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Midterm Exam Essay

Part I: _

Robert Allen utilizes the framework of the internal colony or domestic colonialism to articulate the black experience of exploitation in America, assess the response of Black militants to this problem, and draw a necessary link to anticolonial efforts abroad. Black communities in America constitute an internal colony who experience both political and economic subjugation that render them “a semi-dependent man, not that of an equal or independent being” within our social systems (Allen 6). Domestic colonialism functions to keep black communities impoverished, a source of labor and revenue for the white dominant group, and unable to access democracy despite the illusion of advancement in civil rights. As Allen describes, Black America has “transformed from a colonial nation into a neocolonial nation; a nation nonetheless subject to the will and domination of white America” who are subject to “an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, or military means” (14).

The empowerment movements, especially in their institution building, were formed in response to the conditions created by domestic colonialism -- that is inadequate healthcare, insufficient educational systems, lack of ownership within the community of businesses and property, and other manifestations of urban blight. Each movement was motivated by the conditions of the barrios, “ghettos”/urban centers, and reservations that were unable to establish a political power base or attain social and economic mobility due to a dependency that was historically *manufactured*. More importantly, they were focused on destroying the myth, created by the white power elite, that there is an ability to thrive in these resourceless communities. Multiple demands of the Black Panther Party such as “we want an end to the robbery by the

white man of our black community, we want education that teaches us our true history, we want decent housing, and we want an immediate end to police brutality” are addressing each of the categories of domestic colonialism’s domination (political, economic, social, and military) (Allen 84). Their establishment of free health clinics, breakfast programs, police surveilling, and encouragement of Black-owned business expansions were all mechanisms to vy for a self-determination that is vehemently suppressed under domestic colonialism. In the Chicano movement, they sought resolution to disparities in access to education, a decolonization of the mind through Chicano studies programs, and a remedy to the conditions of the almost internal colonies present on college campuses where Chicanos are excluded from political channels and leadership roles within the institution.

This framework is very much applicable today, especially when we understand domestic colonialism as predicated on the dominant group suppressing the political and economic mobility of the dominated through systems like education and housing. The segregation combated by the various Black movements until the 1960s, has evolved into a de-facto segregation that has continued to create internal colonies within the United States to this day. The legacy of redlining has cordoned off predominantly minority communities in neighborhoods where ownership of homes is rare and insufficient property taxes have led to underfunded school systems that systematically deny black and brown children from accessing higher education and thus higher-paying jobs. However, the educational material that the Black Power movement and Chicano movement advocated for has now been realized in some curriculums, with greater incorporation of histories that deviate from the dominant white tradition. Like the Black power movement and Chicano Student Movement sought to address, the underrepresentation of black

and brown students is still occurring despite the illusion that civil rights has advanced us beyond what are recognizably mechanisms of domination and subjugation.

Part II

One of the major successes of the Chicano movement was a solidification of Chicano identity, which effectively rejected assimilation into broader white culture and aided in the unification of all Mexican Americans not on the basis of social class, but rather in a pride for Mexican culture and knowledge of heritage. It was the radicalism first articulated in *I Am Joaquín* that would propel a rejection of the politics of accommodation and integration in favor of politics as a means of self-liberation and self-determination. The Chicano Student Movement's establishment of Chicanismo as a driving ideology meant significant wins in the documentation of Chicano history, literature, and ways of thought in educational systems. As the philosophical leaders of the Black Panther Party and the Native American movement articulated as well, progress was no longer viewed as contingent on these communities' ability to deny the culture that positioned them in opposition to white culture, but rather reliant on embracing and weaponizing this difference (as we witnessed with Red Pride and Black Pride).

Ultimately, the greatest successes of the Chicano movement was its transformation of higher education. More importantly, the institutionalization of Chicano student programs and Chicano student leadership created a legacy that inextricably linked the academy to the broader Mexican American community both in economic and political initiatives. The "ideological and philosophical foundations" of documents produced at both the Denver Youth Conference and the Santa Barbara conference "identified the institutions of higher education as strategic targets for political change" while solidifying mechanisms for inter-state coalitions among Mexican

American youth in the academic setting (Muñoz 101). The Chicano Movement normalized the presence of Chicano student groups on campus as a constant facilitator of political consciousness raising and facilitated their ensured survival through support networks. MEChA, through political activism, was instrumental in the creation of Chicano Studies programs at virtually all California universities. MEChA created institution-sponsored community programs that elevated educational efforts in the form of tutoring, bilingual education, etc. while simultaneously developing economically marginalized and politically silenced neighborhoods. Additionally, their organization tackled educational opportunity programs by increasing representation of Mexican American administrators and prioritizing the redirection of resources and funding for the recruitment of Mexican American students, especially in prioritizing access to higher education for Mexican American youth from low-income backgrounds (Muñoz).

The Chicano movement failed in ways similar to that of the Black power movement, in that its foundational ideology and agenda did not reflect a commitment to gender equality. The Chicana perspective, like that of Black women, was relegated to an inferior priority and treated as a diversion that weakened efforts and focus of the “greater” cause. As articulated by Elena Hernández, the inclusion of Chicanas in leadership roles was largely insufficient due to internal opposition by the Chicano majority who viewed expressions of feminism as alienating acts. Adalizja Riddell explains further that Chicano men were “induced to define their very being and existence in terms of external constraints and conditions imposed upon them by their colonizers” which meant they were susceptible to stereotypical conceptions of women’s roles and less likely to acknowledge the intersections of oppression that were uniquely experienced by Chicanas (93). As was also commonplace in the Black Panther Party, women’s role in the revolution was almost

always framed in relation to supporting their male counterpart's endeavors, with the Black man being representative of the struggle and thus his needs considered integral to their agenda.

Across all movements, there was a lack of demands addressing the unique intersections of oppression experienced by LGBTQ+ within their communities. As we saw in each of the movements, an exclusion of the female perspective in leadership and agenda-setting hindered the extent of their progressiveness, which is why I believe a unified movement must include specialized support of queer interests. In line with the radical emphasis on education in the Chicano movement, I believe this demand should call for queer Chicano studies and an expansion of the ideology of Chicanismo to combat the ways in which heteropatriarchy and homophobia are tied to white supremacy. In terms of institution building, there should be dedicated clinics, safe spaces, and educational organizations that support how Chicanos struggle to navigate both their queerness and ethnic identity while acknowledging the ways they may be more susceptible to violence, inequality, over-policing, etc.