Amplified our voices within our own communities
- More Chicano authors, professors, community leaders & activists
- Explosion of Chicano art and murals, Chicano poetry, teatros, and music
- Increase in Chicano graduates
  - In 1968, in Los Angeles the high school dropout rate was 60%
  - In 2020-2021, the graduation rate was 80.5%

Reflect, Relate, & Think Deeper

1. What surprised you? Made you feel, wonder, think?
2. Can you relate to any of the challenges facing Chicanos in the 1960s & 1970s? Can you relate to any parts of Manuel's story?
3. Are any of the same social problems a problem still today?
4. Why does the Chicano Moratorium still matter?

Resources & Further Learning

Library of Congress

Ruben Salazar Project

LA Times

About the FBI Cointelpro Attacks

ESTE INC.
A 501 (C)(3) Chicana-founded & led nonprofit creating resources & offering support to Empower Self, Students, & Society Through Education

Funds go to further educational justice for communities of color!

Check out our website for free resources, Ethnic Studies curriculum, & more Chicano/a/x history!

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WHAT IS THE TRUE STORY OF THE CHICANO MORATORIUM?

REBELLIOUS HISTORY ZINE

June 2023
Recommended for ages 11+

Sensitive Content:
- Racism
- Police Brutality
- Death
Hi, my name is Manuel. I’m a father and a grandfather. My ancestors were in New Mexico long before it was colonized land. I’m Chicano. I mostly grew up here in California, in Pacoima. I was an activist in the Chicano Movement in the 60’s & 70’s, which was a civil rights movement focused on Mexican and Mexican American communities.

I was also one of the 30,000 people to attend the Chicano Moratorium.

The Chicano Moratorium was a national protest against the extremely high death rate of Mexican-Americans in the Vietnam War, among other issues. It took place on August 29th, 1970, in east LA at Laguna Park, now called Ruben Salazar Park.

But before I talk about the Chicano Moratorium, you have to understand what life was like in that time in the U.S. for Mexican Americans. In the 1950s & 1960s barrios were islands of poverty. People had to leave to find work outside, racism and police brutality were prevalent. For a lot of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, assimilation was a necessity to survive.

In schools, Spanish was forbidden, our culture and food was looked down on, our history was excluded. So, for those of us who didn’t want to assimilate and refused to be dehumanized, many of us became defiant.

The Chicano Moratorium can teach us important lessons. First of all, it shows us that Chicanismo was seen as a threat to those in power. Our unity was the threat. And we were making progress. We were coming together with others and demanding more for ourselves and our kids. We were speaking out against police brutality, which Ruben Salazar had been reporting on and was assassinated for it. The Chicano Moratorium demonstrates to us what systemic racism and police repression looks like. But it went further than the violence of the LAPD & Sheriff’s Department that day. In the years that followed, all over the country, the FBI and local governments carried out attacks against movements led by people of color.

Legacy of the Chicano Movement

- New sense of identity and pride
- Saved lives and redirected barrio youth from gangs
- Showed the power in our numbers and what we can accomplish if we come together with each other across generational and ethnic lines.
This is what it meant to be Chicano. This is why that term grew from this time period. Being Chicano was an act of defiance, a way for us to define ourselves. For me, I had always referred to myself as a Chicano, because I had been a gang member and this term was embraced by Pachucos. But, not everyone used the term.

"A Chicano is a Mexican-American with a non-Anglo image of himself."

- CHICANO REPORTER, RUBEN SALAZAR

Now, in the 60s & 70s, Chicanos were one of many groups in the United States who were fighting against white supremacy and institutional inequality. You had the African American Civil Rights movement, the American Indian Movement, anti-war movements, women’s liberation. You could just feel the energy of the time. People were fed up and they were actually doing something about it. It felt hopeful and energetic. We were forming coalitions with other groups, that’s what they don’t tell you- that the Filipinos and Mexicans joined forces to create the United Farmworkers. Chicanos marched in the 1963 Poor People’s March in Washington where Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to a crowd of over a quarter million people. Even at Valley State College where I attended, white students in solidarity with students of color staged sit-ins demanding the creation of Ethnic Studies.

So, that’s what the country was like in the 60’s & 70’s. The 1970 Chicano Moratorium was a protest against so many things- first of all, it was a march to protest the overwhelming number of Chicanos dying in the Vietnam War. Vietnam is a country in Southeast Asia and the U.S. was basically trying to take power in Vietnam after the collapse of French colonialism. Not only did we feel a bond with the oppressed people there, we were protesting because this war was about nothing but American greed and yet Black and Brown young men were being sent to die in disproportionate rates, especially from poor communities. For Chicanos, we were only 3% of the U.S. population but dying at the rate of 20%.

Part of the reason was that the dropout rate for Chicanos was 60% and out of those who graduated, very few went on to attend college. Not going to school made us more likely to be drafted for war. Also, military recruitment offices were mostly in areas of color, as they still are today. So, here we were dying for a country that didn’t even treat us as equals at home. That’s what the word moratorium means- it’s a call to put an end to something. But the Chicano Moratorium was not just about Vietnam, it was about the battles we were fighting every day in our own schools and neighborhoods.
People came to the Moratorium from all over the United States, Chicanos and other people standing with us. Leaders like Corky Gonzalez and Cesar Chavez were set to speak that day.

This defiance led to many of us dropping out of school, joining gangs and living a lifestyle that landed many of us in prison, addicted to drugs, or dying in driveby shootings.

We as a people decided we were going to fight back... That’s what brought us all together, not just with other Chicanos in LA, but all over the country, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were organizing: there was the struggle over land grants in New Mexico, the farmworkers movement with the Filipinos in Delano California, the Crusade for Justice in Colorado, the Raza Unida Party in Texas, and multiple chapters of Brown Berets throughout the country.

We started in Belvedere Park and marched for 3 miles down Whittier Blvd. to Laguna Park.

At the time, I was working as a youth counselor in a community-centered summer camp for kids that many of us young activists had been a part of creating. We had brought kids to the Moratorium. It was such an uplifting event, all of us chanting together, in unison. The air was filled with promise and hope. People were cheering us on from rooftops and sidewalks as we marched down Whittier Blvd. There was music, drumming, and Aztec dancing, shouts of Viva la Raza and Chicano Power! Our group arrived at the park with about half the march still arriving behind us. When we got there, families were sitting in the grass, listening to music, watching little girls dance folklorico. It was beautiful, a moment of celebration and hope. But then it all changed.

Listen to Manuel’s Firsthand Account on our website
www.esteinc.org

In east LA, students in 7 area high schools led walkouts to demand educational rights and justice for Chicanos and address the high dropout rates. In fact, their struggle helped pave the way for me to attend college after I got out of prison at 19 and avoid the same fate as many of my homies who stayed in gangs.

In 1969, I went to Valley State College in Northridge through a bridge program that helped local Brown and Black youth from the barrios and projects get a college education. We had one of the first Chicano studies programs in the entire country. Finally, my culture and history was not ignored or looked down on, but actually included and celebrated.