

education, income, employment, occupational status, and political representation were dwarfed by the much larger gains of Anglo Americans."⁶

The gloomy picture described here had a variety of causes, among them recent immigration, lack of job skills, a scarcity of capital, and language problems. Equally striking, though, was discrimination—based on class, religion, and especially race. Moreover, demographic changes in the Mexican community worked to increase the climate of intolerance.

ORIGINS OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

Still, the socioeconomic condition of the Mexican community was not notably worse in the early sixties than it had been in the past. Indeed, demographers indicate that steady progress had been made in this regard. Furthermore, despite widespread hostility, overt forms of racism were fading. Discrimination was less blatant than before, thanks in part to the efforts of the Mexican American Generation, as well as the waning of the Cold War and the demand for conformity that it fostered. Even Mexican participation in Vietnam, with its swelling disaffection, is insufficient to explain the rise of Chicanismo; Mexicanos had fought and died in other US wars without turning to militant antiestablishment activity. It was the changing intellectual climate in America, especially the rise of the black civil rights movement, that made the difference.

Brown v. the Board of Education encouraged a new assertiveness by blacks, whose civil rights movement began in 1955, when Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama.⁷ This campaign launched the career of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), a young Baptist minister, arguably the most powerful voice for racial justice in the annals of American history. Swayed by Mohandas Gandhi and Henry Thoreau, Dr. King preached the philosophy of militant nonviolence, which had a profound and lasting impact on his contemporaries. Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) spearheaded the drive for desegregation and together with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) dominated the swelling movement during its first years.

By 1966, however, dissatisfied with the seemingly glacial pace of reform, more militant leaders emerged from the African American community, particularly in northern urban ghettos, where Dr. King was less dominant. They included Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); Bobby Seale, Huey P. Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panthers; and the most charismatic of the new leaders, Malcolm X (1925-1965), who became the chief spokesman for the Black Muslims. Labeling their movement "Black Power," they called for permanent racial separation and the use of violence.