

only Chicanos, offering advice or assistance with badly needed food and clothing, distributed through a bingo-game technique; and on occasion, music for group singing provided by a phonograph or a guitar. Then there were barrio organization work; migrant worker programs; a rural self-help community development project; and confrontation with antipoverty agencies, with the churches, with government officials, and with cautious Chicanos, too....

I owe my life to my Chicano people. They rescued me from the Anglo kiss of death, the monolingual, monocultural, and colorless gringo society. I no longer face a dilemma of identity or direction. That identity and direction have been charted for me by the Chicano—but to think I came that close to being sucked into the vacuum of the dominant society.

Chicano is a beautiful word. Chicano describes a beautiful people. Chicano has a power of its own. Chicano is a unique confluence of histories, cultures, languages, and traditions.

Chicano is the one unique word of the Mexican American people. Its derivation is strictly internal; it owes nothing to the Anglo penchant for categorizing ethnic groups. In a way, Chicano is indefinable, more a word to be understood and felt and lived than placed in a dictionary or analyzed by Anglo anthropologists, sociologists, and apologists.

Chicano has the ring of pachuco slang, of shortening a word, which is typical of our Mexican American experience. It also echoes the harsher sounds of our native ancestors of the Mexican Valley, but is softened by the rounded-vowel endings of our Spanish forebears. It is the perfect word to characterize the *mezcla* that is *la raza*. It portrays the fact that we have come to psychological terms with circumstances which might otherwise cause emotional and social breakdowns among our people if we only straddle cultures and do not absorb them.

Chicano is a very special word. Chicano is a unique people. Chicano is a prophecy of a new day and a new world.

El Plan de Aztlán

Reassessments such as that of Armando Rendón led to a growing sense of Chicano self-identity. Political movements were not far behind. The First Chicano National Conference, held in Denver in 1969, produced "El Plan de Aztlán," a call for political action and race pride.

EL PLAN ESPIRITUAL DE AZTLÁN

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal "gringo" invasion of our territories, *we*, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, *declare* that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny.

We are free and sovereign to determine those tasks which are justly called for by our house, our land, the sweat of our brows, and by our hearts. Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent.

Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come and who struggle against the foreigner "gabacho" who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are *Aztlán*.

Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada.

PROGRAM

El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán sets the theme that the Chicanos (La Raza de Bronze) must use their nationalism as the key or common denominator for mass mobilization and organization. Once we are committed to the idea and philosophy of El Plan de Aztlán, we can only conclude that social, economic, cultural, and political independence is the only road to total liberation from oppression, exploitation, and racism. Our struggle then must be for the control of our barrios, campos, pueblos, lands, our economy, our culture, and our political life. El Plan commits all levels of Chicano society—the barrio, the campo, the ranchero, the writer, the teacher, the worker, the professional—to La Causa.

Nationalism

Nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class, and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon.

Organizational Goals

1. UNITY in the thinking of our people concerning the barrios, the pueblo, the campo, the land, the poor, the middle class, the professional—all committed to the liberation of La Raza.
2. ECONOMY: economic control of our lives and our communities can only come about by driving the exploiter out of our communities, our pueblos, and our lands and by controlling and developing our own talents, sweat, and resources. . . .
3. EDUCATION must be relative to our people, i.e., history, culture, bilingual education, contributions, etc. Community control of our schools, our teachers, our administrators, our counselors, and our programs.
4. INSTITUTIONS shall serve our people by providing the service necessary for a full life and their welfare on the basis of restitution, not handouts or beggar's crumbs. Restitution for past economic slavery, political exploitation, ethnic and cultural psychological destruction and denial of civil and human rights. Institutions in our community

which do not serve the people have no place in the community. The institutions belong to the people.

5. SELF-DEFENSE of the community must rely on the combined strength of the people. The front line defense will come from the barrios, the campos, the pueblos, and the ranchitos. Their involvement as protectors of their people will be given respect and dignity. They in turn offer their responsibility and their lives for their people. Those who place themselves in the front ranks for their people do so out of love and *carnalismo*. . . .

6. CULTURAL values of our people strengthen our identity and the moral backbone of the movement. Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza towards liberation with one heart and one mind. We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture. Our cultural values of life, family, and home will serve as a powerful weapon to defeat the gringo dollar value system and encourage the process of love and brotherhood.

7. POLITICAL LIBERATION can only come through independent action on our part, since the two-party system is the same animal with two heads that feed from the same trough. Where we are a majority, we will control; where we are a minority, we will represent a pressure group; nationally, we will represent one party: La Familia de La Raza.

Action

1. Awareness and distribution of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán. Presented at every meeting, demonstration, confrontation, courthouse, institution, administration, church, school, tree, building, car, and every place of human existence.
2. September 16, on the birthdate of Mexican Independence, a national walk-out by all Chicanos of all colleges and schools to be sustained until the complete revision of the educational system: its policy makers, administration, its curriculum, and its personnel to meet the needs of our community.
3. Self-defense against the occupying forces of the oppressors at every school, every available man, woman, and child.
4. Community nationalization and organization of all Chicanos: El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán.
5. Economic program to drive the exploiters out of our community

"SAY IT LOUD, SAY IT PROUD"

and a welding together of our people's combined resources to control their own production through cooperative effort.

6. Creation of an independent local, regional, and national political party.

A nation autonomous and free—culturally, socially, economically, and politically—will make its own decisions on the usage of our lands, the taxation of our goods, the utilization of our bodies for war, the determination of justice (reward and punishment), and the profit of our sweat.

El Plan de Aztlán is the plan of liberation!

First National Chicana Conference

The emergence of a women's movement in the late 1960s (see chapter 8) coincided with that of the movement for Latino rights. The combined effort of the two movements led to direct questioning of the situation of Latino women and to plans for action. A brief selection from the final report of the first national meeting is reprinted here.

SEX AND THE CHICANA

We feel that in order to provide an effective measure to correct the many sexual hangups facing the Chicano community the following resolutions should be implemented:

- I. Sex is good and healthy for both Chicano and Chicanas and we must develop this attitude.
- II. We should destroy the myth that religion and culture control our sexual lives.
- III. We recognize that we have been oppressed by religion and that the religious writing was done by men and interpreted by men. Therefore, for those who desire religion, they should interpret

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their Bible, or Catholic rulings according to their own feelings, what they think is right, without any guilt complexes.

- IV. Mothers should teach their sons to respect women as human beings who are equal in every respect. *No double standard.*
- V. Women should go back to the communities and form discussion and action groups concerning sex education.
- VI. Free, legal abortions and birth control for the Chicano community, controlled by *Chicanas*. As Chicanas we have the right to control our own bodies.
- VII. Make use of church centers, neighborhood centers and any other place available.

"Liberate your mind and the body will follow. . . ."

"A quitarnos todos nuestros complejos sexuales para tener una vida mejor y feliz" (Let's cast off all our sexual complexes to have a better and happier life) . . .

RELIGION

- I. Recognize the *Plan de Aztlán*
- II. Take over already existing Church resources for community use, i.e., health, Chicano awareness—public information of its resources, etc.
- III. Oppose any institutionalized religion.
- IV. Revolutionary change of Catholic Church or for it to get out of the way.
- V. Establish communication with the barrio and implement programs of awareness to the Chicano movement.

César Chávez and the Farm Workers' Movement

Probably no movement among Latinos received more national attention than the struggle by César Chávez and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) to organize the migrant farm workers. Calling for a nationwide