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On Whose Terms? The (In)visibility of the Latina/o Community at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Arisve Esquivel

*I am American/I was born here/and I've lived my whole life here/But your
"we" doesn't speak for me./I refuse to be a part of/your blind patri-
otic/acceptance of/a history of oppression.*

—Eduardo Alexander Rabel, 1997

The struggle to forge a space for people of color in U.S. society can be traced to the colonial era. While history is always telling, the history of people of color remains to be fully told. In fact, the Latino student in the poem above speaks of the marginality, silencing, and invisibility he experiences within U.S. society on a daily basis—a history that is often left out of traditional historical accounts. Due to the imbedded racism within U.S. society, the histories that are documented usually represent people of color in a negative light and/or marginalize, depoliticize, and reify a sanitized and politically neutral historical account. Such marginalization impacts the ability to address contemporary problems faced by people of color in a more holistic and contextualized fashion. Because the urgency and history of such problems are not made apparent in these renderings, their histories—and by extension, the histories of people of color—often seem to lack legitimacy.

An example of such omission can be seen in the virtual absence of historical literature, personal testimonies, and other documentation that unveil the struggles and issues faced by students of color in predominantly White institutions of higher education. This absence is problem-

atic because it not only minimizes the hostile racial climate that students of color historically have faced in traditionally White institutions but also renders invisible the university's consistent failure to take positive steps to address these particular concerns.

To be sure, issues regarding access, retention, curriculum, and campus climate all contribute to minority students' relative success at a university setting. A university's unwillingness, or inability, to examine its own exclusionary practices not only demonstrates its indifference toward students of color, but also suggests a general reluctance to address minority students' needs as an overall university goal. In many cases, such a refusal occurs despite repeated opposition and protest by students and faculty of color. Indeed, it is often the case that such opposition usually falls on deaf ears.

It is thus critically important to contextualize and historicize minority students' struggles in traditionally White institutions in order to understand that the issues they raise are not new. With this in mind, this discussion examines the history of Latina/o students at a predominantly White institution of higher education as well as the university's dismal attempt to address their needs in a holistic and sincere fashion.

Background and Significance of Study

In the late spring of 1968, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) implemented an initiative to bring at least 500 minority freshmen to campus for the fall semester. Of the approximately 580 minority freshmen admitted in the fall of 1968, the majority were African Americans with only a handful of Latinas/os. Since minority students were greatly outnumbered by a predominantly White majority, Latina/o students sought to create a space for themselves at the university. They believed that a cultural center would provide a physical space to support and expand their community within the university. Although they were small in number, Latina/o students actively fought for a cultural center. They mobilized by writing letters, meeting with administrators, and holding protests on campus to draw attention to their demands. They believed their success as students was directly tied to the preservation of their cultures, especially because the university was a foreign environment to many of them. Latina/o students also demanded change

within the university's structure, including a re-examination of curricular offerings and an improvement in the overall campus climate. UIUC administrators proved, at times, to be allies—at other times they were obstacles—in the students' struggle to forge a community within the university setting.

This study attempts to document this struggle by outlining the invisibility and organizational silencing of Latina/o students' voices, needs, and concerns by UIUC officials. University administrators' actions and inactions are analyzed to highlight:

- how historical narratives were documented
- how the “color-blind” perspective of administrators was constructed, and
- the experiences of Latinas/os at a predominantly White institution.

The struggle of Latina/o students is examined in light of how students fought for liberation of their minds and acceptance of their cultures on the university campus. In the end, this chapter examines the impact of the Latina/o students' struggle, the larger implications for the educational attainment of Latinas/os at the national level, and Latinas/os full incorporation within institutions of higher education.

As such, this study contributes to the literature on higher education and its focus on Latinas/os. It historicizes the development and implementation of Latina/o Studies and the cultural center at UIUC which have not been previously documented. Lastly, by employing a theoretical framework that combines Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), this study also contributes to the expansion of both frameworks, and their utility for conducting historical research on the experiences of racial minorities in traditional White institutions of higher education.

Theoretical Framework

CRT situates race at the center of historical analysis and provides a space in which to address the problems people of color experience within a White power structure (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Solorzano, 1998). It exposes society and its systems as normalizing Whiteness and privileging

Whites. For instance, institutions of higher education appear, on the surface, to be neutral and colorblind. However, their existing structure and daily practices—from admission policies to curricular offerings and the overall lack of organizational and administrative support—marginalizes students of color. CRT exposes this by documenting and valuing people of color's narratives and counterstories (Delgado, 1989; Tate, 1997).

LatCrit specifically places Latinas/os at the center of analysis and speaks to the omission of Latinas/os within CRT (LatCrit III Symposium, 1999). CRT's Black/White paradigm does not expose spaces for Latinas/os to be heard, thus a LatCrit lens widens the scope of CRT without challenging its fundamental tenets (Solorzano, 1997, 1998; Valdes, 1996). Since LatCrit emerged from CRT, I find it useful to employ both theoretical lenses within this discussion.

In this instance, I utilize Latina/o students' counterstories to deconstruct the "official" stories circulated by university personnel about particular campus events. By reconstructing historical narratives and employing a CRT/LatCrit framework, one begins to see who belongs, who is valued, and the falsity of inclusion at the UIUC campus.

Moreover, CRT/LatCrit opens up the discussion of who is a "citizen" at UIUC and consequently, who wields the power to be heard and the issues that will be addressed. In this regard, the discourse of both groups—Latina/o students and university administrators—is examined using a dual methodological approach.

Methodology

The data used for this analysis are contained within the University of Illinois Library Archives and include letters, internal memos, flyers, notes, and other miscellaneous print items. When possible, I have noted the author(s) of each document and the exact location as outlined by the archives' system of classification.¹

When I first began my research, I was informed by a library archivist that no holdings regarding Latina/o students existed. Upon further questioning, the archivist believed the only way to access any information would be to look at La Casa Cultural Latina's archival records (La Casa Cultural Latina is the Latina/o cultural center on campus). This is reflective of the Black and White binary that Foley (1997) discusses: "[T]he

rigid boundaries of Black-White race relations fail to account for groups, like Mexicans, located somewhere in the ethnoracial borderlands between whiteness and blackness" (p. xiv). By racializing archival categories it becomes increasingly difficult for scholars to conduct historical research of this nature because the histories of certain groups have been relegated to a marginal status within the institutional setting. Furthermore, these actions represent vehicles by people of color and their histories systematically silenced and marginalized in colleges and universities of higher learning (see also Donato & Lazerson, 2000).

In this discussion, I utilize archival records to reconstruct the experiences and stories of Latinas/os on the UIUC campus. I will attempt to demonstrate how these stories directly contradict the "official" stories of the UIUC administration—a story that suggests Latinas/os were always welcomed and supported on campus. This juxtaposition between "official" accounts and "counternarratives" highlights the tensions between stories (Delgado, 1989) and the students' struggle to survive in a racially inhospitable climate.

Findings

Latinas/os, predominantly Mexicanas/os, have been residing in the state of Illinois in substantial numbers since 1916. In 1968, however, the Special Educational Opportunity Program admitted over 500 new minority students, the majority of whom were African American. Prior to this initiative, the admission rates of Latinas/os at UIUC were so low as to be essentially nonexistent.

Nevertheless, the accessed data indicate that Hispanic² undergraduate and graduate students had a significant increase in numbers beginning in 1967. In this year, records indicate there were 25 undergraduate Hispanics students and 20 Hispanic graduate students—while the combined student body was 30,407. By the time La Casa Cultural Latina was established in 1974, there were 149 Latina/o undergraduates and 68 Latina/o graduate students within a total student body of 35,045.

As Table 1 suggests, these numbers have improved, but they have not drastically shifted since 1974. In fact, by 1998, Hispanic undergraduates numbered 1,453 while Hispanic graduate students totaled 261 (Admissions and Records Office, 1998).³ The fact that university minority

student totals have remained somewhat constant throughout this period is due in significant part to efforts by undergraduate and graduate students themselves to recruit and enlist prospective students of color.

Table 1: Latina/o Undergraduate and Graduate Student Enrollment

Year	Hispanic Under-graduate Students	Hispanic Graduate Students	Combined Hispanic: Under-graduate and Graduate Students	Combined Minority Under-graduate and Graduate Students	UIUC Total Combined Student Population
1967	25	20	45	675	30,407
1974	149	68	217	1,801	35,045
1998	1,453	261	1,714	8,178	36,330

Nevertheless, the small Latina/o student population is a powerful reminder of the changes that need to be made in the university system and provides a context for understanding why Latina/o students began to push for changes in the university structure.

Negotiations of Space and Priorities: Initial Proposals for La Casa Cultural Latina

Given the campus climate of the late 1960s (less than 2% of UIUC students were students of color) and the need to support one another, Latina/o students believed that a cultural center could provide a base for support. La Colectiva Latina, formerly known as the Urban Hispanic Organization, was the main student organization that pushed for the development of La Casa. By 1975, La Colectiva Latina promoted a tripartite mission:

- To promote activities which emphasize the life-style and the cultural heritage of the typical Latino student, which includes Chicano's, Puerto Rican's, Cuban's, Central American's, [sic] etc., all whose homes are the United States;

- To develop programs which can satisfy the intellectual, cultural, social, and recreational needs of the Latino student;
- To serve as a lobbying group which is designed to further the causes of Latino students; to represent the Latino students to the administration and officials of the University in matters of immediate and future concern of the Latino students. (La Colectiva Latina Proposal, March 6, 1974)

While Latina/o students were the catalysts for the cultural center, other units within the university publicly supported their initiative; including the office of Campus Programs and Services, and the Program of Bilingual/Bicultural Education. Consequently, each independently submitted formal proposals for the establishment of La Casa to the office of Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs at UIUC.

La Colectiva Latina's Proposal

In a letter addressed to the Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, La Colectiva Latina submitted a proposal indicating that they would meet with him at a later date to discuss their recommendations (La Colectiva to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974). Their request briefly outlined four main components of the proposed cultural center:

- Background
- Objective
- Purpose of the Center
- Overview

In the "Background" section, students explained how they actively increased their own admission rates at UIUC and how the university needed to provide adequate support services and programs for retention. Furthermore, they explained, "Our emphasis is no longer on compensatory measures, but on establishing creative and concrete programs aimed at Latinos. The programs will be based on the idea of self-determination for the Latino" (La Colectiva to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974).

The "Objective" section described the goals of the Latino Cultural House. The students envisioned a cultural house as providing "a viable role in the university life [both] academic, and social" (La Colectiva to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974). Thus, through the cultural house, Latina/o students could become active, contributing members on the UIUC campus. In the students' eyes, the purpose of the cultural house would not only benefit Latina/o students but the entire UIUC community. Hence, as students pondered ways in which a cultural center would serve their needs, they also considered the role it could play in expanding the cultural, intellectual, and social horizons of the larger campus. As they explain in the "Overview" section:

The overall effect of the Cultural House, through its activities and programs, will contribute to the acknowledgement of our pluralistic society. The mainstream of educational thought is slowly progressing from one of domination by monolingual, monocultural ideas to one where value is placed on the multilingual, multicultural makeup of our society. Through [sic] the establishment of a Latino Cultural House is no giant step, nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction. (La Colectiva to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974)

As a whole, Latina/o students envisioned a cultural center that foreshadowed a contemporary emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. Although students were able to demonstrate the need for a cultural center, the complexity of running it would prove to be a further obstacle.

Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Program's Proposal

In a letter addressed to the Dean of Campus Programs and Services, the Director of the Program of Bilingual/Bicultural Education also expressed his support for the cultural center. He explained that, "This house will provide the students with an invaluable opportunity to engage in joint cultural programs, academic activities, and many other constructive endeavors" (Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program to Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services, April 3, 1974). The Director of the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program believed the cultural house could serve as the basis for its activities. Furthermore, it could house the resources and materials collection generated by the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program so that more people could have

access to the information. Moreover, he saw three main objectives for the Latino Cultural House:

1. To stimulate and enhance the intellectual growth of Latino students by providing them with the proper orientation; proper atmosphere and facilities to meet, share each other's knowledge, plans and concerns; place of relaxation.
2. To stimulate the collection, development and creation of educational materials on Latino cultures, such as, folklore, literature, dancing, music, and art.
3. To integrate educational concerns with the need for a closer relationship, in the spirit of friendship, of all Latinos from different countries and from our own. (Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program, n.d.)

The Director of the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program also posed and answered several questions:

1. *Why is it important to have a house, which would have the functions, mentioned above? Can all this be done elsewhere?* It is hard enough to be a foreigner or a minority student or a minority student in an institution as large and complicated as ours. Latino students need a place they can call "home," where their language is spoken, their art is displayed, their activities and concerns are important, where friends gather informally and reinforce each other's commitment to education. Guidance and help is not sought for in the elegant room of an instructor's office. Help, advice and encouragement are more readily asked for and given in a culturally familiar environment.
2. *Would not this house become a center for political "radicals"?* In my opinion, a cultural house for Latino students would be the least likely place to organize a revolution. Latino students are serious and hardworking young people, thoroughly committed to their academic work. They are aware of the social problems of minorities in this country and that is the reason why they are preparing themselves at the U of I. If they have some suggestions to make to the administration, they will make them following the dictates of reason and in the proper manner.
3. *How would this house be managed and taken care of?* I would suggest that the BBP be in charge of the management and become a clearinghouse for the activities related to the Latino Cultural House. The presence of the BBP would give the house an atmosphere of serious academic concern, intellectual growth, of constructive and organized effort at improving educa-

tion for the Latinos in this state and in the entire country. (Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program, n.d.)

In items two and three this person conceptualizes a center constructed around the interests and the needs of the institution as opposed to needs and interests defined by students. If this would truly be a place that students could call "home," he left unanswered the role they would play in making their own "home." Another troubling aspect with this letter is how "radical" students are constructed. He draws a distinction between "serious" students caring about education (who, presumably, are not radical) versus "radical" students who cannot be committed students. This interpretation, however, does not allow a "radical" student to have the attributes and characteristics of a committed student. In this regard, his response reinforced the policy values of other university officials.

In short, despite his intentions, the Director of the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program reifies the good student/bad student dichotomy. As such, Latinas/os' citizenship within the university structure is immediately called into question. This position serves only to reinforce the university's implicit desire to privilege students who did not question the status quo. In essence, campus officials sought diversity, but on their own terms (Taylor et al., 1997).

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs and the Office of Campus Programs and Services

During this period, administrators at both University of Illinois campuses (Urbana-Champaign and Chicago Circle) struggled to address and/or understand their Latina/o constituencies. Less than two weeks after a hearing on the Chicago campus regarding the lack of support given to the Latina/o community, UIUC's Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, in a letter addressed to UIUC's Office of the Chancellor, stressed the importance of avoiding the difficulties of the Chicago Circle Campus: "Don't let that sort of thing happen here" (Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to Chancellor, April 29, 1974). The Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs goes on to say:

So far, with the help of ... [UIUC Administrators] and the nebulous but moderate leadership of our Latino students, we have kept turmoil and controversy out

of the campus, at least insofar as our Latino relations are concerned. Now we are at a point where we can make real steps forward, not just to avert difficulty, but to add some penicillin, not a band-aid. (Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to Chancellor, April 29, 1974)

The Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs then discusses a possible site for the cultural center and where funding would come from. He believed that the establishment of such a center was "the answer to some of the critics that we are not far-sighted and concerned about the welfare and needs of minority students" (Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to Chancellor, April 29, 1974). He ends the letter by saying, "As I said earlier, this is a very real possibility for us to make some real progress with the very small but ever growing Latino community here on campus" (Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to Chancellor, April 29, 1974).

While university administrators publicly maintained the appearance of supporting Latina/o students and La Casa, there was an entirely different "internal" conversation that was taking place among the UIUC administration. In a "confidential" memo addressed to the Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, the Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services discussed the funding and overseeing of the Latino Center. In this letter he expressed his preference to keep his position confidential since "this could be a politically explosive proposition" (Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974). This letter details the Dean's belief that the Latino Cultural Center be placed under the aegis of the Campus Programs and Services Office because the Afro-American Cultural Center was already housed there. According to the Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services, the funding for La Casa (\$13,500 at the time) should come from the Student Relations Program. The "politically explosive proposition," however, was due to the fact that funding was readily available from a different source:

A final comment must be made which is a factor we must face. We do have some \$100,000 plus for intellectual and cultural programs. Yet we have a zero amount for our Latino students. I cannot see how we can justify this for too long a period of time. (Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974)

In other words, while the Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services was aware of the need to provide for Latina/o students, he knew

that none of the intellectual and cultural program funds were utilized for the Latina/o population.

Even more problematic was another statement made by the Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services in that same letter: "It is an erroneous assumption to believe that the Latino student, whether here on this campus or any other, will integrate truly with the normal flow of campus activities" (Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974). This particular dean, who publicly supported Latina/o students, now reveals a position that questions Latinas/os' citizenship by implying an unwillingness or inability on their part to integrate into the normal flow of campus activities. Even though he publicly claims to be a strong supporter of La Casa, he candidly doubts that Latina/o students would ever integrate fully into the university's community. Furthermore, his use of the term normal indicates that he considers Latinas/os to be unlike mainstream/White university students. Delivering a further blow, he privately confesses a personal belief that Latina/o students are linguistically and expressively lacking: "There are significant numbers of Latino students who are deficient in speaking English and Spanish. Thus, a center with the proper facilities can prove most beneficial for our Latino students" (Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services to Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs, April 23, 1974). Rather than negotiating with Latinas/os to shape the mission and programs of the proposed cultural center, he was inclined to improve programs based on his perception of Latina/o cultural traits.

A general administrative resistance accompanied these sentiments to the establishment of a cultural center, as indicated in the follow-up letter from the Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to the Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services:

As I told you the other day, the Chancellor is not very enthusiastic about us accepting another major responsibility for an ethnic centered program. However, based upon the problems of the times and our very sincere efforts to bring about some resolution regarding the Latino feeling lost on campus, I am sure that he will move on it as rapidly as possible. (Vice-Chancellor for Campus Affairs to Dean of the Office of Campus Programs and Services, May 3, 1974)

The university's unwillingness to develop the cultural center suggests a general lack of organizational support for Latina/o issues and concerns.

Consequently, problems encountered by Latina/o students take on a different light as students continue to encounter “hidden” obstacles and/or resistance.

While the “public” discourse maintained by the university suggests a strong support for the development of a cultural center, the “private” discourse reveals the institutionalized perception of Latinas/os as deficient and problematic. Even though the university ultimately approved the establishment of La Casa, it did not provide the adequate funds to support it and ensure its success.

By deploying graduate students as directors of La Casa and hiring undergraduates to serve as office workers, the university placed an insurmountable burden on students to keep La Casa afloat. Despite the fact that the university benefited from the events, programs, and recruitment efforts generated by La Colectiva Latina, students were never given any public credit for their efforts.

The Legacy of Struggle Continues

The struggle to sustain and expand a space within UIUC continued long after the development of La Casa. Students continued to encounter obstacles at different levels. However, they were determined to maintain, improve, and expand opportunities for Latina/o students such as enrollment growth, academic presence, and program offerings which would benefit the campus as a whole. While it is impossible to cover all the events that transpired since La Casa was founded, there are some key events that need to be highlighted. By examining these points of struggle, I will attempt to demonstrate that contemporary problems faced by Latina/o students are historically grounded. While there have been some advancements and accomplishments, the university has systematically failed to fully accommodate the needs of students from different backgrounds.

This struggle for respect and acceptance is exemplified in the two student sit-ins of 1992: April 29 at the UIUC Office of Minority Student Affairs and Cinco de Mayo (May 5) at the UIUC Henry Administration Building. The issues that prompted the protests—Latina/o recruitment and retention, increased representation of Latinos in faculty and administrative ranks, the elimination of Chief Illiniwek as the university mascot,

and the development of a Latina/o Studies Program—can be traced back to the same issues that Latino students faced in the late sixties and seventies.⁴ Indeed, not much had changed to provide a welcoming environment and climate for Latina/o students. Despite the fact that negotiations between the students and the administration came to a halt during the subsequent academic year, students resumed negotiations in 1994. This time, the focus of student concerns was on the development and implementation of a Latina/Latino Studies Program.

This struggle for legitimacy, space, and validation is the same struggle that has plagued Latina/o students at UIUC for decades. By understanding La Casa's origins and its legacy, we can see the evolution of the Latina/Latino Studies Program. Only when we contextualize this struggle are we able to understand the parallels and connections that students have historically faced at the UIUC campus.

Contemporary Struggles

In the spring of 2001, Latina/o students continued to push the university to address their needs. This time, the focus of contention was the UIUC history department. During a ten-year span, from 1990 to 2000, the history department only hired one Latino scholar. When the Latino professor left the campus, students felt that his resignation was greatly influenced by a general lack of departmental support. When the history department began interviewing possible candidates to fill the position, students urged the history department to do a "cluster hire" of two equally strong Latina/o candidates. To show their support, students wrote a letter to the department and attached a petition with 117 UIUC student signatures.

What transpired, however, was another disappointing moment in the long history of mistreatment, miscommunication, and mistrust between Latina/o students and UIUC administrators. Not only did the history department challenge some of the student signatures as being false, but also their hiring selection was the single candidate the students had *not* chosen.⁵ Despite the fact that the history department and other university officials have cooperated with students to discuss their concerns about these faculty hires, they continue to insist that no problems exist within the history department. This attitude clearly demonstrates how little the

administration and faculty are informed about the needs of the Latina/o community on campus.

At this point in time it remains to be seen if a meeting with the provost will result in concrete changes or the usual symbolic university gesture. While university officials maintain they are concerned with issues affecting the Latina/o community, they continue the traditional “official” double-speak. The university uses meetings with high-ranking officials—such as the provost—as “proof” that they are addressing the concerns of Latinas/os. However, action is missing within the policies they enact. There must come a time when universities have to deal with the rhetoric they espouse and directly deal with the issues at hand (Larson, 1997). It will remain to be seen if the university will continue with its symbolic rhetoric and action or take concrete steps to address the legitimate issues and concerns raised by Latina/o students.

Discussion

This study has demonstrated how UIUC administrators in the late sixties and UIUC administrators today have implemented inclusion on their own terms. It suggests that while administrators seem to espouse inclusion, their actions clearly indicate an entirely different objective. This contradiction demonstrates the importance of documenting historical research on race in higher education and the importance of narratives and counternarratives to reveal this contradiction.

This analysis has traced the early efforts by Latina/o students to improve conditions on the UIUC campus. Analysis of the data suggests that Latina/o students forged and located a community within La Casa. Over time, the Latina/o community on campus has increased, but the basic needs of recruitment, retention, respect, inclusion, and acceptance remain the same. The struggles of Latina/o students from the late sixties to 2001 are inextricably linked. Therefore, it is critically important to view these struggles as continuous rather than as isolated/explosive incidents.

By employing CRT/LatCrit to analyze the events that historically transpired at UIUC, it opens up a space to bring issues of race to the center of this discourse. Through the use of counterstories, one begins to see how Latina/o students have historically been marginalized, and how this marginalization continues to the present day. CRT/LatCrit highlights the

racism that is embedded within the UIUC campus and defines what Latina/o students are fighting against. In this regard, CRT/LatCrit provides an analytical basis from which Latina/o students can continue to demonstrate their needs. Lastly, CRT/LatCrit demonstrates the connection between the past and the present as well as holding the university accountable for past and present wrongdoings.

Latina/o students have historically demonstrated that it is not enough to get admitted to the university; they understood that in order to succeed within the institution they had to set up a support system. The support system they fashioned was the development and implementation of La Casa. Students believed they had a right to be at UIUC and that they had a right to have their needs/concerns addressed.

The negotiations that occurred placed a heavy burden on the students because they had the dual responsibility of being both students and activists. However, many of these students had no other choice. Students were willing to sacrifice their time and effort to improve campus conditions, but they were not willing to assimilate into a structure that did not respect their cultures, their histories, and their individuality/subjectivity. Latina/o students firmly believed that change had to occur, not only for their benefit but also for the benefit of future generations to come.

Conclusion

Taken holistically, we can see how the events that led to the development of the La Casa left a lasting impact on future generations of Latina/o students. This link can be seen in the actual painting of the mural in 1975 to the struggle to preserve it in the mid-nineties. Latina/o students continued to push the UIUC administration to address their needs/concerns, which ultimately resulted in the two sit-ins in 1992. As a result, the sit-ins provided the catalyst for the development and implementation of the Latina/Latino Studies Program. Moreover, the continued push by students to improve the hiring and retention of Latina/o faculty and Latina/o scholars was demonstrated in the discussions with the history department in the spring of 2001.

UIUC Latina/o students have continually proven that they will not accept inclusion as it stands and will continue to demand inclusion on their terms. If this history of struggle and contestation is not recognized,

then, as the opening epigraph suggests, a whole segment of the U.S. population is rendered invisible. By contextualizing the campus climate at UIUC, a clearer picture emerges of the past and present relationship between Latina/o students and university administrators. This context, in turn, provides an opportunity for future university administrators—both local and national—to better serve their Latina/o constituency. Perhaps most importantly, this context provides a space for Latina/o students to reclaim their history at UIUC and use it to improve conditions for all UIUC students.

Notes

1. Please note that references are made to offices and programs to underscore the fact that correspondence, proposals and negotiations represented official or organizational rather than personal responsibility. Also, there existed some confusion regarding the classification used within the archives. For example, some documents were in folders with dates that conflicted with the date on the specific document. In order to be as precise as possible I noted all the information given—even though it appears, at times, that I have the wrong date.
2. The term Hispanic is used here because this is how Latinas/os are categorized in the data. Please note that I object to using this term, since it is not reflective of the diversity, which exists within Latinas/os. Furthermore, the term Hispanic does not allow for gender distinctions. I will use the terms Latina/o and/or Latinas/os in this discussion, unless I am reporting findings that use the former term. I also use the plural terms cultures and histories because—while people of color have commonalities and share a collective history and culture—I do not want to suggest that there exists only one true culture or one true history (Oboler, 1995). In this study, the racial/ethnic categories, upon which the data are based, depend on voluntary self-reporting submitted to the university.
3. Admissions and Records Office Statistics (Nov. 3, 1998). Undergraduate, Graduate and Professional Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Category University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, fall 1967 to fall 1998. Note: "Enrollment as of the 10th day of instruction. The distinction of enrollment by racial/ethnic categories is based on voluntary self-reported data. Foreign students are not included in these racial/ethnic counts. Source: OAR. OAA: 11/3/98 MAW." Note: The term *Hispanic* is very broad and it is unclear how U.S. Permanent Residents fit into the data.
4. CRT/LatCrit, as stated previously, recognizes the importance of narratives and practice. I was one of the students involved in attempting to effect positive change after the 1992 Latina/o student actions. Although, CRT/LatCrit provide me with a legiti-

mate space in which to discuss my involvement, I have decided not to do so. My reasons for this are difficult to explain, but I will briefly attempt to do so in this footnote:

I find it difficult to explain my involvement for various reasons. First, because I'm still in the middle of it, it is hard to reflect on what has transpired. Too often I find myself questioning the decisions and actions we have taken. Was there a better way? Instead of making things better did we mess up things even more? How can we be smarter, stronger? Did we get our message across? It is difficult to live with the contradictions that being involved on campus entails. The contradictions exist within the reality of being a doctoral student who believes in the power of education but being proven through university officials' words and actions that we do not belong here. How do I reconcile this? Will I ever come to conclusions that I can live with? The spaces and borders that we have had to (re)cross in order to get the university to address our needs come with repercussions. Some repercussions are very obvious while others are subtler almost like shadows. Thus, I feel that I need more time to sort out what I'm thinking and what I have experienced before I can write about it. While I have numerous questions the following perspectives are clear in my mind because they have emerged from discussions with fellow Latina/o students who are involved on this campus.

Striving to get the needs and concerns we face as minority students, specifically Latina/o students, addressed at a predominantly White university has been difficult and discouraging at numerous levels. As students we have had to learn how to navigate the institution as we have gone along. We have been fortunate, however, that previous students passed down their expertise and knowledge. Nonetheless the fact remains that we are undergraduate and graduate students; we work part- or full-time jobs; we have responsibilities to our families back home; and some of us have children of our own. These factors have made our activism come at a much higher price. Although we recognize the responsibility that comes with what we have undertaken, at times it is an overwhelming burden.

Throughout this process, we often feel that we are doing the jobs of administrators, but without the benefits of time, money, or recognition. Many of the things we have asked for and demanded over the years should already exist on this campus. We have learned that the only way to improve things on this campus is to undertake the work ourselves. This role reversal has come at a price. On the one hand, we have learned much, especially how institutions work. On the other, we are frequently demoralized. To understand my point, ask yourself these questions. If you are trying to change an institution because its existing structure does not provide a space in which people like you can succeed, why would you want to continue to be part of that institution? If administrators by both their words and (in)actions insult and demean you, why should you be motivated in your classes? If the administration does not diversify its faculty, administrative staff, and student body, how does that encourage you to pursue a master's degree or doctoral work?

There have been so many difficult questions with no easy answers. However one thing has been a constant even when we look back to when Latinas/os first started coming here. The only way this institution has really changed is when stu-

dents have made them change. Thus, the counterstories that exist on and about this campus have to be documented, especially because the administration has demonstrated not to value, recognize, and prioritize Latina/o students' needs and strengths. The counterstories of these students have to be documented so that future generations of students become aware that the problems they experience have roots in the past. Having this knowledge raises the stakes to a new level. Will the UIUC administration truly value and recognize its Latina/o constituency as it does with its White constituency? I would argue that if the university espouses the importance of having a diverse campus and a commitment to diversity, then it must address the concerns of Latina/o students in an aggressive/proactive manner instead of its typical resistance to change until, and only until, the university is portrayed in a negative public light. As one undergraduate Latina student stated at a meeting last semester regarding the lack of Latina/o faculty in the history department: "We have had to sacrifice our time, our classes, in other words our education to be here to fight for more education, a better education." How much longer will students have to do the work of paid administrators?

5. The reason for this was that students wanted them to hire all three candidates but were told that it would never happen and to only select two. Thus, the chances of hiring two would be better than three. Students were not opposed to the candidate hired by the history department. However, students wanted a cluster hire and not just one person. Students wanted a cluster hire to build up the Latina/Latino Studies Program and the History department. Despite the History department's assertions that not all three candidates were qualified, students believed all of them were competent candidates.

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