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The Making of a Movement: The Archival Reconstruction of Chicanismo in Northern New Mexico

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The Making of a Movement: The Archival Reconstruction of *Chicanismo* in Northern New Mexico

Julianna C. Wiggins

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The recovery of a movement is explored in this project inspired by the New Mexico Highlands University (HU) Archives and Special Collections. Known for its liberal student body in the 1960s and 1970s, I argue that HU was a catalyst for the Chicano Movement in northern New Mexico. The movement was punctuated by an influx of visitations by prominent activists such as Reies Lopez Tijerina and Rudolfo “Corky” Gonzales. Campus life at HU shifted from an Anglo-centric atmosphere to fostering a cultural space fueled by the Spanish language and the overt accusations of racism against minority students. Through my work, I show how Anglo and Chicano students confided in their school newspaper to express personal opinions and engage in racially charged correspondences across both groups. These conversations ignited a Chicano-student-based effort to elect the first *Nuevomexicano* and Chicano president of HU. These protests necessitated the involvement of the HU Board of Regents, whose readiness to elect a university president under such stipulations oscillated over the course of a year. Their responses to Chicano students are recorded in the HU Archives. I assert that the contrast of dialogues produced from the administrative entity and Chicano students reveals the latent racial tensions present on the HU campus. Finally, I demonstrate the manifestation of Mexican-American identity by investigating its historical contexts in New Mexico and its implications through a national lens. Post-Vietnam War sentiments speckle the racial commentary of students’ published works through art, poetry, and articles published in Spanish. By investigating primary, non-fictional sources, I work to reconstruct an historical movement and weave social commentary within a politically infused undertaking of exploring identity.