

Los Seis Remembered: Criticism and Analysis of a 1974 News Cycle

The digital humanities archival project “Los Seis Remembered: Criticism and Analysis of a 1974 News Cycle” focuses on the news coverage surrounding the Los Seis de Boulder tragedy that occurred in 1974. This project focuses on the student-activist newspaper *El Diario de la Gente*’s coverage of two car bombings that took the lives of six Chicano activists in Boulder, Colorado compared to larger regional publications in the area including the *Colorado Daily*, the *Daily Camera*, the *Denver Post*, and the *Rocky Mountain News*.

“Los Seis Remembered” shows that the tone of the coverage ranged from remorseful to hostile to down right sensationalist, depending on the outlet and the news angle taken. After about three weeks, the coverage fizzled out. Until that event, *El Diario* had largely covered protests, boycotts, school events, Chicano, and gave a platform for artists to share creative works since the newspaper began publishing in 1972. The writers of *El Diario* said goodbye to their friends as they tried to understand what happened and the implications it had for their community. The regional newspapers largely shared the law enforcement’s point of view, which blamed the bombings on the Chicano community, narrowing in specifically on the Los Seis.

Oftentimes tragic events or the perpetrators receive more press coverage than those who lost their lives. With Los Seis, the Chicano felt that regional press coverage was hardly fair and after a few short weeks, the coverage dissipated from all newspapers except *El Diario*, which continued to write about the tragedy for years. Over 45 years later and few are familiar with this part of Boulder’s history. If they are familiar, they typically do not know the names of the six people who lost their lives. This project aims to change that.

By reading through this project, looking at the images and listening to the sound clips, the story of Los Seis de Boulder and the tragedy that was covered up for decades will be heard, seen, and felt. Analyzing one month of coverage focused on Los Seis from five different media sources confirms a need for advocacy journalism, or rather, compassion in news’ coverage. Without *El Diario*’s official coverage of Los Seis on June 11, 1974, the Chicano community’s voice would have been muted by explosive coverage meant to shock readers for the wrong reasons.

Converting primary source materials into digital formats and disseminating information to be reflected on by digital humanists, archivists, journalists, educators, researchers, and communities whose voices have not been heard as they should have been, qualifies this work as a noble contributor to scholarship and the public landscape of knowledge. The close readings of five newspapers printing in the spring of 1974 demonstrates the difference in approach to the public’s right to accurate information. Several of the city newspapers printed graphic accounts of the crime scenes from the car bombings at the end of that year, and demonstrated that its focus was relatively narrow in scope. *El Diario* challenged the narrative by introducing readers to the victims on June 11.

Collaborative digital scholarship and DH movements such as representation, race, and social justice served as the backbone of this project. Newspaper clippings that were scanned or digitized, recorded interviews, images, a story map and a timeline make “Remembering Los Seis” an original DH work. Combining these DH practices and epistemologies was the only way to tell the story of Los Seis’ range of media representation, and its consequences.

The majority of this history is being kept alive due to oral histories and current historians and activists archiving the information. Much of what we see in history books favors white people and any person of color has to fight for equal representation. Scholars are attempting to better this by creating works of social justice that show representation of all people, not just white people and it's imperative that these works which encourage archival justice are shared in ways that are easily accessible both in location and in comprehension.

To do this, we scheduled interviews with subject experts Jasmine Baetz, an artist who spearheaded the sculpture commemorating Los Seis de Boulder; Dr. Johanna Maes, director of the Masters of Higher Education Program and a senior instructor at CU Boulder; former journalist and founder of *El Diario* Juan Espinosa and historian Deborah Espinosa. Their insight humanized the Chicax experience then and now for both of us.

The question of when does research become activism was as important and very much in parallel to the assemblance of “Los Seis Remembered” as ongoing discussions of what role activism plays in journalism, and if the combination of the two eliminates any possibility of objective reporting. The tools we used to explore this approach included conducting oral histories and in-person interviews, which included writing questions and transcribing interviews. We also spent hours looking at primary source material in both the Special Collections & Archives Reading Room in Norlin Library and manually scanning through 10 rolls of film on a microfilm reader at Norlin Library. We cut and uploaded those audio sound bites to SoundCite from Knight Lab but realized that our ARCGIS Story Map does not recognize the embed codes. We adapted and used SoundCloud to house the clips instead. We decided to add the sound clips to our Story Map to give it another interactive feature. By offering site visitors the option of listening to or reading quotes from our sources, we were able to create a Story Map site that is more accessible and gives viewers options in how they can disseminate information. We created an ArcGIS Story Map complete with an interactive map showing the bombing locations. We also created a timeline from KnightLab to help the viewer perceive the news cycle at work.

We had a vision for our coverage of Los Seis de Boulder that morphed and evolved, then shrunk and grew again. The task was always to analyze the media coverage of Los Seis. The objective was to give the six lives lost to the tragedies in May 1974 recognition. When we read and analyzed the news stories from 1974, the difference in how the Chicax community covered their story and the outside news media covered their story was stark. We chose to highlight the stories of the six run by *El Diario* because to us, those stories were the kind of journalism the six and the larger community needed. Throughout the process, we had to remind ourselves of what our role was: Researcher or Activist? In all honesty, it was probably a bit of both. “Remembering Los Seis” is a digital humanities project that serves as a reminder of how

the Chicax community has faced bias from the media. "Remembering Los Seis" contextualizes what progress the media has made, and what progress has not been made. We encourage everyone who explores this digital humanities project to use it as a tool to inspire further research into a history where there is more to learn.

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