CREATING COMMUNITY IN ISOLATION: THE HISTORY OF CORPUS CHRISTI'S MOLINA ADDITION, 1954-1970

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"Creating Community in Isolation: The History of Corpus Christi's Molina Addition, 1954-1970" examines the history of the Molina Addition in Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas, and its serving district, the West Oso Independent School District, from 1954 to 1970. Specifically, this essay begins with an analysis of the elite-driven campaign to annex the blighted Molina Addition in September and October 1954. The city intended to raze the neighborhood and develop middle-class homes in place of the newly annexed neighborhood. Following the annexation of the Molina Addition, African American and ethnic Mexican residents initiated protracted struggles to desegregate and integrate schools that served their area, the West Oso Independent School District, as detailed in the chapter, "The West Oso School Board Revolution." The chapter examines the electoral "revolution" in which Anglo rural elites were unseated from their positions on the school board and replaced by African American and ethnic Mexican Molina Addition residents. The third chapter, "Building Mo-Town, Texas," focuses on residents' struggle to install indoor plumbing, eliminate pit privies, construct paved roads, and introduce War on Poverty grants to rehabilitate the neighborhood. This chapter also offers a glimpse into the social life of Molina youth during the 1960s.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Molina Addition in Corpus Christi, Texas, is a predominantly ethnic Mexican and African American-populated neighborhood established in the middle-to-late 1940s on the western fringes of the city. The Paul Cox Land Company originally developed the unincorporated territory after it acquired ranch land from Susano Molina beginning in 1946. Oral tradition suggests that Susano Molina squandered his assets. As a gambling addict, Mr. Molina slowly lost his land throughout his adult years and eventually became property-less after many bets had gone wrong.[1] His life as an alcoholic did him no favors, either. His alcoholism may have been attributed to a car accident in 1930 that resulted in at least one death and the serious injuries of some of his family members and friends.[2] He passed away in 1947 at the age of 69, in debt, just two years after selling off the last of his property.[3]

Under the ownership of the Paul Cox Land Company, the unincorporated Molina Addition sold homes to Corpus Christi's ethnic and racial minority population. The streets—Angela, Barrera, Elvira, Mendoza, Lolita, Theresa, Valdez, Jose, Villarreal, Ramona, Yolanda—were named after Paul Cox's first employees after Molina had been the first street in the neighborhood to be named. The company marketed homes to African Americans and ethnic Mexicans whose neighborhoods in the north side and in the west side of Corpus Christi had overcrowded following World War II. Alex Cox, Paul Cox's son, explained in a 1991 interview,

[1] Alfredo Torres and Esther Alvarado-Torres, interview with author, Corpus Christi, Texas, March 18, 2015. Unless otherwise noted, all oral history interview were recorded by the author. As of 2015 they are in the author's possession, with plans to make them accessible online via the forthcoming Westside Corpus Christi Oral History Project.

[2] "7 Personas Resultaron Heridas," *El Tiempo De Laredo,* Laredo, Texas, November 18, 1930.

[3] "Deaths: Susano Molina," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* Corpus Christi, Texas, July 18, 1947.

"At one time, we cleaned out the housing projects in Corpus Christi, because we would sell [ethnic Mexicans and African Americans] a house cheaper than they could rent in the housing projects."[4] The Molina Addition was a release valve that dispersed and relocated a large number of the city's minorities, many of whom were veterans including a Tuskegee Airman and some 88th Infantry Division Blue Devils.[5] By 1970, the Molina population reached approximately 8,000 people; a quarter of the population was African American with the rest ethnic Mexican.[6]

The neighborhood lacked basic utilities and infrastructure. With no running water or drainage, death from illness in the 1940s and 1950s, especially among young children, was common. Tuberculosis and polio were rampant. Roads were unpaved and ran parallel to open drainage ditches. There were no sidewalks or lampposts and each home had an outdoor pit privy in the backyard, which equaled nearly 800 in 1954.

Schools were substandard as well. The neighborhood's ethnic Mexican children travelled five miles west of the neighborhood to the decommissioned Cuddihy Airfield (see *Figure B.1*). Health inspectors regularly reported on the substandard conditions of the abandoned base.[7] Even George I. Sánchez of the University of Texas at Austin wrote fervently about the injustices of segregated schooling at the West Oso district.[8] Meanwhile, wealthy Anglo families, descendants

[4] Alex Cox, interview with Dr. Thomas Kreneck, December 5, 1991, Special Collections at Jeff and Mary Bell Library, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

[5] "Molina's Military History," Molina Veterans Society, accessed November 14, 2014, www.molinaveterans.com.

[6] U.S. Department of Commerce, Social and Economic Statistics Administration, "1970 Census of Population and Housing: Corpus Christi, TEX., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area," March 1972.

[7] A.J. Fogaley, Fire Marshall to H.H. Allen, City Manager, February 16, 1949, Cuddihy Field Collection, Corpus Christi Public Library Local History Department, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1.02 15 (hereafter cited as Cuddihy Field Collection).

[8] George I. Sánchez letter to Dr. Héctor P. García, October 2, 1956, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, Mary and Jeff Bell Library at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 21.15 (hereafter cited as Dr. Héctor P. García Papers).

of Texas pioneers and Civil War soldiers who had owned ranch land for generations near the neighboring towns of Petronila, Robstown, and Driscoll sent their children to the top of the line West Oso School that had a laboratory, gymnasium, and stadium.[9] Black students, on the other hand, were bused to Corpus Christi ISD's school for African Americans, Solomon Coles. The conditions at Coles often forced some parents to enroll their children at a Catholic boarding school in San Antonio.[10] In the middle 1950s, two new elementary schools were built in the neighborhood less than half a mile away from one another to accommodate the growing population: W.E. Hall Elementary, which served ethnic Mexicans, and the West Oso Negro School, which served African Americans.

In addition to the hopeless circumstances at home and school, the Molina Addition was plagued with as much crime as it was with disease. Multiple accounts of drug raids, illegal gambling busts, and gang warfare in and near the Molina Addition routinely lined the pages of the local newspaper. With a high crime rate in a space designated for racial minorities, innocent residents were susceptible to police abuse that regularly went unchecked. Under the guise of bringing improvements and more stringent police protection to the area, the city annexed the Molina Addition in 1954. However, extreme poverty and neglect lasted for decades thereafter. Complete neighborhood rehabilitation did not arrive until 1970, the same year that the newly minority-run school district opened a new high school in the area to serve minority students.

This thesis examines the history of the Molina Addition and its serving district, the West Oso Independent School District, from 1954 to 1970; it details the community's relationship to a

[9] Al McCulloch, "Dawn Blaze Guts 4 Classrooms, Office of West Oso High School," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 26, 1954; "Homecoming Event Honors Oldest Teacher, Ex-Student," *Corpus Christi Times,* November 21, 1954.

[10] Thurma Hilton, interview with author, December 29, 2014, Corpus Christi, Texas.

city built from the collision of two frontiers. As a Borderlands city with a Confederate past, Corpus Christi was a "Hispanic region until Anglo intruders arrived, suppressed and blighted what Mexicans were creating, and imposed a new frontier."[11] With the introduction of Anglos to the area came a new population to the region who arrived by force, African Americans. The following three chapters demonstrate that the Molina Addition from the years 1954 to 1970 was one site in ex-Confederate and Borderlands Texas where black-brown coalitions organized to challenge Anglo supremacy within the very spaces they inhabited.

The first chapter, "The Conquest of the Fringes," examines the annexation campaign in 1954 that changed the status of the Molina Addition from unincorporated territory into a neighborhood within Corpus Christi's city limits. This chapter sets the tone for the relationship that Molina would have with its host city for the decades that followed. After a failed election campaign in September of that year that had portrayed annexation of the neighborhood as beneficial to all, city officials initiated a second campaign that portrayed Molina Addition residents as deserving of conquest based on their supposed backwardness, filth, and criminality. The second campaign was successful and the city consequently absorbed the neighborhood. Chapter 2, "The West Oso School Board Revolution," explores the transformation of the Molina-area school district from a segregated, rural Anglo-dominated political juggernaut into a community-run, minority-dominated school district from 1954 to the late 1960s. This chapter presents an example of black-brown coalition building that eventually resulted in the election of the district's first African American school board president by a mostly ethnic Mexican school board. The third and final chapter, "Building Mo-Town, Texas," details residents' struggle, with

[11] Alan Lessoff, *Where Texas Meets the Sea: Corpus Christi & Its History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 14.

some help from liberal Anglos who represented religious institutions, for infrastructure improvements from the time of annexation to 1970. Within those years, African American and ethnic Mexican residents transformed the isolated and neglected neighborhood physically and culturally. To them, the neighborhood was no longer the Molina Addition but Mo-Town, Texas, an unofficial town within a town.

Altogether, this thesis complicates the historiography of black-brown relations in Texas. Historians such as Brian Behnken and Neil Foley dwell on the lack of Texas-wide interracial unity among ethnic Mexicans and African Americans, which they attribute to cultural dissimilarities, geographic distance, class distinctions, and political affiliation.[12] On the other hand, historian Max Krochmal seeks to abandon the assumption that ethnic Mexicans and African Americans should have worked together simply because of their common experiences of Anglo oppression. Instead, Krochmal looks to the shop floor where race intersected and the question of the "presumed alliance," flips. "Instead of why black and brown activists did *not* unite," he writes, "scholars must probe why, on occasion, they *did*."[13] The story of the Molina Addition presents a unique example of interracial unity in which both ethnic Mexicans and African Americans lived without the chasms that Behnken and Foley argue had stunted biracial coalitions and offers an extra dimension to Krochmal's analysis of inter-group unity that takes place outside of the shop floor. I argue that similar to the workplace, cross-racial unity in the

[12] Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1-12; Neil Foley, *Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 19-21.

[13] Max Krochmal, review of Brian D. Behnken, ed., *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), in *Journal of American History* Vol. 99, no. 4 (December 2012): 992-993; Max Krochmal, "Chicano Labor and Multiracial Politics in Post-World War II Texas: Two Case Studies," in Robert H. Zieger, ed., *Life and Labor in the New South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 133-176.

Corpus Christi neighborhood was a feasible first step toward making gains that both groups agreed were mutually beneficial based on their similar day-to-day experiences as residents of the same community.

The Molina Addition remains an under-studied community in the historical discourse. It has its place in history as the home of slain Tejano music star Selena Quintanilla and as one of the sites of Dr. Héctor P. García's toughest struggles for social justice. Aside from those two persons of interest, very little has been told about the Molina Addition's history. Inaccurate assumptions and upsetting omissions of its history prevail in scholarly works. For example, historians commonly refer to the neighborhood as a purely Mexican American despite the strong African American presence since its inception.[14] Granted, historians' treatment of the neighborhood is sincere and their shortcomings do not derive from a blatant attempt to omit details about the neighborhood's history or demographic makeup. The problem stems from the dearth of primary source material.

In 1965, an African American West Oso ISD school board member motioned for a new policy that called for the district to maintain a file of all community organizations and clubs that met on and off school property. That motion did not carry.[15] In a 1977 master's thesis that examined the 1970 Neighborhood Development Program in the Molina Addition, the author explained at the time of his writing that very little documentation had existed and the lack of a

[14] For example, see, Deborah Paredez, *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Ignacio M. García, *Héctor P. García: In Relentless Pursuit of Justice* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2002); and Lessoff, *Where Texas Meets the Sea*.

[15] Minutes of the West Oso Independent School District School Board, October 14, 1965, West Oso Independent School District Administration Office, Corpus Christi, Texas (hereafter cited as Minutes, West Oso ISD).

centralized archive problematized his narrative.[16] Additionally, Hurricane Celia of 1970 devastated the neighborhood and erased private collections of families across the neighborhood. Lastly, the many activists who resided in the area and maintained group files have since passed away and records have gone missing. Finding primary source material to tell the story of Molina demands much more than a few visits to the local city and university archives.

Using newspapers to fashion a timeline of Molina's history, I turn to school board minutes, yearbooks, correspondences, local publications, personal collections, maps, photographs, and oral history interviews to complicate the narrative. Indeed, the most insightful were oral history interviews. Although the narrators in the interviews conducted in the 21st century had been children, adolescents, or young adults in the 1950s and 1960s, their oral histories opened a window into the social world of Molina youth during a formative period in the neighborhood's history. Stories of black and brown parents uniting to work against the city or school district, reminiscences of black and brown neighborhood youth getting together to play baseball near the hazardous caliche pit, or recollections of the neighborhood's lack of basic amenities takes readers on the scenic route of the Molina Addition story from the youth perspective between the years 1954 and 1970.[17] Many narrators expressed a heartfelt attachment to the neighborhood, which offered a raw and honest testimony of the community when they described times of abundance and poverty, of violence and peace, and of failure and success. Narrators constructed a collective memory of post-WWII Molina that offered more substance than paper documents could. In other words, these oral histories humanized the story of a unique

[16] Marion F. Brown, "The Neighborhood Improvement Program in the Molina Subdivision of Corpus Christi, Texas," (master's thesis, Texas A and I University at Corpus Christi, Texas, 1977).

[17] Caliche (pronounced ka-lee'-chee) is a clay and soil mixture used as a substitute for dirt on rural roads. It is extracted from beneath the top layer of sediment, leaving behind deep pits that regularly flooded with rainwater.

intersectional neighborhood that is often told through shoddy impersonal narratives at best or through disparaging descriptions at worst.

Like narrators' recollections of the neighborhood, the history of the Molina Addition is not devoid of interracial conflict or failure after unity had been realized; in fact, even intra-organizational disputes over the neighborhood's future within local chapters of groups like the American GI Forum were just as common. Additionally, gruesome violence and accompanying death manifested in the neighborhood, often due to outside factors like the city's neglect and other times were due to personal quarrels that escalated quickly. Sometimes, bloody violence in the community resulted from "friendly arguments" between close friends. In other less-violent cases, lifelong friendships had ended dramatically with borrowed music records and furniture having been dumped on ex-friends' doorsteps following emotional political disputes.[18]

For some oral history narrators, their stories were too difficult to tell in their entirety. They were decades-old memories that continued to hurt years after they had been created. Tears and requests to pause recording equipment often marked the end of a sentence or the discussion of a certain topic altogether. Other memories were like thick scars, impenetrable to the curious student of history. Talkative participants' moods flipped from nostalgic to somber when the topics of violence and poverty arose. As historian Jonathon Scott Holloway writes, "The misshapen edges of the scar, its keloid surface, and the way one's fingers absentmindedly trace the original injury affect the retelling of the story that led to the cut in the first place."[19] For other narrators, certain memories of living the Molina Addition in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were

[18] "'Friendly' Argument," *Corpus Christi Caller Times,* April 18, 1955; Nick Jiménez, "West Oso employees fear losing jobs," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 26, 1977.

[19] Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory & Identity in Black America since 1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 5.

too traumatic to revisit altogether. These omissions, however, supplement the story of a community that had faced injustice for most of its history with occasional moments of triumph.

Like narrators' recollections of the neighborhood, the story of the Molina Addition continues beyond the year 1970. Jim Crow and Juan Crow's echoes resonated loudly for the remainder of the twentieth century. Sadly, much of the progress made in the 1960s had been reversed by the middle 1990s. Despite having overcome much of the discriminatory policies established by Anglo Corpus Christi city councilors and West Oso school board trustees in the 1940s and 1950s, the legacy of segregation and racism that had initially isolated a large number of Corpus Christi's minority residents continued to haunt the neighborhood. Even those of my generation born at the end of the Cold War in the Molina area attended the very same dilapidated elementary school in the Molina Addition that had once been called the West Oso Negro School, which by that time was Carl Allen Elementary. Many of us recall the flooded classrooms, the summer free lunch program, the vermin infestations, and the hazardous playground equipment that defined our elementary school experiences. And although the era of legal segregation is now over, racialized "code words" still remind the city of who resides in that purportedly dangerous neighborhood.[20] Nonetheless, the events that unfolded in the years from 1954 to 1970 in Corpus Christi and its west side reveal how institutionalized urban racism afflicted a community that sought to move beyond its constraints and how that community triumphed, even if for just a short moment in its long history of struggle.

[20] Hilton, interview with author; 2014; Gilda G. Medina, interview with author, Round Rock, Texas, March 2, 2015; Victor Treviño, interview with author, Corpus Christi, Texas, March 18-19, 2015.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONQUEST OF THE FRINGES: CORPUS CHRISTI'S ANNEXATION OF THE MOLINA ADDITION, 1954

The city of Corpus Christi lies in the Gulf-Coast region of Texas, approximately 160 miles north of the United States-Mexico border. As in any city, residents' political orientation and their performance of the Corpus Christian identity depends on their understanding of the city's history. In the mid twentieth century, the city expressed its identity through physical structures that commemorated historic events that occurred in the region. To this day, Confederate war memorials are scattered across the downtown district while abundant frontier imagery—high school mascots, street names, and business advertisements—highlights the city's role in the formation of Texas as a state and cultural icon in the era of American Westward Expansion.[1]

The prevailing regional symbolism in Corpus Christi is problematic because it pays tribute to the racial subjugation that transpired in the area following its conquest. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur explains, "What makes a monument suspect, even though it often is found *in situ,* is its obvious finality, its commemoration of events that its contemporaries—especially the most powerful among them—judged worthy of being integrated into the collective memory."[2] Monuments erected in Corpus Christi in the twentieth century were thus a symbolic

[1] Alan Lessoff, "A Texas City and the Texas Myth: Urban Historical Identity in Corpus Christi," in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* January 1997, 304-329; Alan Lessoff, "Public Sculpture in Corpus Christi: A Tangled Struggle to Define the Character and Shape the Agenda of One Texas City," in *Journal of Urban History* 26 (2000): 190.

[2] Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces," in *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art,* edited by Charles Merewether (Whitechapel: The MIT Press, 2006), 68.

reaffirmation of Anglo supremacy over the inhabitants of the physical spaces that were acquired through state sanctioned violence in the 1800s.[3]

As beneficiaries of conquest, city elites in the twentieth century exploited their inherited authority to dictate the use of physical space according to their desires. The city's regional-historic identity, honored by Confederate statues and frontier iconography, encouraged Anglo city planners to enforce residential segregation patterns according to race: ethnic Mexicans historically inhabited the west side of the city while African Americans resided in the north.[4]

The Molina Addition in the far west side, just outside of the town's then city limits, however, housed both ethnic Mexicans and African American residents and has remained a socially and politically marginalized community since its creation in the 1940s.[5] Evidence suggests that most Molina residents during the 1940s and the 1950s worked either in agriculture or in the gas and oil industry.[6] When the Paul Cox Land Company had owned the territory, it leased half-built homes and materials needed to complete home construction on their own to ethnic Mexican and African American workers, many of whom were returning World War II and

[3] Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West,* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 21.

[4] David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 218n3; Alan Lessoff, "Harland Bartholomew and Corpus Christi: The Faltering Pursuit of Comprehensive Planning in South Texas," in *Planning Perspectives* 18 (2003), 202; David Louzon, "Corpus Christi's Galvan Ballroom: Music and Multiculturalism in the 1950s," in *African Americans in South Texas History*, ed. Bruce Glasrud, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 264.

[5] The neighborhood was bordered by Rabbit Run Road (now Columbia Road), Horne Road, Old Brownsville Road, and Lexington Boulevard (now Texas State Highway 358). A 1940 Census map shows no indication that the Molina Addition existed as a neighborhood at the time of the survey.

[6] Georganna Mitchell, "School in Molina Has Outstanding Record," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 25, 1954; Mitchell, "Local Couple Helps Wetback to New Life," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 3, 1954; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 121-123, 136-137; Lessoff, "Harland Bartholomew and Corpus Christi," *Planning Perspectives*, 205.

Korean War veterans.[7] In October 1954, the city of Corpus Christi elected to annex the Molina Addition without the consent of its residents. The annexation was one of the multiple historical events in the 1900s that reinforced Corpus Christi's position as an ongoing battleground between the victors and the vanquished of Northern Mexico's conquest during the era of Westward Expansion.[8]

In three parts, this chapter scrutinizes the language employed in local publications over the course of the city's annexation campaign. In the era of outward suburbanization from the central city, Corpus Christi planned to contain suburbia within its city limits rather than in its surrounding areas as in other Texas cities. By strictly limiting analysis to the region's print culture, this chapter demonstrates that the elite-driven pro-annexation campaign succeeded because of its persistent evocations of Manifest Destiny, a pillar of the city's identity. To Corpus Christians, the frontier was an evolving American myth that extended to the twentieth century. Through the language in local publications that repetitively utilized frontier tropes to justify annexation, city elites persuaded its electorate, most of whom were Anglo, that they were agents of westward expansion and were predestined to acquire land inhabited by nonwhites just as their ancestors had.[9]

2.1 Corpus Christi: An Intersection of Regional Identities

[7] "Fillings," *La Verdad*, Corpus Christi, Texas, November 26, 1954; Oral History Interview with David Noyola, interview with José Ángel Gutiérrez, June 14, 1997, CMAS No. 97.

[8] Lessoff, *Where Texas Meets the Sea*, 5.

[9] Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 3.

The popularity of Western films and novels swept across the American cultural landscape in the 1950s like the American pioneers who traversed westward a century before.[10] In the 1950s, major media outlets all seemed to have collectively recognized Americans' nostalgia for a scenic world where courageous white frontiersmen triumphed over the perils that a virgin land and its natives presented. White Americans, mostly men and boys, lived vicariously through Western fiction's protagonists because, despite the picturesque images of the 1950s that still abound, the era was one of anxiety and fear.[11] As an issue of *Life* deemed 1954 the year of "the domestication of the American man," Westerns supposedly offered male consumers the adequate channels of imaginary escape from the so-called emasculating domestication that came with suburbanization and a changing economy.[12] John G. Cawelti explains, "Americans love to think of themselves as pioneers, men who have conquered a continent and sired on it a new society. This radical discrepancy between the sense of eroding masculinity and the view of America as a great history of men against the wilderness has created the need for a means of symbolic expression of [Anglo] masculine potency in an unmistakable way."[13]

In Corpus Christi, this attraction to Western fiction influenced how residents understood their city's history. A gleaming example of this sentiment is the *Centennial History of Corpus Christi*, published by the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* in 1952. The author dedicated the book to "those pioneers who carved a settlement from the wilderness and helped bring law and order to a

[10] John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 39.

[11] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170.

[12] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 181-182.

[13] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 39.

wild frontier." It tells the story of Corpus Christi's progress from its humble beginnings as a "town without a country" in the nineteenth century that had triumphed over the Mexican bandits and cattle rustlers to build a modern city that eventually served as a "port and playground in South Texas." Through it all, the city remained "rich in the lore of Texas."[14] The text is entrenched in the expansionist philosophy and argued that progress according to the needs of the white population defined the city's identity.

Cawelti explains in his analysis of Western fictions that the idea of progress was a common trope that symbolized the modification of the "savage wilderness" into a beacon of civilization. He writes, "The redefinition of the frontier as a place where advancing civilization met a declining savagery changed the frontier setting into a locus of conflicts which were always qualified and contained by the knowledge that the advance of civilization would eliminate them."[15] Westerns focused on the cultural clash between the agents of progress and civilization and their antithesis, the allegedly silent but deadly Indians and outlaws who inhabited the frontier.[16]

The Centennial History of Corpus Christi is unsurprisingly devoid of an analysis on contemporary conflicts except for a single paragraph that vaguely addresses "some traditional [and] a few peculiar" problems that the city faced at the time. Without providing much detail, it merely explained that the Area Development Committee of the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce, composed of business and civic leaders from "all walks of life," was in the process of addressing the city's "many problems." Residents later learned that the solution to those

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[14] Anonymous, *Centennial History of Corpus Christi* (Corpus Christi: The Corpus Christi Caller-Times, 1952), 1, 13.

[15] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 22.

[16] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 23.

problems entailed the annexation and clearance of the city's fringe communities, which, to them, was justified by the frontier spirit that built their city in the middle 1800s.[17] Considering the racial tensions, the Western genre's crossover from fiction to city planning counters Cawelti's point that popular genres were merely ways in which "individuals in a culture act out certain unconscious or repressed needs, or express in an overt and symbolic fashion certain latent motives they must give expression to, but cannot face openly."[18] Anglo males did not relieve their frustrations purely through fantasy; they unleashed their racially charged tensions through actions that extended the nineteenth-century conquest mentality.

Historian Rodolfo F. Acuña explains that the 1950s was the "decade of defense" for minorities in the United States.[19] Property owners brutally exploited and displaced laborers, and gentrified their communities. The militarization of the border threatened Mexican immigrants with violence and the mass deportations during Operation Wetback of 1954 that repatriated Mexican nationals and deported Americans of Mexican origin. American control of the U.S.-Mexico border had solidified through state-sponsored violence.[20] Historian Kelly Lytle Hernández explains that Operation Wetback signaled the beginning of the "carceral era," when "crime and punishment were emerging as primary ways of understanding and managing social problems," which affected the black community nationwide as the civil rights movement bourgeoned and developed through the 1960s.[21] Furthermore, in South Texas, the intersection of

[17] Anonymous, *Centennial History of Corpus Christi*, 133.

[18] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 18.

[19] Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos,* 7th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2011), 263.

[20] Acuña, *Occupied America,* 263; Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 169.

[21] Lytle Hernández, *Migra!,* 170.

regional identities that Anglo Texans adopted for themselves reified the threat of violence against minorities. As a state founded on the conquest of Northern Mexico that subsequently joined the Confederacy during the Civil War, Texas remained a hostile place for both ethnic Mexicans and black Americans a century after those events had ended.

Corpus Christi is a city whose identity in a Borderlands state with a Confederate past intensified in the 1950s. Just as Howard Zinn described the American South as the "essence of the nation," Corpus Christi contained "in concentrated and dangerous form a set of characteristics" that marked the state as a whole.[22] Racial discrimination limited the black and ethnic Mexican population's freedom to navigate the city, and housing segregation isolated them in the neglected slums during the first half of the twentieth century.

By the U.S.'s entry into World War II, blacks and ethnic Mexicans quickly took up employment in developing industries as agriculture rapidly mechanized.[23] After the War, help-wanted ads regularly sought "Negro or Latin American" workers to perform menial, unskilled tasks.[24] With the city's industrialization that attracted ethnic Mexican workers, Anglo Corpus Christians began "to recall with nostalgia the pristine whiteness of Texas before the Mexicans came, when the whitest people could be found on the blackest land."[25] As a racialized pool of cheap labor, city Anglos viewed ethnic Mexicans as they did "the Negro before the [Civil] war,

[22] Howard Zinn, *The Southern Mystique*, 5th ed. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), 218.

[23] Foley, *The White Scourge*, 122-138; Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 181-203; Russell Lee Photograph Collection, 1935-1977, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

[24] One such example: *Corpus Christi Times*, "Negro OR Latin American cook wanted," September 3, 1953.

[25] Foley, *The White Scourge*, 204.

to be cuffed about and used as an inferior people," while Jim Crow practices continued to oppress the city's black population.[26]

The Molina Addition was consequently a "borderhood," a meeting ground and a shared space between the city's two oppressed populations, both of whom were victims of the "Crow Cousins."[27] Most of Molina's roads were unpaved. Running water was limited to one tap per twelve or more households, and the majority of homes were without electricity. By the middle 1950s, due to insufficient running water facilities, the neighborhood became a breeding ground for diseases that claimed the lives of many residents.[28] Additionally, a small Corpus Christi city landfill was adjacent to the neighborhood.[29] One city planning consultant observed in the early 1950s that Molina was "blighted at its inception" and deemed it obsolete and substandard.[30]

Throughout the 1950s, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* advertised Molina Addition homes and jobs specifically for "Negroes OR Latin Americans."[31] The geography of the Molina

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[26] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836 - 1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 231; I use "racialization" as defined by Michael Omi and Howard Winant: "Race is a concept, a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the meanings and social practices that are ascribed to these differences." Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 111.

[27] Albert M. Camarillo defines a "borderhood" as a hybrid term that "borrows from the literature that describes and conceptualizes 'borderlands': geographical areas where social, cultural, and political forces shape the lives of various groups within bounded or bordered spaces. It also borrows from the term *hood*, used in popular cultural discourses over the past generation in reference to African American inner-city neighborhoods." Additionally, Camarillo refers to the "Crow cousins," one of which is the Jim Crow laws that marginalized blacks in the South and the Jaime Crow social practices that marginalized ethnic Mexicans in the Southwest. Albert M. Camarillo, "Navigating Segregated Life in America's Racial Borderhoods, 1910s-1950s," in *The Journal of American History*, (December 2013), 649-650.

[28] García, *Héctor P. García*, 77-79.

[29] "New Health Law Charges Reported," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 17, 1951.

[30] Lessoff, "Harland Bartholomew and Corpus Christi," *Planning Perspectives*, 205.

[31] *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, Classifieds, September 25, 1953; *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, Classifieds, December 8, 1955.

Addition itself was a racialized space since its inception. Mirroring Stephanie Lewthwaite's observation of early twentieth century residential segregation in Los Angeles, Molina Addition residents' marginalization was "legitimized by the categories of difference that became embedded in the landscape and the people who inhabited it."[32] As a slum populated by two socially "Othered" peoples, Molina was isolated from the city's white middle-class neighborhoods and suburbs, which in turn "translated spatial distinctions in the city into racial and cultural hierarchies."[33] Additionally, at a time when Mexican Americans slowly filtered into the middle-class, especially in Corpus Christi, "Euro-Americans condescendingly viewed the culture of the *barrio* [Mexican neighborhoods] as seditious, threatening, and rebellious," explains David R. Díaz. He continues, "*El barrio* [presented] a challenge to the social identity of Euro-Americans" who were accustomed to controlling the city's politically marginalized constituencies—blacks and Mexicans—for over a hundred years.[34]

In columns and articles, local newspapers participated in efforts to further racialize those spaces. For example, On August 3, 1954, the *Corpus Christi Times* published an article titled, "Local Couple Helps Wetback to New Life." The article tells the story of one Mexican "wetback," Gerónimo Jiménez, who was hired by Alex Cox of the Paul Cox Land Company as a repairperson.[35] After having been an employee of the company for some time, Jiménez eventually built his home in Molina with material that Cox advanced. In other words, not only

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[32] Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles: A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 1.

[33] Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles*, 36.

[34] David R. Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 54.

[35] "Wetback" is a derogatory term for Mexicans, whether they are American citizens or undocumented immigrants.

was Jiménez racially stigmatized, he was indebted as an employee who worked for and lived on property owned by the Paul Cox Land Company.

Of course, the *Times* did its best to portray Jiménez's story in a positive light. The writer buttressed the myth that hard work and persistence yielded home ownership, the realization of "the American Dream." Yet, institutional and systematic racism, coupled with desperation for housing and employment, forced many Mexicans and blacks into debt like Jiménez. Although he apparently came to own his home and became debt free, Jiménez was an exception. In reality, the article implicitly reveals the plight of countless minority workers who experienced crippling debt. Residents' extreme poverty and non-whiteness therefore led Corpus Christi Anglos to solidify their view that the Molina Addition was an inferior space.

The city's first attempt to annex the Molina Addition, which at that time only consisted of a few homes on two streets, came in 1945 when residents of an unincorporated territory west of Port Avenue and south of Agnes Street, an area inhabited predominantly by ethnic Mexicans that included the Molina Addition, launched an incorporation effort to establish the city of Westport. The incorporation campaign was short-lived and ended when Corpus Christi immediately absorbed Westport. Texas annexation laws limited the space that a city could legally annex at a single time, which left Molina as unincorporated territory since it lay beyond the city's legal annexation limits. However, the annexation of Westport resulted in the instantaneous increase of the city's ethnic Mexican population, a population that later played a significant part in the Molina annexation dispute nine years later.

2.2 "Annexation—Good for everybody!"

Historian Alan Lessoff explains that Corpus Christi officials considered expanding the city limits when Harland Bartholomew and Associates (HBA) presented them a new comprehensive city plan. HBA conducted rigorous research on the city beginning in the 1940s and believed Corpus Christi to have been an "attractive and progressive place" based on its rapid urbanization following the growing petrochemical and military industries. Rapid industrialization, however, prompted the city to neglect minority residential areas, which concerned HBA. The 1953 city master plan strongly advised that the city expand its borders and address the overwhelming need in the Molina Addition with "redevelopment"—slum clearance and middle-class suburban development—rather than "rehabilitation," (see *Figure B.4*).[36] To redevelop the neighborhood, it first had to be within the city's limits.

The *Corpus Christi Times* announced on September 1, 1954, the city's plans to annex the area west of its existing borders, which included Molina and a middle-class suburb miles north of Molina called Ebony Acres (see *Figure B.2*).[37] With the annexation of the 5,500-acre area would come a $4.1 million price tag, most of which was earmarked to bring Molina homes up to city code. The bond issue, exclusively voted on by property owners, would provide Molina a new sewage disposal system, a network of sewer lines, street improvements, drainage, a fire station, and street traffic controls. The election was set for September 25, 1954.[38] The campaign in the following month portrayed the annexation as helpful to its minority residents.

[36] Lessoff, "Harland Bartholomew and Corpus Christi," *Planning Perspectives*, 199.

[37] The city also announced the proposed annexation of a suburban area south of the city's borders. The southern area, a predominantly white neighborhood, was not central to the annexation conflict.

[38] "Council to Set Annexation Vote," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 1, 1954.

The *Caller-Times* published on September 19 an editorial titled, "Annexation and Bonds Should be Voted."[39] Arguing that conditions in the Molina Addition posed problems for the city and for "the people who live and raise their families in the environment of poor housing and unsanitary conditions," the author claimed that annexing the area would benefit the city as a whole. "When money is provided," argued the author, "beautiful parkways, built over underground storm sewers replace unsightly and hazardous drainage ditches" like those in the slums. Through annexation, Molina residents would experience the "*full standards of citizenship,*" which implied an awareness on the author's behalf of the second-class treatment received by residents of the area. The editorial employed frontier rhetoric by having subtly reproduced the notion that the expansion of civilization and the alteration of the landscape were certain. But unlike the version of Manifest Destiny that readers were accustomed to, it argued that predestined "progress" was inclusive of all residents. Voting against annexation, the author argued, would "represent only an evasion of the inevitable." That is, the growth and expansion as a uniform city toward what it "rightfully should have within its corporate limits by 1975." That day, the city released a statement asking citizens to support both the annexation and bond issues, arguing that annexation would be in the best interest of the greatest number of people.[40]

On September 20, the *Times* featured its first paid pro-annexation advertisement. Prior to then, no publication featured any overt pro-annexation propaganda. Local papers had only published the previous day's editorial and reported on organizations that supported annexation, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Better Government League, the Citizens Council (not to be confused with the White Citizens Council), and Women for Better Government. The first

[39] "Annexation and Bonds Should be Voted," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* September 19, 1954.

[40] "City Asks Annexation Support," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* September 19, 1954.

allusion to an organization that opposed city expansion appeared that day in an article titled, "Public Debate set on Annexation Issue." The article announced that a public discussion was set for that night at the local YMCA between businessperson Paul Vogler and his West Side Taxpayers League who opposed annexation, and Dale Owen of the Zoning and Planning Commission (ZPC).

The first ad that favored annexation portrayed an illustration of a young, white, seemingly middle-class couple standing against the backdrop of a Corpus Christi map that highlighted proposed annexation sites. The ad read, "Annexation—Good for Everybody!" (see *Figure A.1*) and listed three bullet points, "Good for Corpus Christi," "Good for Annexed Areas," and "The Only Way."[41] A list of the improvements that Molina residents would see was listed under the "Good for Annexed Areas" bullet point, which included police and fire protection, lower insurance rates, garbage collection services, property value protection, and sanitary controls. "The Only Way" explained, "There isn't any other way for people living in those areas to receive full city services. The bond issue is necessary to provide them with those services quickly." The *Times*'s first advertisement was a clear attempt to invoke a sense of sympathy among its readers toward the area's most destitute community.

On September 22, the *Times* featured the same advertisement but with some minor alterations. Rather than "Annexation--Good for Everybody!" the ad read, "Corpus Christi Needs Room to Grow." It listed some statistics meant to induce a sense of municipal claustrophobia among city dwellers: "Corpus Christi's population increased from 10,522 in 1920 to 108,053 in 1950. Now it is at least 132,000. During the same period, its area was increased more than 350

[41] Advertisement, "Build a City to be Proud Of!" *Corpus Christi Times*, September 20, 1954.

percent, but there still isn't room enough."[42] Two bullet points also changed to "We've Outgrown our Boundaries," and "No Controls outside City," while the third remained "The Only Way."

The first point's subtitle explained that a quarter of all Corpus Christi's development lay outside of its then city limits. The second point explained that the only thing that separated Molina from the city was an imaginary line, but was otherwise "really part of Corpus Christi now." It then proclaimed that Molina residents "should have the same sanitary and health controls" as those living within the official city boundaries. The third point explained that the annexation of Molina was inevitable, and that the "longer we wait, the more it will cost." The second ad's tone slightly departed from the first in that it revealed on behalf of city officials a growing sense of anxiety with each passing day. This anxiety became very clear by the third ad, published on September 23.

The ad featured the same illustration as the first two, but it was renamed to "Remember Westport!"[43] Reminding readers that Westport had developed poorly prior to annexation, the ad demanded that voters "Don't let it happen again" because the city was still paying for its overdue annexation. Admitting that the death rate from infant diarrhea had reportedly dropped "amazingly" since the absorption of Westport, it argued that the longer the city waited to annex Molina, the more costly it would be, financially and in terms of human lives.

The September 24 issue of the *Corpus Christi Times* ran two ads that supported annexation and one that opposed. The first of the two featured the same graphic as before. The second ad, paid for by the South Texas Home Builders Association (see *Figure A.2*), explained

[42] Advertisement, "Build a City to be Proud Of!" *Corpus Christi Times*, September 22, 1954.

[43] Advertisement, "Build a City to be Proud Of!" *Corpus Christi Times*, September 23, 1954.

that through annexation, residents "can keep on building a city we can all be proud of," alluding to the ad that the papers had printed the previous week. Additionally, the entertainment section advertised a special radio broadcast titled, "Find out why annexation is good for everybody!" hosted by the Chairman of the ZPC, Dale Owen. The city elite's goal was to arouse their readership's sympathy for residents of the proposed annexation sites.

The anti-annexation ad, paid for by the Corpus Christi Voters League (CCLV), titled "Are We Ready?" (*Figure A.3*) displayed photographs of a dilapidated Westport as evidence of the city's negligence since 1945. The ad argued that "we," Westport residents, still had no water and had not seen any improvements. It did not specify which other improvements were yet to be seen. It is worth noting that similar to the pro-annexation ads, the Voters League ad attempted to arouse sympathy. By claiming that "we" had not yet seen any improvements, the CCLV sought to draw the same emotional response from voters that the pro-annexation organizations had attempted to draw in their campaign.

The seemingly sympathetic language in September's papers does not suggest that the city had departed from its racist past. That the newspapers' coverage of the annexation issue was devoid of any voice from the racialized Molina Addition speaks to the city's insouciance about its residents' concerns. In fact, the city conveniently cited a Texas state law that prohibited residents of a proposed annexation site from voting in the election that would seal their fate as a community. The city did not disclose, however, that banning fringe residents from voting was only one way that a city could legally annex an area. A second was to gain *ten percent* of fringe residents' support to join a municipality. The city had the option of allowing fringe residents to

vote but they predicted unfavorable results. The city deliberately chose to ignore their voices altogether.[44]

The election took place on Saturday September 25, 1954. The city's larger-Anglo majority precincts in the south side and downtown areas reported the highest turnout. On September 26, the *Caller-Times* reported that the annexation issues lost but that most bonds passed.[45] However, "the killing of the two annexation proposals nullified, in effect, the passing of the improvement bonds." Annexation was defeated, but voters gave ballot approval to the use of $4 million of taxpayers' money to construct a sanitary sewer system and the issuing of street improvement and fire station bonds in the areas on the ballot for annexation. Surprised by the seemingly contradictory results, Owen claimed, "It is apparent that our position was not made clear and that a certain amount of confusion exists regarding the annexation proposals." Former Mayor Albert Lichtenstein, on the other hand, claimed to have known why the annexation proposal failed while improvement bonds passed. He accused Westport's ethnic Mexican voters of having sabotaged the city's plans.

The September campaign's rhetoric called for citywide cooperation with fringe residents. This strategy was incompatible with Anglo voters' conservative sentiments during a decade of intensifying racial tension. Because of how they understood their city history, residents viewed themselves as frontier people who conquered, not cooperated. City officials would have seen more success by appealing to that frontier identity, which entailed a pursuit of progress that could only come at the cost of the menacing "Other." This notion of progress was a common

[44] Dr. Héctor P. García, Address to Mayor of the City of Corpus Christi, P.C. Callaway, and the Corpus Christi City Council, October 7, 1954. Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 1.24; Staff of the Texas Legislative Council on Municipal Annexation, 53rd Legislature of Texas, Austin, Texas, September 1954,14-15.

[45] "Both Annexation Issues Lose; Most Bonds Pass, But Improvements Void, Says Callaway," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 26, 1954.

trope in the Western genre, Cawelti explains.[46] When Ebony Acres's Paul Vogler and his group filed a petition on September 29 for the incorporation of the western area into a new municipality called West Corpus Christi that included Molina, the city saw an opportunity to employ such an aggressive rhetorical strategy to sway voters in favor of annexing the coveted area.

2.3 "Meet Your Neighbor!"

After Vogler submitted a petition to incorporate West Corpus Christi, the Corpus Christi City Council held an unannounced special session. They resubmitted the question of annexation to the electorate at the request of former Mayor Albert Lichtenstein, one of the city's prominent land and business owners and member of the local Citizens' Council. The election was set for Tuesday, October 26. Newspaper advertisements, in addition to ignoring Molina residents' desires, portrayed Molina residents as a faceless public "menace" that was to be neutralized and conquered before it disrupted the controlled progress the city believed it was predestined to achieve.

On September 30 the *Times* reported, "Obviously, the call of the council today was aimed at countering a move on the part of some west side petitioners for a special election on incorporation of the western area proposed for annexation as a separate municipality."[47] The article reported that State Representative Curtis Ford contacted Vogler and requested that he withdraw the petition. Vogler refused. The article quoted Vogler's explanation for having filed the petition for an incorporation election, which was "to protect the best interests of all

[46] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 45.

[47] "New Annexation Vote Set Oct. 26: City Attempts Expansion Again," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 30, 1954.

concerned," and that he designed the petition "to protect the west side area against unwanted inclusion." However, Vogler made the questionable decision of having offered the city an opportunity to compromise had they agreed to meet with him in a "secret session."

City Commissioner J.S. Naismith accused Vogler of "hiding behind a public welfare cause when actually [Vogler's] motives were for private and personal gain in fighting the proposed annexation." The accusation that Vogler, a private contractor, was acting in self-interest was certainly plausible. Local attorney Farrell Smith repeated the accusation and added, "While it may not be contemplated at present, such fringe area municipalities could move to annex the [unincorporated] industrial area in the future," which included a large number of the gas and oil refineries in the north side. Smith claimed that such "municipalities could grab control of the water now flowing down the Nueces [River] and force the city to deal with them for water."[48] Adding to the fear that Corpus Christians may engage in a conflict for water with a neighboring municipality, Mayor Pro Tem Elroy King said that to guarantee sufficient water for the city, it must annex West Corpus Christi immediately.[49] In fact, the city's intent to quickly absorb the west side was actually to undermine Vogler's legal petition, which had the authority to incorporate West Corpus Christi according to Texas law.[50] Sensationalizing the potential water dispute between neighboring municipalities was one scare tactic that city elites employed in the month of October. The most successful tactic, however, was the portrayal of the fringes as an external threat.

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[48] "Exchange Club Comes Out for Annexation," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 7, 1954.

[49] "BGL Denies Being Chief Backer of Annexation," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 19, 1954.

[50] Staff of the Texas Legislative Council on Municipal Annexation, 53rd Legislature of Texas, Austin, Texas, September 1954, 14-15.

A major tenet of the western frontier myth replicated in Western fictions held that towns had to defend themselves from threats that supposedly originated outside of the surveilled town. Cawelti explains that in Westerns, the town did not symbolize an isolated fort in a hostile country, but the "advance guard of an oncoming civilization." The openness around the town served both as a haven of lawlessness and savagery in Westerns, just as the October annexation ads had portrayed the city in relation to the fringes.[51] Cawelti explains this common trope in Westerns:

> The ideals of progress and success had no room for those who didn't make it. Americans…did not acknowledge the costs and ambiguities of progress and success. Faith in the guiding hand of divine providence and confidence in the special historical mission of their country assured them that progress and success were benevolent processes. Thus, those individuals who paid the cost, instead of being offered sympathy and compassion, were stigmatized as failures or even as villains. Groups who did not fit in with the general trend of social progress were forced to adjust or be eliminated.[52]

Knowing that residents viewed themselves within the historical trajectory of Manifest Destiny, city officials presented an antagonist that embodied savagery and threatened civilization.[53]

The *Caller-Times* published editorials that looked to other American cities that declined after adjacent territories had incorporated. Cities like Kansas City, El Paso, and St. Louis were "strangled by artificial boundaries" that were erected by surrounding municipalities inhabited by people who "didn't want to pay their taxes" and who relied on those "who earned their living" in the city to pay for its services.[54] Inciting fear with hypotheticals in which "honest taxpayers"

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[51] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 24.

[52] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 51.

[53] Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel,* 35.

[54] For more on the subject of suburbanization in relation to city growth, see Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

were victims of an adjacent municipality's greed had coalesced with Corpus Christians' view that they were already victims in 1954.

One editorial called for the city to halt its fire department service of fringe areas because its residents did not "pay its fair share of fire protection."[55] Others reiterated that October would be the city's last chance to annex fringe areas due to the possibility of Texas State annexation laws changing at the Texas State Legislature scheduled for January 1, 1955. The changes to annexation laws that Corpus Christi elites feared would "require cities to provide the same types of services furnished to the city in general to the areas to be annexed before annexation could become final…If such services were not provided within 18 months, the proposed annexation would become subject to district court action to have the annexation declared null and void." If annexation did not occur in October, warned one article, then Corpus Christi would be confined to its borders indefinitely.[56] This, to Corpus Christi residents, would infringe their "rights" as Americans to live comfortably, making them innocent victims to the faceless menace that threatened their way of life.

Self-victimization depends on the dehumanization of the Other. Rather than having mentioned that people resided in Molina, one ad titled "Meet your Neighbor!" explained that the hog pictured in the ad "and a lot more just like him are your neighbors," (see *Figure A.5*). It continued, "They live just outside the city limits, in the area proposed for annexation."[57] Unlike

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Ed Englebow, "Woes Piled Up on Ascarate After Hurried Incorporation," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* October 3, 1954; "Cost and Failure of Separate City At El Paso Recalled by Builder," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* October 3, 1954; "El Paso's Lesson," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 5, 1954; "St. Louis Lesson," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 13, 1954.

[55] "Use of Fire Funds Outside City Attacked," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 20, 1954.

[56] Jim Greenwood, "Last Chance to Annex?" *Corpus Christi Times,* October 22, 1954.

[57] Advertisement, "Meet Your Neighbor!" *Corpus Christi Times,* October 21, 1954.

the September advertisements that urged the improvement of Molina for the sake of its needy families, the pro-annexation advertisements in October convinced Corpus Christi voters that they were victims of Molina residents' selfishness and filth, embodied by the swine pictured in the ads (see *Figure A.6*).[58]

Another ad described the 800 pit privies that surrounded the city and "threatened the lives of every man, woman, and child in Corpus Christi" as more were built every month (see *Figure A.4*). It explained, "Annexation is the only way that we can get rid of the health menace of pit privies, cow lots and hog pens." By doing so, it could "protect the health of the people against the menace of filth disease."[59] The ads insisted on annexation based on the need for Corpus Christi voters to protect their privilege rather than to raise the standard of living for Molina residents. Interestingly enough, some oral history narrators do not recall pigs or cows in the area, although chickens and geese were common through the years up to 2015.[60]

The demonization of fringe residents began when Lichtenstein blamed leading Mexican American activist Dr. Héctor P. García of having manipulated Corpus Christi's Mexican residents to vote against annexation.[61] Lewthwaite explains that in Los Angeles, "racialized categories placed Mexicans beyond citizenship and modernity by evoking narratives of evolution and progress."[62] By accusing Mexicans of having decided the fate of the city "forevermore,"

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[58] Advertisement, "Don't' HOG-TIE Corpus Christi," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 24, 1954.

[59] Advertisement, "800 Pit Privies Surround Corpus Christi," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 20, 1954.

[60] Medina, interview with author, 2015; Torres, interview with author, 2015; Johnnie Bryant, interview with author, Corpus Christi, Texas, March 19, 2015.

[61] "New Annexation Vote Set Oct. 26: City Attempts Expansion Again," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 30, 1954.

[62] Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles*, 4.

Lichtenstein replicated the same sentiments in Corpus Christi, that Mexicans were incapable of achieving progress and thus hampered it. He personified ethnic Mexicans' unwillingness to progress with Dr. García. Unlike in the frontier myth and in common Western tropes that viewed the savage or outlaw as fading away from the foreground of the story of American progress, ethnic Mexicans in Corpus Christi defied what was expected of them, in Lichtenstein's view, when they purportedly disrupted the city's evolution. Lichtenstein's charges against García signaled the beginning of the scapegoating campaign, which was so successful that it even convinced some Ebony Acres residents to seek annexation.

Some middle-class suburban residents from Ebony Acres published a pro-annexation ad urging Corpus Christi voters to "be [their] voice" and to elect them into the city. The ad listed their reasons for supporting annexation. Among them were, "We do not want to become a dangerous slum area just outside your city," and "We do not want the crime waves and disease epidemics that often accompany such unprotected, uncontrolled growth." Again, Anglo residents, this time from Ebony Acres, viewed Molina as a faceless "menace" worthy of extermination or at the very least, relocation. Ebony Acres residents, though miles away from the Molina slums, felt like they were too close to the dangerous slum dwellers. Their disingenuous opportunistic plea to be voted into the city read as a request for asylum. The ad also listed the names of those who requested annexation. Of the listed 105 names of individuals and businesses that sought annexation, only one was Spanish-surnamed.[63]

A few middle-class Mexican citizens and activists internalized this view without having taken into consideration that filth was not a choice but a condition that the extremely poor were

[63] Advertisement, "We the Undersigned WANT to Become a Part of Corpus Christi," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 25, 1954.

forced into by racist segregation laws, extremely low wages, and property owners' reluctance to improve substandard housing. Even Mexican American activist Dr. Héctor P. García was susceptible to said ideals when he led a "self-help" campaign in the Molina Addition in which he "taught" Molina residents about the dangers of living in filth. With his knowledge that Molina residents had been forced to live with limited access to running water during his "gospel of cleanliness and prevention," Dr. García, in a way, blamed the victims of the city's negligence. [64]

Dr. García was a leading figure of the "Mexican American generation," during which a small but growing Mexican American middle class "emulated the key standards of citizenship as confirmed by the nation's political, legal, and popular culture." To Mexican American middle class leaders in the 1930s to the 1950s, "the ideal *citizen* had been defined as *white, male,* and *willing to serve his country in battle*."[65] Through this loyal subscription to purportedly American ideals, many Mexican American leaders internalized their inferiority and believed that they had to correct it before they could achieve greater access to the American mainstream. Citizenship was a proxy for whiteness, and to become white, one must be both legal and social citizens of the United States.[66] Some Mexican American leaders believed that race was a black/white binary in which they *legally* occupied the white side and that their social marginalization "was seen as a consequence of their inability to adjust to a new society, rather than a blatant effort by

[64] García, *Héctor P. García*, 77-79.

[65] For more on the Mexican American generation, see Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

[66] For more on citizenship and whiteness, see Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), *and* Craig Robertson, "Mechanisms of Exclusion: Historicizing the Archive and the Passport," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, edited by Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

government officials and white citizens to dispossess them of land and political power."[67] Leaders of this generation coped with conquest and subsequent marginalization by adopting American ideals in the hopes of becoming *socially* white.

Historian Ignacio M. García writes, "Mexican Americans could only shed the stigma of their 'otherness' from mainstream society if they participated and proved themselves to be good citizens."[68] Citing George Lipsitz, historian Neil Foley writes that ethnic Mexicans sought to benefit from their "possessive investment in whiteness"; that is, the pursuit of the white classification through their high-spirited claims of American patriotism.[69] Whiteness was possible when they loudly affirmed their identity as patriotic males who were "'clean,' which often was a euphemism for 'white' as well as an allusion to the eugenic maintenance of white 'racial hygiene," explains Foley.[70]

Dr. Héctor P. García became involved in the annexation issue after former Mayor Albert Lichtenstein accused him of having carried "non-property holding" Mexican residents to the polls to "decide the destiny of the city forevermore."[71] The *Caller-Times* published a similar argument on October 3.[72] Yet, there was no evidence of Dr. García's involvement during the month of September. In fact, Dr. García responded to those accusations in an address to city

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[67] Ignacio M. García, *White But Not Equal: Mexican Americans, Jury Discrimination, and the Supreme Court* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 10.

[68] García, *White But Not Equal,* 11.

[69] Foley, *The White Scourge*, 211.

[70] Foley, *The White Scourge,* 41-42.

[71] "García Lays Cards Down to Corpus Christi City Council," *The American GI Forum News Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2,* Austin, Texas, October, 1954; "New Annexation Vote Set Oct. 26: City Attempts Expansion Again," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 30, 1954.

[72] "Civic Spirit," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* October 3, 1954.

council on October 7. He presented his daily log as evidence of having had no involvement with the defeat of the September annexation campaign.

After García detailed his activities from the day of the election, he accused Lichtenstein and his "coalition" with the city council and the *Caller-Times* of having instigated a "class war" by scapegoating the city's "working people." García professed as he looked directly at a "wooden-faced" Lichtenstein, "I would like to say that for a man who did not have enough intestinal fortitude to fight for his political convictions, Albert Lichtenstein is trying to find balm for his still festering political wounds of defeat."[73] García continued, "I need no defense in my behalf since I am not a man who is a weakling, a coward, or a crybaby, but come to the defense of the poor people of the City of Corpus Christi who were slandered by Lichtenstein." One writer noted that García, the city council's "most powerful political antagonist," lacked the "usually belligerent approach" in presenting his protests and instead did so "in a most serene, diplomatic, manner."[74]

Additionally, García read the detailed results of the September campaign to the city council and Lichtenstein. García revealed that most of the votes submitted against annexation came from polling stations in white neighborhoods. He concluded by presenting his conditional support for annexation if the city council appointed a Latin American man to city council and if an inexpensive plumbing plan were introduced to Molina residents that would not force them into deeper debt and losing their homes. [75]

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[73] "Address to Mayor of the City of Corpus Christi, P.C. Callaway, and the Corpus Christi City Council," Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 1.24; Joe. G. Rodríguez, "Dr. García Says He Has No Intention of Blocking Anything," *La Verdad,* October 8, 1954.

[74] Rodríguez, "Dr. García Says He Has No Intention of Blocking Anything," *La Verdad,* October 8, 1954.

[75] "Address to Mayor," October 7, 1954, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 1.24.

After his meeting with the city council, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, *La Verdad,* and *The American GI Forum News Bulletin* all reported on García's address. *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* credited Dr. Héctor P. García as having been the "Latin American political leader who helped defeat the recent annexation election," although García had just explicitly denied his involvement in defeating the city's absorption efforts.[76] An editorial later published in the *Caller-Times* accused García, with his demands for a Latin American city councilor, of "political horse trading."[77] The *Caller-Times*' negative coverage was a response to García's accusations that they were involved in Lichtenstein's coalition.

The *Caller-Times* reported that García had "indicated that there has been evidence that the people cannot trust city officials to carry out their promises" because of the city's "international reputation for not having representation on its City Council for the 40,000 or so local citizens of Mexican origin."[78] *The American GI Forum News Bulletin* indicated, "Citizens of Mexican descent are prone to vote against city improvements because they don't believe they will get any benefit from them."[79] *La Verdad* echoed similar sentiments.[80] Unfortunately, this was one of the only instances that Molina residents' concerns were publicized over the course of the two-month annexation campaign. Another instance of ethnic Mexicans' voicing their distrust

[76] C.W. Carpenter, "Dr. García Names Conditions for Support of Annexation," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 7, 1954.

[77] "Obscuring the Issue," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 8, 1954.

[78] "García Lays Down Terms," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 7, 1954.

[79] "García Lays Cards Down to Corpus Christi City Council," *American G.I. Forum News Bulletin* Vol. 3 No. 2, Austin, Texas, October 1954.

[80] Rodríguez, "Dr. García Says He Has No Intention of Blocking Anything," *La Verdad,* October 8, 1954.

of the city came from *La Verdad*, in which the paper's editor-in-chief accused the city of historically ignoring the needs of the ethnic Mexican population.[81]

Even to the selectively righteous Paul Vogler, Molina residents' interests and needs were not an issue. In an open letter to the residents of the proposed annexation sites, Vogler listed grievances against the "spendthrift City Hall Boys, joined by the special Privilege Boys in the city" who "have their greedy eyes on this area…regardless of our wishes, which we cannot voice." Vogler continued: "working together and holding fast, we can protect our interests as taxpayers." He concluded, "Only division within our ranks can split us. Hold on, for your inherent rights." It is unclear to which neighborhood Vogler distributed his letter. That Vogler was genuinely sympathetic to Molina residents' "inherent rights" remains a mystery.[82] There is no record of Vogler having met with Molina residents or with Dr. García to hear their concerns.[83]

The City of Corpus Christi on the other hand shamelessly dismissed Molina residents altogether. David R. Díaz explains that the 1940s and the 1950s was the "initial era of urban renewal" that had "intensified social tension" in cities across the Southwest. Lichtenstein's accusation that Mexicans decided the fate of the city is one manifestation of escalating social tension. In addition, the city-sponsored ads and the language in its articles blaming the Molina

[81] "Why La Verdad Opposes Annexation," *La Verdad*, October 22, 1954.

[82] West Side Taxpayers, "An Open Letter," October 1954, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 1.22.

[83] The *Caller-Times* had listed the names of the incorporation petition signers; none of the signers had Spanish surnames. Vogler claimed to the judge who oversaw the incorporation case that he personally knew each person who signed the petition. There is no evidence that suggests any of the signers were from Molina, especially considering the near-impenetrable racial barriers in Corpus Christi at the time. Over the month of October, Paul Vogler defended the validity of the petition that he and his group filed after coming under attack by Corpus Christi officials. Mary Gene Kelly, "Paul Vogler Takes Stand at Hearing," The Corpus Christi Times, October 14, 1954.

"menace" of impeding growth underscores that tension. Díaz's observation that infrastructure needs were addressed in barrios when they were connected to the requirements of the regional economy also explains the city's plans to redevelop the fringes, especially Molina.[84] The city recognized that its Anglo residents were ready to move to the suburbs from the inner city where the minority population, especially the Mexican population, was rapidly growing. Thus, the city unveiled its intentions to gentrify the fringes by turning the annexation question from one of compassion for fringe residents to one of business and wealth creation for the "enlightened self-interest on the part of Corpus Christi citizens," which appealed to city voters.[85]

In their coverage of local organizations who supported annexation, the newspapers reminded readers of the fringe's tax potential by having publicized influential organizations' endorsements. One editorial argued that "those who know" best about the topic of annexation were the building contractors and developers, the businessmen who saw the "real potential" of expanding the city limits. It argued, "The average Corpus Christi citizen who has taken time to think about it agrees with the builders and planners."[86] The matter of initial cost relative to short and long-term gain became the central point of discussion in city publications. The city implored its readers to consider the personal benefits of annexing the unsightly Molina Addition.[87]

To ensure that voters answered favorably to the city's second annexation request, *Caller-Times* featured three noteworthy editorials in the month of October. The first appeared on October 17 titled, "Annexation Termed Logical and Proper." It was in essence a condensed

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[84] Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism*, 50, 54.

[85] "Not Unique," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 14, 1954.

[86] "Those Who Know," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 17, 1954.

[87] "Annexation Costs," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 22, 1954.

version of the October campaign. It explained why October might be the city's last opportunity to annex and why "room to grow" was essential for the economic development of the area. It explained how areas would be self-supporting, and that the city was "correcting past mistakes." Most strikingly, Dale Owen of the ZPC replicated the sentiments that contrasted the October campaign from the September campaign. He held that Corpus Christi residents were the real victims of the fringes' greed and immorality. Ignoring the conditions that he and other officials had created in the slums, Owen summed up: "If there is a moral issue, I believe the people in the city are the injured parties. I say it's not fair for people of the city to pay for the benefits people living outside the city receive—such as city streets, city fire protection, city parks, and other city facilities," as if Molina residents had actually received those benefits.[88]

Corpus Christi elites replicated what historian Patricia Limerick cogently summed up as a sort of selective amnesia that had developed from Westward expansion: "By assigning responsibility elsewhere, one eliminated the need to consider one's own participation in courting misfortune." Limerick continues, "There was something odd and amusing about late-twentieth-century businessmen adopting for themselves the role…of the martyred innocents, trying to go about their business in the face of cruel and arbitrary opposition."[89] Corpus Christi elites audaciously replicated that philosophy, especially in the 1950s.

On October 24, the *Caller-Times* published an editorial concerning annexation. In, "Annexation Called Economic, Businesslike Thing to Do Now," City Commissioner J.S. Naismith addressed annexation opponents who argued that the city had to fix issues within its

[88] Jim Greenwood, "Annexation Termed Logical and Proper," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 17, 1954.

[89] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 47.

then city limits before it could grow. He obtusely compared city growth to a business: "There's not a businessman in town who waits until he runs out of merchandise before he reorders, nor is there a professional man who deliberately waits until he finishes one job before trying to get another." He continued, "To say that we should not annex new territory until we catch up with our present needs is completely *foreign to the basic principles of business*," ignoring the fact that a city and a business serve completely different purposes. After admitting the city's negligence of its poor communities, Naismith blamed annexation opponents of having overlooked "the progress that has been made to catch up with present city needs."

On October 26, approximately 6,000 of roughly 8,000 residents voted the Molina Addition into the City of Corpus Christi. Most of those votes came from the same neighborhoods that voted against annexation in September, but this time, by a more "informed and aroused" electorate who viewed Molina residents as worthy of conquest. [90] Molina became part of Corpus Christi on October 26, 1954. Almost immediately, the city announced that it would privatize indoor plumbing services and that it could not afford all of the improvements it promised.[91] The neighborhood went without the amenities it was promised for years thereafter. Indoor plumbing arrived to the Molina Addition years later as a result of unrelenting community activism led by Dr. Héctor P. García, while sidewalks and paved roads were not introduced until activists like Welder and Earmeane Brown and Reynell Parkins led War on Poverty efforts in the 1960s.[92]

[90] "City Extends Boundaries," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 27, 1954.

[91] Santos de la Paz, "Legal or Not, the Gestapo Now Rules Areas West and South of Corpus," *La Verdad,* October 29, 1954;"People in Molina Have Started to Complain," *La Verdad,* November 26, 1954.

[92] Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Renetta Kay Hines, interview by author, Arlington, Texas, February 19, 2015; Dr. Maurice Portis, interview by author, Corpus Christi, Texas, March 9, 2015.

2.4 Conclusion

Alan Lessoff suggests that some twentieth century events would symbolize Corpus Christi's historical identity better than the nineteenth-century frontier imagery it continues to rely on.[93] However, the city's frontier iconography does not misrepresent the city's twentieth-century mindset. At the turn of the century, city elites and the Anglo population did not abandon the frontier spirit, which carried with it racist and genocidal undertones. To Anglo and middle-class Corpus Christians, the frontier spirit never perished; instead, it was modified to justify their exploitative actions. Nothing depicts the city's twentieth-century identity more clearly than its fondness for an outdated and racist nineteenth-century ideology.

The 1954 newspaper campaign crystallized the attitudes that Molina residents would grapple with over the next fifty years. In a time before the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, Molina residents struggled to acquire the political power that could challenge city officials. Furthermore, schools remained segregated and inadequate for the neighborhood's minority children. During their struggle with the city over water and sewage, residents took the fight to the area's serving school district, West Oso ISD, to address the needs of the community's children. In so doing, they built political strategies that forced the West Oso "school board revolution" of 1963 and redefined the culture of school and the neighborhood as a result.[94]

[93] Lessoff, "A Texas City and the Texas Myth," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 328.

[94] "Controversy-Torn West Oso Wrestles Problems," *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, March 9, 1965.

CHAPTER 3

THE WEST OSO SCHOOL BOARD REVOLUTION: DESEGREGATION, REPRESENTATION, AND INTEGRATION AT WEST OSO ISD, 1954-1970

The West Oso Independent School District (WOISD) traces its roots to the 1880s when the Oso School was a one-room building that held class five months a year outside of Corpus Christi, Texas, at the Gallagher Ranch. It was the first common school in Nueces County and only served Anglos. In 1936, Oso merged with the nearby West Point School to form West Oso. By World War II, the mostly Anglo student population attended class at Cuddihy Airfield in unincorporated territory five miles west of the city on Old Brownsville Road, just south of Robstown and east of Driscoll, Texas.[1]

The National Code of Fire Underwriters reported a violation when inspectors discovered that West Oso classrooms at the airfield were not equipped with a sprinkler system. The district built a new brick building two miles west from the airfield in 1946.[2] Within a few years, students of all ages in the district, nearly 1,545, attended class at the new West Oso School that boasted a top of the line science laboratory, football stadium, agriculture building, and a gymnasium.[3] It had thirty-six elementary and seven high school classrooms. Many of the individuals who became teachers and administrators at the West Oso School by the middle 1950s were

[1] Mary Mahoney, "Homecoming Event Honors Oldest Teacher, Ex-Student," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* November 21, 1954.

[2] "Closing Program at Two County Schools Tonight," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 16, 1947.

[3] Al McCulloch, "Dawn Blaze Guts 4 Classrooms, Office of West Oso High School," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 26, 1954.

themselves children of prominent ranch-holding families, some of whom were descendants of U.S. Civil War and U.S. Mexican War veterans.[4]

Meanwhile, the ethnic Mexican and African American population grew rapidly within the approximately 140-acre Molina Addition. From 1949 to 1950, enrollment at West Oso increased forty percent. Ex-student Lee Castañón recalls having attended class at Cuddihy Field in those years. Although it was a "step-up" from the Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD) facilities, he recalls the rigid enforcement of segregation within the district; ethnic Mexican children went to Cuddihy Field while the Anglo elementary students attended the newer building down the road.[5] Although fire hazards were cited at the airfield, ethnic Mexican students still regularly walked approximately five miles from their neighborhood west only to be forced into the hazardous classrooms at the abandoned airbase.

One safety inspector's letter to city manager H.H. Allen listed spliced electrical cords, trash accumulation, burnt matches, cigarette butts, and "other inflammable materials" lodged behind gas heaters and between lockers throughout the Cuddihy property. Allen responded, "it has been determined that it will not be practical to abandon this field as of April 14, 1949."[6] The reasoning behind continuing class at Cuddihy Field was that West Oso was locked in an ongoing contract despite reports of multiple safety hazards at the site.[7] The site was still in use by 1956

[4] Madeleine Greene, "Corpus Christians from 'Way Back," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, May 15, 1960; "Descendants of Jean Bluntzer," Genealogy.com, accessed August 26, 2015, www.genealogy.com/ftm/s/p/a/Lacey-Sparks-Texas/GENE83-0011.html.

[5] Castañón, interview with author, 2015.

[6] A.J. Fogaley, to H.H. Allen, Cuddihy Field Collection, 1.02 14; H.H. Allen to A.J. Fogaley, Cuddihy Field Collection, 1.02 15.

[7] U.B. Jackson, Airport Manager, to Maurice W. Cochran, City Manager, May 31, 1949, Cuddihy Field Collection, 1.03 52.

when George I. Sánchez of the University of Texas at Austin wrote about the poor conditions at the segregated West Oso School. Even though there were empty, unused classrooms at West Oso, Sánchez wrote, "Cuddihy kids are getting 'the rough end of the stick,' and, then, when there is no need for it. Local authorities should be given every help and encouragement that is needed to eliminate or ameliorate this discrimination immediately."[8]

Many of the elementary-aged students at Cuddihy Field were children of migratory laborers who resided in the Molina Addition.[9] In the early 1950s, with federal money granted to districts that grew following World War II, WOISD opened the 20-classroom W.E. Hall Elementary in Molina to serve ethnic Mexican students from pre-primer to the sixth grade. The school was made up of two parallel, detached brick structures.[10] The buildings were austere and had no windows. In place of hallways, a tin roofed sidewalk connected the flood-prone classrooms. By 1954, with a larger population, most of the Hall Elementary student body was still composed of children of laborers who spoke Spanish in their homes.[11]

The African American population in the Molina Addition grew rapidly as well. A few black students attended West Oso up to the year 1952 before the district elected to push them out and bus them to Solomon Coles, the CCISD school for African Americans.[12] Unsatisfied with the conditions at CCISD, some black families sent their children to boarding schools in San

[8] George I. Sánchez to Dr. Héctor P. García, Dr. Héctor Perez García Papers, 21.15.

[9] "Enrollment Increase Shown at West Oso," *Corpus Christi Times,* December 13, 1950.

[10] Henry Alsmeyer, Jr., "West Oso and Sundeen Schools Open New Classrooms this Term," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 23, 1953.

[11] Georganna Mitchell, "School in Molina has Outstanding Record," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 25, 1954.

[12] "County School Board to Act on Transfers," *Corpus Christi Times,* February 5, 1952.

Antonio.[13] Most of the African American students remained in town. With busing costs increasing as the black population in the Molina Addition grew, the district elected to build a segregated school in the neighborhood. The West Oso Negro School opened in 1954 to serve students up to the ninth grade.[14] The building was identical to the W.E. Hall School, which was located less than a mile away.

By the middle 1950s, West Oso High School had enrolled ethnic Mexicans but many of those students had dropped out after they completed the eighth grade. Others, due to overcrowding and the lack of Spanish-speaking teachers, attended class at Cuddihy Field where instruction was held in Spanish for most of the day.[15] Despite this, some of the few ethnic Mexican students who had attended class at the main West Oso plant participated in previously all-Anglo clubs and some had even earned the distinction of valedictorian and salutatorian.[16] Castañón recalls that race relations with Anglo students at the high school were decent. For some Mexican American students, the school was desegregated. But with no Spanish-surnamed teachers and no ethnic Mexican administrators or PTA members, the school was hardly integrated.[17] Meanwhile, black students continued their high school education at Solomon Coles. The upsetting reality for most brown and black Molina students was that of a second-class education.

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[13] Hilton, interview with author, 2014.

[14] "Negro School to be Built," *Robstown Record*, March 11, 1954.

[15] George I. Sánchez to Dr. Héctor P. García, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 21.15; Castañón, interview with author, 2015.

[16] "West Oso News: Commencement Exercises Set for May 28; Baccalaureate May 23," *Robstown Record*, May 13, 1954.

[17] *El Oso*, West Oso High School Yearbook, 1954; *El Oso*, West Oso High School Yearbook, 1955.

In three sections, this chapter chronicles how one minority community dealt with the question of integration in the period between *Brown v. Board*—which declared race-based segregated schooling unconstitutional—and *Cisneros v. CCISD*—which extended *Brown* to Mexican Americans as an identifiable minority group who experienced segregated schooling.[18] I argue that interracial coalition building yielded incremental gains at the community level against the political juggernaut comprised of the rural-Anglo elite, the "Bohemians," who prolonged separate and unequal schooling in one form or another. However, those victories were provincial in scope and indirectly and unintentionally contributed to the continued segregation of CCISD schools up to 1970.

Relative to other *barrios* and ghettos in the city, Molina was a subdivision that was highly concentrated with politically active residents and local leaders from groups like the American GI Forum (AGIF) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Therefore, their inclusion in CCISD could have been the tipping point in dismantling the district administration's rigid system of segregated schooling. This did not happen when WOISD elected to remain separate from CCISD in the late 1960s, before the *Cisneros* ruling. But, by having voted to remain separate, Molina residents articulated what *Cisneros* would later find in 1970, that CCISD was a segregated district that enforced unequal education upon the city's brown and black population for years following *Brown*.

3.1 Integrating the 140 Acres

[18] V. Carl Allsup, "CISNEROS V. CORPUS CHRISTI ISD," *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jrc02), accessed September 11, 2015. Uploaded on June 12, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Anglos in the South responded vehemently to the *Brown* decision of 1954. Notable anti-integration protests occurred in Clinton, Tennessee, and in Little Rock, Arkansas. Texas, a Southern state, was not immune to that sentiment. While many Texas schools quietly desegregated, the idea of interposition, or "state's rights," from Governor Allen Shivers and other officials motivated some districts to launch protracted efforts to preserve the traditional system of segregated schooling in their towns.[19] In Mansfield, for example, nearly a third of the town's population congregated at the high school in 1956 after it had been the first district in the state ordered to desegregate. Violence broke out in the form of physical assault against some individuals while the threat of physical assault against the town's black population materialized. Anti-black hatred manifested with lynched effigies and racist slogans painted on cars and signs.[20] Led by the White Citizens Council (a pro-segregation group commonly known as the "White collar Klan" (because of its middle- and upper-class origins and more refined tactics) Mansfield's resistance to integration and desegregation lasted until 1965. It officially ended when superintendent of Mansfield schools Willie Pigg enrolled the community's African American students.[21]

South Texas did not experience such fervent resistance, but overt racism was present. In Corpus Christi, the White Citizens Council was weak and led by "low-status persons."[22] Their

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[19] Robyn Duff Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), xiii. See also *The Crisis at Mansfield*, https://Mansfield crisis.omeka.net, accessed September 11, 2015.

[20] "Images of the Crisis at Mansfield," *The Crisis at Mansfield*, https://mansfieldcrisis.omeka.net/collections/show/2, accessed September 11, 2015.

[21] Duff Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools*, 142.

[22] Kenneth Morland, *Lunch-Counter Desegregation in Corpus Christi, Galveston, and San Antonio, Texas* (Lynchburg: Randolph-Macon Woman's College, 1960), 4.

fight mostly dealt with citywide issues like lunch counters and parks and recreation, mainly because schools in Corpus Christi were conveniently segregated and were to remain that way for almost two decades later. After the city had initiated the process of slowly desegregating public facilities, the White Citizens Council demanded that pools remain separate. The city was unable to meet those demands since no pool had existed in the African American part of town, the north side. The parks and recreation board responded by having ordered the construction of a brand new pool there and then proceeded to integrate all city pools. Outraged and embarrassed, local Citizens Council president Tom Hayes, Jr. regurgitated typical rhetoric employed by the group nationwide and charged that the parks and recreation board "took the cowardly way out." According to Hayes and the White Citizens Council, the board "proved themselves unfit for the offices they hold by surrendering Texas law and traditions to the pressure of the NAACP and the criticism of the Communists."[23]

The White Citizens Council's weak presence in Corpus Christi does not mean that anti-black and anti-Mexican racism was absent from the city or in public schools. *De-facto* segregation was still a reality for Corpus Christi's minority residents. Even though the city's lunch counters and public facilities had legally desegregated by 1960, local officials and business owners demanded that desegregation remain quiet and unpublicized. As a result, many African Americans in the city were completely unaware that the city had desegregated and thus continued to abide by Jim Crow practices.[24] Quiet desegregation was a form of tokenism, a convenient rhetorical device that those in power employed after having failed to implement the

[23] "Segregationist Rips Decision Integrating Pool," *The Corpus Christi Times,* March 30, 1956; Duff Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools,* 27.

[24] Morland, *Lunch-Counter Desegregation*, 4.

law. Reverend James Hamilton of Robstown, Texas, commented in 1970 that such tokenism is another form of segregation and "is not much different from 'do nothingism.'"[25]

Long-time resident Johnnie Bryant recalls the humiliating routines wherein African Americans were expected to give up their seats to white bus riders and to order food at the back of local restaurants. Bryant explained that ethnic Mexicans in the city were "sized up, too." Unless they were of a white complexion and had lightly colored eyes, he explained, ethnic Mexicans "were not seen as equal to the whites."[26]

Local resident Lee Castañón explained that discrimination at public facilities continued through the 1960s. Although he was more than qualified for the jobs he sought, the white office staff at the local post office and military base consistently turned Castañón away after he had inquired about employment positions at those facilities. "No matter what I did," he said, "they would not give me an application."[27] Apparently, this was common throughout the city and when Castañón had experienced discrimination at those offices, it had been years after the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO) began to address and publicize similar complaints from other ethnic Mexicans in Corpus Christi.[28]

At West Oso and Molina, things were hardly different, especially in the 1950s. Although some ethnic Mexican youth gained access to white social circles, most were on the receiving end of Anglo prejudice. The "Bohemians," as Molina residents referred to rural Anglos, were the

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[25] James Hamilton, "Mexican-American Problems and Trends in Corpus Christi, Texas" (master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1970), 70.

[26] Johnnie Bryant, interview with author, March 19, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[27] Castañón, interview with author, 2015.

[28] Hamilton, "Mexican-American Problems," 29; "The Latin Vote: It's used well," *Corpus Christi Times*, February 11, 1962.

"KKK-type," whose involvement in groups like the White Citizens Council, although unproven, would be unsurprising to some. The Bohemians were "crooks" who "were up to no good all of the time," and often abused the trust of the underprivileged. Some narrators expressed similar sentiments about the Cox family, who owned most of the property in the Molina Addition in the 1950s and 1960s.[29]

In July 1954, just months after *Brown,* the all-Anglo West Oso Parent-Teacher Association at West Oso High School with superintendent Noel Reed announced their meeting agendas for the following school year. The themes for each month centered on overly patriotic rhetoric and focused on securing "liberty" and providing legal protection for parents and teachers. The school year would wrap up with a program titled, "To Ourselves and Our Posterity," to which superintendent Reed would speak. [30] The program and speech contents are unclear, but the context of the announcement coupled with the common language employed by segregationist groups throughout Texas following *Brown* suggests that the PTA meetings would dwell on the topic of maintaining segregation. To add to the ambiguity of the Bohemians' affiliation to Texas segregationist groups, many of the PTA members, wives of land owners and board members, had also formed a local club called the Kissing Kin Klub (shortened to KKK), which lasted from summer 1954 to about 1963. Although the group never publicized any racial agenda, it is unlikely that members chose such a controversial name by accident, especially at a time when Anglo segregationist women's groups sprouted across the country.[31]

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[29] Castañón, interview with author, 2015; Torres, interview with author, 2015; Noyola, interview with José Ángel Gutiérrez, 1997, 97.

[30] "West Oso News," *Robstown Record*, July 29, 1954.

[31] For more on women's segregationist groups, see Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance at Central High School* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

On September 1, 1954, Noel Reed rejected three African American students, Burris Lee Jones, Debora Mandson, and Peggy Mandson, from entering West Oso schools. Reed cited Texas state law that required separate facilities for white and black students. Mary Collins, Burris Lee Jones's mother, replied, "The Negro school [Solomon Coles] is not equal…I want my children to have a good education," at West Oso, which offered classes that were not available to students at Solomon Coles. According to Reed, ninth graders "would be able to take a more enriched curriculum" at Coles. He continued, "I think one of the principal reasons the children are disappointed with the school is that they are comparing it with the schools they attended in Corpus Christi. I think that the school would compare favorably with those offered by smaller towns, such as Robstown." He then attributed the district's affirmation of segregation to low funds.[32] On September 2, 1954, board members W.W. Dominy and Joe W. Hayek motioned and seconded to continue the policy of segregation. All board members voted "aye."[33]

In late September, about forty African Americans including Dr. H.J. Williams, Dr. H. Boyd Hall, and attorney Wilbur Orum of the NAACP showed up to the regular West Oso ISD school board meeting. Williams, Hall, and Orum presented the board with a petition from black Molina residents requesting integration. Hall explained to the board that they had the power to end segregation and to integrate schools immediately. The board responded that it would "consider" desegregating the district's schools.[34] They did not revisit the issue until a year later.

In spring 1955, Manuel P. Salazar and Willie Loa, backed by the Molina chapter of the American GI Forum, had announced their candidacy for two upcoming vacancies on the school

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[32] Georganna Mitchell, "Three Negroes Rejected by West Oso School," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 1, 1954.

[33] Minutes, September 2, 1954, West Oso ISD.

[34] Minutes, September 22, 1954, West Oso ISD.

board.[35] Mauricio Jiménez and Alfred Loa, Willie Loa's brother, of AGIF-Molina presented a request to the West Oso school board to include a polling station in the neighborhood.[36] Aware of the GI Forum's political influence, especially after the group had clashed with the City of Corpus Christi on numerous occasions over the 1950s, the WOISD school board "considered" installing a polling station in Molina. The board ultimately decided against it, leaving Molina residents seven miles away from the nearest ballot box on election day. According to the board, petitioners presented their requests for a polling station within ten days of the 1955 school board election, which was too late. Despite this, Willie Loa and Manuel P. Salazar still ran. Loa recalls the election campaign in which an associate of the GI Forum drove through Molina streets announcing over a loudspeaker, "*Van a correr los primeros mexicanos en el* school board," (The first Mexicans are going to run on the school board). Loa explained that he and Salazar went door to door in Molina and informed residents about their efforts to be elected.[37] Loa and Salazar unseated incumbents F.S. Burkhardt and W.A. Whitmire with at least ten votes each.[38]

With Loa and Salazar now on the board, trustees revisited the question of integration right before the beginning of the 1955-56 school year.[39] The board voted to partially desegregate the district. In August 1955, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* announced the partial desegregation plan for West Oso schools: African Americans students would attend West Oso

[35] "Principal of West Oso Mum on Ouster Move," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 24, 1955.

[36] Minutes, March 29, 1955, West Oso ISD.

[37] Willie Loa, interview with author, September 25, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[38] Minutes, April 4, 1955, West Oso ISD.

[39] "West Oso Integration to be Considered," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 23, 1954.

High School from the ninth to twelfth grades while elementary schools would remain separate.[40] However, there is no indication that Loa or Salazar pushed for integration, partial or otherwise. In fact, Loa and Salazar were absent from the meeting wherein the board made the decision. Loa does not recall having attended a meeting where such matters were discussed. It is possible that Paul Hellman and Charles Kosarek, the two Anglo trustees who motioned and seconded this plan, acted preemptively to preclude Loa or Salazar from proposing a more comprehensive integration plan that white board members did not want.

American GI Forum News Bulletin reported in 1955, "Whether it be because they know what segregation of their own children means or because traditionally people of Mexican and Spanish descent do not share in the so-called doctrines of white supremacy and racial prejudice, the Mexican-American population of Texas… is in favor of doing away with the segregation of Negro children in the public schools."[41] Anglos understood that ethnic Mexicans felt this way, according to one observation in 1960. "Apparently," wrote the Anglo observer, "most Latin-Americans do not have the prejudice against the Negro felt by many Anglos. And the Latin-American is more likely to have contact with the Negro, in residential areas and at lunch counters."[42] Like current historians who comment on the lack of black-brown coalitions in Texas, Anglos in the 1950s likely also perceived ethnic Mexicans and African Americans as a "presumed alliance" based on their similar oppression. Unlike current historians, however, Anglos in Corpus Christi had reason to believe that such an alliance would occur based on their

[40] "West Oso High Admits Negroes," *Corpus Christi Times*, August 11, 1955.

[41] "Mexican-Americans Favor Negro School Integration," *American GI Forum News Bulleting*, Austin, Texas, September-October, 1955.

[42] Morland, *Lunch-Counter Desegregation*, 5.

past of having discriminated against both of the minority populations, especially in the Molina Addition.[43]

On paper, partial integration may have seemed as a small victory to some.[44] However, Molina's African American population did not attend more meetings after the election of Loa and Salazar. Their concerns were marginalized just as commonly as Loa and Salazar were. Loa and Salazar, who likely supported the full integration of schools, had little power to influence the outcome of the board's final decisions, including motions to hire more ethnic Mexican women teachers. Loa recalls, "It is kind of hard when you have five or six [board members] against one."[45] The reality was that very little had changed on a practical level. The five rural Anglos on the board dominated meetings and regularly excluded Loa and Salazar from special sessions. A prime example of this is how the board dealt with Molina's ethnic Mexican high school students who travelled by foot or by bus seven miles to class every day. When students were unable to attend, the district frequently filed truancy cases that mostly affected migrant families at disproportionate rates.[46]

The American GI Forum met with WOISD in 1956 about building a new high school in the neighborhood, but trustees told the group that there was no money for such a project unless it was built farther away from Molina beyond Cuddihy Field, adjacent to the standing West Oso

[43] Hamilton, "Mexican-American Problems," 3-4, 16.

[44] "Texas School Integration Apparently Bogs Down After Legislative Action," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 30, 1959; "Texas Desegregation as of June, 1957," *Southern School News,* September 1957.

[45] Loa, interview with author, 2015.

[46] "4 Parents Fined in Truancy Cases," *Corpus Christi Caller Times,* May 18, 1956.

High School.[47] In response, AGIF-Molina members Amador Gutierrez and Mauricio Jiménez announced their candidacy for the two upcoming vacancies on the school board.[48] If successful, Molina residents would hold the majority. Additionally, the board installed a polling station in the Molina Addition, which led to a turnout higher than that of the previous election. At the same time, rural Anglos turned out a higher rate as well and ultimately defeated Gutierrez and Jiménez.[49]

Meanwhile, the population in the Molina Addition continued to grow rapidly. To alleviate the growing pains, WOISD assigned seventh, eighth, and ninth grade ethnic Mexican and African American students to attend class in Cuddihy Field. Dr. George I. Sánchez wrote, "I, personally, would never permit my children to attend the Cuddihy School—*even if no other school were available* [Sánchez's emphasis]," and commented on the disproportionate truancy cases at the district.[50] Facing community pressure led mainly by the American GI Forum, the district built Molina Junior High School.[51]

The new building looked identical to the two elementary schools in the neighborhood that were located within a half-mile radius. It opened for the 1957 to 1958 school year. Additionally, the districted added extra classrooms to the West Oso Negro School, which had been renamed

[47] Conrad Casler, "Trustees Say School for Molina Too Costly," *Corpus Christi Caller Times,* March 8, 1956.

[48] "Forum Told No Money for School in Molina," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 8, 1956; Minutes, September 28, 1955, West Oso ISD.

[49] "Voters in 3 Area Districts Return Only 2 Incumbents," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 8, 1956; Minutes, April 11, 1956.

[50] George I. Sánchez to Dr. Héctor P. García, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 21.15.

[51] "West Oso Students to Register Friday for New School Year: 16 Percent Increase Expected When Classes Begin on Sept. 6," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 28, 1955; Minutes, July 11, 1956, West Oso ISD; Loa, interview with author, 2015.

Carl Allen Elementary. These new additions benefitted ethnic Mexicans and African Americans whose commute to West Oso High School was all too inconvenient. At the same time, however, Anglo board members agreed to such additions because it kept Molina's minority students away from the once all-Anglo West Oso High School for a longer period.

In *Integrating the 40 Acres*, historian Dwonna Goldstone argues, "Although racial integration occurred in the classrooms at the University of Texas at Austin, white administrators and legislators worked to preserve other aspects of segregation and the white supremacy it bolstered."[52] Regents at UT-Austin struggled to appease white popular opinion while having been forced to follow the new law of the land. They "wanted black students to wait just a little longer for equality, and dragged their feet to implement total integration." In other words, regents worked slowly and preferred a "gradual" approach to integrating the university because gradualism would maintain the racial status quo for longer. [53] A component of the status quo was the exclusion of black teachers and administrators from working at the university. Goldstone asserts, "By refusing to allow African Americans to teach on campus, the regents and university administrators not only gave credence to the belief that black people lack the ability to serve in these positions but also strengthened the notion that white students could not and should not be put in positions subject to African American authority."[54]

Goldstone's observations could apply to the experiences of African American Molina residents. The majority Anglo board only "considered" their requests and similarly dragged their feet to implement the new "law of the land." When desegregation did arrive to West Oso, it was

[52] Dwonna Goldstone, *Integrating the 40 Acres: The Fifty-Year Struggle for Racial Equality at the University of Texas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), vii.

[53] Goldstone, *Integrating the 40 Acres,* 11-13.

[54] Goldstone, *Integrating the 40 Acres,* 50.

token at best and regressive at worst. For example, Carl Allen Elementary principal C.C. Sampson, who earned his master's degree at the University of Chicago, was demoted to a teaching position when "integration" arrived to West Oso High while the contracts of many black teachers were not renewed. West Oso's form of desegregation was a microcosm of the city's legacy of "do-nothingism."[55]

Similarly, Molina's ethnic Mexican population experienced token integration in the district. Even though a few experienced some advances at the administrative level, those advances were undermined when Anglos continued to dominate the faculty makeup, student groups, and the administration, despite the fact that more than half of WOISD students were ethnic Mexicans from Molina. For example, the WOISD board often called inconvenient special sessions that dealt with tax equalization and construction contracts that either Loa, Salazar, or both, were unable to attend due to their work schedules.[56] At the same time, Anglo board members regularly tabled and "considered" the concerns from black residents that could have been immediately resolved. Molina residents knew that they needed to organize and elect black and brown school board members. On a seven-person board, the community required a minimum of four Molina residents to prompt the true integration and representation that residents sought in their children's schools.

3.2 The School Board Revolution

Residents formed the Molina Civic Association (MCA) in the late 1950s. In 1957 two ethnic Mexicans, Amador Gutierrez and Noe R. Benavidez, and one African American, Welder

[55] Yearbook, *The Hornet's Nest,* Solomon Coles High School, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1947.

[56] Minutes, September 15, 1955 to August 13, 1958, West Oso ISD.

Brown, all of the MCA, announced and ran for the three upcoming vacancies on the WOISD school board. Their victories would have narrowed the power discrepancy between the board's Bohemians and Molina residents. Unfortunately, Gutierrez, Benavidez, and Brown all lost by a slim margin. Their position as board members, coupled with Loa and Salazar, would have shifted the power dynamics within the district. Despite the loss, Gutierrez continued to make appearances at regular school board meetings pushing for school improvements for Molina students.[57]

Then in August 1957, Manuel P. Salazar resigned from his position. His work schedule coupled with last minute special sessions held him back from fully participating on the board. The board appointed Amador Gutierrez to complete Salazar's remaining term. In April 1958, Loa's term expired and he did not seek reelection because of his equally demanding work schedule at a nearby refinery.[58] The subsequent community election of Ezekiel López kept two of the seven board positions filled by Molina residents.

With Amador Gutierrez and Ezekiel López in office, three seats on the board again became vacant in 1960. MCA made a second attempt to see that at least four Molina residents were on the board. Welder Brown ran again. Fred A. Jones and Joe Treviño ran with Brown. Treviño won one of the three positions and became a trustee, but Brown and Jones challenged the election results after their defeat had been announced. Citing unfair voting practices in the district, they pressed charges against Oscar Strzinek, F.S. Burkhardt, and Charles Kosarek. They contended that the official returns and canvass of the election were illegal and that registered voters at the Molina Addition polling station were denied ballots by the Anglo election judges,

[57] Minutes, July 10, 1957, West Oso ISD.

[58] Loa, interview with author, 2015.

namely C.T. Allen, member of the Kissing Kin Klub and wife of longtime West Oso ISD trustee Carl Allen. Of the registered votes, some were altered to favor the Anglo candidates. Moreover, non-district residents voted at the West Oso High School polling station in favor of Anglo candidates. On May 5, 1960, Brown and Jones published the following statement in the *Corpus Christi Times*:

> The trustees of the school district refused to use voting machines in the election as requested and instead used paper ballots. No booths were provided for secrecy in voting. An ordinary cigar box was used to receive ballots at Molina instead of an election box. The judges did not repeat in audible voice the oath required by law before the election.[59]

There is no indication that either a suit or a recount followed this public complaint. It is likely that in a time before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, courts and officials ignored such complaints from African Americans in the State of Texas. Additionally, the NAACP, a group that Brown and Jones had been members of, was under scrutiny at a statewide level following the 1956 Mansfield Crisis. This resulted in a temporary injunction and the slowing down of the organization's momentum. The NAACP rarely challenged laws in the years 1957 to 1962 because it was held under tight restrictions by the Texas executive and judicial branches.[60]

Nonetheless, after the high school desegregated in 1955 and the black population grew steadily through the early 1960s, the district experienced a massive exodus of white families. White flight from West Oso ISD to nearby Tuloso-Midway, Calallen (named after Carl Allen's brother, Calvin Allen), and London school districts affected district funding and brought on the beginning of the dilapidation of West Oso High School. By 1961, the once all-Anglo West Oso

[59] "Recount of West Oso Vote Asked," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 5, 1960.

[60] Duff Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools,* 140.

ISD shrunk and became seventy-nine percent "Latin American," twelve percent "Negro," and nine percent Anglo.[61]

Then, in 1963, along with other offices and cities in the State of Texas, WOISD experienced what one reporter called a "revolution."[62] The Molina community held voter registration and poll tax drives that ended with the election of enough Molina residents to the board, giving them the majority. Rather than the four members they hoped for, Molina residents, all Spanish-surnamed, accounted for five of the seven seats on the WOISD school board. The new board made a number of changes on the first evening they met. They relocated the trustee-meeting place from West Oso High School to Molina Junior High School. They voted to convert the library at West Oso High School into classrooms to make room for more of the district's minority students. Lastly, they assigned Dr. John W. Skinner, then principal of Hellman Elementary School, which was once W.E. Hall Elementary, to the position of assistant superintendent and placed him in charge of personnel, curriculum, and instruction.[63] The two remaining Anglo board members, Carl Allen and James Baker, opposed these motions. In fact, they voted against every proposal that the five ethnic Mexican trustees motioned, including trivial ones that called for a new voice recorder in the boardroom.[64]

After some urgent housekeeping in the spring and summer of 1963, including the hiring of LULAC's William Bonilla as the school district's attorney, the new board received notice that

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[61] "Problem of Consolidation: Economic Difficulties Standing in Way of West Oso, Corpus Christi School Merger," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 30, 1961.

[62] Ernest Morgan, "Controversy-Torn West Oso Wrestles Problems, *Corpus Christi Times,* March 9, 1965. For more on statewide electoral "revolutions" prompted by Mexican Americans and African Americans, see Behnken, *Fighting their Own Battles*.

[63] Minutes, May 9, 1963, West Oso ISD.

[64] Minutes, June 12, 1963, West Oso ISD.

Allen and Baker had resigned. Their main complaint was that the Molina Civic Association dominated board and district's decisions. In their resignation letter, Allen and Baker hypocritically argued, "we feel that since you five (Latin American) board members have hired the law firm of Bonilla, Thomas, DePena [*sic*], and Bonilla, which this firm or one of its members represent the Molina Civic Association, which you five are members of, to advise you how to run our school and that all of the decisions are made prior to the regular meeting, we do not want to be a party to the actions of the school board."[65] To prevent accusations of alienating Anglo residents in the district, the board appointed Dan McDonough and James E. Roberts to occupy the vacant seats that Allen and Baker had left behind.

Superintendent Reed was unsatisfied with how the new school board had been operating as well, especially after they had assigned Dr. Skinner as his assistant in 1963. The board, which was also dissatisfied with Reed, decided on February 3, 1964, to terminate Reed's contract.[66] After the board fired him, Reed occupied his office until trustees made a settlement for the time remaining on his contract. Reed demanded approximately $18,000 for the remainder of his contract that was set to expire in 1965. The board finally removed Reed from the office sometime after midnight. The following morning, Dr. John W. Skinner had occupied the chair of the superintendent of WOISD schools.[67]

Skinner was an ally to the residents of the Molina Addition, and his assignment to the position of superintendent was a major victory for the community. He was often the only Anglo

[65] Minutes, July 10, 1963, West Oso ISD; "Anglos on West Oso School Board Resign," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 11, 1963.

[66] Minutes, February 3, 1964, West Oso ISD.

[67] "West Oso District: Reed Not in Chair of Superintendent," *Corpus Christi Times*, February 12, 1964.

invited to Molina Civic Association meetings.[68] Skinner gained his popularity among Molina residents after having introduced activities and organizations to the neighborhood, such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Little League baseball. He also spent his own free time and money to train over 300 neighborhood boys in boxing. Some of the boys he trained became successful Golden Gloves tournament fighters across the state.

Skinner also showed a concern for children who walked to school wearing no shoes or had on inadequate clothing to protect them from rain and cold winds. He had even donated his own blood to a Molina teenager who had suffered wounds from a knife fight. The teenager, Ralph Zamudio, explained, "Mr. Skinner saved my life with his blood."[69] Unfortunately, Skinner suffered a heart attack and died in 1964. Within weeks after his death, Molina residents presented a petition to the new board requesting that they rename Hellman Elementary School after Dr. John W. Skinner.[70] Decades later, narrators who personally knew Skinner recall that he was man who stood alone from the district's Anglos, "Everybody loved him—*everybody*. He [had] no prejudice. He was a good kind-hearted man, everybody loved him." One narrator summed up that Skinner was the complete opposite of Noel Reed.[71] Indeed, one of Skinner's first goals was to fully integrate the district's schools. The district then dissolved the boundaries established by the previous administration that conveniently kept black and ethnic Mexican children separated. Skinner also actively engaged in the hiring of more black and ethnic Mexican teachers during his short time as superintendent.

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[68] Ernest Morgan, "Controversy-Torn West Oso," *Corpus Christi Times*, March 9, 1965.

[69] "Good Evening: Introducing John W. Skinner," *Corpus Christi Times*, January 13, 1956.

[70] Minutes, November 11, 1964, West Oso ISD.

[71] Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Castañón, interview with author, 2015.

In spring 1964, the terms of the two appointed Anglo trustees had expired. Dan McDonough was reelected and James E. Roberts lost to Welder Brown, the first African American on the school board and the first African American in the city to hold that position. Brown was a World War II veteran who moved to Corpus Christi in the 1950s. He was a member of the United Steelworkers at Reynolds Metals, which had the highest percentage of black and brown employees in the city.[72] As a prominent member of the local NAACP, Brown had a strong relationship to black Molina residents. One narrator recalls that Brown was instrumental in keeping black Molina residents united in the 1960s.[73] Even though he was popular among African American residents of Molina, Brown also worked closely with prominent ethnic Mexican leaders in the area including Joe Treviño of the Molina Civic Association and imminent Texas Senator Carlos Truan. Víctor Treviño, Joe Treviño's son, recalls that Truan, Brown, and his father were like "*amistades,"* or close friends. Meanwhile, Renetta Kay Hines, Brown's daughter, recalls the close working relationship between her father and Dr. Héctor P. García in the 1960s and 1970s. Brown's reputation in the Molina Addition across color lines resulted in his election as board president by acclamation in 1966.[74]

Although the board was finally representative of the community and the district's student makeup, problems still loomed. With the help of the Texas Education Agency, the new board had to backtrack and "fix" the mistakes of the previous administration.[75] One of the main issues that arose was that of teacher turnover, especially after the board's removal of Noel Reed. As

[72] Jim Wood, "Discrimination Here Charged," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 17, 1966.

[73] Bryant, interview with author, 2015.

[74] "People in the News: Corpus Christi, Texas," *The Washington Afro-American,* May 10, 1966.

[75] Minutes, March 11, 1964, West Oso ISD.

many as thirty-three Anglo teachers, a third of the district's teaching staff, resigned in the early 1960s. Many of those teachers left "in loyalty to Reed."[76] In 1963, the board and Superintendent Skinner elected to hire more black and ethnic Mexican teachers to teach the newly integrated student body. By spring 1964, forty-two faculty members, including teachers, counselors, principals, and teaching aides at WOISD were African American. It was the first district in the city to hire black teachers to teach racially mixed classes in 1964.[77] The district at that time also redrew district boundaries to fully integrate elementary schools and the neighborhood's junior high school.

Few Anglos attended West Oso schools in the middle and late 1960s. Ex-students could not recall having attended school with more than five Anglos at any grade level during that time. By 1965, two years after the "revolution," less than five percent of the district's students were Anglo.[78] However, some racial tension still existed between African American and ethnic Mexican students in the newly integrated classes. One newspaper article reported that tensions at West Oso were "bad" and lamented that if the school had some Anglos, then things would be better.[79]

Ex-student Johnnie Bryant said that tension between students did exist and that physical altercations broke out on school grounds, but tension eventually subsided and the two groups got along well. Raphael Alvarado has a similar recollection. He explained that there were fights between black and brown students on campus but on band trips to small rural towns outside of

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[76] Morgan, "Controversy-Torn West Oso," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 9, 1965.

[77] "West Oso Integrates Its Ten Negro Teachers," *San Antonio Register,* May 22, 1964; Minutes, April 8, 1964, West Oso ISD.

[78] Ernest Morgan, "Controversy-Torn West Oso Wrestles Problems," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 9, 1965.

[79] "Two Minorities: Youth Shows Tension," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* September 15, 1968.

Corpus Christi, ethnic Mexican kids acted in solidarity and walked out of restaurants that denied service to their black bandmates. Other ex-students recall that close friendships between black and brown students became the norm. Guadalupe Silvas recalls having befriended incipient four-time NFL-Pro Bowl tight end for the Denver Broncos, Riley Odoms, after she had overloaded a taco with *picante* that she knew Odoms would steal from her, as he often did. Odoms could hardly speak after having eaten Silvas's breakfast. They ended up having built a friendship that lasted throughout the remainder of their high school years. Víctor Treviño reminisced that overall, black and brown classmates were more often than not "united as one."[80]

Another issue that the district faced after the "revolution," which was unfortunately more financially expensive to address than racial tension among students, was the condition and location of West Oso High School. Funding limits meant that bus schedules remained inconvenient for students while the school building rapidly fell into disrepair. As in the years of Juan Crow school segregation, students from the Molina Addition often walked over seven miles west to a dilapidated and under-equipped school. When students were lucky enough to have supplies like textbooks, most of them were secondhand.[81] The windows at the building were broken out, the roofs leaked water when it rained, and there were no heaters or air conditioning to shelter children from the South Texas heat. The school faced high absenteeism and high dropout rates because of the overall state of the school.[82] In the years from 1964 to 1966, half of the students who entered West Oso High School in the ninth grade dropped out before

[80] Alvarado, interview with author, 2015; Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Bryant, interview with author, 2015; Ted Guillen, interview with author, May 20, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas; Guadalupe Silvas, September 2, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[81] Minutes, October 8, 1969, West Oso ISD.

[82] Minutes, August 28, 1968, West Oso ISD.

completing their next year. Moreover, ninety-eight percent of high school students lived well below the poverty line.[83]

The "dream" for a new building began to come into fruition in 1965 when the board and Superintendent George J. Garza purchased land not far from the Molina Addition.[84] After negotiating with local architects and contractors, the district began construction of the new West Oso High School in 1968. Renetta Hines described the construction of the school as a community project. To save money, for example, community residents had volunteered their time to plant the grass for the new football field, "anything to save money."[85] The school opened its doors in the spring of 1970.

Frances Pettis expressed the excitement she felt when the new building was finished. "It was beautiful, a real sight to see," she said. Silvas recalls her and her classmates having been excited to attend the new school as well. To show their "love" for the new building, the students "baptized" it with a spaghetti and meatball fight. By the end of the 1969-70 school year, says Silvas, Principal Gonzalo Campos had a stress-induced twitch, likely caused by the kind of student antics that resulted in pasta and meat sauce covering the school's new windows.[86] Student misconduct aside, West Oso High School during the 1970-71 school year had been where student groups like the Hispanic Club and the Young Black Mobilization were born to

[83] Minutes, January 24, 1966, West Oso ISD.

[84] "New High School Site and the Bond Issue," *Progreso,* West Oso Independent School District newsletter, spring 1967.

[85] Kay Hines, interview with author, 2015.

[86] Silvas, interview with author, 2015.

promote ethnic solidarity and to teach Mexican American and African American history to its group members.[87]

With a new administration, new teachers, and a new building came a new culture at West Oso ISD that promoted community solidarity, student success, and ethnic pride. The West Oso district served a population that was hyperaware of race and ethnicity. In a city where Anglos routinely discriminated against and mistreated ethnic Mexicans and African Americans, Molina residents felt some semblance of institutional acceptance within their new school system, even though some reminders of marginalization persisted. Therefore, when the discussion of consolidating West Oso ISD with the still-segregated Corpus Christi ISD began in the late 1960s, residents fought to remain a separate district for the fear of reversing the gains they had made as they rebuilt a school system to benefit the non-white population of Molina.

3.3 Defending the District

West Oso ISD had been at the center of the consolidation topic with other districts prior to the late 1960s. For example, in 1949, Dr. Héctor P. García noticed that children were forced to "wade through mud" to reach classrooms at Cuddihy Field only to be taught in inadequate classrooms.[88] CCISD turned down the proposal. Then, in the early 1950s, West Oso ISD had approached surrounding districts including Sundeen, Kostoryz, Tuloso-Midway, and Calallen to discuss the idea of merging districts. When the numbers of brown and black students grew in the West Oso district, so did busing costs for African Americans and segregation costs for ethnic

[87] Yearbook, *El Oso,* West Oso High School, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1970-1971; Dr. Maurice Portis, interview with author, March 17, 2015.

[88] "Request Will Be Made for Transfer of School," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 31, 1949.

Mexicans. The four districts that WOISD had approached did not have a black students and those districts' small ethnic Mexican populations, if at all existent, were at capacity. While WOISD believed that consolidation with nearby districts would alleviate the cost of housing non-white children, mainly children of migratory farm workers, other districts viewed consolidation as an additional expense that it could not and would not take on.[89]

Tony Bonilla and LULAC then led a consolidation effort that began in June 1960.[90] By May 1961, Bonilla had appeared before the board and presented a petition for consolidation of West Oso and Corpus Christi ISD. If CCISD ethnic Mexican voters could harness the voting power of the Molina Addition, then the district could have seen major changes in a short amount of time. Many Molina residents agreed.

Ethnic Mexicans made up a group who for years were "manipulated in politics by their Anglo brothers." By the second half of the twentieth century, with the 1960 presidential election and the 1961 city election that installed a mayor who was sympathetic to the ethnic Mexican population, "Latin Americans" were no longer a "controlled minority" but a "force to be reckoned with in politics," one reporter argued in 1962. While the majority of the county's Anglo population voted Republican in the 1960 election with about 19,000 votes for Richard Nixon, about 30,000 Mexican Americans voted for John F. Kennedy, due in large part to the Viva Kennedy campaign in the city of Corpus Christi. Counties across the state reported similar

[89] "Clarkwood Plans Election on Proposed School Tax Boost," and "Kostoryz School Retains Its Unhurried 'Country' Charm," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 19, 1950; "Enrollment Increase Shown at West Oso," *Corpus Christi Times*, December 13, 1950. "School District Merger Vote to be on Dec. 1," *Corpus Christi Times*, November 10, 1951.

[90] Minutes, June 29, 1969, West Oso ISD.

statistics. Dr. Héctor P. García contended that Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy were elected to office "by the grace of God and the Latin American people."[91]

Likewise, ethnic Mexicans in CCISD saw some gains in the 1950s and early 1960s with the election of Arturo Vásquez. To elect Vásquez in 1952, Mexican American voters employed the "single shot" method that resulted in his election by a landslide. The "single shot" method is a strategy in which voters essentially forfeit a number of council or school board votes in order to increase the proportionate electoral strength of certain candidates who ran on separate tickets. Two years after Vásquez's election, A.O. Lerma ran for a position on the CCISD school board. The Mexican American voters did not use the single shot method and Lerma consequently lost to an Anglo candidate. The "single shot" method also resulted in the election of the city's first two ethnic Mexicans to the city council in 1961.[92]

In spite of the voting power that resulted in the election of Vásquez to the CCISD school board, the Mexican American vote in the district was weak compared to the Mexican American vote citywide. With the Mexican American vote from the Molina Addition, the "balance of power" could tip in favor of the Mexican American population in CCISD. At a time before the 1963 "revolution," Molina residents believed that inclusion in CCISD could result in better conditions for Molina-area students and an opportunity to gain proportionate representation on the school board. At the same time, consolidation would have meant lower taxes and fewer financial burdens for the district's "Bohemians." While some CCISD board members publicly said that they too wanted to avoid extra costs, two school board members privately told a

[91] Cliff Lawhorne, "Latin American Politics Take on a New Look," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* February 11, 1962.

[92] Cliff Lawhorne, "Latin American Politics Take on a New Look," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* February 11, 1962.

reporter in 1962 that reluctance on behalf of CCISD to merge with WOISD had been attributed to the "fear that annexation of the Molina and airport areas would give a heavier 'balance of power' to the Latin Americans in school board elections." The reporter responded that the "exclusion of the Molina area smacks of gerrymandering," which was "not new in Nueces County as a method of forestalling Latin American control."[93]

Despite majority support for the merger on behalf of Molina residents, the CCISD school board denied WOISD's request to merge in the early 1960s. At this time, Molina residents were in the midst of strategizing the election of neighborhood residents to their own school board. After the successful campaigns to elect a favorable board in WOISD, the subject of consolidation entered the conversation among Molina residents again in 1965. At a school board meeting that year, WOISD board member and NAACP member Willie Lanehart reintroduced the question of merging with CCISD as a possible solution to the district's growing financial problems.[94]

Two months later, the board discussed the reasons for and against consolidation with CCISD. Anglo board member Dan McDonough presented a list of advantages and disadvantages that consolidation with CCISD would bring to the community. Most of the reasons favoring consolidation were financial including higher teacher pay and larger state funds that would provide a "wider and better variety of classroom subjects, sports, and other activities." Two of the twelve reasons favoring consolidation were social: "Consolidation would provide a better and more desirable balance of equalization in the classroom of Latin, Negro, and Anglo," and "It would save our children from being educatinnally [*sic*] crushed between racial, political, and

[93]Cliff Lawhorne, "Latin American Politics Take on a New Look," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 11, 1962.

[94] Minutes, August 11, 1965, West Oso ISD.

social factions." Of the five disadvantages present, three included, "The citizens would have less influence on the operation of the schools"; "Transportation of students would be a problem"; and "There would be a loss of identity in being one of many." The board voted to solicit opinions from the community after this pros and cons list was provided to Molina residents.[95] The conversation would last another two years. Although the district was in obvious need of funds and consolidation would correct some of those problems, it was clear to some that the issue of consolidation was more than financial.

Grassroots organizations formed on both sides of the debate to push their agenda regarding consolidation in 1965. The tri-racial West Oso United Parents for a Better Education favored consolidation with CCISD on the basis that a better economic position would ameliorate other problems surrounding truancy, dropout rates, and long-lasting poverty. Addressing those issues would also preclude the problems surrounding racial tension and marginalization that students and parents felt in the classroom and at the administration level. On May 11, 1966, Willie Lanehart and Mrs. Virginia Vargas presented a petition of 1,000 homeowners within WOISD who supported the consolidation of district schools with CCISD.[96] Ex-board member Dan McDonough presented a similar petition to the board a year later.[97]

The newly formed West Oso Progressive Committee, the West Oso Ex-Students Association, led by Mrs. Lupe Longoria, and the Molina Civic Association all opposed the merger. In fact, MCA school board members rejected the United Parents for a Better Education's

[95] Minutes, September 1, 1965, West Oso ISD.

[96] Minutes, May 11, 1966, West Oso ISD.

[97] Minutes, August 9, 1967, West Oso ISD.

request to use a school building in the neighborhood in an effort to stifle their strategies.[98] Without question, the issue of consolidation turned into a hotly contested, and often emotional, debate that lasted well beyond the 1967 election. One reporter wrote, "Interviews with members of opposing factions showed clearly that emotions are running high among at least a small segment of the population, particularly in the West Oso area."[99] However, even consolidation supporter Ed Blakeslee understood why some Molina residents fervently opposed the merger. He accurately surmised, "There are many, many reasons, none having to do with education, why people in the Molina area distrust Corpus Christi." He said that "items such as sidewalks and street lights, which residents were told would be built when the area was annexed by the city and haven't are cropping up in this issue."[100]

Years later, Dr. Maurice Portis recalled that the efforts of Willie Lanehart and others to consolidate were sincere, "But CCISD didn't want to [cooperate]." He continued, "Our community has been looked at as being separate. It is in Corpus Christi but [West Oso] has never been seen as part of the city. We have had to fight for sidewalks [and] streets, and we are still doing that."[101] In short, the city of Corpus Christi on all levels had marginalized Molina residents enough. Even Joe Treviño, the leader of the MCA had at one point considered consolidation a viable solution to the district's problems, but he soon changed his mind upon analyzing the city's

[98] Minutes, March 29, 1965, West Oso ISD.

[99] Margaret Ramage, "Little General Interest Seen in West Oso Vote," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 13, 1967.

[100] Grady Phelps, "Distrust Stirs Opposition, West Oso Trustee Claims," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 11, 1967.

[101] Portis, interview with author, 2015.

past relationship with the Molina Addition.[102] He, along with others, decided that the city was untrustworthy.

After public debates and town hall meetings, the majority of Molina residents eventually found it more beneficial to remain separate. Additionally, they suspected that merging with CCISD would undo the integration and representation that they had accomplished. Although consolidation of CCISD and WOISD would have resulted in a stronger ethnic Mexican and African American electorate in Corpus Christi, Molina Addition residents did not trust CCISD to provide what they had promised based on the city's past and the level of racial segregation and discrimination in city schools that they saw from the outside looking in. The result was that the majority of Molina residents voted against merging with CCISD. Guadalupe Silvas recalls, "We fought it and we fought it, and we won. And I'm glad [we did]."[103]

CCISD's Anglo residents voted similarly, most likely because they knew how Molina's inclusion in their district would alter the status quo, or the "balance of power." Anglo residents knew that the district was conveniently segregated in their favor and so they did not wish to change the racial dynamics within it. By keeping Molina residents out, CCISD schools could remain unequal to the benefit of Anglos. On the other hand, the city's ethnic Mexican and African American population voted in favor of including the Molina Addition in its district. They, too, knew that if Molina had become a part of CCISD, the district's political culture would radically alter based on their understanding of the Molina Addition's history of highly concentrated political activity and subsequent victories for their own district.[104]

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[102] Treviño, interview with author, 2015.

[103] Silvas, interview with author, 2015.

[104] Ben Goodwin, "West Oso, City Reject Consolidation," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 20, 1967.

The WOISD still had its share of financial problems into and throughout the 1970s. Student dropout rate remained high and college preparedness and standardized test scores remained low. However, the district publicized how well it had improved overall relative to the 1960s. New teachers had entered the district who would eventually change the culture of the high school and the district altogether. Students organized groups that centered on the idea of teaching ethnic Mexican and African American history. They regularly crossed racial lines and were not expected to compromise their racial and ethnic identities. For example, Dr. Maurice Portis, then band director of the West Oso High School marching, stage, and jazz bands, recalls Texas Southern University band directors having asked him after a performance at the historically black university's campus, "How do you get the Mexican kids to play like they are black?" Portis responded, "The same way I get the black kids to play like they are Mexican." That is, by teaching both groups of kids the values of one another's cultures and participating in the free expression of both.[105]

Additionally, WOISD students and parents dodged the confusion and controversy brought upon by the filing and subsequent findings of the *Cisneros v. CCISD* case that determined Mexican Americans as an identifiable group who experienced racial discrimination. Besides the confusion that proliferated across federal courts surrounding busing and teacher assignments, Molina residents avoided confrontation with the city's foremost pro-segregationist group, Concerned Neighbors Incorporated, a group that Wanda García, daughter of Dr. Héctor P. García, recalls was comprised of "racists who were everywhere."[106]

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[105] Portis, interview with author, 2015.

[106] Wanda García, interview with author, February 2, 2015, Austin, Texas; Wanda García, "Dr. Héctor P. García versus Corpus Christi Independent School District," *Somos Primos, Online Issue* Vol. 9, No. 4 (April 2008), http://www.somosprimos.com/sp2008/spapr08/spapr08.htm.

The group was formed in 1970 "to combat impending disruption of the Corpus Christi School system," and "undertook as one of its goals the preservation and promotion of quality education in Corpus Christi Schools."[107] Concerned Neighbors contested that criticisms of unequal education in CCISD were exaggerated "in the courtroom, publicly via the news media, and in public forums." In a 1971 report published by Concerned Neighbors, the group admitted after having investigated area schools that some inequalities were present but the disparities were not enough to convince them that the school system was in dire need of alterations. In short, the group argued that despite *some* clear inequalities, nothing was wrong with the school system overall and that the "disadvantaged" were indeed "receiving their share of the educational dollar."[108]

Five years later, the group continued to hold anti-busing protests. *The Corpus Christi Times* reported that at one anti-busing rally in 1975, an Anglo protester angrily shouted against letting the "welfare bums move in our neighborhoods and move us out." The reporter exposed the hypocrisy of anti-welfare remarks from Anglo protesters by having pointed out that most of the Concerned Neighbors themselves resided in government-subsidized housing projects.[109] Of course, the issue was not about welfare or about place of residence. It was about race. "Welfare

[107] Concerned Neighbors, Inc., "Summary of a Comprehensive Review of the Corpus Christi Schools," (1971), 1, *Cisneros vs. CCISD* Collection at the Corpus Christi Public Library Local History Department Archive, 1.14.26 (hereafter cited as *Cisneros vs. CCISD* Collection).

[108] Concerned Neighbors, Inc., "Summary of a Comprehensive Review of the Corpus Christi Schools," (1971), 6, *Cisneros vs. CCISD* Collection.

[109] Thurma Hilton, "School Moods: Opposition, Conciliation," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 18, 1975.

bums" was a "color-blind" code word used to categorize non-white children and to protest their integration.[110]

It is unsurprising that polling stations in predominantly white neighborhoods during the 1967 consolidation election mostly returned ballots that opposed merging CCISD and WOISD schools. It is in those pockets where most, if not all, of the 1,000 members of Concerned Neighbors Incorporated hailed from. The group held meetings at the local yacht club and was led by lower-income Anglos, which indicates that it actively crossed class lines and attempted to appeal to a wider segment of Corpus Christi's Anglo population. Although the city did not witness a strong White Citizens Council in the 1950s and 1960s, it was home to an Anglo resistance movement that had laid dormant until it was awaken by *Cisneros*. Molina residents skirted the blast zone of a movement that indirectly targeted them as non-white city dwellers.

3.4 Conclusion

Like many other school districts in the South following the *Brown* decision, WOISD affirmed its segregation of schools in one form or another through "race-neutral" rhetoric and laws that ultimately preserved the status-quo. WOISD minority students and parents were hyperaware of how blackness in a Southern state and Mexicanness in a Borderlands state limited upward social mobility, including access to political representation. Moreover, WOISD students and parents were conscious of how whiteness, white privilege, and supposed "color-blindness" operated to undermine minority political struggles in the city; they saw through the purported "color-blindness" of a school system that perpetuated segregation following *Brown v. Board.* In

[110] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* 2nd ed., (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 57-58; Anderson, *Little Rock*, 8-9.

response, they organized grassroots efforts to install black and brown Molina residents onto their school board, thereby overcoming *de-facto* segregation and weak desegregation mandates that had perpetuated white domination in a minority-majority school district.

By the late 1960s, when the question of merging with CCISD arose, Molina residents of color overwhelmingly opposed consolidation and elected to remain a separate district for fear of undoing the political gains they had made through their black-brown coalitions. They recognized that the city, and by extension its school system, had been built on a scaffolding that was erected according to race in the Borderlands and Deep Southern state of Texas, and that CCISD had a long way to go before achieving integration compared to the level of integration experienced at WOISD.[111] The 1967 consolidation election revealed that residents of Corpus Christi, including Molina, recognized the level of segregation and discrimination in the city's schools. Whether they approved or disapproved of it, city voters generally agreed that segregated schooling existed in CCISD. Three years later, *Cisneros* would legally confirm the city population's unspoken understanding of its school system's rigid segregation.

From 1954 to 1970, the effort to integrate WOISD was only half of Molina residents' fight against the "Crow Cousins" and its remnants. Following the city's annexation of the neighborhood, the American GI Forum not only initiated campaigns to elect school board officials, but also pressured the city of Corpus Christi to uphold its promises to introduce infrastructural improvements to the neighborhood. After some victories and many losses in that fight, neighborhood residents formed interracial coalitions that ultimately yielded major gains in the War on Poverty. Through the leadership of local individuals like Earmeane May Brown,

[111] Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 3.

Reynell Parkins, and Johnny Bilano, the neighborhood's infrastructure radically improved and increased the standard of living for community residents.

CHAPTER 4

"BUILDING MO-TOWN, TEXAS": THE FIGHT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS AND THE WAR ON POVERTY, 1954-1970

As the fight for integration and school board representation continued in the years 1954 to 1970, Molina residents dealt with the problem of substandard living conditions in their homes and in the neighborhood. Residents knew that crippling poverty and hazardous living conditions affected the outcome of student success overall. The overlap of multiple infrastructural problems began to take center stage as the rest of the city physically changed for the better and left Molina in the first half of the century. But throughout the 1950s, Molina residents dealt with the flooded caliche pits that surrounded the neighborhood that claimed numerous lives of neighborhood children (see *Figure B.3*). Meanwhile, the nearby city dump served as a symbolic reminder to the people of Molina their status in the town, not to mention the pungent and often noxious odors the dump emitted that made their way into Molina homes.

I argue in the following pages that Molina Addition denizens found ways to forge a community without the validation of the city as they confronted it. Through activism, youth culture, and interracial coalitions, Molina residents transformed a neighborhood in the city of Corpus Christi into a tightly knit community that became colloquially known as Mo-Town, Texas. The first section deals with the period following annexation in 1954 to 1960. In those years, residents led by American GI Forum activists fought for indoor plumbing and for the removal of the hazardous caliche pits from the neighborhood. The second section examines social life and youth culture in "Mo-Town," an unofficial city within a city. Section 3 examines different appendages of the War on Poverty in Molina. With certain limitations preventing a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the War on Poverty in the subdivision, I outline the work

of three Molina Addition resident-activists—Earmeane Mae Brown, Johnny Bilano, and Reynell Parkins—who frequently crossed racial lines for the betterment of the Molina Addition as a whole. Taken together, the three sections provide an understanding of the relationship between an Anglo-dominated city and a marginalized ethnic Mexican and African American-populated neighborhood.

4.1 Indoor Plumbing and the Caliche Pits

After annexing the Molina Addition, the city announced that it could not install indoor plumbing in neighborhood homes because of its "inability to take over all of the service responsibilities in the [annexed] area." Of course, police protection (or as *La Verdad* editor Santos de la Paz called it, "the Corpus Christi Gestapo Corps") arrived to Molina the night of the election.[1] In a city intent on "urban renewal," officials' excuse that the annexation was one of the largest in the city's history and therefore could not provide the newly annexed areas with indoor plumbing conveniently kept the Molina Addition below code and consequently susceptible to slum clearance and displacement. Dr. Héctor P. García took a leap of faith that the city would not do such a thing when he had announced his support for the annexation of the Molina Addition in the days before the election. One could expect that Dr. García regretted investing his faith in a city that repeatedly neglected ethnic Mexicans, promised notwithstanding.

Dr. García originally opposed annexation because he worried that the city would require residents to finance their own neighborhood improvements, which would force them into debt and subsequent eviction. These complaints were common among Mexican American citizens in

[1] "City, Company Work toward Gas Agreement," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 29, 1954; "Plumbing Plan Merits Sympathetic Study," *Corpus Christi Times,* November 2, 1954; Santos de la Paz, "Legal or Not, the Gestapo now Rules Areas West and South of Corpus," *La Verdad,* Corpus Christi, Texas, October 29, 1954.

the years leading up to the annexation.[2] As a neighborhood that experienced a high infant death rate from preventable illness, Dr. García changed his mind in late October 1954 after having realized that the longer Molina went as unincorporated territory, the longer residents would go without access to medical care or sanitary conditions.[3] García saw the desperation in the neighborhood and placed a conditional hope on the city that they were going to do the right thing, for once.

In a television talk on October 24, 1954, he reminded his audience, "one of the main issues in this election is slums, sanitation, and suffering." He addressed his previous stance and explained, "I have been criticized and called names because I worry about the poor people losing their homes because of the requirements of sewage, restroom facilities, etc. I believe that I am justified in my worry." However, García eventually "became convinced that our problems will meet with sympathy and understanding instead of sarcasm and injustice. I feel that these gentlemen [on the city council] will listen to our petitions and requests and grant us 'American justice for all." He concluded, "Yes, I am for annexation on the basis of faith, hope, and charity."[4] Unfortunately, his hope was unfounded.

The Associated Plumbing Contractors of Corpus Christi responded to Dr. García's charges of the city's neglect and proposed a plan that would install plumbing quickly and inexpensively. Executive director of the group James L. Lowman presented a cooperative program for the installation of inexpensive plumbing facilities in certain substandard areas of the

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[2] Santos de la Paz, "Fillings," *La Verdad*, November 26, 1954.

[3] "New Public Health Nurses Authorized: Extra Personnel Okayed to Fight Infant Diarrhea," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 25, 1951; "Health Factor: County Medical Group Supports Annexation," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 20, 1954; "Deaths: Jesus Velasquez," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 7, 1951; "Proposed Building Code in Dispute," *Corpus Christi Times*, February 11, 1965.

[4] Transcript, "Television Talk," October 24, 1954, Dr. Héctor Perez García Papers, 104.39.

Molina Addition. He explained that his plan was a "means of enabling low-income families to meet minimum city sanitation requirements" and was a "weapon against [un]scrupulous contractors using the city's sanitation requirements as a vehicle for overcharging and otherwise victimizing homeowners." Lowman forbade any contractor to profit from the plan, including other members of the Associated Plumbing Contractors. As long as the city agreed and each household could pay $138 over the course of months or years as part of their utility bills, plumbing could arrive to the neighborhood immediately.[5]

As the landlords of the Molina Addition, Paul Cox and his son Alex had the option to install indoor plumbing years before the problems of pit privies and standing water made their way to city hall. The Paul Cox Land Company sold half-built homes to Corpus Christi's ethnic Mexicans and African Americans beginning in the late 1940s. Unlike Gerónimo Jiménez who came to own his home, many Molina residents were displaced because of the price to cover for Cox's negligence. Negligence and substandard dwellings were at the center of the Cox business plan. Even when state sanitary engineer Vic M. Ehlers explained how easy it could be to provide sewer and plumbing to the Molina Addition at a low cost, the Cox family ignored such suggestions that could have improved their so-called "baby," the project that the Cox family had invested so much time into.[6]

When persons sought to purchase a home in the Molina Addition, the money that the buyer had originally set aside for a down payment would be put toward purchasing materials to finish construction of the home. The developers did not "sheetrock the inside, other than

[5] "Plan to Provide Inexpensive Plumbing for Molina Offered," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* October 31, 1954; "Low-Cost Plumbing Planned in City," *Corpus Christi Times,* November 5, 1954.

[6] "County to Delay Relied Rentals Pending Cleanup," *Corpus Christi Times,* July 20, 1951.

sheetrock one side of the bathroom and sheetrock the wall that the cabinet went up against." Further, the Cox family "didn't sand any floors, and we didn't trim the windows on the inside, because you have to do that after you sheetrock." After having used the down payment money to purchase materials, residents would "not get a down payment on the house, then, because their money is applied to finishing products. And they move right in." It "worked out nicely" because the people moving in were "laboring class people" who were skilled enough to complete their home or were accustomed to living in below standard homes.[7] Eventually, however, "Hundreds of homeowners," throughout the city of Corpus Christi including residents of Molina were summoned to court to face charges of minimum building standards and plumbing code violations.[8] The Cox family thought it "worked out nicely" because their negligence produced mass profits at the cost of their tenants' livelihood.

To address this problem, Dr. García established a trust fund to finance plumbing installations in 1955. Beginning in 1954, Dr. García distributed flyers for "very important" meetings to discuss the indoor plumbing project. Because of individuals like John W. Skinner, often the only Anglo ally to Molina residents in their times of need, the American GI Forum held meetings in classrooms at W.E. Hall Elementary School where they would discuss with neighborhood residents their plans to finance the plumbing project. In one of the first of these meetings, James Lowman of the Plumbers Association attended to pitch his plan to provide affordable plumbing.[9] Under his plan that Dr. García endorsed, members of the Molina Addition Savings Trust Fund each agreed to deposit $15 a month in the account that would draw 4 percent

[7] Alex Cox, interview by Dr. Thomas Kreneck, December 5, 1991, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[8] Bill Walraven, "Proposed Building Code in Dispute," *Corpus Christi Times*, February 11, 1965.

[9] Leaflet, "Important," winter 1954, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers,152.10

interest while deposited.[10] With a growing number of members came larger checks to finance the supplies that Lowman and others provided at cost.[11] By 1961, plumbing and sewage had arrived to Molina.[12] Although pit privies continued to exist in some parts of the neighborhood and city, the majority of Molina residents had access to a running toilet and faucet for the first time in years or ever.[13] With that success underway, residents turned their attention to the numerous unused caliche pits in and around their neighborhood.

El Tanque was the nickname of one caliche pit located in Laguna Acres, a subsection of the Molina Addition (see *Figure B.4*).[14] Just south of Bloomington Street, the southern border of Laguna Acres, developers in the 1950s began construction of La Pascua, another subdivision of the Molina Addition that would nearly double the size of the neighborhood as a whole. As the population of the greater Molina area increased, so did the number of children who had working parents and guardians who often left the children unsupervised. As residents of a blighted neighborhood, Molina youth had little access to safe recreational sites. The first playground choice for many children consequently became *El Tanque*, a deadly caliche pit with a long history of its own.

One of the first children to have reportedly died in the pit was six-year-old Héctor Rodríguez in 1957. On Monday, May 13, Héctor and two of his friends had been wading through

[10] "150 Join Trust Fund to Meet Plumbing Bills," *Corpus Christi Caller*, February 4, 1955, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 2.6.

[11] Cover letter, "Molina Addition Savings Trust Fund," January 5, 1956, Dr. Héctor P. García Papers, 101.8

[12] "Works Progress; Acting Awards Presented," *Corpus Christi Times*, May 30, 1961.

[13] Walraven, "Proposed Building Code in Dispute," *Corpus Christi Times*, February 11, 1965.

[14] Alvarado, interview with author, 2015; Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Torres, interview with author, 2015; Castañón, interview with author, 2015; Silvas, interview with author, 2015.

the ankle-deep water at the bottom of the ten to twelve-foot pit when suddenly Héctor dropped into water over his head.[15] Passerby F.O. Nieto heard Héctor's cries for help and rushed to his aid but was unable to locate him. Héctor died at 3:15pm.[16] Longtime resident Víctor Treviño personally knew Héctor, his childhood neighbor when he lived on José Street in La Pascua. Treviño recalls that the problem of caliche pits persisted years after the city had filled in the Laguna Acres pit and converted it into a park in 1959.[17] He lamented that Héctor's death was one of the many drownings that would occur over the next few years in and around the Molina area.[18]

About a year later, another tragedy occurred at the nearby caliche pits located in a 300-acre lot directly across from the Molina Addition's eastern border—Rabbit Run Road and the ditch that ran parallel to it nicknamed "*El Ditche*." The caliche pit lot was on the western edge of the Gollihar Addition. This collection of caliche pits was located less than a mile east from *El Tanque* and to get there one had to cross the infamous *Ditche*. At ten o'clock in the morning on December 28, 1958, three young boys fell off a homemade raft into the murky, frigid caliche pit water after they had reached for a turtle. Two of the three boys could not swim and consequently drowned. The third boy tried to save them but was unable as he himself could not swim and struggled to reach the banks of the pit. A fourth boy who had been watching from the bank ran nearly a mile to the nearest store to call for help. Rescuers arrived on the scene and after some

[15] Alvarado, interview with author, 2015.

[16] "Boy, 6, Drowns in Caliche Pit," *Corpus Christi Times*, May 14, 1957.

[17] "Funds for Laguna Park Are Approved," *Corpus Christi Times*, May 26, 1959; Torres, interview with author, 2015; Libby Averyt, "Residents stay loyal to place they call home: Community says it's working to change negative reputation," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, March 10, 1998.

[18] Treviño, interview with author, 2015.

time searching, they found the bodies of the two boys underneath eight feet of water. Firefighters and paramedics were unable to resuscitate the boys. The two boys, John Edward Cabello and David Leal, were pronounced dead at 12:10 p.m. David's father stared with disbelief as rescue crews pulled the body of his son from the pit. He collapsed into the arms of a police officer and sobbed, "My little David. He was going to join the Boy Scouts today. He is the only boy I have."[19]

The caliche pits posed a problem to many individuals who played in or around them, including experienced swimmers. Thirteen-year-old Raul Vega had drowned on the evening of June 20, 1961, at the caliche pit site on the east side of the Molina Addition. While playing with a group of neighborhood boys Vega dove into the water, which suggests that he was confident in his abilities as a swimmer. However, he never returned to the surface. Emergency crews later pulled his body from the bottom of the pit and pronounced him dead later that night.[20]

City officials unanimously agreed that the Molina pits presented hazards to area residents. At the same time that the city faced its caliche pit problem, it had also been under pressure by the business community to remove a landfill located at a beach near the city so that it could attract tourist dollars.[21] City officials saw a way to solve two problems at once: relocate the landfill to the Molina caliche pits where the trash could conveniently fill the hazardous holes. City Manager Herbert W. Whitney expressed with confidence that the new trash dump in Molina and in similar pits across the city would not be a nuisance to nearby residents. After all, the city

[19] Bill Walraven, "2 Boys are drowned in Unused Caliche Pit," *Corpus Christi Times,* December 22, 1958.

[20] Torres, interview with author, 2015; "Raul Vega," *Corpus Christi Times,* June 20, 1961; "Raul Vega," June 21, 1961.

[21] "Beach Area Trash Dump Being Closed," *Corpus Christi Times,* June 23, 1959; Jim Wood, "City Employs 146 Men and Spends $600,000 Yearly Emptying Cans," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* January 29, 1961.

would not burn the trash, merely collect it in the caliche pits and cover them with dirt when they became full.[22] By 1962, it was clear that Whitney's idea was terrible, to say the least. Except for the hordes of seagulls that flocked to their new home, the smell of standing rain and drain water mixed together with the garbage of a medium-sized Texas city offended those who passed by the landfill and especially those who lived in the area.

One of the Molina Addition's defining traits beginning in 1959 was the offensive odor that emanated from the Molina pits landfill and the seemingly inescapable stench from burning trash, trash that the city had specified it would not burn.[23] Molina activist and elected official David Noyola noted in an interview with José Ángel Gutiérrez that in Molina, "we used to have a smell. I mean *estaba feo* [it was rancid]. It was bad, you know. We had the landfill right here."[24] With the racial stigma that converged with the unending perception that Molina residents were dirty and smelled bad, Corpus Christi residents joked that the new trash dump and adjacent ditch, "*El Ditche,*" served as a convenient way to keep so-called "Molineros" from going into town.[25] More than fifty years later, Molina Addition residents still endure the lame joke told by Corpus Christi residents that they are students of "*Pestoso*" Independent School District ("*pestoso*" not only rhymes with "West Oso," but it translates to malodorous or foul-

[22] "Trash Dump Won't Be a Nuisance, Whitney Says," *Corpus Christi Times,* June 26, 1959.

[23] "Here's what Council Did," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 6, 1959.

[24] David Noyola, interview with Jose Ángel Gutiérrez, 1997.

[25] Rafael Alvarado Jr., "Molina's Military History," Molina Veterans Society, http://www.molinaveterans.com/learn-about-the-vietnam-war/, accessed November 14, 2014.

smelling in Spanish). Although the "*Pestosos*" label derived from the Spanish language, it applied to both African Americans and ethnic Mexicans from the area.[26]

After several complaints from Molina Addition residents about the landfill's foul odors, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Swantner and city officials took a "smelly" tour of the Molina pits. To remedy the smell until the city council returned from out of town, Swantner suggested pumping water *into* the pit within the next fourteen days. Added water would "help the major cause of the odor," he believed. Understanding that water was one of the main reasons for the smell, city public works director Jack M. Graham ordered that water be pumped out of the trash pit and into the adjacent ditch. Thirteen days later, crews arrived to begin the process. Crews also began to line the ditch with concrete and built a bridge over it. The "improvements" hardly neutralized the odor that emitted from the pits. Over a year later, residents from the Molina Addition continued to present petitions to the city council demanding that the city immediately fill the pits with dirt instead of trash. The city council continued to stall on the removal of the pits. In 1964, after nearly five years of petitioning from Molina residents, the garbage pits were still in use by the city. Their excuse: the Molina Pits, then nearly full, would eventually become a large park. The park did not appear until the late 1970s.[27]

When the Molina pits nearly reached capacity with the city's garbage in the summer of 1965, officials sought new dumping grounds near the affluent south side of town away from any residents or commercial buildings. Almost instantly, the city as a whole debated the pros and

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[26] Sonia Adriana Noyola, "From Class to Club: An Exploration of High School Civic-Minded Student Organizations from 1996-2011 in Corpus Christi, Texas" (doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin, 2012), 23.

[27] "Swanter Looks at Molina Pit," *Corpus Christi Times,* April 11, 1961; "Water Pumped out of Molina Pit," *Corpus Christi Times,* April 25, 1961; "Pumping From Pit Halted Temporarily, " *Corpus Christi Times,* May 19, 1961; "Here's what the Council Did," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 17, 1962; "Here's what the Council Did," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 12, 1964.

cons of using caliche pits in that area for garbage collection and whether or not the price that landowners wanted for the caliche pits in the south side was a fair deal for the city.[28] This treatment of south side residents' concerns about a potentially nearby landfill and discussion of fair asking prices stands in stark opposition to the city's treatment of Molina residents' concerns. Rather than a discussion over fair prices, the city simply evicted residents who owned homes on the pit property in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The city even conducted, or attempted to conduct, some evictions illegally.[29]

By having ignored the concerns of Molina residents, the city not only excluded ethnic Mexicans and African Americans from decision-making at the local level but also built upon and reinforced a preexisting physical barrier that reminded Molina residents of their second-class citizenship. Speaking of the American Southwestern barrio as a whole, urban historian David R. Díaz argues, "Youth internalized the insensitivity of public officials' devaluation of their neighborhood and reacted accordingly." The physical barriers symbolically limited the horizons of the neighborhood's youth who were denied entry to the post-war American Dream. In the words of ethnographer Jay MacLeod in his analysis of northeastern urban youth, "For them the American Dream, far from being a genuine prospect, is not even a dream. It is a hallucination."[30] Consequently, many Molina youths in the 1950s and 1960s coped with marginalization with crime and violence, "by-products of such neglect," that unfortunately strengthened the bad reputation of the Molina Addition to the city of Corpus Christi for decades to come.[31]

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[28] "Opposing Views on Land for City Park Debated," *Corpus Christi Times*, June 25, 1965.

[29] "City Told it has No Title to Plot," *Corpus Christi Times*, July 29, 1963.

[30] Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspiration and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 2004), 5.

[31] Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism*, 147.

4.2 Life in Mo-Town

Academically speaking, historians have given gangs as a subject in post-World War II Chicano history very little attention. However, gang members, like community activists, are agents that in one way or another assert their existence in a given time and place. Although their goals radically differ from activist organizations, gangs too act in a way that reflects their environment when they collectively raise their voice in a society intent on silencing them. They deserve a place in the historical narrative because their presence adds depth to our understanding of the post-WWII American barrio and ghetto, or as Albert M. Camarillo terms it, the Borderhood. And while sociologists, criminologists, and ethnographers deserve most of the credit for contributing toward a deeper understanding of gang life in the United States, their analyses are often told from the perspective of the outside researcher looking in. Moreover, their analyses lack a complex historical perspective and context as their scope is commonly restricted to the temporal span in which they conduct their research. This does not mean that their research is useless to the historian. In fact, the opposite is true: non-historical academic discourse of gang life in the U.S. serves as a foundation from which a historical analysis can develop.[32]

Most of the scholarship attributes the development of youth gangs in urban areas to a neighborhood's physical isolation from its host city, poor schooling, political marginalization, neglected infrastructure, and racism. As Mike Davis writes in his forward to John Hagedorn's *A World of Gangs*, "Gangs, in the most straightforward sense, mint power for the otherwise

[32] For more on gangs in the United States, see Mark M. Lanier and Stuart Henry, *Essential Criminology* 3rd edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 242-251; Miguel Melendez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008); David Montejano, *Sancho's Journal: Exploring the Political Edge with the Brown Berets* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012); Díaz, *Barrio Urbanism.*

powerless from their control of small urban spaces: street corners, slums, playgrounds, parks, schools, prison dormitories, even garbage dumps."[33] Molina was no exception. It is therefore unsurprising that many Molina youth turned to gang life in the 1950s and 1960s.

However, to label groups of violent youths from Corpus Christi's barrios as "gangs" is unfair. Jay MacLeod argues that to gain an understanding of what the social structure looks like from the bottom, we must let individuals from the bottom "speak to us" as we "strive to understand them on their own terms."[34] This is to say that Molina youths did not consider themselves a "gang," although some groups in other cities did. Violence between groups was territorial according to neighborhood affiliation. Rejecting the "gang" label was common for youths across the country in the 1950s and 1960s, as evidenced by oral histories and written documentation.[35] For example, Jerry Alonzo recalls that in Laredo, "Belonging to a barrio was, not a gang, but an area where that was your turf. Certainly back then when I was a kid, it was kind of scary," because "one barrio was going after another and after school there was going to be a big fight and stuff like that. So you tried to stay to your barrio. You didn't really wander off."[36] Similarly, speaking of his Puerto Rican barrio in the Bronx, Miguel Meléndez writes in *We Took the Streets*, "Venturing outside the territory often meant getting a beating."[37] Again, this was the case in the Molina Addition and other Corpus Christi barrios.

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[33] Quoted from Lanier and Henry, *Essential Criminology,* 242.

[34] MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It,* 6.

[35] Judge Paul A. Martineau of Corpus Christi, Texas, commented on one of the largest supposed "gang fights" in the history of the Molina Addition up to that point in 1961: "I find no evidence that this incident involved organized gangs as such," "Gang Fight Youths put on Probation," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 30, 1961.

[36] Jerry Alonzo, interview with David Robles, July 11, 2015, Laredo, Texas, *Civil Rights in Black and Brown Oral History Project.*

[37] Melendez, *We Took the Streets,* 48.

On March 22, 1961, a "rumble" of teenaged "gang members" broke out on the site of Laguna Park, which was once the site of the Laguna Acres pit, *El tanque*. One narrator, who lived across the street from the park, recalls that evening well. As a ninth grade student at the time, she remembers that rumors had been circulating at school that day about boys from a nearby barrio who were going to Laguna Park to start trouble. That evening, boys from the other barrio met up with the Molina group at the park. The narrator and her sister "were glued to the window," watching the boys from Molina and from the other barrio arrive to the park in numerous cars. Violence ensued almost immediately. During the fight a neighbor called the police. They later arrived in a convoy of paddy wagons and arrested twenty-four boys. Police reports indicate that at least *forty-eight* other boys had evaded the police. Police confiscated a "pile of guns, tire tools, baseball bats, lengths of pipe, chains, and other lethal weapons dropped to the ground" when they arrived. According to the narrator, several of the boys evaded arrest by having climbed up trees and hidden until the police left the scene. The next day in school, very few boys attended class because many of them had been arrested. According to police, such a large outbreak of violence among barrios was both unprecedented and "the type of thing we have been dreading and trying to prevent for years."[38]

The Molina Addition's reputation as a dangerous place existed before the 1961 barrio rumble and continues to the present.[39] Although local publications' rhetoric and the racist opinions from the city's Anglos were much to blame for the majority of Molina's bad reputation,

[38] "24 Arrested: 'Rumble' of Teenage Gang Being Studied," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 23, 1961; Ángelica Castañón in interview with her husband, Lee Castañón, interview by author, March 20, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[39] Hilton, interview with author, 2014; Gilda Medina, interview with author, March 2, 2015, Round Rock, Texas; Elizabeth Riggle, "Coastal Bend Neighborhoods: Molina," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 21, 2011.

some of it was warranted according to oral history narrators.[40] Violence with other neighborhoods and crime in Molina was the norm. Molina feuded with nearby barrios including Los Encinos, located southeast of the Molina Addition, and Chula Vista located directly east. Some of the longest lasting rivalries, however, formed with other barrios including La Cuarenta and La Arboleda, old neighborhoods that were once collectively known as Westport.[41]

In the 1950s and 1960s, the violence was "limited" to melee weapons like clubs, bats, chains, pipes, and fists. It was "nothing compared to the kind of stuff we see today with guns," reminisced several oral history narrators. Although that recollection may not align with the numerous newspaper reports that indicate that guns were present and shootings did occur, the two versions of that past are not incompatible. As historian Monica Perales explains, two seemingly contradictory recollections are "absolutely essential for understanding the other" and that the "balancing memory and historical context allows for a more complicated view of the past."[42] In this case, some of the persons who remembered the barrio as one without gun violence described themselves as "square," as having had strict parents who "sheltered" them, or as "good kids" who did not get into serious trouble. Therefore, it is unsurprising that they did not hear of gun violence or experienced it as frequently as newspapers reported that activity. Whether or not they participated in them, however, all of the narrators did remember and speak of the frequent gun-free brawls that broke out in the neighborhood.

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[40] Alvarado, interview with author, 2015; Brian Rivera, interview with author, May 19, 2015, Corpus Christi, Texas; Silvas, interview with author, 2015.

[41] Anecdotally speaking, I personally recall my grandfather Miguel Ramos having objected to my grandmother's suggestion that they purchase a home in the Molina Addition sometime in the early 2000s. According to my then seventy-year-old grandfather, there was still tension between his barrio, "*La Cuare* hood," (short for *La Cuarenta*) and the Molina barrio.

[42] Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering A Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 11.

Youths from other barrios who entered Molina would risk receiving a group beating at the hands of black and Chicano teenagers who defended their neighborhood. The same would happen to Molina youths when they stepped out of their boundaries. If "you crossed that big ditch, and if they catch you there, they will want to know why you're there," explained Johnnie Bryant. Other times, questioning hardly preceded the brawls that broke out at the bridge over *el ditche* between "Mo-Town," as Molina youth called themselves, and C.V. (Chula Vista), L.E. (Los Encinos), and "La Cuare" (short for La Cuarenta, The 40 Area).[43] One narrator summed up as he pointed down to the ground, "Across the ditch, this is Mo-Town."[44]

In Molina as early as 1948, reports publicized the amount of violence that the neighborhood witnessed within its own borders as well.[45] Knife fights and shootings were common, especially in bars, where violent confrontations unfolded against individuals from outside of the borderhood. The notorious *Alma Latina* (Latin Soul) Bar in the Molina Addition was the setting of numerous brutal fights, one of which left the owner of the bar with gunshot wounds.[46] Violence in the neighborhood was so common that as far as Corpus Christi residents were concerned, the Molina Addition was where even the "friendliest" of arguments ended with knifings and hospital visits.[47] During the 1950s, newspapers reported on the amount of drugs that

[43] "La Cuarenta's Lantern-Light Boxers," *Corpus Christi Times,* July 15, 1955; "Youth Wounded By Gang in Evident Revenge Try," *Corpus Christi Times,* July 22, 1963; "Youth Treated after Beating by Teenagers," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 1, 1963.

[44] Treviño, interview with author, 2015.

[45] "Man Shot in Affray near Beer Tavern," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 17, 1948.

[46] "Five Jailed After Brawl in Club; Sailor Attacked," *Corpus Christi Times,* June 12, 1956; "Armed Bandits Rob Blub Owner: 4 Escape with $112 in Molina Addition Holdup," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 30, 1957.

[47] "Friendly Argument," *Corpus Christi Times,* April 18, 1955; "Weekend Burglaries Reported Over City," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 13, 1963.

had made their way through the Molina Addition for distribution throughout the state as it hosted numerous gambling rings and saw multiple robberies.[48] As a borderhood, it is likely that law enforcement abused their power and that reporters sensationalized the events in the Molina Addition, which was also common throughout the country in minority neighborhoods.[49] To those who did not reside in the non-Anglo west side, violence and gang life plagued the city's ethnic Mexican and African American neighborhoods. But to those from the Molina Addition, Mo-Town was "a very safe place—if you lived there."[50]

Violence was obviously not the only way that Molina youth passed their time. Most of the youth played sports or played outside like "normal kids." Laguna Park was not merely the site of a single, large gang brawl with other neighborhoods; it was also the location of *several* nonviolent football and baseball games between kids from Molina and from other barrios. Víctor Treviño remembers that Laguna Park and the large area behind Skinner Elementary school were "like our *Sandlot*," referencing the 1993 film that told the story of a group of neighborhood boys who spent their summers playing baseball in a similar Southern California space in the 1960s. From those makeshift fields and from the organized West Oso HS teams, some Molina residents became professional athletes including Riley Odoms, tight end for the Denver Broncos in the

[48] Some of the many examples: "Two Arrested, 22 Pounds of Marijuana Seized Here," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 5, 1952; "Seven Fined on Charges of Gambling," *Corpus Christi Times,* July 21, 1953; "Ten Men Held on Gaming Charges," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 17, 1953; "Special Deputy Arrests Man on Marijuana Law Violation," *Corpus Christi Times,* December 17, 1953; "Knifings, Robbery Keep Police Busy: Man Struck on Head with Beer Bottle; Brothers Beaten with Chains, Blackjacks," *Corpus Christi Times,* December 27, 1954; "Drug Store, 3 Schools Entered," *Corpus Christi Times,* February 14, 1955; "Weekend Burglaries Reported Over City," *Corpus Christi Times,* May 13, 1963.

[49] "Dolan Deputy Under Attack for Actions," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 24, 1955; "Ten Arrested After Coles Football Riot," *Corpus Christi Times,* October 21, 1954.

[50] Castañón, interview with author, 2015; Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Medina, interview with author, 2015; Torres, interview with author, 2015; Silvas, interview with author, 2015; Bryant, interview with author, 2015.

1970s, and Richard Sandate, left-handed pitcher for the Atlanta Braves and all-star in the Mexican Baseball League (*Liga Mexicana de Beisbol*). Additionally, Dr. John W. Skinner trained hundreds of Molina boys in boxing. Many became successful Golden Gloves fighters across the state, most notably the Guillen brothers—Tito, Gilbert, and Richard—all of whom eventually became professional prizefighters in the 1960s.[51]

For the majority of other young people who were not involved in turf wars or in sports, the unpaved streets were themselves a place of building Mo-Town unity. Grass ditches ran along those roads in front of the small homes. It is in those ditches where youths spent a large portion of their time congregating with one another. Some even skipped school and found them a useful place to play hooky.[52] Molina youth found sanctuary in those ditches; it was a safe space for the children and adolescents who sought an escape from the harsh realities of extreme poverty. It was where the youth would come together to "mingle, talk, laugh, [and] cry." Often, "We had nowhere to go but the ditch." When it rained, it was a "perfect" time to play in them, despite parents' opposition. Parents did not allow their kids to go into "that nasty water that had tadpoles, but we [children] used to love it." Residents remember that as young people, they caught those tadpoles in a jar, nurtured them to fully developed frogs, and released them into the borderhood waterways. When they were empty and dry, children and adolescents lied in the ditches with their backs against the inclines at night and gazed up at the stars for hours at a time

[51] Joe Scherrer, "Greatest Golden Gloves Assured as Early Tourney List Totals 132," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, January 15, 1956; Castañón, interview with author, 2015; Treviño, interview with author, 2015; "Tito Guillen," BoxRec, http://boxrec.com/boxer/151207, accessed October 11, 2015; "Richard Guillen," BoxRec, http://boxrec.com/boxer/152530, accessed October 11, 2015; and "Gilbert Guillen," BoxRec, http://boxrec.com/boxer/152530, accessed October 11, 2015.

[52] Minutes, February 10, 1965, West Oso ISD.

before having to return to their realities as underprivileged children of one of Corpus Christi's many slums.[53]

Unquestionably, many of the ways that black and Mexican kids spent their time in Molina was unsafe. Neighborhood activists responded. Without adequate parks, safe streets, or clean meeting spaces for neighborhood youth, community leaders planned in the middle 1960s to target Molina as the next battleground in the federal War on Poverty. Carrying on their struggle to improve neighborhood conditions, members of the American GI Forum initiated efforts to bring federal dollars into the neighborhood. Area members of the NAACP meanwhile initiated the struggle to improve roads, recreational facilities, and overall housing. Religious groups had joined the struggle as well. Because of the loosely affiliated efforts between different civil rights activists, black and ethnic Mexican Molina and West Oso residents witnessed a dramatic transformation of their borderhood in a relatively short period.

4.3 The War on Poverty in Molina

Some historians have borrowed language from the historiography of African American freedom struggles to present the "Long" War on Poverty thesis. In an attempt to make civil rights history "harder to simplify, appropriate, and contain," historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall argues that the Long Civil Rights Movements "took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s, was intimately tied to the 'rise and fall of the New Deal Order,' accelerated during World War II, stretched far beyond the South, was continuously and ferociously contested, and in the 1960s and

[53] Kay Hines, interview with author, 2015; Medina, interview with author, 2015; Rafael and Silvia Alvarado, interview with author, 2015; Treviño, interview with author, 2015; Alfredo and Ether Torres, interview with author, 2015; Bryant, interview with author, 2015; Guillen, interview with author, 2015; Silvas, interview with author.

1970s inspired a 'movement of movements' that 'def[ies] and narrative of collapse."[54] Similarly, in his analysis of activism in Mathis, Texas, historian Felipe Hinojosa attempts to reveal how the Long War on Poverty played out in the small South Texas town. He traces it from LULAC's report on the Mexican side of town's general blight in 1948, to the operation of religious groups' health clinics in the 1950s, and to the struggle for federal funding, which merged with the Chicano Movement in the 1960s.[55]

However, the notion of the Long Movement in African American history is problematic because as historians Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang argue, "it collapses periodization schemas, erases conceptual differences between waves of the Black Liberation Movement, [and] blurs regional distinctions in the African American experience." They argue that the Long Movement thesis's "major flaw is its ahistorical *totalizing perspective.* By this we mean the tendency to flatten chronological, conceptual, and geographic differences."[56] In other words, the thesis favors a strict top-down approach. Similarly, Hinojosa overlooks actor agency for the sake of writing a convenient narrative. Historians and students of history must embrace complexity, especially of an understudied community like Mathis or the community located a mere thirty-five miles away, the Molina Addition.

During the middle 1960s through the 1970s, radical Black Power or Chicano nationalist groups like the Black Panthers or the Brown Berets were absent in Molina. Although some

[54] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," in *The Journal of American History* Vol. 91, No. 4 (March 2005), 1234-1235; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," in *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 92, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 265-288.

[55] Felipe Hinojosa, *¡Medicina Si Muerte No!:* Race, Public Health, and the 'Long War on Poverty' in Mathis, Texas, 1948-1971," in *Western Historical Quarterly* 44 (Winter 2013): 427-458.

[56] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long' Movement as Vampire," *The Journal of African American History,* 265, 279

individual youths adopted the politics of confrontation, there were little to no efforts to organize. If there were organizing efforts, they were most likely halted by older activists who subscribed to the politics of supplication rather than the politics of confrontation. Of the leaders who represented Molina interests in the late 1960s and sympathized with confrontational movements, none openly or publicly announced their affiliation with them.[57] As a result, the Molina Addition did not produce Black Power or Chicano groups—groups that were integral to the introduction of antipoverty programs in most Texas cities—because leadership was held firmly by members of groups like LULAC, the American GI Forum, and the NAACP, organizations of the previous generation of activism. Nonetheless, Molina members of those organizations, including religious ones, succeeded in transforming the neighborhood.

Johnny Bilano, chairperson of the American GI Forum's Molina chapter in the 1960s, led the first efforts to bring War on Poverty dollars to the neighborhood. As an administrator at West Oso ISD schools, Bilano and other Molina Forum members formed the West Oso Community Action Group in 1964 as a subcommittee of the Forum. The group applied for benefits offered by the Economic Opportunities Act. Under Bilano's leadership, the West Oso Community Action Group teamed up with the West Oso ISD school board, the Molina Civic Association, West Oso PTA groups, and religious organizations. Different members of the West Oso Community Action Group took on different responsibilities to introduce to Molina after school tutoring centers, an adult literacy program, a community library, recreation programs, a community health clinic, and the Neighborhood Improvement Program.[58] Bilano focused his time and energy on introducing educational programs to the neighborhood.

[57] Carlos Truan, interview with Jose Ángel Gutiérrez, June 17, 1998, Corpus Christi, Texas.

[58] "Molina Forum Fights Poverty," *The Forumeer,* San José, California, June 1965.

With funds approved to make their way to the Molina and West Oso area, the first in the area to receive federal funding, the West Oso ISD school board nominated Bilano to direct the Head Start Program beginning in summer 1965. Within months, the program had a location and a full staff. According to Bilano, the introduction of the program to the neighborhood sparked a "happy feeling" among residents who felt that "for the first time they may look forward to something better."[59] In the first two months of the program, it became clear to residents and Bilano that the program was a success. By spring 1967, the district's Head Start Program had served close to 600 students who received instruction in English, medical and dental examinations, a small breakfast, and a hot lunch. When the school board appointed Bilano to the position of coordinator of Federal Funds Projects, additional federal education programs made their way to the area, including adult basic education classes and after school study centers.[60]

Bilano resigned from his position at the West Oso ISD but maintained a close relationship with War on Poverty initiatives in the neighborhood and throughout the city. As a member of the American GI Forum and LULAC, he became the director of Service Employment Redevelopment (SER), an antipoverty measure focused on migrant education and employment. Bilano later joined workers' struggles across the state, most notably the 1967 Farm Workers' strike in the Rio Grande Valley and the 1969 Sanitation Workers' strike in Corpus Christi. He also protested the poor conditions of Corpus Christi schools, and later became an officer for the non-profit Corpus Christi Community Development Corporation in the 1970s.[61]

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[59] Minutes, April 4, 1965, West Oso ISD.

[60] "1st Round of City Poverty Fight is Well Under Way," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* April 4, 1965; West Oso ISD, minutes, January 18, 1968; *Progreso,* West Oso Independent School District Newsletter, Spring 1967 in Kilgore Collection at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Special Collections Archive, 5058 (hereafter cited as Kilgore Collection).

[61] "Anti-Poverty Program Here Due Discussion," *Corpus Christi Times,* April 24, 1965; "Youth Education, Job Panel to Meet," *Corpus Christi Times,* March 18, 1969; "Sanitation Strike Vote Set Today," *Corpus Christi*

Religious institutions in the Molina Addition made a significant contribution to the development of the neighborhood as well. Dr. W.H. Colson, Director of Missions for the Corpus Christi Baptist Association, described the Molina Addition prior to the 1970s: "The Molina acres was one of the most depressed areas that I think I have ever seen in my life. And in the past two years, I have visited in about twenty different countries and I have gone into city areas, in some really depraved areas, but I've never seen anything worse than Molina was; bad streets, everything terrible."[62] Church groups and religious leaders felt obligated to vocalize their concerns for the neighborhood. One of the most vocal opponent of such devastating poverty was Reynell Parkins of St. Martin's Episcopal Church.

Reynell Parkins was born in Panama to Jamaican parents in 1917. After completing school, he attended the University of Oregon where he was drafted for military service in 1942. After his service in World War II, he enrolled at New York University, where he completed his bachelor's degree in sociology in 1948. He then attended law school there and earned a juris doctor degree in 1950. Parkins moved to Corpus Christi after nine years of practicing criminal law and within two years left to the Episcopal Theological Seminary of Alexandria, Virginia, where he earned a bachelor of divinity degree in 1964. He was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church later that year and established the "tri-ethnic" St. Martin's Episcopal Church in

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Caller-Times, May 31, 1969; "Huerta Quits Post with Operation SER," *Corpus Christi Times*, August 20, 1969; "Wynn Seale School Study is Ordered," *Corpus Christi Times*, September 16, 1969; "Project Really Gave Students a 'Head Start'," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, August 15, 1965; "Rev. Krueger's Dismissal Deplored," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 15, 1969; "County's Operation Head Start Begins in Earnest Tomorrow," June 20, 1965; "67 in Migrant Training Program," *Corpus Christi Times*, October 15, 1969; "Operation SER Duties Explained," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, August 9, 1969.

[62] Dr. W.H. Colson, interview with Alcides Guajardo, February 9, 1979, Corpus Christi, Texas, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

the Molina Addition upon his return to Corpus Christi (see *Figure B.5*). During the 1960s, Parkins also became a columnist for the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times.*[63]

Parkins dedicated his life to improving the lives of the poor and showed a great concern for the people of the Molina Addition. Most importantly, Parkins had a deep understanding of how the intersection of race, class, gender, ecology, education, housing, and employment affected the lives of residents from "our" Mexican American and African American barrios and ghettos across the city. One reporter said of Parkins, "Being a Negro, he understands the feelings of the Negroes of South Texas as no white or Mexican American is likely to do. Being Panamanian by birth, he is fluent in Spanish and at home in the Hispanic American culture." Parkins strongly believed that "Mexican and Indian history need to be implemented in institutions of higher education," and that "Black history is a vital part of American history and it should be emphasized just like any other course." A proponent of birth control and opening women's clinics in poverty-stricken areas, Parkins met with women's groups across the city to hear their concerns. He also publicly criticized religious organizations, government institutions, and activist groups that fell short of achieving their goals as public servants. As ex-reporter for the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* Thurma Hilton explained, Reynell Parkins "did not mince words. He called things like they were."[64]

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[63] Reynell Parkins, "Law Keeps Me Alive," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* September 15, 1968; "UT Professor Speaks Tuesday," *The War Whoop,* Abilene, Texas, February 17, 1971; "Weekend Encounter Opens Series at Western Hills," *El Paso Herald-Post,* April 29, 1972; "Reynell Parkins at Commencement," *The Record,* Austin, Texas, July 21, 1975; "Reynell M. Parkins – WWII Enlistment Record, Lane County, Oregon," MooseRoots, http://wwii-army.mooseroots.com/l/7994265/Reynell-M-Parkins, accessed February 12, 2015.

[64] "Church Women: Talk Planned by Priest," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 27, 1965; Reynell Parkins, "Status Quo has Real Power," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* May 11, 1969; Reynell Parkins, "What Are City's Priorities in Parks, Services?" *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* June 15, 1969; Reynell Parkins, "Evil Doesn't Come in Absolute Form," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* July 27, 1969; "Dedicated Champion," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* August 3, 1969; "Tools for Combating Ghetto Problems Called Inadequate," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* September 14, 1969; "Blacks Still Strive for Equality," *San Antonio Light,* March 22, 1973; Reynell Parkins, "Evil Doesn't Come in Absolute Form," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* July 27, 1969; "UT Professor Proposes Radical Changes in Educational System," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal,* November 8, 1970; "Reynell Parkins at

One of the first initiatives that he and the church began was a bilingual education program hosted at St. Martin's Episcopal Church. Parkins was fluent in Spanish and regularly taught children under six years old in Spanish and in English. He explained, "The acceptance of Spanish as an asset in the school is very important to the Mexican American child…You accept what he brings as well as what he is." Later, Parkins and clergymen of the St. Martin's Episcopal Church, namely the progressive Anglo Reverend James Sigler, focused their efforts on building a small, summer community program in the Molina Addition, located at 4509 Barrera Street. It became the headquarters of a group called the Corpus Christi Tennis Shoe Club. The club bought shoes for Molina children who were regularly barefoot at school and in the neighborhood.[65]

The building at 4509 Barrera became where local ethnic Mexican Golden Gloves boxers trained and where Parkins envisioned a larger community center and a swimming pool. Facing a depleting federal antipoverty budget, the West Oso ISD was unable to assist in the development of the center. Moreover, Mexican American organizations were unwilling assist Parkins in the project. By the summer of 1969, the building at 4509 Barrera had closed, the grounds were high with weeds and the children were "turned out on to the streets of our city for three months." He called out local groups, most likely, the American GI Forum and LULAC, and said, "It is time for Mexican American leadership to recognize and deal with its own responsibility, to look inside rather than outside, to organize our young people, provide needed tutorial and remedial work, provide recreational activities, and fight for the facilities that are lacking."[66]

Commencement," *The Record*, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin, July 21, 1975; Hilton, interview with author, 2014.

[65] Ed Deswysen, "Unique A&I Program to be Kept," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 15, 1968; Reynell Parkins, "Priorities for Mexican-Americans," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, June 8, 1969.

[66] Reynell Parkins, "Priorities for Mexican-Americans," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, June 8, 1969.

Parkins's struggle for community improvements did not end with the failure of 4509 Barrera. He pushed for new and improved housing in the Molina Addition over the decade. After he became convinced that the Corpus Christi Housing Authority would not construct new public housing apartments in the area, he and other community leaders organized the non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) of Corpus Christi, "the poor man's Federal Housing Administration." The CDC of Corpus Christi received numerous donations from small business owners and residents across the city. It would grant poor families loans at low interest rates so that they could afford homes and improvements to existing housing. Under the leadership of Reynell Parkins with the assistance of Reverend James Sigler, the 113-unit Cliff Maus Village Apartments was constructed on the eastern edge of the Molina neighborhood in 1969. Shortly thereafter, Parkins left to accept a faculty position at the University of Austin's school of architecture. He later took a tenure position at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1976.[67]

As Johnny Bilano worked to improve educational programs in the neighborhood and Reynell Parkins struggled for better recreation and housing facilities, Welder Brown of the West Oso ISD school board and his wife Earmeane Mae Brown worked tirelessly to improve the overall state of the Molina Addition in the years 1965 to 1970. Leading the petition drives that

[67] Advertisement, "Opportunity and Challenge to You!" The Community Development Corporation, *Corpus Christi Times*, July 25, 1968; Dean Thorpe, "'68 Was Best Year in Commercial Building," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 9, 1969; Lynn Faivre, "Low-Income Housing Aid Coming," *Express and News*, San Antonio, Texas, September 10, 1972; "St. John's to Get New Rector Oct. 15," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, Corsicana, Texas, October 7, 1972; "UT Professors Speaks Tuesday," *The War Whoop*, February 17, 1971; Commission for Blacks, "Black Faculty Promotions and Tenure List 1976 and Faculty Turnover" (1976), *Faculty and Staff Reports and Communication*, http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_blackfacultyreports/38, accessed February 12, 2015.

both Bilano and Parkins supported for neighborhood infrastructural improvements, the Browns "worked hand in hand, often in different directions, to take care of different parts of the city."[68]

Both were members of the NAACP and participated at the state and national level of the organization in different capacities. Earmeane Mae Brown served as a state coordinator for the NAACP and represented a group of members that lobbied for the creation of a statewide Human Relations Commission in Texas. The Browns organized fundraisers throughout the community, hosted community meetings with other neighborhood residents and prominent local leaders in their home, and petitioned the city council to improve roads and sidewalks in the neighborhood.[69]

In the late 1960s, Welder and Earmeane Mae Brown enlisted in voluntary assessment programs, publicized the need for bond funds, and petitioned to introduce the Federal Community Development Program to the neighborhood so that they could remove the open-ditch drainage, pave roads, and install sidewalks and lampposts in the Molina Addition. They held voter registration drives and assisted residents to polling stations in the successful 1967 bond election for citywide street improvements. In 1969, under the supervision of Earmeane Mae Brown, the city received $1.8 million from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to supplement the budget to improve the neighborhood; $717,337 of that amount went to the Molina Addition. Construction began on December 7, 1970. By spring 1972, the number of substandard homes owned by ethnic Mexicans and African Americans in the Molina Addition decreased from 611 in the fall 1969, down to ninety-one. At the same time, Mrs.

[68] Kay Hines, interview with author, 2015; "Molina Forum Fights Poverty," *The Forumeer*, June 1965.

[69] Kay Hines, interview with author, 2015; "Human Relations at NAACP Meet," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, May 18, 1969; "Chapter Names Five Delegates," *Corpus Christi Times*, March 5, 1969.

Earmeane Mae Brown served on the Community Development Corporation as an elected officer alongside Dr. W.H. Colson of the Corpus Christi Baptist Association, and later with Johnny Bilano in the 1970s. She also served with the Church Women United, which introduced and partly funded the Molina Neighborhood Center and daycare that arrived to the neighborhood in the middle 1960s.[70]

As Reynell Parkins's disapproval of area Mexican American leaders suggests, War on Poverty leaders clashed when their diverse goals, strategies, and group affiliations became incompatible with one another. For example, Alberto Luera explained in a 1996 interview that LULAC leader William Bonilla fired him from the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) project in Molina for his affiliation with a "radical group" of Chicano students at Texas A&I University in Kingsville. In most places, VISTAs "were trained 'to buck the establishment,'" so when it arrived to Corpus Christi, the home of LULAC and the American GI Forum, groups known for their philosophy of working within the rules of the "establishment," VISTA programs failed almost immediately. The philosophies and strategies of VISTA's young staff were incompatible with the visions held by the older leaders who ran the programs. Even lifelong member of LULAC and the American GI Forum Johnny Bilano came under pressure for his involvement in workers strikes in the late 1960s. Ex-director of a local VISTA lamented after the "official" failure of the program in the city, "The establishment won. My program is dead."[71]

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[70] "Slate of New Officers Nominated by NAACP," *Corpus Christi Times,* November 23, 1968; "Dedication Slated at Park Center," *Corpus Christi Times,* December 4, 1968; "City Projects to Start in '69" *Corpus Christi Times,* January 8, 1969; "Housing Corporation Sets Annual Meetings," *Corpus Christi Times,* February 10, 1969; "Fewer People in Molina, Hillcrest to get Loans," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* February 16, 1969; "Zeal Plus a Zoo, Too," *Corpus Christi Times,* August 12, 1969; Don Rodman, "Magic Mile: Public Facilities Proliferate on West Side," *Corpus Christi Times,* February 24, 1976; Brown, "The Neighborhood Improvement Program in the Molina Subdivision."

[71] Alberto Luera, interview with Jose Ángel Gutiérrez, June 10, 1996, Laredo, Texas, CMAS; Bill Walraven, "VISTA Program Falls Short of Goals," *Corpus Christi Times,* September 23, 1968.

Because of these and other reasons listed above, it is problematic to group antipoverty efforts from different decades under one monolithic banner. They were all too different to fit with the Long War on Poverty thesis. To reduce all antipoverty measures from the 1950s and 1960s into the same "Long" thread is a disservice to the historian as well as to the individuals who participated in those efforts at the ground level. Lumping together Mexican American generation activism—represented by groups like LULAC and the American GI Forum—with middle to late 1960s activism led by black and religious groups is like grouping together the "classical" Civil Rights Movement and the succeeding Black Liberation Movement. It is an equivocation that undermines agency and overlooks the historical contexts in which different efforts emerged, developed, and died.

4.4 Conclusion

City officials stalled on improving Molina in the 1950s following annexation. By keeping its residents in substandard conditions, officials depended on the convenient excuse to engage in "slum clearance," an urban renewal process that relocated "slum dwellers" into housing projects and left room for the creation of "an attractive residential environment" in place of old barrios and ghettos.[72] However, those efforts on behalf of the city failed. Molina residents were fed up with the infancy death rate in the neighborhood that stemmed from the lack of running water. They collectively mourned for the children who lost their lives in the Molina pits. After the notorious barrio brawl of 1961 in Molina, police officer Jere Daniels commented that violence broke out because the youth had "absolutely nothing to do." Later, Welder and Earmeane Mae

[72] Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Comprehensive Plan for the Corpus Christi Area* (St. Louis Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1953), 63, 71-72.

Brown became driven to improve the physical landscape of the Molina Addition after having seen children play in unsafe streets and in the unsanitary ditches. Indeed, after neighborhood activists began their struggles, infant death rates plummeted; parents no longer worried if their child would be the next to drown in a pit; reports of youth violence virtually plunged; and many ethnic Mexican and African American families found decent, low-cost homes.

With so many drastic changes that the neighborhood experienced, one thing had remained constant whether adolescents were fighting with one another in hazardous slums, playing sports on empty lots, or participating in new neighborhood programs. The often neglected area in the west side of Corpus Christi, bordered by Rabbit Run Road to the east, Horne Road to the north, Old Brownsville Road to the west, and Lexington Drive to the south, was not simply a subdivision in Corpus Christi called the Molina Addition: it was Mo-Town, Texas. By 1970, the neighborhood was more than a mere collection of homes; it was a *community* of black and brown residents who collectively survived post-WWII American suburbanization and urban renewal efforts. The camaraderie that grew from isolation, neglect, and later survival strengthened as the decades progressed. "Molineros'" extreme loyalty to their fringe neighborhood and to one another was palpable to those who walked through Molina streets in the decades that followed; it remains that way in the year 2015.[73]

[73] Libby Averyt, "Residents stay loyal to place they call home," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, March 10, 1998; Brian Rivera, interview with author.

CONCLUSION

In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Laguna Park, the site of the infamous "rumble" of neighborhood teens, became a topic for discussion among city, neighborhood, church, and community activists. After the city filled *El Tanque* with dirt, Laguna Park had quickly devolved into a run down, dangerous, and unattractive lot. Beginning in the middle 1980s, a group of Viet Nam veterans from the Molina Addition began to petition for a memorial at the park to honor four Molina residents who lost their lives in the war. A marble monument was erected in 1987 that listed the names of the fallen Molina troops. More than two decades later, the group organized for a new addition to the park to include the names of every Molina resident, past and present, who served in the armed forces. The Molina Veterans Society has collected the names of nearly 300 Molina Veterans who served in Viet Nam alone. The park was renamed Molina Veterans Park in 2010. To the Viet Nam veterans and their families in Molina, their neighborhood became one of the few places in the city where their sacrifices could be recognized and commemorated. Located in the heart of Molina, the attractive monument and park is truly symbolic of the neighborhood's long history of isolation, loss, bereavement, struggle, and survival as a community. It is a claim to space and thereby an extension of the Molina ethos that began with the activist movements of the 1950s.[1]

The process beginning at blight, followed by community cooperation (with some level of conflict), and consequent triumph is a common trend in the trajectory of Molina's history. That process is often a protracted one that spans years, such as the fight for paved roads that ended successfully. Sometimes it is short and instantly successful, like the struggle to introduce the War on Poverty programs to the neighborhood. Other times, the process from disenfranchisement to

[1] "Priests organize town hall meetings," *The Bonham Daily Favorite*, Bonham, Texas, December 4, 1987.

triumph does not materialize and efforts fail, like the petition drive to relocate the Molina landfill. But by 1970, the Molina Addition became a thriving biracial neighborhood whose residents overcame exclusion as black and brown people of a historically neglected borderhood. Their "takeover" of the once segregated school district and their transformation of Molina allowed them to dismantle the inferiority complexes and to take pride in being residents of Mo-Town, Texas.

With that said, readers must keep in mind that, despite the success of biracial grassroots coalitions like the Molina Civic Association, activist-residents did not abandon the struggles unique to their racial and ethnic group across the city and the state. For example, Leo Adams, Irvin Brown, and Curtis Williams, leaders of the local NAACP who each served on the West Oso ISD school board at one point in the 1960s and 1970s, worked closely with Reverend Harold Branch at the city and state level of the organization, participating in struggles specific to the black community. Similarly, the trajectory of Johnny Bilano's career as summarized in Chapter 3 adds credence to that point. It is also worth noting that the Molina Addition's story does not end on a completely positive note in 1970. As a borderhood, it too experienced the circumstances that afflicted poor neighborhoods nationwide in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s like the crack epidemic, the reemergence of organized crime, recessions, and crackdowns on undocumented immigration. The success of biracial civil rights coalitions in the neighborhood did not exempt it from the hardships experienced by other barrios and ghettos across the country in the remainder of the century.

In the decades that followed, the greater Molina area expanded to include new low-income housing projects and middle-income housing developments. These include the Village on the Green Apartments and homes, Casa de Mañana Apartments, West Haven, and Seascape

Mobile Home Park (see *Figure B. 6* and *Figure C.16*). Some of the homes in the original Molina Addition are multiple stories and span several lots. Its numerous churches are some of the most attractive that the city of Corpus Christi has to offer, namely Our Lady of the Pilar Catholic Church, which is located directly across the street from Molina Veterans Park.

Over the years, the neighborhood also grew into a hub of artistic cultural production. Molina Veterans Park hosts annual festivals that honor fallen Tejano star and Molina native Selena Quintanilla. In early 2015, the Molina community made Texas headlines for having hosted the live performance of transgender Selena impersonator Honey Andrews after a local official had denied her the chance to perform at the downtown festival. Additionally, the Molina Neighborhood Center regularly holds public events like dances, concerts, and even wrestling matches. The neighborhood is also headquarters to a rapidly growing and popular clothing line, Crooked Christi Streetwear. Paying homage to the neighborhood's legacy of outspoken activists, Crooked Christi's slogan is a short, three-word call to action: Manipulate the System.[2]

Most of the residents interviewed in this study displayed a passionate bond to the place they view as the safest place they could live. A unique sense of trust between neighbors strengthened by their individual experiences of having lived in other parts of the city, state, and country. Mo-town, or sometimes referred to as Molinatown, U.S.A., is indeed a town in its own right. In a 1998 interview, County Attorney Carlos Valdez summed up the sentiment that residents still hold in 2015, "Wherever I go, I tell people I'm from Molina, not Corpus Christi… I'm proud to be from Molina."[3]

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[2] Jeff Winkler, "Amor Prohibido," *Texas Monthly,* September 2015; George Tuley, "Four Brothers from Molina Neighborhood spread positivity with Crooked Christi," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* June 21, 2015.

[3] Libby Averyt, "Residents stay loyal to place they call home," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* March 10, 1998.

APPENDIX A

ANNEXATION ADVERTISEMENTS

Figure A.1. "Annexation—Good for everybody!" The above advertisement ran for a few days with the hopes of instilling a desire among Corpus Christi residents to cooperate with their fringe neighbors and provide them utilities "quickly." *Corpus Christi Times*, September 22, 1954.

Corpus Christi Must Have Room To Grow

Home builders have a better opportunity than most to realize these things:

. . . . . **Already Corpus Christi is growing beyond its boundaries.**

. . . . . **Outside the city limits, where there are no restrictions, much of the development is unsightly, unsafe and a menace to the health of all of us.**

. . . . . **Annexation is the only way by which there can be a building code, a fire code, and health and sanitary regulations in areas that are being developed outside the city limits.**

There's Only One Way To Grow

Most cities can grow in four directions, but Corpus Christi, with bays east and north, can grow only in the direction of the annexation that has been proposed.

That is why Corpus Christi is spreading out into areas proposed for annexation. If we don't annex, other small municipalities may spring up and hem us in so we can never grow. Or else there may be still more haphazard, unsightly and unsafe development.

Build a City To Be Proud of

With annexation, development of fringe areas around present city limits will be orderly and economical rather than haphazard.

With annexation we can keep on building a city we can all be proud of.

(Paid Political Adv.)

Vote for

ANNEXATION

Vote for

BONDS

to make it possible

South Texas Home Builders Association

Figure A.2. "Corpus Christi Must Have Room to Grow," September 1954. Before the city initiated their dehumanization campaign for the annexation of Molina, officials feigned a sense of concern for neighborhood residents. *Corpus Christi Times,* September 24, 1954.

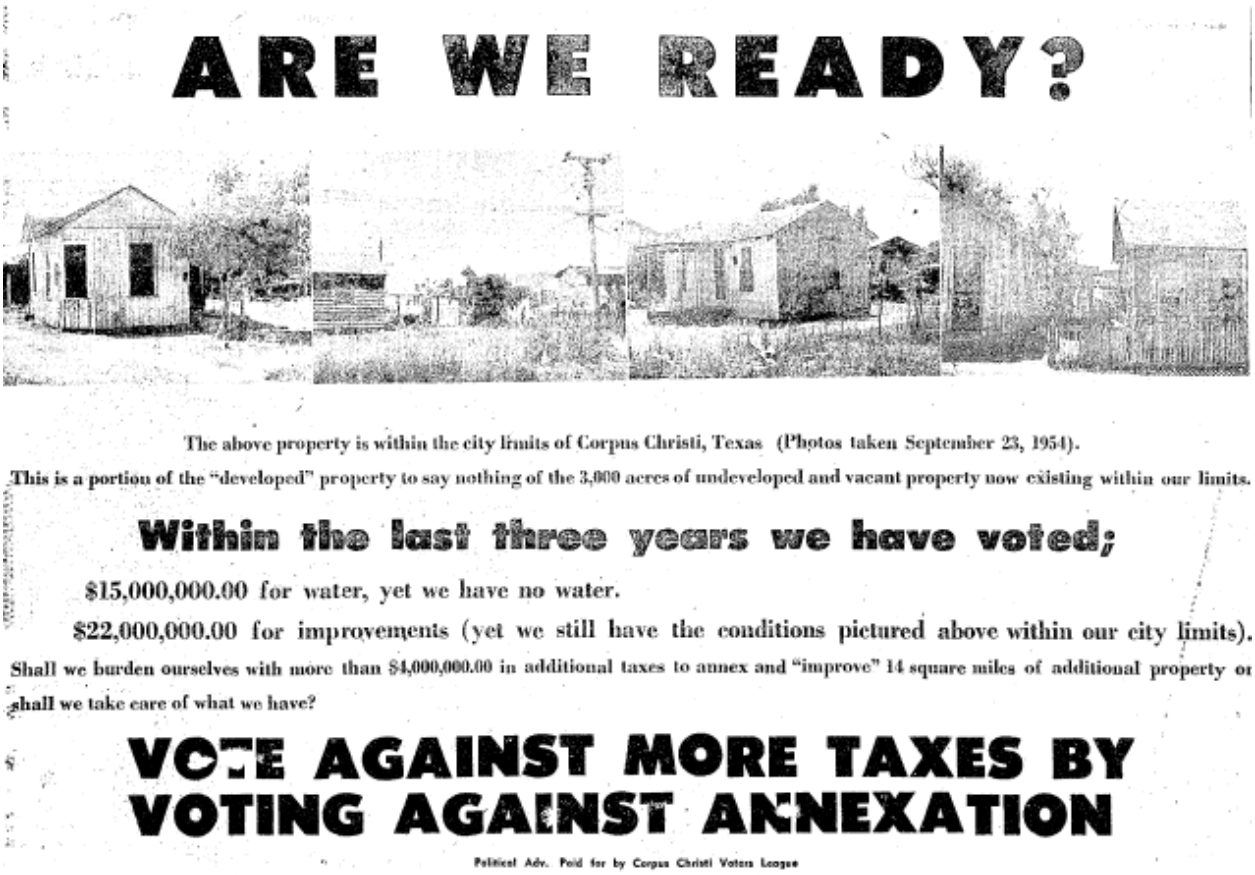
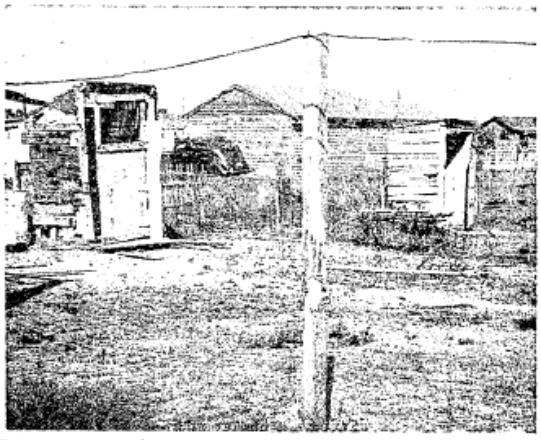


Figure A.3. "Are we Ready?" Westport residents felt betrayed after none of the improvements had arrived to their neighborhood following their annexation of 1945. *Corpus Christi Times*, September 24, 1954.

800 PIT PRIVIES
SURROUND CORPUS CHRISTI



This is a typical pit privy in one of the areas proposed for annexation. There are more than 800 like it surrounding Corpus Christi.

In areas proposed for annexation there are many hog pens like this one. And there are cow pens and chicken yards. They are a menace to the health of people in and near Corpus Christi.

Those 800 pit privies are a serious threat to the health of every man, woman and child in Corpus Christi. And there are more new ones every month.

Also, in the area proposed for annexation, there are cesspools and septic tanks that are overloaded and overflowing. And there are hog pens, cow lots and chicken yards.

Westport Proves:
Elimination of Pit Privies Saves Lives

In 1950 and 1951, before the drive to get rid of pit privies, 39 babies died of diarrhea. Thirty of these babies lived in Westport, and 23 in Corpus Christi—most of them in areas near Westport. Six were in Molina Addition which was beginning to be developed.

Now all except 41 pit privies in Corpus Christi have been eliminated, and diarrhea deaths have dropped to four in 1954.

We have almost gotten rid of one health menace that caused many deaths every year, but another one has been growing, and is still growing.

Annexation Is the Only Way To Get Rid of the Pit Privy Health Menace

Annexation is the only way that we can get rid of the health menace of pit privies, cow lots and hog pens.

With annexation we can have health and sanitary control and regulation to protect the health of the people against the menace of filth disease.

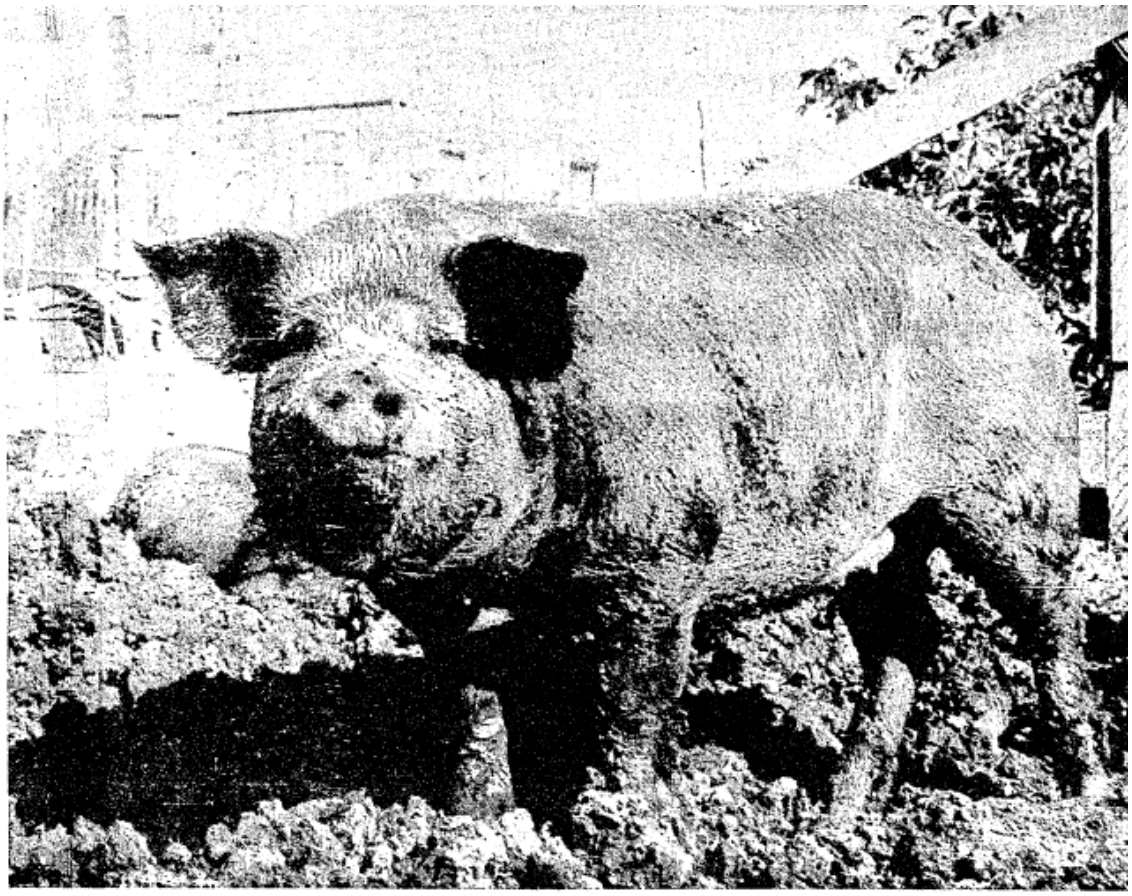
Annexation is the only way.

Vote for Annexation, Tuesday, October 26.

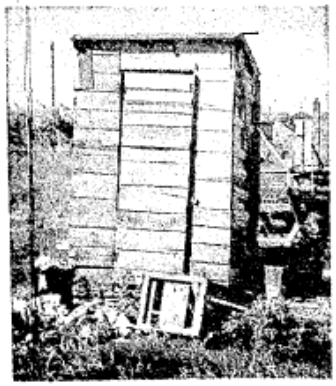
Vote for ANNEXATION

(Paid Political Advertisement)

Figure A.4. "800 Pit Privies Surround Corpus Christi," 1954. The city decided to use Westport as an example as to why annexation of slums was beneficial to the city, even though Westport residents publicized days earlier that the city had ignored their concerns. *Corpus Christi Times*, October 20, 1954.



Meet Your Neighbor!



One of more than 800 pit privies that surround Corpus Christi.

Maybe you didn't know it, but this hog and a lot more just like him are your neighbors. They live just outside the city limits, in the area proposed for annexation.

Besides hog pens like the one this fellow lives in there are many cow lots and chicken yards. There are more than 800 pit privies and hundreds of cesspools and septic tanks many of which are overloaded and overflowing.

City Boundaries Won't Stop Germs

The germs of contagious diseases grow in conditions of filth — in pit privies, in hog pens and cow lots that are just outside the city. And these germs won't stop at the city limits. The city's boundaries have no barricades against germs.

Annexation Will Bring Health and Sanitary Controls

Only with annexation can we get rid of the health menace that is in the hog pens, cow lots and pit privies just outside the city.

NEXT TUESDAY

(Paid Political Adv.)

Vote for ANNEXATION

Figure A.5. "Meet Your Neighbor!" The above advertisement is not the only instance wherein city officials used pigs to represent the Molina Addition. *Corpus Christi Times*, October 21, 1954.

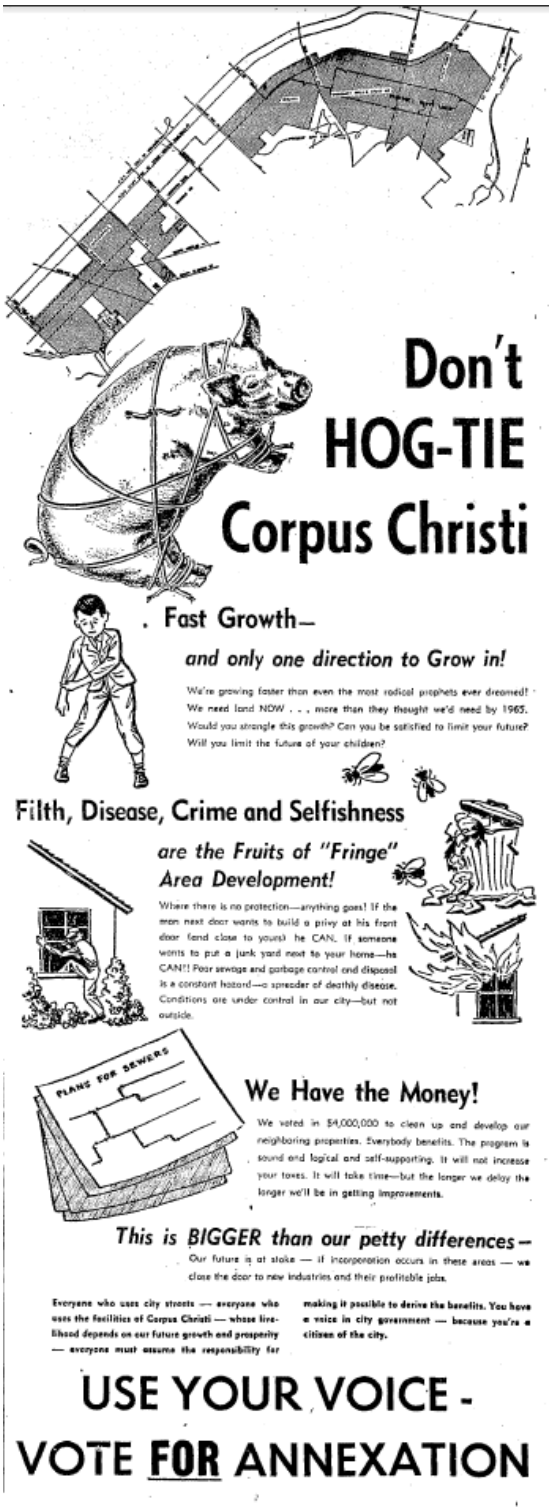


Figure A.5. "Don't' HOG-TIE Corpus Christi." One of the multiple pro-annexation ads that depicted filth, pigs, and crime as the main characteristics of the Molina Addition. It is ironic that in this ad, the city claims, "We Have the Money!" but within weeks following annexation, they came out publicly and said that they did not have the money to bring improvements to the area. *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, October 24, 1954.

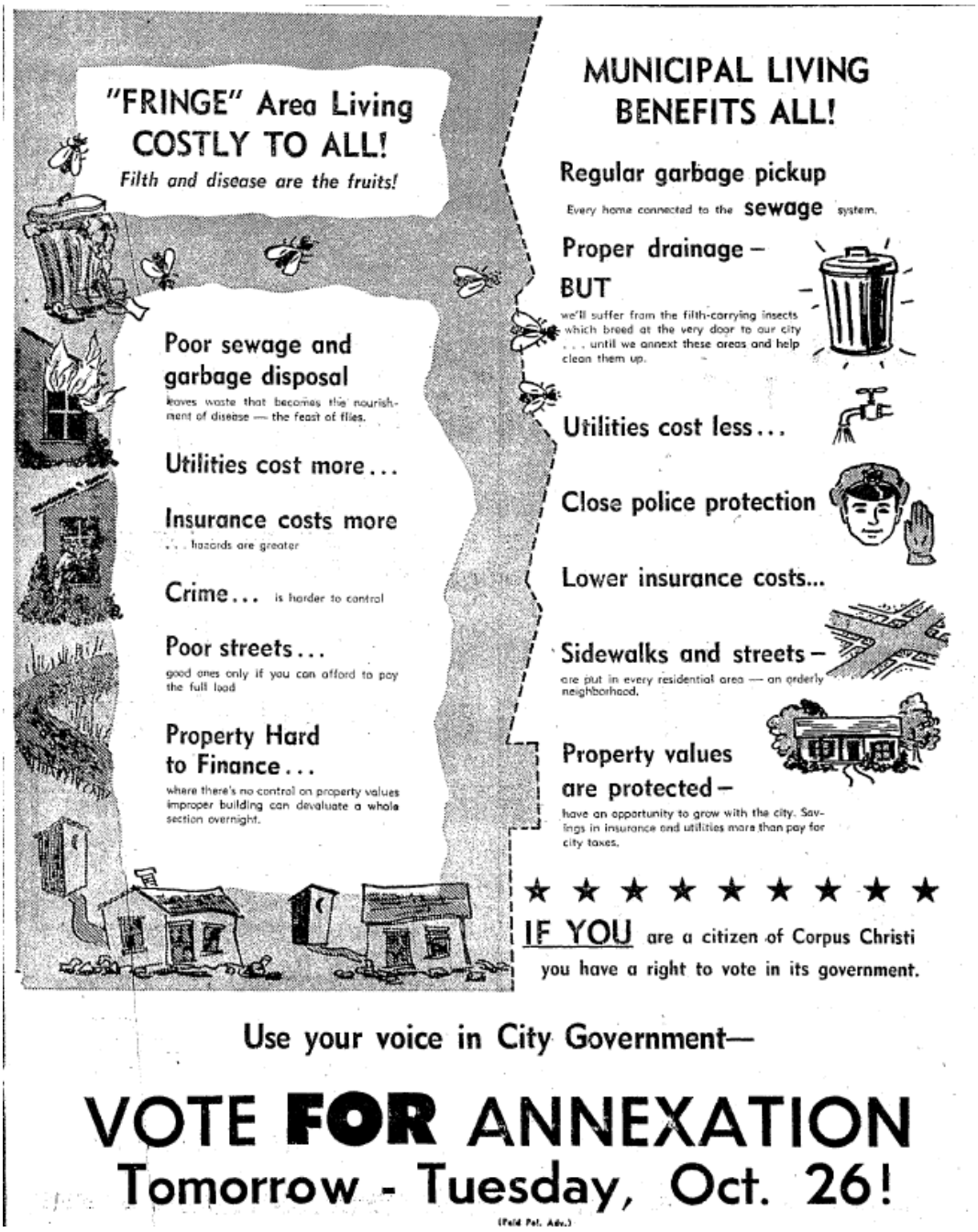


Figure A.3. "'Fringe' Area Living Costly to All!: Filth and Disease are the Fruits," 1954. Of the "benefits" listed on the right side of the advertisement, the only ones that arrived to Molina within a short period was police protection. *Corpus Christi Times*, October 25, 1954.

APPENDIX B

MAPS

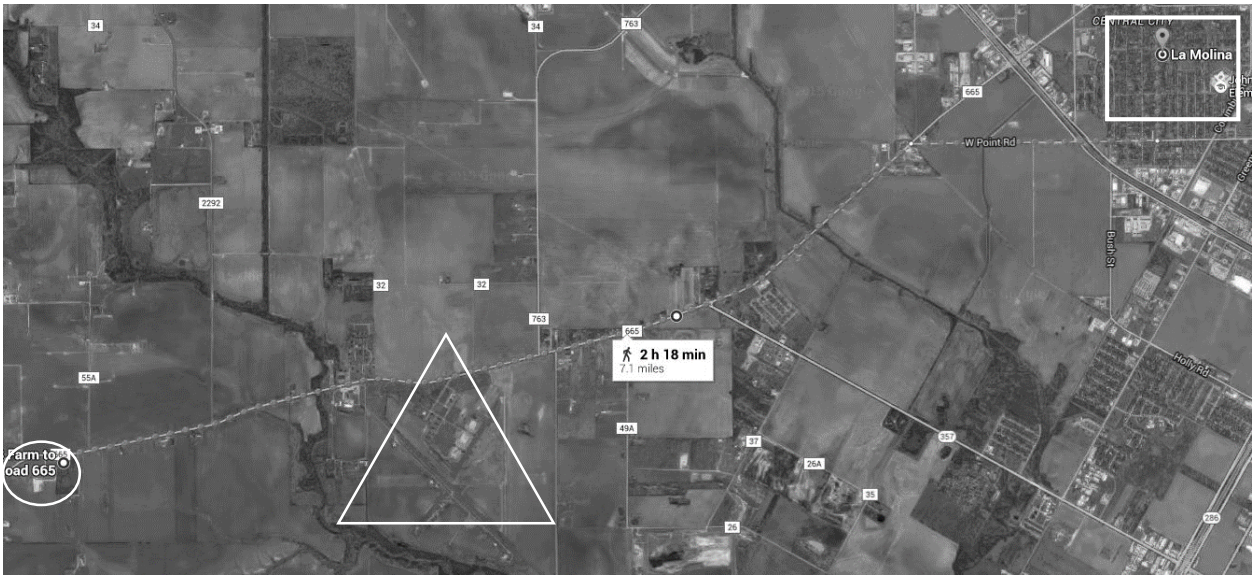


Figure B.1. Google Maps distance from "La Molina" to the site of the West Oso High School building that served Molina youth in the 1950s to 1970. Before the new West Oso High School building was introduced in 1970, students from Molina (marked by square) travelled seven miles to attend class at the dilapidated West Oso High School (marked by circle). For families who did not own a means of transportation, election days were problematic until the board relocated the polling stations to Hellman Elementary School in 1963. Cuddihy Field (marked by triangle), the abandoned airfield Molina students attended in the era of segregation, is five miles from Molina.

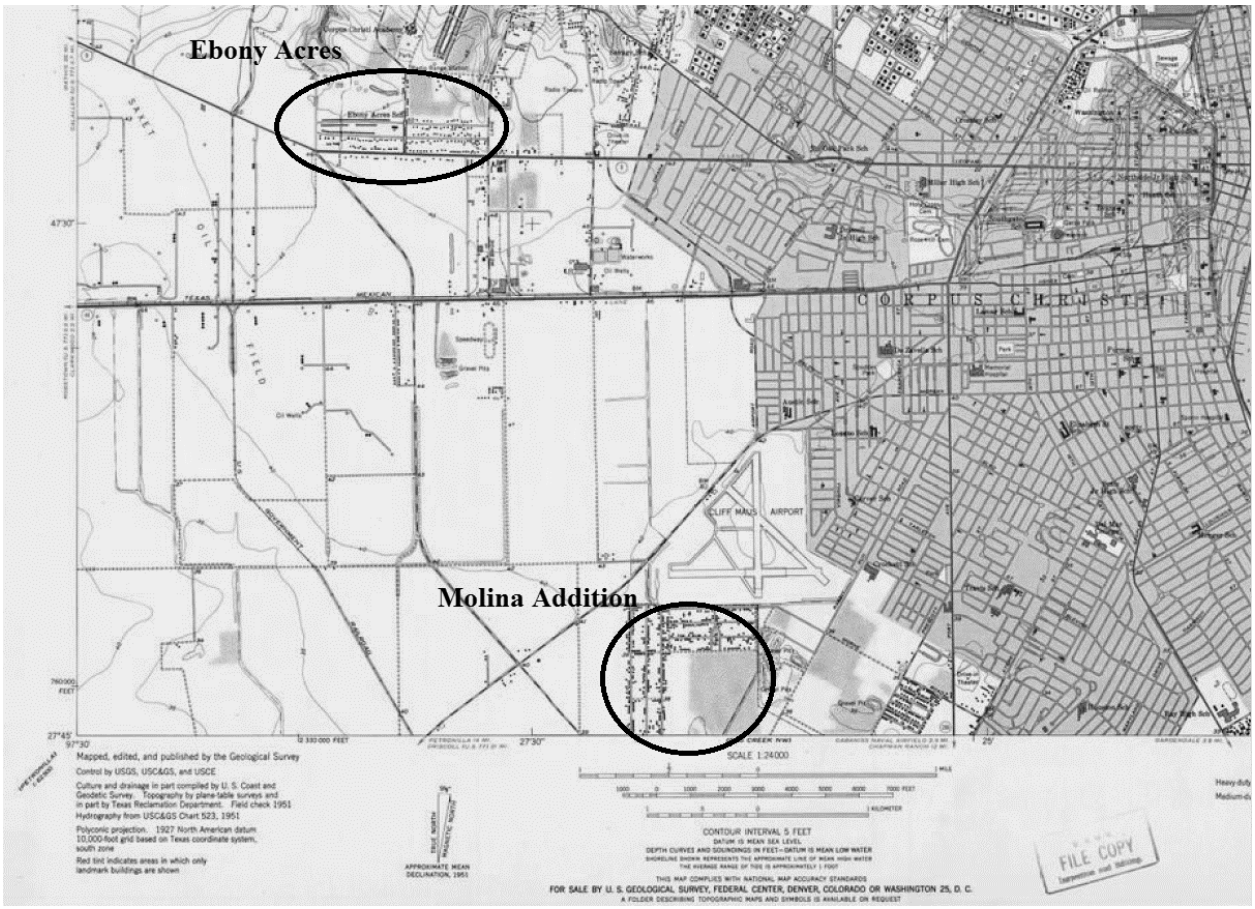


Figure B.2. Ebony Acres and Molina. Separated by miles of open fields and industry, some Ebony Acres residents still feared the Molina Addition during the October annexation campaign.

Portion of Geological Survey (U.S.). Corpus Christi Quadrangle, Map, 1952; (http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth454865/ : accessed October 16, 2015), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department, Denton, Texas.

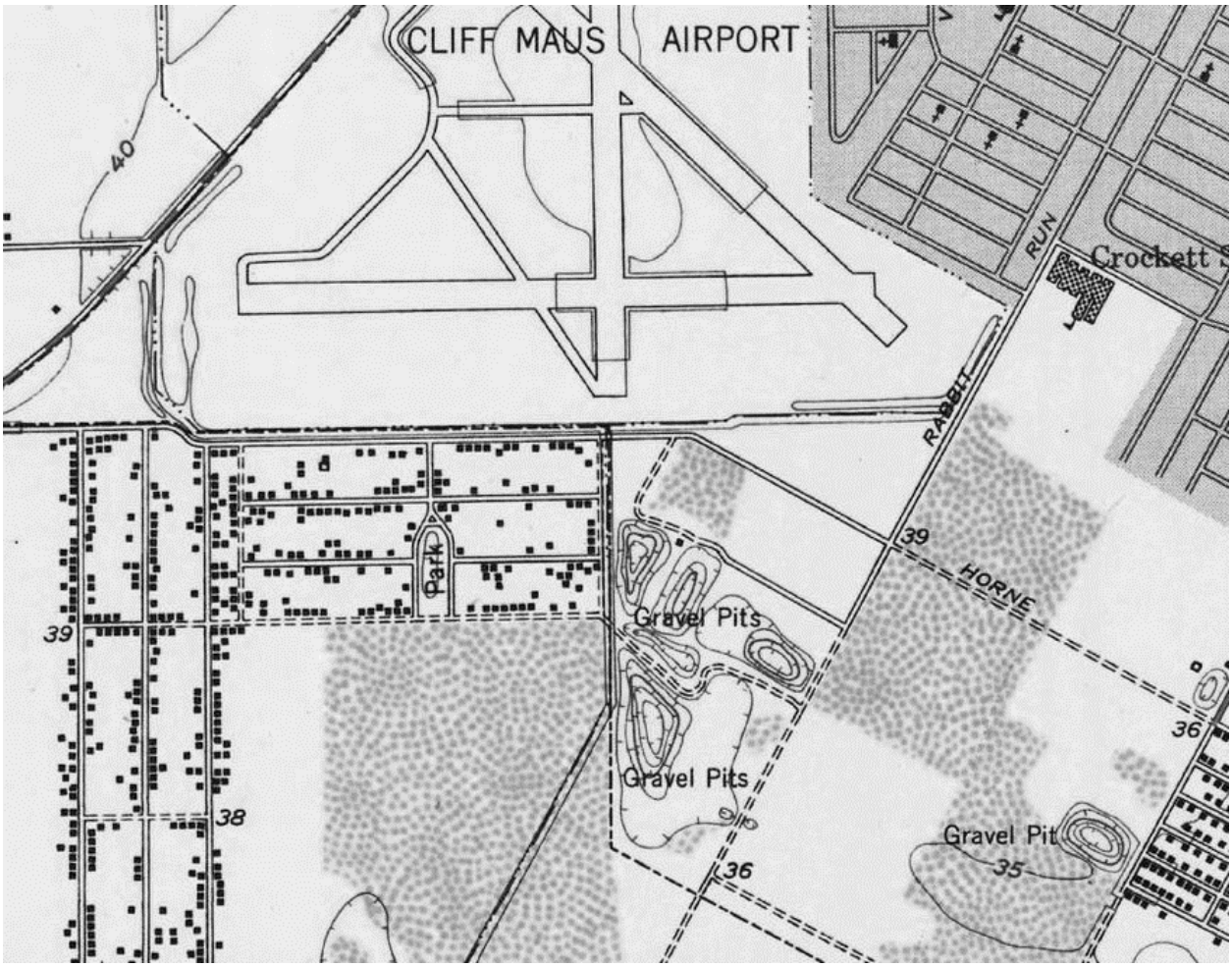


Figure B.3. Map of the Molina Addition and the surrounding area, 1952. The infamous "Gravel Pits" were the site of numerous drowning deaths, including the pit labeled "Park."

Portion of Geological Survey (U.S.). Corpus Christi Quadrangle, Map, 1952; (http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth454865/ : accessed October 16, 2015), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department, Denton, Texas.

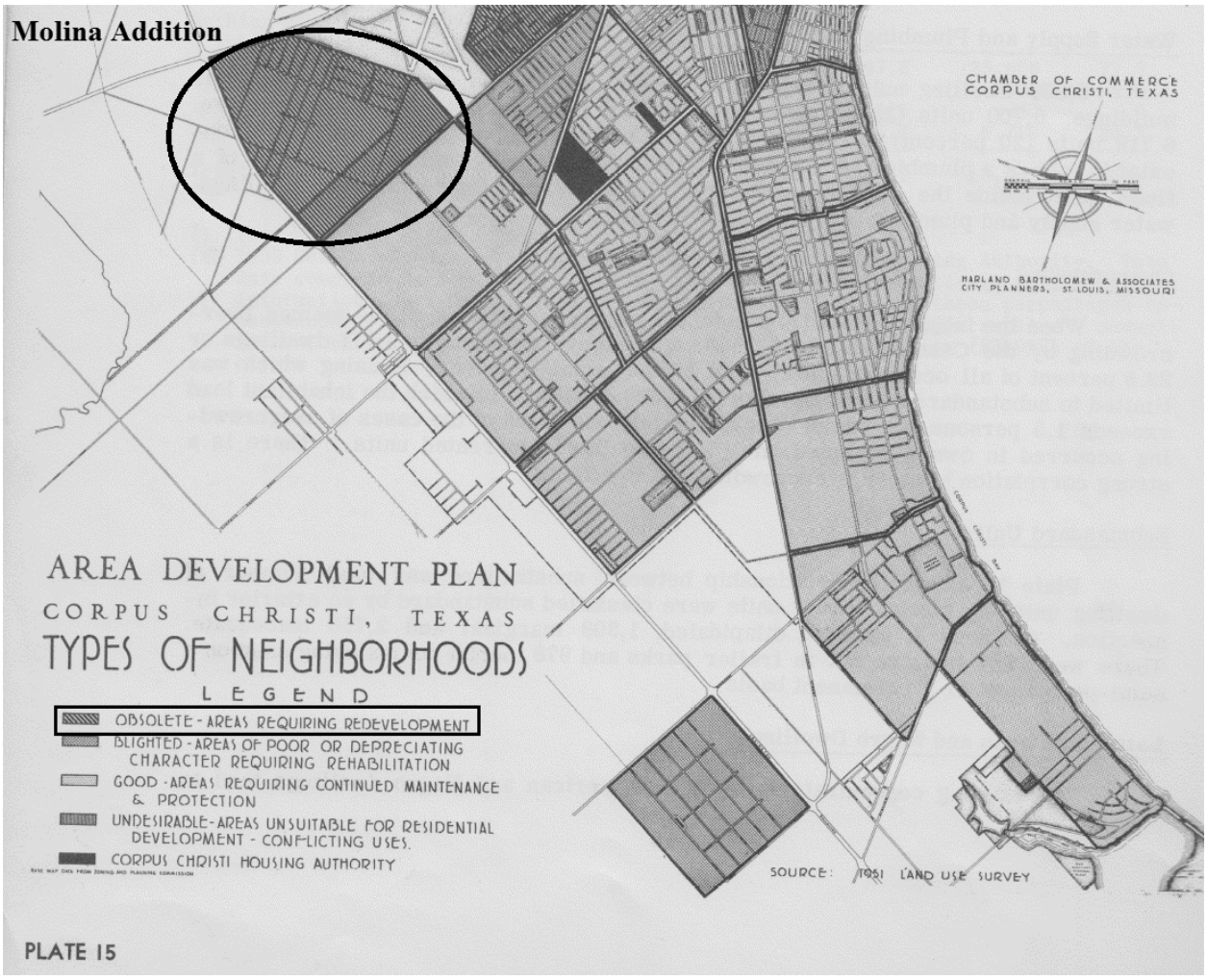


Figure B.4. The Molina Addition: Obsolete. After Harland Bartholomew and Associates conducted research in the city of Corpus Christi, they took note of the blight in the Molina Addition, then unincorporated territory west of the city's borders. As the map indicates, they recommended that the city level the Molina Addition and build a new neighborhood altogether Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Comprehensive Plan for the Corpus Christi Area* (St. Louis Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1953), 15.

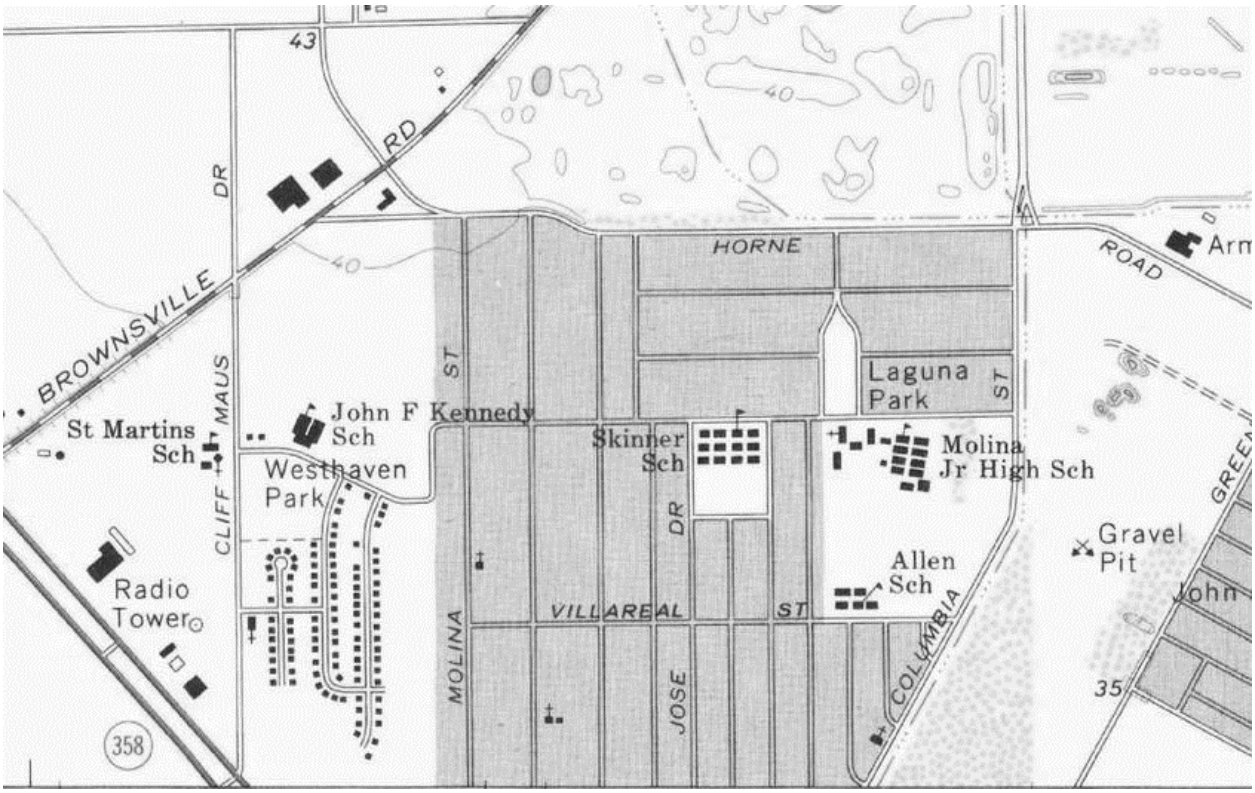


Figure B.5. Map of the Molina Addition, 1971. By the 1970s, the neighborhood had grown and included in its boundaries schools, churches, and other facilities. In addition to having renamed Hellman Elementary after the sudden death of beloved Superintendent of West Oso Schools in 1964, the community elected to rename the street just south of the school and north of Villareal after John Skinner.

Portion of Geological Survey (U.S.). Corpus Christi Quadrangle, Map, 1971; (http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth457559/ : accessed October 16, 2015), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department, Denton, Texas.

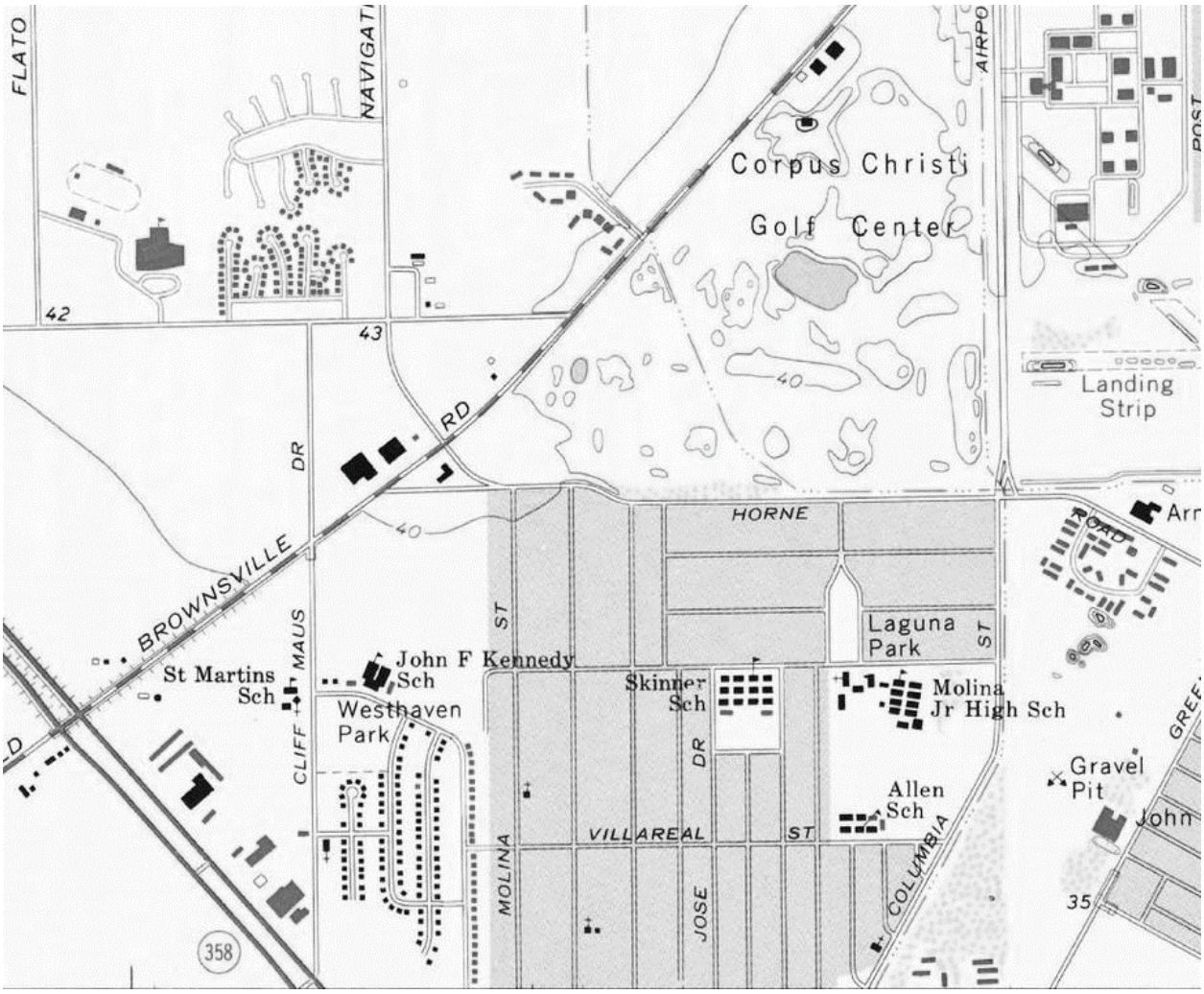


Figure B.6. The greater Molina area, 1977. In the middle to late 1970s, the West Oso Independent School District experienced a growth of housing developments in the area, especially near the recently constructed high school, located between Flato Road and Navigation Boulevard (top-left corner of map). Today, that grouping of homes, The Village on the Green ("The Ville" for short), is one of the housing developments outside of the Molina Addition that is informally recognized as a section of Molina. This grouping of subsections—Casa de Mañana (not shown) Seascape Mobile Home Park (not shown), and West Haven—fall under the Molina banner because they are located in the West Oso Independent School District boundaries.

Geological Survey (U.S.). Corpus Christi Quadrangle, Map, 1977; (http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth445485/ : accessed October 16, 2015), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department, Denton, Texas.

APPENDIX C

PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure C.1. Molina Addition, 1949. In 1949, photographer Russell Lee took at tour of the Molina Addition and other west side neighborhoods with Dr. Héctor P. García. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl13918ad_00110650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.2. Molina Addition, 1949. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl13918ad_0003-650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.3. Molina Addition, 1949. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl13943iicd_0022-650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.4. Molina Addition, 1949. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl13943iief_0007-650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.5. Molina Addition, 1949. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl13943iief_0012-650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.6. Molina Addition, 1949. Notice that the length of the truck is nearly equal to the length of the house. Russell W. Lee Photograph Collection, rwl3943iief_0006-650, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

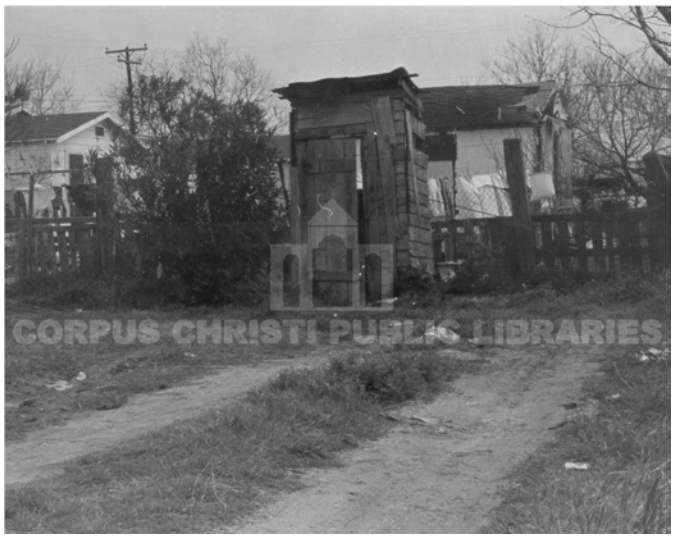


Figure C.7. Molina Addition, 1966. Although indoor plumbing had arrived for most residents of the neighborhood, some still did not have access to running water and sewage as late as the middle 1960s. "Molina Drive Neighborhood," Corpus Christi Public Libraries Digital Archives, archives.cclibraries.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/gpc/id/1192/rec/5.

Figure C.8. Molina Addition, 1966. "Molina Drive Neighborhood," Corpus Christi Public Libraries Digital Archives, archives.cclibraries.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/gpc/id/1188/rec/1.

Figure C.9. West Oso High School, 1965. In the middle 1960s, Molina residents did not have air conditioning. Roofs leaked when it rained and broken windows were seldom replaced. “West Oso High School,” Corpus Christi Public Libraries Digital Archives, archives.cclibraries.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/gpc/id/794/rec/15.

Figure C.19. West Oso High School, 1965. “West Oso High School,” Corpus Christi Public Libraries Digital Archives, archives.cclibraries.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/gpc/id/793/rec/14.

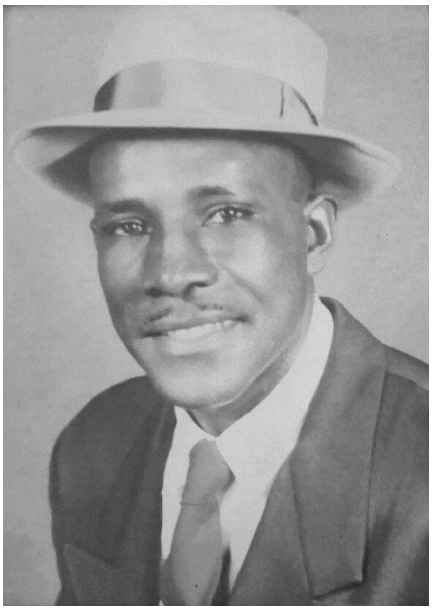


Figure C.11. Welder Brown, circa 1950. Personal collection, Renetta Kay Hines.

Figure C.12. Earmeane Mae Brown, circa 1950. Personal collection, Renetta Kay Hines.

Figure C.13. Reynell Parkins, 1971. After he left Corpus Christi in 1969, Parkins fought for better housing conditions in Austin, Texas, in having established the Community Development Corporation of Austin. The above photo is a screenshot taken from the film *One-Third of a Dream,* in which Parkins details the major issues that faced poor families who sought better housing. Neill DeWitt Hicks, *One-Third of a Dream* (1971), Hugo Leipziger-Pearce (1902-) Manuscript material, photographs, (1920-(1955-1978)-1990) Community and Regional Planning, Alexander Architectural Archive, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Figure C.14. Johnny Bilano, 1968. Image from *The Bear*, West Oso High School Yearbook, 1968.

Figure C.15. Molina Addition, 2015. A view from the bridge crossing over *el ditche* into the Molina Addition from the eastern border of the neighborhood. Author photo 2015.

Figure C.16. Village on the Green, west side Corpus Christi, Texas, 2015. Although the apartments in the image in no way represent the overall conditions of the Molina area, it does represent some of the blight that still exists. Author photo 2015.

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