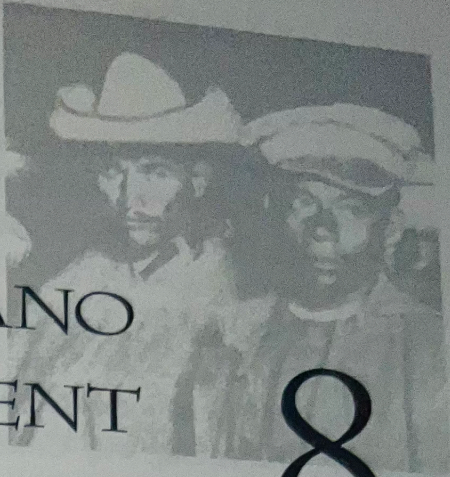




THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

1965–1975

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The decade comprising the midsixties to the midseventies was a period of extraordinary ferment in the Mexicano communities of the United States. Fateful social changes were in the air. Immigration from Mexico, for example, increased markedly, a trend that tended to push many of the older residents of the Southwest into other parts of the country. The most memorable changes, though, were political and psychological.

Following the lead of the African American community, which initiated a far-reaching movement for civil liberties in the fifties, many Mexicanos, now calling themselves Chicanos and Chicanas, embarked on their own campaign to improve socioeconomic conditions and win full recognition of their rights as US citizens.¹ While these concerns had been articulated before, notably by the Mexican American Generation of the post–World War II period, after the midsixties a new aggressiveness developed in the barrios. Socioeconomic gains made in past years seemed woefully inadequate. Many Mexicanos began to demand immediate reform. Some called for revolution. Convinced that changes of whatever kind could be instituted only through the acquisition of power, political action was emphasized as never before. Moreover, in contrast to their postwar predecessors, the leaders of the so-called Chicano Generation stressed pride in their ethnic roots while deemphasizing assimilation into the American mainstream. “A Chicano,” Rubén Salazar, a journalist on the periphery of the movement, once observed, “is a Mexican-American with a non-Anglo image of himself.”² Tired of apologizing for their ethnic origins, Chicanos looked to Mexico, especially indigenous Mexico, for inspiration. While there was much disagreement on specific methods—indeed, a substantial number stood on the sidelines—most of the community was in general agreement with the goals formulated by barrio leaders: cultural regeneration and political power. Since