

Brown Berets, however, were relatively unconcerned with the university; their focus was on the barrio, where they targeted police brutality and drug use in the community. They also took a special interest in the youth and played a conspicuous role in the 1968 school walkouts. Sánchez, Móntez, and Ramírez were among the strike leaders put on trial afterwards. In 1969, they claimed to have chapters in twenty-seven cities other than Los Angeles. These included Denver and San Antonio. By this time, the Vietnam War had become a major priority.

During the previous year, antiwar sentiment in the country had been transformed into a powerful mass movement uniting students and communities throughout the country, and Chicanos were in the forefront of the protest, a fact that has largely escaped mainstream scholarship. As the historian Lorena Oropeza has shown in a pathbreaking study, the war forced many Mexican Americans not only to reassess their relationship to other Americans but also to question certain basic values of their own culture, notably machismo.⁴⁷ Not all of them opposed the war—the G.I. Forum was an unflagging supporter of US involvement, especially under LBJ—but Chicano students found that their opposition was generally shared by their families in the barrios. This contestation was understandable: the armed conflict had escalated steadily since August 1964, when the infamous Tonkin Resolution gave LBJ carte blanche to stop Communist aggression in Southeast Asia; and, as in World War II and Korea, Mexicanos played a leading role.

Inspired by patriotism, machismo, and the chance to escape dead-end jobs in rural towns and urban barrios—the primary motives cited by the soldiers themselves in Charley Trujillo's absorbing series of interviews, *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam* (1990)⁴⁸—many Mexicano youths volunteered for service. A high percentage entered high-risk branches of the service, such as the US Marine Corps. The majority were drafted. Undereducated, and often ignorant of their rights, Mexicanos were prime targets for draft boards. Hispanos, for example, made up 27 percent of the New Mexican population in 1970, but they supplied 69 percent of all draftees from that state. Even more than most wars, Vietnam was fought by poor people. It is not surprising to find, then, that South Chicago's Mexicano working-class "parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe lost more men in Vietnam than any other parish in the country."⁴⁹ Studies conducted by Ralph Guzmán, director of the Mexican American Study Project at UCLA, in 1969 indicated that Mexicanos and other Hispanics were overrepresented in Southeast Asia—on the battle front and on the casualty lists. Constituting about 11 percent of the population in the Southwest in 1960, Mexicanos apparently represented close to 20 percent of the region's soldiers killed in battle during the following decade.

By the war's end, according to Rubén Treviso, an ex-intelligence case officer in Southeast Asia, "One of every five Hispanics who went to Vietnam was killed in action."⁵⁰ This is clearly an exaggeration. However, while it is impossible to