at hand (an invested sense of what must be accomplished at each meeting), listen for emerging consensus, and periodically take straw polls on controversial issues.”102 ACHANGE seemed to believe that facilitation within group conversations was an important for creating a community grounded in democracy and inclusion. Their emphasis on this demonstrates that creating this kind of community was important to them.

Next on the agenda was goal-setting. Notes on these goals include the importance of coalitions that reach across differences, the importance of creating a safe and inclusive culture within ACHANGE, remembering to place importance on mentorship, activism around social and environmental issues, and curriculum reform.103 The fact that ACHANGE members intentionally wanted to reach out to create coalitions across difference and create an inclusive culture within their group makes logical sense when one considers the significant role that the some of their members would later play in the student movement for racial justice and equity. It is also important to note that their concept of mentoring also included peer mentorship. The group’s curriculum reform is also a point to notice, because it showed that their interest in this area already existed and

---

102 “ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993.”
103 “ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993.”
likely contributed to the community conversations about needing alternative curriculums, such as those offered through CSERA (Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America).

The agenda was structured with each student taking turns to express their top two priorities, thus ensuring that all voices present could be heard and creating a collective focus on issues. This structure speaks volumes about how ACHANGE organized. (Since this student group providing the starting point for SCAEP, these characteristics were probably also present in SCAEP and the Alliance). The two main goals that emerged from this consensus were: “We will struggle against the Globalization of Capital, and simultaneously… fight domestic repression and the Restriction of People.” The full articulations of the goals are:

1) We will struggle against the Globalization of Capital, and the role of GATT, NAFTA, IMF, the World Bank, and other financial institutions in the underdevelopment and environmental degradation of the Third World. We will work for a genuine new World Order of sustainable development, national sovereignty, and equitable resource redistribution.

2) Simultaneously, we will fight domestic repression and the Restriction of People: While fighting NAFTA and free trade we will also oppose the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and forced separation of indigenous nations. We will oppose domestic oppression in all its forms: imprisonment, political repression, sexism, racism, economic neglect and exploitation, heterosexism and anti-

104 "ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993."
Semitism, etc. While working for sustainable international development, we will work for poor communities and self-determination in the United States.  

Next, the meeting notes discuss the strengths and weaknesses of ACHANGE. Strengths included hard-working members, a great model of community, organizing skills, and members with open minds. Weaknesses and areas needing improvement included “men don’t do their fair share of the work,” the need to mentor and teach younger activists more frequently, increasing internal education, more follow-through on commitments, and the perception that the group is “not open enough for new people.” For Chapter Four, these assessments become extremely relevant when exploring the intergroup dynamics of the Alliance, especially the concerns about gender and internal education.

**Activist Experience and Coalition Building**

True to its stated principle of coalition building, ACHANGE created several relationships with other progressive and ethnic student groups that were involved with the Alliance. One example of ACHANGE’s coalitional work with UMAS y MEChA and other ethnic student groups can be found in a fundraising effort and coordination of sending four students to a conference in Guadalajara, Mexico. A letter from ACHANGE and other student groups dated October 22, 1992, reads, “Dear Community Leader, Talk about ‘free trade’ puts people to sleep but it’s time we wake up fast! We represent a coalition for student groups on this campus that have come together to sound the wake-up call for economic and environmental justice. While we have been dozing, President Bush

---

105 “ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993.”
106 “ACHANGE Strategy Session Notes, March 14, 1993.”
has pushed for new international trade policies in the North American Free Trade Agreement that will threaten labor and human rights and environmental legislation.”

The letter proceeds to explain how the coalition seeks to send four students; one from UMAS, MEChA, ACHANGE, and the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) to represent CU at a Continental meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico “to form a unified tri-national response to NAFTA.”

In a second letter seeking funding support from student leaders, the coalition of student groups stated that they “are also working in coalition with Rainforest Action Group, Progressive Student Network, and the African Student Alliance.” These letters show that ACHANGE was already well connected to different progressive and ethnic student groups on campus the fall of 1992, a full two years before the formation of the Alliance. These previously established relationships undoubtedly helped increase the level of successful coalition and alliance work that occurred in the spring of 1994.

The group’s democratic organizational skills and structure allowed them to successfully raise the funds needed to attend the conference. Along with the activism mentioned above that was in collaboration with UMAS, ACHANGE and other groups, MEChA also attended conferences such as the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) and the MEChA conferences. Traveling to conferences was something that several student groups chose to do.

---

108 “Continental student meeting fundraising letter.”
110 Quintana, interview.
The conference that ACHANGE, UMAS, MEChA and SEAC sought to attend was “Encunetro Continetal de Estudiantes” (Continental Meeting of Students), which from the accessible documentation suggest was organized by or in collaboration with a group called the International Student Trade, Environment and Development Program (INSTEAD).\(^{111}\) Examining what this conference was about sheds light onto what UMAS, MEChA and ACHANGE were interested in, educated about, what their ideologies were, and what other experiences they shared. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a space for students from Canada, the U.S. and Mexico to gather to share ideas and build relationships in an effort to put an end to the trade agreements that they found to be very exploitative. A letter from INSTEAD sent on November 16, 1992, to those attending the meeting in Guadalajara provided a basic list of definitions to work from for the conference so that participants would have the same language to discuss complex issues, information that would be discussed later, and the agenda.\(^{112}\) Analysis of the letter provides an understanding of the political ideologies of the organization that heavily influenced progressive student groups across North America, two years before the movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB.

The letter states, “A definition you will find used often in this agenda is neo-liberalism… a very basic way to define this term: an economic strategy to make rich people richer and poor people poorer. In the U.S. today, “conservatives” generally support free trade, or neo-liberal economic policies.” INSTEAD also discusses how


education is one of the prevailing themes. INSTEAD approached their analysis of issues of inequity from the perspective in which inclusion of marginalized voices was a priority. For example, the third day of the conference opened with a six-hour discussion on the “impacts of the NAFTA agenda on a variety of sectors in society,” including people of color/indigenous issues, women, border issues/human rights/immigration, environment, farmers/agricultural workers, and labor.\textsuperscript{113} The fact that UMAS, MEChA, ACHANGE and other student groups chose to attend this particular conference suggests that each group shared a similar understanding of trade agreements and what these meant when contextualized within neoliberalism, imperialism, environmentalism, racism and more.

After four days of discussion and debate in the meeting in Guadalajara in November of 1992, “the students identified a need to consolidate and build upon movements within and across their countries for economic, social and environmental justice.” They also decided, “In the struggle for justice, there was consensus on the need for a fundamentally different method of interaction between the people of the three countries.”\textsuperscript{114} This idea of coalition as a solution for social change is important to take note of, because the students would continue to hold this as value and use it as a strategy.

At the end of the conference, the attendees released a statement that declared that NAFTA should be challenged because of the destructive effects it would have on both people and the planet, and that youth needed to mobilize around this issue immediately. The U.S. delegation from the conference issued a press release titled, “Declaration of

\textsuperscript{113} “Letter from INSTEAD preparing for the continental meeting.”
\textsuperscript{114} “Encuentro Continetal de Estudiantes- A Continental Call for Economic, Social & Environmental Justice.”
Opposition to the NAFTA,” that articulated the same urgent call to action.\footnote{US Press Release- Declaration of Opposition to the NAFTA,” Darin Quintana Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.} The press release sheds light on the political ideology the ACHANGE, UMAS y MEChA students at CU held and foreshadows the student movement for Ethnic Studies. The release reveals their commitment to activism as well as their understanding of social and environmental justice at a deep level. It shows that their politicization revolved around an analysis of structural forces and how these forces affected people, especially those already marginalized.

When the CU students returned from the conference, the student groups continued their activism, honoring the commitment to bring the information back to the Boulder campus. In the spring of 1993, ACHANGE published a document in collaboration with the UCB Environmental Center, titled, “Confronting Neo-Colonialism at Home and Abroad: NAFTA, GATT, World Bank, and IMF.”\footnote{“Confronting Neo-Colonialism at Home and Abroad: NAFTA, GATT, World Bank, and IMF,” Darin Quintana Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.} An article in the \textit{Colorado Daily} on February 18, 1993 titled “Students oppose pending U.S. trade agreement” cited the four students who attended the conference in Guadalajara and invited students to a “mock funeral for the victims of pollution along the Texas/Mexico border” that was to be held that day by the fountain.\footnote{“Students oppose pending U.S. trade agreement,” \textit{Colorado Daily}, February 18, 1993, Darin Quintana Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.} The creation of educational literature and street theater provided the UCB campus with information about the social and environmental injustices perpetuated by capitalism and trade agreements.

A few days after this protest, ACHANGE, UMAS, MEChA, and other ethnic or progressive student groups hosted “Activist Networking Conference- Free Trade and the
New World Order; Environmental and Labor Causalities.”¹¹⁸ The first session was, “Confronting Neocolonialism at Home and Abroad and the keynote was “Free Trade & the New World Order: The Hidden Agenda.”¹¹⁹ The conference tied together globalization and neo-colonialism, and argued that human rights and self-determination were indispensable ways to fight the problems they created. The INSTEAD Conference inspired the activists, prompting ACHANGE, along with the other student groups, to plan, organize, and conduct this half-day conference for UCB campus. ACHANGE continued to raise awareness about the issues they were educated about. Planning, creating and implementing these activities demanded time, resources and a high level of commitment and dedication. The political ideologies and organizational skills developed by ACHANGE later proved useful when SCAEP and the Alliance addressed issues foreshadowed here.

Examining ACHANGE between 1992 and 1994 highlights several key points about the group and its members. First, they were committed and effective activists who created a collective statement of their goals, vision, and action steps. They had deep knowledge of social and environmental justice issues. They provided awareness and education in a variety of ways, including using street theatre, organizing events on campus, writing and distributing educational literature and news articles. Second, they understood the importance of creating successful alliances and coalitions. Indeed, they also had previously established relationships with other student groups such as UMAS y MEChA and the good standing would be critical in coalition building for the Alliance.

¹¹⁹ “Activist Networking Conference.”
Their experience, skill sets, political ideology and commitment to act would later be essential in the movement to create an Ethnic Studies department.

**UMAS y MEChA:**

*UMAS y MEChA... was really good to have because up in Boulder,,, as a Latino, you’re just lost. And if you don’t have that grounding or someone there... the Caucasian people, they just have no clue. So if you’re Latino and not wealthy... UMAS y MEChA really helped to have friends. – Darin Quintana, a Chicano student leader that co-founded ACHANGE, was President of UMAS and a leader within the Alliance*¹²⁰

UMAS y MEChA were two of the groups that ACHANGE worked with most often in coalitions. Like ACHANGE, both UMAS y MEChA were committed to coalition building. Although they were separate organizations, UMAS y MEChA worked in collaboration so often, that this chapter will discuss them together.

**United Mexican American Students (UMAS):**

**Historical Legacies**

UMAS organized around their identities as Chicano students with a rich legacy of Chicano activism at UCB and the goal of remembering, celebrating and taking pride in the Chicano culture. In regard to UMAS, the 1993–94 “University of Colorado at Boulder Club Guide” stated, “U.M.A.S. is a support group for students of Latino descent,

¹²⁰ Quintana, Interview.
whose activities include Cinco de Mayo celebration and attending local, state and national conferences.”

Exploring the rich history of UMAS reveals how its values and mission prior to 1994 came to contribute to the vital role it played in the struggle for Ethnic Studies. According to a document created by UCB UMAS members, the Boulder chapter originated in 1968 when a group of nine Chicano students at UCB formed a program to provide support services to ensure academic excellence for all Chicano students. It was called the United Mexican-American Student-Education Opportunity Program (UMAS-EOP). In 1969, 21 UMAS-EOP students took over the Regents administrative building, demanding that financial aid organize their office so that students could access their accounts and be assured that they were accurate. This was sparked by student’s frustration with a common problem of not having their tuition distributed on time. All 21 of the students were arrested. When Richard Falcon was fired from his position as Tutorial Coordinator for the UMAS-EOP Program, after working there from 1969 to 1971, the students in the program were convinced that the reason was because Falcon had been among the 21 students who were arrested for protesting.

The firing of Falcon became a central politicizing issue for the Chicano students involved in the UMAS-EOP, joining existing issues such as limited access to financial aid, and opposition to Board of Regents member Joe Coors, whom UMAS members believed to be racist. Another pressing issue was that when Falcon was fired, Paul Acosta and Jose Franco were appointed by the University to fill the coordinating position of the

---

121 “University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
123 “UMAS HISTORY.”
UMAS-EOP. Unsatisfied with Acosta and Franco’s performance, and frustrated that previous coordinator Falcon had, in their view, been unjustly fired, the students again took over the Regents’ administrative building to make demands that had previously been ignored. After four days, the administration finally agreed to some of the demands, but as time passed, those promises remained unfulfilled. In 1974, 29 UMAS-EOP students barricaded themselves in what was then the UMAS-EOP office, now called Temporary Building #1. Fighting for control of their program, the students were able to resist police arrest for 19 days. Their success forced Acosta and Franco to resign, allowing the UMAS-EOP students to gain back complete control of the program. However, this historic victory heightened the tension between the Chicano students, police and the administration.

On May 27, 1974, an explosion occurred at Chautauqua Park in Boulder, killing six influential Chicano UMAS-EOP leaders: Neva Romero, Una Jaakola, Reyes Martinez, Francisco Dougherty, Florencio "Freddie" Granados Heriberto Teran. According to UMAS, the “authorities again depicted the bombing as though the victims accidentally set the bomb off themselves while preparing for a terrorist act…. There was not enough evidence to prove the police accusations.” No official explanation was ever provided by police, saying only they believed the victims were arming the bombs. A federal grand jury was convened, but its findings were not made public and no person was indicted. According to the document created by UCB UMAS members, after the

124 “UMAS HISTORY.”
125 “UMAS HISTORY.”
126 “UMAS HISTORY.”
tragedy, the university slowly regained the power that UMAS-EOP once held.\textsuperscript{127}

However, UMAS lived on. In the spring of 1990 they protested the appearance of Linda Chavez on campus, and continued to vocalize objections when the university accepted donations from Coors.\textsuperscript{128} What is also noteworthy is the graphic and statement featured at the end of this document. The graphic features a person that appears to be “indigenous” that carries a bag on his bag with books inside titled, “Chicano Literature” and “Art.” The visual asserts that Chicano’s may have lost their land, but through education they will persist.

When recalling how UMAS y MEChA’s activism was informed and inspired by these historical ties, student Bernadette Stewart stated, “There were some significant activists … part of that was that there were a lot of historical ties… the cohort right before I got on campus; their relatives were here in the 70s, when there was crazy activism going on!”\textsuperscript{129} Foy also points out how UMAS y MEChA’s local history impacted their activism, “From what I recall, Raquel, you know her family history and her relationship to her uncle who had been killed in Los Seis… there was a history that they were really trying to uphold and bring.”\textsuperscript{130}

Lopez’s memories of leading the marches provide an example of the powerful ways that the historical legacies of Chicano activists in the 60’s and 70’s were remembered and honored. Lopez recalled, “I remember being the one that would lead the marches; the one that was on the megaphone… We always paid tribute to Los Seis of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127}“UMAS HISTORY.”
\item \textsuperscript{128}“UMAS HISTORY.”
\item \textsuperscript{129}Bernadette Stewart, interview with Renee Roberts, January 10, 2013, her office in Old Main in the UCB campus, transcript.
\item \textsuperscript{130}Foy, interview.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Boulder, so for example we would always say, ‘Neva Romero, Presenta!’ and just know that they were with us in spirit.” Lopez elaborates, “We had always had Cesar Chávez as a hero and we had seen how powerful his hunger strikes had been to bring awareness to different social issues.” Discussing how organizing strategies were selected Lopez stated, “I remember we also used a lot of the strategies that UMAS had used in the 1970’s, with occupying buildings and sit ins and stuff like that… to really get the university to listen to us.”

Sharing how she enjoyed leading the marches and mentioning how doing so enabled her to remember and honor Los Seis is relevant because it seems that for her to be able to engage in actions such as marching to the Regents building, doing a sit in at the Regents building and at the meeting that administration was expected to be present at, and participating in the hunger strike were all inspired by legacies of Chicano activism on the UCB campus and across the U.S. in the 60’s and 70’s.

**Cultural Nationalism as a source of empowerment**

UMAS’s deep roots in Chicano activism directly impacted their work as well as the dynamics of the Alliance. Despite the tragedy with Los Seis, UMAS members seemed to have found inspiration in their legacy and this inspiration fueled their commitment to attaining equity for Chicanos on campus. Another characteristic ingrained into UMAS was an emphasis on honoring, the legacies of Chicano activism by remembering, preserving, and taking pride in the Chicano culture, which often

---

131 Lopez, interview.
manifested into cultural nationalism. Additional documentation of UMAS during this time gives a wealth of examples of this.

A ten-page booklet published in 1993, just before the formation of SCAEP, showed UMAS’s dedication to remembering, preserving and having pride in their Chicano culture. It celebrated the XXV Anniversario (25th Anniversary) of Cinco de Mayo, offers insight on the extent to which UMAS embraced cultural nationalism and how its members were empowered by their activist roots on the UCB campus. The inside cover depicts a Chicana woman on a ladder using sculptor’s tools to carve images into the Statue of Liberty from the bottom up, to reveal a statue depicting images associated with indigeneity, with the bottom of the statue reading, “AZTLAN.” A statement next to the picture reads, “I didn’t cross the border. The border crossed me.” The page across this inside cover is an agenda for the events offered through that year’s Cinco de Mayo celebration. Taking place on May 3, 1993, with Cleo Estrada serving as the master of ceremonies, the first series of events occurred on the UMC Terrace. The events advocated and celebrated bilingual education, Chicana identity, and Chicano poetry, music, and dance. A live comedy show took place in the Glenn Miller Ballroom. The evening closed with a performance by Dr. Loco and His Rockin’ Jalapeño Band (sponsored by CEB). The event illustrates UMAS’s emphasis on Chicano social and political issues and its ability to organize and gather the resources to host such an event.

Filled with pictures of “los pachucos” low-riders, and graphics and designs that appear “indigenous,” the pages of the booklet convey UMAS’s focus on creating and maintaining a strong sense of cultural pride. Also found throughout the booklet are

---

132 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
133 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
phrases such as “Si se puede!” and “Get an education and put it to work for your people!” and “Lost to our land, education is out stand!” and “Viva la raza!”

Throughout, the publication pays reverence and respect to family, older generations, and their ancestors. The dedication page states, “We would like to wish UMAS a happy Cinco de Mayo! Never forget the death and sacrifices of our ancestors. It is their legacy of resistance that demands that we continue the fight. Siempre en lucha!”

All of these things articulate UMAS’s cultural nationalism.

UMAS honored the legacy of the activists who came before them and inspired them to give back to their community. In the booklet’s opening statement, Monica Barragán offers an articulation of how UMAS celebrated the historical legacies of Chicano activism and how their successes inspired many Chicanos to continue working to give back to the Chicano community. “This year we observe the 25th anniversary of organized Chicano student involvement on the CU campus.” Barragán celebrated and paid respect to those who worked for the uplifting of the Chicano community at UCB. She imparts a sense of urgency to continue their legacy.

“But yet we struggle against the same realities our parents faced 25 years ago. We know Chicanos still have the highest high school drop-out rates, the highest unemployment rates and one-third continue to live below the poverty level. Today—25 years later—Chicano issues remain the same. We must continue to fight for la causa with pride and never forget out history. The dedication of past Chicano students made it possible for us to be in college today. But it is not enough to simply recognize this. In order to make a difference we must take out

---

134 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
135 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
experiences and knowledge back to our communities, where the struggle continues. Que Viva UMAS!\textsuperscript{136}

Barragán’s words illustrate UMAS’s commitment to give back and empower the Chicano community, while proudly remembering and honoring their history.

“Racism,” a poem by Miguel Barragan, reads, “‘Go back to where you belong,’ the man told me. But this is where I belong, why do you scold me? Millions of years have passed by, but I can still hear my people cry. A fist in the air, means a lot today.

‘CHICANO POWER’ is what we still say. But there is a long road from the first to the heart, to stay on that road is the toughest part… Racism can only be stopped through education. Maybe then America can become a united nation.”\textsuperscript{137} This poem speaks to the racism that directly impacted and hurt the Chicano community at UCB. The narrative of belonging on UCB’s campus continues with Barragan’s poem. He expressed that his historical roots are a source of empowerment for him. It also speaks to the perceived solution among some of the Chicano students experiencing racism on the UCB campus. Barragan clearly articulated his belief that education is the only way to eradicate racism. This helps to explain why UMAS was central to the movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB. From the struggle of persisting on a campus that they perceived as a racially hostile environment, students in UMAS sought education through the Ethnic Studies as a solution that they believed in.

MOVIMENTO ESTUDIANTIL CHICANO DE AZTLAN (MEChA)

History and Mission

\textsuperscript{136} “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”

\textsuperscript{137} “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
MEChA organized around their identities as Chicano students advocating for Chicano empowerment and social justice. A document MEChA created to share their history and mission states, “Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) is a Chicano student organization at CU that was formed in 1986 to provide a national network of students to work with on various issues. “M.E.Ch.A is committed to 1) increased Chicano/Chicana enrollment; 2) increased Chicano/a faculty; 3) cultural diversity.” The 1993–94 “University of Colorado at Boulder Club Guide” describes MECHA as “a national student organization that promotes the culture of Chicano/a students on campus, political issues on campus and political issues of people of color in institutions of higher education.”

The website for the UCB chapter of MEChA describes the organization thusly: “M.E.Ch.A. was started nationwide in the late 1960's to unite various Chicana/Chicano student organizations.” Their focus on education as a tool for liberation is made explicit when they continue and state that one of their goals is to provide an organization “where students from all backgrounds unite for a common cause: EDUCATION.” Drawing a parallel between their expression in the importance of education and their advocacy around Ethnic Studies, which is often described as an alternative education, where the stories and voices communities of color are central, is a point that needs emphasis. From their articulated mission, it is very understandable why they would choose to struggle for an Ethnic Studies Department.

138 “Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA),” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
139 University of Colorado at Boulder 1993 Club Guide.”
Their mission continues by stating, “M.E.Ch.A. continues to fight in the struggle for justice, for Xicana/o people, and ultimately all oppressed peoples through the education of our communities and ourselves.” This will be come even more meaningful when discussing inclusion within the Alliance. MEChA elaborates more on their value of inclusion later in their statement stating, “The term Xican@ is a term based on cultural, social, and political consciousness… Simply put, Xican@ means that we are the descendants of the original civilizations of this land (i.e. Mexica, Inca, Maya) with our own history, language, and cultura.” Their mission then goes on to explain what Aztlán is. “Aztlán is the homeland of our indigenous ancestors. Many people believe that Aztlán is located in what is now called the Southwestern United States. M.E.X.A. de CU Boulder believes that Aztlán is a state of mind, always present, wherever Xican@s actively work for the liberation and self-determination of nuestra gente.”141 As a result of this philosophy, they state that their organization is inclusive towards all people. “We accept the challenge of combating all forms of oppression as experienced through racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism both inside and outside of our Movement.”142

This self-definition of their mission and explanation of their values is significant because it illustrates two characteristics of MEChA that are important to understand: their understanding of combating systems of inequality, and their embrace of cultural nationalism. Firstly, they state that they want to combat all forms of oppression, unlike UMAS at the time, which was solely focused on supporting Mexican American and Chicano students. Like ACHANGE, it seems that they understand social injustice as systemic and interconnected through the way that they state their intention to combat,
racism, classism, sexism and heterosexism. Their discussion about what it means to be Chicano/Xicano and what Aztlan is, are articulations of cultural nationalism as well, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Comparing UMAS and MEChA, MEChA’s mission is aimed more at creating radical social change than UMAS. Because this document was probably written after the students in the Alliance left UCB, it is difficult to determine how much of this political ideology was present in MEChA during the early 1990s. However, it is probably safe to assert that some of these ideologies existed at the time, especially because MEChA is a national organization.

**Internal Structures of UMAS y MEChA**

The internal structures within UMAS y MEChA reveal that the organizations functioned democratically with a looser approach to the rigidity often associated with some forms of democracy. Leslie Wong stated, “I think that for the student groups that were already established, they do have a traditional system of something like a hierarchy because they are a formalized group; they do a lot of event planning and funding requests and things like that. So it’s pretty common to have this hierarchy.” Stewart agreed that as an older and more established group, UMAS y MEChA had a hierarchy and were democratic, but were less rigid in their implementation of this system. “I would say that it was sort of democratic. It was just so free form. A member would say, ‘We should work on this,’ and then the others would say ‘Yeah!’ and then we would just go after it. It was fire hose style.” When remembering the different positions within UMAS y MEChA Stewart stated that there was “Vice President and someone that dealt with the budget, and I cant remember if there was someone that was taking the minutes. So I would say that it

---

143 Wong, interview.
wasn’t exactly the most organized situation. There were elections… but once the
meetings began, it was not ‘Roberts Rule of Order’. It really was just a free for all. I do
remember that sometimes there were agendas, especially during this time. There were
goals, or whenever we had an event… there were logistics and things had be to
assigned.”

Stewart stated that while the organizational model used by UMAS y MEChA
contained a level of disorganization, the model worked well for them. “I think it’s
interesting because culturally, I don’t think that more structure would have gone over
well. I don’t know if other members would have wanted more structure and
bureaucracy.” When asked about the internal structures of UMAS y MEChA, Quintana
stated, “One year I was President and maybe like Co-Chair the next year. And then we
had Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer etc.” Lopez echoed this statement when
discussing the internal structure of the Alliance. “I know it was a vote, democratically the
way that we would hold our meetings.” Her sentiment shows that she found the UMAs
MEChA meetings democratic.

The differentiation between UMAS y MEChA, besides their separate histories as
Stewart articulated it, was that “it seemed like UMAS was more passive and MEChA was
more militant and there were disagreements about the way that we should approach
things. It seemed like UMAS had more of a history of working with the powers that be,
working through bureaucracy… and MEChA, the people in there were like ‘Screw
them!’ So we had the same goals, it was just about the approach to get to those goals.

144 Stewart, interview.
145 Quintana, interview.
146 Lopez, interview.
And I actually think that it’s a really healthy thing to have both of them. But that’s just my perspective.”\textsuperscript{147} Her memory corroborates the mission of MEChA that was provided on their current website, and her understanding seems to be accurate.

UMAS y MEChA together formed a powerful force. The legacy of activism that UMAS inherited and the militancy of MEChA combined to create student groups that were organized, experienced in activist work, had built coalitions and were poised to respond to needs they saw in their community.

**Establishing Coalitions**

Stewart emphasized the work that was done by student leaders to build the community and coalitions that were already existent prior to the student movement for Ethnic Studies. “At that time it seemed like there was a cluster of student groups that worked very closely with each other like the BSA and Oyate and others. It still seemed like there was amazing community… we were always at each other’s events. I guess I would attribute that to some really key leaders in these organizations being really close to each other. The leadership seemed to be really tight, respectful and interested in supporting the broader cause.”\textsuperscript{148} She articulates how a strong sense and commitment to community was already cultivated between several student groups, and how she attributes this to the leadership from the different communities. By attending each other’s events, working closely with each other and ensuring that people were being respectful, Stewart recalls how community between different groups was created and maintained, and it

\textsuperscript{147} Stewart, interview.
\textsuperscript{148} Stewart, interview.
seems that she attributes this to those students having a commitment to supporting broader causes.

Perhaps the “broader cause,” that Stewart mentioned was what Gabriel described as the vision she had that led her to use her leadership role within UMAS y MEChA to build community. She described how she went about working to see her vision manifest. “That was just my vision. I grew up with a very multicultural experience, so I saw the need for us to be really inclusive. In my place where I had my influence, I really would encourage the members to you know, ‘Don’t just go to Cinco de Mayo. Be present at the Asian events, BSA’s events,’ and I tried to really say that, ‘It is all of us. If we aren’t stepping up now and we don’t have that voice, then who is going to not stand up for us?’” Gabriel articulated how because she understood that ‘it is all of us,’ and that underrepresented groups needed to create coalitions so that they could be strong and support and empower each other, she encouraged the members of UMAS y MEChA to make efforts to build community and coalitions. The work that students did to establish these good relations would directly benefit them when doing the difficult work of creating coalitions.

Small advertisements on the back of the Cinco de Mayo booklet, highlighting different student groups or centers on campus, illustrate the relationships established with UMAS. The BSA ad reads, “Black Student Alliance supports our Brown Brothers and Sisters in their struggle. Viva la Raza! Tengan un feliz Cinco de Mayo.” An ad from CSERA reads in Spanish, “Thank you so much for the students of UMAS for making the

---

150 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
celebration of Cinco de Mayo possible. Congratulations!!!

University of Colorado Student Union (UCSU) posted ads along with other campus resources previously mentioned, including the Environmental Center and the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America (CSERA).

The advertisement from the Environmental Center stated in Spanish: “The Environmental Center, Discover what you can do at the Environmental Center.” The advertisement then lists three services that they are promoting: “Multicultural information about recycling, celebration for Earth Day on September 17,” and “a conference about environmental racism from October 2–4.” The bottom of the ad reads, “The Environmental Center at CU Boulder is working for social and environmental justice.”

The explicit invocation of social and racial justice shows that the Environmental Center saw social and environmental justice as interlocking systems. At the time, the Environmental Center housed a handful of student groups, so if the center was promoting this idea, this may have had implications for other progressive environmental groups on campus. These examples provide specific examples of coalitions and community that were established prior to the student movement for Ethnic Studies. Student groups like UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE provided students with theories and frameworks for action, but specific incidents provided them with causes around which to mobilize. An incident on the Hill was an incident that ignited a great deal of student activism.

Incident on ‘the Hill’

151 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
152 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
153 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
154 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
Accounts of the incident

On September 26, 1993, sometime after midnight, a physical fight between a group of fraternity bothers of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) and a few friends of members of UMAS y MEChA escalated and ended with two of the Chicano men being arrested. This incident, which many interpreted as bias-motivated, sparked a large community response to what activists deemed to be UCB’s culture of racism. Student activist Raquel Lopez issued a statement about the incident saying, “The altercation first started at the youth hostel, which is located to the right of our residence. The surge of the fight eventually pushed us to the sidewalk and lawn located in front of our home. The incident arose out of a conflict between members of the fraternity SAE and our out-of-town friends.” Lopez stated that she had been sitting on her porch down the street from the SAE fraternity and her friends had gone for a walk. A few minutes later, she heard yelling, and ran to see what was wrong. She saw her Latino friends and the SAE fraternity brothers fighting. Police officers arrested Lopez’s friends for assault. As the incident gained increasing public attention, Lopez remained visible and adamant in her position that her friends who had been arrested were victims of the police officers’ racial discrimination.

“Chicanas say police prejudiced—Wrong men arrested after fight, they say,” stated the headline in newspaper. The article read, “A group of Chicana students at the University of Colorado Wednesday charged Boulder police with racial bias after a Sept. 26 incident in which two of their male friends were arrested near a fraternity house for an

---

155 “Lopez’s untitled statement” Personal papers, Darin Quintana. Document in author’s possession.
156 “Lopez’s untitled statement.”
alleged assault.”

“When we attempted to inform the arresting officers that they were in error and that the SAE gang was at fault, we were told to ‘shut up and get back on the curb,’” said Mariá López.” The article continues, stating, “Boulder police did not make note of the alleged fight at the fraternity house. However, police arrested David Heredia, 25 of Vail, and a juvenile at the scene at about 1:30 a.m. on Sept 26… According to the arrest report, officers responded to the area near the fraternity, where suspects were arrested, after taking a report that three Hispanic males had assaulted two men at 111 College Ave… According to the report, officers arrested the two men as they were leaving the residence upon suspicion of second- and third-degree assault.”

The article goes onto describe how the Chicana women present provided different stories. “The women said fraternity members had used racial epithets before and during the fight. They said their friends were on the ground, injured, when police put the handcuffs on them for the earlier alleged assault.”

Lopez’s statement described how “at the initial confrontation between five and ten members of the fraternity were involved. But once people became aware of the incident more and more members of SAE joined in the fighting. I estimate that at one point in the fighting around 40 members of the fraternity were involved in some kind of action.”

The president of the fraternity denied that the fight was racially motivated, as well as the assertion that there was such a large number of fraternity members involved in

---

158 Clay Evans, “Chicanas say police prejudiced.”
159 “Lopez’s untitled statement.”
the physical fight. Lopez adamantly stated otherwise. In her statement, she also recalls how when she asked the SAE members what was happening one answered by saying, “Shut the f*** up bitch, you don’t need to be involved in this.” She says, “When I questioned the statement and his authority, he retaliated by grabbing me roughly by the arms and proceeding to push me up the embankment of grass in the yard of the youth hostel. His pushes forced me to the ground. He left his finger imprints on my arm in the form of bruises.”

Lopez also describes how when the police arrived she was very vocal in her willingness to be a witness to provide information. However, “when the police arrived, they told us that they were not concerned with the incident involving the fraternity, the only incident they were interested in was the one that had happened two blocks across the street. The police officers treated us like second-class citizens.” She continues, “Aren’t the lives of eight Chicanos important enough for the cops to take notice?.... the police sent a definite message to the Chicano community… They told us with their actions exactly how we as Chicanos stand in the Boulder community. Boulder is still as racist as it ever was.”

**Mobilizing to Respond**

One week later, unsatisfied with the lack of justice they had attained, UMAS y MEChA organized a rally and march in protest. News of the protest received significant coverage in at least three area newspapers. The rally and march took place on Saturday,

---

161 “Lopez’s untitled statement.”
November 6, at 11 a.m., and on the next day, the *Daily Camera* and *The Denver Post* published articles about the protest. “Lawmaker calls for racism probe of Boulder police; 100 rally to protest arrests of two during fight,” read the headline. The article highlighted how Colorado State Senator Rob Hernandez, D-Denver “vowed to look into the case.”

The article outlined the series of events that made up the rally that Saturday morning. “Yesterday’s protest began at UCB’s Trumbo Fountain and included a traffic-blocking march down Broadway and a demonstration outside a closed and shuttered Boulder police substation.” The article also stated that “demonstrators claimed the Boulder police reaction was indicative of the routine mistreatment ethnic minorities receive.” President of UMAS, Arturo Jiminez stated, “There are repeated acts of racism here. It’s a hostile environment for minorities. It’s dangerous to really walk down the streets here. We don’t feel safe.” After marching to the Hill to watch a street theater performance about the injustice of the incident, marchers passed the SAE fraternity house where the altercation occurred, but the article states, “no fraternity members answered the door.”

The *Daily Camera* reported, “Chicanos rally to protest treatment by Boulder police.” This account reported over 100 people and described the signs that protestors carried as well as the agenda for the rally by the police station. “Carrying signs that read “Fight Racism,” and “Cops are like the KKK—They’re sexist, racist and anti-gay”” and chanting “Viva la raza,” (Long live the race), participants marched from the University of Colorado’s Trumbo Fountain, to the Boulder Police Hill Annex, where they held a 45-minute rally.” The article alludes to the fact that the police had perhaps closed their doors

---

163 Amy Steve Lipsher, “Lawmaker calls for racism probe of Boulder police.”
since their normal hours of operation stated that the annex should have been open at the time of the rally.

“But the protestors—some whites, some blacks, but mostly Chicanos—went ahead with their plans. Some gave speeches, others sang, and a small group performed a skit that depicted how they perceive Chicanos and whites are treated by police in Boulder.” At the demonstration, organizers also posted a list of demands on the window of the police station. They demanded “that the SAE members be prosecuted; that the police make a formal apology to the Chicano/Mexicano community of Boulder; and that the officers involved in the incident be suspended or dismissed for neglecting to protect the civil rights of the women in the incident.”164

The next day, November 11, another article was published, this time giving voice to the fraternity. “From our perspective, it is a misunderstanding,” said SAE President Brian Hickell. “It’s a real tragedy that this has become a big issue. It’s not helping things; it’s making things worse.” His understanding of the story, even though he was not present for the incident, was that the Chicano men arrested had picked a fight with one of the fraternity’s pledges and that the fraternity brothers then were just “trying to defend a pledge.”165 Despite the large amount of negative media attention that UCB and the fraternity received as a result of the activism, Chicano students did not feel that justice was ever achieved. “Something like that happens, and there is no justice,” said Lopez. “A lot of events like that would happen. Police would come, they would arrest the people of

165 Amy Reinholds, “Fraternity says portrayal of melee is wrong.”
color, wouldn’t do anything to any of the white people that were around… I think that it just got people really upset. And it … it was just time for something to be done.”

Escalation

The incident on the Hill and the movement it spawned is relevant to the formation of UCB’s Ethnic Studies Department for four reasons. First, it illustrates the social climate surrounding UCB at the time. Students saw this incident as bias-motivated, yet did not believe it was addressed as such. Furthermore, they saw it not as an isolated incident, but as part of a broader pattern. The students’ statements that it was not simply an isolated incident, but just one example of racism in the community also speak to this point. Second, the incident illustrates how organized, mobilized, and effective UMAS y MEChA were at the time. Within days of the incident, the student groups responded by organizing a rally, march, and demonstration; creating demands; and gaining significant media attention to raise awareness about their cause. The skills and tactics that UMAS y MEChA used in 1993 foreshadowed their actions a year later in the movement to obtain tenure for Professor Estevan Flores and create an Ethnic Studies Department. Third, the incident shows that coalition and alliance-building that was already occurring in the fall of 1993 provided a foundation for the building of alliances during the spring of 1994.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, exploring the bias-motivated incident sheds light onto the extent of the student’s frustrations and active resistance to the racist culture they experienced while at UCB. Tensions were also exacerbated with the 20-year anniversary of Los Seis approaching that coming spring. UMAS member Darin Quintana

\[166\text{ Lopez, Interview.}\]
worked extensively to collect and compile documentation pertaining to Los Seis and released and widely distributed the booklet on the 25th anniversary of Los Seis. This issue was especially personal for members of UMAS y MEChA and having it on people’s minds was surely another factor in the frustration students felt.

As members of UMAS y MEChA felt an escalating need to act, members of ACHANGE shared their sense of urgency; many ACHANGE participants went on to organize SCAEP (Student Coalition for the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality) that sought to bring racial and ethnic equity to UCB. This second chapter has outlined the circumstances under which UMAS y MEChA and ACHANGE members were ready to organize for action. With rising racial tensions; a sense of possibility that social change could be reached as provided by UMAS’s history; and the skills, experience, and willingness to make it happen, one final event would be the proverbial last straw.
Chapter 3: The Student Movement—The Alliance

“It wasn’t just something that decided to happen. It was something that had been building up for a long time. It wasn’t just one isolated event. It was something that had been building up. The difference was that the stakes had gotten higher.” — Raquel Lopez, former student activist

“The stakes felt high...the stakes felt very high.”— Carlos Kareem Windham, former student activist

Communities of Campus Activism

With the growing unrest and stakes getting higher, student activism escalated quickly during the spring of 1994 at the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB). This chapter outlines the series of events that the student movement engaged into fight for racial justice and equity at UCB. Discussions about fighting for racial justice and equity had been occurring since the winter of 1993 and peaked in the spring of 1994 with a student movement that resulted in a six-day hunger strike. “I remember having the conversations beginning in January, February, and by April we were already doing the hunger strike,” former student activist Leslie Wong recalls. Three Chicano professors, Assistant Professor Elisa Facio, Assistant Professor George Rivera and Assistant Professor Estevan Flores in the Sociology Department came out publicly to protest the racism in the Sociology department that they asserted resulted in Flores being denied tenure. United Mexican American Students (UMAS) y Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) organized to defend their Chicano faculty. The Student Coalition for

168 Carlos Windham, interview by Renee Roberts, January 03, 2013, Skype, transcript.
169 Leslie Wong, interview with Renee Roberts, September 11, 2012, Wong’s office in the Center for Multicultural Affairs in Center for Community on the UCB campus, transcript.
the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality (SCAEP) emerged from some of the membership of Action Coalition Helping Achieve A New Global Equity (ACHANGE), as a new organization working for the formation of an Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder. UMAS and MEChA would eventually create a coalition with SCAEP and together the student groups would expand and organize under the name “the Alliance,” to combine goals and demand ethnic plurality, racial justice and equity on campus. Recollections of how the movement began vary through personal experience and perspective.

**Beginnings**

Former student activist Michelle Foy also recalls this series of events. “I think at that time ACHANGE was predominantly white, and at that time Carlos and Leslie had come to us to talk about forming SCAEP. That’s how I remember it.”\(^{170}\) Wong remembers, “ACHANGE… that was a group that I was really working with at that point, and then pitching ideas to them. And they said, ‘Huh… you know you’re saying what another person on this side named Carlos is saying!’ So we just all kind of came together. We started talking about it more and Carlos and I said, ‘When we have more of an idea [and concrete plan], let’s go back to our communities,’ and that’s when our communities came on board.”\(^{171}\) Wong’s account shows that her work in ACHANGE and exchanging ideas with student activist Carlos Windham about fighting for an Ethnic Studies Department led her and Windham to begin outreach to different ethnic communities in hopes of creating a coalition to advocate for an Ethnic Studies Department at UCB.

---

\(^{170}\) Michelle Foy, interview with Renee Roberts, February 6, 2013, telephone, transcript.  
\(^{171}\) Wong, interview.
Windham was a student in the INVST Community Leadership Program (CLP) and his memories of the cohort in which he was a member illustrate how this community on campus was also frustrated, and ready to act. “At the time it was… I don’t know what happened, man. A bunch of really kind of angry students all ended up there at the same time. We studied what revolutions looked like… we always challenged the authority figures within INVST and we were looking for a fight—we were!” Laughing, Windham continued, “We were just pissy, and the ‘f*** system’ and ‘the man’ sucked and everything sucked ‘F*** this s***! We don’t have to do what you say!’ And I contributed greatly to it. So especially a lot of the kids that came from that vein, I rallied some of those people.”

Poking fun at a younger version of himself and his classmates, Windham describes how many members of his INVST CLP cohort were militant, radical, and ready to fight for justice.

Windham was dissatisfied with American Studies and other degrees offered at UCB, so when his friend Ryan Smith approached him with the idea of working to establish an Ethnic Studies Department, Windham was very interested. “So me and Ryan started talking after class. And we thought about what it would be like to have a major that we could feel good about and how that would look and came up with the idea of Ethnic Studies.” However, for Windham and others, the move toward Ethnic Studies was precipitated by an event in the Department of Sociology.

As Windham recalls, “And then it turned out that at the exact same time, that there were three Latino professors that were all up for tenure at the same time…. That’s when I was talking to Ryan [Smith] and Jenn [Allen] and Marta [Baker] and Raquel

---

172 Windham, interview.
173 Windham, interview.
Windham’s account reveals that he recalled a simultaneous building of momentum behind fighting for an Ethnic Studies Department and defending the three Latino faculty. One can also see that through the networks that and Leslie Wong had access to, the movement for Ethnic Studies began to take shape.

Former student activist Darin Quintana describes the series of events as he recalled them and shed light onto what motivated him to become involved. “Well, CSERA [Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America] was there already, as far as a program. And what all brought it about was that Dr. Flores was going up for his tenure and I think he was denied. And you know, he had been there forever, so they really didn’t recognize the center or him as legitimate. I mean, if he had been teaching Plato or something, I’m sure he would have gotten his tenureship. So he came to an UMAS meeting and talked to us about what was going on, and that he didn’t receive his tenureship and that he was going to be fired.” Quintana’s account illustrates that students and faculty of color were not estranged, but rather were engaged in conversations with each other that began far before the events of 1994 (as Quintana puts it, Flores “had been there forever”) and continued throughout the campaign for Ethnic Studies.

Quintana’s emphasis on the word “legitimate” illustrates his frustration about scholarship on people of color and scholars that research people of color not being accredited. This idea of legitimacy within academia and deserving to belong was a fundamental force behind the student movement for Flores’ tenure, as well as the

---

174 Windham, interview.
formation of an Ethnic Studies Department. Both goals aimed to give legitimacy to the study of people of color and the people that engaged in this research. Quintana concludes, “And it turned out that there was also Elisa Facio and George Rivera going through the same thing. So that kind of started it, and from there we mobilized and got with other people.” 176

Bernadette Stewart was a first year student who had just arrived in Boulder and spent a large portion of her time working and was not as involved on campus as she may have wished. Nevertheless, she became very involved in the movement. Her account is one of an individual who was not necessarily at the center of the movement, but was more peripheral.177 According to her, “We were notified by the leadership [in UMAS y MEChA] that something was happening with Estevan Flores in Sociology going up for review and that for Elisa Facio, it was a hostile environment as well. So basically as I remember, it was just, everyone was like ‘OK, let’s all be aware. We might need to help respond.’ And then it came down that Estevan was denied tenure. From my perspective, that’s what seemed to put it into hyperdrive.”178 From her recollections, the student perspective that Flores was being discriminated against may have sparked Facio and Rivera to also vocalize their experience with what they perceived as a racist environment. Facio and Flores approached UMAS y MEChA and updated them as the tenure process events unfolded. She continued, “Estevan is being denied tenure, we have this hostile

176 Quintana, interview.
177 Bernadette Stewart, interview with Renee Roberts, January 10, 2013, her office in Old Main in the UCB campus, transcript.
178 Stewart, interview.
environment, we don’t have an Ethnic Studies Department… these are all wrongs and we have to help make it right, and let’s protest!”  

UMAS y MEChA- Defending their three Latino faculty

The process for reviewing Flores and determining if he would obtain tenure occurred between November 1993 and April 1994. Filled with explicit racial discrimination (revealed later by an investigation) Flores’ unjust tenure process was the first event that launched students in UMAS y MEChA to mobilize to defend him. On November 23, 1993, the Sociology Department conducted its first process of voting to determine whether Flores would be recommended for tenure. The outcome was five in favor of his tenure, nine against, and three abstained. When Professor Rivera notified Professor Flores about “irregularities” within the balloting process, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Charles Middleton upheld the protests and ordered a second ballot.

On December 14, 1993, the Sociology Department voted a second time on recommending Professor Flores for tenure, and again the results were not in his favor. Because Department Chair Gary Marx voted as a regular faculty member, which was not allowed, and proxy votes were not handled correctly, Rivera notified Flores of these irregularities and Dean Middleton upheld the protest by calling for a third ballot for Flores.

On March 15, 1994, the Sociology Department voted in an unprecedented third

---

179 Stewart, interview.
180 Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
181 Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
182 Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
183 Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
ballot, and the votes once more did not support Flores. Protesting the results of the third ballot because of the irregularities reported yet again by Professor Rivera, Dean Middleton decided on March 24 to “not decide,” on the merits of Flores’ protest of the third ballot and instead passed the decision to the College of Arts and Sciences Personnel Committee, which voted against Flores. From there, Dean Middleton, Vice Chancellor Bruce Ekstrand, Chancellor Jim Corbridge, and President Judith Albino took the recommendation and presented it to the Board of Regents, who ultimately had the power to decide.

For the 1993–94 school year Professor Elisa Facio was serving as advisor to UMAS y MEChA, so when the alleged discrimination began, Facio and Flores approached UMAS y MEChA to update them as to how things were unfolding. Already aware of and outraged by the injustice of three separate votes taken in Flores’ review, all carried out with unethical irregularities, UMAS y MEChA members were ready to take a stand to defend their faculty.

**SCAEP- Demanding an Ethnic Studies Department**

In another community on campus, the organizing efforts of members of the Student Coalition for the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality (SCAEP) had been occurring simultaneously. Initially emerging from some of the membership of Action Coalition Helping Achieve A New Global Equity (ACHANGE), in this new organization working for the formation of an Ethnic Studies Department, the students were able to take the

---

184 Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
185 Elisa Facio, interview with Renee Roberts, February 4, 2013, her office in Ketchum, transcript.
skills and experience cultivated within ACHANGE and apply them to their new goal for Ethnic Studies, and were also able to expand to include others. By March 31, SCAEP had already formed a list of demands and was ready to take action. The document was titled “Student Demands for: The Creation of an Ethnic Studies Major and Minor, To be Followed by Masters and Ph.D. Programs, and Full Separation of the Cultural and Gender Diversity Core Requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder.” It included five main sections: an introduction, a list of demands, an in-depth description of each demand, a conclusion and statistics about UCB’s diversity. It also listed the existing members of SCAEP: Jennifer Allen, CarolLynn Boender, Anna Davidson, Rebecca Dunn, Michelle Foy, Jeffrey Schwartz, Ryan Smith, Scott Smith, Ashild Olsen, Carlos Kareem Windham, and Leslie Wong.

The introduction stated, “SCAEP wishes to make abundantly clear that we are a student coalition and are acting of our own volition. The individuals who comprise the core committee are student leaders and political activists who have taken it upon ourselves to act as a united front in an attempt to solidify UCB’s claim to foster and further ethnic plurality and diversity at the Boulder campus.”

The document also included the affiliations of the student leaders who drafted the document. The list includes “BSA, ACHANGE, Boulder Police Community Board, UMAS y MEChA,

186 “Student Demands for: The Creation of an Ethnic Studies Major and Minor, To be Followed by Masters and Ph.D. Programs, and Full Separation of the Cultural and Gender Diversity Core Requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder,” submitted by Student Coalition for the Advancement of Ethnic Plurality (SCAEP), March 31, 1994.” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.
187 “SCAEP Demands.”
188 “SCAEP Demands.”
189 “SCAEP Demands.”
INVST, Ethnic Student Coalition, Chancellor’s Appointment Committee, Muntu Brotherhood, Project: Interact, Hallett Hall Diversity Council, and the Progressive Student Network.” This list shows the breadth of the student coalition that joined together under SCAEP to advocate for ethnic plurality at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Citing a report issued by the Office of Research and Information, the document states “between 25% and 37% of new students of color will have left the university before their second year, as opposed to 12% of Euro-Americans.” It also criticized the Chancellor’s Committee on Diversity as ineffective, having “no concrete power” to implement structural changes, and also unwilling to include student perspectives as shown by the chair of the committee having “stood by his decision to exclude students from membership on the Chancellor’s Committee on Diversity.” At the time the core curriculum requirements for the school of Arts and Sciences was a three-credit class on either culture or gender. SCAEP demanded that three credits be required for gender and an additional three credits for culture also be required. It went on to provide data on the low percentages of students of color on campus and explain how they had been excluded from structures that could affect change.

SCAEP stated, “Members and associates of SCAEP have agreed, through methods of consensus, that our mission at UCB is the trilateral implementation of concrete change in the area of ethnic plurality.” Their proposed trilateral system included 1) Providing a major and minor degrees in Ethnic Studies, 2) Creating a
progressive sequence of Masters and Ph.D. programs, and 3) Full separation of the “Cultural and Gender Diversity” requirements for the Arts and Science core curriculum. At the time there were 3 “cultural and gender diversity” credits required for Arts and Sciences students, and SCAEP demanded that 3 be required for cultural, and an additional 3 be added for gender. The conclusion of the document states, “Because the voices of students continue to be ignored, we have organized ourselves and will commence with further political actions of our own orchestration, when we deem necessary.” The document then provides details such as the date they expected a written response and the address to which they expected it to be delivered. As this statement shows, SCAEP adopted a consensus model of governance, aimed to fundamentally alter how race and ethnicity were incorporated into the UCB curriculum, and valued student autonomy.

The Alliance – UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP Coming Together

UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP forming a coalition under the Alliance was a pivotal moment in the student movement for racial equity at UCB. Coming together under a new name, the Alliance, the student activists involved were a force to be reckoned with! The specific date that UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP became “the Alliance,” is difficult to pin down. It seems that they slowly joined into the Alliance as a tactic for achieving their respective and shared goals. The Alliance was not solely comprised of these groups, however. Lopez remembered several student groups being involved at different levels, “I don’t remember BSA being that active. There were

193 “SCAEP Demands.”
African Americans students that were involved but I don’t think BSA was in it much. Oyate was always super-supportive of anything UMAS and MEChA was involved in, so Oyate would just always participate.”

Wong remembers, “BSA, Oyate and APAC were in different form and fashion involved… But I think all the groups were involved in some form and fashion… When we held rallies it was pretty big.”

Within the Chicano community on campus, students were quickly mobilizing in support of Professor Flores. One of their first steps was releasing a petition through UMAS, collecting signatures from students who demanded that Flores be granted tenure, and that an official inquiry be convened on the procedures conducted by Department of Sociology Chair Gary Marx. Like UMAS y MEChA, Professor George Rivera did not hesitate to take a stand in support his colleague and released a public statement on April 7, 1994. “To all Chicano students at the Boulder campus: I wish to unequivocally state that I strongly support granting Professor Estevan Flores tenure and promotion in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder.” He continued, “We are at a time in history where others are trying to erode and minimize the Chicano contributions to society. Nowhere is this more evident that in academia.” Asking students for their support, he signed, “Yours in the spirit of la raza, George Rivera, Ph.D., Associate Professor.” The signature “in the spirit of la raza” signaled that he was

---

194 Lopez, interview.
195 Wong, interview.
196 “UMAS petition demanding tenure for Flores,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
198 “Letter from George Rivera supporting Estevan Flores.”
making a racial appeal, as “la raza” is a Spanish term meaning “the race” which alludes to Chicana and Chicano people.

The same day, on April 7, SCAEP issued a press release titled, “Students Demand Action on Diversity.” The document detailed the mass rally and march that would begin at the Dalton Trumbo fountain at noon on April 12. Again, they described themselves to the media as an autonomous organization, “We are acting as a unified front in order to solidify UCB’s constant claims to foster and further ethnic plurality and diversity on the Boulder campus.” The three demands issued by SCAEP are described as “part of a long-term vision to transform UCB’s rhetoric into reality!!!”

On April 8, 1994, the Chair of the Chancellor’s Standing Committee on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues, Joanne Arnold, also released a statement of support. “I write on behalf of the Chancellor’s Standing Committee on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues to express to you our sincere interest in your recent initiative described in your SCAEP document dated March 31, 1994. We support your efforts to foster and promote ethnic plurality at UCB. You have our good will and sincere best wishes for success.”

The bulk of the activism for racial justice and equity in the spring of 1994 occurred within the two weeks that would follow. Meeting with university administrators, the students continued to be frustrated that their demands were not being taken seriously and felt similar frustration when they met with Chancellor for Academic Affairs Bruce Ekstrand that Wednesday, April 13, and again were unsatisfied with the responses they received. The next day, the Alliance presented its list of demands during a rally at the

---

199 “Letter from George Rivera supporting Estevan Flores.”
fountains and approximately 150 people marched to the Regent’s office to deliver the demands.

The flyer for the rally read, “Students Demand Decisive Action on Diversity—Mass Rally/March for the Student Empowerment Around Issues of Diversity.” 201 Speakers included Haunani Kay-Trask (Univ. of Hawai‘i), Glenn Morris (UCD, AIM), Robert Perkinson (ACHANGE), Raquel Lopez, (UMAS/MEChA), Carlos Kareem Windham (SCAEP). The line-up of speakers illustrates how the rally was intended to attract a large audience with identities and interests in varied areas. Trask’s official website states that she is a native Hawai‘ian activist and poet who has been described as “a radical feminist” who works to improve the conditions facing indigenous people, including the global struggle for human rights. An article in the Colorado Daily titled “Students rally for diversity again today,” quotes Trask as saying “Boulder is beautiful but white as can be.” 202 Glenn Morris was a Native American activist and academic, activist Raquel Lopez was a radical Chicana leader with familial ties to UMAS, 203 and fellow student activist Carlos Windham was a radical mixed-race (African American and Latino) student that held affiliations with INVST,

202 Amy Reinholds, “Students to rally for diversity again today.”
203 Lopez, interview.
Hallett Diversity Program, as well as UMAS y MEChA and BSA. The highly diverse roster of speakers shows that the movement was able to bring together radical activists with different racial identifications who were working on a variety of issues. Rallying students to take action, the first march began.

Chants of “What do we want? Education! When do we want it? Yesterday!” rang through the air as the students marched. Students marched with conviction carrying banners the read “UMAS, United Mexican American Students,” and “DIVERSIFY CU,” as well as other signs that read, “Racist Institution (CU) Kicking out Chicano Professors,” and “We Demand Diversity.” Alternating chants, reports were that students were also hollering “All power to the people!” and “Hey, hey, ho, ho, racism has got to go!” Once the students peacefully marched to the Regent’s building, they presented administrators with a list of their demands and participated in a peaceful sit-in to pressure the administration to respond to the demands. “We went and sat down and wouldn’t leave until they would give us a meeting and listen to our demands,” said Lopez. Elaborating further she shared how she felt in the moment. “I just remember it being really powerful. Just feeling like you were a part of something really big, and just having that pride in your chest from belonging to something that you know is going to change history.” The administrators did not provide a response and the police eventually asked the students to leave. However, the students stipulated that they expected a response by April 20, after which they would take further action.

---

204 Windham, interview.
205 Doug Cosper, “CU Students rally for progress- March held to seed up diversity”, Daily Camera, Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
206 Michael Encinias Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
207 Lopez, interview.
208 Lopez, interview.
At this first rally, a flyer was distributed that read “Racist Institution Kicking Out Chicano Professors.” It said, “UMAS/MEChA demands that the University: 1) Tenure Assistant Professor Flores, 2) Create an Ethnic Studies Department and Major, and 3) Protect the remaining Chicano Professors in the Sociology Dept.” The flyer urged students to call Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Bruce Ekstrand and express their support of the demands, and provided his telephone number. Other flyers that were created during the movement read in large font, “Less than ½ of the African American students that enter the University of Colorado at Boulder graduate from CU, as opposed to 71% of white students. The University of Colorado does not have the institutional support for students of color. Stop and think about the classes you have taken here.” Another flyer read, “55% of Latino students that enter the University of Colorado at Boulder graduate from CU. CU is lacking the institutional support for students of color. How many classes have you taken that give a multicultural perspective of the world today? Think about

---

By analyzing data, the student activists were able to produce shocking statistics that and got many students’ attention. Encouraging people to call university administrators is another strategic move that the students utilized. They would use this again later when the hunger strike began.

Student activists held a second rally the following Thursday, on April 14. The flyer announcing the rally stated, “Mass Rally to Demand Action on Ethnic Plurality: Part 2- Come out and support the UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP Alliance to diversify on our campus and grant Dr. Estevan Flores his tenure!” This time the three Chicano faculty members of the Sociology Department joined students at the rally and spoke. In addition, Facio, Rivera and Flores issued a press release titled, “Chicano Professors Denounce Racism at C.U. Sociology Department.” They read parts of this document at the rally in front of hundreds. The document stated that they protested the inaccurate remarks made by Professor Gary Marx regarding Flores’ tenure and promotion, that they wanted to “expose the racially hostile environment” in the Sociology Department, and that they wanted to voice their solidarity with students on the formation of an Ethnic Studies Department. The statement elaborates on each of these points and the press release concludes stating, “We demand that Dean Charles Middleton

---

211 “Informative flier about African American retention,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers.
and Vice-Chancellor Bruce Ekstrand act as responsible academic leaders to immediately rectify the conditions of a racially hostile environment which as been fomented by Chairperson Gary Marx.” Their last line stated, “We unequivocally support the student’s demands that all people of color be valued as human beings and that Ethnic Studies be accorded the status of a legitimate discipline comparable to any other department at C.U.” Facio, Rivera, and Flores’ support for the student movement is clear. The emphasis on the value of the lives of people of color is notable in their sentiment, as is their focus on wanting legitimacy for the Ethnic Studies Department for which they were advocating.

The following day, April 15, UMAS/MEChA and SCAEP issued press release titled “Faceless Administrators Attend Rotary Club Meeting,” announcing that a group of students from UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP would be attending a Rotary Club meeting, at which Chancellor Jim Corbrige and other key administrators would be present. The release states that the students present would be “wearing white masks (representing bureaucracy and lack of accountability to the University’s stated goals to diversity) using guerilla theatre to illustrate the lack of response from Bruce Ekstrand and the administrators to our demands.” For the press release’s contact information, there was equal representation between UMAS y MEChA (Gilbert Muñoz)

and SCAEP (Rebecca Dunn). This model of equal representation was consistent in the press releases. Importantly, the students selected street theater as a tactic, which they had used before: UMAS y MEChA in their activism around the bias-motivated incident the previous winter, and ACHANGE in their campaign to raise awareness about trade agreements. Thus, the students’ activism within this movement directly built off the skill sets they had developed through previous experiences.

Photographs featured in newspaper articles about the demonstration show that the students did wear the white masks promised in the press release. The masks read, “faceless administrator,” and signs hanging around their necks include statements like, “Well, form a committee,” and “It’s not my job!” symbolizing the attitudes students felt administrators took toward the problem of racism on campus. An article titled “Sociology profs back current tenure process,” stated that “six students wearing white masks labeled ‘faceless administrator’ sat in on the first 10 minutes of the Rotary Club meeting…They stood up to speak, but were asked to leave and were escorted out.” Alliance member Reem Al-Jarbou had asked for space on the agenda, but she was told there was not enough time. “At least the people who were there

---

214 “Faceless Administrators Attend Rotary Club Meeting.”
215 Quintana, interview.
heard us,’ said Jeff Schwartz.” This section of the article demonstrates four things. It demonstrates the use of a unique tactic of engaging in sit-ins. It is also important to note who was present for this demonstration. Al-Jarbou was later elected into student government, strengthening the argument that student government, as a force, was supportive of the Alliance in 1993–94. Schwartz was a student in INVST as well as a founding member of SCAEP. The dedication of student leaders is once more emphasized.

The Alliance Hunger Strike

The students had met with Ekstrand, Corbridge, and Middleton and were not satisfied with their responses on April 19. As a tactical move they had planned action steps to escalate the movement. After the April 20 deadline came and went, Alliance activity sped up quickly. Windham recalls, “We knew we had like two months to make this happen, or else it wasn’t going to happen.”

UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP issued another press release that was dated April 18, 1994, titled, “Press conference and mass action called by UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP Alliance.” The press release clearly articulated that April 20 marks the final deadline made to the administration to meet the demands to the organizer’s satisfaction. It said that there would be “a press conference followed by a mass student rally and a march cumulating into larger action.” The document also shares that “detailed informational packets will be provided to members of the press” that contained information about UMAS y MEChA and the SCAEP Alliance, statistics about the UCB campus, and

---

217 “Sociology profs back current tenure process.”
218 Windham, interview.
219 Press conference and mass action called by UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP Alliance,” press release, Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
documentation of Flores tenure process. The contact information for UMAS y MEChA was Darin Quintana, and Raquel Lopez and the contacts for SCAEP were Jennifer Allen and Carlos Kareem Windham. When comparing the release dated April 12 to the one issued on April 14, one can notice that the process of changing their name was happening as the events unfolded as SCAEP went from “SCAEP” to the “SCAEP Alliance.” The student activist’s ability to consistently communicate clearly and to follow-through on their commitments is also noteworthy.

True to their word, on April 20, a rally was hosted. Students rallied by the Dalton Trumbo Fountain by the UMC, and proceeded to march with approximately 150 students down to Regent Hall to present university administrators with their list of demands. An article titled “CU students rally, fast for diversity,” stated “For the second time in two weeks, protestors from a noon rally at the Dalton Trumbo Fountain Court blocked the Southbound lane of Broadway from Pennsylvania to Regent Drive, as they marched to deliver the same list of demands to administrators.”

An article in the Colorado Daily titled “CU students rally for progress,” reports that “With the help of a bullhorn carried on a marcher’s backpack, Windham shouted on the steps of Regent Hall, ‘We’re going to let ‘em know that if we don’t get what we want, we’re going inside to shut ‘em

221 Amy Reinholds, “CU students rally, fast for diversity.”
down. The article reports that the protestors walked single file into Regent Hall and snaked up the stairs to Ekstrand’s office where police broke up their protest. Darin Quintana is featured in a photograph with Ekstrand and other administrators handing them the demands. Another article on the march in the *Colorado Daily* titled “Protestors take over hall, demand action,” UMAS, MEChA, SCAEP and their demands are explicitly mentioned.” The article reads, “UMAS/MEChA students joined Tuesday’s rally and circulated petitions demanding Flores receive tenure… The group had 200 signatures before the rally, at which they collected several pages more.” The article also reports that the rally preceding the march consisted of about 300 students, and about half joined for the march.

The language used by the organizers sheds light onto one of the strategies employed by the Alliance: appealing to a wide audience. “‘These are pathetic demands. We shouldn’t even have to ask,’ said Robert Perkinson of SCAEP. ‘It’s 40 years after the civil rights movement, and we are still making the most minimal demands. This is an outrage. It is an outrage that we have to demand that Estevan Flores be given tenure in the Sociology department.’”

Perkinson’s sentiment illustrates two things. He first provides context for the movement

---

222 Doug Cosper, “CU Students rally for progress- March held to seed up diversity.”
224 Amy Reinholds, “Protestors take over hall, demand action.”
and gives the message to his audience that what the students were demanding is not unreasonable. He also ties the “outrageousness” of UCB not having an Ethnic Studies Department to that of Estevan Flores not receiving tenure. One can see how tying the two issues together in this way is an effective strategy for gaining support and strengthening the coalition between those that wanted Ethnic Studies and those that wanted Flores’ tenure.

Windham also appealed to a wide audience when the paper quoted him. “‘I am a patriot of the University of Colorado,’ Windham said. ‘Because I love this university, I demand this university atone for its sins.’ He lists ‘sins’ such as 27 to 35 percent of students of color leaving the university before graduation and no ethnic studies department.”

Again, when giving a public statement on behalf of the movement, Windham appeals to those that love UCB and uses this point to reach a broad audience by stating that he is driven to hold the university accountable to their commitment to diversity.

When the students reached Regent and their demands were not met on April 20, they escalated their campaign considerably by employing a new and highly dramatic tactic: a hunger strike. Wearing armbands labeled HUELGO (strike), in honor of migrant worker leader Cesar Chavez who also used hunger strikes to protest, the clock began ticking. Records indicate that 35 students committed to “a hunger strike until the demands of the UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP Alliance are met.” Student activists who participated in the strike included Jennifer Allen, Maria Baker, Martha Baker, Monica Barragan, Leslie Domingo, Charlane Lechuga, Thomas Oliver, Tony Ortega,

225 Amy Reinholds, “Protestors take over hall, demand action.”
226 Amy Reinholds, “CU students rally, fast for diversity.”
Darin Quintana, Tim Russo, Ryan Smith, Scott Smith, Bernadette Spinks, Jeff Schwartz, Keith Trammell, Carlos Windham and Leslie Wong.\textsuperscript{227} Those that were on “a hunger strike for shorter periods in support of the Alliance demands” included additional 20 students.

An edited version of demands was presented with the new title, “Declaration of Diversity.”\textsuperscript{228} Dated April 20, 1994, the document begins like the Declaration of Independence and then specifies details pertaining to the Alliance. In Old English font, the document read “We believe that the United States and the University of Colorado have a long and sordid history of exclusion, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, and even genocide; that these buildings in this society were built on the backs of the dispossessed and the stolen lands of indigenous people, and that therefore it behooves us to do everything in our power to rectify these wrongs and to endeavor for a future of justice rather than continued tyranny.”\textsuperscript{229}

“We the undersigned, therefore support in full the following demands” of UMAS, MEChA and SCAEP.” The declaration lists five: “1) That an Ethnic Studies Department, offering major and minor degrees in Ethnic Studies, including Master’s and Ph.D. programs be established and adequately funded at the University of Colorado at Boulder 2) That Assistant Professor Dr. Estevan Flores be granted the tenure he has rightfully earned, 3) That an official inquiry of Gary Marx’s actions as the Sociology Department Chair be launched by the Boulder Faulty Assembly to see if they merit his resignation, 4) \textsuperscript{227} “List of those on hunger strike,” Michelle Foy Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.
\textsuperscript{229} “Declaration of Diversity, April 20, 1994.”
That the remaining Chicano professors and students be protected from retaliation within the Sociology Department, and 5) That the Cultural and Gender Diversity Requirements in the CU Arts and Sciences Curriculum be separated.\textsuperscript{230}

The strike gained national attention, and strengthened the Alliance even more. Utilizing the power of media to their benefit, the student activists strategically continued to appeal to the public and gain support for their movement. On April 20, they announced a name change to the Alliance, and also announced support from Concerned Black Students at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, other chapters of MEChA, and the United States Student Association (USSA). An article titled “CU students fast for diversity on campus,” states, “Tchiyuka Cornelius, president of the Washington D.C.-based United States Student Association, also pledged to gather support for the students’ actions. He came to Colorado Tuesday night to be part of the rally and march. The USSA is a lobbyist group pushing for student concerns, representing 300 campuses.”\textsuperscript{231}

The hunger strike was covered by The Rocky Mountain News, which published an article on April 15 titled “Hispanics call CU racist in tenure case,” stating that about 200 students attended and that all three Latino faculty, Flores, Facio and Rivera, read from their written statement and publically spoke about the discrimination in the Sociology Department. “They claimed Middleton and Marx denied Flores tenure after three ‘highly unusual and irregular votes’ were taken by tenured faculty.”\textsuperscript{232} They adamantly opposed the “flagrant errors in procedure,” that Professor Marx had committed.

\textsuperscript{230} “Declaration of Diversity, April 20, 1994.”
\textsuperscript{231} “CU students fast for diversity on campus,” Colorado Daily, April 21, 1994, Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
Student’s experiences with the hunger strike were covered in an article titled, “Hunger strike ends with written support for diversity.” Carlos Windham stated, “We lost about 10 to 15 pounds each. It got pretty strange. Around the fourth day my arms would constantly fall asleep if I didn’t move them around.” Jeff Schwartz shares how some students were unsupportive. “Unfortunately, many other students view it as radical, as exterior to them. It’s for all of us. It’s a movement to empower students. I don’t think that a lot of students realized this.” Raquel Lopez shared a similar sentiment. “The first couple of days some students were calling us idiots. I think a lot of them have become educated through our actions.”233

Darin Quintana recalled, “For me, personally, the timing of the hunger strike was difficult for me because it was right around finals. A lot of my fellow students understood, but a lot of my professors were not as lenient.” Continuing, he shared, “It’s hard to go home and do homework when you’ve been in meetings and spending time in the Regents building… schoolwork just wasn’t my number one priority, which it should have been.”234 Lopez stated “I just remember being really busy and totally exhausted because we were like on this hunger strike and losing energy and still having to go around our daily business, go to class.”235 Sentiments of being so tired and drained ran throughout the various accounts of participating in the hunger strike. Reflecting on this sense of physical exhaustion, Stewart mentioned how the sense of community was sustaining for her. “I just know that there were glimpses, of ‘I don’t know if I can do this

234 Quintana, interview.
235 Lopez, interview.
anymore.’ I mean, we had each other. You know, it felt like we had a community and we were going through it together,” said Stewart.  

**Successes**

The Alliance’s hunger strike also attracted attention from the administration. A concerned President Judith Albino met with fasters “in her office Friday afternoon until about midnight.”  

Chancellor Jim Corbridge, who had been in contact with Alliance representatives, expressed disappointment with the Alliance’s escalation in tactics. An article stated, “He wished the students would have talked to him before escalating their protests.”  

However, the sentiment among some of the students illustrated that this would not have made a difference. Students felt that the administration was so unresponsive to them that they had to take their activism to another level. Ultimately, it was going through with the hunger strike that was effective. Lopez asserts, “If it would have been a decision left up to the university, the university never would have given us Ethnic Studies.”  

Another article in the *Colorado Daily* on April 25, titled “Meeting with president encourages fasters,” members of student government publicly express support for the Alliance and the hunger strike. The article reads, “Five representatives, four of whom were sworn in at Thursday’s meeting, have joined a fast of more than 35 students to.

---

236 Stewart, interview.
239 Lopez, interview.
indicate the seriousness of their demands.” Vice President pro Tempore Ben Naasko
publically announced his support, as did others. “It is extremely unclear to me why
tenure was not granted,” said newly elected tri-executive Mike Kester.” The article
continues, stating, “Other student lawmakers involved in the fast include newly elected
Reps. Leslie Domingo, Reem Al-Jarbou, Anthony Samu, and Saad Bokkhari, all of
whom ran on the “students in action” ticket this spring.240 On April 21, in an article titled,
“CU students fast for diversity on campus,” Windham is quoted saying that the Alliance
and the hunger strike is a student movement “backed by the new CU Student Union tri-
executives, who will take office this summer.”241 The fact that there would be supportive
administration in office is important to remember when considering how the action plan
for the demands would be implemented.

Following the meeting with Albino, the next day, Monday, April 25, Albino
agreed to negotiate demands and Alliance members agreed to the proposed compromises.
The Alliance issued a statement about the end of the strike. The “Statement from the
Alliance on ending Hunger Strike,” dated April 25, 1994 reads,

“This morning, the Alliance has elected to end the hunger strike of 37 of its
members, in support of diversity in the University of Colorado Boulder
campus…. We are ending the strike today because we believe we have secured a
credible first step—a verifiable agreement in spirit and writing—from the highest
officer in the University of Colorado system, President Judith Albino…. She has
met us half way, dealt with us in a serious and respectful manner, and has offered

240 Amy Reinholds, “Meeting with president encourages fasters.”
241 Amy Reinholds, “Meeting with president encourages fasters.”
specific timelines and a written plan to back up her commitments.”

The statement reflects that the students had negotiated the terms of ending the hunger strike and that they viewed a “verifiable agreement in spirit and writing,” as evidence enough that the demands would be carried out. This part of the statement also suggests that the members of the Alliance had good relations with Albino, as they mention her “respectful manner.” Their statement closes by saying,

“This protest began as advocacy for diversity on this campus. It continued in support of a single individual: Professor Estevan Flores of the Sociology Department and now has expanded into a call for justice for all students, faculty and staff of color on every campus in the country. It is a call that has been made in other times, by people of varying colors, ethnicities, and politics. Its sounds have resonated from the lips of Americans since time immemorial—from Harriet Tubman to Cesar Chavez from Frederick Douglas to bell hooks, all the way to Los Seis de Boulder. Now at the University of Colorado at Boulder, in our time, it is a call for justice we, as an entire campus, will begin to answer. And our answer—though it will come through loudly and clearly—will nonetheless be announced, and heard, in many accents. Thank You Very Much.”

This document is especially revealing of the Alliance’s understanding of what they were fighting for. They state that the protest began as advocacy for diversity on the UCB campus, continued in support of Flores, and had then “expanded into a call for justice” for people of color at university campuses across the nation. This is a fascinating

---

243 “Statement from the Alliance on ending Hunger Strike.”
articulation of their actions and their movement because it infers that they had a shared understanding of the trajectory of the movement, and that the call had reached other campuses. The way that America is mentioned is also worth noting. The document says “Its sounds have resonated from the lips of Americans since time immemorial—from Harriet Tubman to Cesar Chavez from Frederick Douglas to bell hooks, all the way to Los Seis de Boulder.” There is a balance between men and women, and two Chicanos and three African Americans in the brief list of figures they selected. The parallels drawn between Tubman and Chavez, and Douglas to hooks seem to suggest that Chavez for example continues the legacies of Tubman. The writers of the document then bring these parallels back to Los Seis as local heroes to whom they to pay respect.

In an open letter from President Albino, she shared that she met with a group of about 30 students called “The Alliance,” and discussed their demands. She agreed to push for an Ethnic Studies Department offering baccalaureate-level majors and minors in Ethnic Studies, as well as Masters and Ph.D. programs. She also assured that Estevan Flores would “receive a full, fair and timely review,” as well as an official inquiry launched into the climate for faculty, staff, and students of color in the Sociology Department and the entire campus. She also stated that a meeting would be scheduled with Flores, Facio, and Rivera to “discuss their current departmental assignments, possible alternatives, and the implications of any changes for students.” The demand that the three-hour Cultural and Gender Diversity requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences curriculum be separated and expanded to a six-hour requirement, that separate gender and culture, was addressed and would be discussed further. With established

---

244 “Open letter from President Albino,” Leslie Wong Personal Papers. Document in author’s possession.
timelines and report of progress as commitments, Albino also stated that open
communication was another commitment she was willing to make.  

This chapter has outlined the series of events that the student movement for racial
justice and equity engaged in during their struggle to make their campus more diverse
and inclusive. It was an impressive accomplishment that this alliance of student activists,
from different backgrounds and different ideologies could come together, put aside and
work through their differences. Their accomplishment becomes even more admirable
when one considers the internal tensions and conflicts that came up throughout the
process of creating the Alliance.

\[245\] *Open letter from President Albino.*
Chapter 4: Working with Difference & Reflections on the Movement’s Success

“I think that we just had such a powerful commitment in what we believed was doing the right thing for our campus, doing the right thing for our education... We don’t see it as something extraordinary. We just see it as something that had to happen, that needed to happen.” – Leslie Wong, a second generation Chinese American former student activist in ACHANGE, UMAS y MEChA, Oyate, and SCAEP  

Students involved in the movement for Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1994 dealt with a wide array of differences. This chapter examines how the movement accommodated differences in race, class and gender between the students involved in the Alliance through a strategy of embracing and working with difference instead of attempting to eradicate or downplay its importance. After looking at how these internal workings occurred, this chapter concludes by listening to the voices of the former student activists themselves as they reflect on their thoughts about why the movement was so successful. Many of their sentiments speak to the strategic organizing that students engaged in, and the commitment to the struggle.

Cultural Nationalism and White Privilege

One of the more persistent tensions within the Alliance was the tension between the cultural nationalism in UMAS y MEChA and the white privilege in SCAEP. As demonstrated in previous chapters, efforts to honor legacies of Chicano activism were often expressed as cultural nationalism. For this discussion of cultural nationalism Jeffrey

---

246 Leslie Wong, interview with Renee Roberts, September 11, 2012, Wong’s office in the Center for Multicultural Affairs in Center for Community on the UCB campus, transcript.
Ogbar’s explanation will be used. When describing cultural nationalism for the black community he talks about how the Black Panther Party first utilized cultural nationalism, and then rejected it when they realized that the ideology “was a distraction from the more serious problems with the fundamental political and economic order in the United States.” Continuing, he discusses how even when this realization was reached, there was still a distrust in whites and lack of faith in their ability to transcend their racial privilege. It would appear that UMAS y MEChA might have been navigating this dynamic within the Alliance. Ogbar continues, “Still, there remained a vocal minority in black America who did not trust whites and had little faith in the ability of whites to transcend the racist culture in which they were reared. Later he discusses Chicano cultural nationalism specifically, noting how the ideology affirms self-determination, insists that Chicanos are ancestors of those that built great monuments and civilizations such as Aztlan. Ogbar also points that while this may be empowering for those that identify as Chicano, like the Black Nationalist doctrine, it overlooks the fact that Aztecs built these monuments on the backs of exploited people as well.

Data in this study reveals that Chicano cultural nationalism seemed to be a very empowering force for many Chicano students on campus at the time, and these historical ties specifically to “Los Seis,” UMAS and the legacies of Chicana/o activism on campus, were guiding forces behind the important work that UMAS y MEChA did, including their work with the Alliance. However, the cultural nationalism that was born from efforts to

---

248 Ogbar, 115.
249 Ogbar, 115.
250 Ogbar, 162.
honor, remember, preserve and continue legacies of Chicano activism did not come without some unintended negative impacts.

When asked about internal conflict between the groups involved in the Alliance, Bernadette Stewart stated that UMAS y MEChA held a negative opinion another student group that seems to have does been trying to work with them around protecting the Latino faculty. Although she not name the group or explain why they some members had this negative opinion, one can guess these answers after hearing her testimony and others. “UMAS and MEChA were saying, ‘We have a vested interest because these are our faculty members and we will not let another organization that we think is not as ‘whatever’… [and it went] back to this of conflict that occurred …”

Stewart’s hesitation to name the group shows the delicate nature of the coalition, but she seems to imply that UMAS and MEChA were initially unsure if they wanted to ally with SCAEP.

Continuing, she stated, “But then the leaders took it down a notch and realized that we can all work towards the same goal, and everyone doesn’t have to be competing for attention or whatever it is. I think that’s how it happened.” Reading between the lines of her two statements, it seems that members of UMAS y MEChA were distrustful of SCAEP because SCAEP’s white members did not share a Chicano cultural and racial identity with UMAS, MEChA, and the three faculty members. Thankfully the tensions eased when the leadership of UMAS y MEChA convinced their members that a alliance could be built that did not rely on a single shared identity.

---

251 Stewart, interview.
252 Bernadette Stewart, interview with Renee Roberts, January 10, 2013, her office in Old Main in the UCB campus, transcript.
Michael Encinias’ statement supports Stewart’s recollection. He said, “It’s difficult dealing with different groups; there is always distrust. ‘Why are they here? What is their motivation? What are they helping us for? What do they stand to gain from this?’ I think that they showed through their actions that they were there to help.” The questions that Encinias recalls his peers asking illustrate the distrust that some Chicano members of UMAS y MEChA had towards some white members of SCAEP.

Similarly, Raquel Lopez recalled, “It seemed like it was very divided. I mean we all came together, but it was still like once you were in the Alliance, you were still on one side. You were with SCAEP or UMAS, so it wasn’t as great as you might make it sound... It was very divided still.” Lopez describes one specific and publicly visible example of this divide between SCAEP and UMAS: “I remember there were tents set up to the West of the library… see that’s the weird thing.” She continued, “Most of the SCAEP people were hanging out in the tents. But the UMAS people, we just never felt comfortable sleeping there. So we would just go about our business, and hang out at the tents and stuff, but we would still go sleep. So you could see how it was still divided... even within the Alliance.” This statement gives insight into just how divided the Alliance was.

Professor Elisa Facio was explicit in her analysis of the tension between UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP. “I witnessed the conflict between cultural nationalism and white privilege…they became great challenges,” she said. Placing the tension in historical context, she stated, “Well you know, historically, social movements in Colorado having

253 Michael Encinias, interview with Renee Roberts, January 4, 2013, Woody Creek Café and Bakery in Denver, Colorado, transcript.
to do with Chicano, Mexicano populations have been strongly guided by cultural nationalism. I think at one point holding onto that ideology of cultural nationalism in its original understanding may have been detrimental to UMAS y MEChA.” She elaborated by stating, “In that cultural nationalism really needed to be re-defined in relation to the movements that they were involved in. You know, how does one’s cultural identity, religion and sense of self… what does that mean now? You know, not back in the 60’s or 70’s, but what does it mean in the 80’s or 90’s?” Her listing of the decades suggests that the meaning and usefulness of cultural nationalism may have shifted over time.

Facio observed that the new generation of Chicanos began to question the previous generation’s understandings of an older form of cultural nationalism. “They began to question that cultural nationalism… And older generations [that] made their mark with the older ways of cultural nationalism didn’t want to relinquish their place in history.” Facio thus credits cultural nationalism that was rooted in honoring historical legacies of Chicano activism with empowering Chicano students, but also points to its limitations in building cross-cultural and cross-racial alliances.

Discussing how she perceived UMAS y MEChA needing to re-evaluate older generations definition of and application of cultural nationalism to struggle more effectively for Chicano empowerment and empowerment for all people of color by forging coalitions with white students to establish an Ethnic Studies Department, she states. “They knew how to operate within this cultural nationalist ideology, but ‘how do

---
256 Facio, interview.
you operate within this current political economic atmosphere in building allies?’ That means building allies with white students. That was the big challenge.’

The conflict was not just about UMAS y MEChA not feeling comfortable with white allies though. Remembering “white men wanting to define and dictate the movement,” and then being confronted by women and women of color especially, Facio illustrates how the white privilege that was present in SCAEP also greatly contributed to creating this tension. Some white students, like Michelle Foy, recognized that their whiteness presented a challenge in creating a coalition with students of color. Reflecting on the dynamics of white privilege and what that looked like in relation to building alliances with students of color, Foy stated, “I don’t want to speak for the students of color but I remember having conversations where they would share their experiences that had been so challenging and alienating in so many ways.” She continues, “You know, being a student of color in a sea of white students and taking a step where you’re working in this alliance with people that you don’t know, particularly white students, was difficult in some ways.” Here, Foy exhibits her understanding of why students of color were not more trusting and open towards the white allies within the Alliance. She recalled how some of the students of color shared with her their experiences feeling isolated and unsupported on the predominantly white campus, and then acknowledged how this might manifest when dealing with white allies.

Thinking about the whites allies in the movement, she stated, “I think it really pushed some of us who were white to really think about, ‘What do we bring to this?’ ‘What’s the role that we should play, and how can we be engaged in the struggle in the

---

257 Facio, interview.
258 Michelle Foy, interview with Renee Roberts, February 6, 2013, telephone, transcript.
way that we need to be engaged, without dominating or asserting our white privilege?’ So I think it was an inevitable way or working through that.”

Foy’s assessment of the dynamic illustrates how she remembers white students responding to the conversations about white privilege. It seems that by really questioning their role within the movement, the white students, like the Chicano students in UMAS y MEChA, had to leave their comfort zone to critically examine themselves for a greater cause.

According to Facio, another way that race, socioeconomic status, sexuality and gender intersected to create tensions within the Alliance was through the exertion of privilege from white men who also had significant class privilege. “It wasn’t a challenge to build allyships with other students of color, but it was white students and white privileged students, you know. So I think that might have been a conflict.” She recalls, “And I did see that there were a couple of young white men who now and then you know, would overstep the boundaries, with respect to privilege… But I remember that it was … women of color … who were calling them out. It didn’t necessarily hurt the movement but there was a lot of internal strife around the issue of white privilege and probably homophobia too.”

Women in the student movement

The Women’s Resource Center

While the Alliance was struggling for racial justice and equity on campus, another group was working simultaneously for gender equity. In April 1993, a student group called the Ethnic Women’s Alliance initiated a student government referendum proposing

---

259 Foy, interview.
260 Facio, interview.
funding for a Women’s Resource Center.\textsuperscript{261} The referendum was approved and student fee funding began in September.\textsuperscript{262} By October, an UCSU As Hoc committee was established to oversee WRC development. In December, the search for a director began. An advisory board was established through UCSC and the bill stated that Legislative Council would determine if the WRC should become a cost center in the fall of 1996\textsuperscript{263}.

In April 1994, in the middle of the height of activism within the Alliance, the WRC was hiring its first director and drafting a preliminary mission statement as well as some initial goals. By June 1994, the WRC ended the school year with a small budget, moved to an office in UMC 303 where they shared the space with the International Women’s Alliance, and from there the WRC established its first events, peer groups, and student and staff positions.

When asked about the roles that different advocacy centers played in providing support for the Alliance, Carlos Windham stated, “I remember we thought about and tried to bring the Women’s Resource Center in, in a central way… I remember in terms of the groups that we had approached that they were one of the less receptive.”\textsuperscript{264} When one considers the amount of work the center had to do in 1994 by establishing its first events, peer stoups and student and staff positions, it makes sense that those affiliated with the WRC would have been short on time. However, the data provides no way of knowing if the women involved in the WRC’s formation were too busy to participate or were simply not interested enough to engage in the movement.

\textsuperscript{261} “Chronology of Significant Event in the WRC’s Development,” Document in author’s possession.  
\textsuperscript{262} “Chronology of Significant Event in the WRC’s Development.”  
\textsuperscript{263} “Chronology of Significant Event in the WRC’s Development.”  
\textsuperscript{264} Carlos Windham, interview by Renee Roberts, January 03, 2013, Skype, transcript.
Women as participants in the movement

Within the members of the Alliance that were interviewed, there was a difference of opinion about the proper role of women. Facio recalled, “You know, the women, they were really strong!” Leslie Wong remembers, “We had a lot of strong women in there. And a lot of really strong men! I remember the only time that it ever got a little funky… there was a stylistic difference initially.” Explaining an example of “funky … stylistic differences,” Wong recalled, “In the beginning there were a lot of men talking and I remember in the beginning, some of the women said, ‘Hey, we are feeling a little marginalized here; our voices are not rising.’ So we had that constructive discussion, and that was it. And it went on smoothly after that. But I do remember the men were, the men and women working very well. And I think that there was a lot of response to peoples concerns.” The willingness of both women and men to hash out the problem allowed it to remain “funky” without becoming debilitating.

Others recalled how the strong women they remembered often took initiative and were in leadership roles. Encinias stated, “I felt that the women had a strong voice, especially in UMAS y MEChA. They always have had leadership roles and have taken charge.” Lopez’s memory mirrors Encinias’ statement. When asked if there was a strong female presence or feminist consciousness Lopez responded, “Definitely. I would say that some of the most dedicated members of the Alliance were females. It… seemed

---

265 Facio, interview.
266 Wong, interview.
267 Encinias, interview.
like in UMAS and MEChA it was always the females who took initiative and followed through.”

However, not everyone had the same recollection or opinion about how women were welcomed and included in the Alliance. Foy stated, “I think a lot of us had been influenced by different feminists of color, you know Third World feminists. But in terms of an explicit expression of feminist politics in that struggle, I would say that it did not manifest in that way.” Stewart concurred, “I would also say that it appeared to me that there was not a female presence. It definitely seemed to me that the men were driving the efforts, or were at least the most vocal. Again, I was very young so I constantly question how my memory stacks up against others. But I felt like I was a minority for sure, as a woman.”

When considering which people held differing opinions, this exploration of gender becomes fascinating. With the exception of Facio, the women that expressed that the Alliance’s level of inclusivity for women was high all seemed to have held strong leadership positions within the movement. Compared to Stewart who was a first year student and not yet a leader recalling feeling like a minority as a woman, there is a clear difference in opinion and experience. Perhaps because Stewart was coming in as an outsider into an already established community, and did not have a leadership position at this time, her perspective offers insight towards the group’s more general inclusion of women. Foy’s word choice makes this conversation about the role and inclusion of women more complex when she talks about “feminist politics,” and asserts that she did

268 Lopez, interview.
269 Foy, interview.
270 Stewart, interview.
not see these at play during the movement. The difference is that Foy talked about “feminist politics” whereas Wong talked about the actual practices of the movement, and the inclusion of women’s voices.

The LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) absence

Background

Providing a very general overview of what the LGBTQ community looked like during the early 1990’s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a recent emergence in the early 1990’s. With this came a new correlation between the LGBTQ community and HIV/AIDS. If attitudes towards this community had been negative before the rise of this epidemic, they were exacerbated in the early 1990s. In 1992, strides were made when the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from ICD-10 that categorized it as an illness, but steps back were made when in the same year Colorado voters pass anti-LGBT Amendment 2 that made it legal to fire employees for being gay. In response to this policy, LGBT groups across the country initiated a national boycott of Colorado that totaled in $40 million lost. As the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB unfolded, voters made it legal to fire employees in Colorado for being openly gay and CU’s football coach Bill McCartney had made anti-gay statements from a CU podium just two years earlier. At the time of the student movement, the GLB resource center at

CU was in its first stages and the first Boulder Pride being organized were significant events towards progress that would be made a year after the student movement.273

**UCB Task Force emerges**

In June 1993, the Chancellor’s Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues issued a report titled “The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center.”274 Chancellor Jim Corbridge had created the task force in May 1992 and charged it with “examin[ing] the campus climate for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals and [making] recommendations for improvement.”275 Fifteen members from different segments of the university met weekly or bi-weekly over the 1992-93 year to prepare the report, which called for the creation for a “Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Center” to serve as “a focal point for the presentation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues and concerns” on the Boulder campus.276 The report argued that a centralized LGB Center would aid in peer education, monitoring of harassment and discrimination complaints, provide training and education on issues of sexual orientation, encourage faculty research, and provide adequate counseling on issues of sexuality.

Moreover, the report stated, that staffing would be “crucial for the Center’s effectiveness,” in “serving as a visible clearinghouse for information on sexual

---

The report continues, suggesting a library and resources area, such as the one that the Cultural Unity Center had. The report reveals that just as advocates of racial justice were critiquing the university and working for change, advocates of justice for LGBTQ people were similarly criticizing what they saw as a hostile environment and proposing structural change.

**UMAS Cinco de Mayo booklet’s LGBTQ advocacy**

The two movements for racial justice and justice for LGBTQ people did not ignore each other entirely. Instances of visible support and advocacy around LGBTQ issues were sprinkled throughout the booklet that UMAS made for their Cinco de Mayo celebration in 1993. The cover design was created by David Young, who gave the keynote and was described in the booklet as “a longtime member and friend of UMAS. He is an activist of the Chicano movement, an advocate for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Rights and an excellent artist.” Young’s advocacy for GLB Rights is valued along with his activism in the Chicano community. In addition, he was selected to give the keynote, which indicates that his GLB identity and advocacy were seen not as disqualifying him from the Chicano movement at all.

Two pages in the booklet, creating a full spread included an article on de-stigmatizing the gay community for their relation to HIV/AIDS. The heading reads, “Education as a Means of Survival,” and below the text is a drawing of older woman with her middle finger up. Next to the drawing, it said, “Chalé con AIDS!” Written by Chris Falcón, the piece says, “Do Something Revolutionary, Get An Education and Put it To

---

278 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
Work For Your People.’ [N]ever have I felt more ‘revolutionary’ until I became certified to teach HIV/AIDS in the Chicano community.” He continues by boldly stating, “I can never be a true advocate of the Chicano movement without truly being concerned about the well being of my people… One of the most disturbing aspects I have seen are the misconceptions people have about this disease.” Critically, he includes individuals with HIV/AIDS as “his people.” Next he works to deconstruct the common damaging narrative at the time that associated all gay people with HIV/AIDS. “First of all, HIV/AIDS is not a gay disease. It is not exclusive to specific groups of people. Regardless of one’s race, sex, age, or sexual orientation, nobody is immune to this virus.” Falcón goes on to share statistics that reveal that Latina and African women are the groups of women that have the highest percentages of HIV-rates. He also provides a basic education as to how the virus is spread and then encourages readers to spread their knowledge, learn more and thanks the members of UMAS who received the Red Cross certification to be HIV/AIDS instructors. This one example of UMAS taking a stand to defend and be an ally to the larger LGBTQ community demonstrates that despite the attitudes that some members in UMAS had towards LGBTQ-identified people, there were also bold advocates that were not afraid to speak out.

The Cinco de Mayo booklet included another mention of the LGBTQ community with an advertisement for a play about Amendment 2 that CSERA was co-hosting. It read, “Two for the Snow, A play on Amendment Two, CSERA and Professor Salvador Rodriguez del Pino invite the Chicano Community to attend.” The event took place on May 4 and 5th and was presented by the Chicano Theatre students. Having the support of

279 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
280 “CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”
a professor, CSERA and the Chicano Theatre students, and explicitly inviting members of the Chicano community to attend suggests that those that were involved with the planning found it important to have discussions about Amendment 2 with members of their Chicano community.\textsuperscript{281} Another small indication that there was some support for the LGBTQ community were the signs that were reported to be present during the rally and march for the alleged bias motivated incident that included sayings such as “Cops are like the KKK- They’re sexist, racist and anti-gay.”\textsuperscript{282} This clearly shows that there were some community members that were mobilized around justice and equity for members of the LGBTQ community. A photo of that protest shows a button on a backpack reading “No on 2” with a pink triangle (symbolizing LGBTQ community).\textsuperscript{283} All of these things suggest that while there was definitely homophobia in Colorado and across the country, there were activists that were working to create better conditions of the LGBT community, and some of these activists were part of the Chicano movement.

**Oral history accounts of LGBTQ invisibility**

Despite some support for LGBTQ issues in the Chicano community, a disturbing number of UMAS y MEChA members exhibited homophobia. Quintana remembers, “A lot of people in UMAS were weird about gay or lesbian issues. We had someone that came in. His name was David. He was a Latino guy who was openly gay and had AIDS. He would talk to us about safe sex and discrimination within the gay community that he said he would experience as a gay Latino. He was an alumni so he could come to some meetings and activities we had.” When asked if the group was homophobic in general,

\textsuperscript{281}“CINCO de MAYO, 1993, United Mexican American Students.”


\textsuperscript{283}Photograph, Darin Quintana Personal Papers. Documents in author’s possession.
Quintana responded, “Yeah, I would say that most people were.”\footnote{Darin Quintana, interview with Renee Roberts, January 3, 2013, Starbucks coffee shop in Westminster, Colorado, transcript.} Stewart recalled, “Actually one of the mentors of the group, David Young, was HIV positive. So like I said, there were definitely people out front and talking about these things and trying to educate the group.” Despite these efforts to educate others about LGBTQ issues Stewart stated, “Unfortunately like I said, there was crazy homophobia in UMAS and MEChA at that time.”\footnote{Stewart, interview.}

Wong and Lopez both placed the conversation in a larger context in which nationally the LGBTQ movement had yet to really emerge as a strong force in mainstream America. Lopez stated, “That was something that we never even like dealt with in those days. I mean it was kind of mentioned but it wasn’t something that was in the consciousness of students at that time.” Wong echoed Lopez’s comment about LGBTQ issues being something that many people were activated around. “I think in society… the issues around GLBT rights were …still hidden. ‘I can’t talk about that,’ you know, ‘It’s not safe.’ So that was a piece that I don’t remember as a very strong visible piece.”\footnote{Wong, interview.}

Windham’s comments build off of Wong’s, with his discussion of visibility and safety, especially in Colorado at the time. “The queer community, in terms of being out in Colorado at that time, it was super limited. I knew like 3 openly gay people. So while we approached the queer group, I understand fully where the hesitations to be involved in this kind of movement would have been. I mean there was just no visibility. This was like pre- Ellen [DeGeneres] coming out!” Laughing, he continued, “People were willing to
delude themselves and still are. It’s just baffling to me... Of all of the communities that
we tried to reach out to, I think that the queer community in Boulder at the school at the
time was not in a safe place to be able to make that kind of a stand, and didn’t have the
visible numbers to make a visible representation.” Summarizing her perception of the
movement’s focuses on race, class, gender and sexuality, Foy ranks a focus on sexuality
at the bottom of the scale. “I would say the LGBTQ was pretty non-existent in the work.
It felt like there was an emphasis on race and class and less of an emphasis on gender, but
pretty much zero emphasis on sexuality and nothing outside of the gender binary.”

When the oral history accounts are placed into conversation with the
documentation that was produced during this time, one notices a clear discrepancy.
However, perhaps this accurately reflects what the LGBTQ community looked like at the
time, as well as how specific members of UMAS y MEChA in particular were actively
working to be more inclusive of this marginalized group.

**Internal Structure of the Alliance**

With such a large and diverse group of people working together, conflict arising
was inevitable. However, the internal structure of the Alliance was so inclusive and
democratic that conflict was something that the students could work through. Facio
shared her perspective that the Alliance created an internal structure that allowed for
coalitions to form. She elaborates sharing that she believed students were especially
committed to forging these relationships because they knew that they needed to be a
united front to be successful in their goals with the Alliance.

---

287 Windham, interview.
288 Foy, interview.
“From what I remember, those first meetings were very diverse. From what I remember there were Chicano’s, blacks, Asians, white students, Jewish students, a lot of women from what I can remember. It became more of a community and you know they had their internal strife because they were learning how to become allies, which was a very difficult task for them.” She continued, “And you know we would have meetings, and we would meet late at night, all hours of the evening we were meeting and talking about, ‘What does this mean? What does this mean for this movement?’”

So committed to their cause that they would stay at meetings until late at night, the students persisted in working through their differences because as Facio states, “They knew that without any type of alliance or coalition building, they were not going to be successful. Because this did not become a Chicano, Asian, black, white, queer, women’s issue, it became a student movement around Ethnic Studies and that’s how they eventually defined the movement.” She asserts that students knew that if they did not succeed in creating alliances, they would not reach their goals. Approaching the alliance building strategically, their commitment paid off.

Wong described how the Alliance had no formal structure, but functioned by having one core group, and subcommittees. She found this structure very effective and empowering for those involved. “There was no formal structure, no hierarchy for the group that came out of student concerns around Ethnic Studies… People had different roles or stepped into different sub-committees. People stepped into different roles because of their unique strengths and gifts, and I think that that was very empowering.”

289 Facio, interview.
290 Facio, interview.
291 Wong, interview.
She continued, “There was a Research component. I think the Research component was getting information through meeting with the Dean, getting to understand the tenure process and curriculum structure.” She also described what Marketing and PR did. “There was one group for Marketing and PR… we collected a lot of information and disseminated it out to newspapers as well as communities.” At the center was a core group of people that were especially committed. “There was always a core group making decisions and utilizing individual context to say, ‘Ok, who else can we reach out to? Who else wants to talk about this?’”

Also discussing the Marketing subcommittee, Windham shared how because there wasn’t much technology outreach relied heavily on posting informational posters around campus and the Boulder community. Describing how they prepared for a rally he stated, “At the time there is no technology, so ‘rally’ means we are making fliers and like Xeroxing them and tacking them all up in students dorm rooms, and tack boards and all the coffee shops we can find.” Elaborating he shared “It was like 60 some people at times. And we were like doing everything by consensus.”

Maria Gabriel, a student activist that was central to the movement, talked about how the main leaders worked to establish a structure for the Alliance so that the groups involved would have equal representation. “We spent a lot of time to get structures in place… trying to get representatives from the different groups. I vaguely remember the main leaders coming together … It seemed like there was one or two members from each group that came together to talk about, ‘Is there something we could do, what should we do, what would it look like, how do we come together with shared agendas?’”

---

292 Wong, interview.
293 Windham, interview.
Laughing, she said, “I remember a lot of chart paper and markers. And I should have been studying.” She also talked about how the Alliance meetings eventually shifted from being on campus to houses on the hill. “Later on it shifted to other rooms in the UMC and later it became houses which were more typically the white ally’s places.”

Foy discussed how the Alliance would organize peer education sessions and how important this internal education was to the group being able to work together effectively. “We would definitely spend time talking through issues. It seemed like we devoted 15-20 minutes of every meeting to some kind of political education, watching a film or having someone present. So it was a space to really develop plans and do work together, but also a place where we could bring in some degree of education.” When asked how effective the internal structure of the Alliance was, Foy shared, “My memory is that generally we worked together pretty well…I feel like it was a combination of the internal education work and planning and actions together was a good balance. That’s often how good relationship-building happens; people working together and working in a way that allows you to build trust, an understanding of each other’s work styles, and a level of comfort so where there is conflict, tension or differences, you were able to work through that.”

Given the differences and disparities in privilege between the students involved, it makes sense that peer education became a very important way to create trust and establish relationships between the different groups and people.

295 Gabriel, interview.
296 Foy, interview.
297 Foy, interview.
Marta Loachamin, another student leader said, “I really don’t remember what the positions were and all of that stuff, I just remember being at people’s houses on the hill, really just people sitting down and covering the floor, and a lot of talking and a lot of dialogue and conversation… It was a lot of conversation and a lot of open talking [and] sharing.”

Images of a diverse group of students meeting late at night was pretty consistent throughout the oral history interviews, as was the memory that those involved spent a great deal of time communicating open and honestly about how to plan and organize and how this impacted different communities.

Lopez recalled, “I know it was democratically, the way that we would hold our meetings.” Continuing, she stated, “I know there was media, getting the word out to the campus. I remember that we tried to give everybody an opportunity to do something for the bigger picture, so everyone had a job and everyone was contributing. So everybody felt like they were helping, and he or she weren’t being left out.” This is telling because given the vast differences in members of the Alliance, and the variations in talents, skills, personalities and probably level of commitment, it makes sense that the leadership of the Alliance would strive to ensure that all members felt they were valued and a part of the group in an effort retain them.

Sharing her role as facilitator and mentor within meetings, Facio also shared, “We would be there to explain because they couldn’t explain it, or didn’t feel comfortable with it.” This is another aspect of how at least some meetings ran that is important to consider when exploring the inner workings of this student group. Foy also mentioned how faculty

---

299 Lopez, interview.
would come to meetings and provide support. Their skills and support definitely helped the students organize and work through difference and conflict.

General agreement that the internal structure of the Alliance was democratically based in consensus and involved a great deal of discussion was consistent throughout most accounts of his aspect of the movement. It also seems that the internal structure was as Wong described it- a core group, subcommittees to work on specific tasks and not very much hierarchy. When one considers the amount of time and energy it would require in these meetings held late at night to discuss heavy and complicated issues, and make decisions democratically and if possible through consensus, the level of commitment to work in this way must be taken into consideration. This commitment created a space where confrontation could occur and conflicts could arise and be addressed. This internal structure was critical in the students being able to craft effective coalitions.

Success explored

When asked what made the movement for the establishment of the Ethnic Studies Department successful, those involved named numerous factors: the tensions of the political moment, institutionalized support structures on campus for students of color, mentorship of staff and faculty, student access to the histories pertaining to social change, and activist experience all contributed to the success of this movement. Yet none of these things would have happened had it not been for the strong commitment and courage that the student activists demonstrated.

---

300 Foy, interview.
Encinias identified the tactic of going on a hunger strike, the fact that the Alliance was multicultural, and the high level of negative media attention UCB garnered as a result of the student movement as the main reasons for its success. “The tactics, the negative publicity that it brought to the president’s office… There were reporters asking questions, ‘Why are you letting these kids starve?’ That definitely worked better than anything else we could have done.”301 Continuing, he stated, “Plus that it wasn’t just the Latino students who did it… It was a more broad coalition.”302

Quintana also pointed to the hunger strike, and expanded to discuss how some of the strikers’ white privilege was crucial to the Alliance. “It’s one thing for a bunch of Latinos to be sitting out there, but this other group ACHANGE was mostly Caucasian. So then you get these people calling the school saying, ‘Hey, what are you doing? My daughter isn’t eating. What’s going on?’ I remember that’s when it really came to a head.”303 When asked if he was saying that the affluent white students using their white privilege contributed to the movement’s success, he confirmed that this was what he meant. “It couldn’t have just been a bunch of Latinos or blacks out there.”304

Stewart found that the fact that white students participated and particularly that their parents were calling as a powerful force in getting university administrators to listen. “It wasn’t just the MEChA kids and the BSA kids… it was a diverse group and that was amazing.”305 Stewart emphasized the importance of the Alliance not being exclusively made of students of color, but also having white allies. “Parents had been

301 Encinias, interview.
302 Encinias, interview.
303 Quintana, interview.
304 Quintana, interview.
305 Stewart, interview.
There is a connection between white students, their parents calling, and the impact that this had. Those who had white and class privilege, were able to leverage those privileges to launch the Alliance towards success.

When asked to share her thoughts about what led to the student movement’s favorable outcome, Wong talked about the strategy of appealing to a wide audience, ensuring that both students and administration were taking notice, the value of knowledgeable students, and being able to utilize the community that was already built. She talked about how the idea that the UCB campus needed more diversity was one of the “issues that as a community, we could jointly see.” She continues, elaborating on how under a banner that read “Diversity,” many students would rally and support the Alliance. “Whether you’re white or brown or yellow or red, we all wanted to see our university become better.” This appeal to a wide audience was effective. Their portrayal in the media was positive and peaceful, and their calls for “diversity” and “ethnic plurality” were non-threatening and gained public support.

Tying her ideas about why the Alliance was successful together, Wong discussed knowledgeable students and other strategies as factors that worked well. “There were some amazing students that were so knowledgeable... that it just ran really smoothly. A lot of great strategies… A lot of ideas that came out.” Recalling how they would analyze statistics revealing UCB’s lack of racial diversity and disseminated the information throughout campus with flyers and handbills, she emphasized how raising awareness to the general public about the Alliance’s goals was important. She recalls this

306 Stewart, interview.
307 Wong, interview.
308 Wong, interview.
309 Wong, interview.
outreach, saying, “If the university is talking about its commitment to diversity… just look at the demographics. We did that, trying to reach out to the broader community to say why it’s important to the broader community… That’s incongruent in what the university is saying.” She continued, stating that their efforts were aimed at “trying to get people to understand the value of diversity” and were “also designed to have administration take note.”

She then discusses how important it was that UMAS y MEChA had already been mobilized. “UMAS y MEChA was very much galvanized around their faculty members being mistreated, so they were already poised at that point to defend their faculty.” This is a factor that is unique to the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB. Unlike similar movements, such as the struggle in San Francisco State to establish an Ethnic Studies Department in which student leaders were not primarily Latino/Chicano, it was the strong backbone of UMAS y MEChA, and the legacies of Chicano activism on UCB’s campus that really carried the movement.

Foy also pointed to the involvement of students of color as another factor to consider. When asked why she thought the demands of the Alliance were met, Foy pointed to the way the movement was made of a multiracial alliance led by students of color, the political moment, organizing strategies, and support from the mentors in the movement. Foy stated, “A number of things… came together.” She lists them: “One, the fact that we were able to lead a multi-racial alliance that was led by the organizations of students of color on campus.” Adding to the list she says, “the political moment; it was

310 Wong, interview.
311 Wong, interview.
312 Foy, interview.
the situation where people were willing to put their lives on the line to take this kind of action… It meant a lot and I think the collective power and determination that manifested as a result of us coming together… I think really allowed for that success.”

Thirdly she lists, “How we managed the strategy” around the formation of the demands, “how we compromised, negotiated.” She concluded her list with the importance of the movement “having the support from the more radical faculty that were willing to dig in deep with us and sit through our three-, four-, five-hour meetings.” She emphasizes how the mentors were very valuable assets as advisors and supporters. “Also how they played their role; they understood that it was a student struggle. They had had their own years of experience to bring to it, but they knew that we were learning from this, and they didn’t dominate at all. As advisers and supporters… it was really important to have them there.”

Lopez listed the Alliance’s strategic commitment to nonviolence and the ability to gain support from large numbers of students as reasons for their triumph. “We wanted to keep in the spirit of nonviolence. Some of the protests with the Chicano Movement in the 70s…sometimes some things had turned really violent, and we didn’t want to get that kind of media attention, because that wouldn’t really work in anybody’s favor. Those were the strategies that we chose so that we could get our message across.” Lopez’s explanation of why the Alliance chose to use nonviolent tactics sheds light onto how Alliance members were aware of the power of the media and how violence (perhaps especially violence perpetrated by people of color) is often portrayed in the media. Her

---

313 Foy, interview.
314 Foy, interview.
315 Foy, interview.
316 Lopez, interview.
statement spotlights yet another route that the Alliance chose to take. She also talked about the importance of gaining support from large numbers of people. “We also just number-wise, wanted to get the word out to as many people as we could! Getting as many people to join in any of the marches, rallies, whatever they could, to show that they were supporting us.”

Loachamin’s sentiments built off of Lopez’s when she shared that she thought that organizing so strategically and appealing to a wide audience set the Alliance up for success. “There was a lot of evaluation about what works. We looked at a lot of movements for social change. There was a strategy for escalating.” Also like Lopez, Loachamin stressed the fact that the strategies that culminated into the movement were not just coincidence or luck, but were born out of well-researched and planned strategies. She stated, “It wasn’t just a random thing. It was part of a strategy.” She also shared, “I think it was because there was such a wide kind of group of people that were involved… a big spectrum of people… that were affected and interested, was what made it happen. If it had just been one or two student groups specifically addressing one ethnicity or one group of people, it just wouldn’t have been as effective.” Loachamin stated that because the movement’s aims and approach to getting people involved were so encompassing, this allowed for hundreds of students to offer their support.

Reflecting further she stated, “Some of it I think was just what was happening at the time. We had all the right people there at the same time, that were willing to share and come to the table and use their experience and knowledge and access the resources… All

---

317 Lopez, interview.
318 Loachamin, interview.
319 Loachamin, interview.
those things were coming together at the same time with the big question of Ethnic 
Studies.”320 Sharing how various factors accumulated into students critically questioning 
the university’s commitment to racial justice and equity she continued, “I think that for 
all us of we were like, ‘No. Wait a minute. If these professors aren’t important and what 
they’re teaching isn’t important… Really? What kind of university does that—telling us 
that our lives and our experiences in this country and even other countries aren’t 
important?’”321 Another student participant used the language of needing and deserving 
to be valued, validated, and important. “There is just this big huge gap… we, people of 
color from all ages, are not be able to appreciate people of color from what [we] learn 
every day at school, or don’t learn every day at school.”322 Encinias echoed this 
statement, discussing how the history of the disenfranchised should be taught and valued. 
“We should learn our history… the other side of history. The other side, with 
disenfranchised people should be valued.”323

Both students and professors from the time period, such as Prof. William Wei, who 
was on campus teaching in Asian American Studies at the time of the movement, 
discussed how UCB “needed to have an institution that could withstand the changes that 
occur on campus,” so that it could “serve as a tool to bring people together; not only to 
educate but to provide other services as well.”324 Perhaps the other services that he 
mentions might include: empowerment, validation, and the ability to use Ethnic Studies 
as a discipline to affect social change.

320 Loachamin, interview. 
321 Loachamin, interview. 
322 Loachamin, interview. 
323 Encinias, interview. 
324 William Wei, interview with Renee Roberts, December 6, 2012, his office at UCB 
campus, transcript.
Prof. Russell Endo agreed with this goal of research conducted in Ethnic Studies. Discussing what he taught in the 1970s to students at UCB, of the things that he tried to stress in his course, was the importance of doing research. “Why is it important to do research? Why is it important to look at old documents? Why is it important to do oral histories? It’s not only just to recapture the past, but a lot of the material can be used for political reasons.” He stated that this research could then be “effective in addition to having protests and other advocacy activity.” In this way, the Ethnic Studies Department gave students a place to belong, to feel empowered and valued as people of color, and it also provided them with the academic tools to give back to their communities.

Wong stated, “We never thought that it would be this big movement or struggle or this gigantic event…I think that we just had such a powerful commitment in what we believed was doing the right thing for our campus, doing the right thing for our education.” She continued, sharing, “We are the byproduct of so many people that taught us to stand up for our communities. We don’t see it as something extraordinary. We just see it as something that had to happen, that needed to happen.”

When initially asked what led to the movement’s success, Windham gave no immediate answers. “I don’t know why it worked. I don’t understand all of why it worked, because there are a thousand reasons that it shouldn’t have. Even on paper, looking at it in retrospect, it’s like, ‘Well, what the hell happened?’ I don’t get it.” Windham reflected before continuing, “How did it work? … Because it just seemed

---

326 Wong, interview.
327 Wong, interview.
328 Windham, interview.
against all odds that it would. From… everybody who was there from early on, to the folks that ended up there like halfway through [the movement], to the folks who only ended up hunger striking and finding out about it later… The work that they put in really, really, really is what made the difference. Without… the folks that were willing to put their bodies, grades, health, finances, positions in their families at risk… it wouldn’t have worked and it wouldn’t have mattered.”

Gabriel stated what nearly all of the research participants did; “I just saw it as the right thing to do.” Most participants expressed feelings of happiness and pride in their contributions to making such institutional change. Encinias shared, “It was a life-changing experience. I am glad that we did it.”

This chapter shows how difference and diversity were dealt with during the student movement for Ethnic Studies at UCB by exploring how class, race, sexual orientation and gender were present in the movement. Overall, the students were able to make space for the differences between the people involved in the student movement called the Alliance because they were committed to embracing and working with difference instead of attempting to eradicate or downplay its importance. Reflections about why the movement was so successful from former student activists in this movement speak to the strategic organizing that students engaged in, and the commitment to the struggle as reasons for the movement’s success.

---

329 Windham, interview.
330 Gabriel, interview.
331 Encinias, interview.
Conclusion

“As you belong here, so do I. We are here because we belong here.” — UCB Professor Polly McLean, recalling a statement made by a student of color

I began this research project because I was inspired and impressed by the well-planned, strategic organization that a grassroots student movement for racial justice and equity was able to achieve at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I wanted to learn the secret to their success. What I discovered as I delved deeper into my research was how rich the intricate complexities of the movement were. Instead of emerging from my research with an equation for social transformation, I now acknowledge that there was no “key;” it was the culmination of a multitude of events, students, university staff, and organizations whose convergence affected sustainable social change.

When seeking an understanding of why the student movement achieved its goals, archival documents and participants in my study pointed to various factors. The tensions of the political moment, institutionalized support structures on campus for students of color, mentorship of staff and faculty, students’ access to education of histories and skills useful or pertaining to social change movements and activist experience all contributed to the success of this movement. However, none of what ultimately transpired would have happened, had it not been for the strong commitment and courage that the student activists demonstrated.

What drove this commitment was something that I also sought to understand. The answer that I found was that it was the passionate conviction of the student activists themselves that fueled the movement. Their determination to establish a department in
which the lives, histories, and contributions of people of color would be valued was strong. Their hunger for a place to belong and be valued was so great that they were willing to stage a hunger strike. Filling this need on campus, UMAS y MEChA and SCAEP formed the powerful Alliance, and this coalition of passionate and dedicated people paved the way toward the creation of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Today the department continues to stand strong, and has become very well established as a place in which difference is not collapsed, but instead embraced and valued. Much like the Alliance that fought for its formation, the Ethnic Studies Department’s commitment to inclusivity across difference has grown very strong, and it remains a place for students of marginalized races and ethnicities, and more recently has also expanded as a place for students with marginalized genders and sexualities, to belong.

The journey toward fully institutionalizing Ethnic Studies lasted for decades. In 1974, the members of UMAS lost their beloved "Los Seis." Twenty years later, in 1994, the Alliance successfully established an Ethnic Studies Department at UCB. In 2014—yet another 20 years later—a Ph.D. program in Ethnic Studies will finally become a reality. The student movement for an Ethnic Studies Department was monumental victory of UCB because of the lasting impact that it has made on campus, but when placed in historical context, it is just one in a series of efforts to incorporate and value racial diversity at UCB, that began generations ago, and that continues today.

Members of the Alliance in 1994 were fully aware of the legacy of activism within which they were embedded. They remembered that on February 25, 1942, a group had gathered in the Chapel of Old Main at the University of Colorado at Boulder for the
first campus wide conference to reflect on and discuss the current state of diversity and inclusion on campus. In a document titled “Why We Are Here—CU-Boulder Town Meeting (People of Color) on March 7, 1994, Dr. Polly McLean wrote, “Over fifty-two years and ten days later…we have come together again. This time in an open and honest dialogue among those of us who stand to lose the most in the discourse occurring on this campus around multiplicity, diversity and difference.” Reflecting on the state of diversity and inclusion, McLean wrote about the sentiment expressed by myself, the student activists involved in the Alliance, and the student activists that continue struggling today.

Continuing, McLean wrote, “I was thinking about these four words ‘Why are we here’… I first thought about discussions I’ve held with some students of color regarding the climate on this campus. And somewhere in the discussion, a student might say something like ‘Well, you know they don’t want us here,’ and another would respond, ‘Then why are you here?’ ‘Because we belong here, another voice would echo… ‘As you belong here, so do I. We are here because we belong here.’”

At the end of her oral history interview, Stewart shared a personal observation. “It’s that cliché about how one person can make a difference,” she said. “It’s these little things, these micro things…that we do in our lives that maybe seem not totally thought out, or naïve…but they have these macro impacts and it’s amazing. Sometimes…change is made.”

332 “Why are we here CU-Boulder Town Meeting (People of Color) on March 7, 1994,” McLean.
333 “Why are we here,” McLean.
334 “Why are we here,” McLean.
335 Stewart, interview.
Appendix: Interviews Conducted


Stewart, Bernadette. Interview with Renee Roberts, January 10, 2013. Her office in Old Main on the UCB campus, transcript.


Wong, Leslie. Interview with Renee Roberts, September 11, 2012. Wong’s office in the Center for Multicultural Affairs in Center for Community on the UCB campus, transcript.
References


