

Visiones de Aztlan

Vol. 2

Denver's Chicano Perspective of Today's Issues

No. 2



Photo by Dino Castro

In Memory
Luis "Junior" Martinez
August 21, 1952-March 17, 1973

21 Years—March 17 Shooting Still Raises Questions

This March 17th commemorates the 21st anniversary of one of Denver's most controversial police-civilian confrontations. On March 17, 1973 the Denver police department was involved in a confrontation at an apartment complex owned by the Crusade for Justice organization in which over 60 people were arrested, 30 weapons seized from 10 apartments, and five people charged with various offenses. Media accounts reported 70-75 officers were involved but court documents subsequently revealed at least 230 officers were present at the scene. One person, Luis 'Junior' Martinez, 20, was killed and 5 other people shot, including 4 policemen.

The police version of events was that two officers, Steve Snyder and Carole Hogue, were on routine patrol when they were verbally harassed by young party-goers while the officers issued a traffic ticket on the 1500 block of Downing. They later returned to the area to monitor the party and were approached by a belligerent young man they claimed was Luis Martinez. After Martinez was ordered into the patrol car, others approached and argued with Snyder and Hogue. Martinez allegedly jumped from the vehicle and was pursued by Snyder. Martinez was reported to have drawn a gun when the 2 ran between nearby buildings and Snyder was shot 3 times. Martinez' body was later found with 2 bullet-wounds reportedly fired by Snyder and authorities described the confrontation and arrests as a spontaneous event that escalated. Around 2 a.m. three officers were wounded when they raided the last of 10 apartments belonging to the Crusade which was then a very powerful community organization. In the ensuing gunfire an explosion knocked out the wall of the apartment and Mario Vasquez, 20, was found in the rubble.

Local news media consistently refused to publish certain aspects of the civilian version of events. No civilians ever recalled anyone harassing the officers as they reportedly issued a traffic ticket but numerous people told of repeated sightings of police in the area well before the confrontation; the police presence in the area has not been explained to this day. More importantly, witnesses claimed Martinez was not the man who first approached the car and was put in custody. Police later admitted Martinez was not the man who first approached the officers but police never explained the discrepancy. One person, Ernesto Vigil, was shot in the back after back-up units responded to the scene and reportedly saw Vigil, wearing a brown leather jacket, fire a weapon at Officer Hogue.

The media paid little attention to events by the time of the trial and the most detailed account of the incident is a currently unpublished manuscript. All defendants were subsequently acquitted with the exception of Mario Vasquez who was convicted of shooting 3 officers and sent to the State Reformatory.

Vigil's trial lasted 2 weeks but the jury took only 30 seconds to return a not guilty verdict in a trial in which a key prosecution witness, a cab-driver who was parked behind Snyder and Hogue's vehicle, said Vigil was not the gunman. Defense attorneys Walter Gerash and Ken Padilla introduced Vigil's still-bloody clothing to refute the police description of clothing worn by Vigil that night.

Though authorities preferred to describe the event as spontaneous, community activists were always suspicious the incident was not spontane-

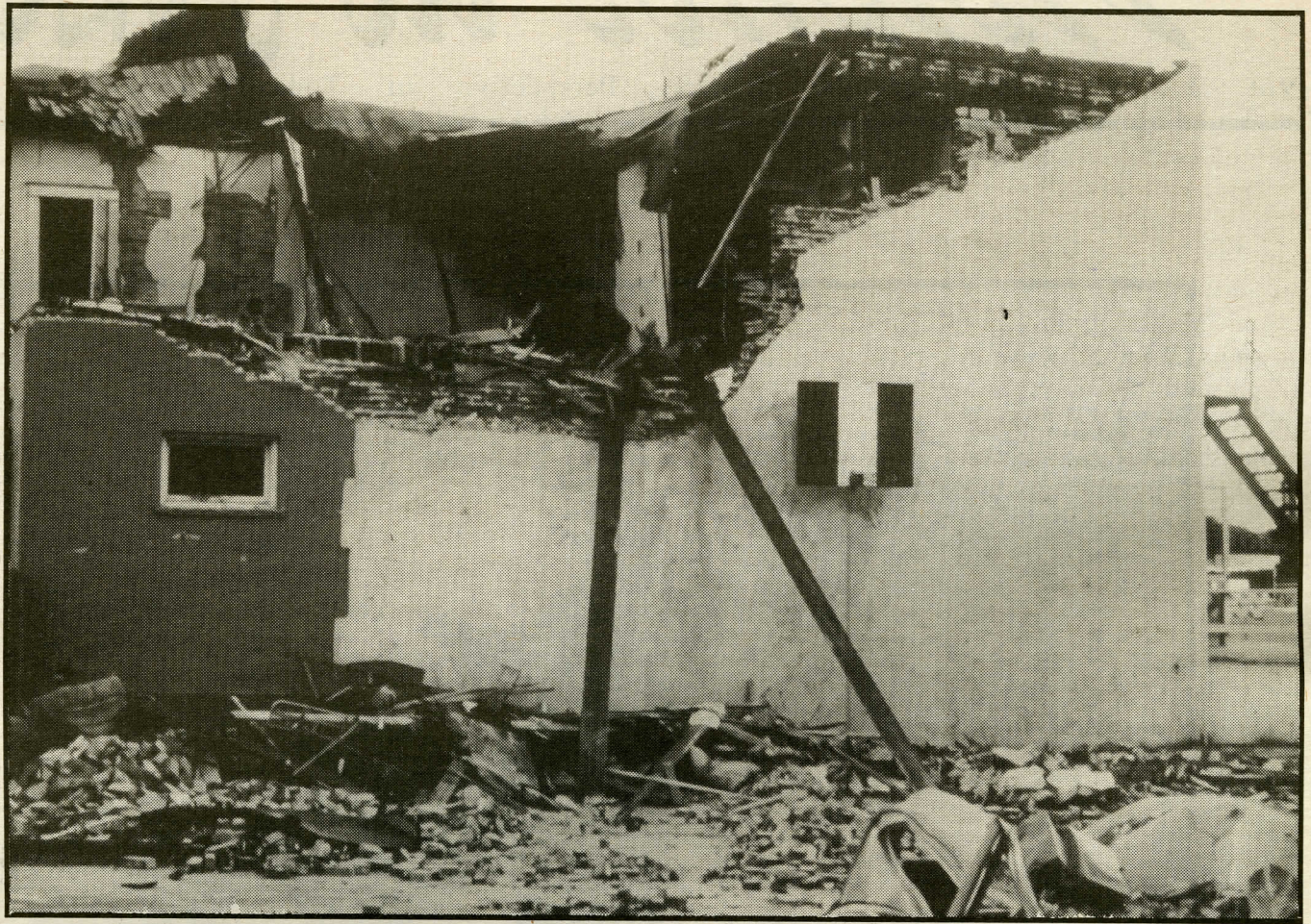


Photo shows the damage to the apartment complex (Photo reproduced from slide by Michael D. Lopez)

ous at all. The Crusade and the Denver American Indian Movement chapter organized a solidarity demonstration in support of American Indians who were occupying the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota to protest theft of Indian lands and violation of their treaties. The solidarity march was the nation's largest protest and drew about 1,200 people, mostly Chicanos and Native Americans, on about 4 days notice. The protest took place a little more than a week before Martinez' death. The FBI routinely spied on the Crusade since 1967; others who jointly spied on the Crusade and other activists included the 113th Military Intelligence Group and the Denver police Intelligence Bureau.

Numerous detectives and officers involved in the March 17th confrontation and its aftermath were members of the police Intelligence Bureau. Many questions remain unanswered about Martinez' death. A second autopsy was done on the body and pictures taken reportedly showed the wounds in Martinez' chest were large ragged holes while those in his back were smaller and cleaner. Small neat holes are usually entrance wounds, but Snyder claimed to have shot Martinez in the front, not in the back, as they struggled hand-to-hand. Moreover, according to the autopsy, one bullet allegedly entered Martinez' chest by the right armpit, travelled horizontally and exited between the shoulder blades. The fatal wound, however, entered the left side of Martinez' neck and travelled downward before exiting the back.

Whatever the whole story reveals about the death of Martinez, this bloody and controversial incident marked the beginning of the decline of the Crusade for Justice and the loss of one of its most promising young activists.

by Ernesto Vigil

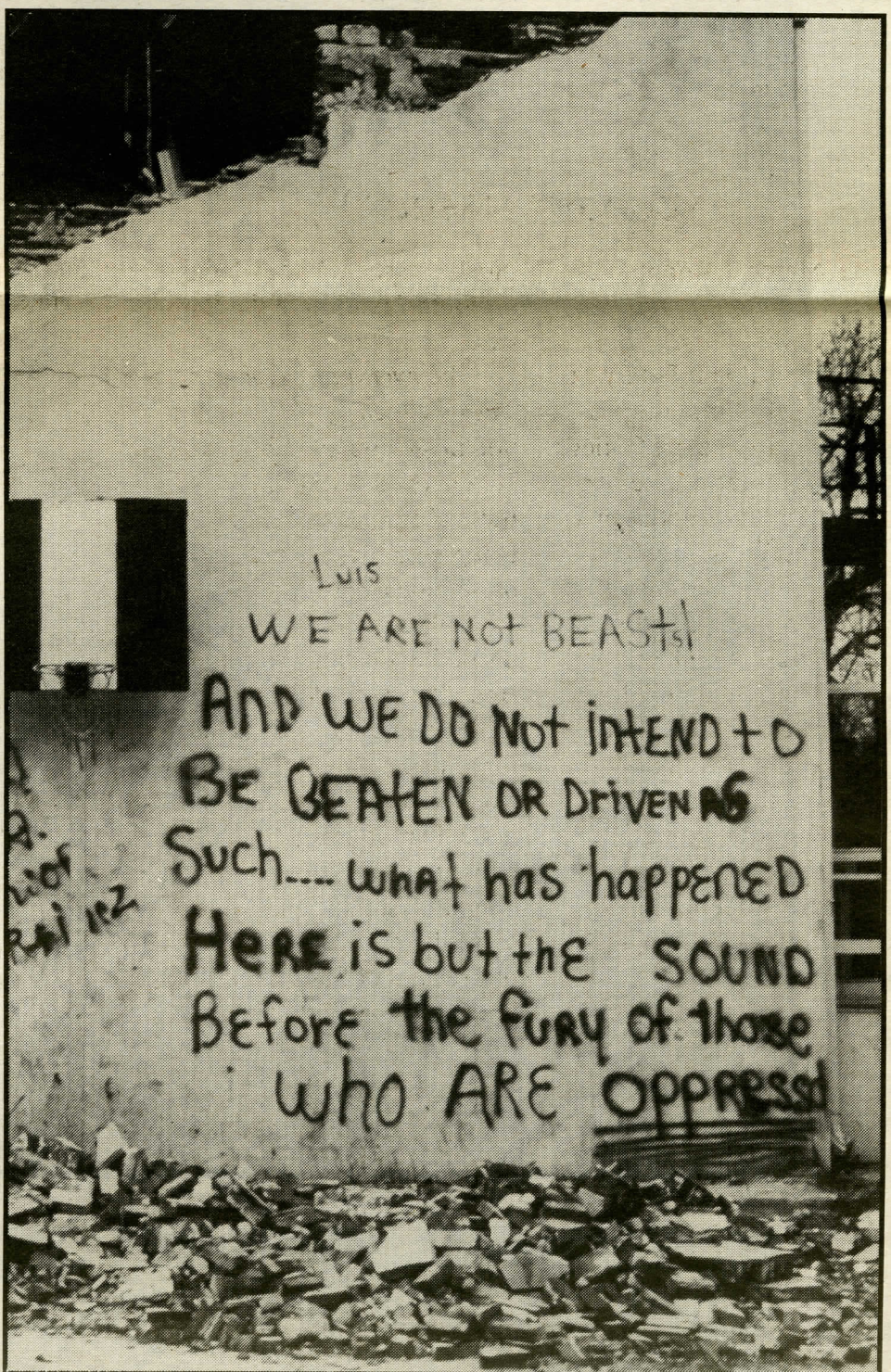


Photo shows a spray-painted slogan on the apartment wall the day after the shooting. Photo reproduced from slide by Michael D. Lopez

The La Raza Male Youth Leadership Conference

A consortium of community organizations, with funding from a variety of organizations, businesses, and foundations, will host the Third Annual La Raza Male Youth Leadership Conference (LRMYLC). The event will be held 8 a.m.—4 p.m., Saturday April 30, 1994, at the Auraria Campus.

Chicano/Mexicano/Latino young men in grades six through twelve are invited to attend this FREE conference. Food, entertainment, awards, t-shirts, workshops, and guest speakers are all included. By offering over 50 Career, Cultural, Self Awareness, and Leadership workshops, it is the hope of conference organizers to cultivate confidence and self esteem within the youth participants.

The mission of the LRMYLC is "To empower young Chicano/Mexicano/Latino males to achieve their full educational, economic, and social potential and to develop a strong commitment and responsibility toward the Chicano/Mexicano/Latino communities."

Statistics show that Chicano/Mexicano/Latino males are more susceptible to problems such as low academic achievement, substance abuse, "gang" activity, lower economic levels, and low self esteem, when compared to their anglo and

female counterparts. These needs play a key role in why there is a need for this conference. The conference will present successful Chicano/Mexicano/Latino role models to show the participants that "Yes!" they can be successful in life.

Workshop subjects include Computers, the Cable Industry, Small Business, Chicano History, Cultural Roots, How to Succeed in College, Sexual Responsibility, Chicano Gangs, Dentistry, Chemistry, Alcohol/Drug Abuse, and many, many more!

The first conference, over 500 young men attended. The second year over 650 participated. This year over 800 youth are expected. Adults, accompanied by a youth, are also invited to attend. Workshops designed specifically for adults will also be presented.

Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity. With the recent increase in youth violence, we must do all we can to educate our youth. By highlighting the positive aspects of our lives and providing alternatives to the negatives of life, together we can put end to the promotion and glorification of the "gangsta" lifestyle.

For registration, applications, or information call 447-6499.

by LeRoy Lemos

NOBODY'S MASCOT

Alamosa, March 9, Adams State College.

President William Fulkerson Jr Declared a two-year moratorium on the Adams State College Indian mascot issue. Fulkerson claims that there has not been a formal request for the name change. He is ignoring over two decades of protest against the derogatory mascot. Fulkerson noted that "by continuing the mascot, we perpetuate a concern by a number of Native Americans. By discontinuing the mascot, we initiate strong feelings from other constituents." Are these strong feelings from "other constituents" to oppress people of color?

Fulkerson's statements about "perpetuating a concern" trivializes the 502 years of genocide, rape, and slavery that

this hemisphere has endured since the invasion of the Europeans.

The two-year moratorium is a smoke screen by the administration in an attempt to buy time. Fulkerson is avoiding the main issue of Indian-bashing symbols being used by state colleges and professional teams.

William Fulkerson Jr. with his policy making has demonstrated his lack of sensitivity to students of color and his inability to make the right decision based on a moral high ground instead of the fear of angering athletic boosters.

Fulkerson in June will become the president of the Board of Trustees of State Colleges. He will be in another position to neglect the issues facing students of color.

by Michael D. Lopez

Llorando Por Ti

by Beth Sanchez

You, young man
Vato Loco,
You with fire in your eyes
And tempests raging in every cell;
You who flare up like a brushfire in the desert
Burning with the knowledge
Of your mothers raped,
Your grandfathers lynched,
And your templos sagrados
Forever destroyed;
Where, carnal,
Is the eye of of your hurricane?

Yes you, hermanito
Pintando con sangre y pasión
The horrible truth
Of five hundred years enslaved in Aztlán;
You who bask in the stinging sun
Of a million brown fists thrusting
Like fuel on the fire of your pain;
Have you noticed, tambien
Que La Primavera has come
Again to crack open your heart
With her first fragile flower.
Can you, brother,
Still let her touch you
Softly like this?

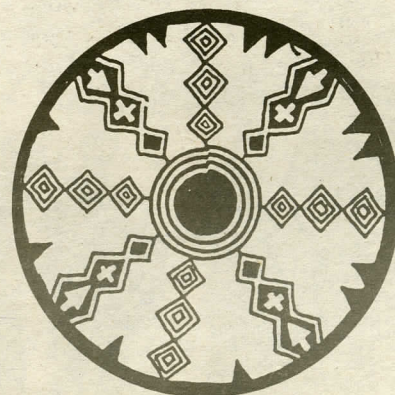
Yes you, Raza,
Engorged with livid righteousness
You whose flesh still burns
With the scarlet memory
Of your ancestors skinned alive
And roasted like wild game.
You whose boundless home
Has been staked and claimed
And scattered with Taco Bells and ski resorts
And sprawling malls like chunks of gringo vomit;
Don't you know that your sisters cry for you?
Wondering, hoping, praying
That despite the piercing thorns of time
Your heart may still be tender



Untitled

by Michael D. Lopez

They say the the wheels of justice grind slowly
But when it comes to chicanos
I think they put it in reverse
How much time must pass
To find peace in our own land
How much oppression can we take
Before we take a stand
No longer do they use just the gun and the horse
The new weapon is the media
And I think it is worse
They want you to think Mexicanos
Are not brothers and stop them
From crossing their borders
They use terminolgy and stats
And say it is not so bad
And merrily skips the hispanics
Down the european primrose path



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Greeley, Colorado—1994

