

The Chicano/Latino Movement 1960s – 1970s

OBJECTIVES:

- Explain how Latinos sought equality during the 1960s and 1970s.
- Explain how Latinos fought discrimination during this period.



- Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Movement
 - Unhappy with situation and decide to do something about it

"We are going to overthrow some of our institutions, but in the way Americans have always done it: through the ballot, through public consensus. That's a revolution."

– Ruben Salazar, May 1970

- *Latinos*...people whose family origins are in Spanish-speaking Latin America.
 - Share the same language and some elements of culture
 - Often have fought against the perception of being an "outsider" to American culture.
 - Like other minority groups, have been denied equal opportunities in many important areas, such as housing, employment, and education.

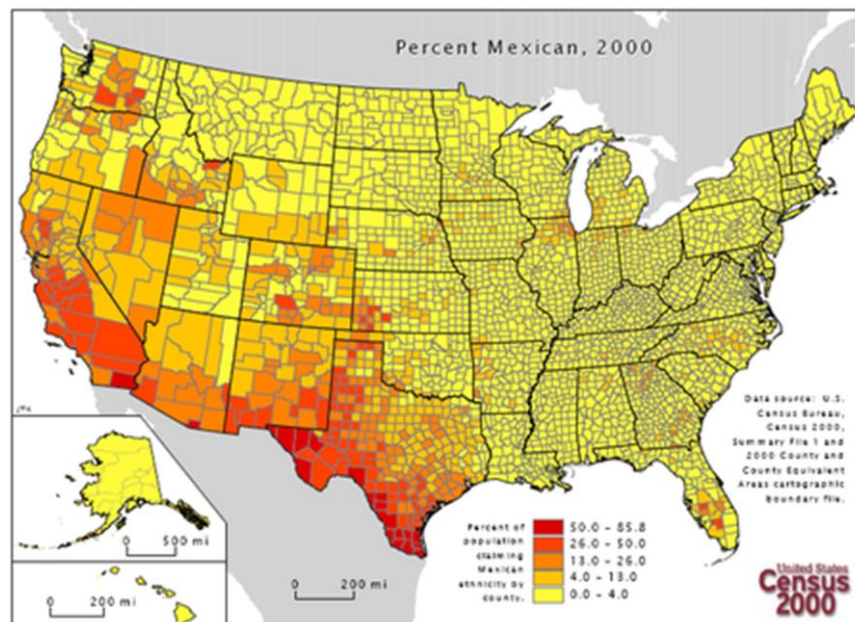


Immigration

- 1960s - 1980s ... huge increase in immigration from Central and South America
- Between 1970-1980 ... "people of Spanish origin" increased from 9 million to 14.6 million.
 - Cubans
 - Were escaping Communism and Fidel Castro, settled in Florida
 - Puerto Ricans
 - Moved to the Northeast...NYC
 - Mexicans
 - Moved to the West and Southwest
- *Chicano*...A person of Mexican descent. The largest group of Latinos in the United States.
 - Chicanos began to organize in the West to fight:
 - ...inequality
 - ...discrimination in the education, employment, and legal systems

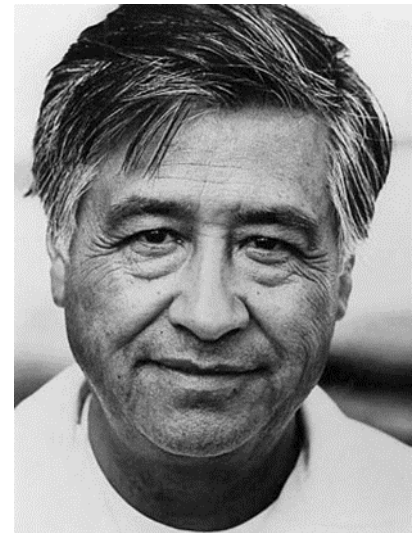
Cultural Identity

- Activists began encouraging Mexican-Americans to take pride in their culture – dual heritage from Spain and ancient Mexican cultures
 - Felt that non-Latinos had undermined Mexican-Americans control over their lives – Roman-Catholic church, the media, the schools, etc...
- Latino neighborhoods...*barrios*
 - Often urban (inner city) and run-down
 - Overcrowded
 - Schools were run-down and crowded as well
 - March, 1968 – in Los Angeles, 10,000 Mexican-American students walked out of 5 L.A. high schools
 - Protested the unequal treatment, and demanded more culturally sensitive courses, better facilities, and Latino teachers and counselors
 - Students in California, Texas, and Arizona



Organizing to Fight Discrimination

- Organizers sought to unite Latino *migrant farm workers*...laborers who moved from farm-to-farm, and state-to-state, working to plant, cultivate, and harvest crops
 - These workers were often taken advantage of and treated poorly
 - Tried to organize and improve conditions
 - Failed many times
- Cesar Chavez – A leader in the Chicano/Latino Movement in the 1960s and 1970s.
 - Became a hero to millions of Latino Americans in his effort to improve conditions for migrant workers
 - Grew up as the son of migrant farm workers – Attended more than 30 schools as a youth
 - Successfully organized farm workers to fight for rights
 - Helped form the union *United Farm Workers* (UFW)
 - By 1965 there were over 1,700 members
- *United Farm Workers* (UFW)
 - Tactics included what they called “brown power” – the use of Latino political and economic strength
 - UFW targeted California grape growers – refused to grant farm workers more pay, better working conditions, and union recognition
 - Chavez and UFW led a nationwide boycott of grapes picked on non-union farms
 - Later boycotted other farm products, like lettuce



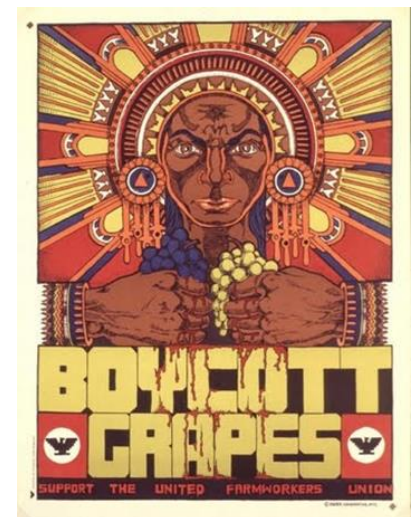
“It’s not me who counts, it’s the Movement. And I think that in terms of stopping the Movement – this one or other movements by poor people around the country – the possibility is very remote. ...the tide for change now has gone too far.”

- Cesar Chavez

- 1975 – California passed a law allowing workers to ask for better wages
 - This was the Latino Civil Rights Movement

Political Change

- Other Chicano activists took a different approach = seeking political power
 - 1961 – Henry B. González
 - ...elected to Congress through Texas
 - 1962 – Joseph Montoya
 - ...elected to the Senate from New Mexico
 - 1964 – Elizo de la Garza
 - ...elected to House of Representatives from Texas
- *La Raza Unida* was a political party formed in 1970 by José Angel Gutiérrez
 - Worked for better housing and jobs
 - Supported Latino politicians
- Chicano leader Reies Lopez Tijerina argued that Anglo culture had stolen Chicano’s land and heritage
 - His group, Alianza Federal de Mercedes (“Federal Alliance of Land Grants”), marched on Sante Fe (capital of New Mexico) in 1966



Latino Movement Today

- LUS (Latinos Unidos Siempre)
 - educational, cultural, and political development of Latino youth
- MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán)
 - Promotes higher education, culture & history
- MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund)
 - Encourages Mexican-American students to become lawyers.

