Latino Transnationalism in a Postwar City: Politics of Urban Growth and Ethnic Mexicans in San Jose, CA 1950-1970

In 2010, San Jose, California was home to the tenth largest Latino/Hispanic population in the United States with over 313,636 Latino residents, most of whom descended from Mexico.[1] Since the 1980s, the city has been known as the Capital of the Silicon Valley, and in 2014 became recognized as the tenth largest city in the country. Today, it is home to over one million people with a third of the population being of Latino or Mexican descent. The majority of the city's ethnic Mexican population resides on the "Eastside" where the aroma of taquerias, the sound of mariachi and banda music, and storefront signs in Spanish are ubiquitous. The Eastside and its Latino population has a history that dates back to the early 1900s. However, the majority of this Latino space and place was not incorporated into San Jose proper until the late 1960s and early 1970s.[2]

Between 1950 and 1970, San Jose underwent an aggressive annexation period where it incorporated thousands of acres of land, along with the people living there, allowing the city to grow four-fold. These annexations grew the physical reach of the city, allowing more people to move into the city. The growth also engulfed a large population of people living in the outskirts, nearby neighborhoods, and townships adjacent to San Jose. The result was an increase in city population (from 95,280 to 445,779) during these two decades.[3] Despite San Jose's impressive growth, the more significant and remarkable statistic concerns the city's Latino population. During this time, Census data reveals the Latino population in San Jose multiplied by fifteen, increasing from 6,180 to 97,637 between 1950 and 1970.[4] The initial inclination is to credit this massive influx of Latinos to internal migration and international immigration. Although these certainly were factors, the increase was largely a result of the city's annexation policy during

these two decades. Under the leadership of City Manager Anthony "Dutch" Hamman, thousands of Latinos already living in unincorporated neighborhoods east of San Jose became recognized as official members of the city. Because of the urban sprawl manufactured under the politics of growth, by the 1980s ethnic Mexicans were predominantly concentrated in San Jose's Eastside, the area most commonly recognized as the "Mexican" part of San Jose.

However, before the Eastside came to dominate all facets of Latino life in the city, the downtown district was at the center of economic, social, cultural, and political life for the city's ethnic Mexican population. During the postwar period and into the 1970s, San Jose's downtown was full of Mexican residents, Mexican businesses, Spanish-speaking store owners and representatives, and the site of highly attended Mexican cultural celebrations that attracted ethnic Mexicans from the entire Bay Area and beyond. At mid-century, there existed a well-established middle class in San Jose's ethnic Mexican community that was vibrant, active, and on the rise. Men and women worked in several sectors of the growing service economy employed in a variety of positions that included: clothing salesmen; automotive retail and repair; restaurant, pharmacy, and market store owners; real estate agents; secretaries; accountants; doctors; and lawyers. The Latino people of San Jose opened businesses, and formed several clubs and organizations to unite with others who shared their middle-class status and cultural heritage for uplifting and improving their community in San Jose.

Their presence downtown made the district into a transnational space where Latinos spoke Spanish, celebrated their culture, and opened businesses that catered to their culinary taste. This article will chronicle the local and transnational activities of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose's downtown district during the postwar period as the South Bay experienced a huge economic transition from agribusiness to high technology between 1950 and the 1970s. During this time,

Santa Clara County and San Jose grew tremendously, leaving behind a rural-pastoral past as the region moved into a (sub)urban-innovative future with federal dollars for Cold War expenditures. This article argues that while Latinos kept downtown San Jose vibrant with their transnational character during this period of massive investment and growth, they did not benefit or prosper at an equal level as their white counterparts from the economic transformation experienced in the region.

The Economic and Political Setting of San Jose, 1950-1970

At mid-century, Santa Clara County—then popularly referred to as "The Valley of Heart's Delight"—boasted a highly productive agriculture industry that primarily planted, harvested, and canned fruits. Although its residents celebrated the Valley's rich fields and orchards, there was a growing desire to move away from the agricultural and rural economy that had sustained the region throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[5] During World War II, San Francisco and Oakland increased industrialization and created jobs as their ports and shipyards contributed to the war effort, improving the economic base of their respective residents.[6] Santa Clara County and San Jose—the county's municipality and largest city—did not industrialize or improve their economic position as impressively as their northern neighbors. Not to be left behind, however, during the postwar period San Jose and its county found a way to grow at a remarkable rate.

In the years following the war, the federal government devoted abundant defense funding to the county, while the politics of growth and development dominated discussions in San Jose's city hall. The South Bay transformed from a rural agricultural hub to an urban center, building the infrastructure, supplying the work force, and laying the economic and structural foundation for what would become the Silicon Valley. Research efforts in the engineering department at

Stanford University had begun to attract funding from the federal government during the 1930s to support the development of high technology in the region. Federal investment in Stanford at mid-century also led to federal investment in the county, encouraging city officials and business owners to promote the development of Santa Clara County and spurring private and public spending. In 1943, International Business Machines (IBM) opened its first West Coast Plant and selected San Jose as its South Bay location, foreshadowing the types of businesses that would eventually drive the county's economy. A major factor in supporting businesses like IBM in the area were defense initiatives that became more prominent during the following decade at the onset of the Cold War.[7] The federal and private funding that went into Santa Clara County during the postwar period provided the county and city governments with job opportunities and capital that attracted people to move and invest in the region. The opening of Moffett Field in the 1930s led to large federal and private investments early on in Sunnyvale, a suburb just a few miles Northwest of San Jose, and provided the impetus for the great development and growth of the air base's home town during the postwar that created jobs for the city and the county. The naval base would later close and reopen as AMES Research Center, as part of the Cold War effort to improve aeronautics and space travel.[8] Sunnyvale would later be dubbed the "Heart of Silicon Valley" and like many other growing cities during this period, it sought out autonomy and growth, participating in the annexation wars that plagued the region while investing in its downtown.

As cities in Santa Clara County opened themselves for development and investment, San Jose city government sought to protect its status as the major city in the South Bay and began a long period of growth through annexations. San Jose City Manager, Anthony "Dutch" Hamann, began a twenty-year term of growth politics functioning through strip annexations. Growing

outward, he believed, protected San Jose from being surrounded by numerous small suburbs that would take away investment, wealth, and development from San Jose and potentially limit the city's prestige and power in the region. His aggressive pursuit of more land led many smaller townships to incorporate and seek annexations of their own to protect their own interests, sparking "annexation wars" that played out in local court, county, and municipal hearings. Hamann worked tirelessly to grow San Jose and develop the city and the region into a major metropolis.[9]

In response to this shifting economy, many of the South Bay's Mexican population transitioned to newly available jobs in the industrial or urban service oriented positions. During and after WWII, many Latina women found work in the fruit canning industry as white men went off to war. When they returned from the war these service men found work outside of the canning industry and in the new burgeoning economy, availing their old jobs to the region's minority populations. Unlike their white counterparts, Mexican servicemen often faced discrimination and found themselves back in the canneries or opening mechanic shops with skills acquired in the armed forces.

However, although the shifting economy allowed for some ethnic Mexicans to make inroads to new positions in the industrial or service economy in the city, many still worked in the disappearing orchards. The Bracero Program—the bi-national agreement between the United States and Mexico that served as a wartime relief effort for U.S. growers—had been extended and many braceros along with Mexican Americans found themselves working side by side in the orchards of Santa Clara County and on living predominantly in the periphery of San Jose. As the economy shifted more rapidly and orchards disappeared, Latino communities and agricultural workers on the fringes of urban development and "progress" found their neighborhoods East of

San Jose being wooed to participate in the city's growth.[10] By the time the Bracero Program was finally eliminated in 1964, large portions of the Mexican *colonia* on the city's eastern front had been annexed with promises of roads, streetlights, running water, and plumbing. With the sprawl of San Jose and the economic and physical development of Santa Clara County, many agricultural workers began to more swiftly look for jobs in the city.

During this period of increased economic prosperity in Santa Clara County and San Jose, migration from Mexico to the United States increased due to troubling times for the United States' southern neighbor. Mexico had seen a steady increase in national GDP due to Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) between the 1940s and the late 1960s, leading to a booming economy that was referred to as the "Mexican Miracle." However, when that miracle came to a halt many Mexican nationals found themselves struggling to make ends meet and looked north to the United States for relief. Many Mexican immigrants traveled to the United States for work to provide for themselves and their families back home. The economic growth of Santa Clara County and its large Latino population, coupled with economic difficulties in Mexico, certainly attracted Mexican immigrants to San Jose, influencing the social, political, and cultural landscapes of the area during this time.

Postwar Latinos and Downtown San Jose

Ethnic Mexicans took center stage in the realm of urban racial politics as highways and housing subdivisions replaced orchards in the Valley. Unlike their northern neighbors, San Francisco and Oakland, San Jose's racial make-up during and after the war was not impacted by an influx of African Americans to the region. The racial politics that dominated San Jose during the postwar period featured tensions between whites and ethnic Mexicans living both inside and outside the incorporated boundaries of the city. The levels of "accommodation and resistance"

from ethnic Mexicans in response to their social, cultural, and economic position in San Jose possessed deep roots dating back to the nineteenth century.[11] Despite their struggles, Latinos in and around San Jose contributed to the bustling and busy environment of a thriving downtown.

In fact, there existed a vibrant and flourishing ethnic Mexican middle class in several barrios inside San Jose proper, most notably in the city's downtown district. Ethnic Mexicans worked in diverse sectors of the economy, providing labor for the local canneries but also working as sales clerks, mechanics, and real estate agents and insurance agents, and often operated their own small businesses, particularly downtown. Their presence, work, and businesses created a dynamic space where ethnic Mexicans and whites encountered one another frequently. People from San Jose and other municipalities in Santa Clara County traveled to San Jose's downtown for their shopping needs, coming into contact and interacting with one another as they passed each other on the streets or participated in business transactions in a thriving downtown. In addition to frequenting the business district for work and play, a large portion of ethnic Mexicans lived in or adjacent to the area. Their residential presence, especially along First Street, helped maintain an active presence in downtown even when businesses closed for the night.

The central business district in downtown San Jose, like many other cities across the country, reached its peak at mid-century. The Latino community played an important role in making the area thrive, particularly through expressions of culture and transnational activities. Throughout the 1950s Latinos utilized the area to claim space and assert their presence through Mexican Independence Day and Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Latino shop owners, entrepreneurs, and white collar employees provided services to English and Spanish speakers alike.

The spaces where people live, work, and play reveal a great deal regarding their identity and how they view themselves. The space occupied by most San Jose Latinos at midcentury was in or near the business district and the other half was scattered in the northern and eastern part of the city. In 1950, the U.S. Census began keeping a record of persons with Spanish surnames, and for the first time San Jose was analyzed by housing tracts. A 1950 map of San Jose reveals fourteen of the city's fifty-six housing tracts containing 250 or more residents who were racially categorized as white with Spanish surnames. Interestingly, half of these tracts were located adjacent to First Street, five of which would have been recognized as being part of downtown.[12] Latinos, especially those living near the urban core, enlivened the streets by shopping, working, and practicing their culture in their daily lives; Mexican supermarkets and restaurants provided foods and goods, storefronts played Mexican music to attract customers, and businesses openly advertised their ability to speak Spanish to attract Latino consumers. The community in San Jose proper was relatively small, with just over 6,000 residents living within the city limits, but there was also a significant community of predominantly agricultural laborers living on the outskirts just east of San Jose.

The Latino community in and around San Jose was sizeable and supportive enough that in 1949 one of their own, Humberto Garcia, began publishing *El Excéntrico*, a bilingual newspaper dedicated primarily to social and cultural events in the Latino community. Newspaper articles were published bi-weekly in Spanish and English by professionals and students, men and women, young and the old. *El Excéntrico's* headquarters moved several times but never left downtown and continued to publish until 1981. Other Spanish-language newspapers emerged in San Jose during this time but none celebrated more than a few years of publication. *El Excéntrico* is thus one of the richest sources for analyzing Latinos in the area during the postwar

period. The community created by the newspaper was localized in San Jose, but with the migratory patterns of ethnic Mexicans within the U.S. and between the U.S. and Mexico, community connections often existed outside the city, state, and country.

The first issue of *El Excéntrico* offered an introduction to the magazine, its authors, collaborators, and director. Most of all, the first issue assured readers that the purpose and vision of the magazine was to create and foster community. The inside-front cover featured a statement explaining that the magazine was "not the pride or product of a single individual who egotistically looks to better himself without the acknowledgement of others. [The magazine] is the product of a cooperative, united, and strong collective of Mexican people."[13] Humberto Garcia desired to reach the Latino community of San Jose, making it clear that the magazine served them and not his own self-interest or upward mobility. And if the statement failed to make his message clear, Garcia included on the first page a dedication that read: "*El Excéntrico*, your magazine, is dedicated to serve the Latino-American people. The magazine seeks to represent all Latino life in a cordial way for all Spanish speakers in our community. We hope to improve the magazine with every issue to reflect the dignity of our people."[14]

Although the first issue only contained a few articles, its writers celebrated the new magazine for unifying and uplifting Latinos in San Jose. In a column entitled "Our Strength is Our Unity," photographer Bill Gonzales stated that the newspaper symbolized the "true birth of being a collective group," and represented the "fetus that produces an educated society." He continued praising the magazine by adding that "The publication of *El Excéntrico* is the baptism of the newly born."[15] Gonzales, along with many other writers viewed the publication as the beginning of truly creating and expressing community through a medium that might uplift the Mexican people of San Jose. Jesuit priest S. Iglesias communicated this idea by insisting in his

article that his interest in writing for *El Excéntrico* stemmed from a desire to assist in the "well-being of Spanish readers in California" and wishing "the best for people of my social background."[16] Although Father Iglesias, S.J. would be transferred to San Francisco within the next two years, most columnists or collaborators that followed certainly wrote out of their own desire to uplift Latinos in San Jose as manifested by the countless articles written regarding social and cultural gatherings, health, legal and political issues, and ads supporting Latinos as patrons, employees, and business owners and operators.

Several columns and articles set forth an assimilationist and conservative editorial line by advocating for education and a need to stop blaming others for any Latino political or economic misfortune.[17] In an article entitled "Patriotismo?" Humberto Garcia lectured the community about their sentiments towards Mexico. He believed it was natural for people who immigrated from one country to another to have love for their homeland but that it was hypocritical for them to maintain a sense of loyalty or patriotism towards a country they had deserted. Indeed, he believed it would serve Mexico better for its transplants to accept the United States as their new home and become an integral part of society by engaging with civic activities, going to school to merit good jobs, and succeeding in their new homeland. This, he opined, was the best way to show pride for Mexico—by showing people in the United States that Mexico produces top quality people who contribute to society.[18] Garcia and other writers early on maintained that there was a need to assimilate to life and culture in the United States but the reason for adapting to life in the U.S. proved more ambiguous. While some promoted full assimilation, here, Garcia promoted assimilation for the purpose of bringing pride and honor to Mexico.

This assimilationist point of view was not only expressed in the writings of columnists, it was also reflected in the photographs and business ads in the newspaper that demonstrated a

desire for material and cultural consumption. Throughout the years, people paid to have photographs printed in the magazine to promote religious celebrations like baptisms, communions, and weddings. Although it was common for people to pay for these types of ads, Latinos rarely appeared in any of San Jose's mainstream newspapers but always appeared in *El Excéntrico*. In addition, photographs in the magazine showed Latinos at social and cultural events including, but not limited to, gatherings at nightclubs and *fiestas patrias*, planning meetings, postcards from Mexico, and banquets.

These photographs showed a vibrant and thriving Latino community enjoying middle-class status with elegant cars and clothing. Photos of nightclubs and dance halls reveal people wearing clothes purchased in the United States while dancing and listening to Mexican singers and performers. Furthermore, pictures of the *fiestas patrias* show cars converted into floats with people clad in both Mexican and U.S.-style clothing while celebrating Mexican holidays in the streets of downtown San Jose. Taken collectively, the photos paint a picture of middle-class ethnic Mexicans clearly manifesting a consumerist mentality that reflected a sense of Americanism. These Latinos lived in a U.S. city and frequently transformed public space in the city into a transnational space that commemorated their homeland while simultaneously participating and practicing forms of assimilation. Latinos and other immigrant communities imagine their existence and their usage of space beyond the nation-state that transforms both public and private places into transnational spaces where they express simultaneously their multiple and complex identities.[19] In San Jose, expressions of assimilation frequently blended together and were intertwined with expressions of cultural nationalism.

Another, albeit not as frequent, example of the ways ethnic Mexicans demonstrated their transnational character and subtle ways of assimilating to the United States was through acts of

consumption on trips they took to Mexico and their correspondence with those in the United States. Correspondence with people in Mexico also provides an insight into the transnational activities performed by ethnic Mexicans every day. Several letters and postcards were written directly to *El Excéntrico* from Mexico with the purpose of communicating with the Latino population of San Jose.[20] Many post cards and letters came from ethnic Mexican San Joseans on vacation or on business in Mexico wishing to share their experiences of visiting the homeland with their co-ethnics in the United States. Some images came from local musicians, like Las Hermanas Montoya, on tour in Mexico and Latin America.[21] Also printed were photos of important ethnic Mexican San Joseans, like Pompeyo Garcia, shaking hands with Mexican officials. Other times letters were from Mexican nationals writing to their family and friends in San Jose.[22] In any case, these postcards, photos, and letters sent from Mexico directly to *El Excéntrico* provide a small and selective sample of ethnic Mexicans traveling for business and leisure activities to their motherland. These actions also suggest the broad ways Latino and other transnational minorities view and experience the world they live in that expands their understanding of life and society beyond the boundaries of a single nation-state.

The transnationalism practiced and expressed by Latinos in San Jose occurred daily and enriched the cultural milieu of downtown and their neighborhoods, but during cultural celebrations the business district completely transformed into a hyper-transnational space.[23] Beginning in 1949 with the fifth issue of *El Excéntrico*, the magazine helped promote the *fiestas patrias*—cultural celebrations commemorating Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence—and their celebrations in the streets of downtown. The events were initially sponsored by San Jose's *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* (CHM) to raise scholarship money to be distributed to qualifying students seeking a college education. CHMs had emerged throughout the Southwest beginning in

the early 1920s to serve as self-help organizations in ethnic Mexican communities and promote Mexican nationalism in U.S. cities where no Mexican consulate was present. The *Comisiones* acted as official liaisons between the Mexican Consulate and Mexican nationals residing in the United States—often their role as a self-help organization extended to assisting Mexican Americans in pursuit of labor and civil rights.[24] In San Jose, the *Comisión* enjoyed several years representing local ethnic Mexicans but primarily focused on promoting the *fiestas patrias*.

These celebrations were often broken up into two parts consisting of a parade downtown followed by a banquet. During the parade, cars were converted into floats with ethnic Mexicans promoting their businesses, mariachis performing as they promenaded down the avenue, and spectators watching with anticipation for the *reina* to make her appearance. For months, young women from San Jose and nearby cities gathered votes and sponsorship to be named the *reina* and be the center of attention during the parade. During the procession, Latinos filled the streets coming from as far away as San Francisco and Watsonville (both roughly forty miles away from San Jose). The Mexican flag was raised by a color guard, *baile folclórico* dancers performed, and horses mounted by *rancheros* made their way across downtown. Often, these celebrations garnered a lot of attention from public figures as well—over the years *El Excéntrico* published hundreds of pictures of California mayors, senators, city managers, governors and Mexican consuls in attendance for San Jose's *fiestas patrias*.

Although the parade drew the most attention, the banquets following the afternoon activities were also well attended by public figures and ethnic Mexicans eager to keep the festivities going. The banquet programs published in *El Excéntrico* presented an itinerary for the dinner, always beginning with a presentation of the *Himno Nacional de México* (Mexican national anthem). After paying homage to the patria with the national anthem there were usually

performances by singers and dancers, the presentation of the *reina* and her court, and ending with a dance. Again, these banquets, like the parades, reveal the continued practice of cultural traditions that promoted pride in having connections with Mexico. These celebrations converted both public and private spaces—areas where ethnic Mexicans lived, shopped, and played—into places where ethnic Mexicans manifested their transnational character.[25]

However, it is important to note that although these celebrations promoted unity and pride within the ethnic Mexican community, the events often highlighted divisions within the community. For example, after announcing the elimination of a "discriminatory practice" that regulated membership in the CHM to those born in Mexico, in 1952 the president of the CHM addressed the community in *El Excéntrico* by reprimanding ethnic Mexicans who failed to attend the *fiestas patrias*. The following year, a thank you was printed on behalf of the CHM to the *colonia* for recognizing the organization as the official representative for the ethnic Mexican community to celebrate the *fiestas patrias*. Printing the thank-you letter revealed a simmering sense of tension within the community stemming from claims of being the official and authentic voice of ethnic Mexicans in the city.

These tensions became manifest the following year when the celebrations for Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day both had multiple dates. The CHM sponsored a celebration for both holidays and other organizations, headed by the Civic Coordinating Council—a collective of civic-minded Latino organizations—collaborated to sponsor their own celebrations on different dates that also included a parade and banquet.[26] Issues of staking a claim to recognition as the official voice of the *colonia* would arise time and time again throughout the postwar period, mostly as members of the CHM struggled to remain relevant as

other organizations emerged that also worked to better the position of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose.

By the mid-1950s several other organizations had formed in San Jose with the purpose of improving the social, cultural, political, and economic lives of ethnic Mexicans, especially those new to the city. For example, the American G.I. Forum established chapters in San Jose and neighboring Santa Clara, offering their assistance to local Latinos by raising money for scholarships, promoting education, and hosting their own beauty pageants to help establish pride in the community. In addition, in 1952 perhaps the most celebrated organization, the Community Service Organization (CSO), founded its second chapter in San Jose. Community organizer Fred Ross helped establish the CSO in Los Angeles that helped Edward Roybal, a Mexican American, win election to city council in 1949 where he remained until he left for Congress in 1962. When Ross's efforts brought him to San Jose he helped recruit César Chávez and mentored him before moving to the Central Valley to work with migrant workers. The CSO published in *El Excéntrico*, early on, promoting voter registration drives, citizenship classes, and English classes for ethnic Mexicans in San Jose.[27]

By the 1970s the growth of San Jose and the explosion of ethnic Mexicans in the city led to the creation of dozens of new organizations and businesses that challenged the CHM as the official voice of ethnic Mexicans in San Jose. Because civic minded organizations like these emerged and worked daily to improve the lives of the Latino community they challenged the authority of the CHM as the sole sponsor and representative of the community during cultural celebrations.

These types of tensions and conflicts regarding leadership and power, inclusion and exclusion, and expressions of culture were not exclusive to the *fiestas patrias*. In the 1960s

several columnists began calling for direct action regarding civil rights and demanding the local government step in for assistance while others maintained a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" approach. In addition, articles discussing Braceros as taking jobs away from citizens and calls to raise money for injured Braceros reflected internal conflicts among ethnic Mexicans in San Jose. The interplay between columnists representing conservative Republican ideals and those of more liberal and Democratic ideals reveal a heterogeneity within the community as it pertained to politics and citizenship that existed throughout the postwar period.[28] Ethnic Mexicans began to join and create social clubs whose main purpose was to gather and promote unity within the community but their social columns in *El Excéntrico* often promoted political activity. Most of the organizations and social clubs were non-partisan and simply encouraged members to participate in the political process. Throughout the years, social clubs encouraged people to register and vote in addition to reporting on issues as they related to local politics and immigration not simply the next social event.

Ethnic Mexican business owners created their own Mexican Chamber of Commerce to assist already established businesses and other aspiring entrepreneurs. In late 1954, there was an announcement in *El Excéntrico* for the arrival of a Cámara Comercio Mexicano (Mexican Chamber of Commerce, MCC) that expressed the importance of Latino businessmen for the upward mobility of San Jose and its ethnic Mexican community. "[A]s San Jose marches towards progress, so does our *colonia*," was a firm statement made by the MCC in one of its first appearances in *El Excéntrico*. The MCC was established in 1955 and sporadically published in *El Excéntrico* sponsoring business ads, announcing new members and leadership positions, and promoting celebratory banquets.[29] Documentation of the MCC is scarce but the organization appears to have maintained some level of activity through 1965.[30] The establishment of the MCC

in the 1950s and a Mexican American Chamber of Commerce in the early 1970s reveals the entrepreneurial spirit and character of Latinos and their desire to find a voice in San Jose through business.[31] Interestingly, many members of the CHM were also members of the MCC who were frequently photographed next to public figures during the *fiestas patrias* or other events. The dual membership of several individuals demonstrates the desire by a few Mexican residents to establish (whether formally or informally) some form of elite group of like-minded ethnic Mexican men attempting to uplift the Latino community through business and political affiliations. Members of the CHM and the MCC were often seen sitting next to and talking to high-status political figures in San Jose and California. During the 1950s and 1960s San Jose City Manager Anthony "Dutch" Hamman attended many of the *fiestas patrias* banquets and had correspondence with public figures in the ethnic Mexican community, especially those with membership in the CHM and MCC.

Although Latinos in San Jose's downtown seemed to enjoy middle-class status and all the material goods and notoriety that came with it, by the mid-sixties and into the 1970s there appeared to be growing discontent among the city's largest minority group. Some of the credit for the growing frustration can be attributed to newly annexed barrios East of San Jose that were assured better living conditions with incorporation to the city and a failure from the city to sufficiently meet those promises. In addition, as the city sprawled outward and attempted to maintain hegemony in Santa Clara County there was a slow declension of activity and investment into the business district that impacted Latino business owners. The incorporation of Eastside barrios and disinvestment in downtown led to a slow shift in the spaces and places for ethnic Mexican social, cultural, economic, and political life. The transition from downtown to the Eastside provided the impetus for more political participation and for a louder voice in

holding the city accountable for discrimination, racism, and other civil rights issues. With oodles of new Latino organizations emerging in the city, the Latino population in San Jose began to demonstrate its frustration more vocally and actively.

Much like many other Latino barrios and Black neighborhoods across the country, ethnic Mexicans in San Jose grew tired of poor living conditions, segregation, and treatment as second-class citizens and they voiced their grievances publicly. In 1969, the city attempted to revive a traditional cultural celebration that had not been observed in San Jose since the 1920s. The Fiesta de las Rosas was supposed to commemorate the rich agricultural past of San Jose with an emphasis on the Spanish influence in the city and the county. According to ethnic Mexican youth, however, the emphasis on a quaint and pastoral Spanish history ignored the violence of colonization and the subjugation of Native Americans and Mexicans in the region. Chicanos, as many of these young ethnic Mexicans called themselves, protested the event; they juxtaposed the erasure of imperialism and racism during the celebration alongside contemporary issues of police brutality, educational inequality, and discrimination in the city. When the demonstration turned violent, local media blamed the tumult on ethnic Mexicans who lived in San Jose's Eastside—the area of the city most harmed by segregation.

Interestingly, unlike minorities in major cities that experienced increasing levels of poverty, low educational achievement, and segregation due to an exodus of whites to the suburbs, it was the growth of San Jose and the arrival of whites to San Jose that led to a weaker Latino population. In fact, a 1972 RAND Corporation study on San Jose stated that the massive growth of the city failed to help ethnic Mexicans in the same ways it assisted San Jose's white community. The study reported that "two decades of rapid growth have improved the absolute income levels of the minority [Mexican American] population but have done little or nothing to

improve the minority's relative status as compared to the majority [Anglos]." The study also reported that in both 1960 and 1970 "[a]bout 70 percent of the Chicanos had incomes below the median income for Anglos in both years."[32] Certainly the annexation of impoverished ethnic Mexican neighborhoods on the outskirts of San Jose played a big role in the growing inequality in the city, an issue still plaguing it today.

Eastside San Jose continued to grow tremendously, both as an incorporated region of the city and as the hub for Latinos. Under the politics of growth, the city sprawled outward, disinvested in the urban core, and focused expenditures on the construction of roads, schools, homes, and malls on the city's periphery. With shopping centers located in the newly acquired and developing areas of East, West, and South San Jose there was less reason for people to visit the downtown district for commercial and entertainment purposes. As regional shopping centers catered to particular socioeconomic groups in their neighborhoods, downtown swiftly deteriorated as a center for social and cultural interaction among diverse populations. In other words, whites shopped in West and South San Jose, and ethnic Mexicans in the Eastside. In addition, the economic status of residents determined where they could buy homes and send their children to school—unequal income had drastic racial implications that shaped neighborhoods and their educational institutions. With the disinvestment in downtown and a sprawling growth pattern, the Latino neighborhoods in the city center lost out socially, culturally, and economically as more investment was placed on developing Eastside. The emphasis in developing the burgeoning neighborhoods on the city's periphery helped isolate and concentrate San Jose's major Latino population in parts of the city that whites avoided.

Although the concentration and segregation of the Mexican population in Eastside proved to manifest levels of socioeconomic strife, there were some (albeit arguably minimal) political

gains. Over the decades, ethnic Mexicans attempted but always failed at electing one of their own to city council. Under the leadership of Anthony "Dutch" Hamman, most of what is now considered the Eastside became part of San Jose through annexations—during his tenure the city approved 491 annexations between 1950 and 1960 and another 900 by the time he retired from the position in 1969. When Hamman abandoned his position as city manager—due to suspicion he would soon be voted out—there was a clear shift in the way San Jose would be managed and governed as local politics focused more on development and improvement of areas within the city limits instead of outward growth. During the 1970s the push was made to move from at-large elections to district elections and in 1980, Blanca Alvarado became the first Mexican American to be *elected* to city council. By this time, the influence of the CHM in local politics had all but vanished and *El Excéntrico* was finishing its last year of publication. The election of Blanca Alvarado to represent District 5 (which encompassed Eastside) in San Jose's City Council marked a key moment in local Latino history as the Eastside solidified itself as the new center of San Jose's ethnic Mexican community.

While Latinos in San Jose and Santa Clara County struggled for civil rights and a political voice, many whites in the area clamored and protested the aesthetic and environmental impact of the region's (sub)urbanization. The politics of growth in San during the 1950s and 1960s laid the foundation for a more segregated city and contributed immensely to the annexation wars that drastically diminished the beauty of the natural environment and the agricultural economy. Hamman's retirement came at a time when it became clear that many white city residents and local politicians had grown frustrated with lack of planning and development that accompanied the city's massive expansion.

In 1970 Karl Belser, a member of Santa Clara County's Planning Department during the 1950s and 1960s, wrote "The Making of Slurban America," a reflective essay on the growth of the county. He described Santa Clara's rich soil, which for seventy years provided it the means to grow into one of the most productive agricultural regions in the United States. By 1940, he stated, Santa Clara County "was a textbook example of a fully integrated agricultural community."[33] At mid-century, the county and its urban center, San Jose, had found the perfect balance between rural agricultural work and urban processing industries: "[T]he key to the economic life," Belser wrote, "was the joint activity where the produce of the farm was processed and prepared for delivery to the world market."[34] Indeed, most of the food processing and other industrial activity in the county occurred in San Jose.

But Belser's nostalgic reflections quickly turned to sadness and anger when he described the suburbanization of Santa Clara County and the growth politics that guided San Jose—both of which had their origins during World War II but accelerated beginning in 1950. "Wild urban growth attacked the valley much as cancer attacks the human body," he wrote.[35] Belser detested what had become of the county that he had tried to manage and protect during his tenure as a county official. If housing tracts, schools, highways, and roads had not replaced orchards in the county—that is, had the politics of growth not dismantled and completely replaced the agricultural economy—he opined that Santa Clara County "could have become the strongest in the state economically" and "would have remained indeed a good place to live."[36] According to Belser, the county was worse off in 1970 than in 1950, and the main culprits were the city of San Jose and its policy makers.

During the twenty-five years that followed the conclusion of World War II Latinos in San Jose maintained a strong presence in downtown San Jose. Their social and cultural activities

transformed the business district into a hyper-transnational space filled with a cultural nationalism that celebrated the motherland of the largest minority group in the city and the county. The political actions of ethnic Mexicans were often exercised in downtown courtrooms and city offices, despite the increasing number of issues being disputed focused on issues of segregation experienced in the city's growing Eastside. Many of the social, cultural, and political happenings of Latinos during the postwar period were documented in *El Excéntrico* Magazine that wrote to both, Spanish and English readers. The newspaper traces much of the social, cultural, and political history of Latinos in San Jose over a thirty-year period while providing a subtle urban story as well. The shift in geographic space for social, cultural, and economic exchange among Latinos can be traced through *El Excéntrico* as advertisements for ethnic Mexican businesses and leisure activities gradually decreased in the downtown district and slowly increased in San Jose's Eastside. Along with other political and social organizations, *El Excéntrico* certainly informed hundreds of readers and voters about upcoming elections. In 1980, as the Eastside solidified itself as San Jose's Latino hub, *El Excéntrico* helped advertise and promote two Latina candidates to represent the majority Latino District 5. Somewhat ironically, the city's single-most-popular Latino newspaper during the postwar period ceased production less than a year after the election of Blanca Alvarado.

During the 1980s San Jose's downtown was, like many other business districts across the country, a ghost town. However, the immigration of Latinos into the city that occurred during this time helped contribute to a revival of the urban core and its surrounding neighborhoods. The local government reinvested in downtown and built a multi-purpose arena that hosts concerts and is home to a professional hockey team. More recently, the development of San Pedro Market offers a variety of foods from different ethnicities and nationalities within walking distance of

newly constructed business buildings. *La Victoria*, a popular Mexican *taquería,* has opened a second location along Santa Clara Street, only a few blocks from City Hall. Diaz Menswear, also along Santa Clara Street, provides Chicano-style clothing often purchased by lowrider aficionados. Certainly, the opening of Google in the near future will contribute to the continued revitalization of downtown but the city needs to be mindful that hipsters and techies do not replace immigrants who have contributed to the downtown community. Although Latinos remain present in downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods, it is difficult to imagine that their presence downtown will ever reach the level of visibility it once possessed during the middle of the twentieth century. Despite this, however, it is reassuring to know that Latino culture continues to thrive and expand in the city's Eastside.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau. *2010 Census Briefs, The Hispanic Population 2010*. Table 5. 2011. Accessed online March 2014 www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf.

[2] The nomenclature surrounding Latino communities across the United States is diverse and there is no agreed upon form amongst scholars, activists, and community members. For the purpose of this paper the terms Latino, Mexican, and ethnic Mexican will be used interchangeably when referring to this population as a whole, citizens and non-citizens alike. The terms immigrant and Mexican immigrant will refer to non-citizens and Mexican American will be utilized when discussing citizens.

[3] U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. *Census of Population: 1950* Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50 City of San Jose. U.S. Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1952; U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Census of Population and Housing: 1970*, CENSUS TRACTS, Final Report PHC(1)-190. San Jose, CA. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1972.

[4] *Census of Population: 1950*, Table 6. *Census of Population and Housing: 1970*, Table P-7.

[5] Glenna Mathews, Silicon Valley, Women and the California Dream: Gender, Class, and Opportunity in the Twentieth Century (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 83, 115; John M. Findlay, Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 124.

[6] Marilynn S. Johnson, The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Robert O. Self, American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

[7] Margaret Pugh O'Mara, "From the Farm to the Valley: Stanford University and the San Francisco Peninsula," in Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[8] Mary Jo Ignoffo, Sunnyvale: From the City of Destiny to the Heart of the Silicon Valley, 85-89; Mattews, 83.
[9] George Starbird, "The New Metropolis: San Jose Between 1942 and 1972," Talk Delivered to San Jose Rotary Club, March 1, 1972; Richard Reinhard, "Joe Ridder's San Jose," San Francisco Magazine, November, 1965; San Jose SUN, "Former Manager Recalls Old Role in Growth of San Jose," July 1974, 4.
[10] The process of ethnic Mexican communities being annexed or encroached upon was not an isolated experience in San Jose and Santa Clara County. In neighboring Alameda County a similar process occurred as surely it did elsewhere in California and the Southwest. Self, 272-274.
[11] Stephen Pitti, The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 1.
[12] Map of San Jose, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1950*, Vol. III, *Census Tract Statistics*, Chapter 50. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952, 23.
[13]*El Excentrico*, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1949.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Bill Gonzales, "Our Strength is Our Unity." *El Excéntrico*. Vol. 1, no. 1. April, 1949.
[16] P. Iglesias, S.J. "Bienestar Latino-Americano." *El Excéntrico*. Vol. 1, no. 1. April, 1949.
[17] Humberto Garcia, *El Excentrico*, "La Descriminacion…" December, 1949; Humberto Garcia, *El Excéntrico*, "Patriotismo?" Vol. 1, no. 7, February 1950.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Arjit Sen, "Transnational Performances in Chicago's Independence Day Parade" in *Making Cities Global: The Transnational Turn in Urban History*, eds. Andrew Sandoval-Strausz and Nancy H. Kwok (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
[20] "Asi me lo contaron," *El Excéntrico*, March 1952.
[21] Las Hermanitas Montoya was a trio of sisters from the rural town of Morgan Hill, twenty miles south of San Jose, that performed often in San Jose and frequently toured in Mexico. Hermanitas Montoya Photograph, *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 12, October 20, 1951.
[22] "De Visita," *El Excéntrico*, December, 1949; Hermanitas Montoya Photograph, *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 12, October 20, 1951; *El Excéntrico*, vol. 1, no. 8, May 5 1950.
[23] In "Transnational Performances in Chicago's Independence Day Parade," Argit Sen discusses the transformation of Devon Street, Chicago during Indian Independence Day celebrations that transform streets into a "theatrical stage" where expressions of power are manifest and reveal the complex relationship between different genders, ethnicities, age groups, and religions. Although the experiences are different because of the ethnoracial make up of Devon Street and Santa Clara Street, San Jose during cultural celebrations, similar power dynamics are played out and a similar form of hyper-transnationalism exists.
[24] F. Arturo Rosales. *Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights History*. Arte Público Press: University of Houston (2006), 100.
[25] *El Excéntrico*, Vol. 1, No. 8, May, 1950; *El Excéntrico*, Vol. 2, No. 13, May 5, 1952.
[26] *El Excéntrico*, August 20, 1954; *El Excéntrico*, September 5, 1954 (2 articles).
[27]Pitti, *The Devil in the Silicon Valley*, 165-172; *El Excéntrico*, "C.S.O. News," August 5, 1953; *El Excéntrico*, "C.S.O. News," September 20, 1953; *El Excéntrico*, "C.S.O. News," October 5, 1953; *El Excéntrico*, "C.S.O. News," October 20, 1953.
[28] The two major political columnists
[29] *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1954; *El Excéntrico*, January 20, 1956; *El Excéntrico*, November 20, 1956; *El Excéntrico*, December 5, 1956.
[30] *El Excéntrico*, June 20, 1965.
[31] Mexican American Chamber of Commerce Meeting Minutes, April 2, 1973 [in my possession]; John G. Zamora, "The History of the San Jose Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, the first 5 years (1973-1978)," n.d. [in my possession]

[32] Daniel J. Alesch and Robert A. Levine, "Growth in San Jose: A Summary Policy Statement," Rand Corporation: Santa Monica, CA, 1973. vi,vii.
[33] Karl Belser, "The Making of Slurban America," *Cry California*, Fall 1970, 3.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 5.
[36] Belser, "The Making of Slurban American," 5.