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Jesus Salas (front left) and Salvador Sanchez (front right) lead a march leaving Waukon for Madison, WI, 15 August 1966. Photo courtesy of David Giffey.
A Movement Made of "Young Mexican Americans Seeking Change":
Critical Citizenship, Migration, and the Chicano Movement in Texas and Wisconsin, 1960–1975

Marc Simon Rodriguez

This history of the Chicano civil rights movement blends the histories of Crystal City, Texas, and Wisconsin, and their interconnection across the interstate migrant stream. This revisionist account presents a corrective to traditional one-place-bound community studies common within Chicano Movement historiography as it argues for the centrality of migrant social networks in the development of Chicano activism after 1963.

"They say there is no discrimination, but we have only to look around us to know the truth. We look at the schools ... the houses we live in ... the few opportunities ... the dirt in the streets ... and we know." José Angel Gutiérrez spoke these words on 1 April 1963, to a crowd of between 1,500 and 3,000 Mexican Americans assembled in Crystal City, Texas, to support the candidacy of "Los Cinco," an all Mexican American slate for city council. Surrounded by a contingent of armed Texas Rangers, this group of interstate farm workers and their children held signs that read, "Vote for all 5." Under the glow of a single light bulb, this "shirt-sleeved crowd" of migrant workers, or Cristaleños, and their children came together as citizens in support of Mexican American political participation.

Marc S. Rodriguez, assistant professor of history at Princeton University, thanks the migrant worker interviewees and the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Science.

1 Journalist's description of Crystal City youth activism from "Gutiérrez Slate Wins in Crystal City," San Antonio Express, 5 April 1970.


3 Goodwyn, "Los Cinco Candidatos."

To achieve success this event relied upon the city's youth for the large turnout. As a result, the most warmly received speaker was not one of the candidates but the nineteen-year-old Gutiérrez. Although too young to vote, Gutiérrez gave voice to a growing rejection of Anglo rule on the part of Mexican American youth. Since its founding in the first decade of the twentieth century, Crystal City, a town of just over ten thousand residents, had been controlled by Anglos who restricted the Mexican American majority to second-class citizenship. Despite the local restrictions set by Anglos, many Mexican Americans no longer depended on local Anglos for economic security, as most migrants spent more than half the year in Wisconsin and other Great Lakes states where they earned the majority of their income as farm workers, a fact their children knew well. Therefore, as he stood before the Texas Rangers, his friends, former classmates, and neighbors, Gutiérrez and those of his generation stood behind their elders seeking election and asked that their parents do likewise. Although the youth of Crystal City could not yet go to the ballot box and vote in support of Mexican American political participation, they did look forward to a future of democratic participation as citizens. Though he was the only young adult to officially speak to the crowd, Gutiérrez was only one of many young Cristaleños working to elect Los Cinco to office. For example, the majority of early comers were Mexican American school-aged children and teens. Moreover, Francisco Rodríguez and several Crystal City high school students and recent graduates managed the stage crew. The youthful spirit of the event continued after the speeches, as children, young adults, and their parents took to the dance floor to hear the music of the Roberto Lopez Band.

This article argues that, drawing on the complex networks of their migrant community, Mexican American youth connected strategies for civil rights activism between Crystal City, Texas, and such Wisconsin cities as Milwaukee and Madison, ultimately strengthening the civic role of the ethnic community in both locations. By using public institutions, activist groups, and especially extended families, young men and women embraced their U. S. citizenship and, in the process, built a foundation for the emergence of an ever-changing Chicano voice in American life. By linking the activism of Crystal City to Wisconsin's migrant community, the Chicano Movement of the period emerged as part of a unified interstate youth-directed social movement. In adapting the social networks of migratory labor to fit the needs of an emerging civil

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4 Francisco Rodríguez, interview with author, 25 July 1998, Madison, WI, recording in author's possession. Francisco Rodríguez, a schoolmate who had attended elementary, middle, and high school with both José Angel Gutiérrez and Jesús Salas, two prominent future activists, was the emcee that night in charge of making sure the speakers were on the stage on schedule.

5 Goodwyn, “Los Cinco Candidatos.” The cheers in response to Gutiérrez’s speech, according to Goodwyn, were the “strongest of the night.”

6 Crystal City-based migrant workers traveled to many states, yet the focus here is Wisconsin and Texas, because it was in Wisconsin alone that the activism of Crystal City's youth developed following the spark of local activism in 1963 and continued most forcefully into the 1980s.
rights consciousness, these Crystal City youth, motivated by their participation in the 1963 election of Los Cinco, founded a civil rights movement in Wisconsin that in important ways served as the foundation for the reemergence of the well-documented Crystal City-based civil rights movement after 1969.\(^7\)

Although past studies have emphasized that Los Cinco's candidacy was dependent on and victorious because of the outside resources of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO) who sent organizers from San Antonio to assist the Mexican American community, these top-heavy studies neglect the mobilization of migrant youth at the grass roots level in 1963. Although it is true that the Teamsters and PASO provided important material and psychological support, as well as legal protection, for the voter registration drives, it would be youth participation and the experience they gained moving door-to-door in their own neighborhoods as citizen participants that would have the most lasting impact on Mexican American social life.\(^8\)

The Mexican American students of Crystal City used the migrant networks central to their community's well being to organize for the purposes of civic participation. For example, Los Cinco candidate Juan Cornejo's younger brother Robert Cornejo—in order to recruit student canvassers and pamphleteers from among his cohorts—used this kith and kinship network.\(^9\) Francisco Rodríguez, and others who migrated north, participated along with non-migrant children (including José Angel

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\(^7\) Although Los Cinco won this election, they were voted out of office by 1965 due to the fact that they lacked the organization and discipline to overcome Anglo harassment and the difficulty of governing. For my purposes, it is the community mobilization on the part of Chicano youth that is central here, not the fact that those elected were soon out of office. On this and the related history of Crystal City, see Shockley, *Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town*; Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson, 1989); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin, 1995) and Armando Navarro *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U. S. Two-Party Dictatorship* (Philadelphia, 2000).

\(^8\) On the support provided by the Teamsters and PASO see, “Both Crystal City Slates Predict Election Victory,” *San Antonio Express*, 27 March 1963; “S. A. Group Deep in Crystal City Race,” *San Antonio Express*, 29 March 1963; William E. Brown, “Crystal City: Symbol of Hope,” *Labor Today* 2 (December 1963-January 1964): 16-20, and “Crystal City: New City Council Names Teamster Mayor,” *The International Teamster* (May 1963): 16-21. Although the focus here is on student activism, the protection provided by the outside support of the Teamsters and PASO cannot be understated. In March 1963, the federal government entered the voting rights fray to protect the rights of African American voters in Greenwood, MS, as it dispatched agents to Crystal City to investigate claims of discrimination and voter harassment.

\(^9\) José Angel Gutiérrez, interview with author, 19 April 1995, Arlington, TX, recording in author’s possession (hereafter Gutiérrez interview); Miguel A. Delgado, “The Fraternization of the Pachuco and the Chicano,” 20 September 1972, TMs in author’s possession; Miguel A. Delgado, interview with author, 8 February 1997, Crystal City, TX, notes in author’s possession; Guadalupe Rodriguez, interview with author, 10 February 1998, Milwaukee, WI, notes in author’s possession.
Gutiérrez) from their high school graduating class, in overlapping mobilizing school and migrant cohorts. In this way, migrant and non-migrant youth organized across communities and across the various Mexican American classes in the name of civic membership and majority rule. Coming of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, these young, increasingly acculturated students exhibited a growing understanding of their individual civil rights and their standing as U. S. citizens of Mexican American descent. At the local level, they resisted the domination of Anglos by demanding the full exercise of those rights guaranteed them by the federal government.10

Crystal City Mexican Americans lived at the center of a national migrant labor network whose spokes spread north and west across the midwestern and western United States. As early as the 1930s, Mexican Americans from Crystal City traveled to Montana, North Dakota, Michigan, Washington, and Wisconsin harvesting vegetables. In a typical year, the migrants would leave Texas in trucks with their families and friends to harvest sugar beets in Montana or other states. After several weeks in beet work, they traveled to Wisconsin, where many other Crystal City residents and south Texas migrants came together to harvest cherries and cucumbers. In this way, Wisconsin became a social space where migrants renewed community contact after the isolating work in sugar beets. This mid-summer reunion brought Crystal City migrants together each year for several weeks, after which smaller groups would travel to Indiana or Ohio for the tomato harvest before being reunited in Texas in September or October.11

As young mobile adults, Crystal City migrants carried a new understanding of citizenship with them into the labor networks of their town, and they converted this knowledge into action to meet the needs of a developing political mobilization. The activism of these young people spread across family networks and brought together several related groups in a web of cooperation and mutual dependence. This transformation was a result of the youths’ participation, and their role as witnesses to the

10 What David G. Gutiérrez refers to as the “significant shift” to ethnic block mobilization is clearly demonstrated in the Crystal City case, and was part of a broader movement for ethnic mobilization among Mexican American citizens taking place across the Southwest, yet few of these efforts garnered the same amount of national attention. The evolution of this electoral policy is discussed in David G. Gutiérrez, Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity (Berkeley, 1995), 181. The specifics of the Crystal City case are detailed briefly in Juan Gomez Quinones, Chicano Politics: Reality & Promise, 1940–1990 (Albuquerque, NM, 1990), 71–2.

victory and defeat of their elders between 1962 and 1965. The activism of 1963 never
died; it was merely the starting point for a grass roots activism that linked Texas to
Wisconsin through a pattern of migration. The ensuing Wisconsin-based activism served
as the grass roots bridge between the events of 1963 and those of 1969, when Wiscon-
sin workers again united with Texas’s parallel Chicano youth movement.12

The fact that the activism of 1963 in Crystal City continued across the migrant
stream is no surprise. Even after the successful election of Los Cinco, the majority of
Mexican Americans in Crystal City still were required to make their living as agricul-
tural workers in Wisconsin and across the Midwest. Increasingly, after 1950, the con-
nection to Wisconsin became more permanent as migrants settled in the north. Those
migrants who had settled in Wisconsin stabilized this traditional pattern of annual
migration northward. As Jack Orozco, a Crystal City resident who chose to move to
Wisconsin points out:

Texas was no place to be. No pay. I came [to Wisconsin] in the 1960s. My
four sisters came to join me in the 1970s and friends and relatives keep
coming. Lots of people are here and the people have been real nice. Other
relatives come to Milwaukee and go back to Crystal City. Wisconsin
work is better. Texas has only part-time seasonal work. Milwaukee has
steady jobs.13

Despite his having left Texas, migrants like Orozco maintained economic, friendship,
and family relations that operated between Texas and Wisconsin. The interstate sys-
tem that had brought Orozco and other workers to Wisconsin and the greater Midwest
continued as a central aspect in daily life for settled and migrant workers alike.14 Thus,
by the 1960s, settled Cristaleños were increasingly linking Crystal City to Milwaukee
through the annual and continued exchange of news between both communities.15

12 Although not linked directly to the movement in Crystal City, Texas, these events
have been detailed in Valdés’s Al Norte, 189–92; Rene Rosenbaum, “Success in Organizing, Fail-

13 Jack Orozco, interview with author, 7 August 1992, Milwaukee, WI, notes in
author’s possession.

14 The general pattern of Crystal City-midwestern migration is detailed in Don Olesen,
information on the continued migration and settlement of Texas-based migrants to Wisconsin, see
“More Migrant Families Calling Wisconsin Home,” Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, 3 September
2002.

15 Geraldo Laccano, interview with author, 10 August 1992, Milwaukee, WI, notes in
author’s possession. Further evidence of this pattern of migration, settlement, and continued visi-
tation and communication can be found in the “Here and There” section of the Zavala County
Sentinel (published in Crystal City, TX). For examples, see the numerous listings in the “Here and
There” and “Obituaries” sections of the Zavala County Sentinel, 1965–1972, detailing the contin-
ued relationships of those Cristaleños living in Wisconsin and the various midwestern states.
One such migrant was Jesus Salas, who spent most of his childhood in Crystal City and moved to Wisconsin as a teenager, yet, at age 19, witnessed and participated in the Los Cinco effort in 1963. In 1959, Manuel Salas Sr., Jesus’s father, long engaged in migrant contracting for Wisconsin firms and the successful owner of a café and tavern in Crystal City, established a similar bar and restaurant operation in the migrant agricultural town of Wautoma, Wisconsin. Like many Cristaleños, Jesus and his family had been migrants for over a generation, and in fact, Jesus and his siblings had been engaged in fieldwork before they entered school. Speaking in 1969, Jesus remarked:

We worked my family, in the fields for 10 years together, up and down the rows. . . . When you migrate you travel as a community with family, neighbors, relatives, travel all together and we reinforce ourselves continually.16

Even after settlement, the family maintained their property in Crystal City, and continued to visit friends and relatives who remained.17 Because of Manual Salas, Sr.’s role as a labor contractor, it was easy for the family to sustain this circular migration.

The Salas family, Jesus in particular, was aware of the 1963 political struggle in Crystal City, having returned between 1962 and 1963 to visit grandparents, teenage friends, and family as the Los Cinco campaign was underway.18 Salas drew a clear link between the effort of Los Cinco in 1963 and his pursuit of migrant civil rights in Wisconsin:

I don’t see that you could have the organizing of farm workers or the development of [the] farm worker’s union if that hadn’t happened—if Los Cinco hadn’t come to the fore in the political arena when they did. In effect, when I speak about organizational activities in the mid-1960s, it is with people that have experienced that situation who become unafraid of the challenge, who start confronting not only the political bosses, but the economic ones in Central Wisconsin.19

For Salas, the Los Cinco victory allowed young Chicanos to consider moving outside the political realm to consider broader social reforms. He saw the Los Cinco events as

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16 Quoted in Olesen, “Jesus Salas,” 8.

17 *State of Texas, Assessment of Property in Zavala County Owned and Rendered for Taxation*, 1960 (Austin, 1960), 118, Texas State Library, Genealogy Collection, Austin, TX; Telephone Directory, Crystal City, TX (July 1958), 20, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.

18 The Salas family owned a tavern and restaurant, as well as a taxi service, in Crystal City after World War II. On several occasions, Manuel Salas, Sr. settled his family temporarily in Wisconsin before finally settling permanently in the late 1950s. In many ways, he was the hub on which the wheel of migrant labor in Wisconsin turned, as he was the labor contractor for the Waushara County-based Libby’s. Jesus Salas, interview with author, 27 July 1992, Milwaukee, WI, recording in author’s possession (hereafter 1992 Salas interview).

19 1992 Salas interview.
Migrant children in Hartford, WI, circa 1969. The children lived in the hemp factory shown in the background. Photo courtesy of David Giffey.

...being "really empowered us to improve ourselves not only politically, but economically and educationally."\(^{20}\)

Inspired by the election of Los Cinco in 1963, Salas became active in Wisconsin’s fight to assist migrant workers. As a young activist, Salas became involved in migrant issues serving as a migrant representative on the Wisconsin Governor’s Committee on Migratory Labor. In 1963, Salas, with the support of an Anglo newspaper, established the bilingual paper *La Voz Mexicana*, a summer publication to inform migrant workers of services available to migrants in Wautoma, Wisconsin. By 1964, the paper became more involved in migrant issues, and later that year Salas hired a team of researchers investigating the status of migrant farm workers for the University of Wisconsin. Although not surprised by its findings, the Wisconsin report demonstrated that migrant cucumber harvesters from Salas’s home region in Texas earned less than the minimum wage, lived in housing that did not meet minimum legal standards, and endured poor treatment in Wisconsin.\(^{21}\) Salas considered...
the evidence gathered in the report another "call to action," and chose to dedicate himself to migrant social activism in Wisconsin.\footnote{22}

In August 1966, Jesus Salas and several student researchers from the University of Wisconsin—emulating Cesar Chavez’s farm workers march to the California capitol earlier that spring—organized a “March on Madison” to bring attention to the problem of Wisconsin’s migrant workers. In the decision to emulate the civil rights march of the California farm workers, a tactic Chavez borrowed from the African American civil rights movement, Salas and the group of young Wisconsin activists sought to demonstrate that the plight of Wisconsin’s migrants ran parallel to the movement of their brethren in California and the national Civil Rights movement. The march demanded public restrooms for the many thousands of migrants who entered the Wautoma area each season, the formation of a state advisory program on workers rights, enforcement of state housing laws, the extension of state minimum-wage legislation to cover migrants, and other reforms called for in the report that he had helped research. Salas hoped that the march would publicly “dramatize the plight of migrant workers” and arouse “the social conscience of progressive Wisconsin.”\footnote{23}

Though they did not intend to form a union, the march to Madison would lead the activists to found a farm workers movement in Wisconsin. As the marchers entered Madison, one Texas-based migratory worker who worked the summer season in cucumbers and the fall season at the Burns and Sons potato processing plant in Almond, Wisconsin, asked Salas and the marchers to help the workers form a union. As march organizer Bill Smith remembered it, “[O]ne of the marchers involved who worked at Burns said that he wanted to form a union.”\footnote{24} In September, the march organizers, most of whom were college students, helped found Obreros Unidos-United Workers (OU) as a labor union. Although the AFL-CIO was monitoring these events and evaluating the likelihood of establishing a union, they did not lead, direct, or organize the workers.\footnote{25} Salas relied on the social networks of migratory life and recently-formed relationships with progressive University of Wisconsin faculty and activist students to successfully organize the Burns workers.

\footnote{22} Jesus Salas, interview with author, 22 March 1995, Milwaukee, WI, recording in author’s possession (hereafter 1995 Salas interview).


\footnote{24} Bill Smith, interview with author, 23 April 2000, Madison, WI, recording in author’s possession (hereafter Smith interview).

University faculty and students provided important support to the union. At key moments in the organizing effort, it was a University of Wisconsin faculty member that aided the student organizers by informing them that an agricultural worker’s right to organize a union was protected under state labor law in Wisconsin, despite the fact that agricultural workers were not covered under federal labor law.26

For Chicano, Anglo, and African American activists, the post-march request of the workers forced them to directly engage social justice issues. By asking for help, the workers had called on these college students to be more than just mere “summertime revolutionaries” before going back to school; they wanted the students to help build a labor union.27 Bill Smith, an African American student activist who had met Jesus Salas while engaged in summer roadwork put the dilemma succinctly:

I felt myself . . . really torn, because this was not in my plans. I was supposed to be going back to school. But as I saw it we [were] . . .

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26 Mark Erenburg, interview with author, 22 July 1999, Evanston, IL, recording in author’s possession. Faculty members also helped the organizers with procedural issues before the Wisconsin Employment Relations Committee, the state equivalent of the National Labor Relations Board.

27 Smith interview.
telling people what they should do, [and] how they should do it . . . and I didn't see how we could essentially say “we can’t do anything now.”\textsuperscript{28}

In 1966, Salas and an interracial cadre of student activists, assisted by faculty members, helped establish a social movement network that was both migrant-based and rooted within progressive Wisconsin’s various activist networks.

The young union organizers, operating as an independent labor union with AFL-CIO support, were able to organize the workers and the Burns and Sons, Inc. plant and win election as the worker's bargaining representatives. Despite a well-developed activist core and the support of the AFL-CIO legal department, the union failed to establish itself in the fall of 1966 due to the Burns’s refusal to bargain. Burns management harassed workers throughout the organizing drive, and used Wisconsin’s labor laws to defeat the union. Although the union failed at the Burns plant, the activists had built up a strong labor organization that allowed the union to prosper in the following years.\textsuperscript{29}

In the winter of 1966–1967, OU organizers, led by Jesus Salas, began to organize workers at Libby’s harvesting operations in east-central Wisconsin. Going against his father who was a Libby’s recruiter, Jesus Salas sought to organize migrant workers at Libby's Wisconsin operations. Understanding the migrant stream quite well, Salas knew that his father had always recruited workers in Texas before the season started in Wisconsin. Borrowing this labor recruiting practice, Salas and several organizers entered the migrant stream that winter, months before the harvest season was to start, making several trips between Wisconsin and Texas. This group of young men and women often drove around-the-clock to arrive in south Texas in less than twenty-four hours, to organize the same workers Salas’s father had recruited for over a decade.\textsuperscript{30} By appropriating and subverting the very labor-recruiting network that funneled workers to Wisconsin, Salas was able to organize a group thought to be unorganizable and unsuitable for unionization.\textsuperscript{31} By entering the migrant stream as a labor organizer, Salas and his cohort were able to organize workers in Texas for future labor actions in Wisconsin.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} 1992 Salas interview; Valdés, Al Norte, 190; Obreros Unidos, “The Migrant Workers Strike in Almond, Wisconsin,” Kircher Papers, Box 23, Folder 10. Under Wisconsin Employment Relations Board (WERB) guidelines, Obreros Unidos formally requested that Burns enter into labor negotiations. Burns and Sons reacted with an attempt to break the union by raising wages by $.25 and dismissing twenty-seven union supporters. OU led a walkout, and suffered a defeat. OU later took Burns to court, and won a WERB case, but the decision came too late to benefit workers.

\textsuperscript{30} Mark Erenburg to Marc Rodriguez, 30 August 1999, letter in author’s possession. In spite of their different activities, there seems to have been little friction between Salas and his father over the issue of organizing at Libby.

\textsuperscript{31} Even the supportive unions in Wisconsin were skeptical about the potential of organizing a sustained union among migrants. See various letters in Kircher Papers, Box 23, Folder 10.
process that allowed the union to gain the support and commitment of workers months before arrival. As OU organizer and University of Wisconsin graduate student, Mark Erenburg, explained it:

[The] impact of Wisconsin organizing in the next summer was parallel to the impact of more traditional organizers establishing their “inside” committee before approaching the workers directly. A number of credible and supporting Libby workers were in place before the season and we (Jesus) worked thru them to talk with and convince other workers. The organizing effort became “owned” by Libby workers . . . not just led by outsiders . . . even . . . [it] Jesus had credentials as “one of them” . . . [12]

Despite a spectacular organizing drive, much as was the case with the Burns plant in 1966, Libby's (much like Burns) stalled and refused to negotiate with the union despite the union's ballot victory. By moving the dispute before the labor board and into court, Libby was following acceptable procedural protocol, yet certainly knew that time would be on their side. It was. Several years later, when the union's lawyers won much of their case in court, Libby's decided to close Wisconsin operations rather than accept

the union. Although the union had failed in this second effort to unionize farm workers, it had organized them as a community of Crystal Citians, and South Texas Mexicans, and with a very limited budget and the support of progressive Wisconsinites had brought the civil rights struggle of Texas-based farm workers to the public.

Even as the union fought for its existence in court, activists—Anglo and Mexican alike—were recruited to serve the California farm workers union of Cesar Chavez. In 1968, in an effort to centralize all aspects of migrant labor activity and reign in Obregons Unidos, Cesar Chavez persuaded the AFL-CIO to transfer control of Wisconsin organizing to his union and transfer Jesus Salas from OU to the UFW to serve as the manager of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee’s (UFWOC) “boycott grapes” effort in Milwaukee. Other important activists, such as David Giffey, were transferred to Chavez’s union under the leadership of Antonio Orendain in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where they had previously traveled while organizing Libby workers. Although Jesus Salas had taken over as an organizer for Chavez’s UFWOC, his brother, Manuel Salas, Jr., continued as the leader of OU, which he led as an independent union. After 1968, OU increasingly came into conflict with the AFL-CIO and UFWOC, as Manuel Salas, Jr. worked to keep OU alive as a viable labor union for Wisconsin’s migrant workers. Chavez apparently saw the union as little more than a vehicle for rallying support for his California union and does not appear to have been committed to organizing the Wisconsin migrants. Although Chavez weakened the Wisconsin union to benefit his California union, Obregones Unidos organizers and former organizers continued their dedication to the Texas migrant workers at both ends of the migrant stream.

When Jesus Salas, Bill Smith, and others assisting UFWOC moved into Milwaukee’s Latino community on that city’s near south side, there was an upsurge in urban activism. When Jesus Salas entered Milwaukee, he joined a group of radicalized


34 Valdés, Al Norte, 191. The AFL-CIO provided a slim outlay of funds to support OU efforts in comparison to similar urban drives, even complaining about the 1967 OU budget of $11,000.


36 The issue of maintaining Obregones Unidos as a viable union was a point of contention between UFW-UFWOC, the AFL-CIO, and Salas. It appears from UFW correspondence that the AFL-CIO and the UFW sought to undermine the Wisconsin union, while hoping to use its best organizers for UFW-UFWOC supported activities outside of Wisconsin. Salas’s correspondence with Chavez and the UFW main office is contained in United Farm Workers Collection, Box 68, Folders 16–17, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.
Mexican American migrants from Crystal City, local ethnic Mexicans, and Anglo progressives, many of whom had helped with his effort to organize Wisconsin’s migrants. This process of activist infusion expanded movements already underway in Milwaukee’s ethnic Mexican community, invigorating them with the spirit of migrant activism. Salas explained the influx:

When we come up from the fields to do the boycotts here, we have already been organizing for four or five years in Central Wisconsin. We were veterans. As far as the Chicano political movement . . . we’d come in with our picket signs, ’cuz we’d already used that, all ready to go. We brought all the organizers. . . . When we moved down here [to Milwaukee] we knew how to do it. We knew how to organize, we knew how to set up a picket line, we were not afraid to get up their and manifest our rights.\textsuperscript{37}

This influx of militants led to the transformation of Milwaukee-based social-service agencies funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity—such as United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc. (UMOS), founded in 1964 and with Crystal City native Genevieve Medina as co-founder and its first Mexican American staff member. In a departure from past policies, which forced UMOS out of engagement with social movements, labor activists trained by OU, many from Crystal City, joined UMOS. These Crystal City residents, and fellow travelers, forced the organization to engage Milwaukee’s broader civil rights movement generally and the emerging Chicano civil rights movement in particular.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Office of Economic Opportunity it created had radical consequences for Mexican American migrant workers in Wisconsin. The act provided direct federal funding to organizations such as UMOS to assist migrant workers, and required that the poor, in this case migrant workers, manage and direct these programs. In this way, UMOS became a resource for further development of Cristaleño leadership in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin. UMOS grew out of the uncoordinated activities of a variety of Wisconsin interfaith church groups providing farm workers with the “basic necessities” each harvest season. A group of Lutheran, Catholic, and Protestant church groups, directed by Wisconsin Anglos, had worked since the early 1950s to develop programs to assist Texas-based migrant workers. In 1965, with the assistance of federal grants, UMOS became a War on Poverty organization established to encourage migrant workers’ education, training, and settlement.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} 1992 Salas interview.

\textsuperscript{38} For the administration’s policy, see James Gaither (?) “Report of the Task Force on Problems of Spanish Surname Americans,” Gaither Papers, Box 327, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX.
More than just a Wisconsin-based organization, UMOS soon had at its center another manifestation of the Crystal City migrant network. Genevieve Medina served as an internal liaison between the Mexican American migrants and the organization. Medina had settled permanently in Wisconsin in the early 1960s, in Waukesha County, where her family lived on a farm and worked as labor recruiters. Despite the all-Anglo UMOS management team, Mexican American migrants, aided by Medina, found work at UMOS and used it as a personal vehicle for advancement, converting it into a community-based resource to assist in the out-settlement process for family members and fellow Texas Mexicans. By supporting the hire of young Cristaleños and other Texas Mexicans as entry-level white-collar workers, Medina positioned former migrants, whom she dubbed “my children,” on the front lines of the War on Poverty migrant effort. In much the same way that young Mexican Americans from Crystal City with high school diplomas began to find ready work in Milwaukee factories, young Cristaleños were employed as “roving counselors” to link farm workers to the job opportunities in Milwaukee, and through these experiences gained useful organizing and bureaucratic experience.\(^9\)

Although not high status, these entry-level positions at UMOS gave former migrants real power in the Texas-to-Wisconsin migrant community. These mainly young men had by the late 1960s become the grass roots embodiment of UMOS, gaining prominence within the migrant community and serving as the gateway to various government benefits and educational programs. The migrant network was obvious throughout the organization, as the supervisor of the UMOS “roving counselors” was another Salas brother, Carlos Salas, forwarded for hire by Medina. Carlos Salas, in turn, hired other Cristaleños and Texas Mexicans for those positions he controlled. Even as the union gained institutional prominence between 1966 and 1968, the Crystal City migrant network had been also institutionalized at UMOS, as young men and women who had been engaged in or sympathetic with the 1963 effort to elect Los Cinco and many who participated in the migrant union effort joined UMOS.\(^40\)

The strong presence of Cristaleños and Texas Mexican youth activists primed the pump for Chicano control of UMOS as the Chicano Movement took hold. In 1968, when Jesus Salas and fellow Texas-Mexican migrant and UMOS employee Ernesto Chacon sought control of UMOS, they did so only after organizing grass roots support within the organization. This strategy worked; the Anglo board members supported Salas and Chacon and the Anglo management resigned. Jesus Salas, as a leader of the community served by UMOS, was appointed the organization’s director, managing a

\(^9\) Genevieve Medina, interview with author, 17 June 1992, Milwaukee, WI, notes in author’s possession.

\(^40\) United Migrant Opportunity Services, Inc. (UMOS), Helping People Help Themselves: Celebrating Twenty Years of Service (Milwaukee, 1985).
budget that included federal funds of $900,000.\textsuperscript{41} In this process, young activists, most of these in their early twenties, became leaders in prominent migrant-serving institutions and of Milwaukee's migrant-centered Chicano Movement.

Through this process of radicalization, the Cristaleño activists, as they engaged the larger Mexican American community in Milwaukee, found themselves only one of many Texas-Mexican bi-regional cultures in Milwaukee. Moreover, the assistance of Wisconsin-based Anglo and African American student activists, settled Mexican Americans outside of the migrant stream, and migrants from many sending areas in South Texas, including Carrizo Springs, Corpus Christi, Cotulla, Eagle Pass, and Pearsal, taught Cristaleño activists to work within the broader civil rights movement in Wisconsin. Therefore, Chicano control allowed UMOS to align itself with the various civil rights movements of African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and others in Milwaukee. In many ways, the history of civil rights activism between Crystal City, Texas, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, here shows how the Chicano Movement was in

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 1–9; “UMOS in Real Dialogue,” El Cocheador, 26 November 1968. (This newsletter was published by UMOS in Milwaukee and is readily available using OCLC). These organizations not only provided opportunities for male leaders but also in some circumstances became centers of female power. See Alfredo H. Benavides, “Homogenous Mexican American Leadership and Heterogeneous Problems in a Midwestern Community,” in The Chicano Experience, ed. Stanley A. West and June Macklin (Boulder, 1979), 275; these events are covered in Valdes, Al Norte, 163–99.
fact a movement made of Mexican Americans and other citizens who sought to improve the lives of poor people, workers, and minorities. In contrast to much of the literature on the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, the movement brought together like-minded Anglos, African Americans, and others with the great variety of metizos, or mixed ancestry people, that made up the Mexican American population.42

Although youth activism spread throughout the broader Mexican American community in Milwaukee after 1968, Cristaleños remained focused on making changes in South Texas. Despite the emergence and evolution of UMOS and other community institutions in Milwaukee, Cristaleños continued to keep abreast of events back “home.” When migrants came to Wisconsin each spring, they brought news of political, social, and family events north, and when they returned south to Crystal City each fall, they brought Wisconsin news home to family and friends. When Crystal City again ignited in protest, the migrants answered the call for help by traveling south on the road home.43

The second Crystal City revolt of 1969 grew from a stereotypically American teen culture. Across most of Texas and the South, and the Southwest for that matter, high schools, football teams, and cheerleader squads were local institutions of high significance inside both the school and the broader local community. In Crystal City, Anglo alumni played an active role in many aspects of everyday school honors and institutions. By the 1968 school year, Chicanos and Chicanas represented the majority of students in the Crystal City school system and dominated social life in the high school for the first time. Chicano boys and girls, by that year, held the majority of democratically-elected student positions.

Despite gains in participation rates for Mexican Americans, the power of Anglo teachers and alumni to reserve honors for their own children continued unchecked. The Anglo alumni used this power to apply discriminatory quotas with the full support of Anglo teachers. Glaring examples of this gerrymander of certain honors can be seen in the low level of Mexican American participation in the yearbook honors and some sports activities, such as the pompon squad, where Anglo teachers and alumni controlled the decision-making process.44 After all, Anglos had been a near exclusive

41 See Navarro, Mexican American Youth Organization and The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community (Madison, 1998); Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle toward Liberation (San Francisco, 1972); and, to a lesser degree, Valdés, Al Norte.

42 UMOS, Helping People Help Themselves, 1–9; Arturo Gonzalez, interview with author, 22 February 1997, Crystal City, TX, recording in author’s possession (hereafter Gonzalez interview).

43 See The Javelin: Crystal City High School Yearbook for 1962, 1963, and 1970. In the yearbooks for 1962 and 1963, Anglos represented the socially dominant group, despite the fact that Mexican Americans accounted for the largest group of enrolled students. Pompon squad and other student groups were Anglo dominated with only token Mexican American representation. José Angel Gutiérrez and Francisco Rodríguez were two of the Mexican American students whose families seem to have been better off than other Mexican American families, as they both participated in various high status Anglo-dominated student activities.
group in the high school for almost forty-five years, as very few Mexican Americans attended or graduated from the high school before the mid-1950s. These “old timers” felt justified in protecting their traditions. Chicano students led by Chicanas felt the opposite. Severita Lara, the leading student activist in 1969, explained the rise in activism:

Cheerleading, and “most popular,” and “most beautiful,” all of those were very important to some of us in high school. We began to see that even though we were ninety percent Chicano here at school it was always three Anglos and one Mexican American cheerleader. And we said “why does this have to be this way?” We started questioning, “well how is it done?” And then we started looking at the process . . . and, that’s when we started questioning, and then we started looking at the whole system, and started looking and saying “did you notice that the ‘most beautiful’ is always an Anglo? The most representative, the most likely to succeed, and all of these thing.” And we said “why . . . is [a Mexican American] never there?”

In the spring semester of 1969, Lara and other students began to agitate for change in the high school, knowing that there were two spots available on the pompon squad.

In 1969, two Anglo cheerleaders graduated, leaving these vacancies on the squad. Diana Palacios tried out, and failed to win a position because the school already had allotted its quota of one Chicana cheerleader. Palacios had also tried out the year before, but felt she was not selected because “she didn’t get along with Anglos.” After the faculty chose an Anglo girl to fill the vacancy, Chicano students began to mobilize for action. Despite protests, the students backed off because of a concern that protests at the end of the year might not yield results, and could jeopardize graduation for some. Though they made some headway, and it looked as if the principal would concede to their demands for democratic participation in school life, Lara and other young Mexican American men and women entered the summer intent on changing the selection process and making it democratic.

45 Severita Lara De La Fuente, interview with author, 15 February 1997, Crystal City, TX, recording in author’s possession (hereafter De La Fuente interview).

46 “Students Air Grievances,” Zavala County Sentinel, 1 May 1969; Diana Palacios, after the boycott, went on to become high school senior class president, and the captain of the cheer squad. She later would work as a legal secretary for a Crystal City law firm.

47 Quoted in Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town, 273, n. 33.


49 De La Fuente interview; Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town, 120.
In June, the agreement between the students and the principal was rejected outright by the school board, in what Armando Navarro characterized as a “separate but equal education” decision that refused to challenge the traditional race-based quota system for student participation. Following another of the migrant streams centered at Crystal City, Lara spent the summer visiting family members in California where she met another young Cristaleño and began formulating a plan of action. According to Lara:

During the summer of ‘69 . . . my sister and I went to . . . San Jose, California and we met some people there and we started talking about school . . . and Los Angeles had had a “blow out” [student walk-out] because of all the discrimination that was going on and we heard what had happened, and how they did it, and then at that time . . . Armando Trevino . . . who had already graduated was in California [working] at that time and we happened to meet at one of my uncles homes in Gilroy, California . . . and we started discussing this . . . planning . . . and it kind of started there. The migrant labor network that operated between Crystal City, and the vegetable growing region near San Jose, California, allowed Lara to gain access to the developing Chicano Movement in California, while never leaving the Cristaleño community orbit. Upon return, Chicana students were insulted once again, as the Crystal City High School Ex-students Association, in announcing its annual homecoming queen competition, required that the parents of the queen must have graduated from Crystal City High School, a new procedural requirement clearly meant to exclude most Mexican American women.

The efforts of Chicano high school students and other educated young Chicanos led to a direct challenge to local Anglo control of the schools. The local newspaper became the main outlet for Anglo rage directed at these young activists with the Zavala County Sentinel running several angry letters. Local resident Larry C. Volz complained that the demands came from a “small fraction of the student body . . . the trash that demand and demonstrate for their rights, rather than earn them as most of us have.” He called on the school to ignore the student demands. Volz characterized the student effort as seeking to “dictate, with the threat of violence, the administration of our school affairs.” In a section presumably aimed at José Angel Gutiérrez, Volz, 50

50 See Zavala County Sentinel, 1 May 1969; Navarro, “El Partido de La Raza Unida in Crystal City,” 134; Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town, 120; José Angel Gutiérrez, “Toward a Theory of Community Organization in a Mexican American Community in South Texas,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1977).

51 De La Fuente interview.


53 The mention of “violence” may have been a result of local reading of supposed statements made by Gutiérrez on 10 April 1969, in San Antonio, Texas, where he was quoted as saying
responding to the youthfulness of the activists, argued that the community should reject the presumably immature leadership of the a group of "disturbed young men." Volz was clearly outraged by the fact that a group of "local boys" whom "Crystal City has been good to," would go out into the world and return to remedy discrimination in the school system that was "paid for by the farmers and ranchers" and that they were allowed to attend.

Other Anglo Crystal Citians chimed in, attacking the youth activists for their effort to bring about democratic practice and an end to discrimination in the school system. One self-described "German American" belittled the desire of the Mexican American students for instruction in the Mexican history of Texas. Another Crystal City alumni argued that by requiring that the homecoming queen and court be the daughters of graduates, they merely sought to encourage "putting forth extra effort and finishing" high school. These and future Anglo letters to the paper betrayed a long entrenched community practice of paternalism and racism, and a unanimous outrage with the desire of young Chicano and Chicana activists to bring these practices to an end.

The following week Chicano parents and students replied to the attack of the Anglos on student activism. Noelia Martinez, the mother of several Crystal City graduates, asked the Anglo community if it was not "possible, repulsive as the idea seems to the majority of us that there are influences within the administration and policy forming groups of the school district that are racist . . . always insisting that the selected cheerleader or twirler groups must not have more than one Spanish-surname girl?" Luis Gonzales reminded Anglos, and Volz in particular, that the students demanded instruction in the history of the Mexican Southwest because "we played a major role in the forming of our great Southwest." Gonzales concluded that "this country needs . . . aggressive, intelligent young men like Angel" and that if African Americans have "Martin Luther King," then Mexican Americans need "our Angel Gutièrrez." Trinidad Rubio, a 1966 graduate of the high school, concluded that an end to the discriminatory treatment of Mexican Americans would pave the way for Crystal City to become a "better town in which its citizens [would] live in peace." In her letter, student leader Severita Lara reminded Anglos that "we are equal—don't push us down" and that "the majority rules in a democracy."\footnote{Zavala County Sentinel, 27 November 1969.}
Young Chicanas in Crystal City began to organize against the gerrymandering of the homecoming queen election process by the Anglo alumni. Though a poll of young women revealed that only one Mexican American teen met the requirement, she did not run for the court; she joined the activist effort instead. The Chicana students circulated a petition of “probably about fifty or sixty signatures of girls” and gave it to the principal, who responded that he had no power to act as the selection was done by an outside group.\textsuperscript{55} Despite selection by an “external” group, the homecoming queen event took place on school property, an issue that led the students to request that the issue be taken up by the school board. The protests of Chicana students forced the school board to bar the alumni association from holding its homecoming ceremonies on school property. Seemingly because of this protest, the alumni group capitulated by electing two Mexican American alumni to the executive board for the first time, while maintaining an Anglo president.\textsuperscript{56} Despite this move, the students began to press for more general demands and began planning for a school boycott in December. To this end, they formed the Youth Association, pledged to “total school reform.”\textsuperscript{57} This spark led to the mobilization of the broader Mexican American community in support of the proposed school boycott.

Not all of the Mexican Americans in Crystal City traveled north each year. A small number of the more prosperous families sent their children to nearby Texas colleges and universities after 1960. These students attended college each year, and some continued to engage in field work in Texas and the Midwest each summer. One of these academic migrants was José Angel Gutiérrez, who had returned to Crystal City in 1969. According to Gutiérrez, the events of 1969 set in motion the merger of the youth activists of 1963 with the new female teen activists:

The important difference was that we had a memory. We knew the mistakes we made in 1963. We knew how we fell apart . . . we learned how to do it better in ’69. The issues . . . were different. You had the political generation that was involved in ’63 still involved in ’69 all the wiser, and you had the component of young people who were not involved in ’63 . . . It was the young people and the women . . . that is part of the

\textsuperscript{55} De La Fuente interview. In an anonymous letter to the Zavala County Sentinel published on 20 November 1969, the writer calculated that over 26 percent of Crystal City high school graduates old enough to have a daughter try out for the court were Mexican American, yet did not provide information on how many actually had a daughter in the high school. It seems as if the single-student figure is accurate.

\textsuperscript{56} “Homecoming Court Presente,” and “Jim Byrd Heads Ex-Students” in Zavala County Sentinel, 27 November 1969.

metamorphosis of the politics . . . all the disenfranchisement, the poor, the women, the young people took leadership. 58

The new activists were certain not to let misunderstanding of the political process, petty infighting, or the Anglo community's desire to push them from office bring defeat, as had happened to Los Cinco in 1965.59 Building from the ground up in early 1970, Gutiérrez took over a managing role in the Youth Association and began to create the framework for a second and permanent political take-over in the city itself. According to Severita Lara, the school boycott led to an influx of supportive Cristaleño and other Chicano activists from Texas who went about organizing the community.60

Having returned in the summer of 1969, José Angel Gutiérrez used Office of Economic Opportunity funding to develop a base of operation secure from Anglo reprisal as he and his wife Luz established a Head Start program in Crystal City.61 Aware of the rapid collapse of Los Cinco under the weight of Anglo coercion after 1963, these Cristaleño activists moved quickly to counter past weaknesses. First, Gutiérrez, by establishing the Head Start program, sought to rely as much as possible on outside sources for personal income to guard against the potential effect of Anglo coercion. Second, he worked to deflect the label of "outside agitator" that had damaged the Los Cinco effort in 1963 by bringing in activist Cristaleños from the Midwest and young Chicanos from other areas to assist the high school boycott.62

After an eventful month of activism in support of the high school student boycott over the winter holiday break, the U. S. Department of Justice sent staff to Crystal City at Gutiérrez's request to help resolve the issue. In an affront to traditional Anglo dominance, Gutiérrez, by successfully calling on the federal government, put local Anglos on notice that young Chicanos would forcefully protect their rights as citizens. The boycott ended on 6 January 1970, after the federal mediators brokered a deal that allowed the Chicano students to enter class without penalty. The district had agreed to consider many of the student goals, including the establishment of bicultural and bilingual education, better testing of Chicano student abilities, and the election of student body positions and most titles by majority vote.63

58 Gutiérrez interview. See also José Angel Gutiérrez "Mexicanos Need to Control Their Own Destinies," in La Causa Política: A Chicano Politics Reader, ed. F. Chris Garcia (Notre Dame, IN, 1974), 226–33.

59 On the collapse of Los Cinco between 1963–1965, see Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town, 42–79.

60 De La Fuente interview; Navarro, "El Partido de La Raza Unida en Crystal City," 141.

61 Gutiérrez interview.

62 Gonzalez interview; Esequiel Guzman, interview with author, 19 February 1997, Crystal City, TX, recording in author's possession.

63 Navarro, "El Partido de La Raza Unida en Crystal City," 143.
Following the successful high school boycott, Gutiérrez set about establishing La Raza Unida Party (RUP) in Crystal City. To make RUP a success, Gutiérrez called on Cristaleños from Wisconsin and Chicano student activists from across the Southwest and California to assist in its formation. Remembering what worked in 1963, Gutiérrez and many of the same young activists that had successfully organized the migrant community behind the candidacy of Los Cinco now sought office themselves under the RUP banner. With Mexican American migrants as the majority population, RUP would begin its campaign by selecting candidates for the school board, followed by city and county posts. Although Gutiérrez sought to establish a successful third party movement, this local politics relied on the networks of the interstate migrant community for success. To be successful in appealing to this population, RUP drew young candidates from those interstate migrants who have lived and worked as activists in Wisconsin. By reaching out across the migrant stream to select candidates, RUP was close to retaking control of the city government and perhaps the remaining county government posts as well.64 When selecting candidates for local office, several former Obreros Unidos organizers and midwestern labor activists from Crystal City topped the list of candidates. Many of these candidates had been participants in the 1963 effort to elect Los Cinco in Crystal City and the Wisconsin-based migrant activism. Among the first such Cristaleño candidates were school board candidate Arturo “Tur” Gonzalez, who had worked with Jesus Salas in Wisconsin, and city council candidates Roberto Gamez and Jose Talamantez, both Crystal City High School graduates who had done organizing work in Wisconsin. The success of RUP in Crystal City led José Angel Gutiérrez to extend the RUP to Milwaukee.65 Continued communication across the Wisconsin-Texas network brought Francisco Rodríguez, a former Obreros Unidos and UMOS organizer, and one of Gutiérrez’s closest friends, to serve as the first RUP city manager. When Rodríguez resigned after one year in office, Ezequiel Guzman replaced him. Guzman was another Cristaleño who had worked with Jesus Salas in Milwaukee and for the Milwaukee Chicano newspaper La Guardia.66 The victory of the RUP led to a transfer of talent south from Wisconsin to Texas, as Cristaleños trained in Wisconsin returned to help govern their hometown.

In the late 1970s, a second wave of educated and experienced young Cristaleños and Chicanos from Wisconsin took positions in Crystal City and Zavala County. In 1974, Gutiérrez recruited Jesus Salas and former Crystal City resident Miguel Delgado, both experienced grant writers, to help establish the Zavala County Economic

64 The first victory was for the school board with Gutiérrez, Gonzalez, and Mike Perez, a local dance hall operator and radio announcer defeating the Anglo incumbents in April 1970. “Gutiérrez Slate Wins in Crystal City,” San Antonio Express, 5 April 1970.

65 UMOS, Helping People Help Themselves, 9. Gutiérrez visited friends in Milwaukee, primarily Francisco Rodríguez, in the taverns lobbied for support back in Crystal City, and provided assistance in mobilization in Milwaukee.

Development Corporation as a federally funded program.\textsuperscript{67} From its very beginning, the RUP used the network of friends and families that connected Wisconsin to Crystal City to recruit qualified Chicanos for governmental posts, and candidates for elected office. Gutiérrez described Cristaleño informal networks as providing a "job information system, . . . mutual benefit society, . . . insurance company, . . . a communication network—you name it—lots of facets to it, but we added the political dimension to it."\textsuperscript{68} Jesus Salas described the return migration of Wisconsin-based Cristaleño activists in the 1970s:

Former organizers for the farm workers union and people who had been involved here in Wisconsin go back and help out the movement in Crystal City. [Francisco] Rodríguez, Esequiel Guzman, Rodolpho Palomo, among others, they all go back to Crystal City and help out with the movement. We never saw it as two different things. For us it was the same. The politics were tied together, and the leadership developed in tandem. I went back in the mid seventies after the take-over of [Zavala] county, and I stayed down there helping organize Raza Unida Party.\textsuperscript{69}

These connections between the core at Crystal City and the migrant periphery would have an important impact on the direction of the Texas-based and national Chicano Movement in the 1970s.

In 1972, the national Chicano civil rights leadership from around the nation met to elect a national leadership and to unite the many state Raza Unida Parties that had formed after the victory of RUP in Crystal City. Delegates to the 1972 convention from the midwestern states were largely former migrant workers from Crystal City or other South Texas towns, or closely allied with the Cristaleño leadership. Gutiérrez used his access to this network of Cristaleño migrants to win control of the national RUP.\textsuperscript{70} When it came time to elect a president of the national party, the Wisconsin delegation seconded the nomination of Gutiérrez and called for a convention floor

\textsuperscript{67} 1995 Salas interview; Gutiérrez, Making of a Chicano Militant, 253–6. Although he imprecisely details the history of the Zavala County Economic Development Corporation, Armando Navarro does show how the RUP relied on Wisconsin-trained activists including Jesus Salas, Miguel Delgado, and Alejandro Niere to manage programs. See Navarro, The Cristal Experiment, 269–78.

\textsuperscript{68} Gutiérrez interview; Tony Castro, Chicano Power: The Emergence of Mexican America (New York, 1974), 169. Castro argued that RUP pursued the "old politics of ward campaigning disguised as new Chicano politics" and that these efforts "whetted the appetites of other Chicano activists."

\textsuperscript{69} 1992 Salas interview.

\textsuperscript{70} Juan Gomez Quinones, Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940–1990 (Albuquerque, NM, 1990). See also José Angel Gutiérrez Papers, 1954–1990, Raza Unida Party, Box 24, Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.
vote. With the aid of Cristaleños and their allies, Gutiérrez won the full support of delegations from a majority of the states attending.

Gutiérrez used the history of activism in Crystal City and Wisconsin, and the pattern of interstate migration, to effectively lobby for control of the RUP, an endeavor that perhaps would have floundered if these young activists had not retooled the migrant network emanating from Crystal City after 1963 to serve as a conduit for activism. Even though the national RUP fell apart due to the infighting between its two main leaders, Gutiérrez and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, the RUP effectively controlled Crystal City for a turbulent decade. For much of the 1970s, Chicano and progressive Anglo volunteers were trained as activists in Crystal City, Texas, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as they flowed back and forth across the migrant stream linking these two states.

This article has shown some of the ways in which the Texas-Wisconsin migrant networks of a young group of Cristaleños served as a conduit for information exchange.

13 José Angel Gutiérrez Papers, 1954–1990, Box 24, “Salazar” File, 1972, 2, Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin. The division between the Midwestern-Texas-California RUP and the Colorado arm headed by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales is still a point of controversy. According to the Gonzales branch, the midwestern chapters were seen as “bogus state chapters,” a view contradicted by the history of activist involvement revealed in this article and other work. See Ernesto B. Vigli, The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government’s War on Dissent (Madison, 1999), 187.
and transmission, well suited to the transfer of activist workers, a change which allowed for the growth of and spread of youth activism across the social space of a trans-local migrant world. Cristaleños coming of age in the 1960s and steeped in the grassroots activism of Los Cinco adapted the national institutions of the migrant system, the national labor movement, federal funding, and Great Society programs to assume control of their communities in Texas and Wisconsin with the assistance of progressive Anglos and other minorities.

As they migrated, these activists took advantage of parallel opportunities to demand and carve out social space for the enjoyment of citizenship rights, be they electoral, labor, or civil, in Texas and Wisconsin. In so doing, this group of young people used the system of labor migration to move as activist workers across networks that expanded outward and integrated Mexican American farm workers from similar South Texas towns, Milwaukee, and eventually other southwestern states by drawing on the unique culture of migration operating between Crystal City, Texas, and Wisconsin cities.