

LATINO AMERICANS

Students Rising (For use with Episode 5)

Lesson Overview

Students view a clip on the situation of Mexican American students in Los Angeles in the 1960s, and how self-concepts and expectations began to change during the Chicano Movement. Students can respond individually or in small groups, in writing or through discussion. The last set of questions connects the historical study to the student's own civic participation. Two extensions offer options for connecting the history to current student activism.

Grade: 7 – 12+

Time: 30 – 45 minutes

Materials

- Video Clip from Episode 5, *Student Walkouts*
- Pencil/pen and paper for individual responses or chart paper for group work

Lesson Objectives

- Analyze the conditions for Mexican American students in Los Angeles schools in the 1960s.
- Identify key individuals and stakeholders.
- Describe the expectations and pathways presented to Mexican American students.
- Explain the history and implications of the term “Chicano” for the students of the 1960s.
- Consider ways that students felt a connection to other Civil Rights activity of the time.
- Make connections forward and backward in time: between the 1960s and earlier periods, such as the forced deportations of the 1930s, and forward to today.

Lesson Procedure

Watch the clip that describes the situation in Los Angeles schools in the late 1960s and respond to the following questions through discussion or reflective writing.

- Describe the conditions in the Los Angeles schools during the late 1960s. What were the educational prospects for Mexican American students at that time?
- Who was Sal Castro? How did Sal Castro's personal history inform his actions on behalf of his students?
- What personal anecdotes do students like Paula Crisostomo and Carlos Muñoz share to describe how the school system perceived them and their potential?
- Sal Castro set out to instill pride and challenge the dire statistics of the schools. What did he use to do this? According to Moctesuma Esparza, what term did students adopt to reference their identity? What is the history of the term?
- What did the Civil Rights Movement of African Americans in the South have to do with Mexican American kids in Los Angeles?
- What tactic did Sal Castro and the students choose to make their concerns known to the educational system? How long did they plan and how extensive was the participation? How did law enforcement perceive their actions?
- After several weeks of action, the school system agreed to hold meetings with students and parents to hear their concerns. What issues came up and what changes occurred because of the direct actions by the students and families?
- Unacceptable educational conditions prompted students to rise and act in 1960s Los Angeles. What are some of the issues affecting students today? At your school? Are students doing anything about it? What issues would or do move you to step up and take action? What concrete steps would you or have you taken on an issue that is important to you?

EXTENSION 1: American DREAM

A major focus of Latino student activism over the past decade has been focused on the DREAM Act. Research the following questions and create a multimedia presentation on the current status of DREAMers. Use information from news articles and photos, embed online videos (from news sources or stakeholders in the issue) and/or captures of social media.

- What is the DREAM Act?
- Who is affected?
- What tactics have activists used?
- What are the arguments for and against the DREAM Act?
- How has Congress and the President handled this issue over the past five years?
- What are the economic implications of passing or not passing the DREAM Act?

EXTENSION 2: Precious Knowledge

Much attention has focused on Arizona's aggressive stance on immigration in recent years, but another controversy in the state has focused on high schools, and youth have been central actors in this unraveling story. There has been a great deal of political turmoil and court activity connected to the Ethnic Studies Program in the public schools of Tucson, Arizona. Specifically, statewide officials and the legislature took steps to force the closing of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson and a number of books have been banned from use in instruction. Students and families have been central players in this debate. Research the controversy with a specific focus on how students have taken a role in determining their educational horizons. Start with the website of the documentary, [Precious Knowledge](#).

- What is the academic program that is in question? What courses are connected to it and what do they explore?
- Who are the principal characters in the issue, both for and against the Mexican American Studies program?
- What are the reasons used by either side to justify their positions and actions?
- How are students participating in the debate? What specific actions have they taken?
- What is the current status of the debate?
- What value comes from studying something you are passionate about or that tells your story? What would you do to protect an aspect of your education that is important to you?