

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Suzanna Ackroyd

The Fight for Justice in Education

(Santa Barbara, Calif.) — On a gray and cloudy day in March 1968, more than a thousand Mexican American students took a stand against decades of substandard education and walked out of their Los Angeles classrooms.

Encouraged by teacher and activist Sal Castro, they took to the streets in protest, initiating what amounted to the largest student strike in American history — the East Los Angeles Blowouts — and helping to catalyze the Chicano movement that followed.

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Blowouts, which led to education reforms across the country, UC Santa Barbara will hold the Sal Castro Memorial Conference on the Emerging Historiography of the Chicano Movement. The conference will take place Friday and Saturday, Feb. 23-24, in the campus's McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. Free and open to the public, it will begin at 8:30 a.m.

"The blowouts helped to empower a new generation of activists in the struggle for educational justice, a struggle that still continues to this day," said conference organizer Mario García, a professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of history at UCSB.

Now in its fourth year, the conference will feature a panel of former high school students who participated in the Blowouts. They will reflect on their experiences and how the walkouts changed their lives and discuss the ways they continue to support

the struggle for educational justice.

“The Chicano Movement represents the largest and most widespread civil rights and empowerment movement by people of Mexican descent in the United States,” García said. “In the last decade many historians, especially younger ones, including graduate students, have rediscovered the importance of the movement and have developed exciting new research and interpretations of it. The Chicano Movement laid the foundation for contemporary Latino political power and these new histories of the movement are reminding us of its historic importance.”

The conference also will feature a keynote address by Max Kochmal, an associate professor and director of comparative race and ethnic studies history at Texas Christian University. His talk is titled “Documenting and Disseminating the Chicano/a Movement: Lessons From the Civil Rights in Black & Brown Oral History Project.”

According to García, Kochmal’s address will highlight his oral history project, which involves interviews with hundreds of Mexican American and African American long-time civil rights activists in Texas. “This depository of oral and video history of such activists is unique in the country,” García said.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.