The History of the Chicano-Latino Movement

Elizabeth Guerrero and Emily Sorroche

Michigan State University
Introduction

¡Viva la causa! This is a common phrase, which means “live for the cause” and it is used by the Chicano-Latinos in fighting for all, pertaining to issues in the community. The phrase is used to bring the community together; it is said in unison when fighting for a cause. The expression is of great importance to Michigan State University (MSU) students as it is the key element in strengthening their purpose. MSU’s Chicano-Latino community has gone through many hardships as they were establishing their presence on campus. The first Chicano-Latino students came in the late 1960s; their names were Rosa Morales, Oscar Mendoza and Daniel Soza (D. Soza, Personal Communication, November 20, 2007).

The Chicano-Latino people of Lansing realized they needed a support system to help move forward in the community. Support for Latinos was small in numbers because of the low rate of incoming students present at MSU during the 1960’s. Cristo Rey Community Center was built in 1961 in Lansing to help support the people. The center had a major influence on the Chicano-Latino population. Cristo Rey helped organize and collaborate other grassroots efforts to help the Chicano-Latino people with attaining a better chance at MSU. A newspaper called Renacimiento and a radio station called Sol de Atzlan, also helped for the progression of Chicano-Latinos.

Admissions procedures, along with providing financial aid for Chicano-Latinos, were slim to none. As the years went on a plan to recruit became more positive as the administration improved its efforts. Financial aid was hard to attain once being admitted as a student and only very few received any. During these years the students fought with research and numbers proving change had to be done. Since then, there have been major
improvements with additions of programs available to Chicano-Latinos.

Different types of activism throughout the history of Chicano-Latinos are another area of focus in understanding the Chicano movement. It has given the community solidarity and motivation to work toward new goals for improvement. Today’s activism is just as alive as it was in the 1960s, with a defined meaning of purpose and the goal of obtaining equality. Until there are equal opportunities available to Chicano-Latinos, the activism will not rest. The analysis of Chicano-Latinos history at MSU has proven that the people have fought and paved the road for the opportunities that are currently available, with much more progress for today’s students to keep the strength of the community.

Presence of Latinos in Lansing Area

Most research is not found because the community was just forming in the Lansing area where the Cristo Rey Community Center is located. The center was very prominent in the beginnings of the Chicano movement at MSU and the Lansing community. This is where grassroots campaigning started to evolve into a defining purpose, giving the community inspiration to fight for the cause. In 1961 Father William McKeon developed the Cristo Rey Parish, with the help of Bishop Joseph Henry Albers of the Catholic Diocese (www.cristo-rey.org). The population of the Chicano-Latino community was starting to grow and Fr. McKeon felt there was a strong need for support of Chicano-Latinos in the greater Lansing area. From the establishment of the parish in 1961 followed a spiritual and social center of Cristo Rey in 1968 by Fr. Kenneth L. Faiver. In 1969 Tony Benavides became the executive director of the community center. Under his appointment he was able to establish services such as a medical health clinic, prescription programs, senior and community kitchens, youth programs, diversion programs,
employment and training program, counseling, disability services and English and Spanish as a second language classes (www.cristo-rey.org). The center helps over 22,000 people/families a year. These services are helping all people in the Lansing community, not just Latinos. Many of the Chicano-Latinos were starting to see that they had a place to receive help and feel comfortable. The city of Lansing was starting to show the Latino community that it cared and they wanted to help the community by supporting Cristo Rey Community Center. Many of the Chicano-Latino students who were attending Michigan State University would go to Cristo Rey to have meetings about the issues that they were facing at the University. It was a safe place for them to go and have discussions about their plan of action on how to get the university to support the Latino community. They also were receiving great support from the community members in their efforts to let MSU and the surrounding Lansing area know about the issues that Latinos were facing.

The community came together and brought about a newspaper called, “Renacimiento” and a radio station building “Quinto Sol”. These two innovative creations became so popular that their messages were being circulated and broadcasted throughout the Latino communities in Michigan, such as Metro-Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Saginaw areas. Huberto Martinez was a student at MSU around the 1970s, who started the newspaper “Renacimiento”. Huberto integrated the MSU community to work with Lansing Chicano peoples on the newspaper. Many of the students at MSU would give articles to Mr. Martinez about the issues that they were facing on campus. He would also receive issues that Chicano people as a whole were facing throughout the nation. Students would volunteer to help organize, print, and distribute the paper. This collaborated effort brought the community together to show their support for one another and their pride for the
Chicano movement. As for “Quinto Sol,” this was a building that housed the newspaper “Renacimiento” and a radio station called “Aztlan de Sol”, this was where the grassroots efforts began. From these grassroots organizing their efforts resulted and gained support from the community to study higher education at MSU.

Admissions Report

Many of the MSU Chicano-Latino students felt that the policies concerning the recruitment and admissions of Chicano students were lacking and they wanted to assess the work of the admissions office. The students found it difficult to determine where and from whom to obtain clear statements pertaining to policies of Chicano recruitment. It was clear to them that recruitment and admissions of Chicanos fell within the general policy of minority students and that there were no separate guidelines to exist for recruitment of Chicanos. After numerous times trying to contact the office to get some answers, they received a Report of the Commission on Admission and Student Body Composition in 1971. In this report Gumecindo Salas stated:

Concerted efforts have been taken by the Admissions Office to travel to and make presentations to those high schools in the state, which have substantial numbers of racial minority students. College Career Nights are held in the high school throughout the state, new recruitment brochures have been developed by the developmental program. A specially designed admissions brochure on MSU for the Spanish speaking of the state has been printed. Since 1971 Chicano students in conjunction with the Admissions Office have conducted a “Chicano Visitation Day” which brings students from throughout the state to visit Michigan State
These were some of the recommendations that the Admissions Office put forward to the students. The recommendations were not implemented until a year and half after they shared this with the students. The chart below shows the number of minority students who were recruited in the developmental program for fall terms:

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<tr>
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<th>1972</th>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>207</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>220</td>
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( Salas,1971).

The chart above shows the number of students recruited for the developmental program, which is a program that helps underrepresented students with the transition from high school to college life. In 1972, the year that this program started, the recruitment for Chicanos was 16 new students, and over the next two years the numbers dropped. The recruitment plan that the admissions office proposed to the students was not working. Many students were upset and wanted something to be done. Daniel Soza, who was a student at the time, set a meeting up with the director of Admissions and gave him a list of names that he wanted accepted into the university. “We were not playing anymore, we went out on our own and recruited Chicano students from Saginaw, Grand Rapids and the Lansing area, and we wanted these students enrolled in MSU” (D. Soza, personal communication, November, 20, 2007). The students felt that if the office was not going to recruit Latino’s then they were going to do it themselves. Every student that they gave to the director was admitted that next year.
Availability of Employment and Campus Resources

The majority of the fight related to campus resources was about getting Chicano-Latino people employed through MSU, and then having the resources available for the students to take advantage of. Daniel Soza stated, “Remember that when I arrived at Michigan State University in the late 1960s, there were no Chicano-Latino people here” (D. Soza, personal communication, November 20, 2007). Daniel along with two other Chicano-Latino students realized a need, and began working toward the goal of making the MSU environment more accommodating to increase enrollment.

Acceptance of a future Spartan was one obstacle, as attaining financial aid to stay a Spartan was another. Affordability of education is one aspect that scares away most people because of the lack of resources supporting the Chicano-Latino population. Research has shown that the procedure of financial aid in the 1970’s was hard to understand. A report states “application procedure for financial aid is sufficiently complex that the language difference and lack of familiarity with educational institutions preclude parents from offering the necessary assistance in applying for aid” (Salas, 1977, p. xi). The language barrier was one area that administration needed to develop. Most Chicano-Latinos were first generation, coming into unknown territories in the University, which created the unfamiliarity dilemma. Both of these issues would force a Chicano-Latino student to get a job, which would put their academic success at risk for failure.

Discrimination against Chicano-Latinos was the next obstacle facing the students. One report studied and researched that the problem was “the equality of opportunity to seek and acquire employment in our society regardless of race, national origin, or sex” (Salas, 1977, p. 89). The evidence leading up to this assumption was that Chicano-Latinos
were hired in the aspect of temporary positions, instead of tenure. Without the support of the institution, the Chicano-Latinos were left to worry about their positions not being there tomorrow.

Another strike against the students was the report by Salas stating that the MSU Ph.D. candidates were rarely accepted to study based on their race. Therefore creating a domino effect, Salas (1977) found that “M.S.U. Ph.D.’s are hired by their own colleges, as opposed to the Chicano who holds a degree from this institution and is less likely, at least in terms of aggregate numbers, to move into a faculty position in the college” (p. xv).

Since the research was getting specific in finding where the problem exists, the recommendations were the next step for administration to improve the conditions for the Chicano-Latinos.

Community resources were nowhere to be found during the late 1960’s until a report came out in 1977 identifying the major areas. Salas (1977) recognized where the most attention needed to be, with “career counseling and organizing for action” (p. xvii). The Chicano-Latino students needed advisors who understood where they came from, and help them gain access to the job market. Salas (1977) defined organizing for action with “community-based problem solving procedures, consistent with university goals for integrating education, research, and service functions” (p. xvii). With these skills integrated into a program or student-run organization, students would be able to use this information and make them more marketable in obtaining a job. These demands were not met right away, as programs developed taking small steps; it took student action to get the attention of administration and the whole MSU student community.
Change began with the students as they started realizing their voice in the MSU community. As the Chicano-Latino students were organizing their unifying goal which was at the time equality. Daniel Soza remembers that there was no protesting in the late 1970s yet; he said they went straight to the top of who was in charge and gave them a list of demands. There was no opposition in the beginning, as they accepted their demands and implemented changes in the administration of the university (D. Soza, personal communication, November 20, 2007). Unfortunately the change to better the university became harder in the long run with administration listening to the community.

MECha

“Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) is a student organization that promotes higher education, cultura, and historia. MEChA was founded on the principles of self-determination for the liberation of our people. We believe that political involvement and education is the avenue for change in our society” (www.nationalmecha.org). At Michigan State University this was the first student group that the Chicano- Latino students started. According to Daniel Soza an alumnus and current employee of MSU, “In the mid 1960’s there were no Chicano groups here at MSU, and so we had to start are own, which was MECha” (D. Soza, personal communication, November 20, 2007). MEChA at MSU was very active in the political and social issues that were happening around the nation and they made sure that they brought them to the attention of important people in administration. There were many protests that the students held to show their support for their community with the intent to inform students and all MSU community members that there are Chicano’s on campus. The Chicano resources were very dismal, and MEChA was trying to show MSU that improvement needed to
happen. Some of the major protests that they held were the United Farm Workers of American grape protest, a hunger strike, and the checking out of thousands of books in the main library at Michigan State University.

**Grape Protest**

In 1965, Filipino and Mexican-American farm workers in Delano, California, began a strike against area grape growers for equal wages for foreign workers. This historic strike launched the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), and made leader Cesar Chavez one of the most celebrated figures of the 20th century (http://www.ufw.org). This protest was not just happening in Delano, California, but with Latino’s fighting for “La Causa” nation-wide. Students here at MSU were very adamant for the university to take a stance to show the Latino community and the nation that they will not serve grapes on campus. They wanted MSU to take this stance until the farm workers were properly treated in the sense of fair wages and better living conditions. In our interview with Todd Mireles a student activist in the mid 1990s at MSU and part of the student group MECha, he recalled some incidents of the grape protest with President McPherson.

On Friday February 11, 1994 the day Dolores Huerta was visiting MSU (she is one of the co-founders of the UFW), the students were sending McPherson boxes of grapes every hour with notes reading, “These grapes were watered with the blood of migrant workers,” and other truisms (Mireles, 2007). That day there were close to 100 Chicano students and their white allies taking over the president’s office and demanding to speak with him. At first he refused to meet with them, although he edgily gave in and asked them to join him in the Board of Trustees meeting room. As they filled up the room McPherson
McPherson tried to defend the indefensible but he was clearly angry at being spoken to this way by those he considered his inferiors. Dolores gave him some; that was beautiful. The white kids in the room gave him some. But the coup de grâce came when after about an hour of verbal battering he began some long ramble about Native Americans, reservations and manifest destiny. Across the table to the right of me sat Anthony Spangler, who took a bag of left over grapes and slammed them down on the Board of Trustees table. The room got instantly loud. McPherson called for order but the noise level in the room continued to rise dramatically as people began to shout out their anger toward him and at his last statement. Julie Salazar a Chicana from South West Detroit and Cindy Cerda another Chicana from Chicago, began ripping open the bags of grapes and began throwing handfuls of grapes at President McPherson (T. Mireles, personal communication, November 20, 2007)

Hunger Strike

Another tactic of the student group MECha was a hunger strike to show how serious they were in having MSU take a stance in not serving grapes on campus anymore. The 1996 hunger strike was on the surface of the United Farm Workers Grape boycott. “In retrospect this hunger strike was really about a group of people testing the limits of their endurance and commitment. Pushing their own envelope as they prepared to ascend to the next level of personal awareness” (Mireles, 2007). They were looking early in the year for
a way to bring attention back to the Grape Boycott issue. The idea for a hunger strike came from Mark Anthony Torres. In the beginning the idea was met with some resistance and healthy skepticism. There were several discussions and research conducted by the students on what a hunger strike consisted of. According to Mireles, “two community members Fenis Ibanez and Rose Castilla (and later members of the Brown Berets) did a lot of the initial research. They both worked in the medical field so they felt a responsibility” (Mireles, 2007). From the research that was conducted, they found that there is not a lot written about hunger strikes.

After doing research and working with the Chicano community the students came to a conclusion that everyone was in reasonably good health and figured they could at least go two weeks without any lasting damage. Mireles stated, “it was decided among ourselves that Maria Zavala, Mark Anthony Torres, Daniel Soza III, Andres Guerrero, Matthew Martinez and Jose Romero would drink only water for an indeterminate amount of time (not to exceed two weeks) and in doing so follow in the non-violent tradition of Jesus, Gandhi, Tolstoy, Dr. King and of course Cesar E.Chavez” (Mireles, 2007).

The students began the fast at dawn on February 13, 1996 with a sunrise ceremony honoring the four directions, a practice they would keep over the next seven days. According to the State News, that same day President McPherson was scheduled to give his third State of the University address. It was a concerted attempt to capture media attention away from him and onto the issue of the grape boycott (Johnson & Perry, 1996). The hunger strike lasted for seven days. At the end of those seven days it became apparent to the students that President McPherson was not going to give in. The students worked together to find a creative way to pressure the University into some type of compromise to
ban the grapes from being served. Mireles states, “So we sent Mark to the hospital. After that, things came to a conclusion quickly. Especially when Mark returned from the hospital declaring his intention to stay the course” (Mireles, 2007). The end of the hunger strike came quickly. There were two white students, Jason Wade and Peter Nitz, who were scheduled to begin indefinite hunger strikes on the Monday beginning the next week. When this became known to administration, the University was ready to make a deal.

They did not win the grape boycott but they did get a mechanism for removing grapes from the dorms and a “No Grapes Day every March 31st”. “It doesn’t seem like a lot, maybe for a week of going hungry it isn’t, however, the greatest victory came from the sense of purpose each person emerged with. Personal determination to see change at MSU was renewed and strengthened” (Mireles, 2007).

**Book Protest**

Activism was evolving into a more meaningful tactic, instead of the different type of action taken with the Grape Protest. The members of MEChA organized a plan called the book protest. The university did not want to implement a Chicano Studies program, and their focus started to move toward an Ethnic Studies program. Since there was no compliance with administration about developing a Chicano Studies program, the Chicano-Latino community came up with another organized plan of action. The book protest was one of two organized protests that took place.

The book protest happened on during the month of February 1999 and took place at the library on MSU campus. At the time, there was not a limit as to how many books a student can check out at one time, it was unlimited. Todd Mireles (2007), who was a
member of MEChA, wrote the following describing the story and reactions of the students who organized the book protest:

The library staff was livid. They wanted us to stop. Mostly the director of the library, Cliff something or other, stomped around huffing and puffing, demanding explanations, alternately threatening and cajoling but to no avail. Like any other action, it always amazed me when what we had planned actually worked. The structure of this particular protest was also different in that many of the Brown Berets from Detroit (which I was a member of at the time) came and provided security for the students checking out the books. Dr. Lee June vice president of Student Affairs then (and now) walked by laughing. “Good one,” he said as he whisked by. “Totally within the rules.” And he kept walking. We had won again. The books were stacked on the floor in front of the check out station in a rectangle about four feet tall, three feet wide and 15 feet long. It was a mighty pile of books. Of the 30 or so students participating we were divided into several groups. One group brought the books down from the stacks and piled them neatly on the floor. Two students stood there checking out books until they reached their limit. Others then carried them out to the U-haul we rented and the Brown Berets loaded them into the truck. All in all we took over 5,000 books from the library that day and as we were shutting the door to the U-haul surrounded by some panic stricken librarians and dumbfounded news reporters, someone asked us why we were doing this. Rosa Salas one of the Tlataoni’s for MSU MEXA at the time responded, “If we can’t read about our history, then you can’t read about yours” (p. 11-12).
The message in the protest was influential in the sense that it was successful and the organizing behind the protest gave it power. In result of the protest, a meeting with Provost Simon took place and the following quote mentions the results. A newspaper article stated “the meeting with Simon was unproductive because of a lack of commitment by MSU to fund the studies. Simon said discussions about the program would continue, which uses classes from other departments. The book protest was not discussed at the meeting” (Sell, 1999, p. 1). The students involved with the protest were not discouraged with the reaction of administration in promising other meetingstol be arranged with students and more administrators. The members of MEChA were prepared for the next plan of action.

**Ethnicity Change**

The next protest that followed was called “Operation Zero – We refused to be used” (Mireles, 2007, p. 11). The idea was invented in 1994, and finally planned out in 1999. It took several years to build up the protests, because support in the community was not there. MECha developed a plan where the members would go to administration and change their ethnicity of record to white. An article described the reasoning behind this protest was the MECha members “do not want their numbers benefiting a university that doesn’t allow them to study their heritage” (Sell, 1999, p. 1). There were about 15 members of MEChA who participated in this protest. Although Operation Zero was only 15 people who changed their ethnicity to white, the smallest amount of change still had a big impact. The article by Sell (1999) also mentioned:

> We only have 300 Chicano-registered students in the university, said Adelita Garcia, an education sophomore who changed her ethnicity on the records. If 10 of
us change it, that will change the university’s percentages, which will only hurt the university. It is not helping us any to be classified as No. 3 or No. 4 (p.1).

The MECha members continued after they changed their ethnicity to speak with Provost Lou Anna Simon, who was out of town at the time and the students spoke with Robert Banks, assistant provost. MECha presented the changes in the specialization curriculum for Chicano studies program, and continued to fight for a full-degree program.

The Chicano-Latino studies program was finally seeing changes a few months later in July 1999. An article stated, “The restructuring will boost an 18-credit specialization to include 20 credits, said Theresa Melendez, director of Chicano-Latino studies. Three new Chicano-Latino faculty members also have been hired” (McCoy, 1999, p. 1). It was not the full degree program, which was their initial goal going into the protests, but it was a result everyone could benefit from. The members of MEChA are going to continue to fight until the degree granting program exists at MSU. The students who changed their ethnicity to white have not changed it back since the protest according to the McCoy (1999) article. One of the members of MEChA, was still protesting that her ethnicity will not change and she said “it will remain as white as a symbolic protest until I see a Chicano-Latino program initiated” (McCoy, 1999, p. 2).

Chicano Latino Studies

With all the protests on the grape boycott, the students of MEChA were preparing for a fight for a Chicano-Latino Studies Program. Some would say the grape boycott was the starting point/focus for a Chicano-Latino Program. In 1993 the students compiled a list of thirteen demands that they gave to the President of the University. Number seven out of the thirteen stated:
7. MSU instates a Chicano/Latino Studies Center (similar to Wayne State University’s) A. This program will do its own recruitment, retention and teach its own curriculum (Original List of Demands submitted by, The Coalition of Asian Pacific Students and Chicano/Latino Students).

When President McPherson arrived on campus, he started to meet with several minority student groups and leaders to go over the needs that they were demanding. When he met with the Chicano/Latino students and they gave him their thirteen demands, he seemed to be startled at demand number seven. According to Mireles, McPherson asked:

“Chicano studies? What do you do with a degree in Chicano studies?” McPherson asked us with a laugh. “What kind of job can you get with that?” “What kind of job do you get with an English degree?” I asked him. “The point is you do with a degree what you want to do with a degree.” As we pressed him further on the subject of Chicano studies he said, “I think ethnic studies programs tend to balkanize campuses (2007, p5).

Needless to say nothing came out of this meeting with McPherson. Throughout the year the students had protests with the checking out of 5,000 books from the main library, and changing of their ethnic identity to show they are serious about getting a Chicano-Latino Studies Program.

On March 29, 1994 the students received a response to a follow-up letter sent to President McPherson on March 14, 1994. In this letter he said under point two, “We support the establishment of an ETHNIC STUDIES (emphasis added) program that would included Chicano/Boricua courses … we are supporting ethnic studies as an important part
of the curriculum” (M. McPherson, personal communication, March 29, 1994). As to an exact time line, none was given; however, Provost Simon indicated that it would take from 12-15 months before significant progress would be achieved.

Many of the Latino faculty had gone along with the company line of ethnic studies one hundred per cent, instead of standing up and fighting with the students to get a Chicano/Latino studies program. It was not until Dr. Teresa Melendez, a fairly recent arrival from the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), was working to create the structure for the undergraduate Chicano Studies specialization. According to Mireles,

There is no question Melendez has paid the price for her collaboration with MEXA rabble-rousers. Denied tenure and under constant harassment from the administration from the very beginning. The administration did not count on the fact that she saw service to her community as a greater opportunity. They quickly learned the error of their ways (p.13, 2007).

The new specialization took off and immediately grew to well over 100 participants. Todd Mireles stated

What we had been clamoring for had arrived. By this time though the oomph had began to run out. We had reached a point where even the younger students who had participated in the early protests of the 1990’s were graduating. Many of us had run a marathon and had clearly sacrificed our undergraduate education for something most would never see. (T. Mireles, personal communication, November 20, 2007)

While the program began to grow administratively and started to become a fixture in the mind of the Chicano-Latino community at MSU, budgeting has become a problem.
Mireles mentioned that “For two years now Chicano Studies at MSU has not been given a budget, each year our department is left to wonder until the last possible second if any money at all has been allocated to us” (p. 17, 2007). Many of the students and faculty felt that they were being belittled and lied to by the administration. “Promises mean little at MSU these days and injustice grows in the silence of our community says Mireles” (p. 17, 2007). With all the challenges that the students and faculty have faced over the last thirty years, they are finally seeing a great advancement for Chicano Latino studies with the creation of the second Chicano studies Ph.D. program in the country.

Current Day Protest

Chris Simcox is the president and one of the founders of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. The State News article points out, “much of the controversy stems from the group’s mission, which is to secure the U.S. borders and coastal boundaries against unlawful and unauthorized entry of people, contraband and foreign military” (Nowak & Maxwell, 2007, p. 1). He is well known throughout the Chicano-Latino community as well as the U.S. for his radical views. Chris Simcox came to MSU in late November, and was invited by at the Young American Freedom student group (YAF), and the MSU College Republicans. The event took place at the Law building on the fourth floor of the MSU campus. MEChA found out about Simcox event and started organizing a plan. The Chicano-Latino community felt offended because of his presence, and a member of MEChA was quoted with saying “many people of color are feeling very ethnically intimidated and violated, said Gonzalez” (Altman & Machak, 2006, p.1). The members of MEChA originally planned what they were going to do the day of the protest, although in the heat of the moment, the plan failed. An article states the protestors arrived “with signs
that read Ignorant Racist” (Altman & Machak, 2006, p. 1). There was debate on both sides of the issue regarding the details to what really happened at the event. State News was under speculation as to altering statements taken from the event sponsors and MEChA. The last part of the article gives an example of misconstrued information with quoting a Claudia Gonzalez who is a MEChA member and a statement from President Simon as well. The article states:

“Student protesters said during a press conference Thursday YAF president Kyle Bristow has received too much media attention and skewed the facts, making situations look worse than they were. “Like I’ve said before, YAF and the MSU College Republicans won’t say those hateful things in front of video cameras or on the news,” Gonzalez said later Thursday evening. On Monday, MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon released a statement condemning the protesters’ behavior.

“Both MSU and the MSU College of Law are committed to providing venues for the free exchange of ideas,” Simon stated, “while thoughtful debate is certainly central to the critical assessment of any issue, disruption is not – and it has no place on our campus” (Altman & Machak, 2006, p. 2).

The administration’s role in handling the situation created a stir within the MSU student community as well as the Chicano-Latinos because they gave the impression of not handling the incident. Nothing else was said related to the situation with administration’s opinion or how they would prevent incidents happening at the University again. The community felt more should have been done on both ends of the spectrum, and it seemed as though the University did not want to take the time to alleviate the tension caused by the event.
Chirs Simcox made another appearance on MSU campus in spring 2007 at Conrad Hall. He was brought again by YAF and the Young American College Republicans. MEChA soon found out, and started to organize a plan of action and gain support from the community at large. This protest was not productive in the sense of the message that was displayed by the students and Chicano-Latino community. The following tells the story of what happened at this protest.

“Jason L. Van Dyke, who practices law in Texas, introduced Simcox to the podium after he addressed the protesters: "Remember, the First Amendment protects ya'll from using four-letter words. I got two more for you — work and soap. About 200 protesters leaped to their feet, where they remained for about 20 minutes. MSU police Chief Jim Dunlap then issued a 30-second warning for students "to not disrupt the event or we're going to clear the room." Police ushered most of the protesters out. "We closed the event to those people who were being disruptive." Of the five arrested, two were men taken into custody for resisting and obstructing and violating a university ordinance, McGlothian-Taylor said. One had to be held down by five officers after he attempted to run away. The others - two men and one woman - were arrested for violation of MSU Ordinance 15.02. Once the room was cleared of most of the protesters, only a few rows remained of Simcox's audience of about 65 supporters and a handful of protesters. "I see we're clearing out some of the riffraff." Simcox said as rows were emptied. "It's about time." While police ushered them out, protesters argued with officers and Simcox supporters. Some officers walked away in sweat, some students in tears. Simcox referred to audience members as "gangbangers." He responded to the protesters'
chants of "Si se puede" - "Yes, it can be done" in Spanish - with his own cry:

"Close the border." The beginning of Simcox's speech was barely audible as students screamed out "murderer" and "you are a criminal." MSU police had been prepared for a protest. About a dozen officers were stationed inside the lecture hall, in the lobby and outside the building at least a half hour before the event was scheduled to begin at 7 p.m."

The outcome of this protest was one of the worst seen in many years. The Chicano-Latino community was distraught, mentally exhausted, and angry with administration, YAF, as well as themselves. MEChA and the Chicano-Latino community felt a sense of failure in the way they displayed their behavior and the message that was conveyed. Mireles mentioned during the interview that the organization and the community should have organized in planning instead of being activists (T. Mireles. Personal Communication, November 20, 2007). The community has learned a valuable lesson during this process and realized that disrupting was not going to solve the problem.

Conclusion

As we can see from the different generations of students at MSU, activism developed many meanings as displayed throughout the years. The older generations had to be activists in the sense of creating a presence because there were no Chicanos at MSU. The newer Chicano students have doubled in size, but the support from all is not as unified as it used to be. The resources compared to previous years have grown and developed into departments with people who are Chicano-Latinos. The following are three major areas of what previous students fought for, and these are the services that resulted from the activism over the years.
**2007 Community Resources**

The Office of Cultural and Academic Affairs, (OCAT) is one of the most well known and used resources by the community. Their mission is to “construct supportive social and education communities that actively involve students in learning” ([http://oresa.msu.edu](http://oresa.msu.edu)). They have provided opportunities of employment for students as well as doing programming for students of color. One of their main goals is helping students learn the value of networking within the community, they accomplish this with programs throughout the year. Another goal of OCAT is to “support individual students in their navigation of cross-cultural encounters, and in their own understanding, exploration and development of cultural identity” ([http://oresa.msu.edu](http://oresa.msu.edu)). The office has helped the community grow and strengthen in providing opportunities through diversity.

**Admissions Report – 2007**

Recruitment activity begins for Chicano-Latino prospective students in the junior year of high school. The Office of Admissions purchases Chicano-Latino student’s names based on ACT and SAT scores (2007 Recruitment and Marketing Plan). Once the office receives the names of the student’s view books are then sent to them. These books have general information on the university and how to contact the office for more information. Along with material being sent to the prospective students, the Chicano-Latino recruiter will send e-mails to the students introducing him/her self as a resource. The next step would be to invite them to participate in programs such as phone-a-thons or chat sessions that current Chicano-Latino students help organize and facilitate. Recruitment of students in high schools that have higher than average percentages of Chicano-Latino’s attending in the state of Michigan are more than likely to have a counselor give a presentation of MSU
and also administer an on-site admissions session. This is where the students will come to
their high school with a completed application and the MSU representative will go over the
application, and then make a decision if the student is admissible to the university (2007
Recruitment and Marketing Plan). There is also recruitment of Latinos in the states of
Texas and Florida. Networking is an important part of recruiting students to the university,
making sure that the counselor is keeping in contact with Latino youth groups in Grand
Rapids, Flint and the Lansing area. Recruiting happens year long, whether it is talking to
prospective students, admitted students, or transfer students.

Diversity at Michigan State University

An organization by the name of Chicano Latino Faculty Staff Association, (ChiLA)
is dedicated to keeping Latinos present in the MSU faculty, staff and students. They are
composed of Chicano-Latino faculty, staff and graduate level students that are committed
to the cause. One of ChiLA’s main goals is to “find solutions to problems that prevent
Latinos from being a visible and viable part of the university” (www.msu.edu/~chila).
This organization was created to keep the Chicano-Latinos population maintained on MSU
campus. The previous generations fought for the Chicanos to get on campus, and ChiLA
exists to help maintain their dreams for the future of the Chicano-Latino generations.

The journey of the Chicano-Latino students at MSU has taken many different paths
throughout the years of progression. Their goals may have changed and people have
divided but one goal has unified the group back together, which is fighting for the cause.
The strength of the community has grown in numbers, by not just the Chicano-Latino
community, but with the support of other diversity organizations on campus and the
greater Lansing area. The first three Latinos have given the light to the community by
defining the movement. The generations of Chicano-Latino students have brought life to the movement into the present day, as resources and opportunities are fading. The challenge remains to be in coming together as one, as a community. There are many different causes within the Latino community now. As a commitment to the Chicanos another chant is said in solidarity, “Si Se Puede” which means “yes we can”. To fight for all and to unify as Chicanos, together they shout, “¡Si Se Puede!”
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