

The Brown Berets

+ lessons for Gen Z

El Movimiento

The Brown Berets originated in 1967 from the “Young Chicanos for Community Action.” Founded by young Chicano students from East Los Angeles, **David Sánchez and Carlos Montes**, the Brown Berets played an integral role in the **Chicano Civil Rights Movement**.

Modeled after the **Black Panther Party**, the Brown Berets aimed to combat police brutality and discrimination against Mexican Americans. The group also opposed the Vietnam War and advocated for healthcare, educational, and housing equity, and other socioeconomic issues faced by Mexican Americans. The group started the “El Barrio Free Clinic,” run by Gloria Arellanes, hosted free breakfast programs, and published “La Causa” newspaper.

The Brown Berets’ thirteen-point political program centered on **self-determination** and social, political, cultural, and economic liberation, called for a return of the land, an end to environmental destruction, denouncement of U.S. capitalism and imperialism, and more.





1970 Chicano Moratorium March (Luis C. Garza/ Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA)

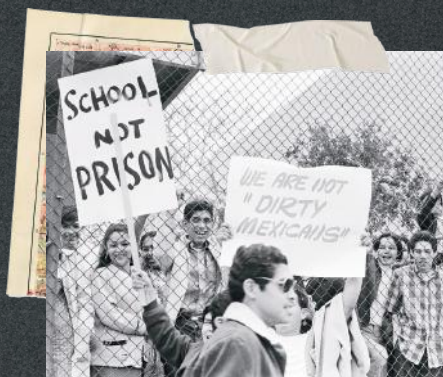


Sheriff's deputies descend on Chicano Moratorium demonstrators (Boris Yaro / Los Angeles Times)

Lucha Contra el Estado Militarizado

In 1967, the Brown Berets were the first to lead a protest outside the East L.A. sheriff's office to **protest the killing of Latino men**. The group worked to **expose police brutality** in a time when some people denied it existed, and allied with the **Black Panther Party** to protest the **killing of Black people** at the hands of the police.

In December 1969, the Brown Berets organized the first **Chicano Moratorium** against the Vietnam War, where they protested the disproportionately high drafting and casualty rate of Mexican Americans in Vietnam. This demonstration led to a larger, **National Chicano Moratorium protest** on August 29, 1970. The event started as a peaceful family event at Laguna Park and led to a march down Whittier Boulevard, where protestors were met with **police force**. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department fired tear gas canisters, killing 4 people, including a Los Angeles Times reporter, and arrested 150 people.



Lucha Para la Educacion

The Brown Berets also tackled **systemic racism in the classroom**, advocating for bilingual education, better classroom conditions, and Chicano studies programs during a time when Mexican American students were **disciplined** for speaking Spanish, had a **60% high school dropout rate**, and were **discouraged** from post-secondary studies.

In 1968, the Brown Berets played a role in mobilizing youth for the **East L.A. Blowouts**, where around 15,000 students walked out of their classrooms in protest of Mexican American student conditions. Chicano students were met with brutal police force, with officers dressed in riot gear beating students, and the **13 organizers were arrested** for "conspiracy to disturb the peace." Although the East L.A. Board of Education rejected the students' demands due to "lack of funding," by the 1970s, more Latinos attended college, Latino and Chicano studies departments were established at more schools, and more Latino staff were present across the education system.

Las Mujeres en los Brown Berets

Often overlooked in the history of the Brown Berets are the **women in the movement.**



Gloria Arellanes was the only woman in the Brown Berets who held a **leadership role** as the minister of Finance and Correspondence. Arellanes and the women of the Brown Berets were often tasked with menial but equally important behind-the-scenes work with **little recognition**, like distributing fliers, editing and designing La Causa newspaper, running the free clinic, cleaning up after members, and more.



On **February 25, 1970**, the women of the Los Angeles Brown Berets chapter collectively resigned, citing these issues. To this day, founder David Sánchez believes the women's complaints were unfounded.

After leaving the Brown Berets, Arellanes helped create the short-lived **Adelitas de Aztlán** in 1970.

Lessons for Gen Z from the Brown Berets

★ The expression of cultural identity is a **freedom** under a democracy, but an act of **resistance** under an authoritarian government. Never stop learning about, uplifting, and practicing your **cultural traditions**.

★ **Representation and diversity** are important in the education system. The U.S. cannot accurately depict the nation's **history** by silencing Black and Brown voices.

Many of the Chicano struggles from the 1960s-70s **still exist today**, including racial discrimination, underfunded education systems, exploitation of labor, police brutality, and more.

★ Activism must be rooted in community through **participation in community spaces** (community centers, volunteering, college campus clubs, etc.) and the **amplification** of the voices of those most impacted by policing, white supremacy, and capitalism.

★ Change can't happen without **coalition building** and the **dismantling** of racial stereotypes and patriarchal practices. The struggles of **one** marginalized group are the struggles of **every** marginalized group.

Supplemental Materials

CourageCalifornia.org

Immigrant Rights		
Bill	Author	Description
AB 49	Muratsuchi	Would prohibit school or child care center employees from letting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers enter their sites without a valid ID, statement of purpose, court order, and approval from the school district's superintendent or director of the child care center.
SB 48	Gonzalez	Would prohibit school or child care center employees from letting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers enter their sites without a valid ID, statement of purpose, court order, and approval from the school district's superintendent or director of the child care center.
SB 98	Pérez	The Sending Alerts to Families in Education (SAFE) Act would mandate schools and college campuses to immediately notify all students, parents, faculty, staff, and other community members if immigration officers are present on the premises, similar to early warning systems in place for emergency alerts.

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FILM, VIDEO

Carlos Montes oral history interview conducted by David P. Cline in Alhambra, California, 2016 June 27



BIBLIOTECA

10/12/2021 43:30PM

Student Activism: 1968 Los Angeles Walkouts to Gen Z Justice

La Biblioteca

▶ Play

Huntington Fellows Herman Luis Chavez and Maria Guadalupe Partida speak with youth activist Daphne Frias and scholar Dr. Manuel Hino to discuss Latino student activism. The episode focuses on the 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts, one of the largest student-led marches in American history, alongside the contemporary justice pursued by Gen Z students at the intersection of disability, educational, and civic activism. Library materials include photograph collections and periodicals. A Latino Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events is an online resource guide of civil rights figures, cases, and events impacting the Latino community in the United States. The resource guide is available for access here.

Library of Congress Podcasts

PBS Learning Media

PBS LearningMedia **PBS KVIE**


FOR TEACHERS

Brought to you by California PBS Stations

Latino Americans Search Latino Americans

LA Walkouts

Video Grades: 3-5, 6-8, 9-12 Collection: Latino Americans



About Standards


In response to poor educational opportunities, students and teachers in Los Angeles began to organize in the late 1960s. Teacher Sal Castro reflects back on the formative experience of seeing his family split up through the involuntary deportations of the 1930s. This informs his resolve to ensure better conditions for a new generation of students. Student activists reflect on the sense of empowerment and accomplishment that came through claiming Chicano identity and taking action.

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times

Stories

The CHICANA Revolt



The women of the Brown Berets — Las Adelitas de Aztlán — break free and form their own movement.

BY VANESSA MARTÍNEZ AND JULIA BARAJAS

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