

The Chicano Movement

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The Chicano Movement represented Mexican Americans' fight for equal rights after the Second World War. The rights that they desired included equality in education and housing, representation in voting, equal conditions in labor, and the recognition and celebration of their ethnic heritage.

The Chicano Movement includes leaders such as Cesar Chavez, United Farm Workers (UFW) who worked to achieve better sanitation and wages for farm workers. Chavez advocated non violent action as the best method of achieving the goals of the UFW. He encouraged striking, boycotting, and marching as peaceful methods to achieve one's goals. While the UFW was formed in California Chavez encouraged and participated in boycotts and strikes throughout the Southwestern United States.

In New Mexico, Reyes Lopez Tijerina fought to regain lands that had been taken from Hispanics after the Mexican-American War. Tijerina believed that if the government and Anglo land owners failed to return lands unlawfully or unethically taken from Mexican Americans after the war in 1848, then Chicanos should use force.

In Texas, Jose Angel Gutierrez assisted in the formation of *La Raza Unida* party which encouraged Mexican Americans to participate in voting, and to run for local, state, and national positions of leadership. *La Raza Unida* brought together Chicanos throughout the Southwest, but was most successful in Crystal City Texas, where the party was successful in electing local Chicanos to the school board.

Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez assisted in establishing the Crusade for Justice in Colorado. The Crusade aided high school and university students in gaining more representation at Colorado universities and establishing Chicano Studies courses and programs in high schools and universities.

While the leadership of the Chicano movement was at the forefront of the movement, it was the organizers and demonstrators that kept the movement alive. Students formed organizations such as United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA). These organizations, like others formed during the Civil Rights movement, encouraged the embracing of Chicanos' indigenous heritage, whether as Mexicans, Mexican-Americans or Spanish-Americans. This celebration of ethnic heritage resulted in poems, songs, dancing, and artwork.