

# Chicano Student Organization in the Central San Joaquin Valley

**Overview:**

Students examine the activities of the Chicano community in the central San Joaquin Valley, with particular attention to the organizational efforts of student organizations at Fresno State College.

**Lesson Summary:**

In the 1960s and 1970s, Chicano organizations flourished in Fresno; new chapters of national organizations and groups that responded to the unique conditions in the Valley. These Chicano groups fought for farm worker’s rights, political representation, women’s rights, and student concerns. Chicano student organizations encouraged activism to improve economic and educational opportunities, and end discrimination. In this lesson, students will identify the concerns of Chicano youth organizations at Fresno State College and become familiar with the tactics they used to fight for their beliefs. Students will connect the activities of students at Fresno State to the events of the national Chicano Movement, such as the first National Chicano Youth Conference organized by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales at Denver in March 1969. Students will also be able to relate the activities of the local Chicano Movement to the ongoing struggle for social justice for Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants.

This is designed as a local supplement to a broader foundational lesson.

**Time Allotment:**

10 minutes, 40 minutes, 15 minutes

**Grade Level:**

Secondary – Grades 8, 11 & 12

**Standards:**

Grade Eight CS.2

Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.

Grade Eleven US.11.8

Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.

Grade Eleven US.11.10

Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

Grade Eleven US.11.10.5

Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans from the churches of the rural South and the urban North, including the resistance to racial desegregation in Little Rock and Birmingham, and how the advances influenced the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of the quests of American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans for civil rights and equal opportunities.

Grade Eleven US.11.10.6

Analyze the passage and effects of civil rights and voting rights legislation (e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965) and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, with an emphasis on equality of access to education and to the political process.

Grade Eleven CA.11.11

Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society

Grade Eleven CA.11.11.1

Discuss the reasons for the nation's changing immigration policy, with emphasis on how the Immigration Act of 1965 and successor acts have transformed American society.

Grade Eleven CA.11.11.3

Describe the changing roles of women in society as reflected in the entry of more women into the labor force and the changing family structure.

Grade Eleven CS.11.11.6

Analyze the persistence of poverty and how different analyses of this issue influence welfare reform, health insurance reform, and other social policies.

Grade Eleven CS.11.11.7

Explain how the federal, state, and local governments have responded to demographic and social changes such as population shifts to the suburbs, racial concentrations in the cities, Frostbelt-to-Sunbelt migration, international migration, decline of family farms, increases in out-of-wedlock births, and drug abuse.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.2**

Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.2.2**

Explain how economic rights are secured and their importance to the individual and to society (e.g., the right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property; right to choose one's work; right to join or not join labor unions; copyright and patent).

**Grade Twelve CS.12.2.4**

Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.2.5**

Describe the reciprocity between rights and obligations; that is, why enjoyment of one's rights entails respect for the rights of others.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.3**

Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.3.1**

Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.3.2**

Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

**Grade Twelve CS.12.3.3**

Discuss the historical role of religion and religious diversity.

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

Describe the organizational activities of the Chicano Movement in the central San Joaquin Valley and name at least one Chicano student organization.

Identify the concerns of Chicano youth organizations at Fresno State College and the tactics they used to fight for their beliefs.

Relate the activities of the local Chicano Movement to the ongoing struggle for social justice for Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants.

**Materials:****Primary Sources:**

Book. Lea Ybarra and Alex Saragoza. *Nuestras Raíces: The Mexican Community Of The Central San Joaquin Valley*. La Raza Studies T.E.A.C.H. Project. California State University, Fresno. October 1980. Courtesy of Arte Americas.

Magazine. *Sentimientos Del Valle* Vol. 2 No. 1, January 1979. Mass Communication and Journalism Department, California State University, Fresno. Courtesy of Arte Americas.

Audio recording. Arturo Tirado Oral History, 1977. 18 minutes. Ethnic Oral History Project, 1977-1978, Fresno County Historical Society Archives.

Calendar. *La Causa – El Calendario Chicano, 1974*. La Causa Publications. Santa Barbara, California. Courtesy of Arte Americas.

Newspaper. *La Voz de Aztlan* Vol. 14, September 23, 1975. A Special Edition to *The Daily Collegian*, California State University, Fresno. Courtesy of Arte Americas.

**Fresno Bee Articles:**

Article. Ray Steele, Jr. "Falk Denies Effort to Oust Minorities," *The Fresno Bee*, May 19, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Alberto Nieto. "Letter to the Editor - Chavez, Militants," *The Fresno Bee*, June 7, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Gerald P. Merrell. "Chicano Students Hit – La Raza Cancellation," *The Fresno Bee*, September 9, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Gerald P. Merrell. "Baxter Differences on Function Cancel FSC La Raza Studies," *The Fresno Bee*, September 10, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Richard Hall. "Violence Disrupts Signup At FSC," *The Fresno Bee*, September 13, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. George L. Baker. "Minorities Blame Baxter for Melee," *The Fresno Bee*, September 13, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Ray Steele, Jr. "La Raza – Months of Confusion," *The Fresno Bee*, September 13, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Richard B. Smith. "Letter to the Editor - Or Else," *The Fresno Bee*, September 16, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Stephen Ross. "Letter to the Editor - Warning," *The Fresno Bee*, September 19, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Henry Sanchez. "Letter to the Editor - Give them Hell," *The Fresno Bee*, September 20, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Carlos A. Rojas, PhD. Emeritus Professor of Foreign Languages, Fresno State College. "Letter to the Editor – About La Raza," *The Fresno Bee*, September 20, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Memo Sarata. "Letter to the Editor - Criticizes Baxter," *The Fresno Bee*, September 21, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Memo Sarata. "Letter to the Editor – FSC Prediction," *The Fresno Bee*, September 30, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. "Board Would End FSC Paper Special Editions," *The Fresno Bee*, November 20, 1970. Newspapers.com.

Article. Ray Steele, Jr. "Baxter Says La Raza Studies Will Be Completely Reinstated," *The Fresno Bee*, December 14, 1970. Newspapers.com.

### **Secondary Sources:**

Article. Salvador Guerrero. "[The Chicano Movement – Alive and Evolving.](#)" *Borderzine*, January 28, 2011.

Article. Dennis Romero. "[Chicano renaissance? A new Mexican-American generation embraces the term.](#)" NBC News, July 15, 2018.

Article. Joseph Nevins. "[Lessons of the Chicano Movement Today.](#)" Book Review. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, September 7, 2018.

Article. Gustavo Arellano. "[Chicano Groups Are Embracing Undocumented Immigrants. It Wasn't Always This Way.](#)" *High Country News*, January 28, 2019.

Article. Dorany Pineda. "[From 'Chicano blowout' to blowup: Turmoil over MEChA name change was decades in coming.](#)" *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 2019.

### Sample Timeline:

**Monday:** Assign contextual readings, student groups, and introduce timed in-class newsletter project.

**Tuesday & Wednesday:** Remind students of readings and timed newsletter project daily. Consider suggesting a Google Image search for Chicano art. Encourage online research beyond the readings.

**Thursday:** Hold timed in-class newsletter project and end-of-class presentations. Assign current events article.

**Friday:** Follow up with current events discussion and assessment.

### Contextual Readings (10 minutes):

Assign the following readings and oral history to provide context for an in-class activity several days later. Assign student groups and inform students about the newsletter activity and requirements in advance, so that they can begin planning for their timed assignment.

- Read Chapter 7 and 8 in *Nuestras Raíces: The Mexican Community Of The Central San Joaquin Valley* (9 pgs of text)
- Listen to Arturo Tirado Oral History, 1977 (18 min)
- Read *Sentimientos Del Valle*, January 1979 (52 pgs)
- Read *La Voz de Aztlan*, September 23, 1975 (8 pgs)
- Review *La Causa – El Calendario Chicano*, 1974

### Introductory Discussion of the Readings (10 minutes):

Key points:

The Chicano Movement in the Valley was about improved educational and economic opportunities.

Many chapters of national Chicano organizations were formed in Fresno in the 1960s and 1970s, see list in reading. There were also many organizations that were formed to respond to the unique conditions in the San Joaquin Valley.

First-generation Chicano university students became particularly active in organizations like MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan],

Mexican American Youth Organization, and Confederation of Chicano Students, among others.

Be familiar with Chicano art styles - Chicano art was influenced by post-Mexican Revolution ideologies, pre-Columbian art, European painting techniques and Mexican American social, political and cultural issues.

Identify the activities and concerns of Chicano youth organizations operating at Fresno State College.

**Learning Activity (30 minutes – 20 for activity & 10 for presentations):**

Hang large sheets of butcher paper around the classroom and provide small groups of students with several multicolored markers and a ruler. Give each group a Fresno Bee newspaper article, or several Letters to the Editor, relating to the cancelation of the La Raza Studies Program at Fresno State College in the fall of 1970.

In a 20 min. speed challenge, students create a newsletter for a new Chicano student organization on butcher paper. Each newsletter must include the elements listed below. Ask student groups briefly present their projects at the end of class.

Newsletters must include:

- Organization Name
- Graphic logo in the style of Chicano art
- Organization Mission Statement and date of formation
- Advertisement for an event; rally, protest, concert, fundraiser, performance, etc.
- Article headline and short teaser paragraph in response to the newspaper article.

Submissions may also include:

- Chicano-style art
- Advertisement from local business
- Photographs

**Homework Assignment(s):**

Students are directed to read one of the articles linking the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s to current events and arrive in class ready to discuss.

**Follow Up & Assessment (15 minutes):**

Follow Up: The next day, lead the students in discussion of their current events article and how it relates to what they have learned.

**Assessment:** Use the following questions to guide a recap discussion, as a quiz, or a guideline for a quick write assignment.

Why did the Chicano students at Fresno State create their own magazine and newspaper?

How did Chicano political participation and influence increased in the central San Joaquin Valley by the late 1970s?

MEChA was the most active Chicano student organization at Fresno State in the 1970s. What was their purpose and how did the Chicano Youth Conference support that mission?

What is the role of the various MEChA committees and how did they connect the students at Fresno State to the broader Chicano community in Fresno?

What was different about 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicano Youth Conference in January 1979?

Describe the purpose of the new Chicano Youth Center on Tulare Street.

### **Extension Activity:**

Instruct students to write an article of 250 to 500 words responding to the events in one of the newspaper articles from the 1970s. Tone should be a call to action. Think impassioned and persuasive social justice warrior. Poetry or creative writing is also acceptable as long as it meets the word requirement.

### **Distance Learning Options:**

- Assign the readings and require a brief paragraph responding to each document.
- Hold discussions via video conferencing software like [Zoom](#), or chat service like [Discord](#). Alternatively, require students to contribute to an online discussion board 3-5 times per discussion session.
- Direct students to create the newsletters individually in response to a newspaper article. Encourage the use of Chicano imagery and messages in a cut-and-paste collage. Alternatively, students create a social media presence announcing their new Chicano group and its mission.
- Assign 250-500 word essay responding to current events article.