

The Origins and History of the Chicano Movement

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Occasional Paper No. 7

April 1996

ABSTRACT

This report traces the origins and history of the Chicano movement from the 1960s to the present, with special emphasis on the role of colleges and universities. The report proposes that it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of movements than of a singular movement because the struggles in different parts of the country were many, with separate goals and visions and unique histories. Some of these goals included: the struggle to improve the lives of farm workers, the effort to end Jim Crow-style segregation and police repression, struggles to recover historical land grants, the struggle to improve educational opportunities, and the struggle for political representation and self-determination. Compared to prior Mexican American civil rights struggles, the role of students was unique in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The influx of Chicano students into universities unleashed a political movement focused on civil and human rights, but also an intellectual movement that challenged historical knowledge and created the discipline of Chicano studies. With the advent of Chicano studies programs, Chicano and Chicana scholars began to produce knowledge about their own communities, but the discipline was fraught with internal contradictions, particularly the lack of attention to women's issues. The challenge for Chicana feminist scholars is to dispel patriarchal myths promoted by Chicano scholars, and to examine intersections between class, race, and gender. In the 1990s there has been a resurgence of the Chicano movement, particularly at colleges and universities.