

Angeles, in an effort to get school administrations to address their many pressing problems, walked out of several local high schools. They were led by Sal Castro (1933–2013), a Lincoln High School teacher.³⁷ These “blowouts,” as they were called, soon erupted in other schools of what was then the largest school district in the country. Altogether, over fifteen thousand students were involved. Eventually, thirteen strike leaders, including UMAS members Moctezuma Esparza, from UCLA, and Carlos Muñoz Jr., an ex-serviceman, then chapter president at Los Angeles State College (now CSU Los Angeles), were indicted on conspiracy charges—which were dropped two years later.

The Los Angeles strike received national attention. It also stimulated student activism in other cities. During the next few months, walkouts occurred in high schools throughout the Southwest and beyond. Chicago witnessed a series of school demonstrations.³⁸ Those in Denver and South Texas were the largest and received the most media attention. Student demands included the hiring of Mexicano instructors, counselors, and administrators; bilingual and bicultural education; and closer cooperation between schools and the barrio.

However, the repercussions of the East Los Angeles blowouts went beyond the high school. A few months later, Mexicano students at San Jose State College walked out of their graduation, the first protest activity by Chicanos on a college campus.³⁹ Other Chicanos participated at the massive strike instigated by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) at San Francisco State College in November 1968. A TWLF strike ensued at UC Berkeley during the first half of 1969. Chicano students, who had played only a supporting role at San Francisco, were among the most engaged supporters of the Berkeley demonstration. By now, it was clear, the Chicano student movement was rapidly moving to the left and increasingly involved with issues that concerned other radical students.

In early 1969, Chicano students, dispersed in a number of student clubs, sought to achieve a measure of cohesion through the establishment of a nationwide organization. The opportunity arose at a conference held in April at UC Santa Barbara, one of the strongholds of the mushrooming movement. The meeting was called by the Chicano Coordinating Committee on Higher Education (CCHE), formed in 1968 by a group of concerned college students and professors.⁴⁰ About one hundred delegates—students, instructors, and administrators—were present. They came from throughout the state of California and other parts of the Southwest. Among the most dynamic participants were Jesús Chavarría, a young professor at UC Santa Barbara and the dominant personality at the meeting; Juan Gómez-Quíñones, who, together with René Núñez (1936–2006), had been one of the prime movers of the meeting; and the ubiquitous Carlos Muñoz Jr., the future chronicler of the Chicano student movement. The three-day Santa Barbara convention had two meaningful results: (1) the drafting of the *Plan de Santa Bárbara*, a program