

La Historia de MEChA

M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan) is an organization whose main reason for existence is the need for a support group amongst Latino/Chicano-Mexican-American students in the university. It accomplishes this by sponsoring social events, promoting and preserving Mexican/Latino American traditions and providing a setting in which students can learn. The organization also considers it a responsibility to further the recruitment of Chicano/Latino students, staff and faculty at the university, and to further generally the advancement of Chicanos/Latinos in all sectors of North American society.

These activities have all been held together by an historical commitment to three principals: educational reform, community involvement and enhancement, and cultural promotion. Examples of these types of activities are many, and of varied durability. The educative efforts of MEChA have created Chicano studies programs, like the one here at the U.W. Community involvement has ranged from picketing and suffering with the United Farm Workers, to the voter registration drives in the barrios de Aztlan, to marches and demonstrations against interventions in Viet-Nam and El Salvador. The cultural promotions of MEChA have included Teatro Campensino, Chicano/Latino graduation, Christmas posadas, Cinco de Mayo celebrations and bailes y fiestas.

Chicanos have been at the University of Washington for the last 18 years, when the Special Education Program (now EOP) was founded in 1968. This program was the result of students of all colors demanding an equal educational opportunity and experience. Under the leadership of the BSU in 1968, students occupied the administration building until their concerns were properly addressed. Later, in 1969 when the first Chicanos from Sunnyside, Othello, Toppenish, Texas, Nuevo Mexico, East Los, etc. arrived on campus, UMAS (United Mexican-American Students) was established to address los derechos de nuestra Raza.

Some of the most critical issues during the late 1960's and

early 1970's for UMAS (which was changed to MEChA in 1970) were the Chicano role in Viet-Nam, the Farm workers struggle, the future of the Equal Opportunity Program, sexism, and politics in the society at large. In the years to come, MEChA hopes to become more diversified and to develop subgroups to deal with specific problems in health, women's issues, community concerns, graduate students and the arts. Las Chicanas (1972-1973), The Brown Berets (1970-1971), The National Chicano Health Organization (1973), Chicano Graduate and Professional Student Association (1970) and other groups began to emerge under the organizational structure of MEChA. Whenever campus controversies arose, however, all groups would come together under the "umbrella" of MEChA and speak as one pueblo.

Todos han sacrificado su tiempo, dinero, estudios, carreras profesionales, y hasta sus vidas personales para que mas jovencitos y jovencitas Chicanos puedan seguir matriculandose en la Universidad de Washington. We have put together lecture and film series, rap sessions, food and clothing drives, bailes con Little Joe, Eligio Salinas, Los Lobos and many Latino festivities and workshops. National leaders such as Cesar Chavez (UFW), Reis Lopez Tijerina (Alianza Federal de Mercedes), Rodolfo "CORKY" Gonzales (Crusade for Justice), Dolores Huerta (UFW), Patricia Vasquez (MALDEF) y muchos otros have been guests of MEChA in the past.

In recent years, MEChA has struggled alongside other peoples of color in efforts to maintain and strengthen a quality educational experience at the University of Washington. Mechistas have taken the lead in support for third world struggles, while others have taken a more traditional route and ran for office in local and state political campaigns. The point of all this historical background is that MEChA means struggle (Lucha) for justice, peace and freedom even in the face of overwhelming odds. Those who keep their lamps lit never fail, even though darkness engulfs the whole world. MEChA means lagrimas, gritos d gusto, abrazos, chingasos, sacrificios, estudios, apoyo, sadness, despair, solitude, solidarity, victory, defeat, excitement and whatever you bring it.

MEChA is good and it is bad. MEChA is what we make it.

MEChA is YOU !!!!!