"hegemonic feminism" by lesbians and women of color in the United States and the Third World itself constituted a third-wave movement. Others see this as a process that has cleared the way, making it possible for a younger generation to take the movement in new directions. For others still, the wave metaphor is always falsely homogenizing, untrue to the variety of sites of feminist movement activity.[43] But however one characterizes it, feminist activity is alive and well in the twenty-first century, both in the form of ongoing women's movements and in the impact of feminism within other progressive movements.

It is also clear that as these movements continue, poetry will continue to be a powerful feminist tool. The feminist music movement, which has always been closely linked to feminist poetry, was given renewed energy in the 1990s by new feminist music, most notably the independent folk/rock of Ani DiFranco, the post-punk energy of Riot Grrrls, and feminist rap by performers like Queen Latifah. The feminist poetry movement is also one of the forces behind the renewed energy in performed, or "spoken word," poetry. Growing as well out of the powerful hip-hop culture pioneered by black and Latino/a youth (which in turn owes much to black power and Latino/a nationalist poetics), spoken word performance is an important site of feminist consciousness-raising for younger women (and men), and a sign that poetry will continue to be one key site of feminist action for years to come.

FOUR

Revolutionary Walls

Chicano/a Murals, Chicano/a Movements

The people we now call Mexican Americans, or Chicanos, came into existence through resistance to two wars of conquest. The first was that of Spanish conquistadors, who in the sixteenth century invaded and decimated the native peoples of the territories now known as Mexico and the southwestern United States. Rape, concubinage, and intermarriage between the Spaniards, various indigenous peoples, African slaves, and others eventually created *la raza cósmica*, the multihued mix of peoples that is Mexico. The second war of conquest was that of the United States against Mexico. The U.S. states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California, as well as parts of Wyoming and Colorado, were part of Mexico before they were forcibly brought under U.S. dominion through the Texas and Mexican-American wars of the mid-nineteenth century. Begun on a dubious pretense and resisted by many in the United States as a war of imperial conquest, the Mexican-American War ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Forced on a defeated Mexico, the treaty extended the U.S. empire into the Southwest and California. Overnight, thousands of Mexicans found themselves strangers in their own land, putatively "American" now but generally treated as second-class citizens.

Mexican Americans can rightfully claim deeper roots in these regions of the United States than most other citizens, yet they are often confused with and portrayed as "illegal aliens." Maintaining their cultural heritage while becoming citizens of the United States was a complicated process involving sporadic open conflict (like the Mexican American

outlaws who fought ranchers and Rangers in Texas), as well as subtle daily acts of resistance during many generations. The process of "becoming Mexican American," as George Sánchez named it, was long, complex, and multifaceted.[1] It produced identities riddled with contradictions resulting from decades of racism, externally imposed and internalized.

Before the 1960s, many Mexican Americans, especially those in a small but influential middle class, believed that the best way to be accepted as Americans was to deny much of the Mexican and Indian side of their heritage and to assimilate into the white or "Anglo" world. But that world was most often hostile and exploitative rather than welcoming. Despite legal gains made by Mexican American civil rights groups like LULAC (the League of United Latin American Citizens, a group similar to the NAACP), the veterans' group GI Forum, and others, Mexican Americans entered the 1960s segregated in *barrios* (Spanish for "neighborhoods"), with inferior schools and services, high unemployment, and a staggering rate of poverty. They were routinely subject to racist insults to their culture, as well as brutality from the police and discrimination from employers. The once open border between the United States and Mexico had become a zone of harassment separating families and loved ones, and subjecting both Mexican visitors and Mexican American citizens to constant threats of deportation or refusal of reentry.

But resistance was also present amid assimilation and acquiescence. The popular front social movement of the 1930s and 1940s, driven by labor union struggles, shaped many future leaders of what would become the Chicano movement.[2] Mexican American labor leaders like Josephina Fierro de Bright and the "cannery women" strikers in California, and Bert Corona of the Los Angeles branch of the longshoremen's union, set models for later activism and in some cases directly involved themselves in the new struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. Many Mexican American activists in the 1930s were also part of El Congreso de Pueblo de Habla Español, an important progressive political coalition of "Spanish-speaking people." Despite significant racism among the white working class, the workplace in the 1930s and 1940s also included multiracial coalitions, reflecting the sense that class unity was needed to overcome the racist "divide and conquer" strategies of employers.[3]

When the new "Chicano generation" rose to prominence in the 1960s, it had to negotiate the complications of these multiple identities, challenging assimilation, building on activist models laid by predecessors,

improvising new elements, and exorcising elements of internalized racism that hindered the creation of a newly politicized sense of self and community. Despite these difficulties, the efforts made by people of Mexican descent living in the United States to claim the right to their own dignity, identity, language, and culture broadened in the 1960s to become *el movimiento*, the Chicano movement.

Various social factors help account for the rise of new activism: the urbanization of Mexican Americans, an increase in the Mexican American population (which doubled after World War II in some areas like Los Angeles), a larger proportion of youth as part of the "baby boom," more Mexican American students in college thanks to financial aid for students of color in the wake of the black civil rights movement, and a new group of Mexican American activists who learned organizing skills in student-centered protest groups like SNCC, SDS, and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. Women like Maria Varela and Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, both SNCC veterans and the former a cofounder of SDS, brought a new kind of movement know-how into the community. Veteran labor movement activists like Corona and César Chávez added to the storehouse of community organizing skills.[4]

As the 1960s rolled on, a new generation, led by students but including many from earlier generations as well, began to call themselves "Chicano," a term taken from street slang that announced the emergence of a new political identity. Chicanos reversed the policies and ideologies of assimilation and sought instead to recover, understand, and celebrate the cultural heritage that made them unique, while insisting on their economic and political rights as citizens of the United States.[5] Many identified with the Mexican revolutionaries of the early twentieth century and sought sweeping, radical change to wipe out racism and class inequality.

Murals in Movement, Movement in Murals

While Chicano movement artists worked and continue to work in many media, and while artists from many other racial and ethnic backgrounds work with murals, most historians and critics note a special affinity between the Chicano movement and the community mural movement.[6] Some sense of this affinity can be conveyed by noting that in the Los Angeles area alone (from which I will draw most of my examples) more than a thousand Chicano murals have been created since 1965. Chicano

murals can also be found in great numbers throughout Texas, the Southwest, and some Midwest cities like Chicago, where large numbers of Mexican Americans live.

The most common reason given for the attractiveness of the mural form for Chicano (male) and Chicana (female) artist-activists is the inspiration of the great Mexican muralists of the 1920s and 1930s: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siquieros. These men were important to the cultural politics of Mexico, and during the 1930s they were significant figures on the cultural side of the popular front labor movement in the United States. To a large extent the modern mural art form is the invention of these Mexican artists. "Los tres grandes" ("the three greats"), as they are known, were important models not only as major modern artists but also as political activists who rooted their muralism in support for the struggles of the poorest, most exploited members of their communities. The work of the Mexican muralists was extended into the United States during the 1930s through government-sponsored mural programs that eventually covered the walls of hundreds of post offices and other public buildings. Knowledge of this legacy inspired many of the creators of Chicano murals and played a role in the general public appeal of murals.

But there was another key element in that popularity—the prior existence in the barrio of a model of popular painted public art. This was *pulquería* art, the painting of landscapes and other scenes on the exterior walls of taverns, restaurants, shops, and other public buildings in Mexico and in U.S. barrios. The tradition of *pulquería* art lent a sense of familiarity to the murals that began to appear in the community with the rise of the Chicano movement. Just as the adaptation of black church music for the purposes of the civil rights movement allowed a radical new content to enter through a familiar, nonthreatening mode, the existence of *pulquería* art probably lessened the shock of the radical new messages being conveyed by community murals.

Other features of early Chicano murals drew from an image-system familiar to many in the barrios. These include the use of images drawn from Mexicano/Chicano religious observations, particularly *altares* (the small religious shrines found in many Chicano homes), as well as *estampas* and *almanaques* (chrome-lithographed religious prints and calendars). On the more secular side, muralists drew upon the style of customized *ranflas* (low-rider cars), on *tatuajes* (home-made india ink tatoos), and

placas (spray-painted graffiti logos). Initially less familiar but soon ubiquitous images drawn from indigenous art, especially Aztec, Olmec, Mayan, and Toltec sources, round out those elements that contributed to a specifically Chicano aesthetic. Add to these sources images drawn from American pop culture that had, by the 1960s, become part of a national youth culture shared by young Chicanos, and you have the main image repertoire used for movement murals. In various combinations these images became the aesthetic base for the articulation of complex, painted political messages that played a key role in reinventing Mexican Americans as Chicanos.

Painting History on the Wall

As I explore the interwoven histories of Chicano/a movement(s) and Chicana/o murals, I'll view the murals as expressions of key aspects of and issues in *el movimiento*, while periodically addressing the political possibilities and limits of the community mural as a form. I'll discuss a series of murals created by Chicano and Chicana artists from the late 1960s to the present, emphasizing that, like other movements, the Chicano movement continues, despite setbacks and changes, to this day.

The intertwined nature of the Chicano movement and the mural movement is apparent already in one of the first Chicano murals executed in California. Painted by Antonio Bernal on the wall of the offices of United Farm Workers/El Teatro Campesino cultural center in Del Rey in 1968, this mural can be read as a kind of origin story of the Chicano movement.[7]

To begin with, the location of the mural immediately points to one of the political struggles that gave birth to the Chicano movement and underscores that murals were not the only important Chicano movement art form. El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworkers' Theater) was a vital theater group that grew up on the front lines of the farmworkers' union movement led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta. El Teatro Campesino originated in the fields in *actos* (one-act skits) performed by farmworkers themselves that urged their *compañeros* and *compañeras* to support the union. Under the guidance of Luis Valdez, El Teatro later expanded its repertoire to take up issues facing urban Chicanos and acted to bridge rural farmworker families and their city counterparts. El Teatro inspired many other Chicano theater troupes that formed throughout California, Texas, and the Southwest.

Turning to the mural itself, and "reading" it from left to right, we get a clear, strong portrait of the forces feeding into and inspiring the Chicano movement. On the far left we see La Adelita, mythical heroine of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. La Adelita is a kind of composite figure for all the *soldaderas* (women warriors) who fought in the revolution, one whose spirit has often been celebrated in *corridos* (political ballads, which have a long history in Mexican and Mexican American culture). That revolution sought to return control of Mexico to ordinary peasants and workers, particularly to those of Indian ancestry who had never fully accepted Spanish domination. This celebration of *indigenismo* (the native *indio* component of Mexican identity) was part of a similar celebration of the Indian part of Chicano identity and a downplaying of the European side (seen as too close to the dominant U.S. Anglo identity).

Alongside La Adelita are two heroes of the revolution, Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. These two peasant leaders became folk heroes to young Chicanos who saw themselves as involved in a similar guerrilla struggle of poor farm laborers and industrial workers against Anglo domination in the United States. To the right of Villa is the legendary Joaquín Murieta, the Mexican/Californian Robin Hood of the gold rush era. Murieta is said to have fought bravely against European American gold miners who stole the claims of Mexican Californians. The gold rush era was the time when the transition of California from a Mexican to an Anglo state was largely completed, primarily through the illegal seizure not only of mine holdings but of many of the landholdings of Mexican Californians under the newly imposed, Anglo-dominated state government. Murieta symbolizes resistance within the confines of the once Mexican parts of the United States, just as Zapata and Villa represent resistance by ordinary people to class and racial hierarchy within Mexico proper. Like La Adelita, Murieta has been and continues to be the subject of numerous *corridos.*

These four figures from history served to evoke a heritage of struggle by the peoples inhabiting the space where Mexico and the United States have permeable boundaries. They express that *el movimiento,* though often led by young people, quickly developed a strong sense of history and drew strength from a long line of figures that had struggled in greater Mexico (including the U.S. Southwest) for justice against oppression. Retelling the history of Mexico and of Americans of Mexican descent was a key part of the movement. This desire to create a new history free

of stereotyped docile Mexicans with an inferior culture led to struggles to form Chicano studies programs that could assure these new stories a place in the curriculum. A militant generation of Chicano historians and social scientists gave rise to new scholarship that saw the United States as an imperial power that, having conquered part of Mexico, tried to force its people to conform to Anglo values, language, and culture. They emphasized the ways in which attempts to impose European American culture were defeated by strong familial and communal resistance from Americans of Mexican descent. Neighborhood murals in which historical figures like these were portrayed as quite literally larger than life became important "textbooks" that spurred an interest in history. This interest could then be nourished by the writings of insurgent historians whose academic work carried the movement to high schools and colleges, where hundreds of students walked out of classes or went on strike for an education that respected their heritage and identity. These "blowouts," as they were known, started in high schools in southern California and were immensely inspirational. They challenged older people to catch up with the younger ones.

Moving into more recent times, the next two figures in the mural represent struggles that fueled Chicano pride and activism more directly in the mid-1960s: César Chávez of the farm workers movement, and Reies López Tijerina of the Hispano land grant struggle in the Southwest. Chávez was a community organizer who became a union organizer and therefore understood that workers are always part of larger communities. While the United Farm Workers (UFW) union had members of many ethnic groups, the majority were Chicanos, and Chávez and union cofounder Dolores Huerta placed symbols of Mexican and Mexican American culture at the heart of their nonviolent organizing efforts. The UFW flag (which Chávez holds in the mural) proudly bore a black Aztec eagle against a red background, a symbol soon to become identified with the Chicano/a movement generally. The union began its first *huelga* (strike) on 16 September 1965, the day commemorated as the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. And when they marched, the UFW members carried a statue of the Virgen de Guadeloupe, patron saint of the Mexican poor, thus linking the Catholic faith of the majority of union members to the struggle, as black Christianity helped form a base for the civil rights movement. In this way Chávez sought to reclaim the spirit of Christianity from a conservative church hierarchy, much as Reverend

King and other black ministers had reclaimed the protesting spirit of black Protestantism. While Chávez, deeply influenced by the multiracial labor coalitions of the popular front era, never saw himself as leading a Chicano union or as part of an exclusively Chicano movement, the union and its members became powerful symbols whose strikes, marches, boycotts, and other protests inspired pride and resistance among the new Chicano generation.

Next to Chávez stands another figure of great importance to an emerging Chicano movement. Reies López Tijerina led the Hispano land grant movement during the mid- and late 1960s in the Southwest. Tijerina and his followers claimed descent from the original, pre-Anglo Spanish settlers *(hispanos)* of the Southwest whose land had been stolen by the invading Yankees. After repeated attempts to press their claims in court, Tijerina's Alianza took up armed rebellion on 5 June 1967, surrounding and then occupying a courthouse symbolic of their land claims. Word of Tijerina's guerrilla action spread quickly among the Chicano community, offering a contemporary exemplar of the kind of resistance practiced by Zapata and Villa. Though hardly a revolution, the courthouse raid seemed to link the legendary bandits and revolutionaries of the past to the current moment and to reinforce a sense among many militant young Chicanos that perhaps only armed resistance could overthrow Anglo colonization of the U.S. peoples of Mexican descent.

More broadly, Tijerina's focus on land fed into the developing notion of Aztlán, quasi-mythical ancient homeland of the Aztecs, said to cover most of those areas of the United States that now have large Chicano populations. A desire to reclaim Aztlán was a deeply symbolic expression of the right to feel at home within the confines of the United States, and an attempt to found a newly awakened Chicano *raza* (people, nation) on the resurrected memory of a homeland that predated by hundreds of years the coming of Europeans. Evocations of Aztlán became common in the political rhetoric, poetry, music, and murals of the movement.

Finally, the mural depicts to the right of Tijerina two African Americans, a composite Black Panther/Malcolm X figure, and Martin Luther King Jr. These figures express Chicano solidarity with the struggles of African Americans and also presumably acknowledge the debt of the Chicano movement to the model of struggle provided by the civil rights and black power movements. César Chávez frequently acknowledged his debt to King's concept of nonviolent resistance, and it is not hard to

draw a parallel between Tijerina's tactics and those of the Black Panthers and other militant African Americans with whom he made alliances. The inclusion of these figures suggests that *el movimiento* was allied to a larger movement for justice for all peoples oppressed within a United States dominated by rich white men and an all-white notion of "American" culture.

If I were to give the image of community conveyed in Bernal's mural a name, it would be something like "community as militant or revolutionary solidarity." To achieve this image of solidarity, the mural collages together, or some would say paints over, several ideological differences. The nonviolent strategies of King and Chávez, for example, exist unproblematically alongside the armed struggle represented by the Mexican revolutionaries, the Black Panthers, and Tijerina. And while the overall image was surely intended to evoke an emerging *chicanismo*, a Chicano nationalism similar to the black nationalism discussed in chapter 2, none of the pictured individuals, including the contemporary ones, were full supporters of a nationalist position. But this expresses both a truth of the movement and one of the strengths of muralism. The truth is that a spirit of common struggle did unite a great many Chicanos at this time, despite ideological, tactical, regional, gender, class, and other differences. No medium was better equipped to express this solidarity-in-difference than the wordless form of the mural where the complexities of verbal political positionings are muted in a visual language of pure juxtaposition—all the figures forming a single, united front of resistance. This sense of united effort was given historical depth not only by the historical figures in the scene but also in the style of the mural, which draws from the Mexican muralists who had drawn from the style of ancient Indian friezes (which, like Bernal's mural, typically depict people in three-quarter profile).

Out of this ethos, inspired by Chávez, Tijerina, and the Mexican revolutionaries, with models of action, culture, and rhetoric drawn from these figures and from the black liberation struggle, and out of an increasing dissatisfaction with liberal assimilation, a vibrant, widespread Chicano movement had arrived by 1968. *El movimiento* was expressed largely through regional power bases rather than a single national organization. In Texas and parts of the Southwest the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and its offspring La Raza Unida Party played the central organizing role. La Raza Unida challenged Anglo dominance

through city, county, state, and national electoral campaigns that were at the same time movements of community and Chicano cultural pride. In Denver the Crusade for Justice, led by Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzales, was a powerful grassroots movement with a strong separatist bent that celebrated Chicano culture and the most militant heroes of the Mexican and Cuban revolutions. Significantly, Gonzales was also the product of an urban barrio; a bit younger than Chávez and Tijerina, he was better able to express the spirit of an increasingly young and urban Mexican American generation. Gonzales's epic poem, *Yo Soy Joaquín* ("I Am Joaquín"), later made into a short film by Luis Valdez of El Teatro Campesino, was a powerful compilation of Chicano history from the Aztecs to the United Farm Workers, which drew together and popularized many of the key themes and aesthetic motifs of Chicano cultural nationalism.[illegible]

California was the center not only of the United Farm Workers but also of the struggle for Chicano studies in the universities, a struggle won usually through student protests and strikes. In Santa Barbara, California, the creation of El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) in 1968 united several existing student groups into the single most important student group of the Chicano movement, one that became a force on and off campus, in high schools as well as community colleges and universities. California was also home to one of the most radical, paramilitary groups in the movement, the Brown Berets, a group with many similarities to the Black Panthers that protested police brutality in the barrios and often provided security for marches and rallies. These various groups had differing ideas and agendas, some reflecting regional variations in the lives of Chicanos, some representing differences in political ideology, but all were imbued with a sense that Chicanos would never accept being second-class citizens ashamed of their culture. Some of the energy of MEChA emerged from the great student "blowouts" of March 1968. Begun as a student strike at Abraham Lincoln School in East Los Angeles, the blowouts eventually involved more than ten thousand students and effectively shut down the city school system. The thirty-six demands of the strike committee included hiring Mexican American and Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators, offering classes in the history of Mexican and Mexican American culture, and ending other racist practices in the schools. On the picket lines outside the schools and school board headquarters, signs

proclaiming "Chicano Power!" and "¡Viva La Raza!" drew media attention. As the first major mass protest specifically against racism by Mexican Americans, the events had a stunning impact on an emerging generation of young activists.

Another famous Chicano mural that embodies this ethos and extends the scope of solidarity even beyond Aztlán is based on a widely circulated poster with a close-up image of Latino revolutionary guerrilla Che Guevara next to the declaration "We Are Not a Minority." Both the poster and the mural versions parody the "Uncle Sam Wants You" recruitment posters of World War I. They became in effect a kind of "Uncle Che Wants You" recruitment device for the Chicano movement. The mural version of the image shows the ability of murals to be at once powerfully direct and yet usefully ambiguous in their rhetoric (even when assisted by some words). For example, to some viewers this piece offers a clear revolutionary message, either a cultural nationalist one about internal colonialism oppressing Chicanos, or a revolutionary internationalist one suggesting worldwide solidarity by peoples of color. These two related but different brands of revolutionism were both prominent in the 1960s and early 1970s. The notion of "internal colonialism," developed powerfully in one of the books that shaped the Chicano movement, Rudolfo Acuña's *Occupied America*, argues that the position of Chicanos within the southwestern United States is parallel to the status of a nation under European colonialism: the dominant culture attempts to impose its forms on a subject people, extracts a wealth of resources from those occupied territories, and gives back little other than paternalistic claims to be helping backward peoples. The "internal colony" notion was a powerful one, especially when tied to the idea of Aztlán as Chicano "homeland."

While this first interpretation stresses the situation within the United States, a second interpretation of the Che mural places it within a wider claim about an *international* movement of resistance. Che Guevara was an Argentinean by birth who played a decisive role in the Cuban Revolution against a corrupt U.S.–backed regime, and later died fighting for a similar cause in Bolivia. Just as the black movement drew strength from the image of anticolonial struggles in Africa, Chicanos drew special inspiration from the struggles in Spanish-speaking countries of South America against European and U.S. colonialism. In the black power movement some groups, like the Panthers, stressed alliance with any groups,

including white radicals, furthering revolutionary change, while others held a separatist all-black position. Similarly, Chicano groups divided over this strategic question. This division is usefully invisible in the mural.

Probably the majority of people in the community would read the Che mural more modestly and generally as a reminder that in the wider world, people of color are the majority, not the minority, and that within the United States no one should accept the second-class status that the term *minority* conveys. There is also an attempt to give historical depth to the community through an infusion of *indigenismo* in the form of the letter *A* done in the shape of a Mayan pyramid. These various political positions do not easily coexist, and they became the source of bitter ideological struggle, especially in the early 1970s. But the mural shows that the phrase "We Are Not a Minority" is meaningful to a very large segment of the Chicano community, a community that the visual rhetoric of such murals helped to form.

The Del Rey and Che murals dramatically convey the political bravado of the early years of the movement, roughly 1968 to the early 1970s, when certain cracks and contradictions just beneath the surface could still be plastered over. Eventually, failure to come to terms with ideological contradictions between reformism and revolutionism, as well as others regarding gender and class, would be part of the undoing of the most radical phase of the movement. I want to suggest here that these murals were expressing a strategic ambiguity or openness that is a key ingredient in moments of movement formation. Such images of community speak a connection caught in *el movimiento*'s terms by *carnalismo,* a "blood" connection deeper than ideology and carried not biologically, as the term misleadingly suggests, but through a shared cultural history of exploitation, oppression, and resistance. Such a notion is part of an "essentialist" moment that is probably an inescapable phase in any emerging movement. "Essentialist" notions (suggesting a natural, biological, essential connectedness) must always be weighed strategically against the costs of suppressing necessary debate about political and cultural differences. These moments embody a confusion between the idea that the movement *expresses* the community, and the truer sense that it is part of an attempt to *invent* such a community, one that existed previously as at best a potentiality.

If these first two murals capture well the radical, even revolutionary, fervor of the early Chicano movement, we turn now to some murals that

express the equally important and equally pervasive, pragmatic side of *el movimiento.* I want to examine some murals that were used more as survival strategies within the everyday life of the barrio than as revolutionary signs. The pragmatic messages of this type of mural were generally of two types: those designed to instill pride by fighting racist stereotypes, and those designed to lessen intracommunity violence. The former concern, for example, is embodied in a mural by members of East Los Streetscapers (Wayne Alaniz-Healy and David Rivas Botello), *La Familia.* At one level it is a piece so conservative it might easily be titled "family values." Its male-led familial utopia is intended in part as a reply to stereotyped representations of Mexican Americans as shiftless street kids and gang members, or as parents who let their children run wild in the streets. The mural is a vivid indication of the deep value placed by Chicanos on family life, both inside and outside the movement culture proper.

This mural is more than an image of the family in a narrow sense because the image of *la familia* is superimposed over a series of scenes from rural and urban Chicano lives, which appear to be linked by the radiating power of the family (represented by rays of sunlight). The family is thus not simply an image of home life but of community and Chicano national life—community as a kind of meta-family headed by a meta-patriarch whose authority is superimposed on the diverse scenes of community activity. The male figure in the mural dominates the scene, his female partner tucked under his arm: it is his power, not hers, that holds together "the" community. This image is paralleled quite explicitly at times in the political rhetoric of the late 1960s and early 1970s when talk of "the family of Chicanos" served to unify forces. But it also served as one focal point for Chicana feminist critiques of patriarchal relations in the movement as they elaborated parallels between male dominance of families and male dominance of *el movimiento.*

A more complex and striking image of family life was painted in what became known in the mid-1970s as Chicano Park in San Diego. This mural is not only a fascinating composition in its own right but also has a story that raises some important issues about the politics of public space entailed in mural making. In the image, a male farmworker appears at once to be crucified on this freeway pylon "canvas" and to be spreading his strong arms/wings like the Aztec eagle on the UFW flag. He is both a powerful patriarch protecting his brood and a victim of

labor exploitation, at once pre-Christian *indio* and a Catholic martyr. Again, these elements might evoke complicated political and cultural contradictions if put into words, but here they are held together effortlessly by the powerful nonverbal language of muralism.

The park in which this and almost two dozen other murals appear was created through a struggle over public space—one that most community mural work entails to some degree but that is dramatically illustrated by the history of this particular project. A struggle for public land erupted when a longstanding request for a park in the Barrio Logan section of San Diego was answered instead with a city plan to shove an eight-lane interstate freeway through the heart of the barrio, displacing more than five thousand people. This struggle over land could be linked to the history of Chicano resistance to Anglo landgrabbing going back to the mid-nineteenth century, while also remaining very much a pragmatic current issue. More broadly, it can stand for the attempt in barrios across the country to create Aztlán, for what the park makers were doing was reclaiming local space as their own. Aztlán was both a mythical homeland and a very real way to rename the land where Chicanos lived. As one of the participants in the park struggle put it: "In English *barrio* means 'ghetto.' In Spanish it means 'neighborhood.'" Aztlán was not just a mythical place in the past but a symbol of the way in which the Chicano *movimiento* was returning the barrios to the people who lived there, making them places that celebrated and defended the interrelated cultures created by Mexicans and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Nothing stated that reclamation more visibly than the proliferation of thousands of murals produced in and around the Chicano movement culture.

While the freeway could not be stopped, an attempt to set up a Highway Patrol parking lot beneath the freeway was met by an occupying army of Chicanos who claimed the site as their own. Surrounding and then appropriating the bulldozers sent to lay out the parking lot, the community members began instead to build a "Chicano Park." After a long, intense struggle, the community won their battle and the park was built, complete with a Centro Cultural de la Raza that is still a community rallying point today. This Chicano cultural center was one of dozens of similar spaces throughout California, Texas, the Southwest, Colorado, and anywhere else Chicano communities existed. These cultural centers acted as educational institutions, organizing points, and artists' studios,

where dance, music, art, theater, and other cultural forms were taught in the context of Chicano history. In turn, students in these centers became teachers of that history as part of the struggle for Chicano dignity and rights.

That struggle included a large-scale "muralization" of San Diego's Chicano Park over a period of many years, including a "muralthon" in 1977–78 involving artists and mural collectives from all over the state. The crucified farmworker mural was done earlier by José Montoya and the Rebel Chicano Art Front (a legendary Chicano art collective centered in Sacramento, California) and inspired other muralists to use the park's unique "canvases." What is perhaps most ingenious in that work is the incorporation of the particularities of the setting into the composition, especially the freeway pylon itself, which becomes the mural's cross. But it is only the most striking of many imaginative efforts to incorporate the far from ideal site into the overall composition. This effort at site-specific composition is an unusually vivid and effective extension of the normal process of community mural making. (Here I use *community* in its more local, neighborhood sense.) Many muralists spend days and weeks seeking the right site in a given community, and weeks more learning about the community's particular needs and values, before attempting a mural. Both the space and the mural content are thus often complexly negotiated texts, texts that raise issues in the community to new levels of debate. At the same time community murals, placed on the outside of buildings rather than inside museums, challenge dominant notions of the art object as fetishized individual production with no real connection to any audience.

A second major arena of pragmatic community concern articulated through murals is a kind of flip side of concern to portray the Chicano community as strong in family values—an effort to acknowledge and examine the issue of gang violence. While such violence has frequently been the focus of racist moral panics directed from outside the community by the dominant society, these murals offer a perspective from the inside where these events can be seen correctly as being most often intracommunity violence conditioned by oppression. A piece known informally as *Homeboy*, for example, painted in 1974 by Manuel Cruz in the Romana Gardens Housing Project in East Los Angeles, joins issues of gang violence with a key theme of much early Chicano mural work, the articulation of the Indian dimensions of Chicano identity. In the mural,

Aztec human sacrifice is recoded as community suicide in the form of a gang of homeboys killing another homeboy. While *indigenismo* was later criticized by some people as an uncritical celebration of the Aztec and other Indian empires that failed to acknowledge their oppressive elements, there is here already an ironic suggestion that the much mythologized Aztec religious practice of human sacrifice is preferable to the meaningless street sacrifice of homeboy life. But there is also an inspiring suggestion that a historically deep warrior spirit has been misdirected to rub out fellow members of *la raza* rather than to uphold and build cultural traditions.

An extraordinary piece entitled *The Wall That Cracked Open*, on a related theme, richly documents the power of a mural as public art to intervene directly at a specific site of social struggle. Executed by Willie Herrón in City Terrace, East Los Angeles, in 1972, this mural was done on a cracked wall in an alley where the artist's brother was beaten nearly to death by gang members, and it ingeniously incorporates the already present gang graffiti into the composition. The multiply layered message here includes the idea that the graffiti is itself part of an aesthetic impulse that could be further developed and redirected, just as gang violence could be redirected in more politically charged directions. Mural projects were sometimes used to accomplish precisely that form of redirection.

One of the most artistically unusual Chicano murals brings together several issues, from the local to the national to the international, suggesting their linkage as part of the continuum of Chicano experience. The piece is *Black and White Moratorium Mural*, by Willie Herrón and Gronk, done in 1973 at the Estrada Courts housing project in East Los Angeles (undoubtedly the most muralized housing project in the world, with more than ninety murals). As the name suggests, the mural is unusual first for being done in black and white rather than the far more common rainbow of bright colors, but the subdued colors are appropriate to the subject matter. The subject is war, war abroad and at home, and the black, white, and gray tones echo one of the great antiwar paintings of the twentieth century, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. The wall commemorates an event known as the Chicano moratorium, a march and rally in August 1970 involving more than thirty thousand people who opposed the war in Vietnam and linked that war to war at home against Chicanos. While often misrepresented as a white student movement, the antiwar movement had many dimensions, many constituencies, and

Black and White Moratorium Wall, by Willie Herrón and Gronk, 1973. Courtesy of Social and Public Art Resource Center.

many links to other issues. This march organized by *el movimiento* was part of the national moratorium, a tactic that declared an escalating series of strike days against the war (a new day was added for each month the war continued). The Chicano march was protesting that people of color in general, and Chicanos in particular, were dying in the war at a rate far above their percentage of the population. The war was being fought disproportionately by people whose experiences of racism and poverty made them far more vulnerable to being drafted and to enlisting out of economic need. The mural vividly depicts the police riot unleashed against the demonstrators at the end of the rally, capturing the screams of victims and linking this police brutality to similar acts visited routinely on barrio residents. In that riot, the Los Angeles police, in what they claimed was an accident but what others believed to be an assassination, killed Chicano journalist Rubén Salazar.

Salazar had worked for the *Los Angeles Times* and was one of the very few journalists who were acting to transmit *el movimiento*'s ideas fairly to a mainstream public. His death was a major blow and has been commemorated in other murals and artworks in addition to this one. The rally and the mural that memorializes it also pointed to the ways in which President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" economic reforms were being decimated by the costs of the war. As a consequence, more

Chicanos were dying in the streets of the United States from the economic violence that leads to gangs and drug abuse. In these ways the mural brilliantly encapsulates the arguments of the Chicano movement as they moved from the barrio to the national government to international politics and back again.

ChicanismA

Most participants in and observers of the Chicano movement agree that the first phase of the movement had come to an end by the mid-1970s. That period accomplished a great deal. *El movimiento* had succeeded in creating a new sense of identity that all people of Mexican descent benefited from and were affected by, even those more conservative folks who rejected the term *Chicano*. A new sense of the dignity and depth of Mexican and Mexican American character and culture had been achieved through the work of countless organizers, including the cultural workers who made poems, paintings, dramas, movies, dances, and, most visibly and tangibly, murals, to represent the key components of this new identity. But this insurgent phase of the movement was also riddled with problems and had reached certain political limits. Many factors contributed to these problems, not the least of which was a great deal of political repression of the kind we saw enacted against the Black Panthers and other radical groups. Internal factors also limited this phase of the movement, most centered on limited definitions of *chicanismo* and ethnic nationalism.

For one thing, La Adelita notwithstanding, we can note a heavily male cast to the murals I have analyzed thus far in this chapter. This emphasis accurately reflects early domination of both *el movimiento* and the mural movement by men. But Chicanas, who had been deeply involved in both movements all along, were by the mid-1970s asserting an increasingly powerful presence as activists and artists. Their presence was the single most important element in expanding and reopening the story being told about the Chicano community through *el movimiento*. The double oppression experienced by Chicanas positioned them to articulate a richer movement vision that supported much of the cultural nationalist stance but also recognized that there were other issues both within and beyond the Chicano community that needed to be addressed. Chicana feminist reinterpretations of community became the key force in moving toward a more fully inclusive politics. These issues are theo-

La Ofrenda ("The Offering") for Dolores Huerta. Courtesy of Social and Public Art Resource Center.

rized explicitly in the crucial works of Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Alvina Quintana, and Chela Sandoval, among others, but they are also articulated through the Chicana murals of Judy Baca, Yreina Cervantes, and many others.

The piece *La Ofrenda* ("The Offering") by Yreina Cervantes, for example, helps to retell the history of the Chicana/o movement. It places Dolores Huerta, UFW cofounder along with Chávez, in her rightful place at the center of the movement. This is important not just for doing greater justice to Huerta as an individual but for symbolizing all the work done in the 1960s, 1970s, and earlier by Chicana activists and cultural workers—work that had been downplayed, ignored, or overshadowed by the dramatic self-importance often claimed by men in the movement. Women did much of the most effective, day-to-day, grassroots organizing, the work that truly sustains a movement, while men too often occupied themselves with strategizing sessions quite removed from the concrete realities of ordinary Chicano lives. Obviously, not all men behaved this way, and some women did manage against great odds to achieve leadership positions, but too often the pattern was one of male generals and female foot soldiers. Indeed, La Adelita is only further evidence of this, since she is not a real individual like "General" Zapata, but

a composite figure of all the anonymous women who followed him and Villa into battle. And this very image of battle was part of the problem: for too many in the movement, the rhetoric of armed struggle became the only language to express Chicano manhood, and a fetishizing of the gun, as with the Black Panthers, often got in the way of the real struggle for the hearts and minds of everyday Chicanos.

Thus, Cervantes's mural also represents work done by Chicanas to incorporate the quieter heroism of everyday community life into the movement story—in this case, the world of religious life as represented by an allusion to the home altar. *La Ofrenda* is also indicative of the feminist articulation of solidarity among women that helped to cross certain rigid community borders. Thus, for example, Huerta's Chicana heroism in the United States is connected to the struggle of Salvadoran women being victimized by U.S. policy and military repression in El Salvador. Giving Huerta her rightful place in the movement is paralleled by a feminist rearticulation of the continuing struggle of farmworkers in the United States in such murals as *Las Lechugueras* ("The Lettuce Pickers") by Juana Alicia. This piece offers an "x-ray vision" of a child in the womb of a lettuce picker in the field to dramatically depict how the environmental and personal dangers of pesticides present a still greater potential for harm to pregnant farmworkers and their unborn children. The mural powerfully supports efforts by the farmworkers' union to limit the use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals that harm farmworkers.

An emerging sense of a Latina solidarity that cuts across national community borders was also articulated by Chicana feminist mural collectives like the San Francisco Bay area's Mujeres Muralistas. Originally formed in 1974 by three Chicanas (Patricia Rodríguez, Irene Pérez, and Graciela Carrillo) and one Venezuelan (Consuelo Méndez), the evolving collective included other Latinas and Chicanas in subsequent incarnations and became an emblem of cross-national communication for the diverse Spanish-speaking populations of the Mission district. Their piece *Latinoamérica,* for example, develops this theme by using a common feminist focus on everyday women's activities and common threads of color to blend designs executed by different Latina artists drawing upon their differing national styles and traditions.

At the level of aesthetic inspiration, the rediscovery of the work of Frida Kahlo played an important consciousness-raising role for many

Chicana and some Chicano artists. Long before her rediscovery by the New York art crowd, an exhibit of Kahlo's work at Galería de La Raza in San Francisco's Latino Mission district contributed to the feminist rewriting of art history. A piece entitled *Homenaje a Frida Kahlo* ("Homage to Frida Kahlo"), painted by Mike Ríos to announce the exhibit, not only helps to mark Kahlo's emergence from the very large shadow of her husband, the muralist Diego Rivera, but also points to another dimension of the reappropriation of public space by the mural form.

Ríos's mural is actually painted on a commercial billboard near the gallery where Kahlo's show was appearing. Over a period of two years the muralists and other community supporters engaged in a battle with the owners of the billboard, painting over its commercial messages with their artistic/political ones, until eventually the owners gave up and donated the billboard to Galería de la Raza. This kind of reappropriation of billboards and other public walls has been a significant part of the mural movement—an important assertion of community rights over property rights and an argument about the very public nature of public buildings. In the context of the Chicano *movimiento* this retaking of public space was part of a rebuilding of Aztlán not as mythic land in the mists of time but here and now as a liberated zone.

Mural/Movement

I end this chapter with a discussion of the collective work guided by Chicana feminist muralist Judith Francisca Baca, both because she is among the most prolific and visionary muralists in the world and because her work brings together and extends many of the themes regarding the relation between murals and movement cultures that I have sketched thus far. Baca painted her murals in the spirit of what Charles Payne calls the "organizing tradition" pioneered in the civil rights movement. Her extraordinary career also offers further evidence that the dual identity of Chicana and feminist helped to expand the vision of the Chicano and mural movements toward connection with a wider multicultural resistance force. But in using Baca as my exemplar, I want to make clear that she herself works collectively and that she is only one among many other cultural workers who are equally deserving of attention.

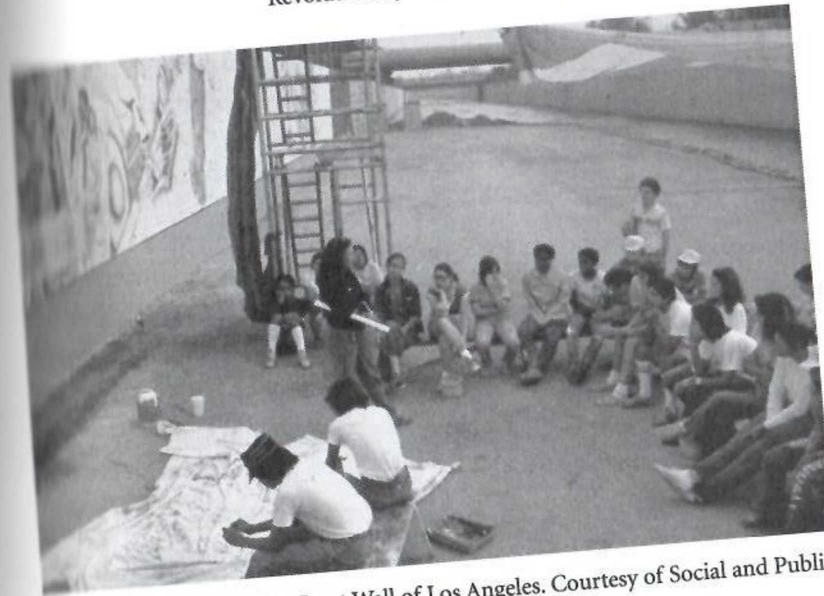
Baca's work extends to something near its logical extreme a theme of communal production that has long been at the heart of mural work. Most of the work I have discussed so far has been the work of mural

collectives, often involving numerous nonartists from the community in which the mural is to appear and usually based on input from the community. Baca has moved this process to a new level of complexity and political power. For example, she was director of the Citywide Murals project in Los Angeles in the mid-1970s that produced over two hundred fifty murals, many done under her direct supervision. That project entailed major input from Baca and other Chicano/as, but was also a multiracial effort throughout the diverse neighborhoods of the city. Funded in part by the city, this project also illustrates the deep tensions community murals generate, and the complicated political negotiations they involve. This project and others like it become struggles between those hegemonic forces of the dominant culture seeking to turn murals into barrio and ghetto "beautification" projects, designed literally to paint over signs of deprivation and exploitation, and those forces seeking to turn murals into critical sites of communal resistance that precisely point out exploitation, while also celebrating cultures drowned out in the so-called mainstream. The continued power of muralism will lie in resisting the former force and defending the latter.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles and Radical Multiculturalism

The kind of large-scale vision that informed the Citywide Murals project is taken in a different, even more spectacular direction in Baca's supervision of the largest mural ever undertaken—the half-mile-long "Great Wall of Los Angeles." This work is a radically multicultural retelling of the history of Los Angeles and California from prehistoric times to the present. Begun appropriately in the bicentennial year 1976 and continued through five subsequent summers (with projections for extensions in the future), the work was accomplished through Baca's direction of teams of Asian American, Native American, African American, Anglo, and Chicano youth. Many of these young people came to her project out of the criminal justice system, with mural work offered as an alternative to further jail time. Far from being a captive labor force, the young people working on the mural were encouraged to become involved in the complex invention, design, and execution of the work. Baca and her team thus sought to create a liberated force for community change.

As in her other projects, Baca facilitated the creation of the "Great Wall" by bringing together professional historians, community storytellers, and a variety of people from all the communities who were to be



Judy Baca and crew at the Great Wall of Los Angeles. Courtesy of Social and Public Art Resource Center.

represented on the mural. The young people took part in intensive revisionist history classes that included lively exchanges about their past and even livelier arguments about their futures. In these classes, in the streets, and on the "Great Wall" itself, the revisionist history now appearing in textbooks was anticipated and incorporated in story forms that linked the past to the vitally contested political terrain of the present. In fact, the wall came to be used by local teachers as a kind of painted textbook that lets their students walk through time.

The "Great Wall" that emerged from this collective process presents a powerful set of images, linked by narrative bridges. The mural links diverse communities, weaving a history of interracial conflict into a wider history of shared oppression and resistance. Here the multiculturalism inherent in the Chicano identity, combined with a feminist vision of everyday personal political linkages, has facilitated the creation of a complex vision of the separate but interacting histories of Los Angeles, California, and America's diverse populations. Mural panels laid out in chronological order depict a range of peoples and events, often in very telling juxtaposition. The section on the 1940s, for example, includes panels on the internment during World War II of Japanese Americans, the flight to Los Angeles of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and the "zoot suit riots" unleashed by attacks made by white sailors on Chicano

street kid *pachucos*. The mural stories richly interweave race, class, sex-uality, and gender, often with great humor. One panel, for example, cen-ters on an image of Rosie the Riveter, symbol of the independent work-ing woman, who is being sucked by a vacuum cleaner into a television set. It wittily makes the connection between a redomestication of women in these "father knows best" years of the 1950s, and the racial phenome-non known as "white flight"—the flight of many whites to the suburbs as cities became more and more racially integrated.

What emerges from Baca's method of composition and from the mural itself is a sense of the integrity of the different ethnic enclaves and cultures of the city, and their inextricable interconnection. The rich story of Chicano/as in "Califas" (California) is maintained, but written also in terms of gender, class, and sexuality, and linked to other racialized groups. This entire story of multiple intersections, and the power system at its core, must be addressed if a radically democratic, truly multicul-tural society is to become more than a glittering promise.

Connecting these issues has become a matter of central concern to all resistance movements in recent years. They bring along with them difficult questions. How, for example, can movements balance the danger of an almost infinitely fragmentable politics of identity against the dangers of a prematurely homogenizing emphasis on common interest that erases important cultural as well as ideological differences? How can ethnic identities be created that honor the diversity of gender, class, and sexu-ality within the community, while maintaining a united front against intersecting dominations? The Chicano community mural movement and projects like the "Great Wall" and the Citywide Murals program of-fer at least some glimmerings of a how a movement-inspired public art can move us closer to answers to these questions.

From Representation to Articulation: Reimagining Community

The interlinked Chicano and community mural movements allow us to see that community is a powerful concept, a powerfully enabling *fiction,* yet with real points of reference in the world. However, the struggle to suppress differences (of gender, class, sexuality, nationality, and ideol-ogy, among others), particularly at the height of the nationalist phase, reminds us of how often the term *community* is used to close debate rather than open up possibilities. There are, no doubt, necessary moments when communal racial, class, or gender identity must be articulated

strategically. But can we find ways to speak that acknowledge unity as the provisional product of multivocal debate and as a negotiable contribu-tion to a necessarily multicultural alliance? If a community must at times speak as one voice in order to generate the utmost power, is it possible still in that voicing to recognize dissent, internal otherness, or differ-ence? Can an identity-based movement progress from a *politics of repre-sentation,* which presumes to speak for an already known community, to a *politics of articulation* that freely portrays community as an always contested process, not a set thing?[9]

Can community be conceived as an ongoing, strategic, and negotiated reality, and still be community? Or is every gain in self-consciousness necessarily a loss in solidarity? Is there some quality of community that can be recognized as preceding or exceeding ideology without resort to exclusionary and mystifying claims to blood consciousness? Is there a view of interconnectedness that is not so easily assimilated to an empty, homogenizing kind of humanism long allied to oppression? Can com-munity be reconceived in something like concentric circles, communi-ties layered one upon another, but also with loose ends, openings of the circle?

The Chicano/a community mural movement, with its development into a "critical multiculturalism," offers a model through which to think about some of these questions.[10] As the twenty-first century began, Chi-cano/a nationalisms were again gaining ground. Some versions seem doomed to repeat mistakes of the past. Others seem more open to mul-tiple identities amid solidarity. A younger generation of Chicana/o mu-ralists emerged in the 1990s to take up the movement/mural connection. Artists like Alma López combine fierce racial pride with open treatment of once forbidden topics like straight and lesbian sexuality. Like her subject matter, López's style, alternating between the traditional mural form and the newer digital mural format, reflects both continuity and change.

Moving On

The wider Chicano movement evolved through the 1980s and 1990s and into the twenty-first century in directions often paralleling those of the mural movement as represented by Baca. New scholarship and new "movements within the movement" brought the concerns of Chicanas, gays and lesbians, and other previously marginalized groups to the center

of concern. New immigration from Latin America reinforced a need to think multiethnically within the Spanish-speaking U.S. community even as still wider multicultural coalitions seemed necessary to progress further. Chicana/o studies evolved more complex, absolutely vital positions, though sometimes these seemed to move further away from contexts of movement contestation. The strengths and limits of Chicano nationalism have been carefully examined, and both the theory and practice of new models of organizing are richly visible. *El movimiento* continues to grow and change, to face the challenges of a conservative backlash (represented by anti-immigrant, anti–affirmative action, and English-only ballot initiatives in California and elsewhere), and to assert the powerful presence of Americans of Mexican descent. Chicanas and Chicanos continue the struggle, as at once a community unto themselves and a force connected to wider circles of resistance to cooptative forms of multiculturalism prematurely celebrating a diversity not yet rooted in equality of economic, cultural, and political power.

FIVE

Old Cowboys, New Indians

Hollywood Frames the American Indian Movement

> Do you remember Leonard Peltier? Do you remember he stood at the window of the farm house in South Dakota yelling Stella! Stella! while the FBI surrounded him and the rest of AIM, a cast of thousands. It was epic, a Cecil B. DeMille production made intimate when two FBI agents were shot to death.
>
> —Sherman Alexie, from "The Marlon Brando Memorial Swimming Pool"

Native American "red power" warriors moved "like a hurricane" across the landscape of America in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[1] These new "Indians" challenged five hundred years of colonial domination by fighting for a return to full sovereign status for native nations, restoration of lands guaranteed by treaty, just compensation for the minerals exploited from reservations, and a renaissance of native culture. The most famous and infamous native organization of the red power era, the American Indian Movement (AIM), will be my focus here. Despite its name, AIM was not *the* Indian movement but rather only one organization among many groups that formed a larger movement. Many other important Indian resistance groups preceded and ran parallel to AIM, but AIM was the most visible and media-oriented of the radical Indian movement groups, and media visibility is very much to the point because the art form I will pair with the Indian movement in this chapter is the mainstream Hollywood film.

While drawing information from various written sources and two important documentaries about AIM (*Incident at Oglala* and *The Spirit*