Chicano Civil Rights Organizations and Objectives Historical Analysis

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The “Chicano Civil Rights Movement“of the 1960s was a socio-political movement based upon furthering Mexican-American rights to achieve empowerment. The”Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” concluded the Mexican-American war and promised the right to property, culture, and language for the Mexicans who remained in the United States territory. However, most Mexicans were already in the U.S., and the immigrants who arrived later were forced to live as second-class citizens. With a failure of repeated attempts to assimilate and gain recognition as white Americans, the participants of the Chicano Movement abandoned the attempts to integrate and proudly accepted their full heritage. Fully embracing the term “Chicano”, which was once used as a racial slur, the activists celebrated their African roots.

Various organizations emerged as a result of the Chicano Movement, and each one had a particular objective. The “National Farm Workers Association,” which was later known as “United Farm Workers (UFW),” was co-founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in California. This organization aimed to improve the economic and social conditions. Their vision was motivated by the first-hand experience of Chavez, who suffered terrible conditions as a farmworker. They aimed to provide the farmworkers and other working people with the encouragement and tools to share in society’s resources and, over the years, achieved job security, farmworkers’ seniority rights, union health benefits, and much more (National Park Service, n.d.).

Another organization, the “Federal Land Grant Alliance”, was formed by Reies Lopez Tijerina, which aimed to reclaim the lands confiscated as a violation of the “Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo”. Similarly, “La Crusada Para La Justicia” was founded by Rodolfo Gonzalez, who realized the importance of young people and that the future of Mexicans is better suited in urban areas. Various students and youth organizations also emerged, such as the “Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA), United Mexican American Students (UMAS), and the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO),” and in April 1969, these diverse youth associations united as “Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MECHA)”. The prime concern of MECHA was educational issues; however, it later participated in political campaigns and protests against issues such as police brutality (University of California, Santa Barbara Library, n.d.).

What are the types of daily life situations that

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confront undocumented youth’s sense of identity and belonging?

For young individuals, especially the youth, a sense of identity and belongingness is imperative to finding their place in society. However, the undocumented youth in America, who constitute around one million children under the age of 18 years and 4.4 million under 30 years, suffer the negative impact of their status through daily life situations. Being undocumented is one of the major obstacles for these young and ambitious individuals whose hopes and dreams are quashed every day through experiences such as racial profiling and continuous discrimination. The stressful experiences, such as being exposed to gangs and raids of their communities, and uncertainty that arises with the fear of deportation or being forcibly parted from their families result in increased negative behavioural and emotional outcomes such as depression, anger, fear, social isolation, and a diminished sense of belongingness (Gonzales, 2011).

The daily life situations of these undocumented youth are filled with discrimination, even at educational institutions where they are taught that their cultural roots are a hindrance to their success and that they are no better than their parents. A lack of concern on the part of teachers, the use of corporal punishment, and increased bullying by peers have remained common issues for these undocumented youth over the years. Random checks for documentation, the uncertainty of returning home to their family, and being placed in child welfare systems or detention camps are the traumatic situations of undocumented youth (Gonzales, 2011).

Terminology Definitions

Aztlan

Aztlan refers to a mythical homeland of the Mexica or the Mesoamerican civilization. According to the myth, the Mexica left Aztlan in search of the Valley of Mexico – their new home, at the command of their ruler, Huitzilopochtli.

Crusade for Justice

“La Crusada Para La Justicia”, or the Crusade for Justice, was founded by Rodolfo Gonzalez in the 1960s and focused on the urban rights of Chicanos along with political, economic, and social justice.

Dolores Huerta

An American civil rights activist and labour leader, Dolores Huerta, co-founded the UFW along with

Cesar Chavez. She is considered a role model among the Latino community for her many contributions towards labour, women, and immigrants' rights.

Sal Castro

He is a notable Mexican-American educator and civil rights activist. He is known for the 1968 high school walkouts and helped run the "Chicano Youth Leadership Conference", which served as a fueling factor for the Chicano Movement (Library of Congress, n.d.).

Rubén Salazar

The first-ever Mexican-American journalist to be a part of mainstream journalism, Ruben Salazar was a reporter for the LA Times and a social activist. He provided media coverage of the Chicano movement and was killed in the "National Chicano Moratorium March" in the 1970s.

Plan de Santa Barbara

A fundamental proposal of 155 pages that aimed to integrate education and research with political consciousness, Plan de Santa Barbara was imperative in empowering and opening pathways to higher education for future generations (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2019).

Civil Rights Act 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 resulted in ending public place segregation and discrimination based on race, religion, colour, national origin, or sex, especially related to employment policies. Proposed by President Kennedy, it is considered to be the most important legislative achievement (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.).

Arizona House Bill 2281

HB 2281 was passed in 2010 and prohibits schools from promoting educational material that incites anti-state sentiments or discriminates against people of a particular race or class (Arizona State Legislature, 2010a).

AZB1070 (Arizona)

A legislative Act of 2010, the AZB1070, is the most detailed anti-illegal immigration measure that aims to prevent illegal immigration. The law entitles officials to check the immigration status of

individuals if they have reasonable doubts about their status (Arizona State Legislature, 2010b; *Arizona v. United States*, 2012).

DACA

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is an immigration policy of the U.S. that allows renewable deferral from deportation for two years for some individuals brought to the country as young children (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.).

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