A NARRATIVE HISTORY OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

CREATING HISTORY THROUGH MEDIA
This project narrates the experiences of the students involved in an innovative experimental course—carried out in the summer of 2010 at UC Davis—involving history, media, and community activists in the larger Sacramento region. The course was a revamped pre-existing Chicana/o Studies class—“The Chicano Movement”—that integrated the basic principles of Chicana/o Studies as well as publicly engaged scholarship. The goal was to bring students and members of the community together to create a mutually beneficial learning experience that allowed us to bridge classroom learning with real-world concerns and to create a forum to video or “archive” the oral histories of Chicano movement activists in the larger Sacramento-Central Valley region.

The impetus for a course bridging Chicana/o Studies and engaged scholarship came from our roles and responsibilities at UC Davis. As the community media expert and Director of Art of Regional Change, a cross-disciplinary program dedicated to promoting and facilitating engaged work at UC Davis, jesikah maria ross brought the technical expertise of filmmaking to the classroom. A natural teacher and communicator, ross also brought the finesse needed to teach media-making skills to undergraduate students and to establish rapport and trust with members of the community—skills she has mastered over many years of experience. Chavez-Garcia, a historian and associate professor in the Department of Chicana/o Studies at UC Davis, envisioned the experimental class as an opportunity to learn new ways to involve students in the classroom and to break the lecture-reading-discussion mode she so often employs. Chavez-Garcia’s desire, too, to bring Chicana/o Studies in closer connection with living members of the surrounding communities—not just as historical subjects—compelled her to take on the project.

In devising a project that sought to engage instructors, students, and members of the community, we made sure to include everyone in developing components of the course and to reciprocate the contributions of the activists. To involve the students, we provided them with readings, films, and lectures about “how to” conduct oral history and public history and about the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Next, we taught the students how to handle a Flipcamera, to develop questions or a script for each individual (based on autobiographies previously provided by the activists), to interview an activist on camera, and to select, edit, and upload video clips to the internet, which the students then showcased in a formal presentation to a gathering of the activists, their family, friends, and members of the community. To integrate the activists’ voices in the class, we shared the course syllabus, readings, and details of the projects and we solicited their feedback at all stages. To honor their contributions to the project, we presented their stories (uploaded to the internet) to their friends and families in a public setting in a community-based arts program in a Mexican American neighborhood. Finally, we archived those stories and solicited feedback from everyone.

We did all this in six weeks. It was a whirlwind experiment but one that proved worthwhile and successful, as we hope this project will convey. Enjoy!

Miroslava Chavez-Garcia & jesikah maria ross
THE PROJECT!
Alright folks, for this portion of the class we are going to focus on capturing the voices of Chicano activists through an interview. So to start off let's practice interviewing each other to get a feel for it.

What do you like to eat?

Everything!!!
and as we are interviewing them we should make sure to be attentive and make sure they are comfortable enough to share their stories.

So we are going to set up our groups and assign an activist to each group. Be sure to prepare questions that are applicable to their part in the Chicano movement.
So Jesikah here are some questions we've prepared for the interview. And all we have left is to set up the equipment for the interview.

Don't forget to make them feel comfortable by giving them drinking water.

So here we're going to have them sit. Make sure the angles are right.

Ready folks?? Let's do this!!!!
WHAT WERE YOUR GREATEST VICTORIES WITHIN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT?

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG ACTIVISTS?

WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE IN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT?

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PARTAKE IN THIS MOVEMENT?

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

WHAT WAS YOUR PARENT'S RESPONSE TO YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN 'EL MOVIMIENTO'?

WHAT IS YOUR STANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND CHICANOS?

WERE THERE ANY INJUSTICES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT ITSELF?

WHAT WERE THE ROLES OF WOMEN WHO WERE IN THE MOVEMENT?

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT WAS NOT ASKED DURING THE INTERVIEW?
What is required to be an RCAF member?

Oh that’s easy! It’s in the heart, it’s just being. Everyone was allowed.

But at times we had to be careful for infiltrators who wanted to provoke harsh violence. For us though, our bullets were our posters, our bombs were our prints and our murals. Some people call it propaganda, but we were helping people through our art.
So much was going on at the time and nobody would listen. Brown Berets were a viable group of people who were taking a stance against injustices. Even today we have to take stances. We can sit back and watch things happen.

What inspired you to join the Brown Berets?
Okay let's prepare for the next interviewee. Make sure to capture their emotions.

Everyone welcome our next interviewee, Graciela Ramirez!
My inspirations came from education. Fighting for books, classes, and rights. We helped open the first Chicano bookstore called La Raza Galleria Posada.

What were your inspirations during the Chicano movement?

It was so inspiring knowing that this would bring education to the barrio.

What are your thoughts on higher education and Chican@s?
Higher education is very very important for everyone. I never had the opportunity to go to college until my 30's. For me, it was the best thing in my life; it opened up a new world to me and it's an experience I wish everyone in the world could have.

Soon after, the class recollects all the footage gathered and commences the editing process in preparation for the event.
I think this one captures the essence of his involvement!

Which clips are we using?

Wow guys this is looking great!!!

Editing is almost done!!!! So what's next? ...
Now that we have successfully edited videos, it's time to prepare for the event where we will be showing these videos to the community.

Let's develop our agenda for the event.

How are we going to publicize our event?

How about we make a Facebook event to advertise our community screening!
Okay! I'm on it!!!

This is so exciting!

I know right?!

Days later...
A joint project of the UC Davis Chicana/o Studies Department and Art of Regional Change

HONORING
CHICANO
MOVEMENT
ACTIVISTS

UC Davis Students of the
“Chicano Movement”

Present Video-Oral Histories of Chicana/o Activists in the Sacramento Region

When: Friday, September 10, 2010, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Where: Taller Arte de Nuevo Amanecer (TANA), 1224 Lemen Ave., Woodland, California.
What: Join UC Davis students in recognizing the struggles and accomplishments of Chicano activists from the Sacramento region. Students will present video-oral history clips conducted with local activists, including Rudy Cuellar, jr., Graciela B. Ramirez, Mariana Rivera, and Richard Soto. Discussion will follow the program. Participating activists will bring memorabilia and share stories. Come meet the students, dialogue with the activists, and support university-community engagement projects.
Contact: Miroslava Chavez-Garcia at 916.320.2952 or chavezgarcia@ucdavis.edu or Jesikah Maria Ross at 530.320.1819 (office) jmross@ucdavis.edu
For more information visit: artofregionalchange.ucdavis.edu.
We’re thrilled you joined us tonight to honor the struggles and accomplishments of Chicano/a activists and cultural workers in the Sacramento region and to acknowledge the work of UC Davis students in documenting and making some of their stories accessible.

Thank you all for coming to pay honor to our local activists.
This was an amazing event!!
“it was like the whole world opened up to me, after that you were never the same” - Danny Robles
“I enjoy seeing the ways in which this project expanded into the community to further educate and demonstrate contribution.”

“I thought the program was beautifully done and well organized. The students are very impressive, thoughtful, compassionate and self-aware.”

“It was wonderful how this small event spread so much knowledge and life experiences that are often left unnoticed.”

“The hard work and dedication was quite evident in the students as well as with the advisors.”

“This program demonstrated the value of university-community projects”

“This program is a good example of connecting classroom learning to community life.”
"I felt that the students really captured the essence of my commitment to the struggle for our people."
-Richard Soto

"The best part of the interview was having to participate there in a place of higher learning and trying my hardest to make sure that your students make sure that they seize the moment and become everything that they can be."
-Rudy Cuellar

"I think that what worked really well was the team effort. Everybody, instructors, students and guests worked together in a very positive way. The best part was when a student started crying. I was so moved that I felt like hugging her."
-Graciela Ramirez
"It is a completely hands-on way to really experience and learn first hand about the Chicano Movement."
-Krystina Caro

"I now believe that I could take a flip camera and give voice to the voiceless."
-Catherine Dufour

The process of learning about the Chicano Movement through the stories of our interviewees made our reading material in class seem much more personal, compelling us to not only visualize the events that took place, but to feel the emotional impacts that came with participating in their community struggles”
-Angela Obispo

"I know recognize how the power of an interview can make an impression on the viewer even if using someone else’s interview from a video archive or the internet"
-Daniel Davis

Seeing the people, hearing their voices, and feeling the power in their tone captured our attention, and made us want to continue fighting for justice.
-Elma Rodriguez

I have learned through seeing, hearing, feeling and doing about the Chicano Movement and was able to connect with other histories such as the Asian American Movement and the Black Civil Rights Movement
-Derek Chan

"I could not believe my eyes when I read that in this class I would have the opportunity to participate in an experimental class that would take us from the theoretical to the practical. I have also learned of the power of the resource of video technology in capturing intimate visuals of Chicano activists as we interviewed them to get their first hand testimony of what they went through during the movement of the 60's and 70's. In the age of Youtube and social networking, the skill of capturing the present through interviews and live footage of events and editing for maximum effect the films we create will serve me well as I continue to pursue my career in education, library sciences and community development."
-Toni Mendieta
CREDITS

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STUDENTS INVOLVED WITH THE MEDIA PROJECT:

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THANKS TO THE ACTIVISTS INTERVIEWED:

RUDY CUELLAR
RICHARD SOTO
GRACIELA RAMERIZ
MARIANNA RIVERA

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FOR VIDEOS OF INTERVIEWS AND MORE INFO VISIT:
HTTP://ARTOFREGIONALCHANGE-UCDAVIS.EDU/