Mecha's Manifesto

MANIFESTO

For all people, aw with individuals, the time comes when they must reckon with their history. For the Chicano the present is a time of renaissance, of renacimiento. Our people and our community, el barrio and la colonia, are expressing a new consciousness and a new resolve. Recognizing the historical tasks confronting our people and fully aware of the cost of human progress, we pledge our will to move. We will move forward toward our destiny as a people. We will move against those forces which have denied us freedom of expression and human dignity. Throughout history the quest for cultural expression and freedom has taken the form of a struggle. Our struggle, tempered by the lessions of the American past, is an historical reality.

For decades Mexican people in the United States struggled to realize the "American Dream." And some - a few - have. But the cost, the ultimate cost of assimiliation, required turning away from el barrio and la colonia. In the meantime, due to the racist structure of this society, to our essentially different life style, and to the socio-economic functions assigned to our community by anglo-american society - as suppliers of cheap labor and a dumping ground for the small-time capitalist entrepreneur - the barrio and colonia remained exploited, impoverished, and marginal.

As a result, the self-determination of our community is now the only acceptable mandate for social and political action; it is the essence of Chicano commitment. Culturally, the word Chicano, in the past a pejorative and class-bound adjective, has now become the root idea of a new cultural identity for our people. It also reveals a growing solidarity and the development of a common social praxis. The widespread use of the term Chicano today signals a rebirth of pride and confidence. Chicanismo simply embodies an ancient truth: that man is never closer to his true self as when he is close to his community.

Chicanismo draws its faith and strength from two main sources: from the just struggle of our people and from an objective analysis of our community's strategic needs. We recognize that without a strategic use of education, an education that places value on what we value, we will not realize our destiny. Chicanos recognize the central importance of institutions of higher learning to modern progress, in this case, to the development of our community. But progress, in this case, to the development of our community. But we go further: we believe that higher education must contribute to the formation of a complete man who truly values life and freedom.

For these reasons Chicano Studies represent the total conceptualization of the Chicano Community's aspirations that involve higher education. To meet these ends, the university and college systems of the State of California must act in the following basic areas:

1) admission and recruitment of Chicano students, faculty, administrators and staff
2) a curriculum program and an academic major relevant to the Chicano cultural and historical experience
3) support and tutorial programs
4) research programs

5) publications programs
6) community cultural and social action centers

We insist that Chicano students, faculty, administrators, employees, and the community must be the central and decisive designers and administrators of those programs. We do so because our priorities must determine the nature and development of such programs. Only through this policy can the university and college systems respond efficiently and justly to a critical reality of this society. Through such a policy universities and colleges will truly live up to their credo, to their commitment to diversification, democratization, and enrichment of our cultural heritage and human community.

We assume the sacrifices and responsibilities inherent in our commitment. It was in this spirit that we met in Santa Barbara in mid-April: over one-hundred Chicano students, faculty, administrators, and community delegates representing the northern, central, and southern regions of la Alta California, Aztlan. Away from the sensationalism of the mass media, and from the alarms of self-seeking politicians, we set out to formulate a Chicano plan for higher education.

Workshops on recruitment, support programs, campus organizing and the curricular and institutionalizing aspects of Chicano Studies produced analyses and recommendations. We never lost sight of the simple fact that these programs will be effective only to the extent that we can influence decision-making within and without the university and college systems. What follows, El Plan de Santa Barbara, reflects on critical dimension of the Chicano struggle.

The destiny of our people will be fulfilled. To that end, we pledge our efforts and take as our credo what Jose Vasconcelos once said at a time of Crisis and hope:

> "At this moment we do not come to work for the university, but to demand that the university work for people."