



©Copyright by

Alex La Rotta

June, 2019

“YOUNG, GIFTED, & BROWN: THE HISTORY OF  
SAN ANTONIO’S WEST SIDE SOUND”

---

A Dissertation Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
University of Houston

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

---

By  
Alex La Rotta  
May 2019





“YOUNG, GIFTED, & BROWN: THE HISTORY OF  
SAN ANTONIO’S WEST SIDE SOUND”

---

An Abstract of a Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

University of Houston

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

---

By

Alex La Rotta

May 2019

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To be sure, the fruit of this labor is not mine alone to enjoy; I share it with many. A special recognition is owed to the city of San Antonio, to its musicians, and to artists and cultural producers everywhere who make this world a better place.

I owe my advisors, Monica Perales and Mark Goldberg, extensive recognition for co-directing this project. Their unwavering support, editorial acuity, and *endless patience with me* was critical to this work. From our first encounters in the graduate program and throughout my dissertation, I've gained so much from their knowledge and expertise. They are peerless scholars, compassionate mentors, and above all, wonderful people. I'm fortunate to now call them my friends. I'm also grateful to Raúl Ramos and Oliver Wang for their commentary and feedback as members of this dissertation committee. They've provided valuable insights that improved this dissertation in more ways than many.

Indeed, a graduate education is one of life's great fortunes. I am exceptionally privileged to have received mine at a fine public institution that, as a native Houstonian, is close to my heart. The University of Houston provided affordable English as Second Language courses to my father and uncle upon arriving to Houston from Colombia in the mid-1970s. A generation later, several of my foreign-born cousins earned UH bachelor's degrees in the 1990s and 2000s. During my own graduate education, a younger generation of extended family members also pursued and earned UH degrees. It is an institution that truly "runs in the family."

The Department of History at the University of Houston is a gem in the sprawling and expansive College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. In the office, Daphyne Pitre, Donna Butler, and Gloria Turner keep the train on track in the face of endless challenges

and stretched resources; I'm grateful for their individualized care and assistance throughout this program. Professors Philip Howard, Lawrence Curry, Kelly Hopkins, Todd Romero, Rick Mizelle, Martin Melosi, and Leandra Zarnow have profoundly influenced my scholarship, pedagogical thinking, and intellectual development in pursuit of my doctoral degree. I am indebted to their knowledge sharing, wisdom, and good humor.

As any graduate school "survivor" will tell you, bonds with fellow grad students are indeed critical to survival. My frequent bike rides and coffee meet-ups with John Huntington kept me balanced (and plenty caffeinated) throughout the frenzy. Allison Robinson, Daniel Mendiola, Alberto Wilson, and Sandra Enríquez became good friends in the program; I relied often on their friendship, humor, and advice. Indeed, I have Allison to thank for bringing me into the program and introducing me to new colleagues in the department. We later forged new bonds as recent parents in graduate school; an exceptional experience I'll never forget.

I'm indebted to the Inter-University Program for Latino Research/Mellon Fellowship for supporting my final dissertation year. It is truly an unparalleled program and I owe my successes to its many merits. Nena de los Angeles Torres, Jennifer Boles, Albert Laguna, Pamela Quiroz, and my IUPLR/Mellon fellow peers were critical in their support and friendship this past year. Additionally, the Department of History Travel Grant, the Ernesto Valdes Oral History Prize, the Murray Miller Grant, the Stanley Siegel Texas History Prize, and the Cullen Fellowship Travel Grant at the University of Houston supported critical research trips to archives in Central and South Texas. The William J. Hill Research Travel Grant facilitated visits to the Wittliff Collections at Texas State

University-San Marcos; an essential repository for oral histories in this study. I'm grateful to my friends-in-sound Noel Waggener, Rob Sevier, Ruben Molina, Jesse Garcia, Stewart Anderson, Andrew Brown, Juan Mendoza, Jason Saldaña, Jason Chronis, and Ramón Hernández for sharing their music knowledge and private archives with me. They know, as few others do, the value of safeguarding marginal music history. We are indebted to the work they do, and others like them, in keeping these sonic histories "alive."

My family is my rock, and none of this is possible without them. Special thanks to my brother and sister, Carlos and Cindy, and to Shannon, Kaidyn, Charlie, Terry, and Viviana, for being in my corner. You all did more than you know in keeping me steady and stable during graduate school. (Don't worry, I'll just find something else to grumble about now!) To my parents, Alegria and Felipe, whom I love and adore so much: THANK YOU. They've instilled in me the value of education, the joy of reading, the virtues of family history (and of our Latino heritage), and supported me in everything I do. Indeed, one should be so lucky. I could write a dissertation on their altruism, selflessness, and overall human excellence, but I digress. I dedicate this dissertation to them. My daughters, Celeste and Inez, bring me joy every single day, and my life is much richer with them in it. I love you both to the ends of the earth. Finally, my wife and best friend, D'Arcy, kept me grounded throughout a seemingly never-ending "career" as a graduate student. Her patience and unwavering support cannot be overstated. She provided endless insight, humor, light, and love in times of despair, as she always does. Thank you, *querida*. Thank you, all.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the early influences, inception, and evolution of the diverse musical genres of the West Side Sound—a popular, yet understudied music culture from San Antonio, Texas—from the interwar period to the close of the twentieth century. I argue that Latinos and Latinas in San Antonio were pioneers, not late-coming contributors, in the creation of postwar American popular music. This study focuses on the untold history of San Antonio’s numerous multiracial doo-wop, R&B, soul, and early rock-and-roll groups of the mid-twentieth century and the distinct urban dynamics that facilitated the sound’s growth. By revealing sonic affinities and cultural kinships across African-American and Mexican-American communities, “Young, Gifted, and Brown” provides new understandings of interethnic connections along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that deviate from conflict-centered narratives of Black-Brown relations.

Through an analysis of San Antonio’s African-American neighborhoods and Mexican-American *barrios* as racialized spaces, I argue that anti-Mexican and anti-black Jim Crow laws, cultural expressions (including culinary and musical traditions) and spatial access influenced the early inception of the West Side Sound. Moreover, by historicizing the West Side Sound through newspapers, album art and liner notes, and multiple archival collections, my study demonstrates how music can serve as an historical lens to understand the mechanisms of racialization as well as tensions and collaborations within communities of color.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Cross Roads Blues.....	23
Chapter 2: On the Road with Rock & Roll.....	63
Chapter 3: Talk To Me.....	99
Chapter 4: Yo Soy Chicano.....	127
Chapter 5: Viva El West Side.....	162
Conclusion.....	198
Bibliography.....	208

## IMAGES AND TABLES

### Tables

1.A: Growth in the Black & White Populations of San Antonio, 1940-2000

### Images

- I.1 The Three Dudes, *San Antonio Register*, May 1967, Pg. 2
- 1.1. Row-house tenement in the Mexican Quarter, March 1939, Pg. 31.
- 1.2. Home Owners' Loan Corporation 1935-1936 Redlining Map, Pg. 32.
- 1.3. Lydia Mendoza, *San Antonio Light*, October 21, 1936, Pg. 43.
- 1.4 Robert Johnson Plaque and Display, Sheraton Hotel, San Antonio, Pg. 48.
- 1.5 Keyhole Club ad, *Hue Magazine*, May 1954, Pg. 54.
- 2.1. Mando and the Chili Peppers w/ Ray Charles & Larry Williams, Pg. 65.
- 2.2. LP by Mando & the Chili Peppers, "On the Road with Rock and Roll," 1957, Pg. 87.
- 2.3 7" EP by Las Hermanas Jimenez, "San Antonio Twist," 1962, Pg. 94.
- 3.1 *Billboard* Magazine ad for Sunny and the Sunglows, 1963, Pg. 100.
- 3.2. Newspaper ad for Key-Loc Records, 1966, Pg. 100.
- 3.3. The Roulettes, *San Antonio Express News*, July 1957, Pg. 111.
- 3.4. Royal Jesters, 1959, Pg. 115.
- 3.5 Rachel Longoria of The Uniques, 2018, Pg. 115.
- 4.1 LP by Sunny and the Sunliners, "Young, Gifted, and Brown," 1971, Pg. 141.
- 4.2. Sunny and the Sunliners Chicano Concert Ad, 1974, Pg. 141.
- 4.3. LP by Tortilla Factory, 1973, Pg. 147.
- 5.2. Photo Banner at Alazan-Apache Courts, 2018, Pg. 187.
- 5.3. 78-rpm by Lorenzo Caballero y su Grupo De Estrellas, "West Side Polka," Early 1930s, Pg. 187.
- 5.6 1983 poster for Doug Sahm's "Return of the West Side Sound" Show, Pg. 192.
- 5.7. Doug Sahm, *San Antonio Rock* CD Cover, Pg. 192.
- 5.5. "La Música de San Anto" mural, 1303 W. Commerce Street, Pg. 195.
- 5.6 "Lideres de la Comunidad" mural, 1303 W. Commerce Street, Pg. 195.
- 6.1 Chulita Vinyl Club Logo, Pg. 206.

## INTRODUCTION

The Three Dudes—Reginald Whitaker, Lawrence Alexander, and Charles Larry Russell—were an African American vocal group from the historically-black East Side of San Antonio. Their 1967 45-rpm single, “Sad Little Boy” with “I’m Beggin’ You” on the back side, was produced by Satin Records—a small label owned by a local wrestler turned record producer, Emil “E.J.” Henke.<sup>1</sup> “I’m Beggin’ You,” a new style of up-tempo R&B which featured guttural vocal shouts, scratchy guitar riffs, and instrumental vamps, is one of the earliest funk songs recorded in Texas.<sup>2</sup> The studio band for the recording, Mickey and the Fabulous Five, were a black and Tejano soul group from San Antonio. Two of the band members, Gilbert Rivera and George Salas, hailed from the Tejano/a West Side of town.<sup>3</sup>

According to Russell, this multiracial mixture was the norm at that time, not an exception. “A lot of the groups here were mixed back then,” remembered Russell. “It was no big thing to see blacks and Mexicans hanging out and making music together.”<sup>4</sup> Sharing a mutual passion for the doo-wop harmonies of The Platters and The Cadillacs, The Three Dudes banded together as students at Sam Houston High School. They won

---

<sup>1</sup> The Three Dudes, *Master Tape: Studio Notes*, Satin Records, 1967. Courtesy of Heavy Light Records Archive, New Orleans, Louisiana. For more on Henke see, Brown, Andrew. “‘No Color In Poor’: San Antonio’s Harlem Label,” *Wired For Sound*, September 25, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Houston’s Archie Bell and the Drells and their 1968 hit single, “Tighten Up,” is often cited as one of the earliest funk singles from Texas. The Three Dudes and other smaller groups throughout the state were experimenting with funk rhythms as early as 1966/1967. For more on the rise of funk in Texas, see Alan Govenar, *Lightnin’ Hopkins: His Life and Blues* (Chicago Review Press, 2010), 199; Liner notes to “Texas Funk: Hard Texas Funk 1968-1975,” CD, JMANCD 006 (Jazzman Records, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Rivera, interview by author, August 10, 2011, San Antonio.

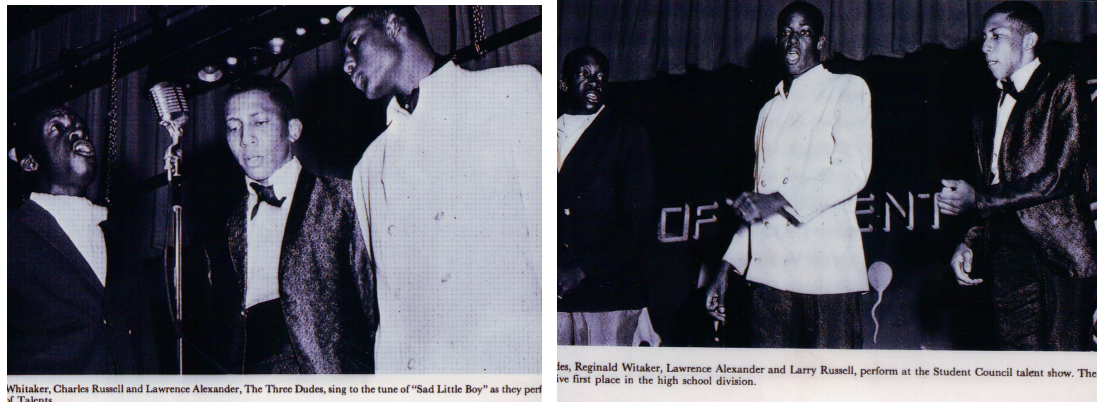
<sup>4</sup> Charles Russell, interview by author, April 15, 2018, San Antonio.



first place at the Student Council talent show; a recording contract soon followed.

“Reginald had this Jerry Butler voice, and the girls just swooned,” recalled Russell.

“We’d walk down the halls and sing – you know, it had that echo chamber effect – and everyone would just get quiet. We never got in trouble for being late because all the teachers were standing at the doors and smiling, too!”



**Fig. I.1** The Three Dudes’ talent show success made a splash in the *San Antonio Register*, May 1967. Newspaper clippings courtesy of Charles Russell; scans by author.

Indeed, it was “no big thing,” as Russell affirms, to see multiracial groups back then in San Antonio.<sup>5</sup> Even before, since the turn of the century, musicians of color have had a long and storied history of performance and interactions in the city. This dissertation is a history of this cross-pollinated music culture, popularly known as the “West Side Sound,” and the people who contributed to its formation. More broadly, it is a social history of San Antonio and the cultural formations which shaped urban life for communities of color.

There are multiple definitions of the West Side Sound. A colloquial phrase, it is a reference to the Mexican American West Side of San Antonio, at times used interchangeably to describe 1950s-1970s “Chicano Soul” or “Latin Soul” music from the

---

<sup>5</sup> Charles Russell, interview by author, April 15, 2018, San Antonio.

city. To some, the West Side Sound is more of a feeling than a specific musical genre. In the words of Texas Tornados drummer Ernie Durawa, “it’s just that San Antonio thing...nowhere else in the world has it.”<sup>6</sup> San Antonio musician Joe “Jama” Perales described it as an African American and Mexican American cultural hybridity. “We absorbed that black sound, and we’re Hispanics from San Antonio, so it just kinda came together into this sound, ya know? We’d cover a Bobby “Blue” Bland song, but we didn’t do it like him—we’d do it like Chicano style. It was the way we [Chicanos] expressed soul music. It’s hard to say, man. It can’t be duplicated—you gotta be from here.”<sup>7</sup>

These descriptions of the West Side Sound are accurate, but they really only tell part of the story of this musical hybrid. I define the West Side Sound as a multi-ethnic music culture consisting of several genres and musical influences found in and around San Antonio, including blues, *conjunto*, country, rhythm and blues, polka-ranchera, swamp pop, doo-wop, soul, Tejano, and rock and roll. While the name suggests it is “sonically confined” to the West Side of San Antonio, it is a cultural product of many “sides,” regions, genres, and people, including influences from outside of the city.

“Young, Gifted, and Brown” argues that Latinos and Latinas in San Antonio were pioneers, not late-coming contributors, in the creation of postwar American popular music. This dissertation places Latinos/as and Black San Antonians at the very center of a diverse, industrious, and nationally-significant music “scene,” not unlike Los Angeles and New York City, and the way these cities have established relationships with popular

---

<sup>6</sup> Ernie Durawa, interview by author, February 3, 2013, San Antonio.

<sup>7</sup> Joe “Jama” Perales, interview by author, January 23, 2013, San Antonio.

genre formations and national identity.<sup>8</sup> Building on sociologist Deborah Vargas' thesis concerning Chicana musician marginalization and "diva dissonance" in the canon of Chicano/Tejano music, this dissertation moves away from a narrative that suggests that rock and roll came under the "natural" and exclusive dominion of white men by the middle 1960s.<sup>9</sup> This narrative, propelled by what American Studies scholar Jack Hamilton describes as late-sixties "rock critics and *Rolling Stone* staff writers," writes women and musicians of color out of rock music's origins and evolution.<sup>10</sup>

Black-Brown relations and cultural cross-pollination are key themes in this study. In recent years, historians such as Max Krochmal and David Montejano have produced engaging and dynamic studies on Black/Brown relations and Chicano/a history in Texas. In *Quixote's Soldiers*, Montejano examines a social history of San Antonio and the making and evolution of the Chicano Movement.<sup>11</sup> Montejano and Krochmal contribute to Black/Brown relationships by demonstrating histories of

---

<sup>8</sup> 1960s/1970s New York Latin music and multicultural postwar Los Angeles emerge as the preeminent national places for black-brown musical hybridity. This is due to the music's popularity and crossover success, including popular hits and identifiable artists. Minus a few exceptions, Latin music from San Antonio and Texas remained far more "provincial" (as a regional Mexican genre) and lacked nationwide distribution and mainstream crossover success. For more on this, see Deborah Pacini Hernandez, *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* (Temple University Press, 2010); Matthew Ramirez Warren, *We Like It Like That: The Story Of Latin Boogaloo*, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (Milwaukee: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Jack Hamilton, *Just Around Midnight: Rock & Roll and the Racial Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Max Krochmal examines multiracial labor politics in Texas through the lens of African American and Mexican American coalitions. Krochmal discusses how community activists banded together to empower the state's marginalized minorities to reveal a liberal tradition in Texas. Davis Montejano connects a local history of anti-Mexican discrimination to its culmination in college student activism and the evolution of the Chicano movement in San Antonio. *Quixote's Soldiers* documents connections between local leaders and organizations, as well as notions of interethnic solidarity and brotherhood, which informed the movement. Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

unity from Popular Front-era labor cooperatives to New Left political activism, known as the “rainbow coalitions” in social histories of the twentieth century. In *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, historian George Sanchez discusses 1930s-era trade union mobilization to view interethnic connections in Los Angeles, grounding shared experiences of social exclusion into a broad class coalition which united African American, Chinese, ethnic Mexican, and other immigrant groups.<sup>12</sup>

Recent Black/Brown studies examine expressive culture, such as postwar R&B ballrooms and neighborhood radio stations, to view these relationships. Ethnic Studies scholars Josh Kun’s and Laura Pulido’s *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition* focuses on the multicultural spaces of Los Angeles to move beyond the “conflict-coalition” model in Black/Brown studies, which either unites black and Latino/a Angelinos through unified civil rights struggles and multiracial coalitions, or divides them as combatants in competition for second-class citizenship.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the essays in *Black and Brown in Los Angeles* aim to not “isolate the world of arts and culture from that of politics,” but to show that “expressive culture can be a rehearsal for politics.” This approach rings true for

---

<sup>12</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Josh Kun and Laura Pulido, eds., *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). In recent studies, a dichotomous model of “conflict and coalition” frame much of the current discussions on Black/Brown relationships. In the coalition model, scholars have examined the connections between Latinas/os and African Americans based on collective experiences (as “othered,” nonwhite, second-class citizens) as well as shared economic and political interests. In the conflict model, studies focus on the tensions between these communities which at times result in racism and violence. Issues such as cultural differences, job competition, access to resources such as quality schools and political representation, as well as increased Latino immigration in recent decades factor into these studies.

Black and Brown San Antonio as well.<sup>14</sup> Cultural formations documented in “Young, Gifted, and Brown” underscore a history of self-determination and ethnic pride among San Antonio’s communities of color.

Other themes in Black/Brown studies examine historical conditions and demographic shifts affecting these relationships. Historian Brian Behnken discusses Latino/a racial relationships to whiteness and failed attempts to integrate Mexicans into white schools during the 1950s and 1960s, causing friction between Tejanos/as and African American in communities throughout Texas.<sup>15</sup> Studies that discuss increased Latino/a immigration to the United States after 1965, and competition for low-skilled jobs and urban resources, accentuate a narrative that accentuates disunity and distrust among these communities.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, attention to racially motivated violence and Black and Brown street gangs continue to reinforce conflict

---

<sup>14</sup> Kun and Pulido, eds., *Black and Brown in Los Angeles*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Essays in *The Struggle in Black and Brown* (2012) focus on the U.S. Southwest and the histories of Black/Brown civil rights struggles and interethnic connections in the region. Despite the amount of political activity, historian Brian Behnken maintains that “their efforts were rarely unified,” operating in separate spheres. Major themes in the *The Struggle in Black and Brown* include multiracial coalitions among civil rights and labor groups on the West Coast as well as cultural connections among African American and Mexican American musicians during the period. For more on Tejano/a racial passing and “black/brown disunity,” see “The Movement in the Mirror,” in Brian D. Behnken, *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 49-77.

<sup>16</sup> For more on Black/Brown relationships and economic competition, see , Edward S. Shihadeh and Raymond E. Barranco. “Latino Employment and Black Violence: The Unintended Consequence of U. S. Immigration Policy,” *Social Forces* 88, no. 3 (2010): 1393-420; Jennifer Gordon and R.A. Lenhardt, “Rethinking Work and Citizenship,” *UCLA Law Review* 55 1161 (2007); Nicolas Corono Vaca, *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What It Means for America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); Michael Jones-Correa, *Governing American Cities: Inter-Ethnic Coalitions, Competition, and Conflict* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001); Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Angela Stuesse, *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

over coalition.<sup>17</sup>

“Young, Gifted, and Brown” examines Black-Brown relationships through cultural expressions and sonic affinities in twentieth-century San Antonio, Texas. I argue this is a critical way to understand these relationships because of music’s ability to move across political and cultural borders. This dissertation focuses on San Antonio’s numerous multiracial doo-wop, R&B, soul, and early rock-and-roll groups of the mid-to-late twentieth century and the distinct urban dynamics that facilitated the sound’s growth. By revealing cultural kinships across African American and Mexican American communities, “Young, Gifted, and Brown” provides new understandings of interethnic connections along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Through an analysis of San Antonio’s African American neighborhoods and Mexican American *barrios* as racialized spaces, I argue that anti-Mexican and anti-black Jim Crow laws and spatial access influenced the early inception of the West Side Sound.

### Methodology/Sources

“Young, Gifted, and Brown” places San Antonio at the center of the Mexican American recording industry of the preceding century.<sup>18</sup> By uncovering vintage

---

<sup>17</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1996), 23.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the history of the Mexican American recording industry, Guadalupe San Miguel, *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century* (Texas A&M University Press, 2002); George J. Sánchez and George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1995); Manuel H. Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (University of Texas Press, 1999); Cathy Ragland, *Musica Nortena: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation Between Nations* (Temple University Press, 2009); Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Duke University Press, 2008); Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an*

recordings through public and private collections, this dissertation reveals a new understanding of postwar popular genres and “Chicano music” in San Antonio.<sup>19</sup>

Historicizing the Mexican American recording industry, as well as the instrumentation, genres, and lyrics captured on vintage recordings, reveals a fascinating cultural history surrounding the largest ethnic group in the United States.

Archival resources used in this study include materials from the Huey P. Meaux Archives at the University of Texas’s Briscoe Center for American History; the San Antonio Newspapers Archives at University of Texas-San Antonio; the Allen Olsen and Joe Nick Patoski collections at Texas State University’s Wittliff Collection; the University of California-Los Angeles’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings; and the University of Houston Libraries Special Collections’ Texas Music Archive. This dissertation also includes materials from private record collections and music archives, including the Ramón Hernández Hispanic Entertainment Archive (San Antonio, TX), the Jesse Garcia archives (San Antonio, TX),

---

*American Culture* (Texas Tech University Press, 2017); Agustín Gurza and Jonathan D. Clark, *The Arhoolie Foundation’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings* (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2012); Steven Joseph Loza, *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles* (University of Illinois Press, 1993); American Folklife Center, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage* (American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1982); Ramiro Burr, *The Billboard Guide to Tejano and Regional Mexican Music* (Billboard Books, 1999); Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures* (University of Texas Press, 2001); San Miguel, Guadalupe. "The Rise of Recorded Tejano Music in the Post-World War II Years, 1946-1964." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19, no. 1 (1999): 26-49; Mary Ann Villarreal, *Listening to Rosita: The Business of Tejano Music and Culture, 1930–1955* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2015); Gary Hickinbotham, "A History of the Texas Recording Industry," *The Journal of Texas Music History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Ethnomusicologists Avelardo Valdez and Jeffrey Halley define Chicano music as “music that is played by Mexican Americans for a Mexican American audience who identify themselves as Mexican American.” Avelardo Valdez and Jeffrey a. Halley, “The Popular in Conjunto Tejano Music,” 199–209. In Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

Numero Group Records archives (Chicago, IL), and Heavy Light Records archives (New Orleans, LA).

Using music as a lens on history shows the lesser-known processes of cross-pollination and interethnic interactions that have taken place in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands over the past two centuries. Examining how the diverse musical influences present in this “sound” helps further our understanding of the ways in which marginalized communities have interacted and shaped cultural art forms in the region. Indeed, a thorough analysis of the evolution and long-term significance of the West Side Sound also provides insight into this music culture’s role in helping shape the larger canon of American popular music.

Currently, very little scholarship exists on the West Side Sound.<sup>20</sup> There is no book devoted to the topic, and only a handful of articles have been written on this distinct musical idiom.<sup>21</sup> Much like Detroit’s “Motown Sound” or Philadelphia’s “Philly Sound” of the 1970s—the string-heavy, smooth soul style which emanated from famed production duo, Gamble and Huff—the West Side Sound has had a significant impact on both local and national music.

“Young, Gifted, and Brown” aims to bring greater recognition to San Antonio music and to better understand how the cultural and historical elements that gave rise to the West Side Sound are connected to larger social, political, economic, and demographic

---

<sup>20</sup> Francisco Orozco, “Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio” (University of Washington, 2012). To this author’s knowledge, Orozco’s dissertation remains the only other known academic study on this subject. However, “Chololoche Grooves” is not exclusively devoted to the West Side Sound, but rather Black/Brown musical connections in San Antonio.

<sup>21</sup> Allen Olsen, “San Antonio’s West Side Sound,” *Journal of Texas Music History*, vol. 5 no. 1, Spring 2005, 27; Hector Saldaña, “The Westside Sound: It’s More Than a Feeling,” *San Antonio Express-News*, December 3, 2009; Hector Saldaña, “West Side Sound Pioneer Gets Animated,” September 20, 2015.



changes taking place throughout the United States. Above all, this is a story about racial interactions and popular music, and of entrepreneurs of color working in the local music market within the boundaries of a provincial media market. Dedicated to the musicians and entrepreneurs who indeed shaped postwar Mexican American and African American music, this dissertation is intended to shed light on this distinct national cultural phenomenon.

### **Literature/Scholarship**

This dissertation contributes to the scholarship on the Chicano Movement through an analysis of Black-Brown musical and social relationships, revealed in the iconography and recordings of 1950s-1960s San Antonio pop music as well as *La Onda Chicana*, or The Chicano Wave.<sup>22</sup> *La Onda Chicana* is the musical and cultural component of the Chicano Movement, the Mexican American civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s that reflected a new sense of nationalism among Mexican Americans across the U.S. Southwest.<sup>23</sup> However, Tejano/a musicians in this period, in

---

<sup>22</sup> For more on the canonization of Chicano music, see Avelardo Valdez and Jeffrey a. Halley, "The Popular in Conjunto Tejano Music," 199–209. In Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Stock, Jonathan P. J., Marin Marian Balasa, Caleb Okumu Chrispo, and Michael Morse. "Review Symposium." *The World of Music* 44, no. 3 (2002): 171-82; Johannes Riedel and Santos Martinez, *Dále Kranque: Chicano Music and Art in South Texas* (University of Minnesota, 1982); Villarino, José. *Mexican and Chicano Music*, (College Custom Series, 1999); Azcona, Stevan, *Movements in Chicano Music: Performing Culture, Performing Politics, 1965–1979*, 2008; Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> For more on *La Onda Chicana*, see Gary Hartman, *The History of Texas Music* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 45-50; Rafaela Castro, *Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2001), 173; Chapter 7, "La Onda Chicana," in Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Deborah Pacini Hernandez, Héctor D. Fernández l'Hoeste, and Eric Zolov, *Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 22-23.

their performance of “racially black” crossover genres such as doo-wop and rhythm and blues, were destabilizing traditional Texas-Mexican genres.

Chicano/a scholarship exploring themes of Mexican American cultural formation (and specifically, Tejano/a cultural formation) discuss how the urban environment forged a localized identity. A foundational study, Albert Camarillo’s *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848- 1930*, explores socioeconomics, history, nationalism, and culture to demonstrate the gradual formation of Mexican American identity in Southern California’s transformation from a Mexican pastoral economy to an Anglo-dominated industrial economy.<sup>24</sup> Camarillo’s study demonstrate the effect of economic systems and power changes in affecting identity formation. In *Becoming Mexican American*, Historian George Sanchez examines the complex process of Mexican American cultural formation in Los Angeles through social phenomena ranging from immigration restriction policies (Johnson-Reed Act of 1924) to industrialization to evolving discourse on race, citizenship, and social inclusion.<sup>25</sup> Sanchez illustrates this cultural-formation process as both a gradual evolution and distinct urban phenomenon in the largest ethnic-Mexican-populated city in the U.S., shifting from preceding New York/Ellis Island-focused narratives of U.S. immigration as a distinctly European phenomenon.

Studies on Tejano/a identity and cultural formation provide a useful base to ground ideas about Mexican Americans in San Antonio and South Texas more broadly.

---

<sup>24</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8.

Historian Richard Garcia describes the creation of the “Mexican American mind” during the early twentieth century among a rising middle-class ethnic Mexican demographic in San Antonio. Garcia discusses how assimilation into U.S. society became a constant tension among generational divides while demonstrating class divisions among migrant and native-born Tejanos/as.<sup>26</sup> Historian Richard Buitron emphasizes the role of Texas-Mexico borderlands history in shaping Tejano identity in San Antonio, arguing that the “middle-class Tejano consensus” largely avoided radical political activity and labor organizing associated with Mexican California.<sup>27</sup> Historian Daniel D. Arreola’s work on cultural provinces and Tejano/a place-making in South Texas connects the importance of cultural artforms in claiming agency and self-determination under the threat of Anglo domination.<sup>28</sup>

Recent studies on Tejano/a history emphasize how Tejano/a identity formation occurs outside of the state as well. Historian Marc Simon Rodriguez analyzes a “Tejano/a diaspora” between Texas and Wisconsin and the migrant farm laborers who influenced Chicano/a politics within these regions.<sup>29</sup> Examining Tejano/a and northern Mexican connections via music, ethnomusicologist Cathy Ragland explores sonic connections between Tejano and Mexican communities and working-class genres.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Buitron, *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel D. Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Marc Simon Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Cathy Ragland, *Música Norteña: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation Between Nations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

“Young, Gifted, and Brown” also examines the impact of the so-called “Chitlin’ Circuit” on the development of the West Side Sound. The Chitlin’ Circuit was a loosely-knit network of black-friendly, and often black-owned, music venues that stretched across the racially-segregated South and Southwest during the Jim Crow era. The Chitlin’ Circuit was vital to the emergence of the West Side Sound, because it provided an arena in which African American musicians, club owners, and audiences could share in a constantly evolving exchange of musical innovations and experiences with Anglo and Latino/a artists and music fans in San Antonio.

Studies of San Antonio’s music scene have highlighted the city’s unique musical culture and its prominence as a recording destination during the interwar and World War Two period. In Alan Governor’s *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound* shows, San Antonio’s blues, jazz, and R&B music venues of the twentieth century were important cultural sites where the city’s musical identity was formed.<sup>31</sup> According to Governor, as important as the “Chitlin’ Circuit” was throughout the entire South in facilitating the safe travel of black musicians, it took on a whole new significance in terms of mixed-race live music performance in and around San Antonio. He argues that race relations in San Antonio were different from other parts of the state in terms of segregation and racial violence, thus adding complexity and nuance to the notion of a “state history” especially as it concerns race and ethnicity. In part because San Antonio had long been a very ethnically diverse city, with large numbers of Tejanos/as, African Americans, Germans, Czechs, and others, it was not as rigidly segregated as most major

---

<sup>31</sup> Alan B. Govenar, *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 463.

southern cities of the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> San Antonio's particular social atmosphere and relatively relaxed attitudes about racial mixing contributed to increased interethnic social mingling among the city's communities of color.

Studies on the origins of postwar popular genre such as rock and soul focus on the racial divides (and racial healing) in the Deep South within a black-white racial framing of the "birth" of postwar music. In fact, San Antonio was the first large city in the South to desegregate its public-school system following the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling that outlawed segregation in public schools.<sup>33</sup> In 1960, it also became the first major southern city to integrate public lunch counters.<sup>34</sup> The proliferation of military bases in and around the Alamo City during World War II, and the desegregation of the U.S. military in 1948, also contributed to the increased social

---

<sup>32</sup> While Mexican Americans in San Antonio experienced segregation, the structure differed from the strict anti-black divides of the Jim Crow South. Particular social dynamics such as socioeconomic status, lighter skin tones, and attempts to assimilate allowed some Tejanos/as to be more accepted in Anglo-Texan society. Black and tan nightclubs, racially-mixed jazz and R&B venues of the 1940s and 1950s, mostly existed in the Northeast and West Coast, even parts of the Midwest. San Antonio's Keyhole Club was a known "Black and Tan" club which was rare for the South during this era. San Antonio's military servicemen patronized these venues and were generally more tolerant of interracial mixing. These factors influenced the West Side Sound by creating what historian Allen Olsen called "intercultural congeniality" in San Antonio. For more on this, see Allen Olsen, "San Antonio's West Side Sound," *Journal of Texas Music History*, vol. 5 no. 1, Spring 2005, 27. For more on Mexican segregation and race relations in the Southwest, see Jennifer R. Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (University of Texas Press, 2015); Ruben Donato, *Other Struggle for Equal Schools, The: Mexican Americans During the Civil Rights Era* (SUNY Press, 1997); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Martha Menchaca, *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Harvard University Press, 2018). For more on studies of race and music in Texas, see Tyina Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Univ of California Press, 2015); Jason Mellard, *Progressive Country: How the 1970s Transformed the Texan in Popular Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2013); Aaron A. Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture* (Duke University Press, 2004); Bill Minutaglio, *In Search of the Blues: A Journey to the Soul of Black Texas* (University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> "San Antonio: A City Already Desegregated," *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL), October 6, 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Goldberg, "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965," *The Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 3 (August 1983): 287.

intermingling among those of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The saxophone-driven soul and rhythm and blues of Clifford Scott and Vernon “Spot” Barnett and the Tex-Mex rock and roll of Doug Sahm, Randy Garibay, and others, all represent the complexity of the West Side Sound resulting from the interethnic exchanges of diverse musical influences found in and around San Antonio over several decades following the Second World War.

An important part of this dissertation is to explore the connections among these seemingly disparate styles stretching over multiple decades and to better understand how they are part of a larger assemblage of musical influences found in the historical and cultural environs of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Emerging over several decades and from different cultural influences and generations of musicians, the West Side Sound is a continually-evolving style, imbued with a sense of folkloric roots tradition and oldies nostalgia for a bygone era. Yet, to many music veterans and aficionados, the heyday of the West Side Sound is long since over—a warm, yet distant musical memory, much the same as psychedelia, disco, or new wave. However, unlike other genres, the West Side Sound is still defined by its intrinsic relationship to the city of San Antonio. Even today, it continues to thrive as an “oldies” format on San Antonio radio stations.

### **Organization**

In order to trace the roots and long-term development of the West Side Sound, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, “Cross Roads Blues: Space & Race in the Alamo City, 1920-1939,” explores the origins of the West Side Sound, including African American blues and Mexican American *conjunto* performance in

public spaces during the early twentieth century. This chapter analyzes the social, cultural, and political dynamics of turn-of-the-century South Texas with an emphasis on the Tejano community. Through a critical understanding of the African American and Mexican American “sides” of town as racialized spaces (East and West, respectively), it demonstrates how anti-Mexican and anti-black Jim Crow laws, cultural expressions and spatial access influenced the creation of the West Side Sound. Building on this analysis, it offers a spatial history of early-twentieth-century San Antonio, showing how segregation shaped racial identities in this multicultural city. Jim Crow laws, codifying segregation and Anglo racial superiority through state and local law enforcement, led to the gradual importation of a binary racial caste system mirroring the rest of the southern United States.<sup>35</sup> San Antonians’ changing relationship to physical spaces and the built environment reflected evolving notions of racial, class, and gender subjectivities. Building on Henri Lefebvre’s notion of “rights to the city”—viewing the city as co-created space wherein San Antonians of color, subject to the impositions of Jim Crow, were historically denied access to its rights—this chapter examines the foundations of the West Side Sound to consider important ways in which music and other cultural practices reflected shifting attitudes about race, space, and class in the Alamo City, and the process by which nonwhite San Antonians’ spatial limitations forged key interethnic cultural connections during and after the Great Depression.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Beatriz de la Garza, *From the Republic of the Rio Grande: A Personal History of the Place and the People* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 40.

<sup>36</sup> George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xxiii.

Chapter Two, “On the Road with Rock & Roll: Roots Music and Musical Routes in San Antonio, 1940-1955,” explores ethnic genres of 1940s-1950s South Texas, including rhythm and blues and bebop jazz, and its impact on the West Side Sound. In discussing cross-pollination or “hybridity” in *música tejana* and rhythm and blues combo groups during the 1950s, this chapter argues that the influence of multiracial postwar genres, as well as an increasing cultural hybridity between African Americans and ethnic Mexicans directly influenced the formation of the West Side Sound. It evaluates the importance of a massive and newly desegregated military presence in San Antonio after World War II, particularly the impact that a large number of racially diverse servicemen and women had on the local entertainment scene. In this social context, the convergence of doo-wop, bebop, *conjunto*, *pachuco* boogie, rhythm and blues, and early rock and roll music complicates racialized and nationalized understandings of popular music genres, as pop genres and Tejano musicians move across the border and shape notions of Mexican modernity. In discussing cross-pollination or “hybridity” in *música tejana*, through *orquestas tejanas* (Texas-Mexican orchestras) and multiracial doo-wop and R&B groups, this chapter examines the categorization of genres. Examining the emergence of rock and roll during the mid-1950s, and the limitations of rock and roll historiography, this chapter also analyzes the forces of commercialism and transnationalism affecting South Texas and its impact on Mexican American and African American identity—a bi-national region shaped by nation-states on different paths towards modernization.

Chapter Three, “Talk To Me: The Peak Years of the West Side Sound, 1955-1968” focuses on the maturation of the West Side Sound with a new generation of Mexican American teenagers influenced by older African American musicians, such as



Clifford Scott, James Brown, and B.B. King. Local high school doo-wop groups, such as The Revells, The Sunglows, Charlie and The Jives, and others, blended these diverse influences to help reshape popular music in the Alamo City. Delving into key moments associated with the West Side Sound's fruition, this chapter explores the little-known history of independent record producers in San Antonio and the forging of the Mexican American recording industry, including entrepreneurs of color and women performers who successfully promoted this music despite being far away from the nation's major music industry centers of New York and Los Angeles. Although many cities during the 1950s and 1960s witnessed an emergence of independent labels, few regional scenes rivaled San Antonio in terms of recording output and diversity of genres found throughout the city.<sup>37</sup> In this context, this chapter focuses on one of the most enduring legacies of the West Side Sound: the sub-genre of "Chicano Soul" music. A journalistic term, Chicano Soul is used to describe 1950s-1970s Mexican American rock and roll and soul music throughout the American Southwest. By the mid-1970s, Chicano/a Soul and R&B faded in popularity in San Antonio, as newer, electronic-driven forms of music, such as Tejano, funk, disco, and hard rock, emerged. Nevertheless, Chicano/a Soul and the West Side Sound shared many common influences, and each played an important role in the evolution of the other.

---

<sup>37</sup> From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, there were approximately 131 Mexican American R&B/soul/rock-and-roll groups in and around San Antonio. Los Angeles, with five times the population of San Antonio by 1960, had roughly 80 groups. Additionally, San Antonio had notably more multiracial groups than Los Angeles, by a margin of nearly 3:1, accentuating San Antonio's distinct culture of multiracial R&B. For further discographic information, see Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 131-174, and Francisco Orozco, "Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, 248-259.

Chapter Four, “Yo Soy Chicano: La Onda Chicana in the West Side Sound, 1968-1980” reveals how the West Side Sound evolved amid the Chicano Movement. Through the voices of musicians, local newspapers, and political activists, this chapter examines how “*La Onda*” shaped the West Side Sound—through its engagement of protest politics and cultural nationalism, anti-Vietnam War themes, critiques of institutional racism and economic disparity, and other factors affecting Mexican Americans in San Antonio and South Texas. The West Side Sound’s transition from teenage love ballads to a more politicized Chicano identity reflects the union of music and activism of a new era. By revealing cultural kinships between African American and Mexican American musicians during *La Onda Chicana*, this chapter provides a new understanding of Chicano/a identity through musical discourse. The first part of this chapter focuses on cultural cross-pollination and racialization projects in South Texas; the second part segues into political activism and music during the 1960s and 1970s. South Texas cultural politics changed significantly during this period, and the West Side Sound reflected such activity through songs, themes, and album art, as well as support of local Chicano rallies/events, such as San Antonio’s *Semana de la Raza*.

Chapter Four also shows the beginnings of the crossover of Chicano Soul and Tejano music of the 1970s into a rock/pop-oriented “Tex-Mex” genre, pioneered by Doug Sahm, both as a solo artist and as one of the founding members of the super-group, the Texas Tornados. Sahm is credited with coining the term “West Side Sound” to describe the horn-laden soul music produced by his brass section, the West Side Horns. Though only some of his band members lived on San Antonio’s West Side, Sahm invented this label partly in tribute to the unique blending of musical elements found in

that part of San Antonio and partly as a way to “brand” this eclectic style for public consumption. Sahm became successful in the 1970s as a solo musician, drawing from his country, blues, and R&B roots to create a unique pop/rock sound. The decline of Chicano Soul gave way to the dawn of the big-band Tejano format of the latter 1970s, still infused with ideology and identity politics of the Chicano Movement. New developments in recording technology by the late 1970s replaced the traditional brass section of three, four, or even five horn players with one synthesizer, which could emulate horn tones. This allowed large orchestras to “down size” into smaller, more portable combos, which were cheaper to maintain and take on tour. This chapter discusses how and why this transformation took place, as well as the long-term implications of these changes.

Chapter Five, “Viva El West Side!: Barrio Memories and Historical Projects in San Antonio, Texas,” discusses local identity and popular memory of the West Side Sound during the late-twentieth century. This chapter discusses recent West Side preservation efforts in San Antonio, including working-class culture and music associated with the West Side Sound, as part of a grassroots effort to counter city-led historical projects focused on Spanish, Anglo-Texan, and elite Tejano histories. Grassroots preservationists, through force and influence, engaged with city leaders to negotiate and “share” historical authority in order to 1) present a more equitable and representative vision of a local past, and 2) work to preserve what remained of a diminished Mexican American identity and culture rooted in the West Side. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how race, power, and nostalgia have shaped “official” San Antonio histories and *barrio* memories of the West Side. The West Side Sound, a colloquial label for local pride and nostalgia for the West Side’s multicultural music scene of the 1950s and 1960s,

reflects such oldies memories of an urban past. This chapter analyzes the work of city historic preservation boards and grassroots preservation organizations, as well as intertextual media in the West Side, to demonstrate how Chicano/a music (including but not limited to the West Side Sound), oral histories, preservation activism, and cultural arts reflect George Lipsitz's notion of "alternative archives" of the past.<sup>38</sup> For example, recent preservation battles in the West Side reveal a subtle rift between the historically tangible and intangible, including music, dance, and cultural traditions that once flourished within these spaces. West Side residents, and those who cherish and embrace their local history did so in contrast to "official" preservation efforts, such as those within the National Register for Historic Places, which overlooked and even opposed such marginal communities.<sup>39</sup>

### Terminology

Due to the musicological aspects of this study, I use various terms for genres, some of Mexican origins, to describe the changes and influences in the West Side Sound. *Música tejana* is used to describe the larger canon of Texas-Mexican music and its various genres, both folkloric and popular. "Tejano" is a modern Texas-Mexican genre music consisting of rock, polka, R&B, and Latino musical influences. *Conjunto* is used in this study to describe working-class accordion music which emerged in South Texas during the late nineteenth century; it is a folk genre in *música tejana*.<sup>40</sup> *Orquesta tejana* is used to describe the small orchestras which emerged in Texas-Mexican music during the

---

<sup>38</sup> George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Milwaukee: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Johnny Magdaleno, "Mexican American Preservationists Are Saving San Antonio's Urban Fabric," *Next City Magazine*, September 4th, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Manuel H. Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 86.

1940s and 1950s, adding saxophone and trumpets to blend with modern American genres during the postwar era.<sup>41</sup> *Ranchera* is a sentimentalized type of Mexican country music (ranch music) typified by a slower waltz tempo.<sup>42</sup> R&B, or rhythm and blues, is an upbeat African American genre originating in the 1940s and usually consisting of piano, drums, bass, horns (usually saxophone), and guitar; it is at times used interchangeably to describe early rock and roll music.

I use several terms to describe ethnic Mexicans in San Antonio, some denote identifiers that change over time or apply to specific groups of people. Mexican American refers to ethnic Mexicans in the United States. “Tejano/a,” when used as an identifier and not a genre, refers to ethnic Mexicans in or from Texas. I use “Chicano/a” to describe ethnic Mexicans in the United States who self-identify as such during and after the Chicano Movement. I attempt to use this term only when its self-designation to a person(s) and/or community is clear and warranted. I use “Latino/a” to describe persons in the United States of Latin American origin or descent and “Latinx” as the gender-neutral variant of this descriptor.

---

<sup>41</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> Peña, *Música Tejana*, 85.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **“Cross Road Blues”: Space & Race in the Alamo City, 1920-1939**

I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees  
I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees  
Asked the Lord above, “Have mercy now  
Save poor Bob if you please”

-Robert Johnson, “Cross Road Blues”

Hot tamales and they're red hot  
Yeah, she got 'em for sale, hey  
Hot tamales and they're red hot  
Oh, she got 'em for sale

-Robert Johnson, “They’re Red Hot”

Robert Johnson, an African American blues musician from the Mississippi Delta, recorded “Cross Road Blues” at the Gunter Hotel in downtown San Antonio in November 1936. “Cross Road Blues” was one of several songs Johnson recorded over a two-day period during his stay in San Antonio.<sup>43</sup> Johnson’s virtuosity on the guitar generated countless legends following his death, the most famous of which states he “sold his soul to the Devil” at a crossroads in rural Mississippi in exchange for his

---

<sup>43</sup> Robert Johnson, “Cross Roads Blues” b/w “Ramblin’ On My Mind,” 78-rpm, November 23, 1936, Vocalion Records, SA-2629, in *Wirz’ American Music Discography*, <https://www.wirz.de/music/johnrfrm.htm>, accessed March 2, 2019.

“otherworldly” skillset.<sup>44</sup> In these tales, “Cross Roads Blues” emerges as lyrical “evidence” of this encounter.<sup>45</sup> Myths aside, the historical reality is that Johnson recorded his blues, like hundreds of roving ethnic folk musicians, during the major record companies’ field recording campaigns throughout the late 1920s to early 1940s.<sup>46</sup> San Antonio emerged among the most popular field recording destinations in this era.<sup>47</sup> Like Johnson, early-twentieth-century San Antonio was at a crossroads: of intersecting racial, sonic, and cultural geographies. Recorded during these sessions, Johnson’s “They’re Red Hot” invoked the piquant Mexican food staple, *tamales*, and the Mexican American women who sold them.<sup>48</sup> It was in this social world, in the sonic and cultural expressions of black and brown folk musicians, in which the origins of the West Side Sound emerged.

---

<sup>44</sup> Patricia R. Schroeder, *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 33-34.

<sup>45</sup> Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012). Wald investigates the known facts of Robert Johnson’s biography to sketch a broader social history of African American life and the “invention” of the blues genre. Wald explores the songs, recollections of musicians, black newspapers, and original research to separate the myriad myths from facts.

<sup>46</sup> Ted Gioia, *Delta Blues: The Life and Times of the Mississippi Masters Who Revolutionized American Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009): 176. For more on the field recordings and commercial exploitation of “hillbilly,” “race,” and “ethnic” music in Texas during this period, see Gary Hickinbotham, “A History of the Texas Recording Industry,” *Journal of Texas Music History* 4, no. 1 (March 2004), 7.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Oliver, *Barrelhouse Blues: Location Recording and the Early Traditions of the Blues* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 117.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Johnson, “They’re Red Hot” b/w “Come On In My Kitchen,” 78-rpm, November 23, 1936, Vocalion Records, SA-2627, in Wirz’ *American Music Discography*, <https://www.wirz.de/music/johnrfrm.htm>, accessed March 2, 2019. Tamales made their way into the Mississippi Delta by the turn of the century at a time when migrant Mexican workers were arriving to satiate labor demands of the cotton industry. It is possible that Johnson was first exposed to tamales during his time in the Delta; the imported food item later became a staple among the region’s African American community. However, Latino/a Studies scholar Roberto Avant-Mier posits that Johnson’s song is a possible allusion to the street tamales from San Antonio “chili queens” who he may have encountered upon his arrival to the city. Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 37.

Through musical discourse from early record producers, bluesmen, *conjunto* musicians, and journalists, among others, this chapter offers insight into segregation and racialization in San Antonio. Following Texian conquest, the gradual curtailing of language, religion, music, and food in downtown spaces ensured Anglo dominion in the Alamo City. Access to space expressed power—or lack thereof—in San Antonio’s transformation as an Anglo-Texan city. Thus, the story of San Antonio’s West Side Sound is not only about “sound,” but about space. By engaging the spatial history of early-twentieth-century San Antonio—its African American East Side, Mexican American West Side, Anglo suburbs, and other areas of import—this chapter argues that the gradual segregation of the city’s nonwhite communities contributed to the formation of the West Side Sound.

Jim Crow legislation, which codified residential segregation and white supremacy through state and local law enforcement, was part of the gradual importation of a racial caste system mirroring the rest of the southern United States.<sup>49</sup> San Antonians’ changing relationship to physical spaces and the built environment evolved following Anglo conquest of Texas. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s notion of “rights to the city,” I contend

---

<sup>49</sup> Historians in recent years have discussed the historical complexities of Jim Crow in multiethnic Texas, particularly in the state’s Southwestern fringes. For example, in his framing of San Antonio as the “most western of southern cities,” Kenneth Mason describes a “paternal brand of racism” in San Antonio which diminished anti-black violence but yielded a powerful black political machine from Reconstruction to the Great Depression. Likewise, de la Garza, Krochmal, Garcia, and Montejano, among others, discuss the effects of Anglo cultural hegemony and the importation of anti-black laws in the South following Reconstruction in forging racial Mexicaness in local and statewide histories. Beatriz de la Garza, *From the Republic of the Rio Grande: A Personal History of the Place and the People* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013). Pg. 40; Kenneth Mason, *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867-1937* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1998); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2016); Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991).



that San Antonio became a city of co-created space wherein San Antonians of color, subject to the impositions of Jim Crow, were historically denied access to its rights. Lefebvre's ideas about class segregation and the making of racialized slums frame the following discussion on spatial inequalities in San Antonio.<sup>50</sup> This chapter thus examines the foundations of the West Side Sound to consider important ways in which music and other cultural practices reflected those social and racial realities, and the shifting attitudes about race and space in the Alamo City. Lastly, this chapter discusses the process by which nonwhite San Antonians' spatial limitations forged interethnic connections from the 1920s-1940s.

### **Making the "Mexican Quarter"**

Southern Anglos fostered South Texas economic development at the turn of the century, settling into the region and bringing established notions of racial and cultural superiority.<sup>51</sup> Historian John Weber discusses how South Texan elites exploited Mexican migration and overpowered a weakened work force in order to pay exploitative low

---

<sup>50</sup> Lefebvre's criticisms on property rights of owners over the rights of inhabitants frame a discussion on cultural expressions as racial markers. For more on Lefebvre and rights of the city, see Mark Purcell, "Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2014), 141–154.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth L. Stewart and Arnolfo De León, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos, and Socio-Economic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 11. Historian Raúl Ramos discusses how elite Tejanos/as in San Antonio were able to "pass" into whiteness dependent on social status. Ramos explores Mexican/Mexican American Bexareño identity in San Antonio via "state formation, local practices, and cultural constructions" within the region's major political upheavals of the early-to-mid-nineteenth century. Following Texian conquest, Bexareños operated within a new ethnic/racial framework that subjugated nonwhites while Tejano elites continued to negotiate for upward social mobility. For more on nineteenth-century Tejano/a race and class, see Chapter 6, "Tejanos as a Suspect Class," 167-204, in Raúl A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2008).

wages.<sup>52</sup> Local speculators, empowered by the state, drew in settlers from the East and Midwest with promises of capital and cheap land in the burgeoning agricultural industry along the lower Rio Grande Valley.<sup>53</sup> By the early twentieth century, labor demands in the region, as well as mass migration stemming from the Mexican Revolution, increased the Mexican population of Texas. From 1920 to 1930, the Mexican population of Texas increased from 388,075 to 683,681, nearly doubling the population size.<sup>54</sup> Mexican laborers on both sides of the border supplied an increasing demand for the cotton industry in the Gulf Coast, transforming the once-dominant cattle industry in San Antonio and South Texas.

In San Antonio, many Tejano/a farm workers toiled in the cotton and agricultural economy, prompting seasonal Mexican migratory waves through Central Texas and across the Southwest and Midwest, into Colorado, New Mexico, Illinois, Michigan, and Arizona, among other areas.<sup>55</sup> This economic drive increased demand for Mexican workers; San Antonio became a hub for a new influx of migrants, bringing cultural—and

---

<sup>52</sup> John Weber, *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> For more on economic changes and Anglo settlement in South Texas, see Chapter One, “Wages of Development in South Texas and Northern Mexico,” in Weber, *From South Texas to the Nation*, 15-39.

<sup>54</sup> Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 127.

<sup>55</sup> Historian Marc Simon Rodriguez discusses the Tejano diaspora and the migratory networks of agricultural laborers in the Midwest and in Wisconsin, specifically. Marc Simon Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2011). For more on Mexican farm migration and the U.S. agricultural economy, see Erasmo Gamboa and Kevin Leonard, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015); Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2017); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America - Updated Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

musical—traditions from northern Mexico. This presence of a growing immigrant and migrant population also energized the Anglo push for segregation based on notions of Tejanos' moral and cultural inferiority.<sup>56</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century, demographic shifts in Texas contributed to the formation of racial Mexicaness during national debates about citizenship and racial classification. In historian Arnoldo De León's assessment of Tejanos/as' physiological likeness to African Americans, anti-black Jim Crow laws doubled to frame the social and legal experience of Mexicans in the United States.<sup>57</sup> Tejano historian Richard Garcia argues that with increasing urbanization, segregation between the Mexican and Anglo communities deepened. At the same time, incomes in the Mexican neighborhoods of San Antonio declined. These factors led to an intensified "Mexican" identity in the community.<sup>58</sup>

The expansion of San Antonio as an "American" city transformed the nature of public space in turn-of-the-century San Antonio.<sup>59</sup> New suburbs developed as streetcars and trolleys increased movement in the old colonial city, shifting living and working

---

<sup>56</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 1998). Pg. 173.

<sup>57</sup> In his view on Texas racial formations, historian Arnoldo De León discusses Tejano racialization wherein elite *Béxareños* were referred to as "Castilian" or "Spanish" and ethnic Mexicans and mestizo Indians were called "greasers." Instrumental to this racial conceptualization is how Anglos regarded "Mexicans as physiologically similar to blacks and Indians," employing intimidation, violence, and lynching campaigns to subdue the Mexican population. Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929–1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> Historian Char Miller's anthology of essays, *On the Border*, explores the environmental history of San Antonio to thread relationships between San Antonians and the South Texas landscape and how they have shaped each other. For more on urban sprawl and changing landscapes in San Antonio, see "Where the Buffalo Roamed: Ranching Agriculture in the Urban Marketplace" in Char Miller, *On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

areas for Anglos and upwardly mobile Tejanos north of the city.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, architectural changes during this period, represented by a shift from Spanish adobe and *caliche*-blocked residences to modern brick-and-mortar buildings, affirmed Anglo dominion of San Antonio.<sup>61</sup> While social and political power shifted away from Tejano control, working-class *Mexicanas* and Tejanas resisted Anglo authority through the development of an informal economy, including the sale of *chili con carne* and piquant foods in the bustling Spanish plazas—entrepreneurial women known as the “chili queens” of San Antonio. Chili vendors initially started selling foods at Military Plaza during the mid-nineteenth century. They were later displaced to Produce Row following the construction of Municipal Market House in 1900, and moved west once again to Haymarket Plaza and Milam Park on the outer edges of the city during the interwar years.<sup>62</sup> The construction of new buildings, including a new city hall in Military Plaza and an opera hall in Alamo Plaza forced many of the vendors and troubadours westward, away from spaces occupied by formal businesses.<sup>63</sup> The turn of the twentieth century signaled the establishment and transformation of San Antonio de Béxar from a colonial outpost to American city.

---

<sup>60</sup> Laura Hernández-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City: Heritage and Carnival in San Antonio* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 25.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis F. Fisher, *Saving San Antonio: The Preservation of a Heritage* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2016), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Edna Campos Gravenhorst, *San Antonio's Historic Market Square* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2017), 31.

<sup>63</sup> Historian Jeffrey Pilcher discusses how new changes in the built environment of downtown plazas fundamentally altered “traditional uses of urban space” and the economic means for Mexican Americans. For more on Plaza de Zacate and cultural formations, see Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 109-110.

However, many vendors eventually returned to Alamo Plaza in the early 1900s in a symbolic reclamation of space and contestation of the Anglo order.<sup>64</sup>

Changes in the environment and limiting of public spaces occurred at a time when residential segregation further confined the city's nonwhite communities to disadvantaged enclaves. Racial groups became spatially confined through racial deed restrictions and federal redlining, housing policies that both radically transformed American cities and directly affected the advancement of ethnic enclaves during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Historian Arnoldo De León discusses the extent of racial prejudice during this period in Houston and the application of Jim Crow codes to Mexicans.<sup>66</sup> During the 1920s, Mexican Americans in Houston were denied access to most public and private establishments owned by Anglos, including ballrooms and restaurants. De León shows how residential segregation and deed restrictions developed through a process of intrusion, wherein Anglos already prepared to leave the inner city for emerging suburbs.<sup>67</sup> In San Antonio, Latinos/as were concentrated into the West and South Side of the city, particularly in the Laredo and Chihuahua *barrios* west of San

---

<sup>64</sup> "S.A. Queens Say Chili Is Sanitary," *San Antonio Light*, September 18, 1941. As World War I began, many of the vendors and troubadours were again forced out of Alamo Plaza and back into the West Side. However, Progressive Era sanitary reforms reigned in the city's vastly nonwhite and immigrant cultural practices, declared as a "public health nuisance" by Mayor C.K. Quin and closed by the city health department in the early 1940s, pushing chili queens and other informal economies out of the plazas and into segregated communities on the outskirts of downtown.

<sup>65</sup> Redlining was a federal-backed housing policy that denied financial services, such as mortgage insurance, to communities of color and people of lower socioeconomic status. Its origins trace back to the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934, responsible for economic and racial disparities still present today. For more on redlining and economic segregation in Texas, see Raul Yzaguirre, Laura Arce, and Charles Kamasaki. "The Fair Housing Act: A Latino Perspective." *Cityscape* 4, no. 3 (1999): 161-70; Weise, Julie M. "Mexican Nationalisms, Southern Racisms: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1908-1939." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008): 749-77; Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

<sup>66</sup> Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 26.

Pedro Creek. Displaced from the original settlement patterns of the city to underdeveloped neighborhoods on the fringes of town, new tenement houses, referred to as “corrales,” emerged in these areas.<sup>68</sup>

City leaders routinely ignored the poor and unsanitary conditions in the West Side corrales.<sup>69</sup> A story in the *San Antonio Light* describes how San Antonio Health Department officials rebuffed a recent report that claimed, “scores die every month and hundreds die every year in the Mexican Quarter from starvation.”<sup>70</sup> The Mexican Quarter, a square-mile of impoverished and ramshackle row houses on the West Side of downtown, contained almost 75 percent of the Mexican population in the city by 1930.<sup>71</sup> Many working-class Tejanos and ethnic Mexicans in San Antonio endured what journalist Robert Lovato calls “Juan Crow,” including political disenfranchisement, race-based covenants, segregated schools, and dilapidated infrastructure.<sup>72</sup> Conditions in the Mexican Quarter, marked by extreme poverty, included unpaved roads, rampant illness, lack of transportation and amenities, and squalid living conditions.

---

<sup>68</sup> Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1972), 95.

<sup>69</sup> David G. McComb, *The City in Texas: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 183.

<sup>70</sup> “Deny Starvation Has Caused Deaths Here,” *San Antonio Light*, June 3, 1915.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Arreola, “The Mexican American Cultural Capital,” *Geographical Review* 1 (1987), 24.

<sup>72</sup> Browne, Irene, and Mary Odem. “‘Juan Crow in the Nuevo South’?: Racialization of Guatemalan and Dominican Immigrants in the Atlanta Metro Area.” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 9, no. 2 (2012), 321–37.



**Fig. 1.1.** Rear view of a *corral*, row-house tenement, in the Mexican Quarter, March 1939. Russell, Lee. “[San Antonio, Texas. March 1939. Mexican Quarter.]” From Library of Congress: *Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004677700/> (accessed March 2, 2019).

In order to stem nationwide foreclosures during the Great Depression, agents from the federal government’s Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) surveyed San Antonio from 1935-1936 to determine “grades of security” and socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods. As shown in the HOLC map below, red areas—the east, south, and west sides—were marked as “hazardous” credit risks, due to the residents’ racial and ethnic composition.

With the highest concentration of Mexican-origin migrants in the United States, the West Side emerged as the cultural center of Mexican San Antonio.<sup>73</sup> African Americans, with roughly 7 percent of the total population in 1940, were segregated to the

<sup>73</sup> Daniel Arreola, “The Mexican American Cultural Capital,” *Geographical Review* 1 (1987), 17-34.

East Side of the city (see Table 1.A). Though the U.S. census did not differentiate “Mexicans” as a separate population category, scholars contend that they comprised approximately 40 percent of the city’s population by 1950.<sup>74</sup> Local deed restrictions further targeted the city’s African American and Latino/a population. This 1949 deed clause on a property owned by San Antonio Mayor Walter McCallister is suggestive of the practice:

No lot, tract, or subdivision thereof, in Highland Hills Subdivision, Unit One (1), shall ever be sold, leased, demised or conveyed by deed, lease, gift or otherwise to Mexicans, Negroes, or persons of either Latin American or African descent, nor shall any lot tract or subdivision thereof ever be used or occupied by Mexicans, Negroes, or persons of either Latin American or African descent except as household servants.<sup>75</sup>

McCallister’s deed restriction and others like it reinforced a pattern in San Antonio’s urban development that empowered housing developer policies to restrict wealthier neighborhoods—typically on the North Side—to Anglo families. African Americans and *Mexicanos/as* were relegated to poorly planned row housing on the East Side and West Side, respectively. By 1930, the stark and rigid racial geographies of the city were clear cut and defined. Indeed, the city was southern in segregation, southwestern in heritage, accentuating a distinct characteristic of the city wherein Anglos segregated from Mexicanos/as first and African Americans second, a population that remained well under 10% of the total demographic (see Table 1.A.). Decades under this condition, as historian David Montejano notes, even outside observers to the city noted

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 17-34.

<sup>75</sup> Bexar County Clerk’s Office. Deed Records: Vol. 2773, pgs. 503-506, 1949. Accessed January 11, 2019, <https://bexar.tx.publicsearch.us/search/advanced>



the stark racial divide, including UCLA social scientists who described San Antonio as “caste-like.”<sup>76</sup>

The instruments of residential segregation and spatial access confined Black and Latino/a San Antonians to areas of town deemed geographically inferior by the early twentieth century. Musician Henry Hernandez, a Chicano Soul singer from the 1950s-1970s, recalled the systemic neglect for the Mexican Quarter. His parents, Mexican Revolution refugees who settled in the West Side, spoke openly to their kids about racist attitudes towards Mexicans:

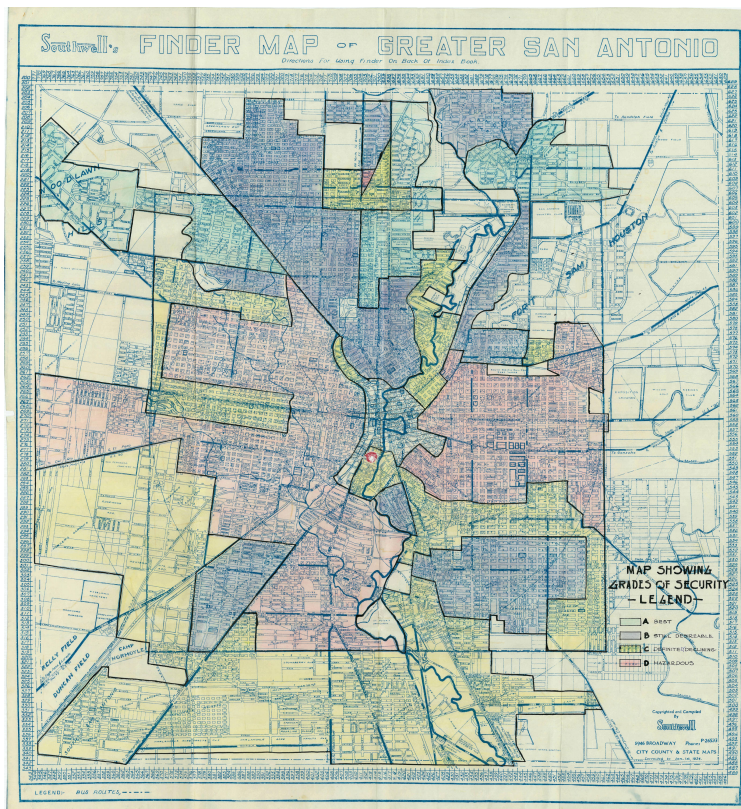
Back then in the ‘20s, ‘30s, ‘40s...even up until the ‘50s, the city council members had investments in the North Side—properties, buildings, whatever—so they would allocate all the money they could over there for streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure around their neighborhoods. Nothing for over here. And it’s still the same! Nothing has ever really been done to this area.<sup>77</sup>

Year	Total Population	Anglos	% of Total Population	African Americans	% of Total Population
1940	253,854	234,022	92	19,235	7.6
1950	408,442	369,766	92.2	28,729	6.78
1960	687,151	639,756	93.01	41,605	5.96
1970	864,014	795,184	92.01	59,432	6.82
1980	958,918	874,670	91.23	72,405	7.51
1990	1,185,394	878,736	74	84,670	7.08
2000	1,392,931	959,122	68.9	100,025	7.2

**Table 1.A:** Growth in the Black & White Populations of San Antonio, 1940-2000. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Geographic Comparison Table, Metropolitan Statistical Area for San Antonio, Texas. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. census did not distinguish Latinos (or Mexicans) as a separate population category. Table created by author.

<sup>76</sup> David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>77</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview with author, March 12, 2017, San Antonio.



**Fig. 1.2.** Home Owners' Loan Corporation 1935-1936 redlining map—the making of the racialized “sides” of San Antonio. UTSA Libraries Digital Collection.

### **“Masters of a Peculiar Minstrelsy”: Música Tejana in Depression-Era San Antonio**

Musicians comprised part of an informal Tejano/a economy in the open-air plazas of post-conquest San Antonio. Tejano troubadours, known colloquially as *guitarreros*, were common fixtures at downtown Haymarket Square and Market Square during the early-twentieth century, connecting listeners to cultural practices extending to colonial Mexico.<sup>78</sup> For a nickel, *guitarreros* in the plazas competed with one another to serenade passers-by and perform the latest *canciones rancheras* and *corridos*, traditional Mexican

---

<sup>78</sup> Bob Dale, “Faces of San Antonio: Guadalupe Acosta,” *San Antonio Express News*, May 12, 1963. Dale’s article discusses the history of roving troubadours in San Antonio while focusing on one particular singer, Guadalupe Acosta.

border ballads, characterized by improvisation, orality, and guitar accompaniment.<sup>79</sup>

Black bluesmen in the city, many from East Texas and areas of the Deep South, were also regular features in the city's performative spaces.<sup>80</sup>

Local ideas of race emerged in the ways in which people heard, described, and recorded folk music.<sup>81</sup> Early recording companies of the 1920s and 1930s, including Vocalion, Victor, Columbia, Brunswick, Okeh, and American Record Company sent mobile recording units to record "race" (black), "hillbilly" (poor white) and "Mexican" folk music in rural areas and borderland regions.<sup>82</sup> Through the creation of "budget" record labels, major recording firms marketed commercial folk recordings to working-class audiences ignored by the advent of commercial radio. At the crossroads of intersecting cultural terrains, San Antonio was a desirable recording location for "race record" labels from the late 1920s until the early 1940s.<sup>83</sup>

During his folk music collecting campaigns for the Library of Congress during the 1930s and 1940s, folklorist John Lomax frequented San Antonio to record African American and Mexican American folk musicians.<sup>84</sup> In a 1934 interview with the *San*

---

<sup>79</sup> "Strum Fun For S.A. Troubadours," *San Antonio Light*, June 8, 1941.

<sup>80</sup> African American musicians came to San Antonio during the late 1920s to early 1940s to record songs in exchange for cash. The Mississippi Sheiks, an African American guitar and fiddle duo, recorded in San Antonio in 1930. Texas pre-war blues pioneer Alger "Texas" Alexander also cut a few sides for Okeh Record's San Antonio field recording operation. For more on San Antonio and pre-war blues, see Paul Oliver, *Barrelhouse Blues: Location Recording and the Early Traditions of the Blues* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 85-98.

<sup>81</sup> Gary Hickinbotham, "A History of the Texas Recording Industry," *Journal of Texas Music History* 4:1 (Spring 2001).

<sup>82</sup> Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (Milwaukee: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> "Folklorist Sees Goldmine in SA," *San Antonio Light*, May 4, 1941.

*Antonio Express*, Lomax discussed his discovery of original “negro songs” in San Antonio which he claimed as “one of the negro’s greatest contributions to art.”<sup>85</sup> Like other white folklorists of his generation, Lomax pursued and recorded “pure” Mexican, black, and ethnic folk music in its most sequestered places. As described in the *San Antonio Light*, he frequented prisons and convict lease camps in the South to find “old-timey” and “sinful black music,” genres untouched by the racially-ambiguous pop music of the modern world.<sup>86</sup> In the making of what historian Karl Miller calls “segregated sound,” wherein folklorists and the early music industry imposed racial categories to folk genres, Lomax affixed such racial assignments to San Antonio’s pre-war sounds.<sup>87</sup> Returning to the city several years later, Lomax mused on his view of San Antonio as a “goldmine of folklore.” Speaking with the *San Antonio Light*, Lomax observed: “Our experiences gathering songs and other material have convinced us there is a greater wealth of folklore in a radius of 150 miles at San Antonio than in any other area of that size in the country.”<sup>88</sup>

Despite Lomax’s observations as an Anglo male with access to Tejano *barrios* and “negro camps,” segregation limited black and brown musicians’ entry to downtown public spaces and the open-air markets in Alamo Plaza, Market Square, and Haymarket Plaza. In culturally and racially diverse San Antonio, the public performance, regulation, and recording of ethnic folk allowed cultural producers to create and police racial

---

<sup>85</sup> “Collector Who Saved Forgotten Cowboy Ballads, In San Antonio To Record Mexican Folk Songs,” *San Antonio Express*, May 17, 1934.

<sup>86</sup> “Folklorist Sees Goldmine in SA,” *San Antonio Light*, May 4, 1941.

<sup>87</sup> For more on Miller’s thesis on the “musical color-line,” see Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 15-22.

<sup>88</sup> “Folklorist Sees Goldmine in SA,” *San Antonio Light*, May 4, 1941.

assignment. Consequently, the sights, sounds, and smells of San Antonio's plaza symbolized news ideas of race, while plaza access—controlled by vending permits and vagrancy laws, enforced by Anglo policemen—revealed the psychological and legal power behind the racial hierarchy. Folk music was a regular fixture in the city's plazas during the first several decades of the twentieth century, consisting of a musical intermixture of working-class black and brown musicians performing vernacular genres from across national and cultural boundaries along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

News journalists, like folklorists, were also contributing to ideas of race through descriptions and writings on sounds. The *San Antonio Light*, one of the most circulated dailies in early-twentieth-century San Antonio, documented the city's cultural life in its weekly first-page column, *Around The Plaza*. Columnist Jeff Davis described Depression-era San Antonio with short stories and opinion editorials on subjects from political scandals and local personalities, as well as the culinary and musical experiences of the bustling Alamo Plaza. The newspaper's editor once described Davis in an advertisement for the column in reference to his interest on local culture in this way: "Davis writes interestingly of everything from swing bands and tunes to colorful characters who have become a part of the local scene."<sup>89</sup> However, a closer look at Davis' "interesting" observations reveals a city negotiating its multicultural heritage and confronting the mechanisms of Jim Crow.

In a column from December 1933, Davis criticized vagrancy laws and the "harshness on the part of the law" as it concerned recent police activity and minority

---

<sup>89</sup> "Davis Takes You Around The Plaza," *San Antonio Light*, November 16, 1937.

groups.<sup>90</sup> Davis complained of the San Antonio Police Department's treatment of gypsies in the plazas, whom he observed were frequent, but harmless, seasonal migrants to the area.<sup>91</sup> Black San Antonians were also targeted for vagrancy in an effort to "sanitize" public spaces and recruit black labor for the needs of white industry. A 1930 crime report in the *San Antonio Light* described an African American musician arrested on vagrancy for busking in a public space.<sup>92</sup> However, these did not necessarily deter African American musicians from performing in public spaces.

Davis' commentary also provided insight on the sonic expressions of Texas-Mexicaness. In February 1936, Davis penned a column discussing the recent passing of troubadour Lupe Martinez, one half of pre-war Texas-Mexican recording stars Lupe Martinez and Pedro Rocha. In the late 1920s and 1930s, Martinez and Rocha recorded popular *corridos* in San Antonio for Vocalion Records, documenting the Mexican experience in South Texas: from fleeing the Mexican Revolution to run-ins with the Texas Rangers to the exploitive perils of industrial labor.<sup>93</sup> One popular *corrido* in San Antonio even lamented the closure of the city's open-air food markets where the Chili Queens once reigned.<sup>94</sup> The performance duo was a regular fixture on San Antonio's West Side performance spaces and downtown plazas. Davis' reflection on Martinez's

---

<sup>90</sup> Jeff Davis, "Around The Plaza," *San Antonio Light*, December 9, 1933.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "S.A. Mouth Organ Player Is Released," *San Antonio Light*, January 9, 1930.

<sup>93</sup> Martinez and Rocha recorded over two dozen songs for Vocalion during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Richard K. Spottswood, *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893-1942. Vol. 4: Spanish, Portuguese, Philippines, Basque* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 2230, 2241.

<sup>94</sup> "S.A. Queens Say Chili Is Sanitary," *San Antonio Light*, September 18, 1941.

passing, the only English-language newspaper to publish the news, offered some commentary about San Antonians' general obliviousness of local Texas-Mexican culture:

With the trifling exception of a brief mention made in this department a year or so ago, San Antonians are quite unaware that almost every great Mexican popular recording artist in the world lives in San Antonio and most of them perform on Hay Market Plaza, in cheap drinking joints, and in small cafes. They are masters of a peculiar minstrelsy, the singers of a beautiful, spontaneous, corrupt folk music. The songs of Texas Mexicans differ from the songs of the folk on the interior of Mexico, and in their sheer beauty, their purity of melody, and their rich harmonics are second only to the native music of the Mexican Yucatan peninsula.<sup>95</sup>

Davis' description of "the songs of Texas Mexicans" acknowledges music in a way that recognizes sound as an expression of ethnicity. Davis' distinction between local musicians who perform in "cheap drinking joints," apart from "the folk on the interior of Mexico," reveals a class distinction between Texas Mexicans and Mexican nationals.<sup>96</sup> His *Around The Plaza* column was one of the few regular publications recognizing the sounds from the plazas. Ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña recognizes the stylings of Texas-Mexican *conjunto*, and the people and musicians who perform it, were indeed of a working-class culture in and of West Side cantinas and cafes.<sup>97</sup>

One of the first recording stars to emerge from San Antonio's plazas was Texas-Mexican singer, Lidya Mendoza (later and more popularly styled as "Lydia Mendoza").<sup>98</sup> Today, Mendoza figures prominently in the canon of Mexican American music, widely recognized for her 12-string guitar virtuosity, prolific *música tejana* discography, and

---

<sup>95</sup> Jeff Davis, "Around The Plaza," *San Antonio Light*, February 9, 1936.

<sup>96</sup> Ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña recognizes the stylings of Texas-Mexican *conjunto*, and the people and musicians who perform it, were indeed of a working-class culture in South Texas. Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 41.

<sup>98</sup> "People's Song Bird: SA Singer Champ Recording Artist," *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1938.

distinct voice, earning her nickname as “La Alondra de la Frontera” (The Lark of the Border).<sup>99</sup> In her book, *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography*, Mendoza reflected on her experiences in the plazas:

There were a lot of groups in the plaza. There were more than ten groups there all spread out through the open area of the plaza. And they’d just be hanging around there playing dice at the tables; waiting for someone to turn up... As soon as a car would enter, everybody, all the musicians, would run and crowd around to see... Well, times were hard and those musicians all made their living the same way we did: just from what people would give them. Everybody was chasing after the *centavos* (cents) in those days.<sup>100</sup>

Mendoza’s observation conjured a bustling space of Texas-Mexican sound. A description of Haymarket Plaza in the *San Antonio Express* described how “these strolling musicians play a large part in one of the most unusual industries of the city, phonographic records.”<sup>101</sup> The article goes on to describe Mendoza as “being the most popular artist in the low-priced record field” in a field recording industry which had become so entrenched that “twice each year...sends technicians and sound equipment to make records of Mexican music.”<sup>102</sup> Mendoza’s first and most well-known recordings—“Mal Hombre,” an early feminist anthem about a womanizing “evil man,” later a big hit throughout the Hispanic Southwest and Latin America—was produced, distributed, and monetized by men: her father, Francisco Mendoza, and her first producer, Eli Oberstein. Oberstein, a New York-born record producer of Russian-Jewish descent, described Mendoza in populist and inclusive terms as the “people’s songbird.”

---

<sup>99</sup> “People’s Song Bird: SA Singer Champ Recording Artist,” *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1938.

<sup>100</sup> Lydia Mendoza, *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 58.

<sup>101</sup> “The Mexican Music Industry,” *San Antonio Express*, September 17, 1939.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*



Mendoza's experience was fairly typical—oral histories reveal that many women of the early *música tejana* industry confronted similar issues in the music business, explored in the following chapter. However, Mendoza's description in local media and record producers reveals the way in which language was used to pass certain Texas-Mexicans into whiteness. During the 1930s and 1940s, local media outlets described Mendoza, an ascending local celebrity, as an “assimilated” citizen while celebrating her endeavors. In October 1936, two years after her breakout hit, a front-page photograph of Mendoza featured in the *San Antonio Light* shows Mendoza with Oberstein during a recording session at the Texas Hotel. Beneath the photograph, a small caption describes Mendoza as “the Connie Boswell of the Latin-American world,” likening her to the pioneering Jazz Age white pop singer who, similar to duet partner Bing Crosby, performed a sanitized version of black jazz music.<sup>103</sup> Two years later, in August 1938, another front-page photograph and article in the *San Antonio Light* again described Mendoza in decidedly non-Mexican terms: “The gal who sells more records than any other solo artist is none other than Lydia Mendoza: Latin American citizen of San Antonio. For four years, she has been strumming her guitar and singing her Spanish songs in front of Victor's recording machines and the results are heard around the world.”<sup>104</sup> Descriptions of “Latin Americans” and “assimilated” Texas-Mexicans shaped notions of citizenship in San Antonio. San Antonio Mayor Maury Maverick's (1939-

---

<sup>103</sup> “Makes Recordings,” *San Antonio Light*, October 21, 1936.

<sup>104</sup> “People's Song Bird: S.A. Singer Champ Recording Artist,” *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1938.

1941) description of Latin American constituents as “a Mexican who has paid his poll tax” illustrates shifting ideas of race and class.<sup>105</sup>



**Figure 1.3.** Field recordist and RCA Records producer Eli Oberstein with Mexican American recording star Lydia Mendoza, described as “the Connie Boswell of the Latin-American world,” on the front page of the *San Antonio Light*. October 21, 1936.

### **Jim Crow Blues: Vagrancy Laws and Sonic Blackness**

Reconstruction-era vagrancy laws, an instrument of the Jim Crow power structure, allowed San Antonio lawmen to arrest “idle” individuals and force them to

<sup>105</sup> Richard B. Henderson, *Maury Maverick: A Political Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), xx

work through the convict lease system.<sup>106</sup> Black codes continued to be reinforced by local lawmakers into the twentieth century, giving policemen more leverage to identify and punish vagrancy. San Antonio's revised City Charter identified vagrants as someone with "no exertions to obtain an honest living" and "no good business in the city." San Antonio policemen were further instructed to "remove all nuisances in the streets, plazas, or highways...and to arrest all mendicants or beggars...with or without warrant."<sup>107</sup> One such update to the Texas penal code in 1916 described vagrants as "able-bodied persons habitually loafing."<sup>108</sup>

Itinerant folk musicians in the South were frequently targeted under vagrancy laws. In early blues recordings of the 1920s and 1930s, African American musicians expressed troubles with the law in songs, evolving into a central motif in pre-war country blues. As noted in Howard Odum and Guy B. Johnson's social history of the blues, *Negro Workaday Songs* (1925), blues lyrics reflect the singer's melancholic state due to Jim Crow's social havoc on black life.<sup>109</sup> *Negro Workaday Songs* reveals important connections between blues lyrics and the displacement of African Americans caused by southern destitution and appeal of northern economic opportunities. Furthermore, the authors discuss how themes of journey and imprisonment represent an increasingly

---

<sup>106</sup> Texas Black Codes of 1866. *Ordinances of the Convention of 1866 in the State of Texas, Chapter CXI: An Act to Define the Offence [sic] of Vagrancy* (State of Texas, 1866). Tarlton Law Library. Accessed January 14, 2019, <https://tarltonapps.law.utexas.edu/constitutions/texas1866>

<sup>107</sup> City of San Antonio, Municipal Archives and Records Digital Collections. Revised City Charter, August 7, 1899. Municipal Code Chapter 39, Section 7; Chapter 54, Section 1.

<sup>108</sup> Texas: The Penal Code (Vernon Law Book Company, 1916).

<sup>109</sup> Howard Washington Odum and Guy Benton Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1926).

segregated South, which imposed vagrancy laws and convict leasing to exploit African American labor. In *Lost Highways: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians*, journalist Peter Guralnick discussed the metaphor of the highway and escapism in relationship to pre-war blues artists.<sup>110</sup> Guralnick delves into blues lyricism to confirm the overwhelming fear that once convicted for vagrancy, southern blues musicians, like other African American itinerants, could be sentenced into forced labor.

A month after Mendoza's front-page spread in the *San Antonio Light*, Robert Johnson—like ethnic folk musicians before and after him—arrived in San Antonio to record in a makeshift studio at San Antonio's Gunter Hotel.<sup>111</sup> Johnson's 1936-1937 recordings influenced rock and roll musicians with its major label reissuance in the midst of a national folk revival, decades after his mysterious passing. However, in his lifetime, Johnson performed mostly on street corners, juke joints, and town dances, and, in the case of San Antonio, Mexican plazas and the black East Side. During his Gunter Hotel sessions, the broader social worlds of England, the American South, and Mexico collided in a city where racial, gender, and class hierarchies were established and regulated outside of the hotel room.<sup>112</sup> American folk songs, from the agricultural fields of Midwest and South to the borderlands throughout the Southwest, often invoked themes of racial, social, class and gender impositions. Much the way Mendoza sang about sexuality and social standards in her music, African American bluesmen and folk singers invoked such

---

<sup>110</sup> Peter Guralnick, *Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians*, (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1999).

<sup>111</sup> Jeff Davis, "Around The Plaza," *San Antonio Light*, November 23, 1936. Davis' article comments on the arrival of Brunswick Records.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

themes in their recordings as well. At the time Johnson recorded his songs at the Gunter Hotel, most hotels across the South did not accommodate African Americans; fewer still provided “colored only” lodgings. The Gunter Hotel, working with record company executives, allowed nonwhite musicians into their hotel rooms over the course of that week.<sup>113</sup> Finding suitable recording locations during this time in the South was often difficult because of segregation. Churches, which were also used as makeshift recording locations and viewed as generally more racially tolerant, would often disapprove of the recording of secular music in their hallowed spaces. Considering these factors, recording secular folk music by nonwhite musicians in the South was a complex endeavor that required foresight and negotiation on part of the field recordists.

Johnson’s recordings and social interactions in San Antonio reveal the nature of spatial entitlement and anti-black discrimination. Don Law, the English-born record producer who recorded Johnson and made a record-setting “105 recordings in the first three days of its San Antonio set-up” for the American Recording Company in November 1936, felt at odds with the local racial caste system.<sup>114</sup> This particular recollection by Don Law’s son, Don Law Jr., accentuates this relationship in 1930s San Antonio:

My mother talked about walking down the street with Robert Johnson and my father. She described this really bizarre circumstance, where my father was determined to walk alongside Robert, and Robert was determined not to let him. My father kept stopping, and Robert kept walking farther back. My mother, who was from Texas, said, “Don, he can’t walk with you because he’d be seen as ‘uppity.’ He’d get beaten up.” My father didn’t get it. It wasn’t like that where he’d come from.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Frank Diggs, “Robert Johnson: Columbia Records’ Liner Notes,” April 10, 1961.

<sup>114</sup> Jeff Davis, “Around The Plaza,” *San Antonio Light*, November 23, 1936.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Jarrett, *Producing Country: The Inside Story of the Great Recordings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 21.

Johnson did get “beat up” and was charged with vagrancy and assaulted by the arresting officers. Johnson narrowly escaped incarceration and beat the charge through Law’s intervention—a gesture towards Law’s racial superiority—but the officers destroyed his guitar during the assault.<sup>116</sup> It is likely that Johnson was performing for money, or busking, similar to the plaza troubadours and other roving musicians. Local newspaper accounts mostly described “Mexican troubadours” in discussing music performance in the plazas. However, as discussed with vagrancy laws and bluesmen, newspapers also described “negro singers” and black bluesmen.<sup>117</sup> Vagrancy laws, part of the state’s legal apparatus towards anti-black discrimination, targeted street performers, including itinerant bluesmen, on condition of perceived idleness and lack of “honest employment” in their presence of respectable Anglo spaces.<sup>118</sup>

While the specific causes for Johnson’s arrest and beating are unclear, his subsequent recordings at the Gunter Hotel are among the most iconic songs in blues and early rock and roll history, including “Sweet Home Chicago,” “They’re Red Hot,” “Terraplane Blues,” “Come On In My Kitchen,” and “Cross Road Blues,” produced from a borrowed guitar due to the calamitous run-in with the police.<sup>119</sup> Following bail, Law

---

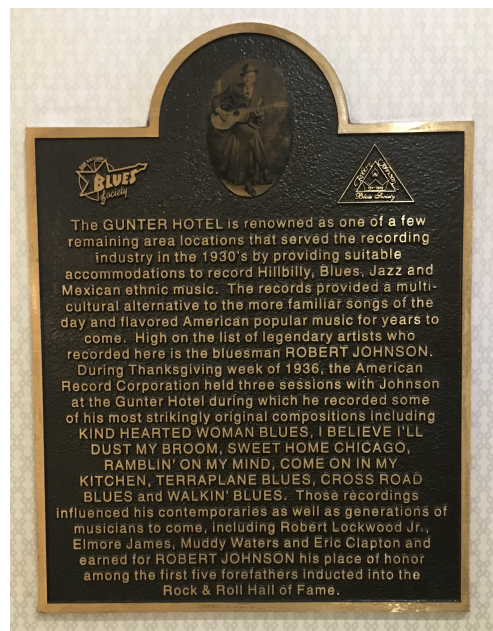
<sup>116</sup> Letter from Don Law to Robert Diggs, April 10, 1961; Michael Jarrett, *Producing Country: The Inside Story of the Great Recordings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014). 21.

<sup>117</sup> “Collector Who Saved Forgotten Cowboy Ballads In San Antonio To Record Mexican Folk Songs,” *San Antonio Express*, May 17, 1934; “San Antonio Casts Spell on Songwriters,” *San Antonio Express*, June 1, 1947.

<sup>118</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Jazz on the River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); *Ordinances of the Convention of 1866 in the State of Texas, Chapter CXI: An Act to Define the Offence of Vagrancy* (State of Texas, 1866).

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Don Law to Robert Diggs, April 10, 1961; “Robert Johnson - Columbia Records’ Liner Notes,” 1963.

later had to escort Johnson to a “boarding house in the negro district” for lodging accommodations, somewhere in the black East Side. S.A.P.D.’s specific condition for Johnson’s release—casted and confined to the “negro district”—further illustrates the nature of spatial access in the city. Furthermore, such details affirm the day-to-day complications when citizens of varying social worlds and divergent racial hierarchy engaged in quotidian activities including walking in public, public performance, lodging, and even recording folk music in a hotel room in the age of Jim Crow.<sup>120</sup>



**Fig. 1.4.** Robert Johnson plaque and display at Sheraton Hotel lobby (formerly Gunter Hotel) in downtown San Antonio recognizing the guitarist’s historic recordings in room 414—the eponymous name of the hotel bar. Picture from author’s archive.

In popular music narratives, Johnson is a mysterious wayfarer who, among select “masters of the blues,” inspired postwar Anglo and British folkies with blues music’s

<sup>120</sup> Letter from Don Law to Robert Diggs, April 10, 1961; “Robert Johnson - Columbia Records’ Liner Notes,” 1963.

reinvention as rock and roll music.<sup>121</sup> As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, "Cross Road Blues" provides lyrical "evidence" in the making of Johnson as the protagonist in his own Faustian tale, selling his soul to the devil in exchange for "otherworldly" guitar mastery.<sup>122</sup> Despite the folktales, Johnson, an African American who lived and died in the grip of Jim Crow, experienced segregation, harassment, and spatial confinement in the 1930s Mississippi Delta as he did over 700 miles away in San Antonio, Texas. Like many other African Americans in this time period, Johnson endured violent retribution for disrupting spatial confinement. However, Johnson also recorded and produced original American music, canonized in the rock and roll genre with "classic" renditions by white rock and roll artists/groups such as Eric Clapton, The Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin, among others. Johnson was among the last pre-war bluesmen of his era. His only two recording sessions—one in San Antonio, the other in Dallas—were produced hastily, in exchange for a few dollars, before his mysterious death at age 27.<sup>123</sup> The city's subsequent elevation as a principal site for military build-up coincided with the rise of a modernized version of Johnson's country blues—"rhythm and blues"—and the dawn of a local music culture born of such intermixed racial spaces, sonic subjectivities, and diverse genres. Alongside far-reaching demographic, economic, and social changes in the city, a

---

<sup>121</sup> Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012). Wald investigates the known facts of Robert Johnson's biography to sketch a broader social history of African American life and the "invention" of the blues genre. Wald explores the songs, recollections of musicians, black newspapers, and original research to separate the myriad myths from facts.

<sup>122</sup> Wald, *Escaping the Delta*, xvii. For more on Robert Johnson's Faustian legend and its ties to popular cultural mythology, see Patricia Schroeder's *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.



period in which the city expanded as a hub for military servicemen and women across the country, mixed-race live music clubs began to flourish in segregated areas of the city.

### **Music Venues and the Chitlin' Circuit**

When the S.A.P.D. expelled Johnson into the “negro district,” they sent him to a part of town where Black San Antonians had established and built their own businesses and communities.<sup>124</sup> Jim Crow’s rigid strictures on African American life created an opportunity for black entrepreneurs to develop and sustain independent black economies. On the eastern side of the San Antonio River, black-owned stores, restaurants and places of entertainment lined Commerce Street—“cash only” operations spurned from a privileged banking world of loans and credit.<sup>125</sup> Local juke joints, icehouses, and mom-and-pop stores provided performative spaces, as well as food and lodging, for local and traveling musicians. So, when New Orleans jazz musician, Don Albert, opened the Keyhole Club in November 1944 in the East Side, he built a musical space in line with an established tradition of local African American enterprise.<sup>126</sup>

Though the venue at the original location at 728 Iowa Street was relatively short-lived, closing in 1948 and reopening at a different location in 1950, the Keyhole Club was an important stop on the Chitlin’ Circuit; it also played a crucial role in the early

---

<sup>124</sup> Kenneth Mason, *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867-1937* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 65.

<sup>125</sup> Historian Kenneth Mason discusses the founding of the “Baptist Settlement,” in reference to the large number of Baptist churches in the area which “evolved into the black community known as the East Side.” For more on the Baptist Settlement and the making of the East Side, see Chapter Two, “Color Struck: Community By Exclusion,” in Mason, *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas*, 23-39.

<sup>126</sup> “Don’s Keyhole Club to Open Friday, Nov. 3rd,” *San Antonio Register* (San Antonio, TX), October 27, 1944. Don Albert’s full name was Don Albert Dominique, but he was commonly known as Don Albert. For more on Albert’s life and career, see Sterlin Holmesly, “Texas Jazz Veterans: A Collection of Oral Histories,” *Journal of Texas Music History*, Volume 6 (2006), 30-34.

development of the West Side Sound. The venue's immense popularity also made Don Albert one of the first major African American club owners in the segregated South.<sup>127</sup> One thing that set the Keyhole Club apart from so many other black-owned clubs across the South was its efforts to integrate white, black, and Hispanic clientele and musical acts. However, this sometimes came at a cost to both club staff and patrons. White supremacists often targeted prosperous black entrepreneurs, particularly those in the entertainment industry who were perceived as racketeers or vice peddlers. Managing a successful business and pursuing profit outside of Anglo control, especially ventures that did not reflect Anglo-Protestant values or interests, were often subject to violent reprisal. Local institutional factors at times prevented and forestalled black economic advancement.

In a region of the country marred by anti-black sentiment, the Keyhole Club was an anomaly in an era of Jim Crow segregation. The Keyhole was one of the first mixed-race clubs to exist in the South as early as the mid-1940s, and one of the only such clubs in San Antonio or elsewhere by the mid-1950s.<sup>128</sup> Don Albert biographer Christopher Wilkinson argues that Albert's decision to encourage integration in his club, though very risky, was mainly an attempt to increase his customer base among San Antonio's diverse military community. The fact that Albert openly advertised his club as "integrated" suggests that he was willing to risk retribution from segregationist forces in order to cultivate an atmosphere of racial mingling in his establishment. This was particularly

---

<sup>127</sup> Olsen, "The Post-World War II 'Chitlin' Circuit,'" 6.

<sup>128</sup> Christopher Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road: Don Albert's Musical Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), 215-229.

important for black touring artists during the 1940s and 1950s who relied on such music venues to make a living on the larger “Chitlin’ Circuit.”<sup>129</sup>

The Chitlin Circuit, a loose network of black-owned and black-friendly performance venues throughout the Midwest and South provided the logistical and commercial accommodations for traveling African American musicians. As a “stop” on the circuit, national and regional touring acts frequently performed in San Antonio during this period, often collaborating with other black-owned booking managers, venue operators, and talent scouts in Texas, such as Don Robey in Houston. In *The Chitlin’ Circuit: And the Road to Rock “N” Roll*, journalist Peter Lauterbach describes the nature of segregated jazz and blues music venues and the scarcity of mixed-race clubs in the South, sometimes called “black and tan” clubs.<sup>130</sup> In these venues, Lauterbach discusses how black jazz musicians would perform for white audiences, bucking a social norm in nightclubs across the country guarded by the color line. However, these clubs were more common in less rigidly segregated regions of the country, particularly on the west and east coasts, in places such as Seattle, Chicago, and New York. In San Antonio, black-owned venues like the Keyhole Club, the Eastwood Country Club, the Ebony Lounge, the Tiffany Lounge, and others, fostered a spirit of integration among patrons and performers.<sup>131</sup> These clubs defied the typical “black-only” nature of segregated venues and instead fostered a multiracial atmosphere consisting of Anglos, African Americans, and Hispanics. Despite this tendency by many club owners, patrons, and performers to

---

<sup>129</sup> Preston Lauterbach, *The Chitlin’ Circuit: And the Road to Rock “N” Roll*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 136.

<sup>130</sup> Lauterbach, *The Chitlin’ Circuit*, 136.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

defy contemporary social mores and mingle openly, certain local individuals and institutions, particularly the San Antonio Police Department, remained vigilant in enforcing Jim Crow to prevent public socializing among people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. “Well, we had trouble with the police. They didn’t get along too well with integration,” recalled Albert concerning his encounters with the SAPD during the 1940s and 1950s. “They tried all ways to close it (the club). They used every subterfuge!”<sup>132</sup>

As seen in the figure below (Fig. 1.6), Don Albert openly advertised the fact that both bands and audiences were integrated. While it was not necessarily uncommon for black entertainers to perform for white audiences, having white, black, and Hispanics mixing freely as audience members was still taboo throughout much of the country. Albert not only permitted this in his venue, he publicly boasted about it through advertisements in the *San Antonio Register*, one of two African American owned newspapers in the city.<sup>133</sup> Albert closed the Keyhole in 1948 to pursue a business venture in New Orleans, but he reopened the venue in 1950 in a new location on the West Side with business partner Willie “Red” Winner.<sup>134</sup> By then, the major dailies picked up on the excitement in its reopening. Benwicke Carey, writing for the *San Antonio Light*’s “Around the Plaza” column, acknowledged the club as “one of the town’s most patronized spots” while noting that “the Keyhole, incidentally, caters to both negro and

---

<sup>132</sup> Don Albert, interview by Sterling Holmesly. January 15, 1980. Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>133</sup> Don Albert, “The Keyhole Club,” advertisement, *San Antonio Register* (San Antonio, TX), February 7, 1947, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road*, 233.

white patrons.”<sup>135</sup> Writing a year later, a report in the *San Antonio Light* described how San Antonio Police Commissioner George Roper was reportedly “fascinated by the fact the Keyhole served a mixed-race clientele [and] attempted to close the club down.”<sup>136</sup>



**Figure 1.6:** A Keyhole Club ad promoting the club’s interracial environment. Proprietor Don Albert was a frequent target of SAPD and the Bexar County Sheriff’s Office. *Hue Magazine*, May 1954.

At the time of the article’s publication in 1951, Roper and the SAPD’s vice squad began harassing Albert, Winner, and their customers as part of an effort to permanently close the club at its new location. Among other charges, officials made questionable claims that the building itself was a safety hazard.<sup>137</sup> Albert fought against such charges, although the resulting legal battles drained a substantial amount of his financial

<sup>135</sup> “Around the Plaza,” *San Antonio Light*, June 13, 1950.

<sup>136</sup> “The Nightclubs,” *San Antonio Light*, July 8, 1951.

<sup>137</sup> Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road*, 235-237.

resources, and ongoing harassment by city officials drove away some of his clientele.<sup>138</sup>

In a 1951 civil suit against SAPD Commissioner George Roper (Winner vs. Roper), Roper and SAPD defendants cited municipal building code violations as the cause of the forced closure. During the trial, Roper stated, “the Keyhole’s roof was inadequately braced, that there were too many people in the building for safety, that there was an inadequate number of aisles between the tables, and that Winner and Albert had failed to obtain the required certificate of occupancy.”<sup>139</sup> However, when Albert responded to the allegations, asking the city building inspector to demonstrate what the specific problem was, he responded to Albert by saying, “Frankly, I don’t know.”<sup>140</sup> Albert also hired an independent contractor to determine whether there was a problem, but the independent contractor could not find anything wrong. After Albert and Winner eventually won the suit, the city twice appealed the court’s decision but lost both times. Despite these challenges, Albert and Winner won the lawsuit. Don Albert’s ability to keep the Keyhole Club operating was both a practical and a symbolic victory. It signaled to other African American business owners that segregationist policies could be successfully challenged, at least in some instances. In addition to that, the fact that he could continue to allow mixed-race bands and audiences to gather openly in his venue helped create an arena in which ethnically-diverse musical influences combined freely and cross-pollinated into the types of hybrid genres that eventually gave rise to the West Side Sound. Don Albert’s clashes with local officials and others is a reminder that racism and segregationist

---

<sup>138</sup> “Race Question Raised As Club Enjoins Raiders,” *San Antonio Express*, July 3, 1951.

<sup>139</sup> Winner v. Roper, Defendants’ Motion to Quash the Temporary Restraining Order (37th Judicial District of Bexar County, Texas, June 28, 1951).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

ideology were still deeply ingrained within local society and would continue for years to cause problems for the Keyhole Club and other racially-integrated venues in the area.

Johnny Phillips's Eastwood Country Club was another important black-owned San Antonio music venue and popular stop along the Chitlin' Circuit. Established in 1954 on St. Hedwig Road in deep East San Antonio, the Eastwood Country Club was one of the city's premiere destinations for blues, jazz, and R&B groups throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>141</sup> The Eastwood hosted some of the most popular black recording stars of the day, including James Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, Junior Parker, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and many more.<sup>142</sup> Like Don Albert, Johnny Phillips had a reputation for being an honest businessman who paid his artists well and treated them with respect. "Back then there was a lot of great musicians. But they were spotted by the club; they were in the bands that were playing at all the big clubs, like The Tiffany, The Bellaire Club."<sup>143</sup>

In addition, Albert and Phillips frequently offered musicians hospitality in the form of lodging and home-cooked meals, which were often eaten communally with club employees and customers. This helped reinforce a sense "family" among the artists, fans, and proprietors and contributed to the growing atmosphere of intercultural congeniality. On a more pragmatic level, providing good pay and comfortable conditions allowed Don Albert and Johnny Phillips to attract some of the most prominent national artists to perform in the Alamo City.<sup>144</sup> In an interview with Curley Mays, an African American

---

<sup>141</sup> Olsen, "The Post-World War II 'Chitlin' Circuit' in San Antonio,"; "Sheriff Raids Club," *San Antonio Express*, April 29, 1955.

<sup>142</sup> Curley Mays, interview by author, July 7, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

blues guitarist who toured with Etta James and regularly performed at the Eastwood Country Club during the 1960s, Mays acknowledged he did not have issues with racism in San Antonio.<sup>145</sup> However, he recognized the importance of this network of clubs and the businessmen who made connections for black touring artists back then, such as Johnnie Phillips:

Johnnie always paid his artists; he always paid me, no problems. And what I liked about Eastwood was they had whites, black, Hispanics—everyone was out there. See, San Antonio during that time was the best town you could go to where everyone would mix together. Servicemen and even policemen would go out there; they'd go out there and relax. We had a lot of city officials come out there! But these other little towns, in East Texas and other places, well it was a lot different over there....<sup>146</sup>

Although perhaps less known than the Keyhole Club and the Eastwood Country Club, there were several other popular clubs throughout San Antonio at the time that welcomed mixed-race audiences and bands. Such examples include the Blue Note, the Tiffany Lounge, the Celebrity, the Cadillac Club, the Fiesta, and the Ebony Club. While these venues are important in terms of their regional historical significance, they are also notable because they are where local musicians mingled with and were influenced by nationally touring R&B, jazz, blues, and gospel groups. Musician Samuel “Little Sammy Jay” Jaramillo performed with African American R&B artist Louis Jordan, one of the most popular R&B artists in that era. “I was in Louis Jordan’s band (Tympany Five) for a little while; that was about 1960. I was a vocalist in the group. He was in town one day and someone told him about me. He came to see me when I was playing at the Tiffany

---

<sup>144</sup> Lauterbach, *The Chitlin’ Circuit*, 99.

<sup>145</sup> Curley Mays, interview by author, July 7, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.



Lounge because he was looking for a band and he liked what I was doing. We played together in Vegas, Reno, Florida, Arizona.”<sup>147</sup> Whether it was R&B legend Louis Jordan, pop vocal virtuosos the Ink Spots, or jazz icon Lester Young, these established artists made a lasting impression on many young San Antonio musicians, including those who would go on to shape the West Side Sound.<sup>148</sup>

These live music venues, whether public or privately owned, served as informal “classrooms” in which aspiring musicians could watch, listen, and learn to emulate their favorite professional artists. According to Spot Barnett, bandleader at the Ebony Club during the 1950s, these were places where “anybody who was anybody...went to play live music.”<sup>149</sup> Most of the clubs provided opportunities for younger players to perform publicly. Several local bands gained some of their first high-profile exposure opening for top-performing national acts.<sup>150</sup> Music historian Jesse Garcia discussed how local musicians Ernie Durawa and Nando Aguilar went to the Ebony Lounge and sat outside to “soak up the sounds.”<sup>151</sup> Local club owners often hired young, unknown artists to either open for established groups or to substitute for individual touring band members who might be absent due to illness or schedule conflicts. In many cases, house bands, which typically included at least some younger, local musicians, served as back-up groups for

---

<sup>147</sup> Samuel Jaramillo, interview by author, December 6, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>148</sup> R&B icon Louis Jordan is highly regarded by most early West Side Sound musicians. Jordan played often in San Antonio throughout the 1940s and 1950s, at a time when the West Side Sound’s first generation of musicians was beginning to frequent the Eastwood Country Club and other venues.

<sup>149</sup> Vernon “Spot” Barnett, interview by author, September 9, 2012, San Antonio.

<sup>150</sup> Sunny Ozuna, interview by author, February 20, 2017. Sunny acknowledged the importance of Municipal Auditorium in exposing Chicano music to wider audiences during the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>151</sup> Jesse Garcia, interview by author, March 13, 2017.

nationally prominent artists.<sup>152</sup> The end result was a network of nightclubs throughout San Antonio that provided an open, welcoming, and dynamic environment in which aspiring musicians could perform alongside veteran musicians, blending, borrowing from, and reshaping an eclectic and seemingly endless range of ethnic musical styles and influences.

Of course, the success of these San Antonio nightclubs was not based solely on their unique role as incubators for musical experimentation and innovation. Entertainment venues of any kind depend on the revenue generated by audiences. These clubs thrived, in large part, because of the sizable and racially diverse military community based in and around San Antonio. Most of these soldiers were young, single males, and many were eager to spend a significant portion of their earnings socializing in local nightclubs.<sup>153</sup> By the early 1950s, rock and roll music, a derivative of rhythm and blues and other black genres, emerged as the expression of the baby boomer generation, driven by disposable income, youth culture, and consumerism in the postwar era. However, the prospect of rock and roll outraged moralists through its concealed sexual innuendos and representation of racial blackness. Consequently, municipal governments banned or in some fashion censored rock and roll music from public spaces due to such seeming lewdness and vulgarity. In March of 1955, Houston's Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Commission banned several dozen rock and roll and R&B songs from radio play considered "objectionable," most of which was black or black-derived music, including

---

<sup>152</sup> Ernie Durawa, interview by author, February 3, 2013.

<sup>153</sup> Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road*, 289.

Elvis Presley's suggestive 1954 single, "Good Rockin' Tonight."<sup>154</sup> In San Antonio, the presence of multiracial nightclubs inflamed the passions of local anti-miscegenationists—clergymen, politicians, white nationalists, racial purists, and especially, law enforcement.<sup>155</sup> For example, an edict by the San Antonio City Council in June 1956 banned rock and roll music from jukeboxes in public swimming places.<sup>156</sup>

According to national headlines, including *Time Magazine*, the city council's decision was motivated by anti-black anxiety due to rock and roll's "primitive beat (which) attracted undesirable elements given to practicing their spastic gyrations in abbreviated bathing suits."<sup>157</sup> Jazz, R&B, and particularly rock and roll music, threatened white morality through its flirtations with and appeal of the forbidden. By their own admission, club owners and musicians cultivated mixed-race audiences and rock and roll culture as a way to attract more patrons.<sup>158</sup> Still, there were repercussions, often severe, for disrupting the status quo and the imposed racial order. It is not entirely clear whether the audiences themselves patronized these clubs as part of a conscious effort to break down segregationist barriers, or whether they were simply frequenting venues in which they felt most comfortable and could hear the types of music they enjoyed. What is

---

<sup>154</sup> "Crime Commission Ban Objectionable Records," *Gladewater Daily Mirror*, March 10, 1955.

<sup>155</sup> Most narratives on black and tan clubs are framed within discussions of racial integration via jazz music, exclusively in the Northeast (NYC's Café Society) and Midwest (Chicago's Sunset Café) during the 1930s and 1940s. There is little historical discussion of black and tan clubs in the South due to lack of documentary evidence or knowledge of their existence or both. William Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994.)

<sup>156</sup> "S.A. Pools Ban Rock 'N Roll," *San Antonio Express News*, June 30, 1956.

<sup>157</sup> "Music: Rock 'n' Roll," *Time Magazine*, July 23, 1956, No. 4.

<sup>158</sup> Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road*, 233.

certain is that the Alamo City's live music scene during the 1940s and 1950s helped create an environment of multi-ethnic cultural exchange from which the eclectic musical genre now known as the West Side Sound would emerge. In many ways, post-World War II San Antonio was a community struggling to reconcile its long history of ethnic and cultural diversity with its position as a major urban center on the fringes of a stubbornly segregated American South. Although several of San Antonio's nightclubs promoted a sense of intercultural mixture during the 1940s and 1950s, the police department, and many private citizens, continued to support policies and behavior that reflected the widespread racial biases present across the South and other parts of the country at that time. Musician Sonny Ace recalled the intermixing at several clubs downtown. "We all got together really well: black dudes, the white guys, and us Chicanos. We never had problems. I give credit to Gene, my black friend from the Navy. He brought me into this music world! There were some colored bands on the East Side, like Spot Barnett. Spot had a real good band, too. He'd play at the Eastwood, and you could see great colored bands, like James Brown, Big Joe Turner. We backed up Big Joe Turner at the Cadillac (Club)."

### **Conclusion**

Examining spatial history reveals how nonwhite San Antonians negotiated racial subjectivities while demonstrating the connection between class and race. This critical understanding of San Antonio's African American neighborhoods and Mexican American *barrios* as racialized spaces demonstrates how anti-Mexican and anti-black Jim

Crow laws, cultural traditions, and spatial access shaped group identities in the Alamo City.

A brief overview of racial formations in the region provided historical background on the implementation of residential segregation in San Antonio. As Historian Arnoldo De León notes Tejano racialization and Anglos beliefs that Mexicans were “physiologically similar to blacks and Indians” reveals the ideological pretense at the center of the “making” of the segregated West Side.<sup>159</sup> This social context is important to better understand the “sound” which emerges from the city’s ethnic enclaves.

The prevalence of integrated music venues in the age of Jim Crow highlights San Antonio’s distinctiveness in the South provided a critical context for continued Black/Brown interactions and cross pollination in the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>160</sup> The Keyhole Club was one of the first “black and tan” clubs to exist in the South as early as the mid-1940s, and one of the only multiracial clubs in San Antonio or elsewhere by the mid-1950s. The Eastwood Country Club, another important African American jazz and R&B venue along the Chitlin’ Circuit, had Chicano musicians in the house band who performed with successful R&B artists such as Louis Jordan and Fats Domino. African American musician and Eastwood Country Club bandleader Curley Mays’ declaration that “San Antonio during that time was the best town you could go to where everyone would mix together” further accentuates this point.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup> Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 104.

<sup>160</sup> Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road*, 215-229.

<sup>161</sup> Curley Mays, interview by author, July 7, 2017, San Antonio.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “On the Road with Rock & Roll”: Roots Music & Musical Routes, 1940-1955

South of the border, down Mexico way  
That's where I fell in love, where the stars above, came out to play  
And now as I wander, my thoughts ever stray  
South of the border, down Mexico way

- “South of the Border,” Mando and the Chili Peppers

Popular stories about the “arrival” of rock and roll in San Antonio often cite Mando and the Chili Peppers, quite possibly the first Mexican American rock and roll band in U.S. history.<sup>162</sup> Randy Garibay, West Side Sound pioneer and Chicano musician, recalled his first exposure to the genre—a sound not imported from the outside but created by Mexican American musicians from the West Side. “I’d go to these house parties with my brother and this guy Armando Almendarez and San Antonio Alegre would be playing. They’d do the standard polkas and *boleros* and then, all of a sudden, with Mando playing accordion, they’d break into ‘Lucille’ [Little Richard] or ‘Just

---

<sup>162</sup> Music historians Ruben Molina and Jesse Garcia credit Mando and the Chili peppers among the first Mexican American rock bands in San Antonio. See Chapter 3, “The West Side Sound,” in Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2017). Popular histories of Mexican American rock and roll focus on Richie Valens and the Latino/a cultural landscape of “East L.A.” as the origins of this music. Specifically, many of these music histories focus on “La Bamba,” recorded in 1958 to widespread commercial success, as its foundation. However, 78-rpm recordings by San Antonio’s Mando and the Chili Peppers (indeed, their early *conjunto* formation) date to 1955—the earliest known date for a Mexican American rock and roll recording. The Arhoolie Foundation’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Music. UCLA Frontera Digital Archive. For more on Valens and the origins of “Chicano rock” in California, see Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010); Steven Joseph Loza, *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles* (University of Illinois Press, 1993); Deborah Pacini Hernandez, *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* (Temple University Press, 2010); David Reyes and Tom Waldman, *Land of a Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock “n” Roll from Southern California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Rubén Guevera, “The History of Chicano Rock” in Theo Cateforis, *The Rock History Reader* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2007).

Because' by Lloyd Price. It was amazing. That's when I first heard rock 'n' roll."<sup>163</sup>

Mando and the Chili Peppers' 1957 album, *On the Road with Rock & Roll*, contained the group's first single, "South of the Border."<sup>164</sup> Originally recorded in 1939 by country recording artist Gene Autry, "South of the Border" takes on a new meaning with Mando and the Chili Peppers. The song was written by Hollywood composers invoking American stereotypes of "Old Mexico."<sup>165</sup> Mando and the Chili Peppers, an ethnic Mexican *conjunto* group who indeed hailed from "down Mexico way," crossed cultural and political borders in their rendition of Tex-Mex rock and roll.<sup>166</sup> The group's guitarist, Jesus "Chucho" Perales, "started playing *bajo sexto* when he was barely more than a toddler," as he told the *San Antonio Express News* in 2005.<sup>167</sup>

"South of the Border" exemplifies the intricate cross-pollination at work in San Antonio and Gulf Coast region. Recorded in New Orleans with African American studio musicians, "South of the Border" features piano triplets—three notes for every beat, a New Orleans-style "template" for early rock and roll—as well as tenor saxophone,

---

<sup>163</sup> Michael Hurtt, "The Other Chili Peppers," *OffBeat Magazine*, [http:// www.offbeat.com/2005/05/01/the-other-chili-peppers](http://www.offbeat.com/2005/05/01/the-other-chili-peppers), accessed March 15, 2019.

<sup>164</sup> John Broven, liner notes to "Mando and the Chili Peppers: On the Road with Rock 'N Roll," CD-CHD 683, Arhoolie Records, Ideal/Arhoolie CD-376, 1994. According to Broven, the single received significant radio airplay in New Orleans.

<sup>165</sup> Historian Mary Ann Villareal explores the roots of this trope through Rosita Fernandez, a successful Mexican American singer in San Antonio during the 1930s-1950s. Villareal discusses how Fernandez's popularity among Anglos and Tejanos/as alike made her a cultural symbol for "Old Mexico," featured in local advertisements and radio programs. She later became closely associated with the tourism industry's campaigns to brand her as a cultural representative for Old Mexico. For more on Rosita Fernandez and "Old Mexico" in San Antonio, see Chapter One, "Business First," in Mary Ann Villarreal, *Listening to Rosita: The Business of Tejana Music and Culture, 1930–1955* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 3-28.

<sup>166</sup> David Welky, *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 173.

<sup>167</sup> Jim Beal, *San Antonio Express News*, "Back On Road After 46-Year Intermission," April 24, 2005.

drums, and bass guitar.<sup>168</sup> *On the Road with Rock & Roll* was recorded at a time when “rock and roll” was emerging on the national scene and associated with young black and white musicians from the South. As Tejano musicians were performing with African American musicians in San Antonio and across state borders, some indeed were traveling “south of the border” as well—connecting with and influencing Mexican musicians in the origins of Mexican rock and roll.



**Fig. 2.1** Mando and the Chili Peppers with African American R&B stars Ray Charles and Larry Williams. Mexican American musicians performed with African American musicians in the making of the West Side Sound. Circa 1958. Photo from Jesse Garcia archive.

This chapter explores the roots and *routes* of postwar music along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the making of the West Side Sound in the postwar era. The eclectic cross-pollination of postwar musical influences, along with a dynamic and

<sup>168</sup> For more on Fats Domino’s triplets and the making of New Orleans rock and roll, see Rick Coleman, *Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock “n” Roll* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006). Examples include Fats Domino’s “The Fat Man” (1950) and “Ain’t That A Shame” (1955).



multiracial live music scene, created an environment in which the West Side Sound could take root and flourish. By examining the convergence of regional and national genres flowing into San Antonio, this chapter explores the diverse musical and cultural roots of San Antonio's West Side Sound during the 1940s and 1950s. Examining the cross-pollination already inherent in Texas-Mexican music such as *orquestas tejanas* (Texas-Mexican orchestras), this chapter argues that the influence of war-era and postwar genres, as well as an increasing cultural hybridity between African Americans and Mexican Americans, directly influenced the formation of the West Side Sound.

### **Sonic Affinities and Musical Ensembles**

Sonic affinities between Mexican Americans and African Americans materialized in the emergence of multiracial groups in the 1940s and 1950s. San Antonio bandleader Domingo "Sonny Ace" Solis recalled his early influences during the early 1950s in the city's mixed-race clubs, noting Mexican Americans' penchant for African American music. "The Blue Notes (a local group) had Bud Harper, a black dude, and the Tiffany Lounge had great rhythm and blues, and they were many black bands. Little Sammy Jay used to play up there. He was a Chicano, but shit, man, it sounded like black dudes playing up there! It sounded *good*."<sup>169</sup>

Postwar genres and new musical ensembles from across the country influenced the local music scene with smaller musical ensembles. By the mid-1940s, bebop music evolved as the modern iteration of Africa-American jazz—a culmination of swing and big band. The minimization of bebop ensembles influenced other musical styles,

---

<sup>169</sup> Domingo "Sonny Ace" Solis, interview by author, February 22, 2017, San Antonio.

including doo-wop combos and rhythm and blues orchestras in Texas.<sup>170</sup> The evolution of ensembles shaped the West Side Sound through band portability and saxophone prominence in the horn section.

Postwar rhythm and blues orchestras in Texas were typified by guitar-and-horn instrumentation, as popularized by Dallas' Aaron Thibaux "T-Bone" Walker in the late 1940s.<sup>171</sup> Walker had developed an upbeat blues guitar style, along with a famously energetic stage presence, which contributed to a newly emerging genre known first as "jump blues," later popularized as rhythm and blues.<sup>172</sup> Walker had a particularly strong influence on blues and rhythm and blues musicians in his home state of Texas, including those in San Antonio.<sup>173</sup>

Walker's innovation had a lasting impact on multiracial groups in the West Side Sound. Local artists, including Sauce Gonzales and the West Side Horns, incorporated Walker's 1947 hit "The T-Bone Shuffle" as a standard in their repertoire during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>174</sup> Likewise, many of the original black rhythm and blues orchestras in

---

<sup>170</sup> Manuel H. Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>171</sup> Bebop emerged in smaller groups replacing the popular big band format of the 1930s and early 1940s. Alan B. Govenar, *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 22.

<sup>172</sup> Govenar, *Texas Blues*, 22.

<sup>173</sup> Musician Doug Sahm discussed the impact Walker had on 1950s San Antonio R&B as well as his own style of performance. Jan Reid and Shawn Sahm, *Texas Tornado: The Times and Music of Doug Sahm* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 154.

<sup>174</sup> Mark Busby, ed., *American Regional Cultures* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 340.

postwar San Antonio, including Big Walter Price and the Thunderbirds and Jitterbug Webb and the Five Stars, built on Walker's orchestrated blues formula.<sup>175</sup>

Blues historian Alan Govenar states that within "the rhythm and blues of T-Bone Walker, the electric guitar assumed a role that superseded the saxophone, which until then had been the prominent solo instrument in jazz. The R&B band sound became tighter and depended more on the interplay of the electric guitar with the horn section, piano, and drums."<sup>176</sup> Walker helped make the guitar and rhythm section "interplay" integral to the West Side Sound, accentuating the saxophone and brass section which reflected a "Latinized" hybridity in San Antonio R&B. Musician Samuel "Little Sammy Jay" Jaramillo remembered performing with T-Bone at the African American clubs in town. "I was playing at the Eastwood Country Club; I was singing there. My band was backing T-Bone Walker for a little while there. I was like 16, 17 maybe? When I was a kid, I'd go up there and sing. My mom and dad let me play, they never got in the way of my music. I started making money. You know, we were *pobrecitos* (poor people) – we needed it."<sup>177</sup>

### **Cultural Hybridity & Texas-Mexican Genres**

The West Side Sound is as a fusion between African American musical traditions and Texas-Mexican folk genres. In order to understand the West Side Sound's stylistic development, some basic musicological and historical understandings of Texas-Mexican genres is necessary. By the early 1940s, there were two main types of musical ensembles

---

<sup>175</sup> Vernon "Spot" Barnett, interview by author, September 2012, San Antonio.

<sup>176</sup> Alan Govenar, "Blues," *Handbook of Texas Music* (Denton: University of North Texas Press), 65.

<sup>177</sup> Samuel Jaramillo, interview by author, December 6, 2017, San Antonio.

popular among Texas Mexicans: *conjuntos* and *orquestas tejanas*.<sup>178</sup> The *conjunto* was typically a smaller group of non-professional musicians whose instruments often included the accordion, derived from German and Czech immigrants in northern Mexico and South Texas; the *bajo sexto*, a 12-string rhythm guitar; and sometimes a fiddle or a single drum, known as the *tambora de rancho*.<sup>179</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, early recording artists such as Pedro Martinez and Lupe Martinez, as well as Lydia Mendoza and her family band, typified the pre-war *conjunto* ensemble of South Texas. Because *conjuntos* were small, more affordable, and tended to perform traditional Texas-Mexican folk music, they were more popular among working-class Tejanos/as.<sup>180</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s, new *conjunto* groups such as Valerio Longoria y su Conjunto and Conjunto Alamo started recording for local independent labels, building on a tradition of music performance in open-air spaces.<sup>181</sup> Conversely, the *orquesta tejana* was usually a larger group whose instrumentation featured guitars, violins, horns, and a full percussion section, performed in upscale ballrooms. *Orquestas* typically included formally-trained musicians who blended traditional Mexican folk music with cosmopolitan and modern styles, such as jazz, swing, and pop.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> Peña, *Música Tejana*, 21.

<sup>179</sup> Flaco Jimenez, interview by PBS *American Roots Music*, Oral Histories, 2001.

<sup>180</sup> Flaco Jimenez, interview by Aaron Howard, 2000.

<sup>181</sup> Chris Strachwitz, liner notes to “Tejano Roots: San Antonio Conjuntos in the 1950s,” Arhoolie CD-376, 1994.

<sup>182</sup> Chris Strachwitz, liner notes to “Orquesta Tejana: The Formative Years,” Arhoolie CD-368, 1994.

*Orquesta tejanas*, which attracted middle- and upper-class Tejanos, included American popular music into their repertoire. With disposable income to hire such large bands, middle and upper-class Tejanos/as were eager to demonstrate their increased upward mobility and assimilation into mainstream American society by embracing a broader range of popular music styles.<sup>183</sup> This blending of more traditional Texas-Mexican genres with popular music is an example of the process of selective accommodation that Mexican Americans, and virtually all immigrant and nonwhite ethnic groups, underwent as they strove to preserve certain aspects of their culture while also working to achieve greater acceptance and upward mobility within American society.<sup>184</sup> During this period, Texas Mexicans, particularly those aspiring to upwardly mobile segments of Tejano society, were similarly pressured to assimilate to Anglo-Texan (and Anglo-American) cultural values through acculturation.<sup>185</sup> Historian Richard Garcia describes the forging of the “Mexican American mind” among a rising middle-class, ethnic Mexican demographic in San Antonio. Garcia examines assimilation as a constant tension between American and Mexican cultures as well as class divisions among migrant and native-born Tejanos/as. Furthermore, a part of middle class identity

---

<sup>183</sup> Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 31.

<sup>184</sup> Historian George Sánchez characterizes the tensions of Mexican assimilation in turn-of-the-century Southern California through Mexican American leader Zeferino Ramírez, who—along with Mexican-Angelino newspaper *La Opinión* and the Mexican consulate—rebuffed efforts to pressure Mexican migrants to apply for U.S. citizenship. George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>185</sup> Francisco Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico Press); Mario García describe the making and characteristics of the “Mexican American Generation” between 1930-1950. For more on this, see Chapter One, “The Mexican American Generation,” in Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1-22.

involved embracing a “middle-class Tejano consensus” that largely avoided radical political activity.<sup>186</sup>

Texas-Mexican musical “spaces” indicate class formations in San Antonio. In order to better understand how Texas-Mexican music reflects class distinctions, it is important to consider two competing schools of thought: “autonomy” versus “hybridity.” In *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (1985), ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña argues that Mexican culture remained largely “autonomous” in South Texas during much of the nineteenth and twentieth century—a Marxist paradigm employed to view the relationships between Anglo-Texan hegemony and working-class Tejano culture along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.<sup>187</sup> Peña contends that most working-class Tejanos embraced *conjunto* music as means to “defend” against increasing Anglo cultural control throughout the state, reflecting an Anglo-Mexican conflict in South Texas. By celebrating cultural traditions, such as *conjunto*, working-class Tejanos were preserving their ethnic heritage in the face of encroaching cultural influences from Anglos and others. Chicano music scholar José Reyna reaches a similar conclusion concerning Texas-Mexican agency, using working-class *música tejana* genres and performativity to define Tejano cultural nationalism in the twentieth century.<sup>188</sup>

However, these interpretations do not account for historical fluidity, even within seemingly “traditional” genres. Historian Jason Mellard emphasizes the hybrid nature of

---

<sup>186</sup> Richard Buitron, *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>187</sup> Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto*, 151.

<sup>188</sup> José R. Reyna, “Tejano Music as an Expression of Cultural Nationalism,” in Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 191-199.

Texas-Mexican music and culture, focusing on the Tex-Mex super-group, the Texas Tornados.<sup>189</sup> Although writing about the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mellard suggests how Tejano music and identity were shaped by centuries of shared exchanges alongside African Americans, Native Americans, and working-class Anglos. Rather than an example of assimilation, *orquesta tejana* is a particularly potent representation of this lived hybridity as reflected in music, since it was a product of the interethnic exchanges from a variety of musical elements both inside and outside of the Texas-Mexican community.

Although it remained more “traditional” than *orquesta tejana*, *conjunto* also incorporated a variety of outside influences. The amalgamation of musical influences that helped create the West Side Sound reflects the ongoing process of hybridity in *música tejana*, which evolved in its blending with non-*música tejana* genres.<sup>190</sup> While Peña’s and Reyna’s analyses are useful, they fail to demonstrate the complex history of cultural exchange along the borderlands which significantly shaped such “traditional” genres. Recollections of prominent bandleaders in the West Side, as well as instrumentation in early *música tejana* discographies, reveal interethnic influences in postwar Tejano/a music. Musician Fernando Aguilar discussed performing *conjunto* as a kid in the early 1950s before transitioning into rhythm and blues:

---

<sup>189</sup> Jason Mellard, “Regional Hybridity in Texas Music: The Case of the Texas Tornados,” *Text Practice Performance* 5 (November 2003), 109.

<sup>190</sup> Mellard acknowledges that Peña’s emphasis on Texas-Mexican “autonomy” was more pronounced in his first book, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto* (1985), than in his latter two books on *música tejana*, *The Mexican American Orquesta* (1999) and *Música Tejana* (1999). Mellard further acknowledges that Peña’s more recent books demonstrate an “evolution” in scholarship regarding *música tejana*. This shifting paradigm can also be seen in José Limón’s *American Encounters* (1998), regarding Texas-Mexican hybridity (models of convergence) and the loosening of the dominant Anglo-Mexican binary of conflict in South Texas. Mellard, “Regional Hybridity in Texas Music,” 109. José Limón, *American Encounters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998). Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

My uncle played accordion and taught me how to play. One day, when he was leaving to go on tour, he told me to listen to his radio so I could practice along with *conjunto* musicians. So, after school, I would listen to the radio and play along like he asked, but then I discovered the rhythm and blues stations, and I started listening to Fats Domino, Larry Williams, Little Richard...all those old pioneers of rhythm and blues! I was thinking, 'man, this sounds good,' but I couldn't play it with the accordion. So, I started leaving the accordion little by little, and then finally I just left it. After that, I got a new group together, Nando and the Rhythm Aces, and we started playing oldies and rhythm and blues.<sup>191</sup>

Aguilar's addition of horn players included local *conjunto* musicians who could transition into the brass-led sounds of rhythm and blues. Typical brass instruments in *orquesta tejana*, particularly the tenor saxophone and trumpet, became integral to the West Side Sound. Producer Manuel "Manny" Guerra discussed his signature double-tenor arrangement with his group, the Sunglows, pioneers of early Tejano music and Chicano Soul during the late 1950s and 1960s. He discussed his musical influences as an outgrowth of drumming and arrangement for *orquesta tejana* bandleader Isidro López.<sup>192</sup> Guerra also drew on musical inspirations from a record-collecting friend and bandmate, Julio Dominguez Jr., who exposed him to non-Mexican Latin genres such as mambo, cha-cha, Latin jazz, rhumba, *guaracha*, and other styles. "He [Julio] had a room with lot of long players [records]—a lot of them! And that was the kind of music I liked. There was Tito Puente, Pedro Beltran Ruiz, Machito, Xavier Cugat...we would listen to all that and from there it spread. When I was a kid, I remember seeing Perez Prado do the mambo and I got hooked."<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> Fernando Aguilar, interview with author, February 25, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>192</sup> Manuel Guerra, interview with author, March 28, 2018, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.



The development of *ranchera* by the end of the 1940s—*conjunto* music with lyrics and instrumentation—changed the nature of Texas-Mexican performance.<sup>194</sup> Musician Valerio Longoria, a first-generation Mexican American musician, represents the forces of change sweeping postwar San Antonio and South Texas.<sup>195</sup> Born in Mississippi in 1921 and raised in South Texas, Longoria is credited with key innovations in *música tejana* throughout his half-century-plus career.<sup>196</sup> Along with adding lyrics and drums to the *conjunto* ensemble, Longoria was also one of the first accordionists to sing during his performances—a previously instrumental folk genre.<sup>197</sup> His 1947 hit, “La Rosita,” recorded for San Antonio’s Corona Records, reflects such innovations and is popularly identified as one of the first *canciones rancheras* (romantic “ranch songs”) performed in a slow waltz tempo.<sup>198</sup> Music critic Eugene Chadbourne attributes such innovation to physical adjustments in Longoria’s performance, transforming *conjunto* from its traditional sit-down style to an upright and stage-performing style by the early 1950s, responding to demands of the *música tejana* industry. “One of his biggest influences on the music was just a question of posture: it was largely Longoria that got accordion players used to the idea of standing up onstage.”<sup>199</sup> Longoria’s *canciones*

---

<sup>194</sup> Cathy Ragland, *Música Norteña: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation Between Nations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 206.

<sup>195</sup> Jesus “Chucho” Perales, interview with Andrew Brown, 2002.

<sup>196</sup> Ben Ratliff, “Valerio Longoria, 75, Conjunto Musician,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2000.

<sup>197</sup> Ragland, *Música Norteña*, 95.

<sup>198</sup> Valerio Longoria, “La Rosita,” Corona Records, 78-rpm, (1947), UCLA Frontera Collection; Ben Ratliff, “Valerio Longoria, 75, Conjunto Musician,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2000.

<sup>199</sup> Eugene Chadbourne, “Valerio Longoria, Sr.” *AllMusic*, <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/valerio-longoria-sr-mn0000256142/biography>, accessed September 23, 2017.

*rancheras* became standard features of postwar *conjunto*, including non-Mexican genres such as the Cuban *bolero*, previously associated with Latin American bourgeoisie and Mexico's upwardly mobile elite.<sup>200</sup> For example, *bolero* singers needed to more finely accentuate harmony and rhythm, unlike the rough-hewn nature of *canciones rancheras* heard in rowdy cantinas—a subtle reflection of class divisions in the consumption and performance of *música tejana*. Longoria bridged this divide to successfully expand *conjunto* beyond regional and class lines. While Longoria's working-class cantina audiences welcomed his reinterpretation of traditional music with modern and international influences, class and racial identities were rigidly fixed to music and dance in the postwar era. This is important to note since *música tejana* has long since adapted to new influences that facilitated its adoption of African American music associated with the West Side Sound.

In *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II*, historian Luis Alvarez argues that black and brown youths' embrace of the zoot suit—the flamboyant, long-jacketed and pegged-panted suit in vogue with self-identified *pachucos* and hep cats during the 1930s and 1940s—stemmed from desires of cultural autonomy and shared identity among nonwhite youth during World War II. Alvarez further asserts that nonwhite youths sought self-empowerment through the zoot suit in the face of widespread discrimination and “denial of dignity” expressed by Anglo racial superiority.<sup>201</sup> By the 1940s and 1950s, San Antonio newspapers, inspired by anti-

---

<sup>200</sup> Peña, *Música Tejana*, 99.

<sup>201</sup> Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

*pachuco* (and anti-Mexican) sentiment in Southern California, began echoing a collective resentment against *pachucos* emanating from Los Angeles' racially-charged Zoot Suit Riot of 1943, describing Mexican misfits who engaged in antisocial behaviors, including, as one police officer noted, "weird actions while listening to bop music...which led [me] to believe they are schizophrenic," in a story on Mexican gang violence for the *San Antonio Light*.<sup>202</sup> Reflecting on the *pachucos*' perceived incivility and penchant for black music, the officer added, "They dance around by themselves and seem like they're living in another world when this music plays."<sup>203</sup> As noted with plaza access and descriptions of musicians during the 1930s and 1940s, such rhetoric reflected localized expressions of social othering at a time when immigration restriction laws and concepts of legal and illegal personhood informed new ideas of nationality, citizenship, and race.<sup>204</sup> However, the ongoing Americanization campaign functioned doubly to enhance cultural connections among Alvarez's notion of "dignity-denied" Mexican Americans and African Americans along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

World War II-era and postwar Latino musicians, particularly in Los Angeles and San Antonio, cities with the highest concentrations of *Mexicano/a* populations, were emulating the African American music they heard and consumed in the stirrings of an emergent musical subgenre. By the end of World War II, Mexican American recording

---

<sup>202</sup> "Behind Gang Fights in SA," *San Antonio Light*, August 7, 1955.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> For more on the cultural, legal, and political effects of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, the first comprehensive immigration restriction law in the U.S. and the constitutional origins of the "illegal alien" political subject, see Chapter One of Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21-45.

artists such as Lalo Guerrero, Don Tosti, and Don Ramon were fusing traditional Mexican and Afro-Caribbean genres with African American rhythm and blues and big band swing to forge *pachuco* boogie. Popular *pachuco* boogie songs of the late 1940s and 1950s, such as “Pachuco Boogie,” “Los Chucos Suaves,” and “Marihuana Boogie,” reflected a burgeoning Mexican American culture born from El Paso, Texas, anchored in Southern California, and steadily spreading through the American Southwest.<sup>205</sup> Though short lived, *pachuco* boogie music was “the first truly Mexican American music, for it mated the cultural and colloquial speak (*caló*) of Mexican East L.A. with the gutsy sound of black American rhythm and blues,” as proclaimed by historian Chris Morris.<sup>206</sup>

While *pachuco* boogie music emerged as a sonic marker of otherness, *pachuco* slang and attire strengthened such emergent subjectivities in San Antonio.<sup>207</sup> In May 1948, a writer for the *San Antonio Light* noted, “*Pachuco* words are the Latin American equivalent of jive talk in English. In fact, *pachuco* means jitterbug...It’s impossible for the average Spanish-speaking citizen to understand a *pachuco* conversation.”<sup>208</sup> “Jive talk,” and other forms of cultural creolization, emerged as audible nonwhiteness during the WWII and postwar era. In his liner notes for Arhoolie Records’ *Pachuco Boogie* CD

---

<sup>205</sup> *Pachuco* boogie reflected the disaffected spirit of Chicano street life in Mexican American society; its major centers were Los Angeles and El Paso. California musicians such as Don Tosti and Lalo Guerrero transformed the African American R&B big band sound into compact combos, mixing R&B and jazz with Cuban *guaracha*, *danzón*, and mambo. Tejano musicians such as Armando “Mando” Almdarez and Jesus “Chucho” Perales started incorporating *pachuco* themes and Afro-Cuban rhythms into their *conjuntos*. For more on *pachuco* boogie’s stylistic and cultural developments, see Chuy Varela’s liner notes for “Pachuco Boogie: Historic Mexican American Music,” CD, ARH07040 (Arhoolie Records, 2002).

<sup>206</sup> Chris Morris, *Los Lobos: Dream in Blue* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015). For more on the cultural history of *pachuquismo*, Los Angeles, and African American jazz fusion, see Chapter Three in Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2008), 119–171.

<sup>207</sup> Macías, *Mexican American Mojo*, 131–132.

<sup>208</sup> “Around the Plaza,” *San Antonio Light*, May 15, 1948.

anthology, Chuy Varela maintains that *caló* is “not a freak occurrence, but a bonafide dialect” rooted in fifteenth century Gypsy culture in the Spanish borderlands, establishing a pre-Columbian cultural history adverse to the U.S. colonial project. In their appearance, *pachucas* blurred and defied gendered normativity by cross-dressing as men and engaging in male behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and socially “indecorous” activities. Derived from African American and Mexican American cultural hybridity, *pachuco* ideology, or *pachuquismo*, signaled a significant departure from the gradual assimilation tactics championed by LULAC leaders and Mexican American civil rights organizations during the interwar and postwar period.<sup>209</sup> Many non-Angelino *pachucos* endured increasingly negative stereotypes, were dismissed as wanna-be copycats, hoodlums, or both. By the early 1950s, San Antonio *pachucos* were increasingly associated with social deviancy and peripheral blackness, and were also part of an urban Latino cultural phenomenon developing throughout the Southwest.<sup>210</sup> Though the stylistic aesthetics of *pachuquismo* fizzled by the early 1960s, *pachucos*’ resistance against “denial of dignity” gave rise to *Chicanismo* and the subsequent Chicano Generation. More broadly, the long arc of Black-Brown cultural hybridity in the Texas-Mexico borderlands ushered in Chicano rock and roll by the middle 1950s.

### **Boppin’ the Rock: Early Rock and Roll in San Antonio**

---

<sup>209</sup> Historian Arnoldo De León describes the emergence of interwar-era Houston LULAC as “fit[ting] in snugly as part of the Mexican American Generation.” Historian David Montejano examines the tension between LULAC leaders and Chicano radicals in 1960s-1970s San Antonio, while acknowledging subtle influences on the former to “be more aggressive” in response to the New Left political turn. Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>210</sup> Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Though rooted in the black diaspora, rock and roll emerged nationally as an identifiably white-led genre by the middle 1950s. The so-called Sun Sound, spearheaded by Memphis-based Sun Records proprietor Sam Phillips, significantly changed the face of American popular music.<sup>211</sup> According to the Sun Story narrative, working-class white musicians—Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins, among others—mixed southern genres that crossed both racial and gospel/secular divides to form the foundation of rock and roll in the midst of the conservative and segregated 1950s.<sup>212</sup> The Sun Story, also sometimes referred to as the “Big Bang Theory,” suggests that rock and roll “exploded” into existence when Sun recording artists began blending together black and white musical influences to create a dynamic, new style that came to be called rock and roll.<sup>213</sup> Celebrated in the annals of modern history, the Sun Story is a primary example of the dominant black-white binary paradigm found in pop music scholarship—a theory that posits “that race in America exists, either exclusively or primarily, of only two constituent racial groups: the Black and the White.”<sup>214</sup> In many ways, the Sun Story functions as a creation myth about the merging of race-based musical genres in the Jim Crow South, between the “race” and “hillbilly” genres, which

---

<sup>211</sup> Colin Escott and Martin Hawkins, *Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock "N" Roll* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. This narrative is often repeated in many accounts of the racial roots of rock and roll, found in popular literature, television, and film. Escott and Hawkins' bestselling book—which later inspired a PBS *American Masters* miniseries—exemplifies this narrative. Music writer Peter Guralnick's solidifies Phillips' ascendancy as the “inventor” of rock and roll. Peter Guralnick, *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock "N" Roll* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 10-15.

<sup>213</sup> Peter Guralnick, *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock "N" Roll* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 10-15.

<sup>214</sup> Juan Perea, “The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The Normal Science of American Racial Thought,” *California Law Review*, October 1997.

resulted in a colorblind hybrid genre known as rock and roll. According to the story, this new musical-cultural force also functioned as a bulwark against Jim Crow and anti-black racism through next-generation black-and-white soul groups and progressive southern labels like Memphis' Stax Records.

The Sun Story/Big Bang Theory contains elements of historical fact and is useful in helping understand the racial dynamics and cultural cross-pollination involved in the emergence of rock and roll. However, this paradigm is a gross oversimplification of when and how rock and roll actually came into being. One only need look at western swing of the 1930s to see how white country artists already were embracing black blues, jazz, ragtime, swing, Mexican mariachi, German-Czech polka, and other styles and mixing those with traditional Anglo fiddle music.<sup>215</sup> Likewise, throughout the 1940s, white bandleaders such as Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller borrowed heavily from African American music. At the same time, black R&B artists of the 1940s also incorporated elements of pop and country music and regularly used such terms as “rocking and rolling” in their song lyrics. Chuck Berry—a black musician—and Bill Haley—a white musician—were performing early rock and roll prior to the heyday of Sun Studios. So, rather than rock and roll resulting from a “Big Bang” convergence of a handful of artists in one particular studio, the elements of rock and roll had been mixing and mingling for years before Presley and his peers popularized this new style. What is most obviously lacking in the Sun Story, as a result of its reliance on the over-simplified black-white binary paradigm, is any acknowledgement of Latinos and Latin music in the formation of rock, soul, and R&B music.

---

<sup>215</sup> Gary Hartman, *The History of Texas Music* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 114.

While Latinos had no direct role in the recordings produced at Sun Studios, the notion of a Black-White binary relies on a subjective construct of “whiteness” and “blackness” which does not accurately represent the complexity of American ethnic heritage. Since the 1980s, a number of race theorists and social scientists have challenged the black-white binary in American music and popular culture, because it largely ignores ethnic groups other than African Americans and Anglos.<sup>216</sup> In his effort to deconstruct this black-white binary model, U.S. legal scholar Juan Perea asserts “the Black/White Paradigm operates to exclude Latinos/as from full membership and participation in racial discourse, and...that exclusion serves to perpetuate...negative stereotypes of Latinos/as.”<sup>217</sup> The idea of black-white binarism has long dominated popular discourse on the origins and evolution of rock and roll, but is as outdated as it is inaccurate. Large U.S. cities such as San Antonio, Houston, and Los Angeles, all of which historically included large Hispanic populations, do not fit in black-white racial binary histories. Consequently, black-white binarism marginalizes America’s Latino population, minimizing their influence on the development of national culture and postwar popular music. In particular, San Antonio’s West Side Sound, a confluence of multiracial genres—as well as regional ethnic influences, including Czech, Polish, and German—highlights the inherent weaknesses within the Black-White binary model.

---

<sup>216</sup> For more on Latino/a hybridity and the black/white racial binary in music, see Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History Of An American Culture* (Mictlan Publishing, 2007); Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>217</sup> Perea, “The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race”



In the early 1950s, Jesus “Chucho” Perales, a versatile *bajo sexto* player who, along with Armando “Mando” Almendarez, recorded some of the first all-Chicano rock and roll records.<sup>218</sup> Perales and Almendarez’s group changed several times from the early-to-mid 1950s—an evolution from traditional *conjunto* group names to rock and roll combo names—before settling on Mando and the Chili Peppers. Predating West Coast Latin rock pioneer Richie Valens, Mando and the Chili Peppers were one of the first Mexican American rock and roll groups in U.S. history. Almendarez’s ability to adapt his two-button accordion and *conjunto* rhythms to perform *pachuco* boogie and rhythm and blues represents a significant turning point in *música tejana*. Samuel “Little Sammy Jay” Jaramillo, a musician who recorded with Perales and Almendarez, recalled being at the very forefront of Chicano rock and roll during this period. “Mando and I were the first guys [in San Antonio] to sing rock and roll, or rhythm and blues, at a Mexican dance. We played it with an accordion.”

In 1954, the Perales and Almendarez recorded “Mi Dolorcito” (My Little Heartache), an accordion-driven mixture of western swing and *pachuco* boogie sung in *caló*.<sup>219</sup> The following year, under the group name Armando Almendarez y su Conjunto Mexico, they recorded the first “Chicano rock” song: a polka-rock rendition of Clifton Chenier’s “Boppin’ the Rock,” with Chuck Berry’s “Maybelline” as the B-side.<sup>220</sup> The

---

<sup>218</sup> Jesus “Chucho” Perales, interview by Andrew Brown, 2002.

<sup>219</sup> Conjunto San Antonio Alegre, “Mi Dolorcito” b/w “Los Chavalitos,” 78-rpm, R-1106, Rio Records, 1954, UCLA Frontera Collection.

<sup>220</sup> Armando Almendarez y su Conjunto Mexico, “Maybelline” b/w “Boppin’ The Rock” 78-rpm, R-1138, Rio Records, 1955. UCLA Frontera Collection.

group's cover of Berry's breakout 1954 hit, a veritable staple in rock and roll music history, is the earliest known version by a Latino group.<sup>221</sup>

However, the group's rendition of "Boppin' the Rock" reflects a curious mixture of Gulf Coast musical expressions: a Texas-Mexican *conjunto* cover of a French patois-inflected Cajun "swamp pop" song which draws influences on African American rhythm and blues and zydeco music. Curiously, Cajun and Texas-Mexican folk genres, vestiges of German and French colonialism and settlement in northern Mexico and Louisiana Acadiana, both feature the accordion and unify the neighboring states' folk music. This cross-pollination of Texas-Louisiana music and culture is colloquially referred to as the "Highway 90 Effect," a collective nostalgia referencing the popular mixture of postwar African American, Cajun, and Chicano music heard in juke joints and Chitlin' Circuit stops along the Gulf Coast interstate.<sup>222</sup> Some of the earliest cantina records recorded in San Antonio during the late 1940s and 1950s, including Perales and Almendarez's pre-rock and roll singles, further accentuate the hybrid nature of *música tejana* and penchant for African American bop and boogie music along the Gulf Coast.

Perales and Almendarez's mid-1950s recordings were produced at Rio Records, a record label operated by Hymie Wolf—a Spanish-speaking Russian immigrant with ties to the San Antonio's Latino community. Located at 700 West Commerce Street, adjacent to Market Square and the live music spaces of downtown, Rio Records became known

---

<sup>221</sup> Bruce Pegg, *Brown Eyed Handsome Man: The Life and Hard Times of Chuck Berry* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 9.

<sup>222</sup> Margaret Moser, email message to author, April 22, 2013. Moser credits Austin musician Larry Lange for raising public awareness of the cultural and historical significance of Highway 90 during his performances. Moser explains, "When he started Larry Lange & the Lonely Knights about 12 or so years ago, Larry was specializing in music that ran from Lafayette to San Antonio to Corpus and made a point of talking about Highway 90. He became so into the Latino musicians, the band morphed into the Chicano Soul Revue. He deserves credit for emphasizing that regional aspect."

for its locally produced *conjunto* and cantina records during the 1950s, as well as its popular stock of Latin and Mexican records from major recording artists.<sup>223</sup> More important, Rio Records was also one of the first independent record labels in Texas, pressing “home-style” cantina records straight to disc in Wolf’s liquor store-turned-record shop which featured “a disc cutter, blank acetates, a mixer, and a couple of microphones.”<sup>224</sup> A modest but enterprising operation, Rio Records paved the way for local entrepreneurs and record start-ups during the height of the West Side Sound. Perales and Almendarez’s recordings, and others from the label’s extraordinary 350-plus catalog, demonstrate the dynamic cross-pollination taking place throughout San Antonio during the postwar era. Almendarez and Perales were rapidly redefining the parameters of Texas-Mexican popular music during the 1950s, and in an attempt to stay relevant and increase record sales, Hymie Wolf started dabbling in American pop music in the mid-1950s by recording Almendarez and Perales and their *conjuntos*.<sup>225</sup> Many *pachucos* and Mexican American teenagers were inclined towards the horn-driven styles of doo-wop and rhythm and blues.

From 1952-1955, Perales and Almendarez recorded over fifty singles for Rio Records. In 1956, they recorded another dozen singles for Manuel Rangel’s Corona Records—another local pioneer, like Wolf and his Rio imprint, in independent *música*

---

<sup>223</sup> Chris Strachwitz, “Tejano Roots: San Antonio’s Conjuntos in the 1950s,” Arhoolie Records, Ideal/Arhoolie CD-376, 1994.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Chris Strachwitz, interview with author, March 3, 2011, Austin.

*tejana* records.<sup>226</sup> After some success with regional touring in the Southwest, including a club residency in Denver, Colorado—a short stint which landed the group a recording contract with a nationally-distributed label—the group released their full-length LP in 1957, *On The Road With Rock N' Roll*, on New York's Golden Crest Records. The LP's collective recordings represent a remarkably diverse range of styles, including *conjunto*, polka, rock and roll, country, rhythm and blues, and *pachuco* boogie—songs which not only reflect their versatility as musicians, but the eclectic tastes of their audiences. Indeed, Golden Crest was aware of their distinct find in the ever-versatile Almendarez, employing descriptors on the album's liner notes icons to emphasize the group's New Orleans-influenced Tex-Mex R&B credentials:

For several months, the young group from Texas had been performing to capacity crowds; the town had gone slightly daffy over the Chili Peppers. Like the old-time musicians who came out of New Orleans, they have had no formal musical training. Mando is a restless young man with the inner drive of a Presley strangely mixed with the easy relaxed style, when need be, of a Fats Domino.<sup>227</sup>

Such marketing ploys about New Orleans and its great, African American R&B icon, Fats Domino, suggest a particular Latino “authenticity” in performing black music. This connection is further accentuated by a particular remembrance from a notable “oldies” DJ in New Orleans, Billy Delle, when he and friends mistook the Chili Peppers and their 1957 single, “South of the Border,” for a black New Orleans rhythm and blues band:

“We loved the music and we prided ourselves as knowledgeable New Orleans R&B fans. ‘South of the Border’ received heavy airplay on New

---

<sup>226</sup> Rio Records and Corona Records discographic information culled from Strachwitz Frontera Collection at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center online archive. Accessed November 12, 2017 via <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/frontera-search>.

<sup>227</sup> Mando and the Chili Peppers, *On The Road with Rock 'N Roll* LP, CR-3023, Golden Crest Records, 1957.

Orleans radio, especially on WJMR, where [DJ] Poppa Stoppa promoted local artists. It wasn't until much later that we discovered our rational thinking was flawed. The music so closely related to New Orleans R&B was actually the emerging Tex-Mex sound. The success of 'South of the Border' opened the door to many other border town discs."<sup>228</sup>

The group's brief success, however, is scantily documented in rock and roll history, despite their close following in Texas, Louisiana, Colorado, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, their innovative style and abilities laid the groundwork for the West Side Sound.

Perales and Almendarez successfully melded regional styles helped to forge a distinct "Tex-Mex" rock and roll sound during the 1950s, influencing an entire generation of younger San Antonio artists.<sup>229</sup> Reflecting their immense local popularity, Perales and Almendarez also had their own TV show, "Rock 'N Roll" on Raoul Cortez's KCOR, the first Mexican American-owned station in the United States. Hosted by African American DJ Albert "Scratch" Phillips, the show began sometime in 1956, featuring the Chili Peppers and other local African American and Mexican American R&B and rock and roll groups. However, such recordings and TV performances garnered widespread regional attention, and inspired Mexican American teenagers across the Southwest, including West Side Sound pioneer Randy Garibay, as discussed in the introduction of this chapter.<sup>230</sup> Garibay went on to lead some of the most influential bands

---

<sup>228</sup> John Broven, liner notes to "Mando and the Chili Peppers: On the Road with Rock 'N Roll," CD-CHD 683, Arhoolie Records, Ideal/Arhoolie CD-376, 1994.

<sup>229</sup> Histories of Mexican American music and *pachuco* boogie focus on El Paso, Texas, and Southern California, where African American R&B bandleaders such as Louis Jordan, Earl Bostic, and Johnny Otis, performed for Mexican American and African American audiences, including mid-century Los Angeles' iconic black-and-brown nightclubs along Central Avenue. West Coast *pachuco* boogie artists, including Freddy Rubio, Tilly Lopez, Sal Cervantez, Phil Carreon and Don Tosti, captured the rebellious spirit of *pachuco* culture through cheeky song titles and variations of new "boogie" songs intended to inspire a sellable hit.

<sup>230</sup> Michael Hurtt, "The Other Chili Peppers," *OffBeat Magazine*, May 1, 2005.

of the West Side Sound, including The Pharaohs, The Dell-Kings, Los Blues, and Cats Don't Sleep. As TV show hosts, major recording artists, and early rock 'n roll "stars" from the *barrios* of the West Side, Mando and the Chili Peppers' pioneered a path for Mexican Americans in San Antonio, performing genres which stretched across national, geographic, and cultural boundaries.



**Fig. 2.2:** 1957 LP by Mando & the Chili Peppers, one of the first Mexican American rock & roll albums. From author's collection.

### **Twisting Across the Border**

By the mid-1950s, Rodolpho Treviño "Rudy Tee" Gonzales was also influencing the West Side Sound. Similar to Perales and Almendarez, Gonzales transitioned from *conjunto* to rhythm and blues, performing both Spanish- and English-language genres throughout his career. Born July 4, 1939, in San Antonio, Gonzales started playing with

his brother, Manuel “Red” Gonzales, as part of a traditional *conjunto* group in 1952. Starting as Red y su Conjunto and switching to Conjunto Los Panchitos, Gonzales finally changed the band’s name to Rudy T and His Reno Bops in 1955. By the mid-1950s, San Antonio teenagers were exposed to rock and roll through various media, from local KCOR African American radio DJ and TV personality Scratch Phillips (including the Chili Peppers’ Rock ‘N Roll show) to nationally-syndicated television programs such as *American Bandstand*, prompting many to form their own groups. Gonzales admitted that anti-Mexican attitudes plagued the music industry when he started, making it difficult for Mexican American musicians to “crossover” to the mainstream, particularly before the advent of Spanish-language radio in the 1970s.<sup>231</sup> One of his first producers, E.J. Henke, urged Gonzales to drop his last name and go by the racially vague moniker, “Rudy T.” He also describes how migration and lack of resources affected San Antonio’s working-class Mexican American community, as well as their ingenuity to overcome such obstacles:

There was a lot of prejudice in the industry when I started. If you didn’t have an English sounding name, they wouldn’t play your records. We started with an accordion group in 1953—Conjunto Los Panchitos. I was 14, going on 15. We had two accordion players, and when one of the accordion players left for migratory work, I would take it over. The drums were made out of an old washing machine tub. We’d plug the hole with tar and rags, put a tin in the front and wire it up. We were poor; we couldn’t afford drums or anything.<sup>232</sup>

In 1957, the same year Mando and the Chili Peppers recorded their full-length LP, Rudy T and His Reno Bops recorded a 45-rpm single, “Cry, Cry” backed with

---

<sup>231</sup> Rudy Gonzales, interview with author, June 19, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

“Rambling” on the B-side, on Rio Records.<sup>233</sup> Released a year before Ritchie Valens’s debut hit single “Come On, Let’s Go,” and frequently cited as the earliest Mexican American rock song, “Cry, Cry” was the first and only decidedly “rock” record on Rio Records.<sup>234</sup> Featuring a guitar-driven combo and a two-part tenor saxophone section, Rudy T and His Reno Bops represent one of the earliest examples of the West Side Sound group ensemble. Gonzales recalled the innovative and do-it-yourself environment at Wolf’s makeshift studio. “Hymie was a nice man, and he was recording a lot of people at that time. He took us into his little room at the record shop, no bigger than a large bathroom. Everyone gathered around one microphone, and that was it.”<sup>235</sup> However, Gonzales insists it was rhythm and blues, not rock and roll, which inspired his switch into English-language music. Popular R&B songs as Johnny “Guitar” Watson’s “Those Lonely, Lonely Nights” made a powerful impact on young Gonzales (it was also West Side Sound pioneer Randy Garibay’s signature cover tune, and Chicano rock pioneer Freddy Fender’s popular hit, “Wasted Days, Wasted Nights,” was closely patterned after it as well). “That was one of the first songs I fell in love with as a teenager. It made me leave Spanish music and go into R&B. But I wasn’t into rockabilly. I mean, Elvis was okay and all, but I was really into Little Richard, Fats Domino, and Johnny Ace.”<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>233</sup> Reno Bops, “Cry, Cry” b/w “Rambling,” R-101, 45-rpm, Rio Records, 1957. The Arhoolie Foundation’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings.

<sup>234</sup> Beverly Mendheim, *Ritchie Valens: The First Latino Rocker* (Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1987), 52; Andrew Brown, “Rudy and his Reno Bops on Rio 101,” *Wired for Sound*, March 10, 2012.

<sup>235</sup> Rudy Gonzales, interview with author, June 19, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.



Gonzales' penchant for rhythm and blues music reflects the attitudes of many Mexican American West Side Sound recording artists of that era.

While Gonzales and Mando and the Chili Peppers were the earliest and most successful exporters of the burgeoning West Side Sound in the mid-to-late 1950s, a young guitar virtuoso named Baldemar Huerta was forging Spanish-language rock and roll in the *pueblos* and *colonias* along the Texas-Mexican border near his hometown of San Benito, Texas. Collectively, these South Texas musicians shifted *música tejana* from traditional to popular influences, including rhythm and blues, country, and rock and roll. In 1958, Huerta adopted the name Freddy Fender, inspired by his Fender-brand guitar. He was one of the first Latino artists to employ code-switching as an artistic device, performing rhythm and blues with Spanish or bilingual lyrics. Reflecting on his 1950s “barrio hits” for a 1994 CD compilation, Fender touched on a particular border fluidity which inspired his Spanish-language rock and roll and versatility in Mexican and American genres. “In ’57-’60, with Falcon [Records], I had the first rock and roll they had in South America and Mexico. Mostly we kept on eye on the charts in Mexico and said, ‘Ok, we gotta record this one or that one, it’s hitting.’”<sup>237</sup> Using various aliases, Huerta also recorded as “Scotty Wayne” and “Eddie Con Los Shades,” recording Chicano rock and roll hits including “Acapulco Rock” and “Tequilita Rock” in 1961, popular on both sides of the border and covered by early Mexican rock and roll groups. For example, Mexico City’s Los Hooligans popularized “Acapulco Rock,” which climbed to number two on *Billboard*’s “Hits of the World” in December of 1961.<sup>238</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> Freddy Fender, liner notes to, “Freddy Fender: Canciones de mi Barrio,” Arhoolie Records, Ideal/Arhoolie CD-366, 1993.

<sup>238</sup> “Hits of the World,” *Billboard Magazine*, December 12, 1961.

According to the University of California Los Angeles Frontera Collection database, Huerta recorded over 160 songs, many of which were rock and roll and rhythm and blues, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s.<sup>239</sup>

Both Huerta's and Gonzales's Spanish-language rock and roll crossed the borders through new distribution networks by South Texas music entrepreneurs in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley. Due to cross-border distribution and blasting "border radio," Tejano artists' songs were covered by both *fronteriza* (a Mexican national from the borderlands) groups and Mexico City bands in the early 1960s.<sup>240</sup> Falcon Records in McAllen, Texas, among the pioneering Mexican American record labels in Texas, was one of the first U.S.-based labels to establish formal distribution and licensing deals with Mexico's Peerless Records. In a small but telling report in *Billboard Magazine* from 1962, the writer describes how Falcon label owner Arnoldo Ramírez "visited his representatives at Peerless Records and brought them the tapes of his latest recordings of Twist."<sup>241</sup> For instance, Los Apson, an early Mexican rock and roll band from Agua Prieta, Sonora, recorded two versions of Gene Thomas' swamp pop hit, "Sometime," made popular south of the border by Rudy T and the Reno Bops in the early 1960s. Gonzales's brief stint in Mexico City in 1961 included his introduction of "The Twist" dance and song craze to two of the prominent *refrito* groups ("refried" cover bands) from

---

<sup>239</sup> "The Roots of Tejano Rock," The Arhoolie Foundation's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings.

<sup>240</sup> McAllen's Falcon Records, which produced early Freddie Fender rock and roll records, had formal distribution and licensing contracts with Peerless Records—a major Mexican record label. Falcon was among the few Tejano record labels of the 1960s with Mexican distribution; some labels in San Antonio and elsewhere did have informal distribution networks into Mexico. For more on Falcon Records, see Manuel Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 109-110.

<sup>241</sup> "International News: Arnoldo Ramirez," *Billboard Magazine*, May 19, 1962.

Mexico City: Los Teen Tops and Las Hermanas Jimenez. In his impressive history of Mexican rock and roll, *Estremécete y Rueda: Loco por el Rock & Roll*, Federico Rubli credits Las Hermanas Jimenez for introducing “The Twist” song and dance to Mexico.<sup>242</sup> Gonzales recalled shaping the Spanish-language rock and roll craze in early-1960s Mexico:

I went into rock in Spanish in 1961 when I joined Renner Records in San Antonio. I was doing a radio show with Scratch Phillips here in San Antonio, and Mexico’s number one rock and roll group, Los Teen Tops, came to town around that time in 1961. I bumped into them at Syd’s Clothing Store where they were buying stage uniforms and we got along great, so they invited us to perform with them in Mexico. So, Fred Liseño (saxophonist) and I bought a bass guitar and left on a 30-hour train trip to Mexico City. But see, they were still doing 1950s music—Little Richard and stuff like that. We were in the ‘60s now, and up here we were doing “The Twist,” and I taught them and these two sister-musicians, Las Hermanas Jimenez, how to do it. And because of me, the Hermanas Jimenez recorded a twist song with the (Bob Wills) “San Antonio Rose” melody I taught them and called it the “San Antonio Twist.” They invited me to their house and they asked me to teach them how to dance the twist, so I taught them the basic steps.<sup>243</sup>

A big hit for Mexico’s Orfeon Records, Las Hermanas Jimenez’ “San Antonio Twist” begins with a drum roll and “choo choo-ing” resembling a train in motion, transporting listeners to rock and roll’s north-of-the-border origins. The Hermanas Jimenez’s breakout song and accompanying *Twist* EP and LP, produced in 1962, helped introduce the Twist dance craze to a wide audience in Mexico.<sup>244</sup> (See Fig. 2.3) In the song, San Antonio is depicted as a faraway city north of the border where teenagers

---

<sup>242</sup> Federico Rubli, *Estremécete y Rueda: Loco por el Rock & Roll* (Mexico City: Ediciones Chapa, 2007), 126. Though Rubli briefly mentions women in the formation of Mexican rock and roll, there is need for further studies to explore their roles in creating the genre.

<sup>243</sup> Rudy Gonzales, interview with author, June 19, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>244</sup> Rubli, *Estremécete y Rueda*, 126.

gather and dance the twist. As the first teenage dance phenomenon to achieve widespread international appeal, launching rock and roll far beyond America's borders and airwaves, "The Twist" gained particular prominence in the Mexican and Latin American popular cultural pantheon by the early 1960s.<sup>245</sup> Bill Haley and the Comets were also known for popularizing "The Twist" in Mexico, briefly joining Mexico City's rock and roll scene and recording their Latin-tinged twist spinoffs, including "Florida Twist" (1961) and "Twist Español" (1961), during Haley's short stint in Mexico City and subsequent recordings with Mexico City's powerful Discos Orfeon in the early 1960s.<sup>246</sup> Meanwhile, countless renditions of twist songs and spinoff novelty dance songs surged in popularity during this period, some with more success than others. Las Hermanas Jimenez' twist is noteworthy in its location of San Antonio as the origins of the dance. Inspired by Rudy and the Reno Bops' breakthrough performance of Spanish-language rock and roll at San Antonio's Alameda Theater in 1961 (part of a tour which featured Mexican rock groups touring the United States), as well as Gonzales' subsequent stint in Mexico City, Las Hermanas Jimenez summoned their Mexican listeners to visit San Antonio and learn to twist.

---

<sup>245</sup> Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>246</sup> "Mexico's Orfeon Diskery Inks Bill Haley to 2-Yr. Pact," *Variety*, August 1961.



**Fig. 2.3.** 1962 *Twist* EP by Hermanas Jimenez, Mexican Rock & Roll Pioneers. From Author's Collection.

San Antonio fue donde yo aprendí  
el twist y cómo se baila,  
y si quieres tú aprender el twist  
también irás a San Antonio!

Baila, goza, el ritmo del twist  
que te hace sentir muy feliz.  
Mece suave y aprenderás  
`mover sin parar tu cintura.

(San Antonio was where I learned  
the twist and how to dance it  
and if you want to learn the twist  
you should also go to San Antonio!

Dance, enjoy, the twist rhythm  
which makes you feel very happy  
Rock softly and you'll learn  
to shake without moving your hips.<sup>247</sup>

---

<sup>247</sup> Hermanas Jimenez, *Twist* EP, 45-1073, 45-rpm, Discos Orfeon, 1961.

Freddy Fender, Las Hermanas Jimenez, and Rudy Gonzales were “twisting” across the border, producing transnational ideas about San Antonio’s connections to rock and roll. In Las Hermanas Jimenez’s version, San Antonio emerges as a place where dancers across the border can participate and indeed, “feel very happy.” Falcon Record’s Arnoldo Ramírez, capitalizing on the teenage dance craze, exported Mexican American versions of the song to Mexican audiences, inspiring dozens of cover songs.

Inadvertently, Las Hermanas Jimenez were connecting Mexican listeners to San Antonio’s Mexican diaspora on the West Side, where rock and roll was mixing with rhythm and blues, *conjunto*, doo-wop, and other regional musics of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. “San Antonio Twist” borrows its melody from Bob Wills’ 1940 western swing hit, “San Antonio Rose.”

Unlike rock and roll’s fierce contestations in the United States, parents and politicians in Mexico did not condemn rock and roll, owing to reduced anxieties concerning racial blackness and prospect of racial mixing. As Eric Zolov argues in *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*, Mexico City’s *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) establishment welcomed rock and roll as a symbol of a “new world modernity” that Mexican society should embrace.<sup>248</sup> By the early 1960s, early rock and roll groups, reflecting the so-called “modernizing miracle” and social mobility of postwar Mexico, became commodities in the national and transnational music industry aiming to exploit teenage pop culture in the nation’s newfound upwardly-mobile urban classes. However, the government’s short-lived romance with rock and roll ended

---

<sup>248</sup> Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 91.

when the music took a decisively anti-establishment tone by the end of the decade in tandem with burgeoning international counterculturalism, culminating in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968.<sup>249</sup> Still, Zolov contends that rock and roll served as both "wedge and mirror" for Mexican society caught in throes of rapid modernization.<sup>250</sup> By challenging traditional notions of decorum, gender constructions, and national identity, rock and roll in Mexico reflected the dueling tensions of modernity and traditionalism.

Simultaneously, rock and roll mirrored the aspirations and anxieties of an upwardly mobile Mexican society pursuing modernity, both emulating and competing against the United States. West Side Sound musicians, whose music reverberated beyond the US-Mexico border through radio and record distribution, provided access to rock and roll to Mexican audiences. The marginal yet increasing mainstream successes of Mexican-origin rock and pop stars in the United States during the by the mid-1960s, including Ritchie Valens, Trini Lopez, Sam the Sham, and Carlos Santana, created what Zolov calls an "insider sense of participation" for aspiring Mexican musicians.<sup>251</sup> San Antonio, a Tejano-dominant city closely associated with Greater Mexico, represents such "insider connections" through border-crossing and Spanish-singing musicians who undermine national concepts of rock and roll.

---

<sup>249</sup> "Racial Violence Flares Around Schools, Construction Sites," San Antonio Light, September 24, 1969; Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 91. For more on the Tlatelolco Massacre, see Anabel Hernandez, *A Massacre in Mexico: The True Story Behind the Missing Forty-Three Students* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2018).

<sup>250</sup> Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 10.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 11.

## Conclusion

With its booming multiethnic population and vibrant and diverse live music scene, postwar San Antonio's multicultural social environments contributed to an eclectic listening and dancing experience in nightclubs located throughout the city. Postwar upward mobility within San Antonio's *Mexicano/a* population expanded both record production and record consumption markets, facilitating the growth of an independent music industry pioneered by immigrant and nonwhite entrepreneurs. Popular genres such as swing and bebop jazz from Harlem, swamp pop from Southwestern Louisiana, and rhythm and blues orchestras from Los Angeles and New Orleans, blended with the rich traditions of *conjunto*, western swing, honky tonk, blues, gospel, and other genres that already had existed in San Antonio for decades.

Musical stylings from northern Mexico and South Texas, including brass-led genres as mariachi and *norteño*, influenced the formation of the West Side Sound. By the early-to-mid 1950s, working-class *conjunto* groups including Conjunto San Antonio Alegre (Mando and the Chili Peppers) and Conjunto Mirasol were experimenting with rhythm and blues and pioneering Chicano rock and roll. Such black-brown musical hybridity accentuates limited understandings about the origins and depths of rock and roll and postwar popular music in the twentieth century.

The mixing of Texas-Mexican folk genres with African American ensemble formations shaped the emergent "sound" becoming popular with the city's communities of color. Perales and Almendarez pioneered a bi-cultural sound by the middle 1950s which fused a new genre, while Rudy T Gonzales and Baldemar Huerta forged Spanish-language rock and roll shortly after, bringing rock and roll dance crazes across the border



to influence rock and roll in Mexico. Collectively, these South Texas musicians shifted *música tejana* from traditional to popular influences.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “Talk to Me”: The Peak Years of the West Side Sound, 1955-1966

“Talk to me, talk to me  
Oh, I love the things you say”

-Sunny and the Sunglows, “Talk To Me”

On November 9, 1963, San Antonio’s Sunny and the Sunglows became the first Mexican American group to perform on Dick Clark’s *American Bandstand*.<sup>252</sup> Their breakout hit, “Talk to Me,” made its way to the number eleven spot on the *Billboard* “Hot 100” chart in the fall of that year.<sup>253</sup> The Sunglows’ arrival on *Billboard* and performance on *American Bandstand* marks a moment when Mexican Americans emerged on the national music scene. Sunny Ozuna, the group’s bandleader, reflected on that moment:

During my graduating year in 1963, I woke up one morning and our recording of “Talk to Me” was moving real fast up the charts. As teenagers, we would kill to get our hands on the weekly surveys that the big [radio] stations put out so we could keep up with what was being played and what was going up the charts. And all this time, our big thing is Dick Clark’s TV show, *American Bandstand*. So, if we weren’t at the sock hop on the weekends, we would be rushing home to go see *American Bandstand*. We also got ideas from that on how to dress and how to act from watching it — it was something subconsciously going on with us teenagers.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup> Hosted by Dick Clark, *American Bandstand* was a live music and dance television program which aired from 1956 to 1989. Popular histories of the show, including a narrative Clark was quick to reaffirm, was that he used rock and roll and advocacy for black performance to “present[ed] himself as the brave individual who broke down *American Bandstand*’s racial barriers.” While *American Bandstand* did put African American performers on the program by 1957, it would take another six years for the first Chicano group. Matthew F. Delmont, *The Nicest Kids in Town: American Bandstand, Rock “n” Roll, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in 1950s Philadelphia* (University of California Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>253</sup> Huey Meaux, “Sunny and the Sunglows,” advertisement, *Billboard*, October 19, 1963, 16.

<sup>254</sup> Sunny Ozuna, interview with author, February 21, 2017.

“Talk to Me,” a stirring, string-filled R&B ballad, was indeed moving “real fast” in part because of the group’s new record deal with Houston producer Huey Meaux, a regional music powerhouse who successfully launched Texas R&B sensation Barbara Lynn into the commercial mainstream just a few months prior. The single’s three-month stay on the *Billboard* “Hot 100” happened at a time of a tremendous growth in both record productivity and local garage bands in San Antonio. This chapter argues that the productivity of the “peak years” of the West Side Sound was driven by record producers, record pressing plants, radio stations, studio engineers, and African American and Mexican American musicians in the making of a local music industry.


**SUNNY AND THE SUNGLOWS**  
(Tear Drop)

**PM: Huey P. Meaux**  
**BO: Continental**

**NAMES:** Sunny Ozuna, vocal; Jesse, Oscar and Ray Villanueva; Tony Tostado, Gilbert Fernandez and Alfred Luna. **HOME TOWN:** San Antonio. **BACKGROUND:** The group has been working together now for almost four years. They were organized while still attending Burbank Vocational High School, at which time they approached independent producer Huey P. Meaux at a night club he owned in Galveston, Tex. Under his guidance, the group became a hot item in numerous personal appearances in the local area. Their early recordings of “Golly Gee” and “Just a Moment” got good action and spread their name in the industry so that with “Talk to Me” they found a ready, receptive market. Now that they are riding up the charts with their hit single, they’ve decided on a slight alteration. They have recently changed their name to Sunny and the Sunliners.

**LATEST SINGLE:** “Talk to Me,” which has been on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for seven weeks, is in the No. 15 slot this week.

**LATEST ALBUM:** “Talk to Me,” which will soon be released.



**IN PERSON**  
IN OUR RECORD DEPT.  
**Mon. July 18, 7-9 P.M.**

**SUNNY OZUNA**  
and the  
**SUNLINERS**

Introducing his own personal label  
**“Key-Loc”**

“Smile now, Cry Later,” “Hopeless Case” plus “Lagrimas Del Alma” and “Dia Tras Dia”

These two hits on “Key-Loc” are now on sale at Barker’s Record Dept. Get your copy and meet Sunny Ozuna in person.

Barker’s has a complete record department. Featuring any type of music you want . . . in stereo, monaural and 45 rpm hits!

**Fig. 3.1.** (left) Trade ad in *Billboard Magazine*, October 9, 1963. The ad shows the group’s previous name, The Sunglows, which changed under Huey Meaux’s direction to The Sunliners.

**Fig. 3.2.** (right) Newspaper ad in *San Antonio Light*, July 17, 1966. Ozuna left Meaux’s Tear Drop Records to start his own label, Key-Loc Records.

From 1955-1968, there were over 120 known Mexican American rock & R&B recording artists and groups in San Antonio, second only to New York City in number of independent recordings by Latino/a rock & R&B groups in the United States.<sup>255</sup> By comparison, there were over 70 known Mexican American rock & R&B recording artists and groups in Los Angeles during this same period.<sup>256</sup> This chapter places San Antonio at the capital of the postwar Mexican American recording industry and examines how African American and Mexican American entrepreneurs and musicians recorded, pressed, broadcasted, and performed popular music. In order to understand the musical productivity of this era, this chapter begins with the rise of the independent music industry and cultural formations in San Antonio. The second part of this chapter segues into local Chicano/a rock & R&B combos in to understand how gender, class, and race affected this period in the West Side Sound.

### **Cultural Formations: Television, Radio, Record Labels**

The immediate postwar years experienced rapid technological developments in radio, television, and recording industry infrastructure. A thriving postwar economy and consumer market paved the way for a dynamic recording industry and a new teenage

---

<sup>255</sup> This figure also includes multiracial “black/brown” groups. San Antonio had notably more multiracial groups than Los Angeles, by a margin of nearly 3:1, accentuating San Antonio’s distinct culture of multiracial R&B. For further discographical information, see Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 131-174, and Francisco Orozco, “Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, 248-259.

<sup>256</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Metropolitan Statistical Area analysis, San Antonio’s population in 1960 was 587,718, while Los Angeles’s was 2,479,015. U.S. Census Bureau, 20th Century Statistics; Current Population Reports, [www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/99statab/sec31.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/99statab/sec31.pdf); Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 131-174, and Francisco Orozco, “Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, 248-259.

demographic eager to consume local and imported music.<sup>257</sup> In 1949, with the assistance of music producer Jerry Wexler, *Billboard Magazine* replaced its “race” chart with a new “R&B” chart at a time when African American music was increasingly “crossing over” into the U.S. mainstream.<sup>258</sup> Throughout the United States, the early 1950s experienced a significant growth of independent recording firms that embraced regional genres from blues, jazz, country, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll, among others. This period included the rise of the Mexican American music industry in San Antonio and the independent recordings of Texas-Mexican genres as well.

Local African American and Mexican American disc jockeys and radio pioneers emerged during this time period. In 1948, Raoul Cortez signed on to KCOR-AM, a full-time Spanish-language radio station, becoming the first Mexican American radio station owner in U.S. broadcast history.<sup>259</sup> Albert “Scratch” Phillips and Flip Forrest, hired by Cortez in 1951, were among the first black disc jockeys in San Antonio; their popularity surged simultaneously. *The San Antonio Register* recognized the two men as “well-known San Antonio disc jockeys.”<sup>260</sup>

Phillips was instrumental in exposing local teenagers to both local and national R&B talent. His daytime radio programming was described as “deeply religious song(s)

---

<sup>257</sup> The 45-rpm format, created by RCA records in 1949, accelerated the development of the music industry in the postwar era. For more on the connection between the format and the music industry, see Rick Kennedy and Randy McNutt, *Little Labels--Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xvi-xvii.

<sup>258</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Rock'n America: A Social and Cultural History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 29.

<sup>259</sup> Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>260</sup> “Wheatley’s Bop Club Officer Named,” *San Antonio Register*, November 13, 1953.

mixed in with bop tunes in between his patter,” but it was his nightly two-hour show, the Scratch Phillips Show, which influenced many African American and Chicano musicians in routine exposures to R&B music.<sup>261</sup> Henry Hernandez, singer for the vocal group, the Royal Jesters, recalled the Black and Brown musical variety on KCOR in those days. “KCOR had mostly Spanish programs, but on Sundays you could hear [Phillips’] R&B show, and we all listened to it. He was a showman! He was loud, funny, and just a great DJ.”<sup>262</sup> KCOR later produced Phillips’ weekly television show, “Ebony Theatre,” where he adapted his radio program for studio audiences. By spinning local records on the air and inviting local bands to perform on his TV show, Phillips regularly supported local African American and Mexican American R&B groups. Musician Albert “Al Reed” Gonzales recalled how Phillips invited his group to perform on his KCOR show at a time when the local Anglo media industry was unfriendly towards Mexican Americans.<sup>263</sup> Phillips assisted Mexican American R&B groups in exposure on television as well as his connections with local African American music venues such as the Keyhole Club.

KCOR’s opportunities for communities of color, as well as their cross-pollination of Mexican American and African American genres, is significant in the formation of the West Side Sound. Chicano rock pioneers Mando and the Chili Peppers had their own KCOR show, “Rock ‘n’ Roll,” which aired at 8:30 pm on Monday evenings.<sup>264</sup> Debuting

---

<sup>261</sup> “Around the Plaza,” Benwicke Cary, *San Antonio Express News*, June 7, 1951.

<sup>262</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview with author, March 13, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>263</sup> Ramón Hernández, “Al Reed’s Visit to SA Was a Flashback to the Past,” <http://www.rivercityattractions.com/al-reeds-visit-to-sa-was-a-flashback-to-the-past>, accessed February 25, 2019.

<sup>264</sup> “Tonight, Channel 41, 8:30pm,” *San Antonio Express-News*, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960. As discussed in Chapter Two, Mando and the Chili Peppers broke several racial and cultural barriers during the 1950s. They were the only Mexican American group to have their own television show during the 1950s.

in 1956, Cortez gave the group freedom to produce the show; they performed a variety of *conjunto*, R&B, and rock and roll, and invited other local groups as guest performers.<sup>265</sup>

The group later tapped Phillips to host the show, adding to its success. Through Ebony Theater and Rock ‘n’ Roll, Phillips exposed local Chicano musicians, including Sonny Ace, Little Sammy Jay, and Charlie Alvarado, to national Black R&B acts such as Big Joe Turner and Bobby “Blue” Bland. These artists, when performing in the area, used Phillips’ Chicano talent for back-up performances.<sup>266</sup>

Other local radio stations, such as KMAC, also programmed Black and Brown genres to wide appeal among local teenagers. One of its most popular shows, “Harlem Serenade,” a nod to the Black nightclub hub of Harlem, New York, was the first radio program in San Antonio exclusively devoted to jazz music.<sup>267</sup> DJ Flip Forrest took over Harlem Serenade in the early 1950s. Airing from 10:00 pm to midnight, Harlem Serenade gained a devoted following among San Antonio’s youth, resulting in the formation of a Flip Forrest fan club—a popular “interracial organization,” according to the *San Antonio Register*.<sup>268</sup> Forrest also made frequent appearances at record shops and high school record hops in African American and Mexican American neighborhoods.<sup>269</sup> In the face of increasing competition from other stations, a series of KMAC ads in the *San Antonio*

---

<sup>265</sup> Francisco Orozco, “Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio,” PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2010.

<sup>266</sup> Henry Carr, interview by Andrew Brown, September 25, 2011.

<sup>267</sup> “Today’s Radio Programs,” *San Antonio Light*, April 23, 1936. This is the earliest known date for the origins of the show.

<sup>268</sup> “Surprise Birthday Party Honors Flip Forrest,” *San Antonio Register*, December 18, 1953.

<sup>269</sup> Allen Olsen, “Overlooked Americana,” unpublished manuscript, pg. 28; “Surprise Birthday Party Honors Flip Forrest,” *San Antonio Register*, December 18, 1953.

*Express* boasted the program as “San Antonio’s Number One Rhythm and Blues Show,” among other slogans.<sup>270</sup> In a 1953 write-up, *Cashbox Magazine* acknowledged that Harlem Serenade “has a wide listenership and has been well publicized in the San Antonio newspapers.”<sup>271</sup> By the mid-1950s, KMAC attracted a powerful listenership comprised of white, Hispanic, and black teenagers.<sup>272</sup>

In 1956, Joe Anthony, a Mexican American DJ, took over Harlem Serenade. But as music historian Jesse Garcia points out, “the money [for Anthony] wasn’t in being a DJ—it was in payola and meeting the right people.”<sup>273</sup> Payola, the illicit practice of bribing a radio DJ to promote and broadcast a particular song, connected Anthony to local music entrepreneurs and rock and roll groups. These connections later helped his subsequent entry into the record business. Musician Charlie Alvarado expressed his adoration for Anthony, with whom he made his first hit record. “[Anthony’s] mother was Mexican, his father was an Italian immigrant. He was like Wolfman Jack, but could break out in Spanish at the proper time, and say it in slang. So right there, all the West Side loved him. Joe was one of the most popular DJs in town, especially with the Chicanos.”<sup>274</sup> Anthony’s popularity surged quickly. A 1958 ad in the *San Antonio Express News*

---

<sup>270</sup> “KMAC, Top Adult Entertainment,” *San Antonio Express News*, July 31, 1956

<sup>271</sup> Andrew Brown, “‘No Color In Poor’: San Antonio’s Harlem Label,” *Wired For Sound*, September 25, 2011.

<sup>272</sup> Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010). Pg. 230-231; Charlie Alvarado, interview by Allen Olsen, San Antonio, TX, May 10, 2004. In interviews with San Antonio musicians, many referenced KMAC and/or its DJs in reference to their initial exposure to such music, including but not limited to Sonny Ace, Sunny Ozuna, Spot Barnett, Manuel “Bones” Aragon, and Rudy T Gonzales.

<sup>273</sup> Jesse Garcia, interview by author, March 13, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>274</sup> Andrew Brown, “‘No Color In Poor’: San Antonio’s Harlem Label,” *Wired For Sound*, September 25, 2011.



encouraged teenagers to attend his weekly sock hop where they could “meet Joe Anthony, San Antonio’s Most Sensational Night Time DJ.”<sup>275</sup> Anthony launched Harlem Records, a nod to his KMAC program, in August of 1959. Due to rising debt issues, he sold half of his imprint to local producer Emil “E.J.” Henke.<sup>276</sup> Over the next two years, Harlem’s recordings reflect the diversity and talent in San Antonio pop music during this era.

San Antonio’s record industry was developing quickly during this period. Local recordings were pressed and distributed by local operators in the city. Harlem’s recordings were recorded at Texas Sound Studios on the North Side of town and pressed up at Bob Tanner’s Tanner ‘N Texas Records, one of the first commercial pressing plants in the South.<sup>277</sup> In an interview with music historian Andrew Brown, Tanner admitted there was dire need for a pressing plant in San Antonio by the mid-1950s, particularly among Texas-Mexican producers. “I put in a studio in 1954. We started making our own masters, electroplating—we put in a complete plant. I said, ‘If I want to stay in this business, I’ve got to be self-sustaining.’ We were probably the only place in the world where you could come with your orchestra, and leave with the finished item ready to sell, if you wait long enough, under one roof.”<sup>278</sup> After Harlem, dozens of local record start-ups were producing local sounds resonating from in and around San Antonio. Additionally, many local Mexican American groups had the distinct ability to attract

---

<sup>275</sup> “Teenagers: Make A Date Every Saturday Night With The Joe Anthony Hop,” *San Antonio Express News*, May 23, 1959.

<sup>276</sup> Jesse Garcia, interview by author, March 13, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Bob Tanner, interview by Andrew Brown, June 5, 1999, San Antonio, Texas.

listeners on both English and Spanish radio and record markets, increasing the crossover appeal of Mexican American R&B and rock music on Spanish-language stations as well as *conjunto* and *ranchera* on English-language stations.

As Harlem Records began to decline by mid-1961, a young Mexican American realtor on the West Side of town, Abraham “Abe” Epstein, founded Cobra Records. Following Cobra’s regional success, Epstein went on to launch eight other record labels: Jox, Dynamic, Soulsville USA, Suzuki, Vallado, Groovy, Beckingham, and Metro-Dome. Together, Epstein’s family of labels represents some of the most diverse collections of independent music produced in South Texas. Over a twelve-year period, from 1961 to 1973, Epstein released hundreds of local recordings, from Texas-Mexican genres to soul, rock, and R&B. “Recording became like a disease to me,” Epstein recalled. “I signed so many groups, hoping that at least one of them would have a monster hit for me.”<sup>279</sup> While most of were not “monster hits,” Epstein’s recordings featured some of the most popular Mexican American rock and R&B groups in South Texas.<sup>280</sup> His catalog includes The Commands, Little Jr. Jesse and the Tear Drops, Doc & Sal, George Jay and the Rockin’ Ravens, Al and the Pharaohs, Henry and His Kasuals, Don and the Doves, The Royal Jesters, Zapata, and Rene & Rene, among others.

Music historian Joe Nick Patoski credits Epstein with helping promote the multiracial “ethos” of the West Side Sound. “It was black, brown and white like no one

---

<sup>279</sup> Ron Young, “Back Trax: Abie Epstein,” *San Antonio Express-News*.

<sup>280</sup> In 1964, Epstein’s “monster hit” did finally arrive—not from the West Side but from a guitar-strumming duo from Laredo called Rene & Rene. Epstein produced Rene & Rene’s “Angelito,” a Latin pop ballad sung in both Spanish and English, for his Cobra label. After finally getting KONO, an English-language station, to play it, he sold 30,000 copies in 30 days. The license was later purchased by Columbia Records and went to number one in nine countries, selling in the millions. Ron Young, “Back Trax: Abie Epstein,” *San Antonio Express-News*.

else mixed up at the time. That's his legacy. That was one of the richest periods in Texas music. Those records define what San Antonio music is and was. It's one of the coolest sounds going. He knew good music, he had a good ear and he made great records that continue to resonate."<sup>281</sup> Epstein's eclectic stable of record labels represents the tremendous breadth and depth of the West Side Sound during the 1960s, since each label had its own niche market, whether soul, *conjunto*, rock, or some other genre. Jox, Cobra, and Dynamic were by far Epstein's most successful labels. Musician Henry Hernandez recalled Epstein's pioneering role in the local music industry. "In our case, we started out on Harlem Records, but we were aiming higher, so we went to Abe. As a teenager in San Antonio, every high school had a garage band, but it wasn't a band unless you recorded at Abe's recording studio. We just wanted to be on vinyl and hear it on the radio. The teenagers in high school would buy the music to keep it going."<sup>282</sup>

### **"Oh, Please Love Me": The West Side Sound Takes Off**

Latina R&B group, The Roulettes, was among the earliest groups to emerge during the peak years of the West Side Sound. The group performed original compositions, including "I'll Always Love You" and "I Can't Say," at San Antonio's Harlandale Lions Club and Palm Heights Recreation Center teen clubs in the late 1950s.<sup>283</sup> Members of the group later formed another, The Uniques, to short-lived

---

<sup>281</sup> Hector Saldaña, "Producer of Iconic 'West Side Sound' Dies," *San Antonio Express-News*, April 13, 2012.

<sup>282</sup> Ramón Hernández, "Abie Epstein's Legacy Was Music," *River City Attractions*, May 12, 2012.

<sup>283</sup> "Two Rhythm, Blues Groups Launched By Burbank High School Teenagers," *San Antonio Express News*, July 31, 1957. Although it is nearly impossible to verify, the Roulettes have a rightful entitlement to this claim since one of the earliest documented Latina doo-wop groups, El Paso's Rhythm Heirs and their original "Cradle Rock" recording on the Yucca label, dates to 1958. However, they did have a male singer in the group. Ruben Molina credits the West Texas group as "one of the first doo-wop-styled recordings to

success. Though their histories remain largely unknown in Mexican American and Chicano/a music history, The Uniques helped establish a local “sound” in San Antonio. Remarkably, the teenage group recorded a 45-rpm single; beat a popular, all-male doo-wop group in a city-wide battle of the bands; enjoyed radio play on KONO and KTSA; and performed live on local television.<sup>284</sup> Local producer Bruce Duncan flew the group on a private jet to record their single in Houston. Recorded at ACA Studios in the summer of 1960, The Uniques’ “Cradle Rock” made a small splash on KMAC and KONO radio but ultimately failed to chart.<sup>285</sup> Despite *Billboard*’s inclusion of the single on their “Very Strong Sales Potential” list, the group dissolved after an unsuccessful attempt to succeed in Los Angeles.<sup>286</sup>

The Uniques’ inability to continue to record and perform was not for a lack of talent. Mexican American gender norms of this time period constricted Tejanas within limited boundaries. Historian Vicki Ruiz explained how social experiences of Mexican American women were shaped by their Mexican immigrant parents whose notions of “familial oligarchy” imposed strict control over the lives of their children.<sup>287</sup> According to

---

come out of El Paso.” Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 101.

<sup>284</sup> Rachel Longoria, interview by author, April 25, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>285</sup> Audio Company of America, Master Book, 1953-1990. Andrew Brown Texas Music Collection; Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

<sup>286</sup> “Very Strong Sales Potential,” *Billboard Magazine*, October 3, 1960.

<sup>287</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s, Ruiz’s description of “La Nueva Chicana” examines the development of a distinctive Chicana feminist consciousness resisting strict social control and familial oligarchy. For more of chaperonage in Mexican American social life, see Chapter 3, “The Flapper and the Chaperone,” in Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 51-71. In *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music*, Manuel Peña describes how “young men and women *de buenas familias* (i.e. of middle-class orientation)” were forbidden to attend *conjunto* performances in cantinas or town dances, much less perform rock and roll.

Ruiz, a central conflict between Mexican mothers and daughters was the strict restrictions of social outings, including performances and dances, unless accompanied by a chaperone. Chaperonage, described by Ruiz as “a manifestation of familial oligarchy whereby elders attempted to dictate the activities of youth for the sake of family honor,” constricted the social spheres of young Mexican American women.<sup>288</sup> Tejana musicians like Rachel Longoria (Uniques lead singer) endured strict social control by parents and family members and were generally limited in participating in the music scene.

The Uniques, as a Chicana R&B group, were an anomaly in San Antonio in the late 1950s. Longoria recalled feeling marginalized among their male peers and the limitations in their performance spaces.

We went to school with Randy Garibay at Burbank High School; he sang for The Velvets and later sang with The Pharaohs. His sister, Yolanda Garibay, sang with us in the group. We beat The Pharaohs at a battle of the bands at Arneson River Theater in 1958. One day, Sunny Ozuna, another one of our classmates at Burbank, asked if he could join our group and we said, ‘No, no, no! We want to keep it all girls!’ I never noticed any other girl singers at that time. The teens enjoyed us, especially the young women. Maybe we represented something for them. The guys were ok with us, too, but I think sometimes they didn’t like for us to be there. At that time, girls couldn’t go to the same places as guys and so we were limited to where we could perform...it was different back then.<sup>289</sup>

The Uniques’ marginalization in the West Side Sound accentuates a broader historical experience among Tejana musicians. In her study of Tejana performers and entrepreneurs between the 1930 and 1950s, historian Mary Ann Villarreal argues that Tejana musicians, performing in working-class spaces like cantinas and bars, negotiated the cultural and racial terrains of South Texas.

---

<sup>288</sup> Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 51-71

<sup>289</sup> Rachel Longoria, interview by author, April 25, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.



**Figure 3.3:** The Roulettes, one of the first Latina R&B groups in U.S. history. *San Antonio Express News*, July 31, 1957.

Longoria's groups were not the only all-girl rhythm and blues groups in San Antonio, but they were among the first. A few years later, a trio of young Tejanas calling themselves The Royal Tones, who later changed their names to their more popular designation, The Dreamliners, recorded three singles for local record producer Abe Epstein's Cobra and Jox labels. The Dreamliners also provided back-up vocals for several of Epstein's rhythm and blues productions. Formed in 1961 by Sylvia Wilburn-Salas, Clair Peralta, and Cecilia Silva at South San Antonio High School, the group initially practiced in their school choir room, singing popular doo-wop songs, including The Five Satins' "In the Still of the Night."<sup>290</sup> Styled after Motown's The Supremes, a popular African American female singing group, The Dreamliners became one of the first local groups to leave San Antonio for a brief residency at Las Vegas' Golden Nugget Casino with Sunny and the Sunliners in the mid-1960s. However, because of age and

<sup>290</sup> Sylvia Wilburn-Salas, interview by author, February 17, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

gender, they were not allowed into any of the casinos, unlike their male counterparts.<sup>291</sup>

Shortly after, they also toured with another group, Rudy and the Reno Bops, including stops in Phoenix and El Paso. Sylvia Wilburn-Salas, the group's lead singer, reflected on the paternalism in the local music industry. She recognized their vulnerability as underage Latinas, including the theft of their original compositions:

We were coached by our producer, Abe Epstein. I didn't really know how to emote because I was so young—I mean, what did I know? I was only twelve when I wrote “Just Me and You” (1963) after watching a Susan Hayward movie. Later, when Abe approached me about recording, he asked me if I had any songs and I said, “Yeah, I have a couple, but they're not any good.” I sang them for him and he loved “Just Me and You.” He had this A&R guy that was working for him, Milton Lance, and he changed two words in one of my other songs, “A Shoulder To Cry On,” and put himself as co-author! That threw me for a loop but there was nothing I could do. Another one of our songs, “From One Fool To Another,” (1965) was also my idea but Milton took credit for that one, too.<sup>292</sup>

Similar to other local groups, The Dreamliners dissolved after a few non-charting singles. In her experience, Wilburn-Salas acknowledged the inherent difficulty for young women to advance in the music business. Despite the impediments, she had mostly positive impressions of Epstein, but was frustrated that he blocked an attempt by Houston music mogul Huey Meaux to sign the group to his label. Meaux had just landed a major record contract for East Texas rhythm and blues sensation, Barbara Lynn, launching her into the national pop charts. However, Tejanas such as Longoria and Wilburn-Salas, as well as their all-girl band members, created their own compositions, participated in local competitions, performed in venues as far as Las Vegas and Phoenix, and recorded and

---

<sup>291</sup> Sylvia Wilburn-Salas, interview by author, February 17, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

arranged songs in studios alongside male counterparts, but are far less recognized in Mexican American musical lore. Moreover, other local black and brown girl groups, including The Primettes, The Latintones, and The Tonettes, helped fashion this distinct cross-pollination of genres in San Antonio during this period.

San Antonio rock and roll reflected a particular black-brown connection among Mexican American and African American communities. For example, The Lyrics' "Oh, Please Love Me," reflects a pivotal moment in the formation of the West Side Sound: a remarkable display of lead vocal range and tight-knit harmonization from a mixed-race group of West Side teenagers. Despite the absence of wide-scale or sustained success, The Lyrics' 1959-1960 singles were a benchmark of the burgeoning multiracial pop music emanating from San Antonio's inner-city schools.<sup>293</sup> Music historian Juan Mendoza, who befriended The Lyrics' lead singer, Dimas Garza, in his later years, considered Dimas' musical versatility one of his greatest assets:

Dimas was both a featured singer and composer with the Royal Jesters. He used to tell me that he would write poems in his English class at Lanier, and that his teacher told him that his poems sounded like songs and that he should try to put it to music. When the Lyrics started out, they were all Hispanics: Abel Martinez, Alex Pato, Ignacio de la Vega, and Dimas Garza; and they were all from Lanier. Later, E.J. Henke signed them, and that's when Carl Henderson (an African American vocalist) joined the group. They used to perform all over the place at teen places: The Cadillac Club, The Tourist Ballroom, Arthur Murray's Dance Studios, and even local battle of the bands.<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>293</sup> Liner notes from a 1979 LP reissue of the Lyrics' sole two singles, along with some unreleased material, acknowledged the obscurity of the group beyond its regional popularity around San Antonio and Houston in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Compiled by L.R. Docks, the LP's liner notes go on to acknowledge that while the group was essentially a "black vocal group," only one of its members—Carl Henderson—was, in fact, black. The other three were Tejanos. (Curiously, the liner notes fail to credit, or even mention, Anthony or Carr, blatantly misattributing Henke as Harlem Records' sole proprietor and producer.)

<sup>294</sup> Juan Mendoza, interview by author, February 24, 2018, San Antonio.



By the end of 1959, the West Side Sound was gaining momentum. The Royal Jesters, a popular doo-wop group equipped with a “100-member fan club,” released their powerful debut, “My Angel of Love” backed with “Those Dreamy Eyes,” in December.<sup>295</sup> The Royal Jesters’ Henry Hernandez distinctly recalled the moment his debut record hit the airwaves. Anthony made sure his listeners heard it. “When ‘My Angel of Love’ first came out, Joe played it like a dozen times. I was at home and we gathered around the kitchen and turned on the radio, and he just kept playing it over and over [Laughs]. It was very exciting.”

Founded by school friends Oscar Lawson and Henry Hernandez, The Royal Jesters went on to become one of the most prolific multiracial groups with over 33 singles and 5 LPs during their two-decade run. Formed in the summer of 1958, the original line-up consisted of Henry Hernandez, Louis Escalante, Tony Garcia, Mike Pedraza, and Oscar Lawson, later adding Bobby Cantu and Charlie Walker, an African American vocalist from the East Side.<sup>296</sup> Seizing on their popularity, Anthony asked the group to perform at his sock hop and later signed them to his label. He tapped Charlie and the Jives to help on arrangements and back them up in the studio. “I went over to Anthony’s radio show at KMAC, it was down the street from Club Fiesta,” Alvarado remembered. “He tells me he had a band he wants me record and back up at Arthur Murray’s. I heard their song, ‘My Angel of Love,’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I can put some music to it.’ After that recording, they started to get a lot of gigs. That was a big song for them, and they made a name for themselves. I was doing arrangements and wanted to do

---

<sup>295</sup> “Royal Jesters to Meet Sunday,” *San Antonio Express News*, October 15, 1959.

<sup>296</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview by author, March 17, 2017, San Antonio.

a (sax) solo, so Jeff (Smith, studio engineer) put it at the beginning. The band agreed and people say it came out good!”<sup>297</sup>



**Fig. 3.4** Royal Jesters, 1959. Photo courtesy of Numero Group Archive, Chicago, IL.

**Fig. 3.5:** Rachel Longoria, lead singer for The Roulettes and The Uniques, reunited with her 45-rpm single from 1960. San Antonio, TX, October 6, 2018. Photo taken by author.

Raised in the West Side, Lawson and Hernandez were exposed to an array of music during the postwar years, particularly regional Mexican genres, including *norteño*, *mariachi*, and *trio romantico*. They were especially partial to the harmonies found in both doo-wop and *trio* music, listening and singling along to the radio at home and in school. Hernandez sang in his church choir and absorbed music from his father, Henry Sr., who was a mechanic by trade and musician by hobby.<sup>298</sup> Nightly, Hernandez recalled, Mexican music and street brawls echoed from the many cantinas lining Guadalupe Avenue. In 1956, Hernandez started a singing group called The Five Angels, inspired by

---

<sup>297</sup> Charlie Alvarado, interview by author, May 2, 2018, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>298</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview by author, March 17, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

popular African American doo-wop group, The Five Satins, covering their signature song, “In the Still of the Night,” for a Lanier High fundraiser and talent show.<sup>299</sup> That same year, Lawson started a *trio romantico* called The Dukes, inspired by such popular Mexican trios as Los Tres and Los Aces, singing Spanish-language ballads based on *bolero*, *vals* and *pasillo* rhythms. Their skilled harmonies, brass-heavy instrumentation, and affinity for doo-wop music (after the genre’s national decline) is representative of the particular “Chicano Soul” genre rooted in the West Side Sound’s 1960s experience. The following chapter, Chapter Four, discusses The Royal Jesters’ changing sound and image during the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s.

While the Royal Jesters’ Harlem debut launched their career locally, it was Doug Sahm’s breakout single that propelled the label to its greatest heights. Born November 6, 1941, Doug Sahm was raised on the city’s predominantly black East Side and developed an early interest in blues and R&B. As a performer, he was comfortable moving freely among musical genres. At the same time that he embraced Texas-Mexican music and Chicano political ideology, he also was a pioneer in the progressive country music scene. However, Sahm first gained a local following as a young country singer and musician, performing on the radio when he was only five. By the age of eight, “Little Doug Sahm,” as he had come to be known, was performing in area nightclubs and on the nationally popular radio show, Louisiana Hayride.<sup>300</sup> He absorbed the myriad musical genres present throughout his hometown, including German and Czech polkas, waltzes, and schottisches; Texas-Mexican conjunto and mariachi; African American blues, jazz, and

---

<sup>299</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview by author, March 17, 2017, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>300</sup> Jan Reid and Shawn Sahm, *Texas Tornado: The Times and Music of Doug Sahm* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 6.

R&B; and Anglo-American western swing and honky tonk. He freely blended all of these influences to create an eclectic, roots-based style that eventually made him an international star, especially after co-founding the Grammy Award-winning super-group, the Texas Tornados, in 1989.

Sahm was a frequent visitor to mixed-race music venues during the 1950s, particularly the Eastwood Country Club. As a teen, Sahm talked his way into these adults-only venues, mixed and mingled with musicians and club patrons, and convinced Keyhole house bandleader Spot Barnett to let him sit in with his renowned Twentieth Century Orchestra.<sup>301</sup> “On any given night,” Sahm later recalled about the Eastwood, “you had T-Bone Walker, Junior Parker, The Bobby ‘Blue’ Bland Review, Hank Ballard, and James Brown. You just dug in. In the San Antonio clubs, there was nothing but hustlers, pimps, strippers, and a few straggly flat-topped cats from Lackland (Air Force Base).”<sup>302</sup>

Sahm’s 1960 hit, “Why, Why, Why,” featured tenor saxophonist Rocky Morales and became the best-selling single on Harlem that spring.<sup>303</sup> In one of the few leasing deals Harlem successfully managed, Hollywood’s Swingin’ Records, a popular West Coast R&B independent, picked up the single for national re-release that summer. Anthony bumped the song to #1 on his KMAC R&B chart.<sup>304</sup> Sahm waxed nostalgic on

---

<sup>301</sup> Spot Barnett, interview by author, October 2017, San Antonio. Sahm also coined the phrase “West Side Sound” on his 1983 album, “The West Side Sounds Rolls Again,” to describe San Antonio’s roots music he both grew up with and helped shape during his youth.

<sup>302</sup> Reid and Sahm, *Texas Tornado*, 25.

<sup>303</sup> Rocky Morales, interview by Allen Olsen, 2013, San Antonio. Texas Music Collection; Wittliff Collection, Texas State University.

<sup>304</sup> “Joe Anthony ‘Hot’ R&B Sides,” Week of August 5, 1960,” Andrew Brown Texas Music Collection, University of Houston Special Collections.

that song in an interview with *Kicks Magazine*. “That was my first local hit. That slow R&B sound was heavy in town, man.”<sup>305</sup>

The diversity of artists and musical styles on Harlem Records represented on these records reflects the type of cross-pollination that could be found throughout San Antonio’s music scene by the 1960s, including African American tenor saxophonist Spot Barnett who performed on Sahm’s Harlem recordings. Although Harlem lasted only into the early 1960s, it left behind a remarkable legacy. Norton Records’ reissue of the pioneering label’s Doug Sahm catalog, *San Antonio Rock: The Harlem Recordings*, reveals the versatility in musicianship that prevailed during the “peak years” of the West Side Sound. Despite Harlem Records’ demise in 1961, a number of other independent labels soon emerged to help continue the ongoing evolution of the West Side Sound in and around San Antonio.

West Side Sound tenor saxophonist Spot Barnett served as a bandleader and mentor for Sahm and many other young San Antonio musicians, including two young Mexican American musicians named Randy Garibay (born Ramiro Beltrán) and Arturo “Sauce” Gonzalez, who would use their experience in Barnett’s band to help create a distinct Chicano Soul sub-genre during the 1960s. According to West Side Sound veteran Jack Burns, it was common to see Hispanics, blacks, and Anglos playing together in Barnett’s orchestras.<sup>306</sup> Randy Garibay went as far as to claim that ““San Antonio was the

---

<sup>305</sup> Billy Miller, “Mr. Kool! Doug Sahm’s Flipped Sides, 1955-1966,” *Kicks Magazine*, New York, 1992.

<sup>306</sup> Jack Burns, interview by Allen Olsen, 2007, San Antonio. Texas Music Collection; Wittliff Collection, Texas State University.

first city in Texas to have integrated bands.’”<sup>307</sup> Although Garibay’s assertion is difficult, if not impossible, to verify, it does seem that San Antonio had a disproportionately high number of mixed-race bands during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. San Antonio’s live music venues provided an environment in which musicians of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds were not only allowed, but actually encouraged, to work together openly in creating a unique and dynamic amalgamation of musical styles. This local alchemy contributed to the stylings of Sunny and the Sunglows, a popular R&B group whose second single was released on Harlem Records. Some of the Sunglows’ founding members, including Manny Guerra, Rudy Guerra, and Sunny Ozuna, would go on to pioneer Tejano music in the 1960s and 1970s.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Manuel “Manny” Guerra was an important pioneer of the West Side Sound. His first foray into making music started with a simple experiment. “When I was 6-years-old,” he explained, “I would get into the garage and, over a tamale can, I would put tacks on it and get a couple of sticks. That was my first snare drum! We grew up like that, just making sounds with objects.”<sup>308</sup> Guerra’s curiosity and experimentation with music remained a constant throughout his career. After spending over half a century in the music business, as well as having received multiple awards and accolades, Guerra remains an important figure in the Tejano music industry. Guerra’s 1965 *polka-ranchera* hit, “Peanuts,” on his Sunglow Records label, helped to

---

<sup>307</sup> Andrew Brown, liner notes to *San Antonio Rock - The Harlem Recordings, 1957-1961*, ED-274, Norton Records.

<sup>308</sup> Manny Guerra, interview by author, March 2018, San Antonio.

form the foundation of the modern Tejano sound.<sup>309</sup> His recording studio, Amen Studios, is a celebrated site in the early creation of Tejano music, including Selena Quintanilla's first recordings in the 1980s.<sup>310</sup> Consequently, Manny Guerra is an important link between the *orquestas tejanas* and *conjunto* of the early postwar period to the Chicano Soul of the 1950s and 1960s to Tejano music from the 1970s forward. As drummer and producer for Sunny and the Sunglows, Manny Guerra is a vital part of the movement.

The Sunglows' story begins with Guerra's brother, Rudy, and his friend and schoolmate, Ildefonso "Sunny" Ozuna. In 1957, while friends at San Antonio's Brackenridge High School, Rudy Guerra and Sunny Ozuna started an *a cappella* pop group, The Galaxies.<sup>311</sup> Though short-lived, The Galaxies were a stepping-stone to the pair's next band, The Sunglows, which was patterned after doo-wop and R&B groups popular at the time. Ozuna and Rudy Guerra formed The Sunglows in 1958, a six-piece R&B combo composed of Mexican American teenagers, most of whom attended Brackenridge High School.<sup>312</sup> In 1959, the Houston-based Kool record label released the first Sunny and the Sunglows 45-rpm, "Just a Moment," a love ballad whose flipside was an upbeat song entitled "Uptown."<sup>313</sup> While they enjoyed moderate success from the

---

<sup>309</sup> Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 152.

<sup>310</sup> Gary Hickinbotham, "A History of the Texas Recording Industry," *Journal of Texas Music History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2004), 9.

<sup>311</sup> Sunny Ozuna, interview by author, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>312</sup> Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 27.

<sup>313</sup> Andrew Brown, e-mail message to author, April 30, 2013. Some sources cite the release date of "Just a Moment" as 1959. However, music historian Andrew Brown found evidence in Houston's ACA studio archives verifying that the single "definitely dates from 1960—it was mastered at ACA in Houston on or around June 30, 1960."

single, a few of the band members moved shortly after its release. Meanwhile, Manny Guerra was drumming for Corpus Christi's Isidro Lopez Orquesta, a popular bandleader and pioneer of *orquesta tejana*. Lopez's big-band formation had a strong influence on Guerra, who would later incorporate an orquesta-styled horn section into his 1960s R&B productions.<sup>314</sup> Guerra's band experience with Lopez, as well as his early exposure to Afro-Caribbean musical styles including *mambo* and *guajira*, was critical to the Chicano Soul sound they would pioneer with The Sunglows. He later recalled the spontaneous nature of his promotion to bandleader:

We were at my mom's house the day I took over Sunny and the Sunglows. My brother, Rudy, went to school with Sunny and they had a band. I heard them in the back room. They were out of tune and out of tempo, and I was thinking, 'What's going on here?' (Laughs) But I wasn't doing much else with Isidro (Lopez) anymore, so I went and helped them and they later put me in charge of the group. Since I had been around with different bands and had that knowledge, they welcomed me in."<sup>315</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Manny Guerra made his debut as record producer with Sunny and the Sunglows' "From Now On" backed with "When I Think of You" on the Harlem label: swamp pop-inflected songs written by a 17-year-old Sunny Ozuna.<sup>316</sup> Ozuna recalled Guerra's friendship with Anthony as their initial connection with Harlem:

Back then, there were these record hops at places like the Tourist Ballroom, Arthur Murray's, and Patio Andaluz, where so many kids would go. Joe Anthony was one of the main DJs fronting these parties; they would play records there and let some of the local groups play live, too. One day, Anthony says to Manny, 'Hey man, let's get together and

---

<sup>314</sup> Greg Beets, "La Onda Chicana: Sunny Ozuna, Still Talking – to You, Me, and Texitans Everywhere," *Austin Chronicle*, July 21, 2006.

<sup>315</sup> Manny Guerra, interview by author, March 2017, San Antonio. Guerra described the impact of (non-Tejano) Latin musicians, including Tito Puente, Pedro Beltran Ruiz, Machito, and Xavier Cugat, on his performance during the mid-1950s.

<sup>316</sup> Andrew Brown, "'No Color in Poor': San Antonio's Harlem Label," *Wired For Sound*, September 25, 2011.



record. I got a little record company, let's just see what happens.' That was our second single. After that, I found myself wanting to get away from just the doo-wop stuff into a rhythm section with horns. So, we went from just harmony voices to more of me being the upfront guy; we were going to really focus on the brass section with harmonies and stuff like that, keeping up with what was going during the time."<sup>317</sup>

Henry Parrilla, who performed with Ozuna and later enjoyed a successful career with his own Chicano Soul group, Little Henry and the Laveers, remembered Guerra's key development of the West Side Sound. "I think Manuel Guerra was the one who brainstormed that whole thing (using the Hammond organ)," recalled Parrilla. "You see, he wanted to do music without the accordion, and he didn't want to just have a horn band like an orchestra and they couldn't carry around a piano. Once Sunny and the Sunliners started to use the organ, that was it—everyone wanted to use that sound."<sup>318</sup> That "sound" was a result of the core ensemble most often associated with the golden era West Side Sound—keyboard, drums, electric guitar and bass, and horns. In many cases, the lead singer also served as front man and namesake for the group, as with Sunny and the Sunglows, Henry and the Laveers, and Dino and the Dell-Tones.

However, it was Sunny and the Sunglows' ninth single, "Talk To Me," recorded in 1962 for Manny Guerra's Sunglow Records, that caught the attention of prominent Houston disc jockey and producer Huey Meaux, a.k.a. "The Crazy Cajun."<sup>319</sup> The following year, Meaux released "Talk To Me" on his own Tear Drop Records label. Meaux knew the Spanish-language market, as well as R&B, blues, country, polka, rock,

---

<sup>317</sup> Sunny Ozuna, interview by author, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>318</sup> Molina, *Chicano Soul*, 25.

<sup>319</sup> "Talk To Me" b/w "Pony Time," 45-rpm produced by Manny Guerra, performed by Sunny Ozuna, Sunglow Records SG-110, 1962.

funk, swamp pop, rockabilly, and nearly all other styles of music found in Texas and Louisiana.<sup>320</sup> By October of 1963, under Meaux's newly rebranded group, Sunny and the Sunliners, "Talk to Me" reached Number Eleven on the *Billboard* "Hot One Hundred" list.<sup>321</sup> Following the success of the single, Sunny and the Sunliners became the first Chicano group to perform on Dick Clark's popular television show, *American Bandstand*.<sup>322</sup>

"Talk to Me" remains a very important song in the canon of Mexican American music, partly because it was the first Chicano record to break nationwide. It also is a prime example of early Chicano Soul, with its slow, string-filled rendition of R&B recording artist Little Willie John's original from 1958.<sup>323</sup> "Talk to Me" secured Sunny and the Sunliners' position as "the premier Chicano group in the country,"<sup>324</sup> according to music historian Ruben Molina, especially after helping make national television exposure more accessible to young Mexican American artists. What is not often remembered about that particular tune, however, is that Manny Guerra arranged, recorded, and produced it, but never received full credit. More than thirty years later, Manny Guerra recalled the experience:

I produced that ["Talk To Me"], that was my arrangement, that was on my label. Just recently, I was telling my wife, "I can't understand. I chose that song, gave it to Sunny, I arranged it, I recorded it, it went on my label, and yet when people here talk about 'Talk To Me,' it's Sunny and the

---

<sup>320</sup> Andy Bradley and Roger Wood, *House of Hits: The Story of Houston's Gold Star/SugarHill Recording Studios* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>321</sup> Huey Meaux, "Sunny and the Sunglows," advertisement, *Billboard*, October 19, 1963, 16.

<sup>322</sup> Molina, *Chicano Soul*, 30.

<sup>323</sup> Manuel Guerra, interview by Ramón Hernández, 2004.

<sup>324</sup> Molina, *Chicano Soul*, 30.

Sunliners.” Sunny just split our group when the thing was hitting. That’s when they [Huey Meaux and Chester Foy Lee/Tear Drop Records] coaxed him “come out from there, you don’t need to carry that group. We’ll get you to form your own group.”...So he took off on his own, and he took advantage of the hit.<sup>325</sup>

Two years following Sunny and the Sunliners’ nine-week stint on the *Billboard* Hot One Hundred with “Talk to Me,” Huey Meaux produced the Sir Douglas Quintet’s breakout single, “She’s About a Mover,” which eventually hit the number thirteen spot on the U.S. *Billboard* “Pop” list in 1965.<sup>326</sup> These songs, which were two of the biggest hits in West Side Sound history, highlight the often-under-recognized importance of the late producer, Huey Meaux. By bringing Sunny and the Sunliners and the Sir Douglas Quintet, along with dozens of other artists, into the national spotlight, Meaux and his Tear Drop and Tribe record labels had a profound impact on shaping and popularizing Chicano Soul and the West Side Sound.<sup>327</sup>

## Conclusion

Anthony and Henke were among the first record producers of the West Side Sound. Harlem Records’ two-dozen singles represent some of the most prominent names and groups of the West Side Sound: Doug Sahm, the Pharaohs, Sunny and the Sunglows, Spot Barnett, Charlie and the Jives, The Lyrics, and the Royal Jesters, among others. Rudy T. Martinez, who recorded for and later worked with Henke in the late 1950s with his record label, Blaze Records, credited the duo for being among the first in the local

---

<sup>325</sup> Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta*, 261.

<sup>326</sup> Reid and Sahm, *Texas Tornado*, 31.

<sup>327</sup> For more on Huey Meaux’s life and career, see Andy Bradley and Roger Wood, *House of Hits: The Story of Houston’s Gold Star/Sugar Hill Recording Studios* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

record circuit. “There were very few people who started record labels at that time.

Another one in town was Lonnie Fairbanks, who started Wildcat Records. Me, Doug Sahm, and The Pharaohs all started on Henke’s Warrior and Blaze Records.”<sup>328</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, weekly surveys from radio stations, charts with disc jockeys’ “top spins,” reflected the growing influence of payola and demonstrated the changes in pop genres.

Other entrepreneurs also launched their own independent labels around this time. Producer Emil “E.J.” Henke, who partnered with Joe Anthony on Harlem Records, was known for his output of country, rockabilly, and rock records, including some of Doug Sahm’s earliest recordings.<sup>329</sup> Henke also dabbled in soul and R&B with his Satin and Wildcat record labels during the late 1950s and 1960s, although he failed to chart any major hit singles.<sup>330</sup> Local producers Jesse Schneider of Renner Records and Manuel Rangel of Rival Records also produced scores of local Chicano Soul records associated with the peak years of the West Side Sound.<sup>331</sup>

Despite playing a significant role in the larger South Texas music scene, most of these independent producers folded after a few years, unable to keep up with the rapidly changing music scene of the late 1960s—an era which ushered in *La Onda Chicana* (The Chicano Wave) of the 1970s and signaled the beginnings of a third and final phase in the ongoing development of the West Side Sound. The industriousness of the West Side

---

<sup>328</sup> Jesse Garcia, interview by author, March 13, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>329</sup> Andrew Brown, liner notes to *San Antonio Rock - The Harlem Recordings, 1957-1961*, ED-274, Norton Records.

<sup>330</sup> Gary Hickinbotham, “A History of the Texas Recording Industry,” *Journal of Texas Music History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2004), 11.

<sup>331</sup> Molina, *Chicano Soul*, 22.

Sound during this period, however, shows how Latinas and Latinos, alongside African Americans, contributed to popular genres in the 1960s. Black and brown musicians in San Antonio left behind an “alternative archive” and the creation of national culture during the 1960s. The 1955-1966 period reveals the immense productivity of local record labels, radio stations, and musicians in creating a brown consciousness through Chicano/a Soul and rhythm and blues.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Yo Soy Chicano: La Onda Chicana in the West Side Sound, 1966-1980*

“Año de Sesenta y Cinco, Sesenta y Seis, mas o menos / Se levantó nuestra gente en los campos de Delano / Pidiendo mejor sueldos por trabajar el terreno / Estado de California tener candado tejen / Se escucharon las palabras andala paisa joven / A ingresar a los indicados, nos ira mucho mas bien / Porque salímos en huelga, ruesa que mucha sasombre / ‘Es todo!’ decía un joven, Cesar Chávez es su nombre / ‘Solo pedimos lo justo y la dignidad del nombre!’”

The year '65, '66, more or less / Our people arose in the camps of Delano / Asking for better wages to work the soil / The state of California has it locked down / They listened to the words of a young man / To invoke their names it would be much better / Because we went on strike, / “That’s it,” said a young man / His name is Cesar Chavez / “We only ask for what’s fair and the dignity of our name!”

- Lalo Guerrero, “El Corrido de Delano,” 1966<sup>332</sup>

Lalo Guerrero’s song, inspired by the Delano grape strike in 1965, is the first known *corrido* about renowned Mexican American labor activist Cesar Chávez and one of the first protest songs of the Chicano Movement.<sup>333</sup> Guerrero and Chávez were close friends and central figures in the movement during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>334</sup> Known as the “Father of Chicano Music,” Guerrero was an advocate for migrant workers and wrote songs in support of the United Farm Workers, joining labor strikers throughout California during the 1960s. “I only wrote about what I saw,” Guerrero said in an interview for *NPR*, reflecting on his career as a Chicano musician and activist.<sup>335</sup> Conversely, Chávez

---

<sup>332</sup> Lalo Guerrero, “El Corrido de Delano” b/w “El Corrido de Cesar Chavez”, 45, C-537 (Arhoolie Foundation’s Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings, UCLA: Colonial, 1966).

<sup>333</sup> Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010), 70.

<sup>334</sup> *Corridos* are narrative-driven Mexican folk songs often inspired by topical events or people—folk heroes, bandits, corrupt officials, lawmen, etc.—consisting of epic themes and traditional story arcs. Usually, *corridos* describe events or people near the US-Mexican border. For more on *corrido* origins, see Américo Paredes, *“With His Pistol in His Hand”: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958).

<sup>335</sup> Faria Chideya, “New Film Honors Late Musician Lalo Guerrero,” *NPR.org*, October 25, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6380997>, accessed February 28, 2019.

admitted that Guerrero's political activity and songs, including "El Corrido de Delano" and "El Corrido de Cesar Chávez," served as a major source of inspiration for many Mexican Americans in the United States.<sup>336</sup> "El Corrido de Delano" represents the nexus of Mexican American music and social movements of the 1960s. Guerrero's support for workers' rights—"la causa"—and visibility as a prominent Mexican American figure inspired other Chicano activists and musicians in the United States, including San Antonio and South Texas.

Likewise, the West Side Sound's transition from teenage love ballads to "Chicano music" during *La Onda Chicana* ("Chicano Wave") reflects the union of artistry and activism in a new era.<sup>337</sup> *La Onda Chicana*, the musical component of the Chicano Movement, revealed a sense of Chicano/a nationalism among Mexican Americans during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>338</sup> Chicano/a nationalism, which foregrounded the affirmation of cultural identity rooted in Aztec folklore, freedom struggles against second-class citizenship and institutionalized racism, and improved economic opportunities for Mexican Americans, found expression through cultural innovations in music, literature,

---

<sup>336</sup> Lalo Guerrero, *Lalo: My Life and Music* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 161.

<sup>337</sup> Mexican American Studies scholar Estevan César Azcona argues that 1960s/1970s Chicano/a cultural producers and musicians "engage a diversity of other race, ethnic, and regional struggles" to connect Chicanos/as with broader interethnic solidarity and transnational protest movements in Latin America and the United States. Azcona recognizes "outside" genres, beyond cultural nationalist and Mexican-origin frameworks, which influence the "canon" of Chicano/a music. Estevan César Azcona, "Movements in Chicano Music: Performing Culture, Performing Politics, 1965-1979" PhD Diss., University of Texas-Austin, 2008, accessed February 13, 2019, <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/17735>.

<sup>338</sup> Manuel Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 119. Peña frames the music of *La Onda Chicana* during the 1960s/1970s as a mixture between working-class *conjunto* and middle-class *orquesta*, as well as fusions with rock, soul, and funk, to forge a new stylistic expression Chicano/a autonomy.

and theater.<sup>339</sup> While many Chicanos/as broadly affirmed ethnic pride during this period, many also reaffirmed cultural connections to other ethnic groups. Exploring the West Side Sound's evolution into *La Onda Chicana*, this chapter argues for the conceptualizing of the Chicano Movement as a multicultural expression. Mexican Americans musicians in this period, in cross-pollinated performances of Texas-Mexican genres and rock, R&B, soul, and funk, contributed to evolving notions of Chicano/a music in their interethnic connections with African Americans. This chapter also examines how the continued proliferation of multiracial Chicano/a groups during *La Onda Chicana* accentuated hybridized expressions of *Chicanismo*, or Chicano/a identity.

The first part of this chapter begins with a discussion of the Chicano Movement in San Antonio in order to understand its relationship to *La Onda Chicana* and the evolution of “Chicano music” in the West Side Sound. This chapter then turns to discussions of identity formation in *La Onda Chicana*, as well as visual/aural expressions of protest and ethnic pride, to view the “evolution” of the West Side Sound into the 1970s. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of Latin music hybridity in the West Side Sound and the origins of Tejano by the latter 1970s.

### **Chicano Movement in San Antonio**

The Chicano Movement advanced goals of improving civil rights, political liberties, social justice, and economic opportunities for Mexican Americans.<sup>340</sup> Political

---

<sup>339</sup> Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 92.

<sup>340</sup> Peña, *Música Tejana*, 160. As a broad social movement, there are many interpretations and definitions of the Chicano Movement. For an introduction and historiography of the movement, see “Introduction: The Chicano Movement and Chicano Historiography,” in Mario T. García, *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-19. For further reading on the movement, see Francisco Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico Press); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in*



objectives included the dismantling of anti-Mexican discrimination in public education and incorporation of Mexican American history in school curriculum.<sup>341</sup> Other aspects of the movement include the political mobilization of Chicano/a youth and the challenging of established Mexican American leadership to upend Anglo cultural and political hegemony.<sup>342</sup> More broadly, artistic transformations in music, literature, language, fashion, and culture evoked ethnic pride and Chicano/a cultural consciousness among Mexican Americans during this period.

By the late 1950s, a small and rising middle class of Mexican Americans in San Antonio, many World War II veterans who benefitted from the GI Bill, transcended the segregated *barrio* into postwar prosperity.<sup>343</sup> Mexican American elites were slowly gaining seats in local government, a paternalistic “sharing” of Anglo power in a gradual change of civic leadership. Established Mexican American civil rights organizations in South Texas, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum, made steady gains in the legal fight against anti-Mexican

---

*the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1989); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publisher, 1972); Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989); Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

<sup>341</sup> Historian Guadalupe San Miguel documents the rise of a new grassroots leadership coalition in Houston working to achieve the legal recognition for Mexican Americans as a minority group. Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

<sup>342</sup> David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>343</sup> Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2016), 25.

discrimination.<sup>344</sup> However, the majority of Mexican Americans in San Antonio were relegated to an economically-limited and second-class status, confined within a system of governance which benefited few and subjugated many. Continual growth of the Mexican American population in San Antonio—at nearly forty percent of the population by 1960—developed along established racial and class divisions.<sup>345</sup>

Local conditions affecting Mexican American life in San Antonio contributed to a burgeoning Chicano/a political ideology by the mid-1960s. Mexican American *barrios* continued to suffer from decades of substandard housing and infrastructure.<sup>346</sup> Regular flooding in the area and continued devastation of communities instilled desperation and growing resentment towards the Anglo oligarchy.<sup>347</sup> Years of neglect and isolation of the *barrios* bore powerful street gangs and violent warfare among rival *pachucos* in area schools and neighborhoods. When police did venture into these areas, brutality against *pachucos* and Mexican American street youth caused further racial tensions and frustrations with law enforcement.<sup>348</sup> West Side native and musician Vicente “Chente” Montes recalled the street violence afflicting his neighborhood during the 1960s. “Almost

---

<sup>344</sup> By the end of the 1950s, LULAC won several court cases upending school segregation while initiating assimilationist programs such as the “Little School of 400” campaign aimed at instructing English to Spanish-speaking Mexican children before grade school. For more on LULAC in Texas, see Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 3-10.

<sup>345</sup> The total population of San Antonio in 1960 was 587,718. Most of the Mexican American population continued to live in the West and South sides until the end of de jure segregation during the latter 1960s. Bruce A. Glasrud, *African Americans in South Texas History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 281; Population of San Antonio, Texas, 1960, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

<sup>346</sup> Rodolfo Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion: The Untold Political Story of San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 116.

<sup>347</sup> Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*, 24-25.

<sup>348</sup> Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 61.

every weekend, guys from the neighborhood gangs, like La Blanca, would do drive-by shootings. They'd pass by and it sounded like they were shooting a zip gun! There was a lot of fights in that neighborhood, it was a rough neighborhood. It was dangerous on the weekends because the trouble-makers would drink like crazy and get into fights."<sup>349</sup>

These underlying social conditions, in the wake of wide-scale protests and social change in the ongoing African American civil rights movement, roused a new generation of Mexican American *barrio* leadership.

With frustrations stirring in the *barrio*, the onset of striking farmworkers in California and Texas from 1965-1966 further galvanized the Chicano Movement in San Antonio.<sup>350</sup> Newly-unionized farmworkers protested low pay and poor working conditions in South Texas. In June 1966, an organized march from Rio Grande City through San Antonio and into Austin gathered over 10,000 farmworkers and community activists to the steps of the Texas State Capital.<sup>351</sup> Local college students (there were four private universities in San Antonio at this time) joined farmworker support communities in a show of solidarity with the movement.<sup>352</sup> These networks gradually broadened their political agenda to include other aspects of Mexican American life, including segregation, poverty, access to education, and anti-Mexican racism.

By the mid-1960s, youth affirmation of "Chicano" and "Chicana," fused with notions of a united Chicano/a race (*la raza unida*), comprised the ideological tenets of *Chicanismo* (Chicano/a identity) in San Antonio. Chicanos/as' connections to Aztlán, the

---

<sup>349</sup> Vicente "Chente" Montes, interview by author, February 6, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>350</sup> Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion*, 107.

<sup>351</sup> Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2011), 105-106.

<sup>352</sup> Montejano, *Quixote's Soldier*, 27.

mythical Aztec homeland in the territories of the modern U.S. Southwest, informed the wider cultural, intellectual, and artistic aspects of the movement. Historian David Montejano describes the making of a local Chicano/a identity in San Antonio in its relationship to Chicano/a comradeship, or *carnalismo*. He writes, “Chicano identity only became a potent influence once it was revamped with ideas of brotherhood and unity.”<sup>353</sup> This unity represented a common ground among San Antonio Chicanos/as and a sense of familial connections beyond *barrio* or political boundaries.<sup>354</sup>

By the late 1960s, New Left organizations such as the Brown Berets and MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) were among the central Chicano/a groups in San Antonio.<sup>355</sup> Founded by St. Mary University students José Angel Gutierrez, Mario Compean, Juan Patlan, Willie Velasquez, and Ignacio “Nacho” Perez in 1967, MAYO emerged as the central organization for mobilized Mexican American youth in Texas.<sup>356</sup> Inspired by Black Nationalism and firebrand leaders such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X, MAYO sought social justice for Mexican Americans through similar modes of activism and self-determination. Demonstrations, picketing, school walk-outs, and other forms of protests characterized a new era of confrontational activism in San Antonio. MAYO leaders forged a powerful coalition among disaffected *barrio* youth and

---

<sup>353</sup> Montejano, *Quixote's Soldier*, 268.

<sup>354</sup> Examining Chicano identity more broadly, historian Francisco Rosales asserts that Chicano/a identity evolved within distinct regional formations across the Southwest due to geopolitical and statewide histories. For instance, Chicano/a identity in Texas differed from California due to a stark history of anti-Mexican violence in the state, making the “division between Anglos and Mexicanos...clear” which generated an “acute resentment of a well-defined Gringo group.” Rosales also points out that political elements of identity formation were generally more conservative outside California. Francisco Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press), 224.

<sup>355</sup> “The Militant Chicano: Where Next?,” *San Antonio Express News*, January 11, 1970; Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion*, 168.

<sup>356</sup> Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion*, 108.

urban and farm-labor activists around the region, mounting a challenge to Anglo control of Texas. In a front-page story in the *San Antonio Express News*, discussions of MAYO and the “militant Chicano” included the organization’s criticisms against the Catholic Church and an insurgency campaign to “turn the economic, political, and social systems of South Texas over to Chicanos.”<sup>357</sup> This political campaign included the creation of new MAYO chapters in South Texas towns and a new political party, La Raza Unida, to fill city council and mayoral seats. By 1969, at the peak of MAYO’s power, there were active chapters throughout the state.<sup>358</sup>

The Chicano Movement tapped into young generation’s disaffection and frustrations with the status quo. Historians David Montejano and Ernesto Chavez examined the tactics of Chicano leadership in recruiting inner-city youth to join *la causa*, or “the cause,” as the rank and file “soldiers” of the movement.<sup>359</sup> Continued poverty and discrimination in the West Side yielded an increase in street-level delinquency groups. Mexican American activists in San Antonio initiated a citywide campaign to mobilize youth for *la causa*, particularly street youth associated with juvenile delinquency and gangs in the West and South Side.<sup>360</sup> Wide scale police brutality and criminalization of *barrio* youth provided suitable social conditions to channel disaffection into political power. For some, music provided an escape from the harsh realities of West Side street life. “La Dot, La Tripe, and El Urde, those gangs were always fighting (at school) and I

---

<sup>357</sup> Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion*, 168.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>359</sup> Ernesto Chávez, *A Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First!): Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 57; Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*, 10.

<sup>360</sup> Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*, 55-56.

was right in the middle of them, man,” recalled musician saxophonist Gilberto Escobedo. “Those guys there were carrying knives and guns to school...I learned a lot at that school (Harris High School). And then I was playing there and stuff, in the different bands.”<sup>361</sup>

Young Chicanos/as expressed frustrations against the preceding generation’s culture of conformity, inspired by the fervor of colonial revolutionary ideology in Cuba and elsewhere. The escalation of the Vietnam War mobilized wide scale efforts across the country to denounce the U.S. war effort. In San Antonio, school walkouts in *barrio* high schools in April of 1968, including Lanier and Edgewood, expressed Chicano/a unity with efforts around the country to protest the war.<sup>362</sup> The Chicano Moratorium of 1970 in East Los Angeles assembled an estimated 20,000-30,000 Chicanos/as (and sympathizers) to protest the war and put an end to Mexican American soldiers from fighting and dying on the frontlines.<sup>363</sup> Historian Lorena Oropeza’s study of Chicano opposition to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam centers anti-war activism as a key tenet of the Chicano Movement. Oropeza documents how Chicano activists in San Antonio and South Texas expressed solidarity with the North Vietnamese in their struggle to both defy U.S. imperialism and liberate their dispossessed homeland.<sup>364</sup>

Images, figures, and political drama of the movement filled front-page news pages in San Antonio during this period.<sup>365</sup> A 1970 *San Antonio Light* article paraphrased

---

<sup>361</sup> Gilbert Escobedo, interview by José Angel Gutierrez, May 1996, San Antonio, transcript.

<sup>362</sup> Rosales, *Chicano!*, 281.

<sup>363</sup> Oropeza, *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!*, 145.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>365</sup> Between 1966-1976, there were over 300 articles on “La Raza Unida” and the “Chicano Movement” between the *San Antonio Express* and *San Antonio Light*, the city’s two leading papers. Articles such as “The Militant Chicano: Where Next?,” and “Parties, Church, Hit By MAYO Leaders” informed readers of

Chicano youth delegate Roberto Elias, who pointed out that while only ten percent of the nation consisted of Latinos, more than twenty percent of combat fatalities in the war were of “Spanish-speaking descent.”<sup>366</sup> The article described Chicano land redistribution efforts in New Mexico and ideas about establishing Chicano nationhood in *Aztlán*. Such rhetoric became part of the resistance against the war and the U.S. government at large. A furious op-ed in the *San Antonio Express* derided U.S. Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez and the Mexican American establishment for “bowing and scraping before gringos” and perpetuation of second-class citizenship for Mexican Americans in San Antonio.<sup>367</sup>

Struggles against San Antonio’s Mexican American political establishment, including Congressman Gonzalez and the Bexar County Democratic Party, characterized the generational tension between Chicano/a activists and their moderate elders.<sup>368</sup> Gonzalez, a central figure of the preceding World War II generation, was the first Mexican American elected to the Texas Senate and later, the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>369</sup> During a congressional proceeding in 1969, Congressman Gonzalez accused MAYO and their allies in San Antonio of undermining the gains of preceding civil rights initiatives, likening the *Universidad de los Barrios*—a MAYO-established youth outreach center in San Antonio—to a “local gang operation” that regularly

---

the goings-on in Mexican American politics. “Parties, Church Targeted by MAYO Leaders,” *San Antonio Light*, December 31, 1969; “The Militant Chicano: Where Next?,” *San Antonio Express News*, January 11, 1970. University of Texas-San Antonio - San Antonio & Texas Newspapers Archives.

<sup>366</sup> “Chicano Group: New ‘Nation’ Proposed,” *San Antonio Light*, March 31, 1970.

<sup>367</sup> Gilbert Rico, “Gonzalez Held Out-Dated,” *San Antonio Express*, May 6, 1969.

<sup>368</sup> Rodolfo, *The Illusion of Inclusion*, 98.

<sup>369</sup> Jan Russell, “Henry B. Gonzalez,” *Texas Monthly*, January 2001, <http://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/henry-b-gonzalez/>, accessed March 3, 2019.

distributed “hate sheets, designed to inflame passions.”<sup>370</sup> Still, many Chicano activists were undeterred by such criticisms as the movement was growing across the Southwest. In their attempt to upend Anglo hegemony and improve Mexican American life, Chicano/a activists in San Antonio rejected the politics of moderation represented by Gonzalez and Democratic Party leadership. This split represents a flashpoint in the local movement wherein mobilized youth and New Left activists banded together to disrupt the status quo and demand immediate and far-ranging social change.

Responding to the movement, innovations in art, music, theater, and poetry encapsulated the spirit and frustrations of local and national social issues. Chicano theater groups *El Teatro de la Universidad* and *El Teatro Chicano de Aztlán* staged “short dramatic forms” in San Antonio to “inspire the audience to social action.”<sup>371</sup> A group of West Side Mexican American artists, *Los Pintores de Aztlán* (Painters of Aztlán) set out to “promote the artwork of the Chicano... relating to our people” with desires of inspiring a “full-scale art movement” in South Texas.<sup>372</sup> Con Safo, another Chicano art group formed in San Antonio in the late 1960s, advanced Chicano art into the mainstream, embodying stylistic elements of Mexican art forms in murals and local exhibitions.<sup>373</sup> Chicano/a musicians evolved from English-language rock and pop combos during the 1950s and 1960s, to re-interpreting Texas-Mexican musical traditions and Spanish-

---

<sup>370</sup> Henry B. Gonzalez, “A New Militancy,” April 22, 1969, *Congressional Record*, 91 Congress, 1st Session. April 22, 1969.

<sup>371</sup> “Notes on Chicano Theater” in *La Raza On The Move: Program for ‘La Semana de La Raza’* (Mexican American Unity Council, September 1971), 36.

<sup>372</sup> “Los Pintores de Aztlán” in *La Raza On The Move: Program for ‘La Semana de La Raza’* (Mexican American Unity Council, September 1971), 28.

<sup>373</sup> Ruben Charles Cordova, *Con Safo: The Chicano Art Group and the Politics of South Texas* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2009), 5.



language recordings during *La Onda Chicana*. These cultural innovations reflected a prevailing sense of ethnic pride and political activism affecting Mexican Americans in San Antonio during this period.

### **Pride and Protest in *La Onda Chicana***

*La Onda Chicana* signaled a renewed interest in the hybridization of musical genres occurring in South Texas to varying degrees for decades. *Orquestas tejanas* of the war and postwar era, which had long absorbed “outside” musical influences, took a leading role in incorporating rock and roll into an eclectic blend of styles. *Onda Chicana* musicians included messages of Chicano/a consciousness in music and album artwork, reflecting aural and visual expressions of the Chicano Movement. New groups self-identifying as “Chicano,” “Latin,” or “Brown,” such as Brown Machine, Los Chicanos, and Latin Breed, demonstrated a prevailing sense of ethnic pride among San Antonio Mexican Americans in the era of the Chicano Movement. These groups mixed traditional Texas-Mexican genres with (non-Mexican) Latin and African-American genres.

The changing music and album art of Sunny and the Sunliners, a popular Chicano R&B group during the peak years of the West Side Sound, embodied a growing “brown consciousness” during *La Onda Chicana*. Bandleader Sunny Ozuna described himself as “Mr. Brown-Eyed Soul” and “Little Brown-Eyed Soul” on album titles and liner notes with increasing frequency by the latter 1960s. African American DJ and Houston record producer, Skipper Lee Frazier, fashioned these names after seeing the group perform in Houston. Frazier later helped popularize the group with African American audiences

through his radio show on KCOH.<sup>374</sup> In his liner notes for Sunny and the Sunliners' 1968 LP, "Little Brown-Eyed Soul," Frazier praised the group as his "soul brothers" from San Antonio. He added, "With Sunny and the Sunliners, whom I often refer to as my 'Brown-Eyed Soul Brothers,' they've got soul. They express it in their own way."<sup>375</sup> Frazier's up-and-coming vocal group from Houston, Archie Bell and the Drells, recorded with Sunny and the Sunliners in San Antonio, including Vietnam protest song, "A Soldier's Prayer 1967."<sup>376</sup> The two groups later toured together throughout Texas and Louisiana, including Tejano music venues in Seguin, Corpus Christi, and San Marcos.<sup>377</sup> Recalling his interactions with the group, Bell affirmed the Sunliners' skill and soulfulness, comparing the Texas-Mexican group to the "Godfather of Soul," James Brown. "Over there in San Antonio, they were doing a lot of Hispanic music at that time, which also influenced our sound. And they were funky. Sunny and the Sunliners had a band that could blow James Brown's band out of the water!"<sup>378</sup> Sunny and the Sunliners, influenced by shared musical experiences with African Americans and the Chicano Movement in San Antonio, affirmed brownness and ethnic pride during *La Onda Chicana*.

Sunny and the Sunliners' 1971 album, *Young, Gifted, and Brown*, borrowed its title from civil rights activist and singer Nina Simone's 1970 Black Power song, "To Be

---

<sup>374</sup> Skipper Lee Frazier, *The Man Who Brought a Mountain of Soul to Houston, Texas: Autobiography of a Disc Jockey* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2012), 39.

<sup>375</sup> Sunny and the Sunliners, *Little Brown Eyed Soul*, LP, KL-3005 (Key-Loc Records, 1968).

<sup>376</sup> Archie Bell and the Drells with Sunliners, *A Soldier's Prayer 1967 b/w On in One*, 45-rpm, Ovide-226 (Ovide Records, 1967).

<sup>377</sup> Archie Bell, interview by Ramon Hernandez, August 10, 2017. Hispanic Entertainment Archives, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>378</sup> Archie Bell, interview by author, September 9, 2016, Houston.

Young, Gifted, and Black.” Reflecting on this period, Ozuna recognized the wave of ethnic pride affecting black and brown musicians in the late 1960s and early 1970s. “I didn’t really do it with anything political in mind. We did go through a little spell there when James Brown was doing his ‘I’m Black and I’m Proud’ thing, so it subconsciously affected our music. You know, we as Hispanics, we’re drawn to the word ‘brown’ as an identity, so we started to name our songs and albums with ‘brown’ in the title.”<sup>379</sup> Other Sunny and the Sunliners albums during this period, such as *Sky High* (1967), *The Versatile* (1969), and *The Missing Link* (1969), mixed soul, funk, and rock with Texas-Mexican genres, including descriptors of “brown” and “Latin soul” on song descriptions and liner notes.

Sunny and the Sunliners’ popularity continued to rise with Mexican American audiences outside of San Antonio, spreading the multicultural sounds of Chicano music through commercial record sales and extensive touring in the Southwest. Though their songs were not explicitly political, the Sunliners embodied the spirit of the movement in overt themes of uplift and self-determination and participation in Chicano rallies.<sup>380</sup> The group’s performance at the El Paso Coliseum in 1974 anchored a *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* (MEChA) event to celebrate Chicano Month at the University of Texas-El Paso.<sup>381</sup> The celebration included speeches by Chicano leaders Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and César Chavez. Sunliners bassist Vicente “Chente” Montes recalled the

---

<sup>379</sup> Sunny Ozuna, interview by author, February 21, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>380</sup> By the early 1970s, writers and journalists promoted The Sunliners as pioneers and leaders of Chicano music. A full-page 1972 article in the *Corpus Christi Caller* on the growing Chicano music industry, reprinted in several papers across Texas, dubbed The Sunliners as “the Chicano group that started the big money flowing in Texas for this type of band back in the early sixties.” Charlie Brite, “Chicano Music Dominates the Profit Scene in Texas,” *Corpus Christi Caller*, February 20, 1972.

<sup>381</sup> “Chicanos Promote Cultural Awareness,” *El Paso Prospector*, September 3, 1974.

musical and political transformation during this period. “I started playing Chicano music when I joined Sunny and the Sunliners. Before that, it was all nightclub music – Fats Domino, Ray Charles, stuff like that. I was 17 when I went on the road with them [Sunliners]. People came out to see us, to dance to our music. I remember we would play the Coliseum at El Paso and there was *raza* (ethnic Mexicans) everywhere.”<sup>382</sup>



**Fig. 4.1** Sunny and the Sunliners’ *Young, Gifted, and Brown* LP from 1971. From author’s collection.  
**Fig. 4.2** Advertisement for a “Chicano Concert & Dance” at the El Paso Coliseum featuring Sunny and the Sunliners and Laredo’s Rene & Rene. *El Paso Harold Post*. September 8, 1973.

Continued intercultural exchanges between black and brown musicians in Texas uncover the extent of multicultural influences throughout *La Onda Chicana*. Musician Jose María “Little Joe” De León Hernández recalled shared experiences with African Americans in his segregated hometown of Temple, Texas.<sup>383</sup> Hernández’s first group

<sup>382</sup> Vicente “Chente” Montes, interview by author, February 6, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>383</sup> Lawrence Clayton and Joe W. Specht, *The Roots of Texas Music* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 31.

during the early 1960s, Little Joe and the Latinaires (including an African American drummer), drew on an older *orquesta* tradition and incorporated a wide range of pop genres, similar to Sunny and the Sunliners. In an interview with the *San Antonio Current*, Hernández acknowledged African American influences on his Chicano musical innovations. “I lived on the black side of town,” Hernández recalled. “So, when I was at friends’ houses, I’d hear black music.”<sup>384</sup> As a young farmworker in the 1950s, Hernández heard blues and *corridos* from elder African American and Mexican American workers.<sup>385</sup> These sonic affinities and cultural influences shaped the Chicano music Hernández performed and recorded over the next several decades.

Although Little Joe and the Latinaires were not from San Antonio, their music resonated with West Side Sound musicians and local *Onda Chicana* groups. Sunny and the Sunliners and Little Joe and the Latinaires were the top-selling Chicano groups of the mid-1960s.<sup>386</sup> The Latinaires’ commercial success and innovative musical arrangements inspired new and established Mexican American groups to embrace *La Onda Chicana*.<sup>387</sup> Gilbert Sedeño, keyboardist and arranger for the Latinaires, recalled their impact on Texas-Mexican music during this period. “Most bands at the time were doing 3-part harmonies. I used 5-part harmonies and expanded the sound. We took the rhythm section to another level. Everybody was doing the same thing: polkas, rancheras, vales

---

<sup>384</sup> Matt Stieb, “King Of The Brown Sound: The Music And Social Movements Of Little Joe,” *San Antonio Current*, accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>385</sup> Lawrence Clayton and Joe W. Specht, *The Roots of Texas Music* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>386</sup> Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010), 69.

<sup>387</sup> Rudy Gonzales, interview by author, January 13, 2017, San Antonio.

(waltzes), ballads. It was like cookie-cutter style of recording. We would add different instrumentations, adding f-horns, clarinets, stuff like that. No one was doing that. [Little] Joe was a renegade. People would come out just to see what he's going to do!"<sup>388</sup>

Little Joe and the Latinaires introduced protest themes, as well as Chicano and Brown affirmation, in song lyrics and album titles with increasing frequency by the late 1960s. Little Joe and the Latinaires' rendition of "A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan" ("They're Taking Me To War"), a World War II *corrido*, distinguished their 1968 *Arriba!* LP as one of the first politically-charged (and Spanish-language) albums of *La Onda Chicana*.<sup>389</sup> According to the UCLA Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican American and Mexican Recordings database, there were at least eleven recorded versions of "A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan" by Mexican and Mexican American groups during the Vietnam War era, many of which came from San Antonio and South Texas.<sup>390</sup> Little Joe and the Latinaires' version, distinguished by its subtle jazz inflection and *orquesta tejana* sound (opposite from the traditional *corrido* versions of this song), takes on an explicitly political tone in the context of *La Onda Chicana*. Hernández contributed a new line to the *corrido* about an airplane flying overhead to take him "derechito a Vietnam" (straight to Vietnam).<sup>391</sup> The album cover depicts the Latinaires in playful protest, sporting absurd uniforms and old military garb, portraying the group in soldierly dissent. Members of the

---

<sup>388</sup> Gilbert Sedeño, interview by author, March 5, 2017, Houston.

<sup>389</sup> Alejandro Gamboa, *Catalog of Copyright Entries: Musical Compositions* (Library of Congress, Copyright Office, 1941).

<sup>390</sup> "The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings | Frontera Project," <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/>, accessed February 19, 2019.

<sup>391</sup> Little Joe and the Latinaires, *Arriba*, Buena Suerte Records LP 1001, 1968. "The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings | Frontera Project," <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/>, accessed February 19, 2019.

group hold signs with poorly-written puns and phrases, such as “How You Bean” (a nod towards the Mexican racial slur, “beaner”) and “Me No Sing, Me No Fight.” The album’s liner notes, written by Sunny Ozuna, celebrates the musical hybridity of the Latinaires’ Chicano sound. “They (Latinaires) are, together, a combination of Latin soul and English variation. They, as myself, cater to different masses of people.” Ozuna goes on to credit the Latinaires’ singers, Bobby Butler (an African American) and Johnny Hernandez (Little Joe’s brother), as pioneers in “one of the most entertaining bands of today” who are “nothing but soul.”<sup>392</sup>

In its original rendition, “A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan” depicts a soldier consoling his mother, insisting she not cry for her “lonely son” being sent to war. By the third verse, the soldier affirms his fate: as a man, his destiny is to fight. The lyrics reveal stark contrasts within Mexican male gender roles: a soldier asserting masculinity and valor while grappling with fear and the certainty of death.<sup>393</sup> The singer attempts to accentuate his bravery, but exposes insecurity and resentment.<sup>394</sup> In an era of Chicano pride, “A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan” takes on new social meaning, included on an album that visually expresses dissent with the U.S. war effort. In *Raza Sí!, Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era*, historian Lorena Oropeza argues that Chicano protest against the war brought about a cultural questioning of citizenship in a nation that

---

<sup>392</sup> Little Joe and the Latinaires, *Arriba*, Buena Suerte Records LP 1001, 1968. “The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings | Frontera Project,” <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/>, accessed February 19, 2019.

<sup>393</sup> For more on Chicano masculinity and the U.S. military, see Steven Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U.S. Military from World War II to Vietnam* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017).

<sup>394</sup> Little Joe and the Latinaires, *Arriba!*, LP, BS-1001 (Buena Suerte Records, 1968). The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings, <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/>, accessed February 19, 2019.

discriminates against the communities who fuel its war efforts.<sup>395</sup> As seen in Figure 4.3, La Zaro and the Dominants were one of eleven known groups to record “A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan” during the Vietnam War. The front and back cover on their 1969 album, *Promesa A La Virgen De San Juan / A La Guerra Ya Me Llevan* depict Chicano soldiers patrolling a Vietnamese jungle. While the photo is staged (most likely somewhere in Central Texas), the stark visual imagery reflects the central occupation of the war on the Mexican American community.



**Figure. 4.3.** La Zaro and the Dominants, an *Onda Chicana* group, performed soul and R&B alongside traditional Texas-Mexican genres.

*Onda Chicana* groups also included African American musicians in new ensembles. Hernández added African American singer Bobby “El Charro Negro” Butler (“The Black Cowboy”) to the Latinaires during the mid-1960s, adding rock and soul to the group’s Texas-Mexican musical repertoire. In an interview with the *Austin Chronicle*,

<sup>395</sup> Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (University of California Press, 2005).



Butler admitted his admiration for Mexican music at a young age. “I must have been 8 or 9 years old—me and Mom and my brothers out in the cotton fields picking cotton. At that time, they brought up workers from Mexico to help with the cotton harvest. They’d sing out in that sun all day, and I fell in love with the sound.”<sup>396</sup> Similar to Hernández, Butler’s shared experiences with sharecroppers and laborers of color reveal a broader history of sonic affinities in the making of Chicano music.

After the Latinaires, Butler joined a group of former members of the group to create a new band, Tortilla Factory, in 1972. Butler sang on the group’s subsequent albums throughout the early-to-mid-1970s. Tortilla Factory’s debut self-titled LP mixed soul, jazz, and funk with Texas-Mexican genres.<sup>397</sup> Journalist Margaret Moser described the group’s Chicano music in its innovation of Latin soul music. “Tortilla Factory birthed a new kind of Latin soul from 1973 into the 1980s, somewhere between Doug Sahm’s West Side San Antonio gang and Santana.”<sup>398</sup> On “El Papalote,” a polka-ranchera song on the group’s debut album, Butler sings “el grito”—the iconic Mexican “cry” heard in mariachi music. Keyboardist Gilbert Sedeño recalled the originality of “The Black Cowboy” in their Texas-Mexican group. “Bobby was Joe’s [Hernández] first drummer. And here he was, a black guy, singing in Spanish. He had to learn the lyrics in Spanish,

---

<sup>396</sup> Margaret Moser, “Urban Tejano,” *Austin Chronicle*, 2010, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2010-12-24/urban-tejano/>, accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>397</sup> Gilbert Rivera, interview by author, August 10, 2011, San Antonio.

<sup>398</sup> Margaret Moser, “Urban Tejano,” *Austin Chronicle*, 2010, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2010-12-24/urban-tejano/>, accessed January 10, 2019.

and he enunciated pretty well! He hung around us so he picked up on a lot of our trash talk, too (laughs).”<sup>399</sup>



**Fig. 4.4** Tortilla Factory’s self-titled LP from 1973, a multiracial *Onda Chicana* group featuring Texas-Mexican genres and soul and funk. Gatefold picture of group at Houston’s Memorial Park, where the group was “being eaten alive by mosquitos,” as keyboardist Gilbert Sedeño recalled. From author’s collection.

Chicano festivals in San Antonio incorporated new *Onda Chicana* groups, performing musical expressions of pride and protest throughout the 1970s. In May 1970, San Antonio activist and restaurateur, Mario Cantu, in partnership with the Mexican American Friendship Association, produced a weeklong festival called *Semana de la Raza Unida*.<sup>400</sup> The following year, its biggest and final production, the organizers shortened the name to simply *Semana de la Raza*. Reports of thousands of people crowding the festival grounds at Mission County Park, a celebratory *grito* by an official representative of the President of Mexico, and a “new cry of independence” invoking

<sup>399</sup> Gilbert Sedeño, interview by author, March 15, 2017, Houston.

<sup>400</sup> “Bigger-Than-Ever Events Slated for Diez Y Seis,” *San Antonio Express*, August 31, 1970.

leaders of the Chicano Movement signified a particular political and cultural moment in Mexican American life in South Texas.<sup>401</sup> Festival organizers, including local and national Chicano groups, centralized music as a part of the Chicano experience.

A glimpse through the 43-page souvenir program further illustrates the diversity of programming and local Mexican American organizations (nearly fifty) involved in the festival. The program included information about festival speakers José Angel Gutierrez, Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales, and other prominent Chicano leaders; typed manifestos from local Chicano organizations Brown Berets and Chicano III; advertisements from local Mexican American businesses; and a message of interracial solidarity from The San Antonio Committee to Free Angela Davis.<sup>402</sup> Festival entertainment included Mexican and Chicano theatrical groups, a Mexican ballet troupe, West Side high school bands, and a variety show featuring Chicano ventriloquist Oscar Zamora, which promised to “keep you laughing all night long.”<sup>403</sup> A United Farm Workers-sponsored concert by East Los Angeles’ El Chicano, one of the most successful Chicano rock groups of the era, capped a week of musical performances by local *Onda Chicana* and *conjunto* groups. Vic Love and the Lovells and Rudy and the Reno Bops, Chicano R&B groups associated with the West Side Sound, also performed at the festival.

Reno Bops bassist Fernando Aguilar recalled the group’s performance at *Semana de la Raza* in 1971. Aguilar maintained that the shifting musical style and political moment of *La Onda Chicana* allowed the group to tap into their Mexican roots and

---

<sup>401</sup> Nell Fenner Grover, “S.A. Celebration Continues Saturday,” *San Antonio Express-News*, September 18, 1971.

<sup>402</sup> “La Raza On The Move: Program for ‘La Semana de La Raza’” (Mexican American Unity Council, September 1971).

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

address social issues concerning Chicanos.<sup>404</sup> He portrayed the diversity of music and the significance of their involvement with the festival as a distinct transition for the group. “Rudy had been in the music business since the early fifties, and then he started doing these political gigs and stuff, he supported it. We all felt it was important to support [the festival]. It was a beautiful thing, lots of people. Even though the majority of the bands were *conjunto*, we went in there with our jazz and rhythm and blues! But they accepted us, it was real nice. They were applauding after each song.”<sup>405</sup> Similar to Sunny and the Sunliners and Little Joe and the Latinaires, Rudy and the Reno Bops evolved from a small R&B group to a “ten-man combo” during *La Onda Chicana*.<sup>406</sup> The group’s performance of Spanish-language Chicano music at Chicano rallies, blending with rock, soul, and funk, further illustrates the evolving multicultural expressions of Chicano Movement.

Other festival acts, including Juan Ramos y Los Principes and Distant Dream, also expressed the sentiments of Chicano cultural awareness and *barrio* activism. Fronted by Chicano activist Tito Moreno, Distant Dream performed “fusion Latin/jazz/rock” at West Side *barrio* block parties and MAYO’s *Universidad de los Barrios* functions during the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>407</sup> The group borrowed its name from Luis Jaramillo’s “La Nueva Raza,” an influential Chicano nationalism essay.<sup>408</sup> MEChA sponsored the

---

<sup>404</sup> Fernando Aguilar, interview by author, February 25, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> “Rudy, Reno Bops Appearing Here,” *Del Rio News Herald*, March 19, 1971.

<sup>407</sup> Cordova, *Con Safo*, 20.

<sup>408</sup> Luis Jaramillo’s “La Nueva Raza” also inspired the origins of San Antonio’s Brown Berets. For more on Tito Moreno’s involvement in Chicano art and performance, see Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers*, 124.

group's performance at *Semana de la Raza* with local *conjunto* group, Juan Ramos y Los Principes. Juan Ramos y Los Principes wrote and performed Chicano-themed *corridos*, including "Los Mojados" (The Wetbacks), a song lambasting racist attitudes towards Mexicans and Mexican Americans.<sup>409</sup> Such performances by local musicians expressed the sentiments and frustrations of Chicanos in a heightened era of self-awareness and cultural pride.

The Chicano Movement continued to influence other R&B combos associated with the peak years of the West Side Sound. A *Billboard* review of The Royal Jesters' latest single, "Chicanita," credited the band as "continuing the trend toward bilingualism among Chicano groups."<sup>410</sup> *Billboard* featured new write-ups, reviews, and spotlight features on "Chicano music" with increasing frequency through the early-to-mid 1970s. The Royal Jesters' music during *La Onda Chicana* marks a notable departure from their English-language pop music of years of the 1960s. Urged by their new producer, Manny Guerra, the group recorded an all-Spanish album in 1973.<sup>411</sup> Guerra's production resulted in The Royal Jesters' full-length LP, *Yo Soy Chicano*. The album cover features the group with long hair and bell bottoms, standing in front of a Mexican *mercado* decorated with *piñatas* and terracotta pots. Royal Jesters singer David Marez recalled the pivotal, if awkward, transition into *La Onda Chicana*:

When we did the Royal Jesters album, *Yo Soy Chicano*, I was still pretty wild then. Me and Joe Jama, the singers, we could barely speak Spanish! He (Jama) was worse than I was. Somehow we managed to make us

---

<sup>409</sup> "La Raza On The Move: Program for 'La Semana de La Raza'" (Mexican American Unity Council, September 1971).

<sup>410</sup> "Latin Scene: In Texas," *Billboard Magazine*, July 20, 1974.

<sup>411</sup> Joe "Jama" Perales, interview by author, February 22, 2017, San Antonio.

Spanish artists or singers and from there we took it ourselves and up to now, I have discovered that what I was saying in Spanish is exactly what John Denver or whenever Mel Torme or you know, Ray Charles, whatever they were singing, it was the same thing except it was really in my tongue, which is Spanish. And I learned and now we do, it is something that I don't know why I didn't start it sooner.<sup>412</sup>

The group's decision to record in Spanish captures the spirit of *La Onda Chicana* to embrace Mexican identity and heritage. The eponymous title track from the LP, "Yo Soy Chicano," affirms the band's newfound sense of Chicano pride. In the lyrics of the song, Marez asserts that indeed "nada es mejor" ("nothing is better") than being a Chicano. The song and album title is a possible allusion to "Yo Soy Joaquin" by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales—the renowned 1967 epic poem associated with the origins of the Chicano Movement.<sup>413</sup> In the poem, Gonzales speaks of the triumphs and struggles of Mexican Americans, calling upon young Chicanos/as to embrace their *mestizaje*, or mixed ancestries. The Royal Jesters played a leading role in blending together new musical influences while reconciling a contradictory "dual identity" experienced by many young Chicanos/as. Marez's experience was typical of first-generation Chicanos/as who were born and raised in the United States and were "rediscovering" their Mexican heritage during a period of increased group and individual identification. Discussing this transition in San Antonio music, ethnomusicologist Juan Tejeda emphasized the politics of the era and its impression on the musicians. "Some (bands) were more political than others, but even those that weren't as political, many still referred to themselves as

---

<sup>412</sup> David Marez, interview by José Angel Gutierrez, May 1996, UTSA Oral History/Tejano Voices Collection, [http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/xml/CMAS\\_005.xml](http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/xml/CMAS_005.xml), accessed April 3, 2019.

<sup>413</sup> Francisco Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico Press), 105.

*Chicano*. And so music during that time started to show that pride, like the Royal Jesters...there were songs and band names with ‘Chicano’ in the title, for example.”<sup>414</sup>

Latin musical influences outside of the region also shaped the West Side Sound during this period. *La Onda Chicana* musicians embraced the wider Latin music boom of the late 1960s and 1970s in their continued innovation of Texas-Mexican music. Latin rock artists from the San Francisco Bay Area, including Carlos Santana and Malo, influenced the West Side Sound through Afro-Latin rhythms and Caribbean genres. The Royal Jesters’ “Yo Soy Chicano,” a musical hybrid of Cuban and Mexican genres, exemplifies such experimentations with new Latin sounds. Historian Stephen Loza discusses how Chicano musicians mixed outside musical influences and “reclaimed” Texas-Mexican musical traditions during *La Onda Chicana*. In his analysis, Chicano musicians engaged in “a collective process of musical appropriation and reinterpretation,” rejecting Anglo cultural and racial hegemony.<sup>415</sup> Loza concludes that Mexican American musicians adopted *Chicanismo* as an expression of pride and cultural nationalism.

Protest themes and musical experimentations continued to make further inroads into the West Side Sound into the 1970s. El Gusano, a band of Vietnam War veterans and *La Raza Unida* members from South Texas, produced an experimental instrumental album meditating on their war and postwar experiences. The group’s sole album, *Fantasia del Barrio* (Fantasy of the Ghetto, 1975), is a small but notable landmark of the

---

<sup>414</sup> Juan Tejeda, interview by author, January 10, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>415</sup> Steven Loza. “Assimilation, Reclamation, and Rejection of the Nation-State by Chicano Musicians” in *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution, and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario*, ed. Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid (Lexington Books, 2008), 40.

psychedelic soul era.<sup>416</sup> In 1966, bandleader Eugenio “Gene” Jaimez suffered an intense shrapnel wound during an early morning raid at the U.S. landing zone in Vietnam’s Binh Dinh province.<sup>417</sup> Song titles on *Fantasia del Barrio*, such as “Melancolia,” “Road To Nirvana,” and “Journey of the Mind,” allude to both post-traumatic anguish and psychedelic mind alteration. Another song on the album, “Work Your Hand To The Bone,” refers to Jaimez’ experience as a farmworker and the arduous experience of Mexican American labor more broadly. In an inscription on the back of the album, Jaimez described *Fantasia del Barrio* (in English and Spanish) in poetic reflection:

*Fantasia del Barrio* is a musical interpretation of expressions and experiences that are felt when one lives there. It’s a remembrance of a hellish war that many of our brothers met with by chance. It is also a request about the wants and needs of a people. Their happiness, sadness, downfalls and triumphs. It is in the end for the friends of the world who want to live at peace with themselves.<sup>418</sup>

Recorded in a small studio on the West Side, El Gusano’s sonic ruminations on anti-Mexican discrimination and post-traumatic nightmares characterize the disillusionment and frustration of many Chicano veterans during the middle 1970s. “We were kids, kids that were learning our instruments and trying to escape from reality at the time,” admits drummer Sonny Ramirez. “That music was our escape from reality.”<sup>419</sup>

Other groups explored themes of drug use and social issues in the *barrio* during the 1970s. Filmmaker Efraín Gutiérrez incorporated music from San Antonio Chicano groups to soundtrack his “Chicano-exploitation” films of the 1970s. He described *La*

---

<sup>416</sup> El Gusano, *Fantasia Del Barrio* LP (Joey Records, 1975).

<sup>417</sup> Thomas Fawcett, liner notes to “El Gusano: Fantasia Del Barrio,” Heavy Light Records, 2010.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.



*Onda Chicana* as an evolution of the West Side Sound. “We called it *La Onda Chicana* because that’s what Tejano music *used to be*. Groups like The Royal Jesters, it was this Chicano sound.”<sup>420</sup> Gutiérrez’s films depicted a gritty portrayal of West Side *barrio* life in the 1970s, moving away from filmic stereotypes of Mexicans to depict the harsh realities of Mexican American life. Many of the characters in Gutiérrez’s films struggled with poverty, racism, and drug addiction. He used West Side Sound musicians and *Onda Chicana* groups in his film to soundtrack his portrayal of Mexican American life during that period. “During *La Onda*, artists like Steve Jordan were mixing conjunto with blues, jazz, and rock, but he [Jordan] wasn’t from San Antonio. He was a friend of mine and he hung around San Antonio during that time so I got him to do my soundtrack.” He acknowledged the mixture of sounds that influenced the music he and others started to call *La Onda Chicana*.

### **Commercialization of *La Onda Chicana* and Origins of Tejano**

In 1972, Dallas, Texas, producer Johnny Gonzales released an ad in *Billboard* magazine, which stated, “We’re Coming Through in ‘72. *El Zarape Records es La Onda Chicana*.” Gonzales’s announcement, which was the first in a series that appeared throughout the early to mid-1970s, is among the earliest examples of the term *La Onda Chicana* being used in commercial advertising.<sup>421</sup> Johnny Gonzales and his El Zarape Records emerged as a major player in the Chicano music scene of the 1970s, in large part because of a *Billboard* “spotlight” issue on the Chicano music industry. The article,

---

<sup>420</sup> Efraín Gutiérrez, interview by author, February 10, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

“Chicano Music Offers Hot Spice: Industry Built on ‘Tex-Mex’ Sounds,” included a profile of the young producer.<sup>422</sup> Gonzales recalled his experience with the major label, CBS International, in the early 1970s:

In the early ‘70s, I went to Mexico City since I was associated with CBS International. They advertised my name and my label on all the newspapers in Mexico City. And the ads’ said: “The *Onda Chicana* has come to Mexico – Johnny Gonzales and El Zarape Records.” And they [CBS International] distributed my records in Central and South America, Spain...I would get royalties from a lot of countries. I was with them for five years, and it was okay, because I got some royalties and eventual recognition for [pioneering] *Tejano* music.<sup>423</sup>

Gonzales’s experience demonstrates how the international distribution capabilities of major labels, such as CBS International, helped promote Chicano music into Latin America during the 1970s. This was important to the long-term development of the West Side Sound, since it brought Texas-Mexican music greater national and international attention. Prior to this time, Texas-Mexican had remained mostly regional, subject to the limited reach of small-time South Texas record distributors. Reflecting on his early recordings during the late 1950s, Henry Hernandez recalled the local music business in those early days. “(Producer) Joe Anthony would literally sell his records out of the trunk of his car, it was the old days when record men would sell records locally and do everything themselves.”<sup>424</sup>

Most West Side Sound records associated with La Onda Chicana rarely sold outside of Texas.<sup>425</sup> In order to place a song on the national charts, these homegrown

---

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Johnny Gonzales, interview by author, November 30, 2011, Dallas.

<sup>424</sup> Henry Hernandez, interview by author, March 12, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>425</sup> Houston’s Huey Meaux had an unusually extensive distributorship for a Texas producer. For more on Meaux, see Bradley and Wood, *House of Hits*.

labels usually had to license a regional hit to a major label.<sup>426</sup> However, for the most part, until CBS International and other major labels started to promote *música tejana* in the mid-1970s, local distribution was generally confined to the greater South Texas region, including Houston, San Antonio, Laredo, Corpus Christi, and elsewhere throughout the Rio Grande Valley.<sup>427</sup>

By the early 1970s, Manuel Rangel, Jr., and his record distribution company, Rangel Distributors, helped to further expand the distribution network of Texas-Mexican music in San Antonio.<sup>428</sup> Rangel was among the earliest local distributors to sell records outside of Texas in such places as New Mexico, Arizona, and California, at about the same time CBS International signed its distribution deal with Johnny Gonzales.<sup>429</sup> The launching of Manuel Rangel and Johnny Gonzales's distribution networks signaled an important moment in which regional Mexican American music would begin reaching a broader national and international market.<sup>430</sup>

San Antonio *conjunto* accordionists Leonardo "Flaco" Jiménez and Esteban "Steve" Jordan, who were gaining mainstream crossover appeal in the 1970s, were also

---

<sup>426</sup> This is what Houston producer Huey Meaux did with San Antonio's Sir Douglas Quintet's 1965 hit, "She's About a Mover," which Meaux had convinced London Records to release nationally. Jan Reid and Shawn Sahn, *Texas Tornado: The Times and Music of Doug Sahn* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 31-32.

<sup>427</sup> Johnny Gonzales, interview by author, November 30, 2011, Dallas.

<sup>428</sup> Charlie Brite, "Tex-Mex Sounds Undergo Change," *Billboard*, August 19, 1972, T-4. Rangel was heir to San Antonio's early postwar *música tejana* label, Corona Records.

<sup>429</sup> Charlie Brite, "Latin Distribution Adds PX's Worldwide," *Billboard*, September 7, 1974, T-10; Charlie Brite, "Tex-Mex Sounds Undergo Change," *Billboard*, August 19, 1972, T-4. Rangel was certainly not the only distributor to start selling records out-of-state, but he was one of the first.

<sup>430</sup> Peña, *Texas-Mexican Conjunto*, 70. Peña states that the major labels stopped making *música Tejana* recordings during the World War II era largely due to the rationing of war material (especially shellac) within the United States and the emergence of a more active Spanish-language record production infrastructure in Mexico City.

garnering new international audiences as far away as Europe and Japan.<sup>431</sup> From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, *música tejana* record sales skyrocketed from hundreds to thousands and, eventually, to millions.<sup>432</sup> This twenty-year period also saw the advent of commercial music production in Texas, with a proliferation of studios and concert venues across the state.<sup>433</sup> Meanwhile, instrumentation and recording technology also changed during this time period. The Hammond B-3, Farfisa, and Vox Continental organs, which were key instruments during the West Side Sound's golden years, often were replaced with the cheaper, more portable, and generally road-friendlier Korg and Yamaha-brand synthesizers during the 1970s.<sup>434</sup> Synthesizers provided a more "electronic" sound than the piano organs of the prior decade. In many ways, this was better suited to the rock and roll that so many Chicano musicians now made a core part of their repertoire. By the mid-1970s, electronic instruments and affordable recording gear, such as mail-order soundboards, also made independent recording much easier than it had previously been. As a result, musicians had greater flexibility than ever in experimenting with mixing new styles and producing and distributing their own recordings.<sup>435</sup>

Although Johnny Gonzales may not be as well-known to the general public as some others involved in the West Side Sound, his pioneering studio work and his efforts to internationalize *música tejana* make him a seminal figure in the rapid rise in popularity

---

<sup>431</sup> Carlos Guerra, "Accordion Menace...Just Say Mo'!", in *Puro Conjunto! An Album in Words and Pictures*, ed. Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 115.

<sup>432</sup> Williams, "Chicano Music Offers Hot Spice," T-6.

<sup>433</sup> Hickinbotham, "History of the Texas Recording Industry," 7-8.

<sup>434</sup> Reid, Jan, and Shawn Sahm, *Texas Tornado*, 45.

<sup>435</sup> Hickinbotham, "History of the Texas Recording Industry," 8.

of the West Side Sound during the 1970s through 1990s. In addition to Gonzales, there were other “behind-the-scenes” producers, promoters, and label owners who were helping promote *música tejana* globally by the 1970s. Such independent producer-musicians as Alberto “Al Hurricane” Sanchez and Roberto Martínez, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, also were helping expand the Texas-Mexican music market well beyond South Texas and Northern Mexico.<sup>436</sup>

### Conclusion

By “listening” to *La Onda Chicana*, this chapter reveals the evolving canon of “Chicano/a music” influencing the West Side Sound, including continued musical and cultural interactions with African Americans in Texas. Mexican American musicians went from performing rock, R&B, blues, and pop during the 1950s and 1960s, to later adapting traditional Mexican musical influences (as well as Latino musical hybridity) through the re-invention of the traditional *orquesta tejana* during *La Onda Chicana*. In San Antonio, many musicians were meditating on local and national issues affecting Mexican Americans through the production and performance of music. Chicano/a identity themes, and other technical innovations including wide-scale distribution and album conception, are a notable outgrowth in the era of broad social changes of the late 1960s and 1970s.

---

<sup>436</sup> Al Hurricane Sanchez owned Hurricane Records, which produced *conjunto*, New Mexican pop, and Chicano Soul that was quite similar to that found in the West Side Sound. Roberto Martínez and his M.O.R.E. Records released comparable types of Mexican and Mexican American music. Louis Holscher, “Recording Industry and Studios in the Southwest Borderlands,” in *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture in The United States*, Cordelia Candelaria, Arturo Aldama, and Peter Garcia, eds., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 672.

The Black/Brown sounds of *La Onda* express a musical hybridity that united Chicanos/as and African Americans across political and cultural borders. Musicians interpreted the Chicano Movement, from the student movements to the farm worker unions of the American Southwest. *La Onda Chicana*, the movement's musical component, was further stimulated by growing resistance against the Vietnam War which continued to devastate America's working-class and minority communities. Historian Eric Zolov makes a compelling case for La Onda emerging from Mexico City's countercultural arts and rock scene of the late 1960s and 1970s. However, ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña and music critic Joe Nick Patoski credit Little Joe Hernández, Sunny Ozuna, and Johnny Gonzales for pioneering the musical La Onda movement, characterized by the orquesta, north of the border during the Chicano Movement.

Hernández's rapidly shifting attitude and his determination to "re-brand" himself, his band, and his music as more "Chicano," reflected a larger change taking place in Mexican American music and culture during *La Onda Chicana*. In 1970, Hernández changed his band's name to Little Joe y La Familia, a nod to the influence of Chicano *carnalismo* on the group's changing identity. La Familia trumpet player, Tony "Ham" Guerrero, recalled that particular transition: "You know," Hernández said, "we're still called Little Joe and the Latinaires, and that sounds dated, and I don't like it anymore. I've decided we're gonna drop the 'Latinaire' bullshit, and we're gonna go with *La Familia*, and we're gonna become hippies with long hair. So we did, we changed. He

became the first freak of the *La Onda Chicana*, with real long hair down to his ass, and chains and all that.”<sup>437</sup>

Since then, Hernández has actively supported farm workers’ rallies, *La Raza Unida* benefits, and Chicano Pride gatherings with live performances throughout the state and elsewhere in the Southwest, becoming a spokesperson for the movement.<sup>438</sup>

Hernández and Ozuna played leading roles in blending together new musical influences during *La Onda Chicana*. In fact, Hernández was typical of most such younger Tejanos, who had been born and raised in the United States but, because of the Chicano Movement, were “rediscovering” their ethnic Mexican heritage. His own ideological evolution, as well as the changes taking place in his music during this period, reflect the struggle many Chicano youth were experiencing in trying to balance the inherent conflicts present within Texas-Mexican life.<sup>439</sup>

---

<sup>437</sup> Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta*, 239.

<sup>438</sup> Joe Nick Patoski, “Little Joe,” May 1978; José Angel Gutiérrez, *We Won’t Back Down: Severita Lara’s Rise from Student Leader to Mayor* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2005), 78.

<sup>439</sup> Hernández’s political activity peaked when he convened with an elite cohort of Chicano dignitaries to visit with President of Mexico José Lopez-Portillo in 1978 to discuss immigration policy in the United States, part of a concerted effort by Chicano activists to derail the Carter administration’s plan to buy Portillo’s support of border militarization through the purchase of cheap Mexican gas reserves. “Leaders Say Support Denied,” *Farmington Daily News*, January 26, 1978.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Viva El West Side!: The West Side Sound & Mexican American Place-Making

In 2018, San Antonio was in a particularly reflective and festive moment. The city was in the midst of a year-long 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration commemorating its founding with establishment of the San Antonio de Valero mission (the Alamo) and San Antonio de Béxar presidio. Marking the occasion, the City Manager-appointed Tricentennial Commission launched a “Commemorative Week” of events for the purpose of “doing something of lasting importance, building a legacy for the community, celebrating our diversity and our unity, and educating kids about the past and the future,” as director Carlos Contrera described to the *Rivard Report*.<sup>440</sup> The opening Day of Reflection—May 1<sup>st</sup>, the city’s founding day—was held at Main Plaza, formerly the *Plaza de Las Islas*, named for its Canary Islander founders. Celebrated at the steps of the plaza’s San Fernando Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in the United States, the Day of Reflection affirmed the plaza’s centrality in local origins with an event including a Yanaguana Indian drum chant, a candlelight vigil, an interfaith celebration, and a speech by the city’s mayor reaffirming San Antonians’ historic diversity and inclusivity.<sup>441</sup>

Despite the sentiment, however, historical reality was that the Main Plaza, like other downtown Spanish colonial plazas, gradually became segregated spaces following the Anglo conquest of Texas, as the city fell under a newly-imposed racial and

---

<sup>440</sup> Frank Nicholas, “San Antonio’s Commemorative Week Takes Shape With Events For All,” *Rivard Report*, March 18, 2018, <https://therivardreport.com/san-antonios-commemorative-week-takes-shape-events/>, accessed September 9, 2018.

<sup>441</sup> Scott Huddleston, “‘Day of Reflection’ Marks San Antonio’s Tricentennial,” *San Antonio Express-News*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Day-of-Reflection-marks-San-Antonio-s-12879561.php>, accessed September 9, 2018.



sociopolitical order. Once the epicenter of Mexican and Tejano government and social life, late-nineteenth-century developments in the city—from the arrival of streetcars, railroads, and trolleys, to the construction of modern buildings—slowly led to the decentralization of the old Spanish plazas and structures.<sup>442</sup> Subsequent efforts to pave and widen downtown streets, as well as the construction of the adjacent Bexar County Courthouse (1896) and later, Frost Bank Tower (1922), further diminished the Plaza’s prominence in an era of rapid, modern transformation.<sup>443</sup> Still, Main Plaza has long occupied city historical projects and official histories as a significant space of origination, recently reflected in a \$12 million renovation campaign to improve the plaza’s walkability and reconnect its adjoining buildings.<sup>444</sup>

Commemorative Week, the anchor event of the year-long celebration, represents the most recent and visible way in which the city reaffirmed its official histories, particularly those surrounding its symbols of conquest and colonial structures. The city’s focus on the plazas and its historic buildings silences a past wherein San Antonians of color negotiated racial subjectivities and second-class citizenship in the grip of Jim Crow. It also fails to recognize the ways in which ordinary Latinos/as and African Americans in San Antonio significantly shaped American popular music and retained cultural plurality through folkloric traditions. Despite these efforts to commemorate established histories and powerful people, popular music and its performance spaces reflect the sonic place-

---

<sup>442</sup> Char Miller, *San Antonio: A Tricentennial History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018), 77-79.

<sup>443</sup> Lewis F. Fisher, *Saving San Antonio: The Preservation of a Heritage* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2016), 87.

<sup>444</sup> “Main Plaza: San Antonio, Texas,” American Planning Association, <https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/spaces/2010/mainplaza.htm>, accessed October 1, 2018.

making and cultural heritage of the city's communities of color. Recent initiatives to preserve historic music venues on the West Side and acknowledge black and brown musicians of the past contribute to the ways in which locals both honor the past and claim ownership to the cultural spaces of the historic West Side.

Competing discourses of local history stand in contrast to such towering, and often-mythologized, historical narratives. The preservation of cultural heritage in San Antonio empowers marginalized communities to insert themselves into local history and defend against cultural hegemony.<sup>445</sup> It is significant because of the limited power these communities have in safeguarding cultural districts. In presenting contests for urban space, this chapter argues that cultural productions, language, musicians, and music venues contributed to Mexican American place-making of the West Side in the past and in the present day. The West Side Sound, a recent idiom derived from local pride and nostalgia for the musical West Side, reflects what American Studies scholar George Lipsitz calls the "*barrio* memories" of the audible past.<sup>446</sup> Lipsitz examines how East L.A. Chicano musicians in the 1960s drew upon "families of resemblance," similarities with other marginalized groups, to construct a cultural counter-hegemony in Los Angeles. Likewise, the multigenerational sounds of the West Side inform *barrio*

---

<sup>445</sup> Cultural heritage preservation includes the conservation of intangible attributes and cultural artifacts of a group or society from past generations. Anthropologist Tracy Duvall examines cultural preservation of the Centro Histórico in downtown Mazatlán, Mexico, in its relationship to locals' desires of cultural change and new building "modernity." See Tracy Duvall, "Old Buildings in Mazatlán: Cultural Preservation or Change?," *Journal of the Southwest*, Architecture, 45, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2003): 203–32. Archeologist Marilena Alivizatou tracks global developments in the intellectual development of "intangible heritage" preservation and relationship to the museum as a place for cultural safeguarding. Alivizatou explores modern-day museological conventions to understand methods and practices in cultural preservation. Marilena Alivizatou, *Intangible Heritage and the Museum: New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>446</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 153.

memories of bygone musical and cultural spaces, including cantinas, plazas, *conjunto* clubs, Mexican theaters, and mixed-race teen clubs.<sup>447</sup>

The first section of this chapter explains how residents and grassroots activists challenged urban revitalization and elite-focused historical narratives while affirming cultural sovereignty of the West Side. In this analysis, musicians and residents contribute to the making of *barrio* memories of the West Side's past. The following section examines West Side music over time and the ways in which Chicano mural art invoking *barrio* sounds emerged as visual contestation of cultural erasure. The West Side's history of Spanish-speaking *conjunto* musicians, *pachuco* boogie recording artists, and multiracial rock and roll groups compose a rich cultural past which facilitate residents' claims to San Antonio neighborhoods.

### **Urban Renewal and Spatial Meaning in the West Side**

Today, San Antonio's vibrant past is seemingly "alive" through the city's ubiquitous historical sites and landmarks that anchor an annual \$13 billion tourism industry.<sup>448</sup> Reaffirming a long-held booster ethos, the "Alamo City" continues to promote itself as an historic and family-friendly destination, a place of Tex-Mex cultural distinctiveness in the Lone Star State. Surviving three centuries inside "the most fought-over city in North America," San Antonio's iconic Spanish missions were designated a

---

<sup>447</sup> For more on families of resemblance, see George Lipsitz, "Cruising Around the Historical Bloc: Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles." *Cultural Critique*, no. 5 (1986), 157-77.

<sup>448</sup> "Study: San Antonio Tourism Industry Had \$13.6 Billion Impact in 2015," *San Antonio Express-News*, November 1, 2016, <https://www.expressnews.com/business/local/article/Study-San-Antonio-tourism-industry-had-13-6-10460977.php>, accessed September 12, 2018.

UNESCO World Heritage site in 2015.<sup>449</sup> This noteworthy development further bolstered the city's historical authenticity on the world stage.

Commercial developments and significant alterations in the built environment over the past half-century have helped make the city a popular vacation destination. The San Antonio River's postwar transformation into the "River Walk," a below-street watercourse park linking key downtown areas through walkways and a bustling commercial district, continues to drive much of the city's tourism activity. In light of these transformations, the city has been able to safeguard historical landmarks and incorporate them into the commercial landscape.<sup>450</sup> The Alamo, the crown jewel of the tourism industry, is visited by nearly two million people each year.<sup>451</sup> Urban planning initiatives from the 1950s-1970s reflected growing support for a growing tourist economy and desire to redevelop impoverished residential areas.<sup>452</sup>

---

<sup>449</sup> In the foreword for *Saving San Antonio*, historian T.J. Fehrenbach described San Antonio as a city whose Native American settlements presaged a violent history of conquest which was "many times destroyed...some-how survived and moved majestically into the Victorian era." He asserts that San Antonio was "the most fought-over city in North America." Lewis F. Fisher, *Saving San Antonio: The Precarious Preservation of a Heritage* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1996), VII.

<sup>450</sup> Historian Lynnell Thomas explores the relationship between tourism, cultural production, and racial politics in New Orleans. She looks at tourism websites and travel guides to understand the making of racial narratives of New Orleans, before and after Hurricane Katrina. For more on this, see Lynnell L. Thomas, *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans: Tourism, Race, and Historical Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). Historian Martha Norkunas explores the making of historical memory and heritage tourism in Monterey, California, and the distortion of a local past by the tourism industry which appeals to a particular middle- and upper-class Anglo viewership. Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (SUNY Press, 1993).

<sup>451</sup> Roberto Treviño, "Proposed Alamo Plan Will Shape San Antonio's Historic, Cultural Legacy," *Rivard Report*, <https://therivardreport.com/proposed-alamo-plan-will-shape-san-antonios-historic-cultural-legacy>, accessed March 20, 2019.

<sup>452</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Contentious and Collected: Memory's Future in Southern History," *The Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 3 (2009): 751-66. Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage examines a recent spate of historical memory studies and "how historical meaning has been assigned through discourse" to view narratives of the past in their relationship to local memory. Brundage's examination of the contested meanings of the southern past provides an opportunity to discuss how San Antonians create and identify with specific narratives about historical periods or events.

A local referendum in 1957 authorized San Antonio city council to create the Urban Renewal Agency [URA] to “develop a slum clearance and redevelopment program” in the creation of new city planning initiatives.<sup>453</sup> Postwar decentralization of the urban core and Anglo suburbanization of the North Side exacerbated the neglect of downtown by the turn of the 1960s. URA officials targeted low-income communities of color as “blighted” risks to growing suburbs.<sup>454</sup> Portions of low-income neighborhoods in San Antonio, including the West and South Side *barrios* and East Side slums, were razed, in principal, to accommodate new and affordable housing for the working poor.<sup>455</sup> By 1961, the URA gained the legal authority to condemn properties and declare eminent domain to enact its urban renewal projects.<sup>456</sup> A policy decision to eradicate slums and rebuild new habitats elsewhere took precedence over improving existing living conditions. Backed by the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, the URA’s slum clearance mandate contributed to the eradication of *corrales* collecting on the fringes of downtown.<sup>457</sup> The use of federal aid bolstered commercial development and private capital in the rehabilitation of San Antonio’s slum areas.

By early 1963, the city’s plans to host the 1968 World’s Fair, HemisFair ‘68, accelerated the demolition of the near West Side to make way for the fifteen-acre

---

<sup>453</sup> “Vote Clears Slum Project,” *San Antonio Light*, December 18, 1957.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> “Final Report On Projects By Andrew,” *San Antonio Light*, November 8, 1961.

<sup>456</sup> “Urban Renewal Model About Ready To Show How Program Works,” *San Antonio Express News*, July 16, 1961.

<sup>457</sup> Robert Fairbanks, “The Texas Exception: San Antonio and Urban Renewal, 1949-1965.” *Journal of Planning History* 1, no. 2 (May 2002): 181–96

HemisFair Park.<sup>458</sup> Upon bid approval in 1965, URA officials condemned over 125 acres in a multi-ethnic neighborhood known as Germantown.<sup>459</sup> Ironically, HemisFair '68 coincided with the city's 250th anniversary, including the theme, "Confluence of Civilizations in the Americas," to recognize the various ethnic groups which settled the region.<sup>460</sup> Funded through public and private resources, the \$185-million-dollar initiative drastically reshaped downtown's built environment, including the construction of the Convention Center, John H. Wood Federal Courthouse, Texas State Pavilion, and Tower of the Americas—a 750-foot observation tower conceived as the fair's theme structure.<sup>461</sup> In addition, the city extended the River Walk into HemisFair Park, reinforcing a powerful tourist economy.

The URA continued to condemn residences through a series of urban renewal projects from the mid-1960s to 1970s.<sup>462</sup> Initial URA figures for the Civic Center Project renewal project estimated the displacement of 739 residents, mostly low-income Mexican Americans, for the construction of HemisFair Park.<sup>463</sup> The URA's Rosa Verde Urban Renewal Area, an expanse of real estate "bounded by Dolorosa and Buena Vista on the south, IH35 on the west, Cameron and the Expressway on the north, and San Pedro Creek on the east," targeted the near West Side for new commercial properties and an expansive

---

<sup>458</sup> "Urban Renewal Agency Pledges HemisFair Aid," *San Antonio Express News*, January 30, 1963.

<sup>459</sup> "3 Primary Building \$ Provided," *San Antonio Light*, February 10, 1966.

<sup>460</sup> "Theme: Western Brotherhood, HemisFair '68," *San Antonio Express News*, October 30, 1966.

<sup>461</sup> Steve Bennett, "The Neighborhood That HemisFair '68 Erased," *San Antonio Express-News*, August 27, 2017.

<sup>462</sup> Robert Fairbanks, "The Texas Exception: San Antonio and Urban Renewal, 1949-1965," *Journal of Planning History* 1, no. 2 (May 2002): 181–96

<sup>463</sup> John Bennett, "UR-Backed Plan Holds Promise," *San Antonio Express*, March 10, 1964.

new medical center.<sup>464</sup> The Rivas House, the last remaining adobe homestead from the Mexican era of San Antonio, stood in Rosa Verde's demolition path.<sup>465</sup> Despite a Texas historical medallion adorning its doorway, the URA's demolition of Rivas House in 1970 incited outrage from preservationists and residents, including San Antonio State Representative Jake Johnson. Johnson lambasted the agency, accusing the URA of "bulldozing the Mexican American heritage of San Antonio."<sup>466</sup> In total, the Rosa Verde urban renewal plan displaced over 1,000 people from West Side *barrios*. Downtown and outlying streets were realigned and land parcels packaged for redevelopment. The San Antonio Conversation Society appealed to the Department of Housing and Urban Development to intervene and save the historic West Side from the URA's path of destruction.<sup>467</sup>

Responding to changes in the built environment, Mexican American preservationists and *barrio* activists attempted to conserve remaining buildings and neighborhoods from demolition. In press releases and media statements, community leaders framed the West Side as the center of Mexican American life, under attack from business and political elites. Contested preservation battles galvanized residents and preservationists, recognizing the marginalized histories of music and community in the built environment of the West Side. In a full-page interview in the *San Antonio Express News*, Chicano leader José Angel Gutierrez derided ongoing "urban removal" efforts as

---

<sup>464</sup> "Citizens Protest West Side Plan," *San Antonio Light*, April 14, 1966.

<sup>465</sup> Lewis Fisher, "Unique San Antonio...How Long Will It Be That Way?," *San Antonio Express*, February 1, 1970.

<sup>466</sup> Fisher, *Saving San Antonio*, 210.

<sup>467</sup> "Conservationists Appeal To HUD," *San Antonio Light*, October 1, 1971.

“cutting the Chicano out,” affirming *barrio* frustrations of Mexican Americans’ status as an oppressed cultural minority and general lack of power in city planning efforts.<sup>468</sup>

Pressure and public backlash against the URA forced the agency to search for “potentially reclaimable historical structures” in the early 1970s to little effect.<sup>469</sup>

Resentment over urban renewal boiled over into grassroots preservation efforts and a public debate over conservation and public housing.<sup>470</sup> A newly-formed Chicano Council, representing “more than 200 persons and several groups,” protested the URA and its slum clearing programs.<sup>471</sup> In March 1971, Chicano Council members passed out leaflets against the proposed Bandera Expressway, an I-10 reliever route which would further displace Mexican American residents, deriding the URA as the “Chicano Removal Agency.”<sup>472</sup> In a press statement, Chicano Council President Ruth Barrego charged, “Our barrios are saying that there will be no more destruction of Chicano neighborhoods. Urban renewal is a monster that must be destroyed.”<sup>473</sup> Following the Chicano Council’s actions, new city councilman Henry Cisneros and *barrio* advocacy group, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), led a successful fight to

---

<sup>468</sup> Gutierrez criticizes liberal Anglos for insulting Mexicans, including their disdain for low-class *ranchera* and polka. He adds, “but they like the Mexican music only when it’s played by the Tijuana Brass.” “An Exclusive Interview with Jose Angel Gutierrez: Can La Raza Unida Win? Its Leader Says Yes,” *San Antonio Express News*, May 10, 1970.

<sup>469</sup> Deborah Wesch, “URA To Look For Historical Buildings,” *San Antonio Express*, November 16, 1971.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> “Barrio Group To Fight Renewal,” *San Antonio Express News*, March 27, 1971.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.



finally upend the Bandera Expressway plans.<sup>474</sup> Fights continued to play out in a mounting battle for the preservation of the West Side. A scathing tirade by *San Antonio Express News* columnist Ron White criticized the Chamber of Commerce and the URA for destroying the city's Mexican heritage. The near West Side, he concluded, "has been leveled more thoroughly than Berlin in 1946."<sup>475</sup> White also pointed out that while urban renewal has forced thousands of people out of the downtown area, "not a single residence" had been replaced.<sup>476</sup>

Along with historic Mexican structures and working-class residences, performance spaces of the past emerged as key battleground sites for the West Side. Texas-Mexican music venues, such as La Gloria Filling Station #3—one of the oldest Tejano dancehalls in the state—embodied some of the rich cultural heritage of the West Side.<sup>477</sup> Opened by Matilde Elizondo in 1928, La Gloria was one of the first filling stations of its kind in Texas. Located at 701 South Laredo Street, La Gloria #3 (his third store in the West Side) included eight pump stations and a dancehall on the upstairs roof

---

<sup>474</sup> COPS became a powerful force in 1970s San Antonio politics, emerging from West Side parishes which featured Spanish-language masses and mariachi music. For more on COPS, see Heywood T. Sanders, "Communities Organized for Public Service and Neighborhood Revitalization in San Antonio," in Robert H. Wilson, *Public Policy and Community: Activism and Governance in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

<sup>475</sup> Ron White, "The Wrecker's Ball Shapes Our City," *San Antonio Express*, December 15, 1974.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> There were over a thousand dancehalls in Texas from the late nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century; many built and used by immigrant groups. A few hundred remain in Texas today. Austin-based preservation group, Texas Dance Hall Preservation, commits itself to "saving historic Texas dance halls and the authentic music and culture that is still found in them." For more on the history of German-Czech singing societies and Texas-Mexican dancehalls in San Antonio and South Texas, see Gail Folkins, "Texas Dance Halls: History, Culture, and Community," *Journal of Texas Music History* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 2006). For more on dancehalls in East and Central Texas, see Stephen Dean, *Historic Dance Halls of East Central Texas* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

garden.<sup>478</sup> In English- and Spanish-language newspaper ads, Elizondo promoted lubricating oil and “free souvenirs” for customers, touting a “romantic roof garden...where we have dances every Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday night.”<sup>479</sup> Elizondo marketed his filling station as a main stop into town for incoming Mexican and Mexican American visitors, noting that the store is “directly on the way to Mexico City.”<sup>480</sup> Elizondo’s La Gloria #3 became an important gathering place for Mexican Americans in San Antonio from the 1920s to the 1950s.

La Gloria’s three-story atrium also contained a food market, bakery, and silent movie theater—an impressive \$70,000 total investment.<sup>481</sup> The roof garden attracted local residents with live performances and dancing in the evenings with its large, custom-built bandstand, concession stand, and dance floor, becoming one of the most popular ballrooms in the city.<sup>482</sup> La Gloria was one of the first venues to regularly feature early blues, swing, and *conjunto* performances in San Antonio.<sup>483</sup> As a source of extra income during the Depression, Elizondo also rented the roof garden, and it became an important *barrio* space for social events, wedding receptions, boxing matches, and society

---

<sup>478</sup> “La Gloria Modern Station,” *San Antonio Light*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>479</sup> “La Gloria: Siempre Adelante,” *La Prensa*, July 31, 1925; “Gasolina Del Magonolia Al 12c Al Galon En La Gloria Filling Station,” *La Prensa*, December 12, 1925; “La Gloria Modern Station,” *San Antonio Light*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>480</sup> “Gasolina De La Mejor Clase a 14¢ Gallon,” *La Prensa*, San Antonio. Elizondo also advertised his filling station for Mexican nationals returning to Mexico, noting the location at Laredo and South Brazos Street is “directly on the way to Mexico City.” “La Gloria Modern Station,” *San Antonio Light*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>481</sup> “La Gloria Modern Station,” *San Antonio Light*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>482</sup> *San Antonio Remembered: The Good Times*. Alamo Public Telecommunications Council/KLRN, 1997.

<sup>483</sup> Amy Kastely, “La Lucha Sigue con Esperanza: Three Stories from the Legal Component of Community Actions,” *La Voz de Esperanza*, vol. 20, issue 8, October 2017, [https://issuu.com/esperanzasanantonio/docs/la\\_voz\\_-\\_october\\_2017](https://issuu.com/esperanzasanantonio/docs/la_voz_-_october_2017), accessed March 10, 2019.

meetings, among other functions, boasting “comfortable accommodation for 300 couples.”<sup>484</sup> La Gloria roof garden also hosted speeches from state and national Communist Party leaders during the late 1920s and 1930s, a time of increased labor organizing among Mexican American workers in San Antonio.<sup>485</sup> La Gloria’s house band, Rudy Almaguer and his Rio Grande Palace Serenaders, performed a mixture of big band jazz and *conjunto* alongside touring swing orchestras during the Jazz Age.<sup>486</sup> Formed in 1920 and described as “San Antonio’s first jazz and dance band,” the Rio Grande Palace Serenaders’ residencies at the Majestic Theater and La Gloria suggests they were fairly popular with Mexican American audiences during the Jazz Age.<sup>487</sup> In a 1997 PBS program on San Antonio musical pastimes, La Gloria patrons recalled dancing the Charleston, a popular dance during the Jazz Age, along to the Rio Grande Palace Serenaders’ Tex-Mex-style of swing music.<sup>488</sup>

La Gloria sat empty on the corner of Brazos and Laredo streets for nearly four decades until it was demolished in 2002—a galvanizing moment in forging a new generation of West Side preservationists. La Gloria’s historical significance to the city, and to Mexican American history at large, was little recognized at the time of demolition, remembered only by elder residents in the neighborhood and later partially uncovered

---

<sup>484</sup> “La Gloria Modern Station,” *San Antonio Light*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>485</sup> “Red Bid For Texas Governor Set Here,” *San Antonio Light*, September 23, 1936; “Ten and Twenty Years Ago,” *San Antonio Light*, October 16, 1938;

<sup>486</sup> According to oral testimony from West Side resident, New York’s Red Nichols and his Five Pennies performed there, among others. *San Antonio Remembered: The Good Times*. Alamo Public Telecommunications Council/KLRN, 1997.

<sup>487</sup> “Musician Recalls Disastrous Fire,” *San Antonio Express News*, June 29, 1969.

<sup>488</sup> *San Antonio Remembered: The Good Times*. Alamo Public Telecommunications Council/KLRN, 1997.

through an oral history campaign by Save La Gloria Alliance.<sup>489</sup> Formed in late 2001, Save La Gloria Alliance consisted of grassroots activists opposed to La Gloria's demolition.<sup>490</sup> Found footage of the venue played an important role in the organization's campaign to establish the building's cultural significance and to pressure city leaders to intervene. Reflecting on that campaign, Save La Gloria Alliance's Graciela Sanchez discussed the power of the visual in generating interest:

We recovered video of original footage of the building and rooftop dance floor from the 1930s. We organized public discussions focused on La Gloria, the original footage, and the memories shared by elders. We invited community members to envision possible uses for the building that would allow its preservation. In the original footage, community members were able to see La Gloria in its heyday. By seeing Mexicanas/os dancing the Charleston, dressed in clothing of that era, younger generations acquired a vigorous image of their grandparents and great-grandparents. We showed the video wherever we could so that people would remember or learn of the significance of the building. When we marched through the streets demonstrating against the demolition, we made sure to screen the video at the end of the march in a much-traveled intersection so that anyone driving or walking past would be able to see the images of this building and its connection to the Westside community. We also screened the video outside City Hall (after being denied access to City Hall Chambers during the Citizens to Be Heard section) and during a hearing in front of a state judge who heard the case to save La Gloria.<sup>491</sup>

Save La Gloria Alliance presented videos of La Gloria's roof garden dances to demonstrate the building's cultural significance to the West Side, and to educate younger residents on the historic landscapes surrounding them. In doing so, activists disrupted stereotypical conceptions of how Mexican Americans dressed and danced in the 1920s and 1930s. The found footage depicts a large and vibrant dance party—over 100 people,

---

<sup>489</sup> Graciela Sanchez, interview by author, July 7, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Pam Korza and Barbara Shaffon Bacon, "Arte es Vida Case Study: The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center," in *Art, Dialogue, Action, Activism: Case Studies from Animating Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2005), 1-32.

young and old. Mexican American women appear in fashionable dresses and bobbed hair; men with tailored suits and coiffed, gelled-back hair.<sup>492</sup> An energetic performance by Rudy Almaguer and his Rio Grande Palace Serenaders—fitted in tuxedos and featuring trombones, piano, clarinets, saxophones, drums, fiddle, and a tuba—reveals a sophisticated and cosmopolitan Texas-Mexican orchestra in the era of the Jazz Age. While Save La Gloria Alliance and other preservation organizations raised enough funds to purchase the property, the owner, Tony Limón, declined the offer. “The problem is running into what the property owner would like to do versus what the community would like,” Sanchez conceded. “It (La Gloria) did not get landmarked and we lost the building.”<sup>493</sup>

Sanchez refers to one of the Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice’s educational pillars as “culturally grounding” residents to their history. Adding to the problem of La Gloria, admitted Sanchez, is a general lack of knowledge about the West Side’s rich cultural past. “What remains of the West Side is only a small part of what it used to be. The Esperanza was born out of this moment with La Gloria,” added Sanchez.<sup>494</sup> Oral histories and found footage of music performance helped build the case for La Gloria’s preservation. The Esperanza Center’s Susana Segura distinctly remembered the collective disappointment following La Gloria’s demise. Since then, Segura worked with community members to identify spaces of import in the West Side under threat of

---

<sup>492</sup> *San Antonio Remembered: The Good Times*. Alamo Public Telecommunications Council/KLRN, 1997.

<sup>493</sup> Graciela Sanchez, interview by author, July 7, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

demolition. A decade later, Segura led a lengthy battle to save Lerma's Nite Club, another West Side Texas-Mexican music venue.<sup>495</sup>

Established in 1951 at 1602 N. Zarzamora Street, Lerma's Nite Club was one of the longest-running live *conjunto* music venues in Texas.<sup>496</sup> Before owner Paul Lerma opened the club, it was formerly El Sombrero Night Club, another *conjunto* venue. Despite the popularity of *conjunto*, Mexican Americans musicians had limited options for performance spaces in the city. Lerma's was one of the few music venues that regularly booked *conjunto* groups, creating an environment that both celebrated and sustained Texas-Mexican folk music and provided an important gathering space for West Side residents.<sup>497</sup> Lerma's welcomed established and up-and-coming *conjunto* musicians throughout its five-decade operation, including Santiago Jimenez, Jr., Nick Villareal, and Juan Ramos (one of the *conjunto* artists discussed in *Semana de la Raza* in Chapter 4).

A 1976 article by *San Antonio Express News* entertainment writer Ben King recognized Lerma's and one of its mainstays, Trio San Antonio, for "keep[ing] an important South Texas tradition alive."<sup>498</sup> King described *conjunto*'s crossover moment into the mainstream, including recent Tex-Mex rock hits from Doug Sahm as well as Trio San Antonio's popularized recordings with California folk label, Arhoolie Records. King discussed Trio San Antonio's pending European tour, with stops in London, Paris, and Berlin, spreading the hybridized German-Mexican accordion genre to its co-originated

---

<sup>495</sup> Mark Wilson, "Saving A Conjunto Landmark," *San Antonio Express News*, December 19, 2012.

<sup>496</sup> As discussed in this dissertation, *conjunto* music was popular throughout South Texas and represented the cultural traditions of the Tejano working class.

<sup>497</sup> Graciela Sanchez, interview by author, July 7, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>498</sup> Ben King, "Zimmerle's Grand Trio," *San Antonio Express News*, July 11, 1976.

country of origin and beyond.<sup>499</sup> Upon regular visits to the club, King recognized that (Anglo) San Antonians may never know of this storied music venue because, for many, “it seems to fit the ‘West Side bar’ stereotype.” Indeed, a working-class Tejano dancehall in the segregated Mexican part of town, Lerma’s was a place where Anglos rarely ventured. In the face of anti-Mexican discrimination, Lerma’s endured as an integral part of the social—and sonic—fabric of the West Side. It was a place where “thirty couples or so” gathered to dance to live conjunto every night, as they had for decades prior.<sup>500</sup>

In 1988, musician Gilbert Garcia purchased the venue and building from the Lerma family, continuing to welcome Texas-Mexican music fans well into the twenty-first century.<sup>501</sup> But on July 6, 2010, San Antonio’s Dangerous Premises Unit (DPU) discovered electrical, mechanical and plumbing violations with the building. Following the reports, the DPU ordered an evacuation of the building, prompting the club’s sudden closure.<sup>502</sup> Under threat of demolition, Garcia acquired a structural engineers report affirming the building’s viability. News of Lerma’s pending demise prompted an outpouring of community support; live music fundraisers quickly materialized to alleviate Garcia’s mounting costs. Grassroots mobilizing from the West Side became critical to Lerma’s preservation. Letters of community support, including from then-Mayor Julián

---

<sup>499</sup> Ben King, “Zimmerle’s Grand Trio,” *San Antonio Express News*, July 11, 1976.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Travis Buffkin, “Historic Lerma’s Nite Club Owner Gilbert Garcia Has Died,” *San Antonio Current*, January 8, 2016.

<sup>502</sup> Smith Gregory, “Lerma’s Nite Club, Bexar County, Texas,” *National Park Service*, [https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/Hispanic/2011/Lermas\\_Nite\\_Club.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/Hispanic/2011/Lermas_Nite_Club.htm), accessed April 17, 2019.

Castro, were submitted to the DCU for public record.<sup>503</sup> Formalizing an alliance, community members formed the Save Lerma's Coalition in 2002. Through the ensuing legal challenges, the Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice retained guardianship of the club, overseeing campaigns to raise money for its renovation.<sup>504</sup>



**Figure 5.1.** A group of Save Lerma's Coalition organizers stand in front of the storied venue with signs that read, "Este Lugar Es Importante," "This Place Is Important," and "This Place Matters" for the National Register of Historic Places' Community Challenge grant. The group's grassroots mobilization landed Lerma's on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo courtesy of Save Lerma's Coalition.

**Figure 5.2.** Rita Vidaurri, a famous golden age *música tejana* singer from the West Side, sang a *ranchera* song at a City Council budget meeting in support of Lerma's restoration. Photo courtesy of Hector Saldaña/*San Antonio Express News*.

Hector Romero Alanis, a Lerma's regular, lamented the venue's closure: "It's like somebody passed on and there's no place to go anymore. It was *el corazón de Tejas* (the heart of Texas)."<sup>505</sup> Alanis' remembrance of Lerma's was not just as a music venue, but

<sup>503</sup> Letter from Mayor Julián Castro to Texas Historical Commission, Dec 6th, 2010, <http://www.savelermas.org/page5-2/>, accessed April 03, 2019.

<sup>504</sup> Garcia secured a National Trust for Historic Preservation grant for a more thorough structural engineers report. In 2016, the city awarded the Esperanza Center a \$500,000 contract to rehabilitate the building. As of Spring 2019, Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice and Save La Gloria Alliance completed its environmental due diligence and is currently seeking bids from general contractors.

<sup>505</sup> Smith Gregory, "Lerma's Nite Club, Bexar County, Texas," *National Park Service*, [https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/Hispanic/2011/Lermas\\_Nite\\_Club.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/Hispanic/2011/Lermas_Nite_Club.htm), accessed April 17, 2019.



as a living part of the community. Like other West Side residents, Alanis ascribed meaning to Lerma's as a significant communal space for Mexican Americans in the West Side. An op-ed in the *San Antonio Express News* by Pablo Lerma's granddaughter, Elia Palmieri, invoked memories of dance and congregation. "Lerma's Nite Club was a place to dance polkas, waltzes, cumbias, etc...It was just as entertaining to watch people dance as it was to dance. Lerma's has a very special place in my heart and in the hearts of many San Antonians."<sup>506</sup> In September 2015, over 100 people showed up to a city council budget meeting to support the Esperanza Center's campaign to restore Lerma's.<sup>507</sup> While many testified before the council, golden age *ranchera* singer Rita Vidaurri, along with accordionist Mark Weber and *bajo sexto* player Oscar Garcia, opted to sing.<sup>508</sup> Vidaurri sang "Morena Morenita," a popular West Side *ranchera* song from the early 1940s, to demonstrate music's intrinsic relationship to both Lerma's and the culture and people of the West Side.<sup>509</sup> (See Figure 5.4.)

Employing testimony and performance from elder West Side residents, Lerma's successful preservation builds on community pride and localized understandings of the past. Historian Kenneth J. Bindas' comparison of oral histories from Anglo and African American communities (from the North and South, respectively) shows how personal

---

<sup>506</sup> Elia Palmieri, "Family Ties To Lerma's," *San Antonio Express News*, August 4, 2010.

<sup>507</sup> Hector Saldaña, "Esperanza Center Asking For \$1 Million To Save Lerma's Nite Club," *San Antonio Express-News*, September 3, 2015, <https://www.mysanantonio.com/entertainment/article/Esperanza-Center-asking-for-1-million-to-save-6481785.php#photo-8572951>, accessed April 10, 2019.

<sup>508</sup> "City Council B Session - Final Meeting Minutes," § San Antonio City Council (September 2, 2015). <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/Clerk/Minutes/2015/2015.09.02%20Minutes.pdf>, accessed April 10, 2019.

<sup>509</sup> "Morena Morenita" was as originally written and recorded by West Side *conjunto* pioneer Santiago Jimenez. "The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings | Frontera Project," <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/>, accessed February 19, 2019.

experiences and collective racial group experiences shape interpretations of the past.<sup>510</sup>

Bindas explored how African Americans and Anglo Americans constructed distinctive meanings of past events, blurring the historical narrative. In his study, oral histories from different racial groups produce divergent understandings of national historical phenomena including segregation and race relations. In San Antonio, Mexican American residents with conflicting interpretations of San Antonio's past assign meaning to important gathering places of sound and culture to stake claim to the West Side and accentuate their underrecognized histories in the city.<sup>511</sup> Save La Gloria Alliance advocated for musical traditions as significant to their collective identity and as a silenced cultural past.

### **“The Harlem of the Mexican American Community”**

The battles for La Gloria and Lerma's demonstrate how West Side residents champion the district's histories within endangered traditions and landmarks. Music of the past, and the people who made it, emerge as cultural symbols of a marginalized community vying for visibility. These sonic and oral histories, presented in city council meetings, community organizing events, and newspaper editorials, engender an audible archive for community preservation. Building on a strong history of *barrio* activism, the Westside Preservation Alliance (WPA), a local conservation group, recently embarked on

---

<sup>510</sup> Kenneth J. Bindas, "Re-Remembering a Segregated Past: Race in American Memory." *History and Memory* 22, no. 1 (2010), 113-34.

<sup>511</sup> Other musical spaces in the United States have taken on place-making and cultural production initiatives. Cincinnati's King Records recorded a diversity of postwar genres including rhythm and blues, country, jazz, and gospel, forging the sounds of rock and roll. In recent years, music writers, activists, and public historians have attempted to accentuate the label's history and importance to cultural history. For more on this, see Charles Lester, "They've Taken It All Away. The Only Thing Here Is Me": The Struggle to Preserve the Legacy of King Records," *The Public Historian*, May 2017, vol. 39.

a mission to “identify, document, and protect places of significance on San Antonio’s Westside” through community forums.<sup>512</sup> These places included vacant churches, nightclubs, stores, community spaces, and other locations of cultural import under threat of demolition. The WPA’s Westside Designated Landmarks project identified over ninety properties and areas deemed significant to the West Side for its history, culture, and architecture. The city later joined the effort, responding to growing criticisms that only a fraction of the 2,000 local landmarks were located within the West Side.<sup>513</sup>

The Westside Designated Landmarks (WDL) initiative originated from concern of the West Side’s exclusion from city-led historical narratives. As one of the largest and oldest Mexican enclaves in the United States, the West Side has important historical ties to Mexican American cultural formation. According to the Office of Historic Preservation, the WDL initiative aims to “enhance community pride and identity” by identifying and protecting places associated with significant events or people. For instance, Francisco Madero’s *Plan of San Luis Potosí*—the Mexican revolutionary’s formative call to arms against President Porfirio Díaz, a significant document in Mexican history—was written and published in 1910 during his asylum at the Hutchins Hotel on the West Side.<sup>514</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, Tex-Mex food traces much of its culinary

---

<sup>512</sup> “Westside Potential Landmarks 2012-2013,” Office of Historic Preservation, March 21, 2013, [https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/HistoricPreservation/Westside\\_Potential\\_Landmarks.pdf](https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/HistoricPreservation/Westside_Potential_Landmarks.pdf), accessed February 02, 2019.

<sup>513</sup> “Westside Cultural Resource Survey” from the Westside Potential Landmarks Meeting. Office of Historic Preservation, City of San Antonio, March 21, 2013.

<sup>514</sup> “Distant Neighbors: The U.S. and the Mexican Revolution: Madero and Other Revolutionaries on Map of San Antonio, Texas, 1910-1911.” Library of Congress. Hispanic Division Area Studies.

traditions to the enterprising cultural practices of the Chili Queens on the West Side.<sup>515</sup>

Cultural histories such as these are mostly excluded from landmarks, tourist attractions, and public exhibitions in San Antonio and Bexar County. Public pressure on the city led to necessary safeguarding of the living heritage in Mexican American neighborhoods and recognition of the musician's relationship to *barrio* identity. The WDL criteria for landmark designation reimagine the preservation process by targeting structures which evoke "visible reminders of cultural heritage" and "strongly exemplif[y] the social, ethnic or historic heritage of San Antonio" in ways that make Mexican history legible.<sup>516</sup>

A brief examination of Lydia Mendoza's West Side illuminates a long history of musical place-making on the West Side, and suggests how San Antonio's music history can inform preservation. During the 1920s and 1930s, Lydia Mendoza, a pioneering figure in Texas-Mexican music, honed her talent in and around the performance spaces of the West Side and in downtown plazas.<sup>517</sup> As a young child, Mendoza and her family busked in the near West Side's *Plaza del Zacate* (Haymarket Plaza), where food vendors, families, churchgoers, musicians, laborers, tourists, and others convened and socialized in the busy open-air market. A young singing sensation, Mendoza gathered crowds during

---

<sup>515</sup> "S.A. Queens Say Chili Is Sanitary," *San Antonio Light*, September 18, 1941. As discussed in Chapter One, chili queens were enterprising Mexican American women who popularized chili and other Tex-Mex food staples as early as the mid-nineteenth century by serving it to tourists in San Antonio's downtown plazas. In 1933, Mayor C.K. Quin declared them a "public health nuisance" and were closed down by the city health department by the early 1940s, pushing chili queens and other informal economies out of the plazas and into segregated communities on the outskirts of downtown.

<sup>516</sup> "Westside Cultural Resource Survey" from the Westside Potential Landmarks Meeting. Office of Historic Preservation, City of San Antonio, March 21, 2013.

<sup>517</sup> "People's Song Bird: SA Singer Champ Recording Artist," *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1938; Lydia Mendoza, *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993). Chapter One discusses how Mendoza and her family struggled to earn their living playing at San Antonio's *Plaza del Zacate*.

her performances. Outside of the plaza, Mendoza and her family also performed in *cantinas*, grocery stores, and small Mexican theaters thriving in the West Side during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>518</sup> Although the Great Depression brought to an end to many of the West Side theaters, Mendoza earned extra income through successful commercial recordings with mobile recording firms in San Antonio.<sup>519</sup> As her popularity grew, Mendoza's music evoked cultural pride among Mexican Americans. Today, Mendoza continues to be celebrated as a cultural icon of the West Side—a “songstress of the poor” memorialized in Chicano murals, Tejano record shops, and the Tejano Conjunto Hall of Fame, among other places.<sup>520</sup> In her biography, *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music*, author Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales encapsulated her enduring eminence in Mexican cultural formation: “The very sight of her was magical and could awaken a populist frenzy and collective pride in Mexicans.”<sup>521</sup> These histories connect musicians like Mendoza to the West Side as a Mexican American space.

Music continues to inform West Side place-making through ongoing public events and memorialization projects. In these initiatives, the West Side signifies a space of Mexican American cultural renaissance. Community activist Graciela Sanchez emphasized the cultural district's centrality to the Mexican American experience. “We see the West Side as the Harlem of the Mexican American community. The Harlem

---

<sup>518</sup> Lydia Mendoza, *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993).

<sup>519</sup> The Mendozas frequently performed at *Teatro Venus* and *Teatro Nacional* in the West Side. Mendoza, *Lydia Mendoza*, 74.

<sup>520</sup> David Greene, “Lydia Mendoza: The First Lady Of Tejano,” *NPR.Org*, May 24, 2010, accessed April 03, 2019.

<sup>521</sup> Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez, *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music / La Historia de Lydia Mendoza: Norteño Tejano Legacies* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Renaissance had its significant cultural contributions to black life in the United States. With our history of music, literature, culture, and political activism, we have that right here, too.”<sup>522</sup> Within the last two decades, the Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice’s cultural programs, such as *Paseo por el Westside* (Walk Through the West Side) and *Las Tesoras de San Antonio* (a reunited group of golden age *ranchera* singers) represent community efforts to accentuate the cultural significance of West Side.<sup>523</sup> *Paseo por el Westside*, an annual walking tour of the district, includes cultural history, storytelling, music, education, and film screenings to depict and celebrate Mexican American heritage in the West Side. Workshops include themes on Mexican American culture ranging from how to use medicinal plants and traditional wash bins, to making flour tortillas and *pan dulce* (Mexican sweet bread).<sup>524</sup> The San Antonio Central Public Library also participates in this event, hosting genealogical research workshops to help residents to their past.<sup>525</sup> *Paseo por el Westside* also includes live conjunto performances from musicians of past and current generations.

Started in 2006, the Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice’s “En Aquellos Tiempos: Fotohistorias Del Westside” project (In Those Times: Photo Histories of the West Side), installed large photo banners of local Mexican American life throughout the streets of the West Side.<sup>526</sup> As seen in Figure 5.2, one banner depicts a 1940s-era English

---

<sup>522</sup> Graciela Sanchez, interview with author, July 7, 2018, San Antonio.

<sup>523</sup> Erica Learned, “Las Tesoros de San Antonio to Celebrate New CD,” *San Antonio Express-News*, February 8, 2017, accessed April 02, 2019.

<sup>524</sup> Hector Saldaña, “Paseo Por El Westside Is a Walk Back in Time,” *San Antonio Express-News*, May 3, 2017.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Claudia Guerra, interview with author, October 24, 2017, San Antonio.

and citizenship class at the West Side's Alazan-Apache Courts, the oldest and largest public housing development in the city. Alazan-Apache Courts, or "Los Courts," was Mexican-only until the end of segregation in the 1960s.<sup>527</sup> An ongoing project, *En Aquellos Tiempos* displays Mexican American heritage in the West Side, inviting elder residents to record oral histories of their lives in the *barrio*. By inviting the community to participate, this particular campaign reflects shared historical authority of the West Side. Historian Michael Frisch's concept of shared authority, opening the interpretations of the past to the public, offers a view into West Side contestations of elite-focused histories. West Side residents' active remembering of the past through public street installations accentuate the *barrio*'s historical meaning to current residents and social plight of low-income Mexicans in the past.<sup>528</sup> The public celebrations of the ordinary people, including Texas-Mexican musicians, create a tangible way to teach younger generations about the West Side's past.

---

<sup>527</sup> For more on the Alazan-Apache Courts, see Zelman, Donald L. "Alazan-Apache Courts: A New Deal Response to Mexican American Housing Conditions in San Antonio." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (1983), 123-50.

<sup>528</sup> Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 27.



**Fig, 5.3** A photo banner installed by the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center depicting a citizenship class at the Alazan-Apache Courts, San Antonio’s oldest and largest public housing development. Most photos from the *En Aquellos Tiempos* campaign range from the early 1900s to the 1950s. Started in 2006, the Esperanza Center periodically installs these banners throughout the West Side, particularly in the neighborhood near Guadalupe Street. As seen here, many banners invite passersby to call with any information about the photo. Photograph taken by author, March 2018.

### **Oldies, Nostalgia, and Barrio Memories**

Other forms of Mexican American place-making in San Antonio include song titles referencing the West Side. Recordings from area *conjunto* groups date back to the earliest days of the West Side Sound. Lorenzo Caballero y su Grupo de Estrellas, a Texas-Mexican *conjunto* group, recorded “West Side Polka” and “De San Antonio a Monterrey” for RCA Victor in the early 1930s. As discussed in Chapter One, the 1930s



was a period of increased Mexican American settlement in the West Side.<sup>529</sup> Caballero, described as a “San Antonio guitar virtuoso,” pioneered *conjunto* in solo recordings as well as guitar accompaniments with Lydia Mendoza and Santiago Jimenez. A noted showman, Caballero occasionally performed the guitar with his tongue, even “putting lighter fluid on the guitar [and] lighting it up,” recalled musician Arturo Yglesias.<sup>530</sup> During his military tours in World War II, Caballero’s *conjunto* music traveled from the West Side to the Far East. He was the first GI broadcast over Tokyo radio and performed for the Emperor of Japan.<sup>531</sup> Though instrumental recordings, “West Side Polka” and “De San Antonio a Monterrey” reveal early musical expressions of Mexican identity and locality in the West Side. Alongside Mendoza and Jimenez, Caballero was inducted into the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center’s Tejano Conjunto Hall of Fame in 1990.<sup>532</sup>

Conjunto Trio San Antonio, one of the resident Lerma’s Nite Club groups, recorded their “Viva El West Side” LP for Arhoolie Records in 1974. In the liner notes for “Viva El West Side,” label owner Chris Strachwitz’ description of Conjunto Trio San Antonio’s music accentuates the West Side as a distinctively Texas-Mexican space:

Most Americans think of colorfully costumed Mariachi bands with trumpets and violins when Mexican music is mentioned. However, that is not Texas-Mexican music. There are indeed Mariachi bands in San Antonio even at San Antonio restaurants and at the annual Fiesta when they battle it out on the floats in front of the huge new Hilton Hotel on the

---

<sup>529</sup> “West Side Polka,” Lorenzo Caballero y su Grupo De Estrellas, RCA Victor, #23-5125-A. The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

<sup>530</sup> Arturo Yglesias, interview by Victor Rendón, April 14, 2009, San Antonio, <http://bronxconexionlatinjazz.com/interviews/arturo-yglesias>, accessed April 10, 2019.

<sup>531</sup> “GI Guitarist To Play For Benefit,” *San Antonio Light*, September 6, 1946.

<sup>532</sup> Arturo Yglesias, interview by Victor Rendón, April 14, 2009, San Antonio, <http://bronxconexionlatinjazz.com/interviews/arturo-yglesias>, accessed April 10, 2019.

San Antonio River to the delight of the tourists. The real music of Texas-Mexicans is seldom heard by outsiders, visitors, or even most Texas Anglos. The West Side of San Antonio is in many ways a Mexican city and you seldom hear English spoken.<sup>533</sup>



**Fig. 5.4.** Conjunto Trio San Antonio, *Viva El West Side!*, 1974, LP-3004. Courtesy of Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

**Fig. 5.5.** “West Side Polka” by Lorenzo Caballero y su Grupo De Estrellas, circa early 1930s, 78-rpm, RCA Victor, #23-5125-A. Courtesy of Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Strachwitz’ acknowledgment of the West Side as a Spanish-speaking “Mexican city” affirms a cultural expression of Mexican American sovereignty. The group’s hybridized album title, “El West Side,” conjures a Texas-Mexican space, and that it should continue to live, or *viva*, as such. The cultural dominance of Spanish language and Mexican music contests notions of Anglo hegemony. A popular 1950s-era *pachuco* slang, “El West Side” modifies English and Spanish in the making of *barrio* argot, or *caló*. “El Weso,” another popular *pachuco* nickname for the district, derived from the old

<sup>533</sup> Conjunto Trio San Antonio, *Viva El West Side!*, 1974, LP-3004. The Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

*barrio* gangs of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>534</sup> The mixture of language represents a way for Mexican Americans to lay claim to the West Side as a Hispanic neighborhood.

San Antonio musicians continued to invoke the West Side in song titles and lyrics, referencing specific locations to give the listener a sense of musical mapping of the cultural district. A pioneer of the West Side Sound in the 1950s, musician Randy Garibay recorded several songs referencing the West Side during the 1980s and 1990s. His new group, Randy and the Westside Sound, performed “puro pinche blues,” mixing classic blues and R&B with a Chicano twist. Garibay’s local hit from 1997, “Barbacoa Blues,” highlights the culture local pastimes of the West Side as hanging out with friends and family and dining on *barbacoa*, Mexican-style barbecue, and Big Red soda.<sup>535</sup> The song makes reference to Mexican dishes and *taquerias* on the major West Side thoroughfare, Nogalitos Road. “Barbacoa Blues” remains popular in San Antonio, since it resonates so strongly with locals, and because it was one of the last hits for Randy Garibay, the self-proclaimed “Chicano Bluesman.” Garibay’s follow-up hit from 2002, “Where Are They Now?,” pays tribute to his musician friends, the “legends” of the West Side Sound. Garibay opens the song by stating, “I wrote this song as a tribute to the *vatos* that started West Side Sound, right here in San Anto, back in the fifties. You know who they are!” A slow-moving ballad, Garibay sentimentalizes the “missing” popular artists of yesteryear, invoking Sunny and the Sunliners, Charlie Alvarado, The Royal Jesters, Doug Sahm, and others. Similar to “Barbacoa Blues,” Garibay invokes specific musical

---

<sup>534</sup> Mike Tapia, *The Barrio Gangs of San Antonio, 1915-2015* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017).

<sup>535</sup> “Barbacoa and Big Red” is a curious local food-and-drink pairing dating back to the 1960s; its continued popularity, in part because of the song’s resonance in the *barrio*, inspired an annual food festival in San Antonio. See Abe Levy, “Big Red-Barbacoa Event Underscores Tradition,” *San Antonio Express News*, October 14, 2013, accessed March 21, 2019.

and cultural spaces of the city, such as the Tourist Ballroom, where mixed-race youths danced to R&B and rock and roll during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>536</sup>

Other Chicano/a groups associated with the peak years of the West Side Sound continued to sentimentalize the past and perform “oldies” for new and old audiences, through a radio format devoted to 1950s-1970s rock and pop music.<sup>537</sup> With themes of love and romance, San Antonio oldies evokes a particular nostalgia for the past wherein African Americans, Anglos, and Mexican Americans forged a localized style of rock and roll.<sup>538</sup> KEDA’s “San Antonio Oldies Radio Show,” and its listenership of “San Antonio’s Oldest Teenagers,” contributes to the *barrio* memories of the West Side.<sup>539</sup> Reminiscing on the West Side Sound’s “sacred grounds,” including former teen clubs and area high schools, local oldies disc jockeys celebrate this music as a source of identity and pride.<sup>540</sup>

Founded in 2015, San Antonio Oldies Radio Show broadcasts local oldies on the air and online, increasing its popularity and syndication since its inception. It was founded by Henry “Pepsi” Peña and Jesse Garcia. Peña, a popular disc jockey and West

---

<sup>536</sup> Randy Garibay, *Barbacoa Blues*, CD (Ce Distributors, 1997).

<sup>537</sup> Ed Ward, “Remembering San Antonio’s Horn-Infused Doo-Wop Scene,” *NPR*, accessed October 27, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/10/27/452206170/remembering-san-antonios-horn-infused-doo-wop-scene>

<sup>538</sup> In recent years, music historians such as Anthony Macías and Ruben Molina have produced histories of rock and roll which insert Latinos and Latinas in the creation of postwar American popular music. Recognizing Latino/a participation in these narratives diminishes black-white racial framings of American music and presents transnational perspectives as well. See Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Los Angeles: Mictlan Press, 2007).

<sup>539</sup> The station is self-styled as the “The Epicenter of the West Side Sound.” Adam Tutor, “Patio Andaluz Reunion Sparks Sentimental Spirit of ‘Westside Sound,’” *Rivard Report*, February 26, 2016, <https://therivardreport.com/patio-andaluz-reunion-sparks-sentimental-spirit-of-westside-sound>, accessed March 10, 2019.

<sup>540</sup> San Antonio Oldies Radio Show Facebook page. “Patio Andaluz 2018 Reunion: Promotional Video,” <https://www.facebook.com/1637688313115229/videos/2075218002695589>, accessed August 15, 2018.

Side Sound recording artist, teamed up with Garcia to create radio programming based on “homegrown hits” interspersed with oldies hits from the era.<sup>541</sup> Peña and Garcia reminisce about the intangible histories of the West Side Sound’s multiracial bands, high schools, teenage sock hops, record labels, and battle-of-the-band contests. The radio hosts also connect with listeners through an extensive social media network, monthly breakfast clubs, and an online dedication portal where listeners can request songs for loved ones—a “throwback” to the call-in dedication lines of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>542</sup>

By “bringing back memories,” as described by listener reviews of the program, Peña and Garcia invoke local *barrio* memories through the popular and vintage recordings of African American and Mexican American musicians.<sup>543</sup> In their annual oldies reunion concert, “Patio Andaluz Reunion Show,” Peña and Garcia produce these memories through live performance. In an interview, Peña described the reunion concert’s popularity as consequence of support and pride in the West Side overlooked in city histories. “It’s home-grown hits, the epicenter of West Side Sound, we take you back in time and talk about all the events, stories of that time. We have woken up a culture that has been ignored, and we have sparked their lives with the music they grew up with. In the 55 years I’ve been in the business, I’ve never had such a response.”<sup>544</sup> San Antonio

---

<sup>541</sup> San Antonio Oldies Radio Show Facebook page. “Patio Andaluz 2018 Reunion: Promotional Video,” <https://www.facebook.com/1637688313115229/videos/2075218002695589>, accessed August 15, 2018

<sup>542</sup> Jesse Garcia, interview by author, March 13, 2017, San Antonio.

<sup>543</sup> San Antonio Oldies Radio Show Facebook page. “Patio Andaluz 2018 Reunion: Promotional Video,” <https://www.facebook.com/1637688313115229/videos/2075218002695589>, accessed August 15, 2018.

<sup>544</sup> Adam Tutor, “Patio Andaluz Reunion Sparks Sentimental Spirit of ‘Westside Sound,’” *Rivard Report*, February 16, 2016, <https://therivardreport.com/patio-andaluz-reunion-sparks-sentimental-spirit-of-westside-sound>, accessed March 10, 2019.

Oldies Radio disc jockeys contribute to the ongoing remembrance of the West Side Sound and affirmation of Mexican American place-making of the district.

In some instances, musicians' reference of the West Side also functioned to legitimize the Mexican American space outside of the city. Doug Sahm's 1983 album, *The West Side Sound Rolls Again*, sentimentalizes the 1950s/1960s heyday of Sahm's adolescence where he absorbed and performed the multicultural sounds of San Antonio. Sahm and West Side Chicano musicians perform "classic" West Side R&B, such as "Why, Why, Why" and "Golly Gee," in a "throwback" to the city's cultural past. A few years prior, Sahm revisited his former San Antonio haunts in further adoration for the West Side's perceived authenticity, unchanged by outside influences. He waxed nostalgic to friend and *Rolling Stone* journalist Chet Flippo about his homecoming and the racial integration of San Antonio's musical landscape:

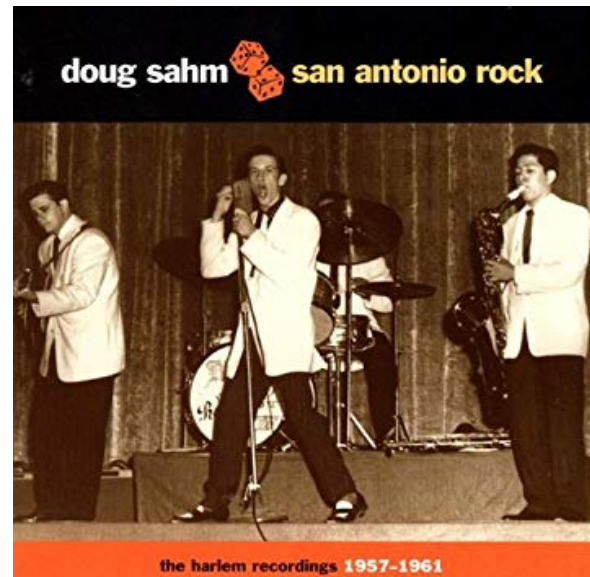
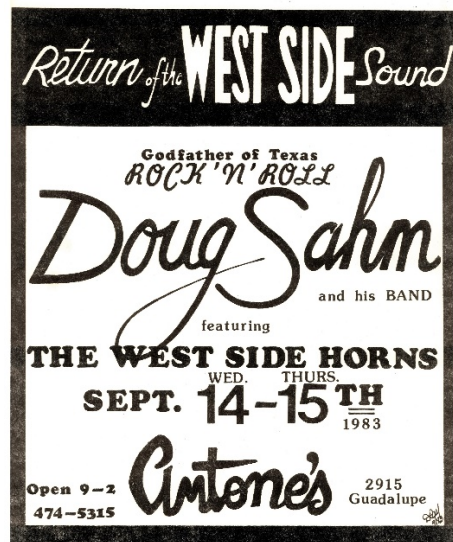
Man, the West Side is so beautiful, so soulful. There's 400,000 people on the West Side, man, the original soul Mexican thing of the *world*. See, the West Side is pure Chicano and the East Side is black. I grew up on the East Side and that was a significant thing in my life. We used to sneak out of school and go drink wine and listen to Blue Bland and B. B. King and Little Willie John on the jukebox, and all those same cats would play at the Eastwood Country Club right across the field from where I grew up, and I could hear 'em at night.<sup>545</sup>

Despite Sahm's affection for his hometown, the musical environment in San Antonio had changed significantly since he and others migrated to California in the late 1960s. By the mid-1970s, the city's music scene featured much more traditional *conjunto* and Mexican folk than it did the eclectic music associated with the West Side Sound of the previous decades. However, Sahm's affinity for and recognition of the West Side

---

<sup>545</sup> Chet Flippo, "Sir Douglas of the Quintet Is Back (in Texas)," *Rolling Stone*, July 8, 1971.

helped form its popular understanding as a space of cultural significance within the city's official memory.



**Fig. 5.6.** 1983 poster for Doug Sahm's "Return of the West Side Sound" concert. Courtesy of Jason Saldaña.

**Fig. 5.7.** Doug Sahm, *San Antonio Rock* CD compilation. Norton Records, 1999.

Suburban flight and urban decay contributed to the West Side's depopulation and economic decline. While the *barrio* once thrived with Tejano-owned grocery stores, *cantinas*, churches, schools, and other distinct cultural spaces, urban renewal and construction of the interstate highway during the mid-1960s divided the neighborhood, further separating it from downtown and other prioritized urban hubs.<sup>546</sup> In more recent years, partial demolition of the neighborhood, as well as the forces of gentrification, further damaged its historic character and economic sustainability.

<sup>546</sup> City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation. "San Antonio's Westside: History, Culture, Community," accessed July 29, 2018. <https://www.sanantonio.gov/portals/0/Files/HistoricPreservation/SA'sWestside.pdf>

Responding to such changes, San Anto Cultural Arts, a nonprofit founded in 1993 to foster community development through community-based arts, commissioned artists to create murals and intertextual works depicting local Chicano/a history and *barrio* memories throughout the West Side. These works illustrate the connections among landscape, place-making, and iconography within the Mexican American communities. Many local murals reflect ethnic consciousness and accentuate cultural heritage of Chicanos/as. San Antonio's murals are found on buildings and open spaces in the West Side. As markers of place-making, murals of local history and *barrio* leaders reflect meaning, giving insight into the history and culture of San Antonio's Mexican American community.

San Anto Cultural Arts Director Keli Rosa Cabunoc considered the murals' meanings within Chicano/a artistic practices and as a means to contest urban histories. In an interview, Cabunoc reflected on the representations of *barrio* life contained in local murals. "The Chicano art movement was part of a larger movement of Chicanos struggling for self-determination and the reclamation of their community's history and culture. Chicano activists looked to artists to empower the Chicano community...to create public art pieces that are not only accessible to the Chicano community, but that serve as a way to educate, to reclaim identities, and to create true-to-life representations of *barrio* life."<sup>547</sup> As of 2016, there are over fifty murals in the West Side, many of which

---

<sup>547</sup> E. Dan Klepper, "San Antonio's West Side Murals Celebrate Chicano Culture," *Texas Highways*, accessed September 3, 2018. <http://www.texashighways.com/culture-lifestyle/item/8555-san-antonios-west-side-murals-celebrate-chicano-culture>; Historian Holly Barnet-Sanchez discusses the development of Chicano/a murals in the Mexican American housing projects in the Boyle Heights district of Los Angeles. Barnet-Sanchez situates the social context of the Chicano Movement to understand the development of Chicano/a mural culture in East Los Angeles. Holly Barnet-Sanchez and Tim Drescher, *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016).



reflect Mexican and Chicano/a cultural icons including Aztec iconography, Chicano/a leaders, Tejano/a musical life, and artistic tributes to *La Virgen de Guadalupe*.

One of the biggest murals within the Community Mural & Public Art Program, “La Música de San Anto,” features local *música tejana* pioneers and celebrated figures of the West Side Sound. *La Música de San Anto* is a tribute to the popular musicians of color from the West Side. The mural depicts multiple generations of San Antonio musicians posing in live performance. Commissioned in 2009, *La Música de San Anto* features Randy Garibay, Rocky Morales, Clifford Scott, Felix Villarreal, Manuel “Manny” Castillo, Eva Garza, Doug Sahm, Lydia Mendoza, and Valerio Longoria, among others.<sup>548</sup> References to historic music venues and West Side spaces gives a visual sense of the district’s deep-rooted relationship to music. At 150-feet wide, *La Música de San Anto* is designed to be “the very first thing you see upon crossing the Commerce Street bridge, so it’s the gateway to the West,” according to lead muralist David Blancas.<sup>549</sup> Blancas credited San Anto Cultural Arts founder Manny Castillo for conceiving the piece as a tribute to the city’s rich musical heritage.

---

<sup>548</sup> Elda Silva, “Visual Arts: ‘La Música de San Anto’ Mural,” *San Antonio Express News*, November 19, 2009.

<sup>549</sup> Ariel Barkhurst, “Musicians Immortalized on West Side Mural Project Is Legacy of San Anto Cultural Arts Founder Manny Castillo,” *San Antonio Express News*, November 21, 2009.



**Fig. 5.8** (top) “La Música de San Anto” mural, 1303 W. Commerce St. Features San Antonio musicians Randy Garibay, Rocky Morales, Clifford Scott, Felix Villarreal, Manuel “Manny” Castillo, Eva Garza, Doug Sahm, Lydia Mendoza, and Valerio Longoria. Photo by author, March 2018.

**Fig. 5.9** (bottom left) “Lideres de la Comunidad” mural (Leaders of the Community), 1204 Buena Vista Street. Features La Gloria Rooftop, labor organizer Emma Tenayuca, and accordionist Paul Morada. Photo by author, March 2018.

**Fig 5.10** (bottom right) Close-up of Lydia Mendoza and Rosita Fernandez at “La Música de San Anto” mural, 1303 W. Commerce Street. Photo by author, March 2018.

## Conclusion

*Barrio* memories of the West Side, signified by vintage recordings, oldies radio, Chicano/a murals, cultural programming, and continued celebration of the West Side

Sound, reflect a broader grassroots initiative to contest city-led histories and stake claim to the West Side as a Mexican American space. While these sonic histories reflect working-class Tejano/a cultural heritage, they also contest underrepresentation in the city's depictions of its past.<sup>550</sup>

The sonic and cultural “making” of the West Side reveals a process where myth-making, silencing, and power dynamics contribute to competing visions of San Antonio history. San Antonio's West Side was, for generations, home to community landmarks and musical spaces that residents enjoyed. Mixed-race bands played in live music venues during the 1940s and 1950s, providing an environment in which musicians of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds were not only allowed, but encouraged, to work together openly in creating a unique and dynamic amalgamation of musical styles. Focus on the city's artefactual structures, efforts historically tied to the city's tourism industry and political elite, overlook the place-making in the West Side through celebration of its people and its “sound.” Long-held defiance against urban renewal laid the groundwork for West Side residents to resist cultural erasure.<sup>551</sup> Mexican American place-making of the West Side emerges through musical spaces of the past, which represent meaning for current generations.

---

<sup>550</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 153.

<sup>551</sup> Cultural heritage preservation includes the conservation of intangible attributes and cultural artifacts of a group or society from past generations. Anthropologist Tracy Duvall examines cultural preservation of the Centro Histórico in downtown Mazatlán, Mexico, in its relationship to locals' desires of cultural change and new building “modernity.” For more on this, see Tracy Duvall, “Old Buildings in Mazatlán: Cultural Preservation or Change?,” *Journal of the Southwest*, Architecture, 45, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2003): 203–32. Archeologist Marilena Alivizatou tracks global developments in the intellectual development of “intangible heritage” preservation and relationship to the museum as a place for cultural safeguarding. Alivizatou explores modern-day museological conventions to understand methods and practices in cultural preservation. Marilena Alivizatou, *Intangible Heritage and the Museum: New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2016).

Remembering the West Side enables historically-marginalized communities to not only insert themselves into the city's history, but empower their current position in the city. West Side organizations, and the cultural productions and musical spaces of the past, contribute to localized identity in the present. The West Side Sound's continued celebration reflects the *barrio* memories scantily recognized in city-led historical projects.

## CONCLUSION

Sunny and the Sunglows' 1963 hit, "Talk To Me," was one of the first Mexican American recordings to achieve national popularity.<sup>552</sup> Recorded in April 1963, "Talk To Me" charted on Houston's KNUZ in early May, it gained momentum on regional radio charts by early summer.<sup>553</sup> Sunglows producer and drummer, Manny Guerra, innovated a do-it-yourself style of promotion:

That was on our label (Sunglow Records) and I just sent it out, sowing the seeds everywhere. If I could find the 4 letters to any radio station in Texas, that's what I did. I remember [someone] told me, 'No, Manny, what you do is you take a region and send it there and see what it does.' I didn't do that. I sent it to everybody in the world that I could! (Laughs). It went to #4 in the nation, *Billboard Magazine*.<sup>554</sup>

Houston record producer Huey Meaux picked up the R&B ballad for national distribution on his Tear Drop label.<sup>555</sup> From September to November 1963, "Talk To Me" sold hundreds of thousands of copies, signaling the emergence of the West Side Sound into the popular music mainstream.<sup>556</sup> Although many Americans may not have even noticed this cultural milestone, it had significant implications for the history of Mexican American music. The success of "Talk To Me" exemplifies how Mexican Americans shaped the larger canon of American popular music. Music entrepreneurs of color, including Manny Guerra and others, laid the framework for a dynamic music industry in the postwar era. While Los Angeles figures prominently, San Antonio is arguably the

---

<sup>552</sup> Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 260.

<sup>553</sup> Manny Guerra, interview by author, March 20, 2018, San Antonio

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Huey Meaux, "Sunny and the Sunglows," advertisement, *Billboard*, October 19, 1963, 16.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

heart of the Mexican American recording industry. From 1955-1968, there were over 120 known Mexican American rock & R&B recording artists and groups in San Antonio, second only to New York City in number of independent recordings by Latino/a rock & R&B groups in the United States.<sup>557</sup> By comparison, there were over 70 known Mexican American rock & R&B recording artists and groups in Los Angeles during this same period.<sup>558</sup>

This dissertation has revealed how San Antonians of color staked claim to their spaces through sound and cultural art forms. Popular music in San Antonio reveals a bigger story about race and race relations in the urban Southwest. Urban settlement and segregation signaled the remapping of the city's racial boundaries during the early twentieth century, characterized by ethnic slums and affluent Anglo suburbs. The West Side transformed into the "Mexican Quarter," becoming one of the largest ethnic Mexican enclaves in the United States.<sup>559</sup> Over the next several decades, Mexican American settlement in the West Side *barrios* grew rapidly due to displacement from the

---

<sup>557</sup> This figure also includes multiracial "black/brown" groups. San Antonio had notably more multiracial groups than Los Angeles, by a margin of nearly 3:1, accentuating San Antonio's distinct culture of multiracial R&B. For further discographical information, see Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 131-174, and Francisco Orozco, "Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, 248-259.

<sup>558</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Metropolitan Statistical Area analysis, San Antonio's population in 1960 was 587,718, while Los Angeles's was 2,479,015. U.S. Census Bureau, 20th Century Statistics; Current Population Reports, [www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/99statab/sec31.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/99statab/sec31.pdf); Ruben Molina, *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (Texas Tech University Press, 2017), 131-174, and Francisco Orozco, "Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2010, 248-259.

<sup>559</sup> Richard Buitron, *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000* (New York: Routledge Press, 2012).

Mexican Revolution and labor demands in the Southwest.<sup>560</sup> As the city urbanized and expanded outwardly, regulation of its most significant public areas, including Alamo Plaza, Haymarket Plaza (Plaza del Zacate), Produce Row, and Military & Main Plaza, ousted Mexican cultural life and informal businesses from the urban core. The gradual curtailing of musicians and street vendors in downtown plazas ensured Anglo dominion in the Alamo City. African American and Mexican American musicians negotiated public spaces to perform for money for passers-by, navigating the local power structure to avoid vigilant lawmen. In the postwar era, music venues, including Don's Keyhole Club and Lerma's Nite Club, provided important communal spaces for patrons and musicians of color in the age of segregation.

Specific cultural, social, and historical factors helped forge a distinct musical environment in San Antonio and contributed to the emergence of the West Side Sound. The orchestral swing of Harlem, the country blues of the Mississippi Delta, the big-band jazz and swamp pop from neighboring Louisiana, and R&B from Memphis and Detroit, blended with the rich traditions that already had existed in San Antonio for decades. This eclectic mixing of musical influences, along with a dynamic live music scene, helped create a cultural environment in which the West Side Sound could take root and flourish. The city's live music venues provided an environment in which musicians of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds were not only allowed, but actually encouraged, to work together openly in creating a unique and dynamic amalgamation of musical styles.

"Young, Gifted, and Brown" accentuates the effects of multiculturalism and cross pollination in the making of postwar San Antonio popular music. Chicano

---

<sup>560</sup> Louis Mendoza, Raquel Marquez, and Steve Blanchard, "Neighborhood Formation on the West Side of San Antonio," *Latino Studies* 5 (2007), 288–316.

musicians such as Jose “Little Joe” Hernandez and Freddie Fender shared musical and cultural experiences with African Americans in Texas, learning blues music from elder African American sharecroppers. Collectively, their “Chicano music” spanned a wide variety of genres on both sides of the border, including blues, jazz, *rock en español*, R&B, soul, country, *ranchera*, *cumbia* and Tejano. Texas-Mexican music already had a long history of absorbing and adapting diverse influences during its formation in the early twentieth century, including regional genres such as blues, jazz, R&B, country, and polka. San Antonio and the greater South Texas region transformed into a dynamic patchwork of hybridized sounds across the region’s various communities, connecting Mexican and American cultures across the border.

Because it attracted such a large and ethnically diverse population, San Antonio became home to a dynamic and eclectic musical environment. The continual influx of diverse populations and cultures helped create a situation in which musicians and fans from a variety of backgrounds could mingle freely in an atmosphere of intercultural congeniality that was quite distinct, especially at the middle of the twentieth century in Texas. The proliferation of military bases in and around San Antonio during World War II ushered in a vibrant mix of servicemen and women from around the country who brought with them a variety of ideas, cultures, and musical tastes. The fact that many of these military personnel had disposable income and were eager for live entertainment made it possible for several of the city’s nightclubs to provide a public arena in which musicians and music lovers of all races and ethnic backgrounds could share in a unique cultural communion that would help give rise to the West Side Sound.<sup>561</sup>

---

<sup>561</sup> Robert Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965.” *The Journal of Southern History*. August 1983, 382.



Local nightclubs, such as the Eastwood Country Club, the Ebony Lounge, and Don Albert's Keyhole Club, played a vital role in providing a public space in which local artists could socialize and exchange musical ideas and innovations with their peers and with younger musicians. Prominent national R&B and blues performers such as Bobby "Blue" Bland, Louis Jordan, Fats Domino, and James Brown, played these venues frequently, helping to influence generations of San Antonio musicians. During this period, it was not uncommon to see racially integrated bands in San Antonio nightclubs. According to music historian Andrew Brown, "the first fully integrated (white, black, Hispanic) band in town anyone can remember was Little Sammy Jay and The Tiffanaires, one of the regular groups at the Tiffany Lounge."<sup>562</sup> (Samuel "Little Sammy Jay" Jaramillo also contributed to one of the first mixed conjunto-rock recordings in music history—an accordion-led version of Little Richard's rock and roll hit, "Tutti Frutti," in 1955.) West Side Sound veterans Charlie Alvarado, Rocky Morales, and Doug Sahm all have remarked on the importance of these local nightclubs in their early musical development. Reflecting on San Antonio's race relations during this period, African American musician Spot Barnett said, "Oh, we didn't give a shit about all that! We just wanted to play. See, San Antonio was different."<sup>563</sup> As an African American musician who toured extensively during that time, Barnett performed in many clubs throughout the South that were still racially segregated. Because San Antonio had long been a very ethnically diverse city, with significant numbers of Mexican Americans, African

---

<sup>562</sup> Andrew Brown, liner notes to *San Antonio Rock - The Harlem Recordings 1957-1961*, CD-274 (Norton Records, 1999).

<sup>563</sup> Vernon "Spot" Barnett, interview by author, September 9, 2012, San Antonio.

Americans, Germans, Czechs, and others, there were more opportunities for intercultural exchange than most major southern cities of the early twentieth century.<sup>564</sup> Examining the West Side Sound reveals a lesser-known history of social interactions among African American and Mexican American musicians spanning several generations.<sup>565</sup>

San Antonio was culturally different from southern cities, but distinguished because of the vibrant ethnic Mexican musical culture rooted in its *barrios*. Music coursed through the veins of the *barrio*, defining community spaces in ways that echoed for generations, especially when urban renewal threatened to destroy the physical structures of the geographically defined the West Side. Preservation groups such as the Esperanza Group for Peace and Justice and the San Antonio Conservation Society continue to preserve the past and living heritages of San Antonio. In recent decades, efforts to save La Gloria and Lerma's Night Club resulted in stand-offs between local activists and city leaders. La Gloria's demise in 2002 galvanized activism in preserving the West Side, inspiring oral history projects and cultural programming based on the rich musical heritage of the community. A decade later, Lerma's pending demolition spurred further *barrio* activism, framing working-class music as part of a distinct Mexican American culture in the West Side. Lerma's ongoing restoration, including funds and support from the city, is a testament to the hard-wrought preservation battles for the West

---

<sup>564</sup> San Antonio was the first large city in the South to desegregate its public school system following the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling that outlawed segregation in public schools. In 1960, it also became the first major southern city to integrate public lunch counters.

<sup>565</sup> Despite the social interactions between musicians of color during this period, institutionalized racism materialized in the form of police intimidation, lack of equal access to public facilities, and a variety of segregation customs existing at the municipal level. However, San Antonio did not experience widescale anti-black violence as other comparable southern cities. For more on this, see Goldberg, Robert. "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965." *The Journal of Southern History*. August 1983, 382.

Side.<sup>566</sup> The ongoing celebration of the West Side Sound, including oldies radio, new music compilations, and murals, reflects *barrio* pride in the West Side as a space of innovation and ethnic pride.

The hybrid and diverse nature of the West Side Sound can still be heard in many forms, including the Tex-Mex rock of the Sir Douglas Quintet, the Chicano country ballads of Freddy Fender and Rudy T Gonzalez, and Flaco Jiménez's accordion licks accompanying recordings with the Rolling Stones, Willie Nelson, and Bob Dylan.<sup>567</sup> Although it may not have the same level of popularity that it once had, the West Side Sound still remains vital culturally, economically, and historically. Still, a half-century after it first appeared, the West Side Sound continues to receive attention, as celebrated archival record labels such as Chicago's Numero Group and New York's Big Crown Records re-release San Antonio Chicano Soul music to new audiences.<sup>568</sup> Currently, Numero Group is working on a comprehensive reissue of the expansive Abe Epstein record catalog for a forthcoming compilation in the ongoing "resurgence" of the West Side Sound. Meanwhile, new soul groups such as Durand Jones and the Indications and

---

<sup>566</sup> For more on West Side preservation and music, see Pam Korza and Barbara Shaffon Bacon, "Arte es Vida Case Study: The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center," in *Art, Dialogue, Action, Activism: Case Studies from Animating Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2005), 1-32.

<sup>567</sup> Hector Saldaña, "Conjunto Legend Flaco Jimenez Celebrating 80th Birthday," *San Antonio Express News*, March 13, 2019.

<sup>568</sup> Matt Stieb, "Numero Group Reissues Classic West Side Sounds From The Royal Jesters," June 17, 2015, <https://www.sacurrent.com/sanantonio/numero-group-reissues-classic-west-side-sounds-from-the-royal-jesters/Content?oid=2447219>; Oliver Wang, "Sunny And The Sunliners' 'Mr. Brown Eyed Soul' Is For The Loved And Lovelorn," September 27, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/09/27/553834549/sunny-and-the-sunliners-mr-brown-eyed-soul-is-for-the-loved-and-lovelorn>, accessed April 9, 2019.

Bobby Oroza cover San Antonio Chicano Soul songs in recordings and live performances for new audiences.<sup>569</sup>

Locally, all-vinyl deejays such as JJ Lopez, Olivia Garcia, Rae Cabello, Jason Saldaña, Chicanos of Soul DJs, Rambo Salinas, Eddie Hernandez, and Hector Gallegos continue to spin San Antonio soul music and educate young audiences about the city's musical heritage<sup>570</sup>. Furthermore, cultural institutions, including the South Texas Popular Culture Center, the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, and the Carver Community Cultural Center are dedicated to the preservation and celebration of San Antonio's rich and diverse musical traditions.<sup>571</sup> In recent years, a new generation of all-vinyl women-of-color deejay collectives, including Chulita Vinyl Club and B-Side Brujas, promote vintage black and brown sounds—particularly Chicano Soul— as a source of identity, viewing vinyl as a way of connecting to a cultural past.<sup>572</sup> The origins of these collectives, a fixture in contemporary club scenes from Los Angeles to Austin to Mexico City, come in response to a male-dominated deejay culture and the ongoing Latinx social

---

<sup>569</sup> Big Crown Records, "Bobby Oroza - Should I Take You Home - BC064-45 - Side B," YouTube video, August 14, 2018; pink665, "Durand Jones and the Indications - Should I Take You Home (Sunny Cover)," YouTube video, April 1, 2018.

<sup>570</sup> Hector Saldaña, "Royal Jesters Are Eternal," June 21, 2015; Adam Tutor, "Rudy Tee Joins King Pelican, Relives Classic Sound," *Rivard Report*, May 6, 2016, <https://therivardreport.com/rudy-tee-joins-king-pelican-relives-classic-sound/>; Jennifer Herrera, "Chulita Vinyl Club: All-Girl, All-Vinyl, All for the Love of Music," *Rivard Report*, February 5, 2016, <https://therivardreport.com/all-girl-all-vinyl-all-local-club-creates-a-female-empowerment-music-driven-movement/>, accessed April 9, 2019.

<sup>571</sup> Melanie Robinson, "Guadalupe Cultural Arts Lighting up the Westside," *Rivard Report*, October 29, 2013, <https://therivardreport.com/guadalupe-cultural-arts-lighting-up-the-westside/>; Hector Saldaña, "Revisiting Chicano Soul," May 8, 2013, <https://www.mysanantonio.com/entertainment/article/Revisiting-Chicano-soul-4480773.php>, accessed April 9, 2019.

<sup>572</sup> Kahron Spearman, "Chulita Vinyl Club Holds the Line Against Cultural Appropriation," November 17, 2017, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2017-11-17/chulita-vinyl-club-holds-the-line-against-cultural-appropriation/>, accessed April 9, 2019.

movements.<sup>573</sup> In an interview with *NPR*, Chulita Vinyl Club DJ and Ph.D. student Xochi Solis summed up the significance of vintage vinyl and women-of-color empowerment central to their organization. “I think there's a real beauty there — of us holding on and being the conservators of this sonic information.”<sup>574</sup>



**Fig. 6.1** A logo for Chulita Vinyl Club, one of the first all-female women-of-color DJ collectives with connections to North American and Latin American all-female women-of-color DJ collectives.

Currently, the West Side Sound possesses a significant symbolic power across communities of color in San Antonio. It is a point of pride for countless “ordinary” individuals who remain underrepresented in the city’s official narratives. Local pride is reflected in recent public history initiatives, artistic murals, cultural history organizations, oral history projects, street festivals, mom-and-pop Tejano music shops, live performances, public media programming, *barrio* activism, public education, and other

---

<sup>573</sup> Latinx is a term to describe a person of Latin American descent and as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina. This term is part of larger social movement to promote social inclusivity in language. For more on Latinx, see Ed Morales, *Latinx: The New Force in American Politics and Culture* (New York: Verso Books, 2018).

<sup>574</sup> Jessica Diaz-Hurtado, “For The Chulita Vinyl Club, Crate Digging Is More Than A Hobby,” *NPR.Org*, March 30, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/latino/2017/03/30/519495301/for-the-chulita-vinyl-club-crate-digging-is-more-than-a-hobby>, accessed April 9, 2019.

spaces devoted to the local heroes and cultural institutions of the West Side. These initiatives serve as a style of local art that contest historic marginalization and gentrification. Indeed, the West Side is not a powerless *barrio* that suffered under cultural hegemony, but a potent cultural center that represents the greater nonwhite experience in San Antonio and South Texas.<sup>575</sup> The West Side Sound reflects a distinct, and often progressive, blending of cultures, ideologies, and conditions present along the Texas-Mexico borderlands. The continuing popularity and social relevance of this “sound” is a testament to the history, culture, and people of San Antonio.

---

<sup>575</sup> George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Milwaukee: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xi.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **PRIMARY SOURCES**

#### **Archives:**

Huey P. Meaux Archives at the University of Texas's Briscoe Center for American History

San Antonio Newspapers Archives at University of Texas-San Antonio

Allen Olsen and Joe Nick Patoski collections at Texas State University's Wittliff Collection

Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at University of California-Los Angeles

Andrew Brown Texas Music Archive at University of Houston Libraries Special Collections

Ramón Hernández Hispanic Entertainment Archives, San Antonio, Texas

Jesse Garcia Archives, San Antonio, TX

Numero Group Records, Chicago, IL

Heavy Light Records, New Orleans, LA

Digital Collections at University of Texas-San Antonio

#### **Newspapers:**

*San Antonio Express News*

*San Antonio Light*

*San Antonio Register*

*San Antonio Current*

*La Prensa*

**Interviews:**

Escobedo, Gilbert. Interview by José Angel Gutierrez. May 1996,  
[http://library.utsa.edu/tejanovoices/xml/CMAS\\_010.xml](http://library.utsa.edu/tejanovoices/xml/CMAS_010.xml).

Albert, Don. Interview by Sterling Holmesly. January 15, 1980. Institute of Texan  
Cultures Oral History Collection, San Antonio, Texas.

Guerra, Manuel. Interview by Ramón Hernández, 2004.

Henry Carr, interview by Andrew Brown, September 25, 2011

Jack Burns, interview by Allen Olsen, San Antonio, TX, 2007. Texas Music Collection;  
Wittliff Collection, Texas State University

Jesus “Chucho” Perales, interview with Andrew Brown, 2002

Jimenez, Flaco. Interview by Aaron Howard, 2000.

Jimenez, Flaco. Interview by PBS *American Roots Music*, Oral Histories, 2001.

Rocky Morales, interview by Allen Olsen, San Antonio, TX, 2013. Texas Music  
Collection; Wittliff Collection, Texas State University.

**Interviews with Author:**

Fernando Aguilar, San Antonio, Texas, February 25, 2017.

Charlie Alvarado, San Antonio, Texas, May 2, 2018.

Vernon “Spot” Barnett, San Antonio, Texas, September 2012.

Ernie Durawa, Austin, Texas, February 3, 2013.

Jesse Garcia, San Antonio, Texas, March 13, 2017.

Gloria Garza, San Antonio, Texas, February 24, 2018.

Claudia Guerra, San Antonio, Texas, October 24, 2017.

Manny Guerra, San Antonio, Texas, March 28, 2018.

Johnny Gonzales, Dallas, Texas, November 30, 2011.

Rudy Gonzales, San Antonio, Texas, June 19, 2017.



Henry Hernandez, San Antonio, Texas, March 12, 2017.

Samuel Jaramillo, San Antonio, Texas, December 6, 2017.

Rachel Longoria, San Antonio, Texas, April 25, 2017.

Curley Mays, San Antonio, Texas, July 7, 2017.

Juan Mendoza, San Antonio, Texas, February 24, 2018

Sunny Ozuna, San Antonio, Texas, February 20, 2017.

Joe “Jama” Perales, San Antonio, February 22, 2017.

Gilbert Rivera, San Antonio, Texas, August 10, 2011.

Chris Strachwitz, Berkeley, California, March 2011.

Graciela Sanchez, San Antonio, Texas, July 7, 2018.

Juan Tejeda, San Antonio, Texas, January 10, 2017.

Charles Russell, San Antonio, Texas, April 15, 2018.

Domingo “Sonny Ace” Solis, San Antonio, Texas, February 22, 2017.

Sylvia Wilburn-Salas, San Antonio, Texas, February 17, 2017.

## **SECONDARY SOURCES**

Acuña, Rodolfo. *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles*. New York: Verso, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1972)

American Folklife Center, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage*. Washington, DC: American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1982.

Appy, Christian. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Arreola, Daniel. "The Mexican American Cultural Capital," *Geographical Review* 1, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Avant-Mier, Roberto. *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010.

Azcona, Stevan. *Movements in Chicano Music: Performing Culture, Performing Politics, 1965–1979*, 2008.

Barnet-Sanchez, Holly, and Tim Drescher, *Give Me Life: Iconography and Identity in East LA Murals*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016.

Barr, Alwyn. *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995*. Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

Behnken, Brian. *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era*. University of Nebraska Press, 2012.

Bindas, Kenneth J. "Re-Remembering a Segregated Past: Race in American Memory." *History and Memory* 22, no. 1 (2010): 113-34.

Blackwell, Maylei. *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.

Bradley, Andy and Roger Wood, *House of Hits: The Story of Houston's Gold Star/SugarHill Recording Studios*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Brown, Andrew. "'No Color In Poor': San Antonio's Harlem Label," *Wired For Sound*, September 25, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. Liner notes to *San Antonio Rock - The Harlem Recordings, 1957-1961*, ED-274, Norton Records.

Browne, Irene, and Mary Odem. "'Juan Crow in the Nuevo South'?: Racialization of Guatemalan and Dominican Immigrants in the Atlanta Metro Area." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 9, no. 2 (2012): 321–37.

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh, "Contentious and Collected: Memory's Future in Southern History," *The Journal of Southern History* 75.

Buitron, Richard. *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

- Burr, Ramiro. *The Billboard Guide to Tejano and Regional Mexican Music*. New York: Billboard Books, 1999.
- Busby, Mark, ed. *American Regional Cultures*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Camarillo, Albert. *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Castro, Rafaela. *Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2001.
- Chacón, Justin Akers. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican-American Working Class*. Haymarket Books, 2018.
- Chávez, Ernesto. “¡Mi Raza Primero!” (*My People First!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Coleman, Rick. *Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock “n” Roll*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006.
- De la Garza, Beatriz. *From the Republic of the Rio Grande: A Personal History of the Place and the People*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.
- De León, Arnoldo. *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic, *The Latinola Condition: A Critical Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 1998.
- Delmont, Matthew. *The Nicest Kids in Town: American Bandstand, Rock “n” Roll, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in 1950s Philadelphia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Donato, Ruben. *Other Struggle for Equal Schools, The: Mexican Americans During the Civil Rights Era*. New York: SUNY Press, 1997.
- Enciso, Fernando Saúl Alanís. *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation during the Great Depression*. Chappel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2017.
- Escott, Colin, and Martin Hawkins, *Good Rockin’ Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock “N” Roll*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Filene, Benjamin. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2000.

Fisher, Lewis. *Saving San Antonio: The Preservation of a Heritage*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2016.

Flores, Lori. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Flores, Richard. *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Fowler, Gene, and Bill Crawford. *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Fox, Aaron. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Gamboa, Erasmo, and Kevin Leonard. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015.

García, Ignacio. *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party*. Tucson: University of Arizona, 1989.

García, Mario. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

Garcia, Richard. *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991.

George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*. Milwaukee: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Gioia, Ted. *Delta Blues: The Life and Times of the Mississippi Masters Who Revolutionized American Music*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.

Goldberg, Robert. "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965," *The Journal of Southern History* 49. August 1983.

Gordon, Jennifer, and R.A. Lenhardt, "Rethinking Work and Citizenship," *UCLA Law Review* 55 1161 (2007)

Gordon, Robert. *Respect Yourself: Stax Records and the Soul Explosion*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015.

Govenar, Alan B. *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008.

Gravenhorst, Edna. *San Antonio's Historic Market Square*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2017.

Guerra, Carlos. "Accordion Menace...Just Say Mo'!," in *Puro Conjunto! An Album in Words and Pictures*, ed. Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Guerrero, Lalo. *Lalo: My Life and Music*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002)

Guevera, Rubén. "The History of Chicano Rock" in Theo Cateforis, *The Rock History Reader*. Taylor & Francis, 2007.

Guralnick, Peter. *Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock "N" Roll*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sweet Soul Music: Rhythm and Blues and the Southern Dream of Freedom*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1999.

Guzman, Ralph. "Mexican American Casualties in Vietnam." Santa Cruz: University of Santa Cruz, 1969.

Hamilton, Jack. *Just Around Midnight: Rock & Roll and the Racial Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Jasinski, Laurie E., Casey J. Monahan, Gary Hartman, and Ann T. Smith. *The Handbook of Texas Music*. Denton: Texas State Historical Association, 2012.

Hernández-Ehrisman, Laura. *Inventing the Fiesta City: Heritage and Carnival in San Antonio*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

Hernandez, Anabel. *A Massacre in Mexico: The True Story Behind the Missing Forty-Three Students*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2018.

Hernandez, Deborah Pacini, Héctor D. Fernández l'Hoeste, and Eric Zolov, *Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

Hickinbotham, Gary. "A History of the Texas Recording Industry," *The Journal of Texas Music History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2004)

- Holmesly, Sterlin. "Texas Jazz Veterans: A Collection of Oral Histories," *Journal of Texas Music History*, Volume 6, 2006.
- Holscher, Louis. "Recording Industry and Studios in the Southwest Borderlands," in *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture in The United States*, Cordelia Candelaria, Arturo Aldama, and Peter Garcia, eds., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004)
- Hughes, Charles. *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2015.
- Hurt, Michael. "The Other Chili Peppers," *OffBeat Magazine*
- Jarrett, Michael. *Producing Country: The Inside Story of the Great Recordings*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014.
- Johnson, Gaye Theresa. *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Jones-Correa, Michael. *Governing American Cities: Inter-Ethnic Coalitions, Competition, and Conflict*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001.
- Kaplowitz, Craig. *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005.
- Kastely, Amy. "La Lucha Sigue con Esperanza: Three Stories from the Legal Component of Community Actions," *La Voz de Esperanza*, vol. 20, issue 8, October 2017
- Kennedy, Rick, and Randy McNutt. *Little Labels--Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music*. Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Kenney, William Howland. *Jazz on the River*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Krochmal, Max. *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Kun, Josh and Laura Pulido, eds., *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kun, Josh. *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Lauterbach, Preston. *The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock "N" Roll*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

Lester, Charles. ““They’ve Taken It All Away. The Only Thing Here Is Me””: The Struggle to Preserve the Legacy of King Records,” *The Public Historian*, May 2017, vol. 39.

Limón, José. *American Encounters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

Lipsitz, George. *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Loza, Steven Joseph. *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Macías, Anthony. *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Magdaleno, Johnny. “Mexican-American Preservationists Are Saving San Antonio’s Urban Fabric,” *Next City Magazine*, September 4th, 2017.

Mark Purcell, “Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2014).

Martinez, Monica Muñoz. *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Martínez, Sara. *The Chicano Movement: A Historical Exploration of Literature*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2017.

Mason, Kenneth. *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867–1937*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1998.

McComb, David. *The City in Texas: A History*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

Mellard, Jason. “Regional Hybridity in Texas Music: The Case of the Texas Tornados,” *Text Practice Performance* 5, November 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Progressive Country: How the 1970s Transformed the Texan in Popular Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2013)

Menchaca, Martha. *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Mendheim, Beverly. *Ritchie Valens: The First Latino Rocker*. Tempe: Bilingual Press, 1987

Mendoza, Lydia. *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993.

Miller, Billy. "Mr. Kool! Doug Sahm's Flipped Sides, 1955-1966," *Kicks Magazine*, New York, 1992.

Miller, Karl Hagstrom. *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Minutaglio, Bill. *In Search of the Blues: A Journey to the Soul of Black Texas* (University of Texas Press, 2010).

Molina, Ruben. *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History Of An American Culture*. Mictlan Publishing, 2007.

Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Morris, Chris. *Los Lobos: Dream in Blue*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

Muñoz, Carlos. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. New York: Verso, 1989.

Nájera, Jennifer. *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Odum, Howard Washington, and Guy Benton Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*. Chappel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1926.

Oliver, Paul. *Barrelhouse Blues: Location Recording and the Early Traditions of the Blues*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Olsen, Allen. "San Antonio's West Side Sound," *Journal of Texas Music History*, vol. 5 no. 1, Spring 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Post-World War II 'Chitlin' Circuit' in San Antonio," *Journal for Texas Music History*, January 2007

Oropeza, Lorena. *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!/: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.



Orozco, Francisco. "Chololoche Grooves: Crossroads and Mestizaje in Chicano Soul of San Antonio" (University of Washington, 2012).

Pacini Hernandez, Deborah. *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.

Paredes, Américo. *"With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

Pegg, Bruce. *Brown Eyed Handsome Man: The Life and Hard Times of Chuck Berry*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013.

Peña, Manuel. *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.

Perea, Juan. "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The Normal Science of American Racial Thought," *California Law Review*, October 1997.

Pilcher, Jeffrey. *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

Ragland, Cathy. *Música Norteña: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation Between Nations*. Temple University Press, 2009.

Ramos, Raúl. *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2008.

Reid, Jan, and Shawn Sahm. *Texas Tornado: The Times and Music of Doug Sahm*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Reyes, David, and Tom Waldman. *Land of a Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock "n" Roll from Southern California*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009.

Reyna, José. "Tejano Music as an Expression of Cultural Nationalism," in Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez, *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Richard B. Henderson, *Maury Maverick: A Political Biography*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Riedel, Johannes, and Santos Martinez, *Dále Kranque: Chicano Music and Art in South Texas*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982.

Rodriguez, Marc Simon. *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2011.

Rosales, Francisco. *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Houston: Arte Publico Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Rosales, Rodolfo. *The Illusion of Inclusion: The Untold Political Story of San Antonio*. University of Texas Press, 2000.

Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U.S. Military from World War II to Vietnam*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017.

Rubli, Federico. *Estremécete y Rueda: Loco por el Rock & Roll*. Mexico City: Ediciones Chapa, 2007.

Ruiz, Vicki. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

San Miguel, Guadalupe. "The Rise of Recorded Tejano Music in the Post-World War II Years, 1946-1964." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19, no. 1 (1999)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century*. Texas A&M University Press, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005.

Sanchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Schroeder, Patricia. *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Shihadeh, Edward S., and Raymond E. Barranco. "Latino Employment and Black Violence: The Unintended Consequence of U. S. Immigration Policy," *Social Forces* 88, no. 3 (2010)

Spottswood, Richard. *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893-1942. Vol. 4: Spanish, Portuguese, Philippines, Basque*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Stephoe, Tyina. *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.

Stewart, Kenneth, and Arnoldo De León, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos, and Socio-Economic Change in Texas, 1850-1900*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1993.

Strachwitz, Chris. Liner notes to “Tejano Roots: San Antonio’s Conjuntos in the 1950s,” Arhoolie Records, Ideal/Arhoolie CD-376, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. Liner notes to “Orquesta Tejana: The Formative Years,” Arhoolie CD-368, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. Liner notes to “Tejano Roots: San Antonio Conjuntos in the 1950s,” Arhoolie CD-376, 1994.

Stuesse, Angela. *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Vaca, Nicolas. *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What It Means for America*. New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

Varela, Chuy. Liner notes for “Pachuco Boogie: Historic Mexican American Music,” CD, ARH0704. Arhoolie Records, 2002.

Vargas, Deborah. *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Villarreal, Mary Ann. *Listening to Rosita: The Business of Tejano Music and Culture, 1930–1955*. Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.

Wald, Elijah. *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (Harper Collins, 2012).

Wang, Oliver. “Sunny And The Sunliners’ ‘Mr. Brown Eyed Soul’ Is For The Loved And Lovelorn,” September 27, 2017

Ward, Brian. *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Weber, John. *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century*. Chappel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2015.

Weinstein, Deena. *Rock'n America: A Social and Cultural History*. University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Weise, Julie M. "Mexican Nationalisms, Southern Racisms: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1908-1939." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008): 749-77  
Welky, David. *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Werner, Craig. *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, and the Rise and Fall of American Soul*. Crown/Archetype, 2007.

Westheider, James. *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.

Wilkinson, Christopher. *Jazz on the Road: Don Albert's Musical Life*. Berkeley: University of California, 2001.

Yzaguirre, Raul, Laura Arce, and Charles Kamasaki. "The Fair Housing Act: A Latino Perspective." *Cityscape* 4, no. 3 (1999): 161-7

Zelman, Donald L. "Alazan-Apache Courts: A New Deal Response to Mexican American Housing Conditions in San Antonio." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (1983): 123-150.

Zolov, Eric. *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.