

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY

During the activism of the 1960's, the Chicano Mexicano people came to the realization that the mainstream political mechanism had only served to abuse and manipulate us. After much soul searching, we finally concluded that the only solution to our political, social, and economic condition was to organize our own independent political organization.

In 1969, the concept behind La Raza Unida spread throughout the Southwest. Other independent Chicano political organizations sprung up as well during this time. In California, La Raza Unida Party was first organized in the Bay Area. It took on a more militant line, organizing under working class issues and emphasizing the development of a Chicano Mexicano ideological line. In Colorado, La Raza Unida was a product of the work done by La Crusada por La Justicia, under the leadership of Corky Gonzales. It dealt with Chicano Nationalism and youth. In Texas, La Raza Unida organized around electing Chicanos to Boards of Education and City Councils. The spirit and force of La Raza Unida was truly embodied in Texas under the leadership of Jose Angel Gutierrez, a student and president of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO).

La Raza Unida concept in California, Colorado, and Texas created a flame that quickly spread throughout the Southwest and other areas populated by Chicanos. By 1970, La Raza Unida existed throughout the Southwest. In California, chapters existed from San Francisco to San Diego. In the County of Los Angeles alone, thirty chapters existed. In the San Fernando Valley, La Raza Unida originated from a MEChA Political Committee out of the University of Northridge. Hundreds of Chicanos Mexicanos were registered in San Fernando and Picoima by Northridge students in 1971. These early organizers formed La Raza Unida Chapter in San Fernando that followed, transforming the organization from a student migratory one to a stable one. Addressing issues affecting the Chicano Mexicano, La Raza Unida differs from other Chicano and "Hispanic" organizations in that it has been consistent and persevered. In some areas La Raza Unida has been active since the early 1970's and is still active today. The San Fernando chapter is such an example.

La Raza Unida Party held its first National Convention in 1972. The main figures were Jose Angel Gutierrez, Corkey Gonzales, Reyes Tejerina, and Cesar Chavez. Jose Angel Gutierrez was elected National Chair. Since its inception, The National Partido was plagued with contradictions. However, the major one was the lack of a clear position on what we wanted to achieve and the strategy for achieving it. In order to correct this lack of clarity, La Raza Unida went through a period of re-organization and re-structuring since 1975 to the present.

Today, La Raza Unida has advanced to a bileveled structure: Internal and External. Under this structure the Commission of Popular Action is utilized for organizing different committees. Such committees include: La Raza Youth Committee, The San Fernando/Pocoima Health Council, Foros del pueblo, August 29th Commemoration, Obreros Unidos, and Padres Unidos. Community work and study are prerequisites under the new structure and may take place simultaneously. For more information, please see "How to Join La Raza Unida Party."

La Raza Unida Party is an independent community organization that is dedicated to struggle for the betterment of our people. It is not manipulated by the two mainstream political parties, instead it is independent and accountable only to our people and principles.

In order to understand the need for an organization like La Raza Unida Party, it is important to understand the differences among the various organizations that exist. Basically, there are student organizations, agencies, mainstream political organizations, and independent community organizations.

Student organizations are crucial because they provide students the opportunity to develop those skills that will make them better community activists. However, we must accommodate our organization to student organizations since they have limitations. Not only do student organizations serve as a training ground for future activists, they also provide a pool of potential activists and revolutionaries.

Funded agencies play a vital role in our communities, but must not be confused with independent community organizations. They are also limited by the mere fact that they are held accountable to their funders. Frequently, these agencies are manipulated by politicians for the purpose of personal gain. Rather than giving validity to existing independent community organizations, these politicians push community agencies as community organizations. Although important to our communities, funded agencies are limited to the service or program they provide.

Mainstream political organizations differ from independent community organizations in that they are tied to the Democratic or Republican Parties. These special interest "Hispanic" groups assume the position of power brokers, obtaining votes for their particular mainstream candidate without regard for valid community input or betterment, but rather for their own personal political interest.

Neither the Democratic nor the Republican Parties have represented our people or allowed us full participation. The Democratic Party has a long history of broken promises that it now tries to cover by token appointees. The Republican Party is blatantly racist, yet attempts to convince us of their concern.

This does not mean that we can not or should not work with organizations that represent either party. It simply means that we do it on an equal basis without go between that may sell our people for their own personal gain.

Thus, the need for an independent community organization that represents the will of our people to be self-determined. It is the only alternative to the oppression our people face.

La Raza Unida has consistently strived to work with other peoples. The only requisite is that they are organizations or individuals that are working toward the betterment of their communities. We have successfully worked with Africans, Anglos, Asians, Native Americans, and Filipinos.

In regards to our youth, it is our position that Chicano Mexicano youth get educated and return to their communities to practice their profession, and thus, contribute to the community's improvement. We reject the "poverty draft" that is offered to our youth as the only alternative. It simply creates an illusion that they can "be all they can be" in the army, when in reality they "can be all they can be" in their communities, while improving their communities at the same time.

Internationally, El Partido Nacional de La Raza Unida has supported the just struggles of Latina America, Europe, Asia, the Middle and Far East, particularly the Palestinian struggle. We are strongly against U.S. intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Such an imperialistic action will surely use our youth as cannon fodder for the U.S. armed forces.

Mexico also plays a crucial role in our struggle, for our historical, cultural, and family ties demand that our Movements and organizations work closer together. Whatever happens in Mexico has a direct effect on our people and vice-versa. Thus, we have established communication with the Revolutionary Movement in Mexico, such as PST, PMT, PSLM, Unions, and Campesino groups.

La Raza Unida is committed to organizing our people, raising our consciousness, and rescuing our culture. If you agree with us, join us. Be part of the solution, not the problem.