“Now Serving ‘Tacos al Cabrón’:
Student Use of Satirical Humor as a Form of Protest at Texas A&I”

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Abstract

During the 1970s Chicano activists at Texas A&I in Kingsville, Texas produced underground newspapers in which they utilized satirical humor and bilingual word play not only to assert their rights as students, but also to stand up for the rights of Mexican American workers in the community. In this essay, I argue that this Mexican American satire constituted a form of transnationalism; the humor represented a unique blend of Mexican and U.S. influences. It is indeed, an expression of what Walter Mignolo (2000) would describe as “border thinking,” because through the venue of these newspapers, the students dismissed their subaltern position by reclaiming and redefining reality as they perceived it as Mexican American students at A&I. I conclude that their use of satirical humor constituted a yet-to-be explored form of cultural nationalism because it expressed pride in Mexican American culture at the same time that it claimed the right for a distinctly Mexican American culture to exist within the framework of U.S society.

Texas A&I University in Kingsville was a focal point of student activism from the late 1960s until the late 1970s (Hunter & Hunter, p.133). Although students engaged in protests regarding many issues including gender rights and the Vietnam War, Mexican American students led the most pointed attacks, raising their voices not only to proclaim equal treatment for Mexican American students at the university, but also to advocate for Mexican American workers in the community. During the mid-1970s, student activists published the alternative student papers El Chile and El Machete because they believed that the official student newspaper, The South Texan, did not represent Mexican American students effectively. The unofficial papers provided ample examples of the satirical humor--and its accompanying bilingual word play--that students utilized to advance their cause.

These Texas A&I alternative newspapers formed just one part of a larger movement of Chicano journalism. Mexican American activists throughout the Southwest published as many as fifty newspapers with the goal of serving as a voice to their civil rights movement (Flores, 2008). In the mid-1960s, many of these papers organized under the banner of the Chicano Press Association with an agreement to share articles and features so that they could more effectively disseminate information to the Mexican American community. These periodicals often made no effort to provide objective coverage, even admitting that “sometimes every story we print is an editorial” (Lewels, 1974, p.65). Publishing the papers, which were produced with the goal of empowering readers, constituted a form of activism. As such, most of the staff volunteered its services, most of the papers were offered to the public at no cost, and papers were frequently funded by Chicano organizations; they often were not run as business ventures. These newspapers focused on local concerns, such as education, and on national and even international topics, such as the United Farm Workers’ grape boycott, voting rights, and U.S. involvement in Nicaragua.
These periodicals very much emanated from and represented the era in which they were produced. Chicanos used earlier counterculture newspapers, such as The Rag, published in Los Angeles, as models to emulate. They also employed the gonzo journalism techniques made famous by Hunter S. Thompson (Flores, 2008; Lewels, 1974; Vasquez, 2006). While their lack of objectivity and biting satire might, at face value, seem to be purely the American influence of writers like Thompson and his counterculture cohort, the form of satire employed in these papers represented many distinctly Mexican influences as well. As such, the humor in Chicano newspapers published in Texas reflected transnational influences, and the humor itself served as a yet-to-be explored form of cultural nationalism. Other scholars have examined literary and ethnographic sources of Chicano satire and humor, as well as performance art in the mainstream media (Dickinson, 2008) but none have yet analyzed the satirical references employed by activists in underground newspapers. The A&I student newspapers thus represent a valuable prism through which scholars can expand their definitions regarding both the forms and intent of satirical humor.

The students’ position in society impacted their self expression. As Mexican Americans growing up in South Texas, many of these students and their families had suffered systematic discrimination throughout their lives. Many scholars convincingly assert that tejanos experienced stronger racist animosity than other Chicano groups, due to the long tradition of Anglo-tejano tension dating back to the early nineteenth century (Hernandez, 1991, p. 8; DeLeon, 1983, pp.1-13). Historian Mario Barrera (1979) advanced the idea that Mexican Americans throughout the country existed within a model “internal colonialism” that relegated them to a subaltern status in U.S. society. The students, then, engaged in what Walter Mignolo (2000) described as “border thinking,” (p.3) because through the venue of these newspapers, they responded to their subaltern position by reclaiming and redefining reality as they perceived it as Mexican American students at A&I. This redefinition constituted more than a restitution of a previously quieted voice; it marked the creation of a new voice reacting against its subordinate status through the use of humor.

Despite an antagonistic relationship with U.S. culture, most of the Chicano students grew up in the United States and were thus influenced—however indirectly—by long traditions of Anglophone satire. Literary scholars of British and American satire have agreed on certain generalizations. Although satirists may have feigned objectivity, they presented exaggerations. Satire functioned as a highly referential art form; it typically required that people hold shared values in order to appreciate it. Therefore, satire was best understood in the community in which the humorist created it. Commonly held ideas allowed satirists to convey superiority and derision, either by ridiculing a group or person who did not fit established norms, or by challenging the norms themselves, and thus criticizing mainstream society. Scholars argued that relative community stability had to exist for people to enjoy satire because a group concerned with survival would feel threatened by it. Analysts of Anglophone satire also posited that such humorists did not offer solutions to problems; they merely shed light on issues. While satire might have offered commentary regarding societal ills, literary scholars argued, it was not typically motivated by specific political ideas. The work did not constitute a call to action; it merely served as a form of entertainment. Scholars argued that satire provided a safe release of hostility against a group, or the established order. It allowed people to vent their anger, thereby reducing the chance for real action. The literature regarding British and American satire overwhelmingly concluded that this form of humor was not a form of activism (Feinberg, 1967; Griffin, 1994; Schutz, 1977).

Historian Stephen E. Kercher studied non-literary humorists, including controversial comedian Lenny Bruce and MAD magazine creator Harvey Kurtzman. In Revel with a Cause: Liberal
Satire in Postwar America, he offered a somewhat different interpretation of satire by examining
the work of such liberal satirists in the two decades following World War II (2006). He agreed with
his literary colleagues that this form of humor provided social and political commentary designed to
raise awareness among educated liberals about issues including the Vietnam War, race relations,
and the superficiality of American culture. He stated that such humor had a “cathartic effect” (p.11).
But unlike his literary colleagues, Kercher provided ample evidence that non-literary humorists in
the 1950s and 1960s did indeed focus their invective on specific political targets, including Lyndon
Johnson and Barry Goldwater. Political satirists enjoyed exploiting the contradiction between the
ideals expressed by politicians and the realities of their policies. Indeed, according to Kercher, sati-
rists “readily criticized Democrats for failing to live up to their ideals” (p.2). He also observed that
many of these humorists were Jewish or African American. Working from the perspective of being
marginalized members of society, thus provided them common ground with the Mexican American
satirists of the Chicano Movement.

The A&I students, of course, also lived as part of Mexican culture; Mexican satire therefore
influenced them as well. Despite a rich satirical heritage, only a handful of scholars have studied
Mexican satire. In 1943 Teodoro Torres published Humorismo y satira, a work almost entirely
dedicated to Mexican satire. More recently, scholars such as William H. Beezley (2008) and Linda
Curcio-Nagy (2004) incorporated discussions of satire into their broader work. And art historians
have focused on the work of the famed print maker, José Guadalupe Posada. Yet history offered
abundant proof that people of Mexican descent have a strong and distinct satirical heritage.

Certainly, the Mexican past provided fertile ground for satire; during the colonial period and
nineteenth century, Mexican residents lived in a world of sharp dichotomies, including the class
and caste distinctions of the colonial period, and political competition in the nineteenth century.
The strong emotions engendered by these dichotomies lent themselves to the creation of satire.
During the Hapsburg Era (1506-1700), government officials typically allowed satire as a relatively
harmless expression of dissatisfaction. Although the Bourbons (1700-89) cracked down on satiri-
cal protest as a threat to the state, satire persisted, and the tradition grew with the extreme political
rivalry of the nineteenth century (Curcio-Nagy). Posada emerged as the most famous satirist of
that century. His career as a printmaker spanned the last years of the Reform Era (1855-76) and
continued until his death in 1913. He frequently used art to express humorous contempt for the
Porfriian government and the excesses of the upper class. He endeavored to speak for el pueblo
through his artwork, thus using that medium as a form of protest (Tyler, 1979; Berdecio & Appel-
baum, 1972). His prominence continued well into the twentieth century through his influence on
the artwork of Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco. Such satiric humor
remains strong in Mexico even today with the publication of magazines such as El Chamuco, which
offers biting commentary regarding the government.

Mexican scholars have argued that unique characteristics made the country ripe for the
development of a satiric tradition. Curcio-Nagy posited that satiric humor resonated well in New
Spain because Spanish, indigenous and African cultures all prized wit (2004). Torres asserted
that not just wit, but extreme bitterness, characterized Mexican satire (1943). The scholars agreed
that Mexican satirists frequently had the political goal of criticizing the government; their satire
was much more direct than the examples typically found in the United States and Great Britain.
Lastly, whereas the literature that exemplified the most studied and recognized Anglophone satire
emanated from and was created for the educated classes, Mexican satire often emerged from the
people, created and performed in the streets and in cafes (Curcio-Nagy).
In Mexican American studies, the dearth of information proves more startling—Guillermo Hernandez’s Chicano Satire: A Study in Literary Culture stands nearly alone (1991). Although Hernandez himself studied literary works, he embraced a broad definition of satire, leaving room—and, indeed, offering encouragement—for scholars to study non-canonical texts such as newspapers for satirical influences. Hernandez demonstrated that Mexican and American traditions influenced Mexican American satire. He wrote that, “One key factor in the interpretation of Chicano culture, therefore, lies in recognizing the various strategies that Chicanos have devised for over a hundred and fifty years of blending, adapting, reformulating, accepting or rejecting, one set of cultural values or the other” (p.10). He argued that just as Mexican humorists played with the sharp dichotomies shaping their existence, Chicanos often highlighted the challenges of living between (and in) two cultures and sets of values—American and Mexican. He further asserted that, just as the dominant group could use satire as a tool to reinforce its hegemonic status, those with subaltern status could wield satiric references to challenge that hegemony. He aligned himself with the perspective of the literary scholars when he argued that the target of a satirical attack was usually fictional. Yet he broke ranks with them by asserting that satire could invoke change by challenging people to alter the way they think about commonly held values.

Nicolás Kanellos augmented the work of Hernandez in an article exploring the role of the satiric cronista in early twentieth-century Hispanic newspapers (1998). He focused on the immigrant press that emerged from the massive influx of Mexicans to the Southwest during the Revolution. The editors of these periodicals, he argued, endeavored to protect Mexican culture from Anglo-American influences, including Protestantism. They believed not only in the superiority of Mexican culture, but also in the need to preserve its integrity for the return of los Mexicanos to the homeland following the Revolution. He posited that the cronistas, who lampooned those guilty of conformity in weekly columns focusing on the social mores of the community, engaged in political action, using their satire to “fan the flames of nationalism and to enforce the ideology of México de afuera” (p.10).

Scholars of Texas folklore completed ethnographic research on the role of jokes and jests in Tejano culture that strengthens the conclusions of Hernandez and Kanellos. Renowned folklorist Américo Paredes noted the transnational nature of Mexican American humor when he argued that Mexican Americans influenced Mexican attitudes and jokes regarding Anglo Americans as much—if not more than—Mexicans influenced such forms of Tejano humor (1966). Literature professor José Reyna2 described Tejano humor as targeting both Mexicans and Anglos as Mexican Americans sought to understand and explain their “position between Mexican and American cultures” (1980, p.26) This humor frequently presented Anglos as the outsiders or the “other,” thus allowing Mexican Americans symbolically to reclaim Texas and remind Anglos that they “were here first” (1980, p.26). Reyna also addressed Chicanos’ use of bilingualism in their jokes, asserting that they utilized both English and Spanish as way to demonstrate a sense of superiority over both Mexicans and Anglos. Both Reyna and José Limón argued that jokes and jests sometimes functioned as instructional devices designed to remind people about important cultural roles and practices. Such humor served, therefore, as a form of “cultural restoration.” (Reyna,1980; Limón, 1984, p.36) Limón went even further in his 1982 article “History, Chicano Joking, and the Varieties of Higher Education: Tradition and Performance,” where he focused specifically on joke-telling among University of Texas—Austin students in the years between 1966 and 1975. He posited that these students,

2 Jose Reyna also served as Director of Ethnic Studies at Texas A&I University from 1971 until 1977. In fact, the editors of El Chile noted his call for the creation of a Chicano Studies Center in their October, 1975 edition.
attending the university during the Chicano Movement, utilized joking not as a release of anger, but as “cultural symbolic action” (p.155) in which they reinforced their “intra-ethnic solidarity” (p.155) as well as their antagonism toward Anglo Texans.

Mexican American students thus entered an Anglo-dominated academic environment from a culture that utilized jokes in informal settings as a way to respond to the pressures of living simultaneously in two cultures. Once at the university, they experienced frustration in a variety of areas, and A&I became an influential center of Chicano activism. In the late 1960s, noted activists José Angel Gutiérrez and Carlos Guerra enrolled at A&I and initiated a local chapter of the Mexican American Youth Organization (M.A.Y.O.) They and other students spoke out about issues such as housing discrimination and a lack of curriculum reflecting the Mexican American experience (Hunter & Hunter, pp.139,143). Other students such as Amado Peña, Carmen Lomas Garza, and Santa Barraza used art as a venue to express pride in their Mexican American heritage (Vargas, 2010). And still other students, engaging in the same style of humor that they would have witnessed growing up, turned to the medium of newspapers to reach a wider audience than informal joking alone would have as a call to action to their fellow Mexican American students, and perhaps as a warning shot to the university’s administration.

Incomplete records of two underground newspapers remain archived at the South Texas Archives: El Chile and El Machete, both of which were produced in the 1970s. These papers differed dramatically in quality, but provided similar content. Students created El Machete anonymously, typing it and copying it on a mimeograph machine; it even lacked dates of publication. Like El Machete, El Chile identified neither its contributors nor its editors by name. But each edition included dates and a volume number, indicating a regular cycle of publication. They also placed advertisements for local businesses, most of which were under Mexican American ownership. The editors also solicited subscriptions at a cost of $4.00 each semester, including a campus post office box to which people could send money. Despite its local focus, El Chile had a fairly wide ranging subscription base, with universities as far away as Nebraska, Iowa, and California requesting copies (Ramiro Villarreal Papers, South Texas Archives). While all of the surviving copies of El Machete were in English, the editors of El Chile published articles both in English and Spanish and some of its contributors engaged in code switching. This demonstration of bilingualism constituted an expression of pride in their “unique cultural identity” (Dickinson, p.17). Considered in historical context, the use of Spanish was a particularly powerful statement, as the vast majority of these students would have been punished for speaking Spanish in grade school (Blanton, 2007). Contributors went further to assert cultural pride when they utilized bilingual word play, demonstrating their facility in two languages and making references that only fellow Chicanos could understand. Such “in-group” humor proved an important characteristic of ethnic humor (Dickinson, p.14; Watkins, 1994, p.29). These underground papers thus used humor to address diverse social, economic, and educational issues.

Rather than always focusing on specific issues, El Chile sometimes included satirical pieces aimed at more general circumstances facing Mexican Americans. The editors periodically ran a column entitled “The Mexican American Devil’s Dictionary.” This column borrowed its premise from Ambrose Bierce’s The Devil’s Dictionary, first published in 1881, in which Bierce offered cynical definitions of common words to encourage his audience to reassess popularly held assumptions. In its 1970s counterpart, the author engaged in bilingual word play, using the pseudonym P. Galindo, a play on words involving the Spanish verb “pegar,” or “to hit.” His definitions were indeed hard hitting and he employed the bitter commentary typical to Mexican satire. Although the premise of
the column itself indicated that the author was educated, many of the references he employed only require community knowledge for the public to enjoy.

Many definitions offered commentary on Anglo hegemony and, in so doing, challenged Anglo control. For example, “Galindo” defined a barrio as “A restricted neighborhood maintained thusly by your friendly realtor. The Barrio is a recent discovery in the Disneyworlds of Sociology and Government” (El Chile, 1976). With this definition he simultaneously accused real estate agents of using their authority to continue segregated housing practices and he mocked academia, indicating that scholars could only play at understanding the systematic discrimination they purported to oppose. In another edition, he defined the Alamo as “a religious shrine built, on low bid, by missionaries for the Daughters of the Texas Revolution. The Alamo is a nice place to visit, but you wouldn’t want to live there” (1975). With this definition, he ridiculed perhaps the most sacred of Texas landmarks and vividly critiqued the fact that the Daughters of the Texas Revolution had controlled historical interpretations of Texas Independence. His depiction of Texas also made a statement against Anglo hegemony. He described it as “A place where Mexicans should be seen and not heard.” He continued by writing, “Most Texans possess afine [sic] sense of irony as witnessed by the derivation of the state name: it means friends or friendship. Texas ranks first in cotton, oil, and in the exportation of migrant laborers [sic]” (1976). Lastly, he defined elections, simply as “an in-joke,” (1975) again lambasting Anglo hegemony by implying that the Anglo controlled electoral process was unfair.

Other definitions referenced the dichotomy between Mexican Americans and Anglo society and culture; still another illustrated cultural nationalism with a provocative reminder that Mexican Americans were from the Southwest—they were not purely an immigrant population. Speaking to economic inequality, the author characterized air as “One of the four natural elements; the other three being space, freedom, and friendship. For many Chicanos, air is the first meal of the day” (El Chile, 1975) and he defined “Cheap Labor” as “Something gringos love and cannot do without. They especially love it when they get it from Chicanos” (1976). His definition of “Mexican American” emphasized Chicanos’ longstanding presence in the Southwest. It read as follows: “Chicano, Hispano, Latino, Mexican, Latinoamericano, Boy, Latin American legless war vet, Spanish-surnamed. . . People who refuse to go back to where they came from, namely Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, etc.” (1975).

The “Mexican American Devil’s Dictionary” highlighted an overarching characteristic of El Chile: its anti-assimilationist tone. The dictionary portrayed assimilation as “the exchange of one set of problems for another, oftentimes bigger” (1976). This definition pointed to internal tensions within the Mexican American community and could be read as a warning cry against becoming “un vendido” because the editors did not believe that assimilation would help Mexican Americans. Two letters to the editor that appeared in the official school newspaper, The South Texan, reinforced this point. On October 31, 1975, a letter written by a student named David Flores appeared, entitled “Let compassion guide the Chicano movement” (p.2). In this letter, Flores accused the students who wrote El Chile of being “bigots,” and wrote, “They’re satisfied in blasting all white people.” He said that he, too, had been a victim of Anglo oppression, but that “It would be tragic, indeed, for La Raza to go down the same road the Gringos chose when they decided to oppress us for so many years” (p.2). He urged them to move beyond what he regarded as unfocused and unhealthy anger, and to let love and compassion guide them in their quest for social justice. On November 7, Luis Coronado responded with his own letter to the editor, entitled “El Chile staff loves
you David Flores” (The South Texan, p.2). In keeping with the tradition of anonymity, Coronado never admitted that he himself wrote for El Chile. But that did not stop him from excoriating Flores. He accused Flores of having had a cultural transplant operation as a student at A&I, and wrote that “El Chile staff knows that behind that brown mustachioed [sic] mask there lurks an Anglo mind” (p.2). He questioned Flores’ idea of offering love and compassion to white people, asserting that “A vast majority of anglos lack these two qualities” (p.2). He concluded by speaking to the universality of the Mexican American experience and indirectly accusing Flores of being a sellout, when he proclaimed: “A person must begin to love, understand, and have compassion for himself first. It is evident in your article that you do not love yourself or our people (we’re an extension of you.) El Chili [sic] staff loves you David Flores” (p.2).

The editors of El Chile frequently ran another feature entitled “Taco al Cabrón,” again using bilingual word play by replacing “carbón” in the name of the popular dish “tacos al carbón” with a common expression of derision, cabo. El Chile often awarded the crude moniker to individuals and organizations that seemed to deny Mexican Americans equal representation. This column spared no one. It even lambasted First Lady Rosalyn Carter (and by implication President Jimmy Carter). The editors noted that the First Lady had made an effort to learn conversational Spanish before traveling to Latin America. The editors complained that “She will now be able to lie to us in two languages, giving her the advantage over her husband, who, of course, only lies to us in English” (1977). They accused the Texas A&I University System Board of Regents of racism because it purportedly dedicated less than one percent of the entire budget for academic year 1977-78—$15,000—for a Mexican American Studies Center. They pointedly attacked the Board of Regents, writing “This is the clearest indication that A&I will continue its racist attitudes and will continue to ignore the fact that A&I’s student population is more than 52% CHICANO” (1977). They also condemned the A&I maintenance department for using nepotism in hiring practices, thus favoring Anglos over Mexican Americans.

Anger regarding political representation had also coalesced into formal action by the 1970s. Chicanos in Texas had grown increasingly disillusioned with the Democratic Party because they believed it did not represent their needs. Political activists José Angel Gutiérrez and Mario Compean led the effort to found a third party, La Raza Unida, at Crystal City in January, 1970. They forged this party to bring social, economic, and political self-determination to Mexican Americans. The party unsuccessfully ran gubernatorial candidates for elections throughout the 1970s, but it did achieve temporary prominence in South Texas and permanently opened the door for more Mexican American participation in politics (Navarro 2000; Garcia 1989).

La Raza Unida did not stand alone in its opinion of the Democratic Party; satirists working for Chicano papers throughout the state characteristically used humor to malign the party. El Chile picked up on this theme in 1977 with a caricature that depicted a man holding a sign in which he asserted that the Democratic Party was the affiliation of the poor. Other text implied that if people wanted to continue to live in poverty, they should vote for Democrats. The man—dressed in worn clothes, and holding what seems to be the dreaded and maligned short-handed hoe behind his back—appeared as un pelado, or a caricature of the common working man who, in literature and theatre, offered satirical observations about his plight in society. In her dissertation, “Pocho Humor: Contemporary Chicano Humor and the Critique of American Culture,” Jennifer Alvarez Dickinson also wrote that the pelado functioned as a symbol of Mexican Americans’ bicultural identity and a “sounding board for many cultural conflicts” (25-26). Here, the pelado’s very appearance, as well as the accompanying sign, pointed to the danger of engaging in agringamiento politics. At the
bottom of the image, the cartoonist encouraged unity among Mexican Americans by proclaiming “¡Solos caen en la lumbre!” (El Chile 1977). The accompanying article reinforced this interpretation; it endorsed support of La Raza Unida in upcoming elections.
The student activists’ concern for issues regarding discrimination and equality went beyond the confines of campus when they printed stories and caricatures about Kingsville-area workers’ conditions. Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest faced systemic discrimination in hiring, wage, and promotion decisions. The editors of El Chile regularly ran stories on the activities of Trabajadores Unidos de Kingsville (TUK), an organization founded in 1975 to protect the rights of workers in industry, for the city, as well as at Texas A&I, the King Ranch and the Kingsville Naval Air Station (Abdiel Blanco, October 13, 1976, letter to St. Martins Mutualistas, Ramiro Villarreal Papers, South Texas Archives). They printed multiple articles regarding a class action lawsuit that TUK brought against The Arthur Brothers Construction Company, a company that subcontracted out of the local pharmaceutical plant, Celanese. The claimants argued that Arthur Brothers engaged in discriminatory practices, such as failing to promote Mexican Americans. In 1976, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (E.E.O.C.) in San Antonio found the Arthur Brothers guilty in five violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (El Chile, 1976).

While reporting on this story, contributors at El Chile provided satirical commentary through the use of caricature. One image dehumanized the Arthur Brothers’ supervisor by making him appear animal-like. He claimed his authority as Mexican American workers approached him, gifts in hand, seeking a job and overtime (1976). This created a vivid image of workplace corruption carried out by Anglo management. Once the workers had achieved victory, they depicted the same goon-like supervisor trying to buy a soda from the “come caca” vending machine, put in place by the E.E.O.C. of San Antonio (1976). In this caricature, the artist rendered the supervisor a fool who would be victimized by his own ignorance because of his inability to speak Spanish.
Students of course, dedicated a great deal of attention to issues regarding the education that they were receiving at A&I. Many of their complaints centered on the theme of representation, as they complained about the scarcity of Mexican American faculty members and administrators. Mexican American students at Texas A&I represented about 30% of the school’s population by 1970 (Hunter & Hunter, p.154). According to El Chile that percentage had increased to 52% by 1977 when the A&I Board of Regents selected Dr. Duane Leach as President of A&I (1977). Contributors from El Chile expressed their outrage through scathing satirical references. The first image depicted Leach luring a dog with a bone as he prepared to confine him in a collar. College Hall, home of the president’s offices, appeared in the background. The dog was described with the caption “un vendido se conforma con su hueso.” The dog represented the new assistant to President Leach, Dr. Rolando Hinojosa-Smith (the now-famous Chicano author). An article that appeared later in the issue supported this contention. Entitled “Gringos Rule by Appeasement,” it referred to Hinojosa-Smith as a “sell-out half-Mexican-half-Anglo who is considered an enemy of the Chicano Movement” (1977). Another caricature similarly lambasted the Board of Regents’ decision to hire Leach by illustrating that the choice was a knife in the back of the people of Kingsville (Kinis refers to Kingsville inhabitants) and that Leach, appropriate to his name, would drain the community. The people are again represented by un pelado calling out in vain for a Chicano university president. As he stood with a knife in his back and the leech draining his hand—the very source of his livelihood as a manual worker—the sun looked down sympathetically, saying that nothing had changed since 1973 (1977). In the October 1977 edition, the paper featured Student Association President Osvaldo Romero in the column “Tacos al Cabrón,” writing that Romero “is playing the politics of appeasement with the new illegitimate president of Texas A&I” because he stated that he would give Leach three months to demonstrate his sensitivity to the Mexican American students. The editors struck out at Romero, arguing that “gringos” had already had 51 years to prove their sensitivity. El Chile’s commentary demonstrated not only Chicano antagonism toward an Anglo administration, but also revealed the complexities within the Mexican American community itself.
"...A person doesn't win confidences from people he earns them." A.M. Leach

Members of LA RESISTENCIA are protesting the racist action by the A&I Board of Regents and have meet the Chicano demands is causing the greatest turn-over in "top" administrators of any university in the area.

¡Queremos un Chicano para Presidente del colegio!

Dice J.C. Martin que un Chicano no puede ser Presidente hasta en 2 o 4 años!
In its October 1975 edition, the editors of El Chile published the “A&I Recipe of the Month” in which they addressed student discontent with the A&I administration as well as with students who chose reticence over activism. The recipe called for a can of jalepeño bean dip, a javelina foot (the javelina being the A&I mascot), a large poster of Mr. Whipple (from the ubiquitous advertisements for Charmin bath tissue) and an article from the university’s official newspaper, the South Texan, among other ingredients. It required that the cook mix the ingredients well while adding “vendido” sauce and the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting. It suggested that the meal be served with the “sweet moldy taste” and the “half-ass flavor of the Bilingual Program.” It claimed that if this odd concoction made you sick, “then for sure you’re Raza, but if nothing happens then you’ll swallow anything fed to you by the A&I administration.” An image functioning as the header to this recipe reasserted these conclusions. It featured a pot of beans under the caption “For gringos all Mexicans are beans in the same pot.” Arrows pointed to “Mexican jumping beans” with the explanation that these were sell outs who always tried to escape.

This recipe, while not gastronomically advisable, offered salient commentary about the students’ beliefs. Some of the recipe’s ingredients (the poster of Mr. Whipple) symbolized perceived Anglo hegemony at the school while others (such as the can of jalepeño bean dip) reinforced stereotypical notions of Mexican Americans. The article from the South Texan likewise symbolized Anglo domination of the University. In his letter to the editor, Coronado had denounced the school paper as being an “anglo dominated . . . mouthpiece of an anglo dominated administration” (South Texan, November 7, 1975, 2). The comment about the Bilingual Education Program seemed surprising because Chicano students had strongly favored the creation of the Bilingual Education Program. But they later complained that the faculty lacked the appropriate qualifications (El Machete). The warning about potential illness that accompanied the recipe also clearly established a dichotomy between “true” Chicanos and those who had sold out to the A&I Anglo-dominated administration. Lastly, the visual image of the pot of beans again censured los vendidos. But it also denounced Anglos for not recognizing the diversity of the Mexican American population, and for naively assuming that they could convince all Mexican Americans to assimilate to Anglo American culture.

Only three editions of El Machete have been preserved. They unfortunately failed to include publication dates, but the work clearly referenced events occurring in the mid-1970s, when student enrollment dropped and a number of faculty members subsequently lost their jobs (Hunter & Hunter, p.156). In one edition El Machete referred to the students as “so damn apathetic” and aggressively called for them to wake up and join the fight against racism, writing “Get off your ass and fight” (El Machete). They argued that A&I students were too disinterested and had been too easily placated with Cinco de Mayo Fiestas and ethnic studies courses. The editors then put forth a platform of demands to transform the university into a place more sensitive to the realities of Mexican Americans. They purposed giving students the authority to participate in decisions to fire racist professors, as well as demanding that the university create Chicano and Black Studies programs. Although the University had created an Ethnic Studies program, it was decentralized and did not offer the variety of courses, nor have the impact on campus culture, that students desired (South Texan, September 16, 1977, 1) In addition they requested that the University “extend the deadline for paying tuition,” (El Machete) thereby expressing the desire that the University impose policies to help the majority of Mexican American students who came from working class backgrounds.

In another article, they even lambasted the Drama Department, which had received high praise in the South Texan for the activities of the La Compañía de Teatro Bilingue, led by Professor Joseph Rosenberg (Hunter and Hunter). El Machete complained that the “Lily White Drama Dept.”
had not performed any Chicano plays, but instead required actors to perform Anglo and Spanish American plays. The editors asserted that the Drama Department used Chicano students for their bilingual abilities without allowing them to express their culture. This critique encapsulated the complexity of a Mexican American experience that was neither Mexican nor American, but a unique iteration unto itself. The editors also exposed the university’s inability to understand this reality.

The A&I students thus employed satiric wit and bilingual word play to express discontent through the publication of underground newspapers. The charged environment of the Chicano Movement at Texas A&I proved fertile ground for the evolution of Mexican American satiric expression. Chicano discourse, with its frequent focus on a “them vs. us” dichotomy, lent itself almost perfectly to the creation of satire, which requires such oppositional characterizations to thrive. The satire found in these periodicals of course did not deviate entirely from the traits embodied in U.S. satire. In particular, the political and social satirists of the 1950s and 1960s—many of whom also worked from the perspective of the “other”--encouraged both widespread reassessment of U.S. culture and the use of specific targets. But the work of these Mexican Americans represented characteristics that placed it firmly in the tradition of Mexican satire: particularly bitter wit, direct political content with intent to inspire action, and references that required community knowledge, but not formal education, to enjoy. Furthermore, these satirists belied the notion that such humorists were unmotivated by a desire for reform or by specific political principles, as scholars of Anglophone satire had insisted. Instead, as Mexican satirists have done since the colonial period, these students in the 1970s included direct political content aimed at specific individuals, at the campus, local, and national levels. These attacks did more than allow a healthy release of community anger, they called people to action. Not content to rely on the indirect influence of the casual joking traditions of their childhoods, they harnessed an audience through the power of the print media. And although the editors of these periodicals certainly built on the tradition of their cronista forebears, the intent of their invective differed dramatically: the Chicano humorists worked under the ideology of cultural nationalism. When they expressed pride in their heritage, they powerfully laid claim to the right for their culture---a distinct Mexican American culture--to exist within the framework of U.S. society. They did not advocate a return to the homeland; rather they sought to remind their readers that the U.S. was part of that homeland. These satirists then, promoted la causa with their direct political content, while advancing cultural nationalism through the use of a distinctive Mexican American voice.
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