

the women's liberation movement—will join together and march as a united women's contingent. Last August 26th, the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage, tens of thousands of women poured into the streets to demonstrate for our right to control our lives. On April 24th, we will take the strength of women, which we showed to the world last August, and link up with all other people who say this war must end now.

... There are many reasons why it is essential that we relate to the April 24 demonstrations as women. First, women have played a leading role in the antiwar movement since the first teach-ins and demonstrations. Yet the press and media imply that the antiwar movement is led entirely by men. This is a misconception that must be corrected. We have participated in and been key organizers of every antiwar march, just as we have been perhaps the most effective force in every movement for social change, in the history of the world. ...

Women in this country are challenging the right of the U.S. government to wage a war of slaughter and destruction in Indochina while it denies the needs of women at home. One million children are left uncared for, while their mothers work, because there are no child care facilities. Seven thousand women die every year of illegal abortions. Millions of dollars of profit is made every year by paying women less than men in the exact same job. Thousands of women are shut out of higher education because there's not enough money to provide scholarships and loans. We are told that there is no money for child-care centers or for abortion services; that the economy cannot meet the demands of women for equal and decent jobs; that high schools and universities cannot provide equal education for women. All this while Nixon spends billions of dollars on bombs, B-52s and "Vietnamization."

... Recent polls show that 78% of the women in this country want an end to the war. We must galvanize that antiwar sentiment into mass participation of women to activate them into the planning and participation in them demonstrations. The action of our sisters around demands for the control of our own lives, combined with our outrage at the latest action of the U.S. government in Southeast Asia, indicate the potential for the largest participation of women ever, in the April 24th demonstrations. ...

PARTIAL LIST OF N.Y. ENDORSERS OF THE UNITED WOMEN'S CONTINGENT (Organizations listed for identification purposes only) MYRNA LAMB playwright; BARBARA LOVE Gay Liberation Front; MAE MASSIE Civil Rights Director for IUE; SUSAN MILLER Episcopal Peace Fellowship; WOMEN'S STRIKE COALITION; KATE MILLETT feminist writer; LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRONT; PAULINE ROSEN Women Strike for Peace; BARBARA DANE folksinger; GLORIA STEINEM feminist writer; BETTY FRIEDAN feminist writer; QUEENS COLLEGE WOMEN'S LIBERATION; COLUMBIA WOMEN'S LIBERATION; N.Y.U. WOMEN'S LIBERATION; HOFSTRA WOMEN'S LIBERATION; RENEE BLAKKAN Guardian; MYRNA BURKHOLDER Women In City Gov't; RUTH GAGE-COLBY Women's Int'l League for Peace & Freedom; ELIZABETH FISHER; APHRA writer; DORIS L. SASSOWER Professional Women's Caucus; DOROTHY ELDRIDGE N.J. SANE; SARAH DOELY Church Women United; LUCILLE IVERSON Radical Feminists; CLARA DE MIHA Jeanette Rankin Brigade Rank and File—and others.

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The Asian American Movement

—DARYL J. MAEDA

The Asian American movement emerged from the political ferment of the late 1960s and was formed when Asians of various ethnicities in the United States banded together to fight for racial justice. Although Asians had been in the United States in large numbers since the mid-1800s, they had not previously formed strong interethnic coalitions; instead, various Asian nationalisms had divided Asians in the United States, and the few multiethnic alliances they did form were fleeting. Because of numerous bans on Asian immigration enacted from 1875 through 1934, by the mid-1960s the majority of Asian Americans were native-born citizens and most Asian American youth spoke English and were immersed in American popular culture. Some Asian Americans were drawn into the social movements of the 1960s—including the civil rights, Black Power, and anti-Vietnam War movements—and many others became convinced that fundamental changes were necessary to achieve justice for Asians and other people in the United States and abroad.

The Asian American movement was a loosely organized coalition of groups and individuals spanning the nation, with epicenters in major cities on the coasts and in college towns. It addressed issues including education, housing, healthcare, workers rights, culture, and the war. Three points distinguished the movement from previous modes of politics among Asian Americans: first, it pulled together Asians of various ethnicities by arguing that Asians, regardless of ethnicity or national origin, shared common experiences of racism in the United States; second, it sought to build alliances between Asian Americans and other people of color in the United States; and third, it conceptualized the linkage between Asians in the United States to those in Asia as one of a shared relationship to U.S. imperialism rather than common biology or culture.

The beginnings of the Asian American movement can be traced to the late 1960s, when the Black Power and anti-war movements were blooming. The Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA, the first organization to use the term "Asian American") was formed at University of California, Berkeley, by Yuji Ichioka, who started the group by contacting all of the people with Asian surnames on the roster of the progressive Peace and Freedom Party. AAPA chapters, which borrowed the name but were not organizationally affiliated, were formed at Yale University, Columbia University, and elsewhere across the nation. In 1968 and 1969, Asian Americans participated in student strikes for Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College and University of California, Berkeley. In both cases, Asian American organizations were part of multiracial coalitions called the Third World Liberation Front. While the strike at San Francisco State was the longest student strike in American history, it was part of a wave of student strikes across the United States and abroad during the late 1960s, in which students demanded social justice and protested the war in Vietnam; strikers often clashed not only with administrators, but also the police.

While AAPA began on campus, the Red Guard Party emerged from San Francisco's Chinatown in 1969. The Red Guards adopted programs of self-determination modeled on the Black Panther Party's ideology and rhetoric; they decried police brutality, demanded fair employment, decent housing, and social services, opposed the war in Vietnam, and viewed racism against Asian Americans as similar to that against blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. In New York City, Asian Americans for Action (AAA) was initially organized in 1969 by Kazu Iijima and Minn Matsuda, two Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) women who had been political radicals before they were interned during World War II. These pioneers revived their prewar radicalism and connected with the growing political awareness of the younger generation (including Kazu's son Chris) to form a multi-ethnic Asian organization that opposed U.S. militarism in Asia and racism at home. They were joined by Yuri Kochiyama, another Nisei woman, who was famously associated with Malcolm X and cradled his head when he was assassinated. Avowedly communist groups, including I Wor Kuen (into which the Red Guard Party merged in 1971) and Wei Min She admired Mao Tse Tung as the most globally prominent opponent of U.S. imperialism; they sought to find common ground with other "Third World" radicals in trying to better the lives and working conditions of Asian Americans and other people of color in the United States.

Opposition to the Vietnam War was critical to the Asian American movement. Asian American organizations participated in many of the large-scale anti-war protests of the 1970s, often by forming Asian Contingents that marched and rallied together under the flags of left Asia, including North Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, and North Korea. They felt that it was vital for Asian Americans oppose the war as an anti-Asian genocide that followed in the steps of the U.S.-Filipino War, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Korean War. Among Filipino Americans, one of the most pressing issues was opposition to the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. The Union of Democratic Filipinos (Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino, or KDP) opposed Marcos as both anti-democratic and complicit with U.S. imperialism.

As the anti-Marcos movement demonstrates, the Asian American movement was not motivated by uncritical Asian pride. Rather, its participants drew inspiration from Asian leaders such as Mao and Ho Chi Minh whom they believed exemplified the ideals self-determination and equality. Furthermore, they understood that while there were differences among Asian nationalities and ethnicities, Asians in the United States and in Asia were bound together by a relation of subjugation to American racism and imperialism.

Participants from across the spectrum of the Asian American movement objected strenuously to the depiction of Asian Americans as a "model minority" who had escaped from prejudice through hard work and education. Instead, they emphasized that Asian Americans continued to suffer from discrimination, poverty, and exploitation. The International Hotel, the last vestige of San Francisco's Manilatown, was the site of a bitter battle from 1968 to 1977 in which Asian Americans and their allies fought developers who wished to raze the building. The hotel provided affordable housing and a sense of community to elderly Filipino and Chinese bachelors, former migrant workers who were the source of the cheap labor indispensable to the agricultural industry and became disposable once their labor was extracted. Students trekked to the hotel to renovate its deteriorating edifice and organizations including Asian Community Center and Chinese Progressive Association established offices there. Despite their best efforts, however, the tenants were evicted and the hotel was destroyed.

A wide array of cultural workers explored Asian American identity in music, visual arts, literature, poetry, and drama. Joanne ("Nobuko") Miyamoto, Chris Iijima, and Charlie Chin performed as the folk trio A Grain of Sand at rallies, protests, and conferences across the nation and in 1973 recorded the self-titled album, *A Grain of Sand*, which expressed their opposition racism, capitalism, and imperialism, along with their solidarity with blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. Organizations such as Basement Workshop in New York City and Kearny Street Workshop in San Francisco provided resources and opportunities for artists and encouraged community participation in the arts. Theater companies in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles developed and staged Asian American plays and fostered Asian American talent. Frank Chin emerged as a prominent, but controversial writer and critic. Although numerous Asian American organizations produced newsletters, newspapers, and magazines, the most influential and widely read movement periodical was *Gidra*, a newspaper published monthly in Los Angeles from 1969 to 1974. Its exuberant graphic design expressed the humorous and joyful spirit of the 1970s, but *Gidra* also reported seriously on Asian American perspectives on issues such as the war, Asian American studies, fair housing and wages, and drug abuse within the Asian American community; furthermore, it highlighted the activities of other "Third World" activists, such as the American Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island.

Asian American women played pivotal roles in the movement. Pat Sumi was a well-known anti-war activist who toured with Eldridge Cleaver across China, North Korea, and North Vietnam; upon her return, she spoke to Asian American groups across the United States and helped to organize a conference between Indochinese and North American women in Vancouver, Canada, in 1971.

Similarly, Evelyn Yoshimura also traveled through China and published reports with *Gidra* in 1972 and 1973. Carmen Chow was a driving force of I Wor Kuen after the merger with the Red Guard Party. Despite the visibility of a few individuals, many Asian American women felt that they were relegated to performing menial tasks, that their issues were not considered important, and that Asian American men viewed them as sexual property. Asian American women addressed sexism within the movement by pursuing projects that addressed their particular needs, including drug abuse among young women and domestic abuse, educating men about sexism, and building sisterhood with each other. The Asian American women's movement viewed itself as integrally connected with the larger movement and argued that Asian American liberation could not take place without women's liberation.

The Asian American movement drew much of its strength from its diversity and flexibility. It encompassed groups and individuals with a wide array of ideologies and political commitments ranging from liberalism to avowed communism. All participants agreed, to varying degrees, that Asians of all ethnicities suffered from common racism and that coalescing together provided an effective means for combating that racism. However, tensions between and within groups detracted from the movement's effectiveness, especially as the 1970s progressed. Like much of the new communist movement, Asian American radicals turned increasingly toward party-building and political consolidation with other like-minded groups, including those composed of leftists from other racial minorities. I Wor Kuen allied with Chicanos of the August Twenty-ninth Movement in 1978 to form the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), while Wei Min She entered the Revolutionary Union. Excessive devotion toward achieving ideological correctness embroiled these organizations in bitter internecine conflicts, and disproportionate efforts at party-building inhibited their ability to build grassroots connections to communities. On the left, Asian American radicals sometimes overly romanticized communist Asian nations such as the People's Republic of China and North Vietnam and leaders including Mao and Ho Chi Minh and underestimated the degree of internal conflict and political repression within these nations. Adopting democratic centralism (which was more central than democratic) as an organizing principle led some groups into undue rigidity.

But rather than disappearing with a trace, the Asian American movement left lasting legacies that continue to impact American ideas about race and ethnicity and improve the lives of people of Asian ancestry in the United States. To begin with, the very idea of Asian Americans as a racial bloc encompassing multiple ethnicities, which is now recognized by the federal government and has become part of commonplace understandings of race among Americans, was pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s by the movement. Furthermore, cultural, educational, and social service institutions begun by the movement—including theatrical companies, arts organizations, historical societies and museums, Asian American studies programs, immigrant service providers, and legal aid advocates—continued to serve the needs of the community throughout the twentieth century and are still flourishing in the twenty-first century. Finally, the Asian American movement brought attention to ongoing problems of racial inequality and showed the importance of building coalitions and alliances across lines of ethnicity, race, and gender.

KILLER FAWN, *In the Movement Office* (1971)

This 1971 skit by Killer Fawn (Linda Iwataki) illustrates women's frustration with sexism within the Asian American movement.

- SISTER: (walking in) What do you think of women's liberation?
- BROTHER 2: Well, Chairman Mao says "Unite and take part in production and political activity to improve the economic and political status of women."
- BROTHER 1: Far out. Hey man, we better start getting the conference together. (all sit)
- BROTHER 2: Yeah, I been thinking about that. Hey, did you dig on the article brother Alan put out? It runs down some heavy shit!
- BROTHER 1: Right on! Let's put it on a stencil and run it off for the conference. Here, sister, can you type it up (hands it to her without waiting for her to answer) . . . and do this one on illegal search and seizure, too.
- SISTER: Here's an article that Yuki wrote on women. It's really heav . . .
- BROTHER 1: Yeah, that illegal search and seizure is important because the students need to get their shit together as far as legal matters are concerned. Hey, before you start typing, can you get me some coffee?
- BROTHER 2: Me too. I take two sugars. (she gets up without saying anything, goes to get the coffee. Brothers look her up and down.)
- BROTHER 2: When do you think we should have it? During Christmas vacation?
- BROTHER 1: Yeah, righth on. Let's try the first weekend. Maybe we can get the Center. Hey sister, can you call the Center right now and get a confirmation?
- SISTER: (bringing back the coffee) We can't use the Center anymore. Remember what happened last . . .
- BROTHER 2: Oh shit! We can't use the Center. Last year someone left cigarette burns in the furniture and those s.o.b.'s aren't letting anyone use it on weekends.
- SISTER: The first weekend of Christmas vacation might be rough for the students because papers and . . .
- BROTHER 1: Fuck that shit! If they place their priorities on a bullshit paper, fuck 'em.
- BROTHER 2: Right on! Hey, I got a meeting now. Can you get some press releases out and start contacting people for a general meeting? Thanks baby, you're a righteous sister.

Source: Printed in *Gidra*, January 1971.

BROTHER 1: Yeah, I got to split now, too. I have to go out in the field and do some people's work. I'll try to help you if I get back in time. But I know you can take care of business, baby. (both split)

SISTER: (alone and pissed off) What's going on! I got a goddamn meeting, too! The people's work . . . What the hell do they think this is!!

ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE, *AAPA Perspectives (1969)*

The Asian American Political Alliance was the first organization to use the term "Asian American." Its first chapter was formed out of the larger New Left in Berkeley and subsequent chapters arose spontaneously in other locales. This statement demonstrates AAPA's understanding of the deep linkages between racism in the United States and imperialism abroad.

We Asian Americans believe that we must develop an American Society which is just, humane, equal and gives the people the right to control their own lives before we can begin to end the oppression and inequality that exists in this nation.

We Asian Americans realize that America was always and still is a White Racist Society. Asian Americans have been continuously exploited and oppressed by the racist majority and have survived only through hard work and resourcefulness, but their souls have not survived.

We Asian Americans refuse to cooperate with the White Racism in this society which exploits us as well as other Third World people, and affirm the right of Self-Determination.

We Asian Americans support all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation and believe that Third World People must have complete control over the political, economic, and educational institutions within their communities.

We Asian Americans oppose the imperialistic policies being pursued by the American government.

PAT SUMI, *Third World People: Shoulder to Shoulder (1974)*

Pat Sumi was a prominent Asian American anti-war activist who traveled to North Korea and North Vietnam. She delivered this speech at the University of Michigan on February 21, 1974. Sumi appeared alongside the black radical Angela Davis, Clyde Bellecourt of the American Indian

Source: Printed in *Asian American Political Alliance Newspaper*, vol. 1, no. 5 (Summer), 1969.

Source: Printed in *Gidra*, April 1974.

Movement, and Ramsey Muniz of La Raza Unida Party in Texas. In this speech, Sumi demonstrates the connections that Asian American radicals saw between their movement and those of other Third World peoples in the United States and abroad through opposition to capitalism.

130 years ago, when the first Chinese laborers arrived on the West Coast, America was still a young agricultural country. The outmoded system of slavery still flourished in the Southern plantations . . .

130 years ago, the nations of Asia—China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines—groaned under the weight of decaying feudalism and European imperial penetration.

And 130 years ago, two relatively unknown political economists named Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels served notice to a skeptical but soon to be revolutionary Europe, that capitalism would soon be swept away by the combined might of the world's peoples.

. . . We Asian American people have not remained apart from this great era of historical change. . .

What made us leave our homelands? What brought us Asian American people to the United States? It was none other than the great 19th century dynamic of imperialism and colonialism—an imperialism and colonialism fueled by the African slave trade, the robbery of Latin America, and the confiscation of Native American land. Therefore, from the beginning, our existence as Asian American people was conditioned by the very same social and historical factors which conditioned the lives of other Third World peoples in this country.

. . . We Asian American young people are finding great strength and courage for the trails ahead of us by understanding our heritage as part of the Third World working people. Who can fail to be moved by the quiet dignity of our mothers cooking, cleaning, and sewing to save money for our education? Who can fail to feel humble at the magi and stoic strength that brings for food and flowers for the people's livelihood? Who can fail to be moved when an old Filipino farm worker in his 70's says that the most important lesson he has learned is that young people of all races must work together for the people's sake?

Our lives, along with the lives of all Third World peoples of the world have been conditioned by imperialism. Therefore, our struggles to liberate the Asian, African and Latin American peoples from imperialism. Our lives have been conditioned by racism. Therefore, our struggles as Asian Americans must be part of the struggle to end racism and win genuine equality for all people. And most of all, our lives as Asian Americans have been conditioned by the most brutal exploitation. Therefore, our struggle must be merged with the great world wide struggle against exploitation and for building a society free from exploitation.

The unity of Third World people in America: what does it mean to Asian Americans? It is a window to look back on the past and see ourselves as an integral part of America's transformation into a rich and powerful industrial state. It is a window to see ourselves as part of the long and glorious tradition of slave rebellions, workers' strikes, civil rights movements, and anti-imperialist struggles of the American people's history.

And most of all, the unity of Asian Americans with Third World people in America is the only door through which we can enter the future. The history of the past 130 years, 130 years of blood and sweat, teaches us that only through the unity of the poor and disenfranchised, only through the unity of the racially oppressed, only through the unity of the exploited, can people be victorious. 130 years ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said that capitalism and imperialism would be overthrown by the might of the world's peoples. Today, all the world's people are learning that it is possible, that it is necessary, and that a glorious future awaits us at the end. We Asian American people are determined to be a part of that future.

We Asian, Black, Brown and Native American people are determined to end exploitation and become masters of our society. We who are exploited and oppressed will build a future for our children such that our parents and grandparents hardly dared to dream of. The future is ours. Through unity we shall win!

RODAN, *U.S. Savages* (1971)

Rodan was an Asian American movement newspaper published out of San Francisco. This article argues that Asian Americans should identify with Indochinese people as fellow Asians and oppose the war on the basis of Asian solidarity.

Brothers and sisters, are we not also Asians? Do we not relate to those people who are being tortured and murdered? We are also "gooks" by birth. You and I are no different from those subhuman creatures called Vietnamese. Take a look in the mirror, you have dark hair and dark eyes. You are part of the Third World people and the United States is destroying our kin in Asia. If you don't feel sick after this report, then you are a savage animal. If you do feel sick for the brothers and sisters, then let your rage be known. If you don't, then you and I will be their next victims. Try and remember what happened to the quiet Japanese Americans in World War II. They were like the enemy. They had slanted eyes, black hair, brown eyes, and dark skin. All the necessary features that made them the enemy. Today, the United States is continuing its destruction of the Asian people. They are widening the war by their incursions into Laos and Cambodia. . . . And if war breaks out with China, then it will be possible that the Chinese Americans will suffer the same fate as did the Japanese Americans in World War II. The repression may even be worse, and include all people of Asian descent. Since all Asians have been identifying with one another, regardless of nationality, then we will all become the enemy to the US imperialist. We have been working together politically, economically and culturally to free ourselves from the oppression that is given to all Third World people. Therefore, the US will be forced to repress all Asian Americans, because we will not

Source: *Rodan*, March 1971.

be separated. We are all in the same bag, so we must become truly united and begin to raise our voice as one. . . . See this country for what it really is. It is destroying the people of Vietnam by torture and murder. It will do the same to us.

RED GUARD PARTY, *Our Political Program* (1969)

In this program, which was modeled after the Black Panther Party's 10-point plan, the Red Guards place Asian Americans (referred to as "Yellow people") within a racial paradigm that aligns them with other people of color as exploited and suffering from discrimination.

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our people, the Yellow Community.

We believe that Yellow people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlord will not give decent housing to our Yellow community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

3. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

4. We want all Yellow men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that Yellow people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Yellow people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

5. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER of Yellow People.

We believe we can end police brutality in our Yellow community by organizing Yellow self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Yellow community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment

Source: *Red Guard Community Newspaper*, March 12, 1969, p. 6. Reprinted in Fred Ho et al., eds., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian/Pacific America*, Boston: AK Press, 2000, pp. 401-403.

to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We, therefore, believe that all Yellow people should arm themselves for self defense.

6. We want freedom for all Yellow men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all Yellow people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

7. We want all Yellow People when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Yellow communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Yellow people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Yellow community from which the Yellow defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man of the Yellow community."

8. We want adequate and free medical facilities available for the people in the Yellow community.

We know that Chinatown has the highest density area next to Manhattan. It also has the highest TB and sickness rate in the nation.

9. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then, the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ its people and give a high standard of living. There are thousands of immigrants coming into Chinatown every year and it is impossible for them to find gainful employment.

10. We demand that the United States government recognize the People's Republic of China.

We believe that MAO TSE-TUNG is the true leader of the Chinese people; not CHIANG KAI SHEK. The government of the United States is now preparing for war against the Chinese People's Republic and against the Chinese people. The racist government of the United States has proven that it will put only peoples of color in concentration camps, Japanese were placed in concentration camps; therefore, it is logical that the next people that will be going are the Chinese people; because the United States is gearing its war time industrial complex for war against China.

10

Chicano Activism

—MATT GARCIA

Mexican Americans participated in the "civil rights movements" of the 1960s and 1970s in a way that transformed popular notions of social justice to include issues of land and labor rights in addition to the familiar concerns of equality in education and access to government. The Black Civil Rights Movement and the ensuing Black Power movement also shaped the consciousness of young Mexican Americans who began to embrace a nonwhite, politicized identity known as "Chicano." After years of employing gradual and cooperative pressure on local, state and federal officials, Chicanos began to experiment with more direct action and protest, challenging the intentions and interests of the government to remedy the problems facing their communities. Whereas previous groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the GI Forum sought to work within the system to end discrimination and segregation during the 1940s and 1950s, new groups such as the United Farmworkers Union, La Alianza Federal de las Mercedes (New Mexico), El Centro de Acción Social y Autónomo/the Center for Autonomous Social Action (CASA), the Brown Berets, United Mexican American Students (UMAS), and La Raza Unida Party became much more assertive and considered a wider range of strategies to achieve their goals in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to more strident political expression, this generation of activists also employed and inspired artistic expression that articulated a new, nonconformist, nonwhite identity that sought equality and racial justice for Mexicans living in the United States. The Chicano movement, therefore, was a multifaceted social movement that articulated a new politics and a new place for Mexican people within the U.S. national culture.

The Chicano movement has largely been described as having four primary components: the struggle for homelands formerly held in common by Mexican people in the rural Southwest; the farm workers movement and the debate over Mexican immigrant rights; the urban youth movement in the Southwest, including protests against the Vietnam War and advocacy for educational reform; and finally, the articulation of radical political thought and the formation of a Mexican American political party, La Raza Unida Party. Within each of these movements, Mexican American