10 The Chicano Movement

By 1960 two-thirds of the Mexican American population was urban

This follows the general trend of the US

Suggests greater assimilation to a degree even though Mexican American communities were still organized by ethnicity

This was mostly a process of ethnicity but there was some formal segregation too

85 percent of the Mexicanos were born in the US

More evidence of greater integration

The percentage of Latinos in the Southwest classified as laborers declined from 42 to 30 percent

Educational levels were improving

A lot of the negative conditions that were associated with the Mexican American community as a whole were skewed by the ongoing immigration from Mexico

Despite the advances experienced by the Mexican American community, it still ranked toward the bottom of most categories in terms of economics and education especially in comparison to Anglos

The Chicano movement follows the contours established by the African American civil rights movement

*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)

Montgomery Boycott and the SCLC

The movement turned more radical by 1966 with SNCC and the Black Panthers arguing that reform wasn't fast enough

Viet Nam played a role in this development

A key development that contributed to the Chicano movement was the United Farm Workers strike

The termination of the Bracero program in 1964 was a catalyst to attempt to unionize Mexican farm workers

In 1965 César Chávez and Dolores Huerta led a farm workers strike in California

Chávez had been involved in the Community Service Organization and was influenced by Fred Ross

Based on his activity trying to organize farm workers in the CSO, he eventually left the

organization and started a new organization, the UFW in Delano, California

The Delano strike actually began in 1965 with a Filipino farm union affiliated with the AFL-CIO

Chávez was recruited to organize and lead the strike and he used the opportunity to build his own organization

Chávez employed tactics of Gandhi and MLK of nonviolence

He sought to appeal to middle class Americans

He got help from trade unions, AFL-CIO, SDS, and other civil rights groups

His main tactic was the strike, but in 1968 he sought to expand his cause into the urban areas through the tactic of the boycott

By 1970 the grape farmers recognized the UFW

Chávez's organization had an influence on the attempts to organize Mexican farm laborers in Texas, the Midwest, and elsewhere in the Southwest and Northwest

By 1973 Chávez sought to organize lettuce workers and became associated with the Teamsters which didn't want the farm workers to strike

Also the great influx on undocumented workers contributed to the decline of the UFW

Chávez's efforts have been associated with the civil rights movement in general

He appears to have been working for the plight of Mexican Americans in general

But he wasn't working for recent immigrants

Other early Chicano leaders

Reies Tijerina

Born in Falls City

Was associated with evangelical Protestantism

In 1950 he set up a utopian community in Casa Grande, AZ

In 1960 he moved to New Mexico where he championed the cause to return NM lands to former Hispanic owners

He formed Alianza Federal de Mercedes

He charged that the land was taken illegally

He sought to create a utopian society from the reclaimed lands

Tijerina was a cult leader

By the mid-60s Tijerina was involved in fence-cutting and arson

On June 5, 1967 he and his supporters took over the Tierra Amarilla courthouse

A shootout ensued and Tijerina took a couple of captives

Tijerina was eventually sent to prison in 1969 for the destruction of federal property

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales was another radical leader of the times

From Denver, and was a well-known boxer in the 1950s

He got involved in politics during the Viva Kennedy campaign

During the LBJ administration he got involved in the War on Poverty as it related to inner city barrios

He became disillusioned when he felt that change wasn't happening fast enough

In 1966 he formed La Crusada Para La Justicia

Sought to mobilize the youth to focus on social issues

The organization focused on cultural nationalism

The cultural nationalism espoused by Gonzales began to focus on separatism and he began to champion the idea of Aztlán

He organized student walkouts of schools and marches on Washington

Gonzales was a key figure in the development of the Raza Unida movement

He sought to create a national unified organization

He organized a Chicano Youth Liberation Front convention in Denver in March 1969

It was here that the Spiritual Plan of Aztlán was announced

A call for an autonomous Chicano homeland

After the organization of another Chicano youth conference in 1970 Gonzales was committed to the idea of a separatist political party

He launched the Colorado Raza Unida Party

Actually the Raza Unida movement had begun earlier in 1966 as a result of Mexican American leaders walking out of a Equal Employment Opportunity Commission meeting in Albuquerque addressing problems in the barrios

President Johnson promised a White House conference with Hispanic leaders, but he scheduled a meeting in El Paso instead

He sought to create an Interagency Committee on Mexican American Affairs

The El Paso meeting was held in October of 1967

Radicals walked out of the meeting and held an alternative meeting called *La Raza Unida*

They resolved to set up a nationwide organization to represent Chicano interests in coming elections

The endorsed the *Plan de La Raza Unida* affirming Chicano solidarity

A follow-up meeting was held in San Antonio in 1968

The Raza Unida movement was the idea of José Gutiérrez of Crystal City, Texas

In graduate school he had become active in Chicano student political organizations

He and others decided that a Chicano political party should be organized

Gutiérrez organized the La Raza Unida Party to campaign for school board and city council offices in Crystal City

These activities mirrored Corky Gonzales' ideas of a Chicano party

Gonzales organized a national meeting in El Paso to be held in September 1972

This national convention was a failure because of a division between Gutierrez and Gonzales

Gutiérrez's moderate faction ultimately won out at the convention

The LRUP succeeded to organize a small portion of the Mexican American community

It experienced most success in South Texas

Mexican Americans refused to abandon the Democratic Party

Cháves, The GI Forum, LULAC, and other organizations kept their allegiance to the Democratic Party

The lack of solidarity was the main reason for the failure of the LRUP

Why no solidarity?

Because not all Mexican Americans identify

The Chicano Student Movement

Antecedents to the Chicano student movement

Mexican-American Movement (1942) Southern California

Grew out YMCA conference on Mexican youth

Promoted educational opportunities

Indigenismo and socialism played a large role in the student movement by the late 60s and early 70s

Chicano campus organizations began to appear in 1964 (Student Initiative, San Jose)

In 1967 other organizations appeared in California and Texas

MASO Mexican American Student Organization at UT

MASA Mexican American Student Association at East LA Community College

UMAS United Mexican American Students UCLA

Expanded to Colorado and into the Midwest

MASC Mexican American Student Confederation San Jose

Had chapters throughout California

LA experienced a number of High School student walkouts in 1968

This encouraged other walkouts in Colorado and Texas

These walkouts demanded hiring Mexican American instructors, counselors, administrators, bilingual programs, and close cooperation between schools and Mexican American communities

In 1969 there was an effort to establish nationwide unity between all these student organizations

Met in Santa Barbara and issued the Plan de Santa Barbara

Called for educational reform in the form of Chicano studies programs

Established MECHA El Movimiento Estudiantil de Aztlan to be the general organization of all Chicano organizations

MECHA began to collapse between 1971 and 1973

Internal divisions over class issues versus ethnic issues

Gonzales says that the collapse of MECHA paralleled the decline of the Chicano student movement

Chicano movement in the community

Brown Berets

Organizations

CASA Centro de Accion Social Autonoma-Hermandad General de Trabajadores LA 1968

Leftist organization "became a bulwark of Marxism"

MALDEF Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund Texas 1967

National Council of La Raza Phoenix 1968

Originally established as Southwest Council of La Raza

Association of Mexican American Educators 1965

National Association for Chicano Studies 1972