

History

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The fundamental principles that led to the founding of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán are found in El Plan de Santa Barbara (EPDSB). The Manifesto of EPDSB sees self-determination for the Chicana and Chicano Chicano and Chicana Movement in El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán (EPEDA). A synopsis of El Plan stipulates: 1) We are Chicanos and Chicanas of Aztlán reclaiming the land of our birth (Chicano and Chicana Nation); 2) Aztlán belongs to indigenous people, who are sovereign and not subject to a foreign culture; 3) We are a union of free pueblos forming a bronze nation; 4) Chicano and Chicana nationalism, as the key in mobilization and organization, is the common denominator to bring consensus to the Chicano and Chicana Movement; 5) Cultural values strengthen our identity as La Familia de La Raza; and 6) EPEDA, as a basic plan of Chicano and Chicana liberation, sought the formation of an independent national political party that would represent the sentiments of the Chicano and Chicana community.

Both EPDSB and EPEDA served as the historical foundation for the establishment of a viable Chicano and Chicana Movimiento, and are therefore, fundamental to the M.E.Ch.A. philosophy.

What is a Chicano/Chicana?

A relatively recent term that has been appropriated by many Mexican descendants as unique and therefore reflective of their unique culture, though its first usage seems to have been discriminatory. The most likely source of the word is traced to the 1930 and 40s period, when poor, rural Mexicans, often native Americans, were imported to the US to provide cheap field labor, under an agreement of the governments of both countries. The term seems to have come into first use in the fields of California in derision of the inability of native Nahuatl speakers from Morelos state to refer to themselves as "Mexicanos," and instead spoke of themselves as "Mesheecanos," in accordance with the pronunciation rules of their language. An equivocal factor is that in vulgar Spanish it is common for Mexicans to use the "CH" conjunction in place of certain consonants in order to create a term of endearment. Whatever its origin, it was at first insulting to be identified by this name. The term was appropriated by Mexican-American activists who took part in the Brown Power movement of the 60s and 70s in the US southwest, and has now come into widespread usage. Among more "assimilated" Mexican-Americans, the term still retains an unsavory connotation, particularly because it is preferred by political activists and by those who seek to create a new

and fresh identity for their culture rather than to subsume it blandly under the guise of any mainstream culture.