

# Free research paper about the four horsemen in the chicano movement

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## Introduction

The Chicano Movement is traceable to the agitation of better Mexican-American human freedoms and civil rights, expanding from its humble beginnings of the 1940s, to the vocal Mexican American Movement it was during the 1960s. Its core goal was the agitation of greater Mexican American empowerment. The movement expanded from its humble beginnings, through time to later on transform into the national movement it became. As a whole, it encompassed a wide-ranging cross section of aspects and issues affecting the greater Mexican identity. As such, these included Mexican farm workers' rights, the restoration of land grants, the enhancement of educational development, political and voting rights, to the emergent state of awareness, with regard to Mexican collective history. As a social entity, the movement focused on addressing of various issues it perceived as being a negative depiction/ portrayal of Mexican ethnic stereotypes, especially in the Western world, and particularly in the United States of America. This was unfortunately true through the particular

society's consciousness, as further depicted through its greatly influential mass media industry. To strengthen or validate the existing Mexican-American culture and ethnicity were various contributions of creative visual art and literary work, with this being aimed at emancipation of the greater American Human mind-set. The 1960s were turbulent times in American history, with various conflicts being present as a result of differences with respect to Civil rights, its war in Vietnam amongst others (Shukla & Tinsman, 2007).

## **Hypothesis**

H1: With regard to the movement, the presence of – the 4 Horsemen:

Rodolfo Corky Gonzalez, Cesar Chavez, Jose Angel Gutierrez and Reies Lopez Tijerina – provided a case in point where the agitation was not only verbally expressed, but further enhanced by way of various actions and activities (general activism) in the various facets of American society.

## **Findings**

Each is credited with significant contribution to the greater fight for Mexican rights, through input into various facets of American policy, social structure and governance. They generally strove towards improving Mexican immigrants' life chances, education, greater democratic process participation and inclusion and acceptance in the general American society. With the Movement striving towards attaining its three major objectives: - Land restoration, education reforms and farm-worker rights, the election of John F. Kennedy (1960), with the aid of the significant Hispanic voting bloc, was to result in better chances of enhancing their objectives. This was as a

result of the influence gained, with reference to the American national political arena, where – the Mexican American Political Association – was a key component.

As a token of gratitude, the Hispanic voting bloc was to receive rewarding, by way of various appointments, in the Kennedy administration, in addition to the greater consideration of their various concerns. This resulted in further demands of reforms in the various aspects of the American society, which were significantly influenced by the four aforementioned men. Two of these were crucial in calling for a review of the 1848 agreement, which ended the Mexican-American War, with the resultant annexation/ acquisition of territory, formerly of the Mexican state. This as such, currently comprises of the Southwestern U. S. region, and has been a bone of contention with respect to Mexican American relations. Perhaps the most notable of Mexican-American disagreements during the 1960s, was the resultant strive towards greater job security and unionization of Mexican farm workers (Moore & Cuéllar, 1970).

Cesar Chavez, as a trade unionist leader and a labor organizer, through his Delano (National Far Workers Association) Union, based in California was to provide crucial input by way of agitating for the recognition of Mexican farm workers by their American grape-growers employers. Through his life-long dedication to the improvement of farm workers; lives, working conditions, treatment and pay, his merger with Huerta, proved to be the turning point of Mexican- American relations. As best exemplified in the following quote, was his greater cause for universal justice and equality, the race, ethnicity and origin/ nationality notwithstanding. “ We cannot seek achievement for

ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.” (Rodolfo, 2006, p. 54) With the resultant national strike (boycott) bringing a standstill to grape picking and Chavez going on a personal 25-day hunger strike, amongst several others, the strike proved successful as there was an improvement on general labor conditions and compensation. In addition, he also touched on the issue of farm workers’ health being affected by the pesticides used, thereby aiding in a re-think of their overall working conditions (Rodolfo, 2006).

Dolores Huerta, as the only notable woman leader (in labor Unionism and general activism), she was formerly a teacher who was perturbed by the various case scenarios existing in the larger California region. As such, she was not amongst the four aforementioned, by fact of being representative of Mexican feminine ideals and perspectives. However, her contributions were crucial towards the empowerment of Mexican-Americans within the larger U. S. and hence her high standing as a contributory figure of the Chicano movement. A majority of her students, being children of farm worker, lived in abject poverty and hence could not afford even the most basic of necessities. Thus, she devoted her life to the betterment of Mexican-Americans’ socio-economic conditions, especially for the grape farm workers/pickers. In addition the greater fight against discrimination, the above is best symbolized by her quote: “ None of that would have happened had it not been for the marches. But our work is not done.” (Pease & Wiegman, 2002, p. 75) Through her creation of the Agriculture Worker Association, and later day collaboration/ partnership with Cesar Chavez, the two enhanced the

overall treatment of Mexican-American farmers (Pease & Wiegman, 2002). Reies Lopez Tijerina was crucial in leading the three-day march, from New Mexico's Albuquerque, to Santa Fe's state capital, where he presented its governor with a petition calling for a review (detailed investigation) of the aforementioned agreement and Mexican land grants. He was of the opinion that the annexation of Mexican land by the U. S. was illegal, as the basis was more on coercion than on consensus. The – Treaty of Hidalgo – provided a case for debate, especially in the view of many Hispanics, as they generally felt that it was implemented in an unfair and biased way towards favoring the U. S., in various terms. This is best portrayed through the quote: “ Do you want justice?” (Tijerina, 2000, p. 7), when talking to old men who had suffered injustice, with their answer being: “ For more than a hundred years we have asked Washington and heaven, but no one does us justice.” (Tijerina, 2000, p. 8).

As an ardent fighter for the greater rights of Mexican-American and Hispanics, he embarked on various ways of emancipating the Mexican people from the corruption and vanity of Western civilization. He uniquely tried seclusion, so as to aid in the preservation of Mexican identity and culture, by living in the Arizona desert, as is portrayed in his ideal: “ Here on the desert of Arizona We decided to call this land, this virgin land, Valley of peace. Here, neither the church nor the school would be able to condition the minds of our children and we would be happy.” (Tijerina, 2000, pp. 1-2) This was however to prove difficult as a result of various interruptions He majorly focused on the educational aspect of his people, as a means of greater emancipation and hence a realization to their rights and freedoms (Tijerina,

2000).

Rodolfo Gonzales (Corky), as an activist and former boxer, was also crucial in agitating for a separate Mexican-American state, to be placed around the greater Southwestern region of the U. S. As a poet and activist, his epic work – *Yo Soy Joaquin* (I Am Joaquin) – provided a case in point where the poem depicted the greatness of Chicano history and identity. Through collective identity, he portrayed the greater Mexican American suffering, as was showcased by the evident violation of the Hidalgo Treaty, which resulted in the loss of their ancestral lands. As such, this was viewed as a rebuke of the treaty, where not only was their land taken illegally, but also their culture subsequently negatively depicted and displayed through various stereotypes. He is credited with having initiated the first ever Chicano Youth Conference, which later on contributed to the aforementioned three-day march, which was crowned with the presentation of a written statement – the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán – calling for the self-determination of Chicanos, within the greater Southwest region (Shukla & Tinsman, 2007).

Jose Angel Gutierrez, as a founder of the MAYO – Mexican American Youth Organization – as well as the Raza Unida Party, his contributions to the greater agitation of Mexican-American rights and freedoms is significant. As a young boy, having lost his father, he endured various hardships with regard to the overall treatment of Mexican-Americans in the greater Southwest region. His involvement in militarism, as is best exemplified in his famous quote: “ We have an aging white America They are dying We have got to eliminate the Gringo and what I mean by that is if the worst comes to the worst, we have got to kill him” (Rodolfo, 2006, P. 33). This was to see

him engage in various actions and heated debate; eventually ending in a long and career in American politics. As primarily an educator, he was not only perturbed by the treatment of Mexicans in the especially in the state of Texas, but also by the larger Midwestern and Southwestern U. S. While initially he was more militant in nature, this was to however change, as he focused more on the utility of an educational approach towards changing various existing mindsets. This he did through his two great works: - A Gringo Manual on How to Handle Mexicans and The Making of a Chicano Militant: lessons from Cristal (Rodolfo, 2006).

Of the four horsemen of the Chicano Movement, Tijerina and Chavez, with the additional input of Dolores (woman), were the most vocally involved grassroots-based community organizing. Chavez cut a niche for himself as a peaceful protestor (advocated for non-violent protest), while Tijerina, having failed through peaceful means in agitating for greater respect of his people's rights and freedoms, turned more to militancy, as is best espoused in the founding of the La Raza Unida political party, and most significantly his leading of an armed raid on New Mexico's, Rio Arriba County courthouse. This as such, was for a long time, to conduct various boycotts and protest marches, which at times, often resulted in angry confrontations with the existing local law enforcement systems present.

This hence distinguished him from the rest, as he was often in prison for various offences and allegations, due to his utility of a much more radical approach. Chavez and Dolores were crucial in agitating for the greater rights of Mexican-American farmers, with the later being distinguishable as a result of her gender. Rodolfo, Jose and Tijerina on their part, were fundamental in

the greater call for a realization of previous ills committed, with reference to land issues in the greater Southern region of the U. S., which as such, were essentially rooted in the greater denial of the right of inheritance. The three men were especially critical in enhancing the realization of various ills, injustices and biases with regard to not only land issues, but also treatment and the educational input provided to the greater Chicano community (Rowe, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The Chicano Civil Rights Movement revived the underlying issues affecting the general Mexican-American populace, with regard to various issues such as land rights and grants; educational and socio-economic emancipation, as well as the need for the acceptance and enhancement of the Mexican cultural/ traditional way of life. The Four Horsemen of the Chicano Movement did provide a standing ground on which Mexican-Americans had a greater chance of enhancing their overall social standing.

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