

Immigrant Rights Movement

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### Abstract

This essay has attempted to re-examine the basis, significance, and implications of the Chicano Movement, which according to some information sources, was the framework for the social change and democracy in the Mexican American world. Reading from the historical work titled, "Mexican American: Ethnic groups in the American life series", we see Moor and Cuellar, American authors, making it evident that, prior to the events of the civil rights movement, not all the Mexican people were being treated fairly and equally (Moore, J. & Cuéllar, A., 1970). Some were treated special unlike others. Such observations could be termed as racial segregations and discriminations. These two concepts, that is, segregation and discrimination, have thus been repeatedly used in nearly all the literatures that discuss the cases of civil rights and movements. This essay has no intention of stating otherwise. Also conversed quite elaborately in this piece of work are the roles played by the youths and political activists in fighting for justice and social change.

### The Thesis Statement

Agitation for civil rights was a common factor in most parts of the American land, with the youths and political activists taking a front lead in the war against segregation and discrimination (Anderson et al, 1986). It was unfortunate that unlike their white brothers and sisters, the Mexican Americans had to battle it out for social recognition, freedom and citizenship rights. History informs us that there were too much discrimination in education institutions, public lands, farms and social places. The most repressive of them all was the denial of voting and political rights to Mexican Americans, also termed by scholars as disfranchisements. Something had to be done to change the autocratic trends. But who was to stand in for revolution in the socio-cultural doctrines of the white dominancy? How was this achieved and what were the strategies that the Mexican Americans utilized in fighting for their civil rights? What lesions can we draw from the Chicano Movement, in relation to the Civil and Immigrant Rights? These are some of the issues that this essay attempts to probe, re-address, and discuss.

### The Chicano Movement

Chicano Movement, commonly known as the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, or El movimiento, was the 1960s socio-political turbulence that was geared towards a socio-political revolution (Moore, J. & Cuéllar, A., 1970). Historical literatures notes that Chicano movement actually started way back in the 1940s, basically aggravated by what had popularly been referred to as racial segregation and rampant discrimination of the blacks by the whites (Arsenault, 2006). Among the grievances that El movimiento sort to address were the restoration of grant lands, farm workers' rights, fair education for all,

ethnic stereotypes, denial of voting and political rights. Leading the movements were political activists and the youths who constituted majority of the participants.

Leaders like Reies Lopez Tijerina are remembered for their tireless efforts in leading the struggle for the land grant. Reies Lopez also fought for the rights of the poor and he was also an ambassador of social justice. Not to forget about Dr. Hector Garcia, the founder of the American GI Forum, and leader to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Farm workers had the support of Cesar Chavez who struggled for the rights of the farm workers and enthused the youths into the Civil Rights Movement (Moore, J. & Cuéllar, A., 1970).

#### Ideological Framework of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement

Topping the agendas of the Mexican American Movements were the renovation of the educational system to accommodate the “black skinned”, equal treatment in social places i.e. hospitals, theatres, and social halls; demand for political and voting rights; fighting for the grant lands i.e. the ancestral lands; farm workers` rights to be granted (The Editor of Ebony, 1974). These were among the building components of the Chicano Movement. The components acted as motivating, or rather the galvanizing factors that led to the Civil Rights Movement which was to bring about socio-political changes.

Following the World War II, there was an extensive socio-political awareness among the Mexican Americans. They began analyzing critically how they were treated in every sphere of their livelihoods, including the things they were being taught in the public schools, the kind of jobs they were offered, places they were allowed to visit and those that were simply out of their bound, and why and many other discriminative activities. Such actions and reactions lead to the 1960s students` mass walkouts. It was

about the Mexican American students and youths fighting for what they perceived as their rights i.e. right to equal educational opportunities (The Editor of Ebony, 1974). Similar incidences continued to recur, with the farm workers joining the movement by going on rampages, strikes, boycotts and staging.

#### Methodologies used in the Movement

Creation of parties such as the La Raza Unida Party whose mandate was to fight for the political powers, associations like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA); formation of student unions, organizations and groups i.e. the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA) and the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO); public education and legislative lobbying, were among the major strategies that the Chicano Movement utilized to struggle for civil and political rights (Anderson, B, & George W, 1986).

Groupings, organizations, parties, alliances and associations continued to be formed, as the pressure to fight for justice piled up. The 1960s actually saw the opening of public accommodations to the Mexican Americans, courtesy of the civil rights movements. What followed in the subsequent series of events was the harmonization of political rights, including the rights granted to the Mexican Americans to vote. Farm workers finally had a reason to celebrate after the long bloody battle for justice.

The Chicano Movement winded up in the mid of 1960s, with the disintegrations of the student organizations, activist political parties and youth alliances (Moore, J. & Cuéllar, A., 1970). The hard works of the leading activists like Reies Lopez Tijerina and Casar Chavez had at least beard fruits, fruits of unity and cooperation.

### Resultant effects of the Chicano Movement

The resultant effects of the Chicano Movement may critically be observed both negatively and positively. Negatively, the success of the civil rights movement was never achieved on a silver platter. It was as a result of wars, battles, fights, protests, boycotts and bloodsheds. Many people loosed their loved ones, and great world leaders got assassinated for trying to stifle the rather unjustified social dominance by the whites (Arsenault, 2006).

There were, however, numerous positive outcomes of the Civil Movement that remained to live in the memories of the subsequent Mexican American generations. In the initial stages, we see the Mexican Americans granted their political and voting rights that were previously left out of their favor as citizens of the land. Education become a right to all, irrespective of gender, race or ethnic demography, and with the blacks now allowed to exercise their political rights i.e. voting, there was a sense of democracy coming to the historically undemocratic land. A Peaceful socio-political co-existence was becoming a reality, as riots, boycotts, wars and rumors of war were ceasing to recur. According to Johnson and Stokely, it was as a result of the civil rights movements that the Mexican Americans arose to the black leadership and social recognition (Johnson, J, & Stokely, C., 1990) .Many other socio-political positive impacts were also observed as a result of the Immigrant Rights Movements. These were inclusive of re-organization of the voting system in favor of the blacks, acquisition of other political rights, renovation of the educational system, return of the grant lands, and in the long run, prevalence of justice to the farm workers (The Editor of Ebony, 1974).

### Lesions drawn from the Chicano Movement

Some of the lesions that can be drawn from the Civil Rights Movements would include the sense of democracy in Unity and Cooperation. We may also learn that people have to take the responsibility of fighting for their rights and privileges. Political activist like Cesar Chavez left a legacy and a point of reference to the rest of the leadership fraternity across the world. Politicians and activists can borrow ideas from the civil movement engineers. Through cooperation and togetherness; we also see the Mexican Americans gain the strength to air their grievances in more politically conscious minds. The power of the student unity is also manifested by the salient roles played by the Mexican American youths and students.

### Conclusion

As a result of the racial segregations and discriminations, the Mexican Americans realized the need to come together and say no to the socio-political injustices. The need and desire for equal rights led them to the formation of alliances of all sorts, geared towards the struggle for equality. With the help of their leaders, the movement activists and the power of youths, they managed to achieve their goals. Justice was finally here to stay, because the Mexicans were not leaving any stone unturned in their battle for justice. Justice in this sense implied equal treatments in all the socio-political spheres of life. It was a battle well!

## Reference

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