

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
October 27, 1976

TO ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are the following items dealing with recent developments in Denver:

1. A report by Fred Halstead and Olga Rodríguez on developments in the Crusade for Justice, for internal use only.
2. A copy of a letter by Corky Gonzales in response to the "Declaration Against Violence in the Movement."
3. A copy of a letter from Maria Serna of the Crusade for Justice responding to Fred Halstead's open letter to Corky Gonzales.
4. An open letter to Corky Gonzales from Fred Halstead and Elfege Baca.
5. A "Declaration Against Violence in the Movement" and a list of the signers of that declaration as of October 26.
6. A copy of "An Open Letter from Fred Halstead of the Socialist Workers Party to Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales of the Crusade for Justice."

It might be useful to give copies of items 2-6 to Chicano and other movement activists and organizations we work with.

Comradely,

Olga Rodríguez
Olga Rodríguez
National Office

Report on Recent Events in Denver

by Fred Halstead and Olga Rodríguez, October 22, 1976

A major organizational expression of the Chicano upsurge in the 1960s was the Denver Crusade for Justice. For several years now, however, the Crusade's influence in the Chicano movement nationally, as in Denver itself, has been waning. The organization has become more and more sectarian in working with others. Two developments in the last four years have contributed to this process.

In 1972, a serious rift developed between forces led by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales--the central leader of the Crusade and founder of the Colorado Raza Unida party--and those led by José Angel Gutiérrez--the most prominent leader of the Texas RUP. Differences over strategy of building the Raza Unida parties came to a head at the national convention of Raza Unida parties held in El Paso, in September 1972.

At that time, Gonzales represented the left wing of the independent Chicano political parties, arguing for a firm position of no support to or accommodation with the Democratic and Republican parties. Gutiérrez represented the more reformist-oriented forces in the partido, arguing for a "balance of power" strategy, which implied building the RUPs by shifting support on a national or state level between the two capitalist parties in exchange for favors. Gutiérrez's political strategy did not hold sway at the convention. But Gutiérrez's forces were stronger organizationally and won the leadership of the RUP Congreso de Aztlán, the national leadership body established at the El Paso convention.

Instead of carrying on a political fight along principled lines to win Chicanos over to independent political action and other correct programmatic points, Gonzales and the Crusade withdrew from the political struggle, turned their backs on the entire Texas RUP and those who looked to it for leadership, and began to turn inward. Since the split between Gonzales and Gutiérrez, the work of building the Colorado Raza Unida party into any kind of viable political vehicle for Chicanos has all but been abandoned by the Crusade.

Since that time, the Crusade has evolved into less and less a political organization and has become more isolated from mass activity and work with other Chicano groups in the Colorado area, including in Denver. A reflection of this is the Crusade's total abstention in the last period from the fight for bilingual-bicultural education that broke out in 1974. Instead of jumping into that struggle and helping to lead it, the Crusade has counterposed their school, the Escuela Tlatelolco, to such a fight.

During this same time period, the Crusade has been the target of a major COINTELPRO-type operation designed to destroy it. This attack, and the Crusade's inability to wage a broad political defense of its victimized members, has been a major factor in the organization's growing isolation.

The seriousness of the government's campaign was underlined by the police attack on the Escuela Tlatelolco in 1973, which resulted in the death of one Crusade youth, injuries of numerous others, and frame-up trials of the victims of the police attack. The Crusade was

clearly disoriented politically by the attack. Then, in 1974, six Crusade student activists from the University of Colorado at Boulder were killed in two bombing incidents. The killings remain unsolved, and the government went on a vicious campaign to try to blame the bombings on the dead students.

In addition to these killings, Crusade activists have been the victims of police frame-ups. Last year, for example, Juan Haro, a co-founder of the Crusade, and Anthony Quintana, a Crusade member, were arrested and convicted on federal charges of conspiring to bomb a Denver police sub-station. The two now face a trial on similar state charges. The chief witness in the government's case is an agent provocateur associated with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Treasury Department.

The crusade failed to mount an effective political defense against this disruption program. Instead, their ultraleft rhetoric in the most recent period has left them open to the government's operation against them. A serious problem in defending them is that the Crusade rejects the idea of building a broad, united defense.

This sectarianism has not confined itself to rhetoric. As the Crusade has become less political and less involved in united activity with other Chicano groups and individuals around issues of concern to the community or even in its own defense, the Crusade has degenerated into not much more than a self-serving clique. It provides jobs and other material privileges to a relatively small number of people closely associated by family ties and by personal, rather than political, loyalty to Corky Gonzales and the small group around him.

By virtue of its influence over certain institutions and arrangements that came out of struggles in the 1960s, the Crusade controls a number of jobs within the Chicano community in Denver. Among these are such direct Crusade enterprises as the Escuela Tlatelolco, Ballet Chicano (a dance troupe), and the Teatro Luis "Junior" Martínez, as well as city-paid supervisory positions in several small parks on the east side of Denver. They also control a boxing instructors association, and have influence over certain tutorial and cultural programs that receive money from various university, government, or Catholic charity programs. In addition, the Crusade augments its finances by using its past political authority to obtain large honoraria for speaking engagements by its leaders, fees for its teatro group, etc.

But for the last several years, these kinds of activities seem to have become the central character and reason for being of the Crusade. What is worse, a pattern of physical intimidation has been used by the Crusade in its attempts to maintain control of Chicano community and student groups that have access to some funds or positions. "Community control" of the east-side parks, for example, has effectively become Crusade control, enforced by physical intimidation.

The increased use of physical violence by the Crusade has its origins in the squads of Crusade members who would physically dis-

courage drug pushers or addicts from hanging around the parks the Crusade controls. But this vigilanteism was always rough hewn at best. And now it is being used to victimize innocent people who have no connection whatever with illegal drugs, but who for one reason or another have found themselves at odds with the Crusade or its enforcers.

These tactics, coupled with the Crusade's increasingly sectarian approach to politics, have helped to alienate large sections of the Colorado Chicano community from the Crusade. Many local Chicano figures have broken from the Crusade, some regarding it with outright fear and hostility. This includes radicals, as well as reformists. A significant number of former Crusade members, and even whole families have broken from the Crusade.

In this context, two events occurred last spring and summer that set the stage for the recent physical attack by two Crusade leaders on SWP leaders Fred Halstead and Steve Chainey.

The first was the annual election of officers of the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán (MEChA) at the Metropolitan State College campus in Denver. Prior to the May 1976 elections, the MEChA chapter was led by Crusade student activists on campus. It came as something of a surprise to them when a slate that didn't include any Crusade members ran for and won the elections. The incoming concilio, as the body of MEChA officers is called, co-opted a student member of the Crusade onto it, but this person attended only a few meetings and soon dropped out of activity.

The newly elected chairperson of the chapter was Elfego Baca, who is also a member of the YSA. Baca is a longtime Chicano activist, and was once a member of the Crusade. Although he only recently joined the YSA, YSA and SWP members have known and worked with him for a number of years.

The change in the Metro MEChA leadership assumed a greater potential importance because three major colleges in the Denver area plan to consolidate onto a single new campus in early 1977. The various student activities have been urged to combine, and the three Chicano student organizations on these campuses have agreed to merge at that time. Because the Crusade's influence in the two other Chicano student organizations is negligible, they strongly desire to maintain control of the Metro MEChA.

In the course of his campaign for chairperson of MEChA, Baca was approached by leaders of the Crusade and told he had to stop "spreading anti-Crusade sentiment" or suffer the consequences.

Then, in the beginning of the fall semester, another incident occurred that led to a further heightening of tensions in the MEChA. A second threat was made against Elfego Baca by Ernesto Vigil, a leader of the Crusade. This threat took place following the arrest of two Crusade members alleged to have beaten up a Chicano they falsely accused of being a pusher in one of the parks they control. Vigil accused Baca of being responsible for the charge against one

of the Crusade members. This charge, of course, is untrue. Baca did witness this beating and didn't like it. But, he did not speak to the police about it, nor did he urge the beaten man to make charges or offer testimony against anyone. In fact, Baca made it clear to all concerned that he had no desire to testify on the matter.

The man who was beaten, and who had been the victim of a similar beating at the hands of the same Crusade member only a short time earlier, took the matter to the police completely on his own.

Ernesto Vigil's threat against Baca was made just two hours prior to the regular MEChA meeting on September 22. All of the Crusade student activists on the campus showed up at this meeting, as did a number of Crusade leaders and staff people from the Escuela Tlatelolco. They introduced a motion to impeach Baca as chairperson on the grounds that he "associated with snitches, junkies and pushers"; had arrived late to the September 18 demonstration for Mexican independence sponsored by the Crusade; and similar spurious charges. The motion was defeated 12 to 13, but it was made clear by Crusaders that this was just the opening attempt to oust Baca.

This move was totally unexpected by Baca and other non-Crusade MEChA members. It was only later that Baca realized the full meaning of the threat made by Vigil prior to the meeting. He informed other members of the MEChA concilio about the incident, and a meeting of the concilio was called to explain the background to the threat.

The following MEChA meeting took place September 29. This time, the majority of the concilio urged as many members as possible to attend and also invited leaders of other Chicano student and community organizations in Denver to be present. Baca introduced a motion on behalf of the concilio calling for respect to democratic rights and opposing violence in the movement to settle political disputes. This motion passed with the overwhelming support of those present. Only the Crusade members voted against. The presence of large numbers of Chicano student and community activists had the effect of forcing the Crusade to back down. They withdrew their motion to impeach Baca, announcing they would reraise the motion at a subsequent meeting.

Two days later, Steve Chainey and Fred Halstead went to the Crusade's offices to attempt to talk to Corky Gonzales about the gravity of the situation, and the need to deescalate the tensions. This is the occasion on which they were beaten, as described in the Militant (October 15, 1976), and in the open letter issued by Halstead to Gonzales. Neither Halstead nor Chainey struck back for two reasons. First, it was important politically to make it as clear as possible that the SWP leaders had not come looking for a physical fight, but to have a discussion on a matter of concern to the Crusade, the SWP, and the movement as a whole. Secondly, the building was full of friends of the attackers and any appearance of a fight would simply have meant a gang-up and probably a worse beating.

The attack on Chainey and Halstead signaled a serious escalation of violence on the part of the Crusade. The inability of the Crusade leaders to have a reasoned discussion with leaders of the SWP on the

threats to Baca's safety left no other recourse but to take the matter to the movement. We issued the open letter, and began to ask people within the movement both in Denver and, to a certain extent, nationally, to sign a declaration addressed to Gonzales against violence in the movement. The purpose of this was to bring maximum political pressure to bear on the Crusade leadership to back off from the suicidal political course they have embarked on. Thus far, the response to the declaration has been very significant. Chicano and other movement leaders in Denver as well as nationally have signed the statement, and/or made calls or written personal letters to Gonzales.

Two days after the beating of Chainey and Halstead, Gonzales met with Harry Ring and Olga Rodríguez, both of whom had gone to Denver following the incident.

Gonzales said that he regretted the incident with Chainey and Halstead, but denied that any physical threats had been made against Baca. He insisted further that the SWP shouldn't have anything to do with Baca, that the dispute between Vigil and Baca was a "personal" one, and that Baca was a disreputable character who didn't deserve our support. Most importantly, Gonzales refused to repudiate the use of violence in the movement.

He stated that if the SWP made the situation public, it could only mean "war" between the Crusade and the SWP. He hastened to add, however, that he meant a "political war, not a physical confrontation." Ring and Rodríguez replied that if Gonzales would not issue a public statement against violence within the movement, the SWP would have no choice but to publicize the matter within the movement.

Gonzales also denied that the move to oust Baca as chairperson of MEChA was initiated by the Crusade. This statement, however, was quickly contradicted once again at the next MEChA meeting. The Crusade brought thirty to thirty-five of its people to the October 6 meeting, including Ernesto Vigil and every other Crusade leader, except Gonzales himself. At the meeting, the Crusade members vilified Baca, making many thinly veiled physical threats against him. Some figures from the Chicano community who had signed the "Declaration Against Violence in the Movement" were present, and some of them took the floor at the meeting. The rank and file of the actual MEChA members, however, were clearly tiring of the constant wrangle at their meetings, and many left early. The presence of such large numbers of Crusade people was intimidating, and the Crusade was able to get a motion passed that Baca should not bring his "personal problems" into MEChA meetings.

It appeared that the Crusade members had succeeded in dominating the MEChA meeting and intimidating many of those present. But after the meeting, many of those present expressed their satisfaction that the issue was at last out in the open and a serious discussion on this important issue had begun. Baca and the party as a whole have received many expressions of support in this matter from Chicano community activists in Denver. Resentment against the pattern of physical intimidation had already reached a high point. The fact that

Baca, the YSA, and the SWP have stood up to this, and are helping to launch a political struggle against it, is widely appreciated and will stand the party in good stead among serious Chicano activists.

While our differences with the Crusade for Justice on the question of how to settle political disputes within the movement are deep, we will continue to defend them against government harassment through out press, through our work around the party suit on this question, and in any common activities we can carry out. For example, an invitation was sent to the Crusade to speak at a PRDF-initiated rally against FBI and general government harassment on October 23 in Denver. As one of the government's main victims, the Crusade's participation in a united action with others on this issue would be a powerful rejoinder to the government's campaign against them, the SWP, and other movements for social justice.

Even though the Crusade chose not to respond to this invitation, we will want to continue to try to draw them into common work in response to government harassment, as well as any other activities where there is agreement.

As of this writing, no new acts of violence by Crusade members have come to our attention. A final article and full list of the signers of the "Declaration Against Violence in the Movement" will appear in the Militant dated November 5.

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DENVER CHICANO
LIBERATION DEFENSE COMMITTEE
1567 Downing Street
Denver, Colorado
Aztlan 80218

October 8, 1976

Concerned Fellow Activists:

We have this day received a copy of an open letter from Fred Halstead to Rodolfo Corky Gonzales being distributed and circulated by members of the Socialist Workers Party and their youth affiliate, the Young Socialist Alliance. Several aspects of the content of that letter, the letter itself, and who it is addressed to are particularly disturbing and contradictory. Particularly disturbing is its opportunistic appeal for support from naive, uninformed, misinformed, or trusting supporters who have endorsed the letter. Because of this, we feel it is imperative not that we respond to the letter, but that we project the inconsistencies in its message, to provide a broader picture from which the source and motive behind the letter can be viewed from a different perspective, as well as to challenge some of the lies and distortions leading up to and resulting in what is now clearly a time, energy, and resource consuming, SWP-provoked conflict.

To begin with, it is the Socialist Workers Party, through Steve Chainey and Fred Halstead, that chose to build a conflict out of a Chicano community situation that involved two individuals--not two Movement organizations, as has been suggested in SWP propaganda--one of these individuals being a member of the Crusade for Justice and the other individual being a member of the Y.S.A.

I offer herein a short history of the events that culminated in the incident of October 1, not because we feel that the history warrants public judgment, but because it provides information which fits between the lines and challenges the lies of SWP propaganda. As Secretary of the Denver Chicano Liberation Defense Committee, as well as a person present when Fred Halstead and Steve Chainey came to the Crusade for Justice Building, I share the following pertinent information with you:

On September 18, 1976, Ernesto Vigil was arrested following his speaking at the Chicano Liberation Day Rally held here in Denver. He was arrested for investigation of aggravated assault and menacing--for which he spent four days in jail before a \$10,000 bond to release him was raised. Initially, we all construed his arrest as another police effort to harass him because of his Chicano Movement activism. However, the charges alleged that Ernesto had been party to an assault at La Raza Park on August 5th. He was being charged along with Tony Marquez (who turned himself in and was also bonded on September 22nd), who on that day as La Raza Park Manager had confronted a drug pusher about trafficking drugs in the barrio park. The drug pusher made threats on Tony's life and a fight resulted in which the pusher was not the victor. Two people were in the vicinity of that fight, Ernesto Vigil (a summer park employee) and Elfego (Eric) Baca, who was in the company of the pusher. What led to the pusher's pressing legal assault charges against Tony as a result of a street fight in

which he got beat are speculative--that he did it to retaliate against the Park's position against drugs or to beat a rap with the law in exchange for charges against a Movement activist. But let us look at what led to Ernesto Vigil's being charged:

The pusher's statement to the police claims that his friend Elfego told him he didn't jump in to help him because Ernesto Vigil was "holding a gun"--in other words, Elfego gave his friend a phony excuse and because of it Ernesto ended up charged based on false information. When learning of this, Ernesto did confront Elfego about it--not because Elfego is a YSA member nor because Elfego is the Chairman of Metro State MECHA, or because Ernesto is a Crusade member, but because Elfego's lies resulted in Ernesto's arrest, jailing, and facing trumped-up charges. Elfego was approached about straightening out his lies in court, and Elfego pleaded that he didn't want to get involved in the trial--presumably because to do so would go against his pusher friend's claim--Ernesto reminded him he got himself involved by lying to his friend in the first place. This conversation (not political debate) took place between two individuals--Ernesto did not beat up Elfego, Ernesto did not go to the Crusade for Justice organization to take a position against Elfego, and we presume that when Elfego lied, he was not representing a position encouraged either by the SWP or YSA; we now hesitantly presume also that Elfego's not wanting to testify in support of a Movement activist charged falsely was not representative of a position espoused by the SWP either.

When Fred Halstead and Steve Chainey came to the Crusade to see Corky Gonzales, they did so without an appointment. Corky was not in, and his secretary referred them to me. Upon entering the legal defense office, Mr. Halstead indicated there were two items of business they came to discuss and that he didn't know if I was the person he should bring them out to. I told him what my position was with the organization as Secretary of the Defense Committee and suggested he use his discretion. He commenced by charging that Ernesto Vigil had conversed with Elfego Baca the previous week and threatened him with physical violence unless he testified in court and that they (Chainey and Halstead) were in accord with Elfego's not wanting to become involved. At this point, I told them that since they were making such charges against Ernesto, he should be present to hear what they had to say. I went for Ernesto myself, I did not send for him.

Because Ernesto had a class in session, it took him longer to come to the office where I had returned. While waiting for Ernesto, Mr. Halstead let me know the other item they were there to discuss was the law suit the organization is pursuing against the government, at which time Steve Chainey "calmly" remarked, unless you feel Ernesto has to be here to discuss that too". I dismissed his remark and exchanged a few words with Fred on the suit before Ernesto came into the office. Again Fred Halstead restated his opening remarks to me. Ernesto informed him that he failed to see how any conversation held between him and Elfego Baca was any of the Socialist Workers Party or their business. It is true, Ernesto did not deny threatening Elfego, he did not admit threatening Elfego either. Fred told Ernesto that Elfego was a member of the YSA and "we protect and support our own just as you do". Ernesto again told him that he could not see

how the SWP could take a position on the matter simply because Elfego is a YSA member and had gone to them with a personal concern between Elfego and himself, not the SWP and the Crusade for Justice. Mr. Halstead then remarked that he wanted to make it clear they had come to express their support for Elfego and would "protect Elfego by any means necessary". Ernesto told them they were not aware of all the circumstances regarding their conversation (about which he refused to go into at the time because it was none of their business) and that they were making a big mistake by taking a position involving the SWP and themselves in something that had nothing to do with the fact that Elfego is or is not a Y.S.A. member. Fred and Steve continued to reiterate that Elfego came to them for support and that they were taking a supportive position for Elfego. Ernesto told them it was their prerogative to do so, even if they were exercising poor judgment and being that such was their position they should leave. As Steve and Fred left the office they turned to leave a lasting impression by making intimidating threats. It is true a physical confrontation resulted and that both Steve Chainey and Fred Halstead were ousted from the Crusade premises--again not because they are members of the SWP, again not because of political differences, but because they were intolerably insulting, pompous, and obtrusive in their conduct

Considering the above information, can you rationalize the various open letters being addressed to Rodolfo Corky Gonzales? Can you rationalize why a personal conflict between Ernesto and Elfego has been propagandized as resulting from "political differences"? Can you rationalize why the SWP is espousing unity while conducting a gross local and nationwide divisionary campaign? What political differences exist between Crusade for Justice members and Metro State MECHA leadership? What political differences are Crusade for Justice members supposedly "violently" seeking solutions to? What and who is really responsible for the personal business between two individuals escalating to organizational friction? Is Elfego Baca an agent provocateur, a puppet in an SWP anti-Crusade campaign, a drug traffic sympathizer, or just a very disturbed person using his position with MECHA and the SWP to vent out his personal animosities against members of the Crusade for Justice?--any of which are not justifiable motivations for a supposedly "progressive" organization's representative.

The SWP professes to know how the police systems work to destroy Movement groups and divide Movement efforts; if they do, why do they then allow themselves to become party to such tactics by instigating disunity with their anti-Crusade propaganda? We have had too much experience with establishment opponents not to see the similarity in patterns, and we urge you to be as analytical.

To date, Ernesto Vigil's charges have been dropped, but Tony Marquez will be going to court on November 4th, and our Defense Committee's efforts to continue building progressive organizations' and community support for victimized Chicano activists carry onward...

/s/Maria Serna
Maria Serna, Secretary
D.C.L.D.C.

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CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE
1587 Downing
P.O. Box 18347
Denver, Colo. Aztlan 80218

October 8, 1976

TO: Elfego Baca

Although none of you afforded me the common courtesy or respect to mail or deliver your statement to me personally, I feel an answer to you is important, if for nothing else, to correct your assumptions and your preconceived charges.

You are individually and collectively using the very methods (distortion, innuendo, character assassination, and yellow journalism) that are universally abhorred and rejected by all free thinking and progressive people. By your presumptuous chest pounding and self-righteousness you are joining hands with those biased and reactionary forces who are no doubt pleased by your attempts to create divisionism, factionalism, disunity and confusion within the Chicano Movement.

Your pre-conceived convictions smack of the authoritarian courts of law that lack the vital elements of objectivity and justice. You pompously have become judge, jury and prosecutor based on misinformation, ignorance, spite, guilt, or provocation.

It has been the philosophy of the CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE to educate, politicize, organize and unify the Chicano people in the struggle for total liberation. We have taken a positive and active stand against unjust wars; violence used against our people and all peoples, in the communities, the fields, the factories, institutions, schools, prisons, the courts; against hard drugs, and disruptive leaderships.

We have taken a progressive and positive stand against the inequities, the racism, and paternalism of this society and doing so, we have been murdered, jailed, penalized, and ostracized, all in the name of law and order, justice and society.

We have been and will continue to be in the midst if not in the forefront of the Chicano movement despite those self-proclaimed critics, whose past involvement is questionable, if not negative.

There are those dissidents who disagree with us because of their lack of confidence in themselves and our people, who disagree with our commitment to independence and our dedication to develop our own leadership, our own economic, social and political destiny. Our analysis of these disagreements is that they are based on our dedication to discipline, principles and high standards of conduct which readily reject the use of hard drugs, hypocrisy, dis-

loyalty and political degenerates who would use the movement for their own perversions and monetary gains.

We have consistently remained independent of alien and questionable political groups who pound their chests about the actions of others, who speak about the issues that confront our people but who never take an action to solve the problems.

I take the time to answer your declaration because I feel there may be some Chicanos among you who have made an honest mistake and are truly concerned with the progress of our people.

We have treated all people and all those who take part in the struggle for justice with respect. We have never meddled or falsely charged other individuals or groups without having facts and proof of our charges. We would expect the same from anyone else.

Attempts of provocation to create war between factions has been attempted if not by the F.B.I., C.I.A. and Police enforcement groups but also by many who claim they resented progressive or radical groups.

We have not yet been destroyed by the colonial forces because we are vigilant, we are determined, we are organized and we will not be fooled by provocateurs by any name, front or organization.

Therefore, the CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE will answer only to those who have created and sustained us....OUR OWN PEOPLE.

Our concern is with our people in particular, oppressed people of the world in general.

Those who would follow the missionary leadership of questionable groups insult the intelligence and integrity of their own people's ability and intellect to develop and create our own leadership and social and political institutions.

We consider the movimiento Chicano, a familia and a nation, and we alone shall determine our future.

Those people who signed the "Declaration against violence in the movement," must honestly search themselves and evaluate if their statement created unity or disunity, trust or distrust, clarity or confusion.

The colonized are never freed by the sympathy of the colonizer, only by the action of the people.

History will prove that we are correct in our process and the proper investigation and research will show that our opinions are right about these who offer us their leadership but not their responsibility.

Ganaremos,

/s/Rodolfo Corky Gonzales
Chairman, CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE

P.S. Digame con quien andas y te digo quien eres.

RCG/ngm

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AN OPEN LETTER TO RODOLFO "CORKY" GONZALES
FROM FRED HALSTEAD AND ELFEGO BACA

To:

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales
Crusade for Justice
1567 Downing
Denver, Colorado 80218

In early October, a "Declaration Against Violence in the Movement" addressed to you as a leader of the Crusade for Justice began to be circulated among movement and community activists.

The Declaration was necessitated by some distressing events. First, physical threats were made by a member of the Crusade, Ernesto Vigil, against Elfego Baca, Chairman of the Metro State College MEChA and a member of the Young Socialist Alliance.

When two members of the Socialist Workers Party went to the headquarters of the Crusade to discuss the matter with you, they were assaulted and beaten.

A reply by you to the Declaration Against Violence dated October 8 has now been made available to a number of persons who signed the Declaration.

A companion letter regarding these incidents by Maria Serna, a prominent member of the Crusade, is also being circulated.

We had hoped that your responses would somehow reassure concerned persons that the Crusade would disassociate itself from the use of physical intimidation.

Unfortunately, the letters by you and Maria Serna did not relieve our concern.

In neither letter is there any attempt to deny that Elfego Baca is under threat of violence. Nor is there any attempt to deny that Fred Halstead and Steve Chainey were the victims of an unprovoked assault at the Crusade's headquarters.

Instead, both letters seem to try to justify what happened. Maria Serna justifies the threat by Ernesto Vigil against Elfego Baca as a "personal" matter involving two persons in the Chicano community, and she says that the SWP should not be concerned.

In the first place, we must make it clear that even a personal matter would not justify the use of physical vio-

Halstead-Baca/2

lence to settle differences. In the second place, we do not accept the implication that a physical threat against a member of the socialist movement is none of our business simply because that member is a Chicano who is involved in activities in the Chicano movement. These methods should not be used against anyone.

Maria Serna also brings up another disturbing point. She reports a beating by Crusade members against yet another person. In this case an attempt is made to justify this by calling the person a "drug pusher." There exists not one shread of evidence to back up such an outrageous and irresponsible charge.

What assurances do others who may express a difference of opinion with members of the Crusade have that they too will not be falsely labeled a "pusher" and "agent provocateur," a "puppet," a "drug traffic sympathizer," or a "disturbed person," and then be set upon physically?

We urge you once again to clarify the position of the Crusade regarding these incidents. We urge you to take all necessary steps to assure that this violence is not repeated and to join us and others in redoubling our common efforts against government repression.

/s/ Fred Halstead, Socialist
Workers Party

/s/ Elfego Baca, Young Socialist
Alliance

DECLARATION AGAINST VIOLENCE IN THE MOVEMENT

Disturbing reports of the use of physical violence by members of the Crusade for Justice have come to our attention. This underlines the urgent need for decisive action to deescalate tensions in the movement and to insure that physical intimidation does not interfere with the free exchange of political views.

Recent public revelations about the FBI have shown that fomenting violent conflicts within the movement is one of the government's favorite disruptive tactics. This is all the more reason for us to work to bring such incidents to an end.

We hope you will take a stand in favor of the simple democratic right to express a point of view without fear of physical reprisal from anyone, including those who may disagree within the movement. Taking such a stand certainly does not mean repudiating the right of self-defense against violent attacks. It means making clear that differences among those fighting for social justice cannot be resolved by fists or other weapons. Any attempt to do so simply provides openings for police and other enemies of the movement to tear us apart.

Further, it certainly does not help us oppose the government's use of violence against us if some of us use it against people who may not agree with our point of view.

The forces opposing progressive social change in the United States are very powerful. The unity necessary to overcome these forces can only be achieved if we respect each other's democratic rights.

SIGNERS OF DECLARATION AGAINST VIOLENCE
IN THE MOVEMENT AS OF OCTOBER 26, 1976 *

Robert Allen, editor, Black Scholar
Miguel Angel, chairman, Ethnic Studies, Laney College
Geraldine Armijo, student, Metro State College, Denver
Lamberto Armijo, instructor, Chicano Studies, Community College,
North Campus, Denver
Chuck Arragón, chairperson, MEChA, Community College, Denver
Muriel Ashmore, community activist, Denver
Elfego Baca, student, Metro State College, Denver

Philip Berrigan
Karen Buzis, Union of the Poor, Salt Lake City
Ted Buzis, chairperson, Union of the Poor, Salt Lake City
Cecilio Camarillo, editor, Caracol
Margarita Carro, Salt Lake City
Ann Chávez, community activist, Denver
Everett Chávez, Chicano Studies, University of Colorado, Denver
Abelardo Delgado, Chicano poet
Darlene Domínguez, community activist, Denver
Luis Fuentes, former director, Utah Society of Ex-Offenders
Luis Fuentes, former superintendent, New York City School
District 1
Vera Gallegos, chairperson, United Mexican American Students (UMAS).
University of Colorado, Denver
Adolfo Gómez, Director, Auraria Community Center, Denver
Dr. Armando Gutiérrez, vice-chairman, Texas Raza Unida Party
José Angel Gutiérrez, Raza Unida Party, Zavala County, Texas
Luz Gutiérrez, Raza Unida Party, Zavala County, Texas
Vickie Herrera, community activist, Denver
Armando Juárez, Salt Lake City
Severita Lara, Crystal City, Texas
Benjamin Lovato, student, Metro State College, Denver
Frobén Lozada, chairman, Chicano Studies, Merritt College
Alicia Lucero, community activist, Denver
Patricia Anne Madsen, Attorney, Denver
Daniel Martínez, student, Metro State College, Denver
Edward Martínez, President, University of Texas MEChA, San Antonio
Pedro Martínez, chairman, Raza Student Union, Merritt College
Miguel Pendás, Socialist Workers Party, Denver
Carlos Pérez, community activist, Denver
Josephine Pérez, community activist, Denver
Juan José Peña, chairman, Raza Unida Party, New Mexico
Marie Quintana, Salt Lake City
Kandy Romero, UFW Support Committee, Salt Lake City
Kathleen Roybal, Platte Valley Action Center, Denver
Mateo Torres, UMAS University of Colorado, Denver
Albert Valdivia, former instructor, Escuela Tlatelolco
Rodolfo Valdivia, community activist, Denver
Dr. Wolfgang Yargrau, History Department, Denver University
Miguel Zárate, National Executive Committee, Young Socialist Allian

* Organizations listed for identification purposes only

OPEN LETTER FROM FRED HALSTEAD OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS
PARTY TO RODOLFO "CORKY" GONZALES

Denver, Colorado
October 2, 1976

Dear Corky Gonzales,

Around 2:30 p.m. on October 1, Steve Chainey, the Denver Socialist Workers Party organizer, and I went to the headquarters of the Crusade for Justice in Denver. We had been requested to do so by the national offices of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance.

The purpose of our visit was threefold: to offer any assistance we could in the Crusade for Justice suit against government police agencies; to invite you to speak on your suit at a coming public rally in Denver; and to speak to you about a threat of physical violence made by a member of the Crusade for Justice against a member of the YSA.

We had been told that Ernesto Vigil, a leader of the Crusade, made a physical threat against Elfego Baca, the chairperson of the Metro State College MEChA who is also a member of the YSA. It is common knowledge that there are disagreements between members of the Crusade and the leadership of the Metro MEChA. In itself, there is nothing unusual about disagreement, but we are concerned about rising tensions and the threat of physical violence.

We intended to ask you to join us in discouraging violence over disagreements in the movement.

When we entered the Crusade headquarters we were told you were not there but that we could speak to Maria Serna. When we told her of our concern about the threat, she said we should speak to Ernesto Vigil. She sent for him.

Vigil entered the office accompanied by another man whose name I do not know. When I told Vigil about my concern, he did not deny having threatened Elfego Baca. He simply said it was none of my business. Throughout the conversation both Steve Chainey and I were calm and used a friendly tone. At no time did we threaten violence, or make any movements that could have been interpreted as threatening.

Vigil ordered us to leave the building. As we left the office on our way out of the building, I paused to say that

if Elfego Baca was harmed we would be obliged to make public the previous threats.

Vigil's response was to punch me repeatedly in the face while the other man punched Steve Chainey. Neither Chainey nor I made any attempt to strike back, we simply attempted to leave the building. Nevertheless, they continued punching. By the time we were able to get out of the building both of us were bleeding profusely. Chainey had a bloody nose and a cut lip. My nose was broken and I had cuts on my face that required several stitches.

As we were walking away from the building, people outside expressed concern about the blood on our faces and asked what had happened. I heard someone shout from behind me, "That's what you get for threatening people's lives." This was an obvious attempt to justify a completely unprovoked assault.

We made no physical threats while we were in the building and we make none now.

We are completely opposed to the idea that violence can be used to resolve any dispute among those fighting for the oppressed. Such violence simply provides an opening for the police and police agents to divide us and turn us against ourselves. FBI documents that have come out over the last year or so show that one of the first tactics they use is to try to get movement groups fighting among themselves.

If you allow physical intimidation to become a trademark of the Crusade, it will be a grave disservice to all those fighting for a better world.

I strongly urge you to take all the necessary steps to see that this kind of violence is not repeated.

I await your response with great concern.

Sincerely,

/s/Fred Halstead
for the Socialist Workers
Party