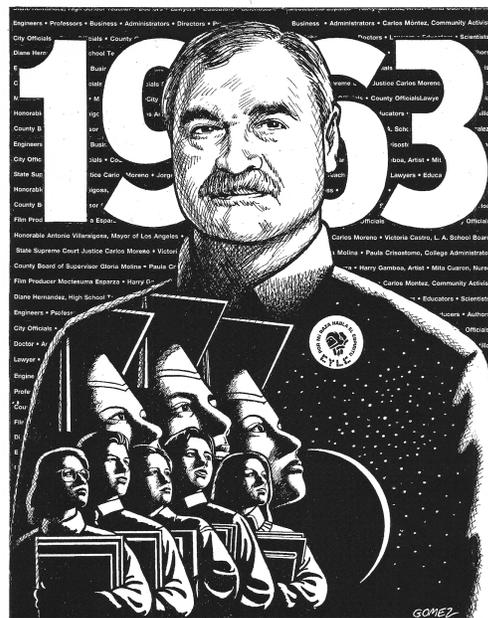


IGNACIO GOMEZ www.ignaciogomez.com

**Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference:
The Development of Chicano Leadership Since 1963**

**A Symposium Organized by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
at UCLA, Friday, May 26, 2006, 9:00 am-8:00 pm**

Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: The Development of Chicana/o Leadership Since 1963



**A symposium organized by
the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
and held at the UCLA Faculty Center**

**Friday, May 26, 2006
9:00 am to 8:00 pm**

Contents

About the Symposium	5
Symposium Program	6-7
Comments on the Significance of the CYLC and Sal Castro	8
Panelist and Moderator Biographies	15
Sponsorship	20
About the CSRC	20
Research Note: <i>Blowout: The Sal Castro Story</i> by Mario T. García	21



The CSRC is proud to host this one-day symposium on the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences (CYLC), Sal Castro, and their impact on Chicanos and Chicano education in California. This symposium brings together CYLC participants, CYLC volunteers, and scholars to discuss the historical and educational impact of the series of high school leadership conferences.

The symposium has been designed to inform students and the general public about

- the role of the CYLC since 1963 in preparing a new generation of Chicana/o leaders;
- the role of Sal Castro and CYLC alumni and volunteers since the walkouts of 1968 in the movement for educational reform on behalf of Chicana/o students;
- the research related to CYLC and Sal Castro that advances the field of Chicana/o Studies;
- the honor due to Sal Castro and the many CYLC volunteers and students in the high school leadership conferences.

Historically, the series of CYLC are the most recognized high school leadership conferences in California. Over the past forty-three years CYLC has prepared several generations of Chicana/o leaders and has contributed to the community in a manner that has no equal. The alumni of the conference series include a mayor of Los Angeles, a state supreme court justice, several LAUSD superintendents, many LAUSD principals and teachers, members of the United States Congress, county supervisors, and a growing number of university professors. Alumni also include members of the print and electronic media, filmmakers and producers, artists, and members of every profession. At the center of the CYLC is Sal Castro, a life-long Los Angeles school teacher with a national reputation as a school reformer.

CYLC was founded in 1963 in response to the harsh reality that Chicano students fared poorly in the U.S. educational system—dropout rates exceeded any other ethnicity and the likelihood of Chicanos attending a college or university was very low. CYLC, also called “Camp Hess Kramer,” brought together groups of high school students to encourage them to graduate from high school, enter college, graduate, and seek advanced degrees in order to become responsible leaders. The conferences have been held for over four decades and are as important today as they were in 1963.

Since 2006 is the forty-third anniversary of the CYLC, the CSRC wants to bring attention to Sal Castro’s work and his guidance of the CYLC in the continuing quest for educational reform and respect for Chicana/o students.

Sal Castro and CYLC Conference Program

9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Exhibit and Video

UCLA Faculty Center, Hacienda Room

An art exhibit by Ignacio Gomez, a contributor and volunteer with the CYLC, is on display all day in the Hacienda Room. A videotape interview of Sal Castro will also be run throughout the symposium.

9:00 am –

Registration

UCLA Faculty Center, California Room

9:15 am

Welcome and Introductions

UCLA Faculty Center, California Room

CARLOS MANUEL HARO, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

CHON A. NORIEGA, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

SAL CASTRO, Coordinator of the CYLC

9:30 am – 10:45 am

Session 1: The Historical Significance of CYLC and Sal Castro

Scholars speak who have done research related to Los Angeles history, CYLC, Sal Castro, and the Chicana/o student movement.

RUDY ACUÑA, Professor, Department of Chicano Studies, California State University, Northridge

JUAN GOMEZ QUINONES, Professor, UCLA Department of History

DOLORES DELGADO BERNAL, Associate Professor, Education, Culture and Society, University of Utah

10:45 am – 11:00 am

Break

11:00 am -

Session 2: Sal Castro: A Biography in Progress

From the 1960s through the early twenty-first century, Sal Castro took action to change education to meet the needs of Chicana/os.

MARIO GARCIA, Professor, UCSB Department of History

ROBIN AVELAR LA SALLE, Ph.D., Co-founder and Chief Program Officer, Principal's Exchange

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Lunch Break

1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

Session 3: Panel of CYLC Volunteers

CYLC volunteers who helped organize and implement CYLC and who have leadership and professional careers (including teaching and academic careers) speak.

LEONARD VALVERDE, Professor of Education, Executive Director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute, Arizona State University

MYRNA GONZALEZ BRUTTI, Assistant Principal, Stephen M. White Middle School

ROBERT BAUTISTA, Teacher and Coach, Belmont High School

FATIMA CASTANEDA, Ed.D., Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of Education, Occidental College

ARACELI LOPEZ, USC M.S.W. Graduate Student, Family Support Services Manager, Pathways Nonprofit Agency

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm – 4:15 pm

Session 5: CYLC Participants and Students of Sal Castro

CYLC participants and students of Sal Castro have moved into leadership positions in various professions and continue to support CYLC.

ARMANDO DURON, CYLC participant, Lawyer, President of the Board, Self Help Graphics in East Los Angeles

RITA LEDESMA, Upward Bound with Sal Castro, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, Los Angeles

JUSTICE CARLOS MORENO, CYLC participant, California Supreme Court Judge

SUSAN RACHO, CYLC Participant, Producer & Film Maker

Film Screening of part of *Taking Back the Schools*

4:15 pm – 4:30 pm

Break

4:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Session 6: “No Se Dejen! Go to College...and Graduate!”

SAL CASTRO, Coordinator of the CYLC

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Reception and Screening of *Walkout*

Fowler Museum, Lenart Auditorium, Room A103B

MOCTESUMA ESPARZA, CYLC participant, Film Producer, *Walkout* HBO 2006
CYLC alumni and 1968 walkout student leaders

7:45 pm – 8:00 pm

The Final Word

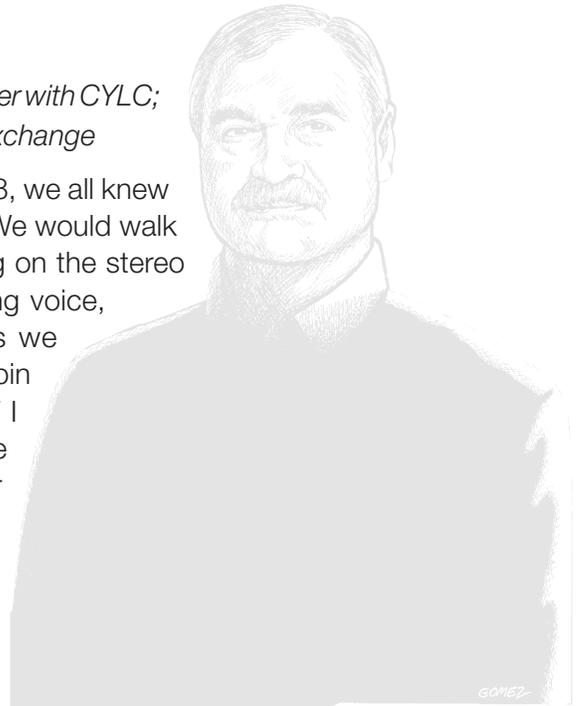
SAL CASTRO, Coordinator of the CYLC

on the Significance of the CYLC and Sal Castro

Robin Avelar La Salle

1978 Belmont High School Student of Sal Castro; Volunteer with CYLC;
Co-founder and Chief Program Officer for Principal's Exchange

Even as his student at Belmont High School in 1978, we all knew Mr. Castro (as I will always call him) was different. We would walk into his classroom to the music of Santana playing on the stereo on his desk. He would call roll with a commanding voice, pronouncing our names, loudly and proudly, as we never heard them pronounced while at school. Robin “a -ve-LARR,” he would call out, correcting me if I slipped and pronounced my name “**A**-vu-lar,” the way I had heard my family name pronounced for eleven school years. At least for the time we were in his class, we all returned to our home identities; Chris became Cristóbal (not crystal ball, as other teachers had pronounced it), “Smoky” was Jesús, imagine that; even Milly Zapata became Emiliana Chancla! No one was spared.



The history we learned was that learned by other classes, except that Mr. Castro made it clear that we, Mexicans, Chicanos, male and female, were central to the development of this state and nation. We used outside sources like Rudy Acuña’s *Occupied America* and Raul Morin’s *Among the Valiant*. We conducted research to understand the walkouts that occurred ten years before, learned of our direct connection to the street names we traveled and “mis”pronounced daily like Figueroa, Sepulveda, and Pico, and gradually developed an inner strength and commitment to the education of our community that has lasted our entire lives. I, like countless other students of Mr. Castro’s, have devoted my entire career to changing the educational system that makes inevitable the perpetuation of the historical underachievement of Chicano/a students, and then shamelessly blames our parents, families and culture.

Mr. Castro’s personal contributions to the cause of educational equity are obvious, fighting for the advancement of our community for forty years. Less obvious may be the influence Sal Castro has had on thousands of students, parents, colleagues, and community members, who, inspired by him, are now leaders in every conceivable field and are actively contributing to the educational and professional advancement of a community that has been undervalued for far too long. Because of Sal Castro’s example, we now have Chicana/o leaders who are not afraid to engage in public discourse about inequities in education or to challenge long-standing practices and perceptions that serve to subjugate our community.

In 1978, Mr. Castro lit a fire under Robin A-ve-LARR. Since 1964, Sal Castro has been igniting the spirit of an entire community by leading the fight for educational equity and opportunity.

Carlos R. Moreno

Attended CYLC in 1965; Associate Justice, Supreme Court of California

I am reminded of my own participation in the Camp Hess Kramer retreat in 1965, when I was a senior at Lincoln High School in Los Angeles. In many ways, that retreat was a seminal turning point in my education, with later ripple effects that continued into my professional career. Although I like to think that I was a good student before the conference, I recall that the conference provided me and the other students with a more defined purpose, or mission, to our education, with leadership at its core.

Lincoln High School, at that time, although nurturing and comforting in many ways, did not envision its students going on to prestigious universities or seeking an education that would lead to a career in one of the professions such as law, medicine, or engineering. Most educators at Belmont would agree that a vocation in one of the trades was most appropriate for our high school graduates.

The Chicano Youth Leadership Conference gave me a tremendous sense of empowerment—a sense that I could go anywhere or become anyone I intended to be—without any notion of there being limits to my ambitions. This sense, I believe, gave me the confidence to apply to and enter Yale University, and later, Stanford Law School.

Now, from the perspective of someone who has been in the legal profession for twenty-seven years, and who has been appointed to the bench by three governors and one president, it is certainly gratifying to know that our youth are still being offered training in leadership skills and techniques through the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. I have learned that these skills and techniques can in fact, be taught, and I congratulate Sal Castro for providing these services for so many years so that others may also benefit.

Over the years, I have visited our old high school and spoken to students there about the many opportunities that exist in our country for those who dare to dream. I have even visited Solano Avenue Elementary School, where Sal Castro was our playground director and Little League coach for the Solano Dodgers, well before the stadium was built in Chavez Ravine. It is always a pleasure and a wonder to go back to the old neighborhood, and Sal Castro is an important part of the history of that neighborhood and the development of leaders from those schools.

Fatima Castaneda

CYLC Volunteer; Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of Education, Occidental College

The CYLC is important for one simple reason . . . it inspires us. During the three days of the conference, high school students are inspired by their college student facilitators, by the speakers, and by each other. The college students and even the invited speakers walk away from the weekend feeling renewed in their dedication to their work and their community. It is a time to motivate each other and to celebrate accomplishments. The conference symbolizes hope for many of us who participate in it. It creates a space for us to explore their common concerns regarding education for Chicanos. We discuss the pertinent issues and how they play out in our lives. We seek solutions and while we may not reach any conclusions, we do come to a better understanding.

Likewise, the life and work of Sal Castro show what is possible for Chicanos. Through education, we can create lasting change. One of the best parts of the conference is when we place ourselves in a historical context via the East L.A. walkouts and through Sal's experience. When he speaks there, we truly are in the presence of an educational greatness. Everyone is grateful for his sacrifice and, again, is inspired by the work in which he continues to do.

Leonard A. Valverde

Supporter of CYLC; Professor of Education, Executive Director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute, Arizona State University

Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. No, I repeat myself. CYLC and Sal Castro are one and the same. For any of us who know Sal Castro and CYLC, this is obvious and a good thing, since it is much needed. I suspect that when our friend Sal created CYLC, he did not say to himself, "I want to create a vehicle that will clone me." As great an idea as we might think that would be, Sal does not think this way. He is much too humble. Only those of us who believe in Sal and what he has contributed, at great personal expense (and I don't mean money), can appreciate this cloning idea.

This country and *nuestra gente* need leaders of the high caliber and the strength possessed by Sal. He is more than a school reformer, as he pronounced when interviewed during the Chicano student walkouts. He is a risk taker and change agent. Because he is a "piñata buster," many Latino educators have benefited in getting administrative positions. As we know the kid who breaks the piñata is not in position to get the spoils of his work, so was the case with Sal. However, in addition he was denied and punished for busting open the Los Angeles City Unified School District.

Instead of cloning himself, Sal set out to instill character in our youth, and not just in Chicanos. He pushed for qualities our communities have always honored: leadership, service to others, and fighting for the justice and American ideals promised to all U.S. citizens—equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination. But because of Sal's experience and that of our black, Native American, and some of our Asian brothers and sisters, he realized that there had to be a program put into place that would remove the deficient model of thinking imposed on our youth in school and replace it with an asset model. One where our kids recapture a sense of positive self esteem and an appreciation of who they are as descendents of Aztecs and Mayas. These kids are members by birth of Mexican Americans, the same group who earned more Congressional Medals of Honor in World War II than any other ethnic/racial minority group (Morin, 1966).

Sal internalized very early on what many educators only have come to verbalize but not practice, that our youth are the future. Also, that our youth are not vested in agencies (because of their status as students, not employees) that discriminate against certain people and that if they can feel empowered early in life to act for good and fight against injustice, then our future can be shaped for the better.

How can we reinforce students' natural philosophy to do right by others and counteract the negative, stereotypic thinking they received in schools? The answer is through information sharing and role models. We know that Sal is a historian by training. He continues to this day

to find little-known facts about Mexicans and their contribution to the American experience. He does this for two reasons, among many. One is to let our youth know the full and accurate story of their people, and two is so that they can develop a solid, positive self-image as Mexican Americans. This way, true pride can emerge.

In these two simple ways, CYLC comes to life. As a result, leaders are formed. Leaders who want to learn more about their people, who want to give back to their communities, who want to correct injustices, who want to create a better nation and a kinder society.

Susan Racho

Attended CYLC in 1965; Filmmaker

Sal Castro has selflessly dedicated his life and career to Chicano youth. To this day he continues to inspire, cajole and motivate high school students to become leaders in whatever endeavor interests them. Sal makes young people feel good about themselves and has a gift for *teaching* in the true sense of the word—this I know and remember having been a teenage participant at a Chicano Youth Leadership Conference over forty years ago.

Armando Durón

Attended CYLC in 1971; CYLC Volunteer; Lawyer; President of the Board, Self Help Graphics in East Los Angeles

The Chicano Youth Leadership Conference that I attended in the fall of 1971 was the first time that I was a witness to the power of Chicanos organizing to take control over our own future. That weekend taught me that there was much to do and that my commitment to the Chicano Movement had to be for a lifetime. I realized that I was not going to be an architect but a lawyer. I met people there who are still in the movement today—thirty-five years later. The Chicano generation has struggled ever since to make all those words of that weekend come true, and although much has been accomplished, the struggle continues. Now our job is to pass our knowledge on to the generations that follow us so that they too will come to know that life is about giving to family and community so that all may enjoy happiness together.

Araceli Lopez

Attended CYLC in 1992; CYLC Volunteer; Family Support Services Manager, Pathways- Non-Profit Agency; USC M.S.W. Graduate Student

For over forty years, the CYLC has been witness to the thousands of miracles that take place in Malibu. Every student, volunteer, or presenter experiences a miracle within them every time they attend a CYLC in Malibu. CYLC inspires, motivates, encourages, supports, and reinforces Chicanos to seek a higher education and return to their communities to make a difference. CYLC provides students with the tools necessary to overcome challenges while in college as well as a space where they can learn and speak more about their heritage. CYLC is a place of rebirth for those who participate. Sal Castro is the *padrino* or “godfather” to those of us who have discovered the true meaning of Chicanismo through his *palabras* or words.

Mario T. Garcia

CYLC Volunteer; Professor of History & Chicano Studies; University of California, Santa Barbara

When he so graciously comes to talk to my students, I tell them “Sal Castro is living history.” He is someone who has made a difference in people’s lives. Very few of us have that opportunity to make history; Sal has. There is no question in my mind that the blowouts in the East Los Angeles schools in 1968 would not have happened without Sal. It took his leadership to encourage the students to take the bold and principled action that they did. Reverberations of that action we still see today as contemporary students are inspired by that historical moment.

But Sal Castro is more than the blowouts. Years before, in the pre-Chicano Movement years, based on his own experiences with discrimination in his education, Sal was already pursuing the direct action politics and training of new leadership that would come to characterize movement politics. In the early 1960s, he became a major organizer of what came to be known as the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences held at Camp Hess Kramer. Sal’s own developing Chicano consciousness inspired him to inculcate in youth the same spirit of ethnic pride and the rejection of racism that he, himself, displayed. At Belmont High School in the mid-1960s, Sal already was organizing Chicano students to stand up for themselves and to exercise leadership. After the blowouts, Sal worked with and inspired additional generations of students. He is still doing this today. Through all of this, what I find impressive is his constant commitment and dedication to the education of Latino students and to helping them to develop their leadership skills and to work for social justice.

As a historian, I have been a student of leadership in Chicano history and Sal Castro is without question one of the major Chicano leaders in that history.

Myrna N Brutti

CYLC Volunteer; Assistant Principal, Stephen M. White Middle School

My mother became extremely worried when I informed her that I was going to attend a university far away from home. But I also informed my mother that Mr. Sal Castro had said that he felt so strongly about me attending university that he would help me achieve this goal. With an anxious look, she informed me that she needed to meet Mr. Castro to discuss the situation with him. My mother then took the time away from her job and, during the meeting, she asked Mr. Castro if he was aware that we didn’t have *papeles* (legal documentations to stay in the country) or the means to send me to college. She asked how he expected me to go to college. Mr. Castro’s words to my mother were simple. Filled with hope and conviction, he told her, “Don’t worry Senora, your daughter has the potential to do great things and things will work out.” My mother was very apprehensive and had no idea how he was going to make this happen but she placed her trust in him and from that day forward she was convinced that I would go away to college. In the meantime, Mr. Castro gave me all the information and guidance I needed to apply to the school I was interested in attending. Looking back, I realize that my mother became a believer when Sal Castro told her to believe, and in essence, that is exactly what Mr. Castro has done for thousands of students. He believed in us and we learned to believe in ourselves.

Rita Ledesma

UCLA Upward Bound and High Potential Program in 1968; Associate Professor. School of Social Work, California State University Los Angeles

I was a student at Roosevelt High School in 1967-68, and I first became aware of Sal Castro during the blowouts and at Camp Hess Kramer. I was present during the meetings, rallies, and marches that followed the walkouts and the arrests of Sal and others. However, my relationship with Sal began during the summer of 1968, when I attended the UCLA Upward Bound Program at UCLA. Sal was one of my teachers, and he was a teacher unlike any I had encountered during my eleven years of schooling.

When the blowouts occurred, I was already disengaged from any educational process at Roosevelt. I had transferred to Roosevelt in fall 1967 after ten years of Catholic school. Although I was a good student for ten years, all I learned at Roosevelt was how to ditch school and cut class. No one in the school seemed to notice or care. Although I had some vague idea of going to college, I had no preparation and no vision about how to translate that unformed notion into any kind of meaningful reality. By the time of the walkouts, I knew that I would be dropping out of Roosevelt. Then, I met Sal. When he spoke in meetings and at rallies about his beliefs and convictions, I felt like there might be a different path for me. I know now that the word for that experience is “inspired”; I was inspired by Sal, because he “cared”. During that summer at Upward Bound, he taught Chicano history. For the first time, I was exposed to different ideas and to the notion that we (students) could succeed and that we had something to offer. Students at UCLA were organizing a new program for students who had the potential for academic success, despite problematic academic records, and Sal talked to me about this program and encouraged me to apply. He and Luis Ortiz were directly responsible for my entry into that program. His belief in me transformed my life at a very critical time in my development. All summer, Sal provided us with education about our history and the opportunity to think and engage in dialog about our community, our identity, and our future. He instilled pride in our heritage by teaching us music, art, and dance. He coerced us into performing a program of dance, music, and poetry for the Upward Bound community at the end of the summer. He helped us make costumes, and he got us on stage. One of my fondest memories is dancing “El jarabe tapatio” at UCLA on a glorious summer day and remembering Sal’s beaming smile as he stood on the sidelines. It was “a good day to be a Chicana” and Sal gave it to me. Thank you, Sal, you’ve influenced me more than you know, and I’m grateful beyond words.

Moctesuma Esparza

Attended CYLC in 1965; Filmmaker and Producer

Camp Hess Kramer: Where the birth of the urban Chicano Movement occurred, where Sal Castro and other teachers brought together for the very first time young boys and girls from diverse high schools who found that they had common experiences and grievances about their education and who decided to come together and organize.

Panelist and Moderator Biographies

Robin Avelar La Salle

La Salle holds a Ph.D. in education from Stanford University with an emphasis on language, literacy, and culture. She has taught elementary, middle school, high school, and university students. La Salle spent six years as the administrator for curriculum, staff development, and assessment at the school district level outside of Los Angeles. She has held numerous positions in research and consulting in both Northern and Southern California focused on advancing academic success for historically underperforming students. Currently, La Salle is co-founder and chief program officer for Principal's Exchange, a California state-approved external evaluation group dedicated to improving schools and districts serving high-poverty, high-minority communities.

Rodolfo Acuña

Acuña is professor of Chicano studies at California State University, Northridge and the founding chair of what is now the largest ethnic studies department in the nation. His book *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* is the most widely assigned text in Chicana and Chicano studies programs across the United States.

Acuña has several other publications, including *The Sonoran Strongman, A Community Under Siege, Anything But Mexican, and Sometimes There Is No Other Side*. Combining theory and practice, Acuña is an activist who has championed the Chicano/Mexican community, including support of the 1993 UCLA student hunger strike for a Chicana/o studies department at UCLA. Always confronting racism, he's rallied against the anti-immigration Proposition 187, the English-only initiative, and the dehumanizing effect of labeling all Latino immigrants—whether U.S. born, legal, or undocumented—as “illegal aliens.” He continues to struggle for the rights of those in the barrio to get a higher education and he participates annually in the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference as a guest speaker. In *Anything But Mexican*, Acuña writes, “An ethnic group unable to define its past is unable to take pride in its accomplishments... History is more than just an esoteric search for facts; it involves a living community and its common memory.”

Myrna N. Brutti

Brutti was born in Sonora, Mexico, emigrating to the United States at the age of seven. Myrna is the fifth child of six, all of whom reside in the United States. Myrna attended Union Avenue School, Berendo Junior High, and Belmont High School. She earned her Bachelor's of Arts from Sonoma State University and her Masters of Science from the University of La Verne. She began working in the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1999 and is currently the Assistant Principal of Secondary Student Services at Stephen M. White Middle School. Brutti is grateful for all of the opportunities that were given to her as a young immigrant student. One of the many ways she shows her commitment and appreciation is by being a board member of the Chicano

Youth Leadership Conference and by volunteering her time twice a year at the conference. In addition to volunteering, she spends countless hours counseling and informing students of their options, the importance of obtaining a college education, and their civil responsibility to themselves and others in a variety of venues.

Fatima Castaneda

Castaneda was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco. She graduated from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) with a degree in speech communication and also received her teaching credential from there. At CSULB, she was a student leader, chair of the La Raza Student Association, and an active participant in the fight against Proposition 187. She worked as a kindergarten teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District. She was also a literacy coach and bilingual coordinator for the district. She is currently a professor at Occidental College in the Department of Teacher Education. She has worked on the CYLC for over eight years. She is an author and motivational speaker who wants to “make visible what, without her, might perhaps never have been seen.”

Dolores Delgado-Bernal

Delgado-Bernal has researched and taught issues relating to Chicana/o education and schooling; critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory in education; and the examination of race, class, and gender in the sociology of education. Delgado-Bernal wrote the famous essay “Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research.” She is currently an associate professor and a central committee member in the Department of Education, Culture, & Society and the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Utah. She is the author of “Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts” (1998) in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* and “Examining Transformational Resistance through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context” in the journal *Urban Education*.

Armando Durón

Durón was born in EL Paso, Texas. He came to Los Angeles at the age of eight and lived in the old Maravilla projects of East Los Angeles for the next six years. Armando attended Duarte High school, Loyola Marymount University, and UCLA Law School. After law school, Armando worked for the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, followed by a stint with the then largest Chicano law firm in the state, prior to opening his own law office. In high school, Armando helped organize UMAS; in college, he was president of MEChA; in law school he was chair of the Chicano Law Students Association; and after, he served as president of the Mexican-American Bar Association in 1986. Durón currently practices family law in Montebello, CA. Aside from his family and the practice of law, Armando has dedicated much of his time to a variety of community activities in the last twenty five years, including being a founding member of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, a member of a variety of boards, most recently serving as the president of the board of Self Help Graphics in East Los Angeles. Armando also has spent countless hours serving as pro-bono attorney for numerous organizations and individuals in the community.

Ignacio Gomez

Artist, muralist, designer, and sculptor, Gomez is most widely recognized for his painting of *El Pachuco*, the character from the play *Zoot Suit*, performed by Edward James Olmos and written by Luis Valdez. Gomez also worked on various motion picture posters, advertising campaigns, and a mural depicting Hispanic movie stars in Hollywood. Gomez's works have been shown in New York, Europe, Japan and Mexico. Many of his original paintings have become parts of permanent corporate art collections, such as "Escape from Sobibor," which is now hanging in the Chrysler Corporate Headquarters. Gomez completed his largest public work project in October 2004 in the city of San Fernando. It was a 23,000 square foot memorial to César E. Chávez, the largest in the United States, including a life-size statue of Chavez, a fountain in the shape of the United Farmworker eagle, ten figures representing the March to Sacramento, and a 100-foot long mural of Chávez's life. In 2004, he also designed the headstone for the Cesar E. Chavez burial site in La Paz, Keene, California. Gomez is also proud of the forty portraits he painted for famous Latino actors and entertainers for a series of calendars in three years.

Juan Gómez-Quiñones

Gómez-Quiñones is professor of history at UCLA, specializing in the fields of political, labor, intellectual, and cultural history. From 1969 to the present, he has taught university classes each year and has delivered papers before professional historical societies in the United States and Mexico. During his scholarly career he has completed several research projects relating to political/labor history and public policy. Among his over thirty published pieces are: *Mexican American Labor 1790-1990*, *The Roots of Chicano Politics, 1600-1940*, *Chicano Politics 1940-1990*, *Porfirio Diaz—Los Intellectuales*, *Sembradores*, *Ricardo Flores Magon and the PLM*, *Mexican Students for La Raza*, "On Culture," "Antonio Caso and the Idea of Progress," "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," "Chicano Labor Conflict and Organizing, 1900-1920," "Mexican Immigration to the United States," "Critique on the National Question," "The Relations Between the Mexican Community in the U. S. and Mexico," and "Questions Within Women's Historiography." He is completing *Mexican Nationalist Formation: Discourse, Policy, and Dissidence*. Current projects are studies on art and culture, on the mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s, Mexican-African relations, an autobiography, and "Greater Mexican East Los Angeles."

Carlos Manuel Haro

Haro received his PhD from UCLA. He is the coordinator and moderator of the symposium on the CYLC. As assistant director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Dr. Haro oversees CSRC research activities, including a research grants program, a postdoctoral and graduate fellowship program, and faculty development and visiting scholar program. In addition, he undertakes and directs specific education research projects and scholarly conferences at the CSRC, including the *Latina/o Education Summit* (2006); *The Sleepy Lagoon Case, Constitutional Rights, and the Struggle for Democracy* (2005); and *Mendez v. Westminster School District: Paving the Path for School Desegregation and the Brown Decision* (2004). Haro has published on higher education school admissions, the Bakke Decision, and school desegregation.

Rita Ledesma

Ledesma, Ph.D., LCSW is an associate professor of social work at California State University, Los Angeles. She received an undergraduate degree in history (1979), an MSW (1981), and a Ph.D. in social welfare from UCLA (1997). She has extensive direct practice and consultation experience working within the Latino and American Indian communities of Los Angeles. She also regularly provides training and offers consultation services to community based organizations. Her research interests include issues associated with American Indian/Alaska Native and Latino children and families, loss/bereavement, health care and health policy, child welfare, and bicultural and cross-cultural social work practice. She has been an active member of the university community and has made significant contributions to the development, implementation, and accreditation of the CSULA MSW program. She has led several health and education initiatives for the Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Institute of Public Affairs, including creating and establishing the Health Policy Outreach Center. She currently serves as director for the university based PALS (Partnership for Academic Learning and Success), a peer mentoring program. She is the recipient of one of the CSULA Distinguished Women of 2006.

Araceli Lopez

Lopez was born in Mexico City, Mexico. Her family immigrated to the United States when she was three years old. Since then, Araceli and her family have worked hard to build a home away from home in Los Angeles. Raised in Watts, Araceli attended Belmont High School where she met Sal Castro. She attended CYLC in 1992 as a student participant. Because of Mr. Castro's teachings, she realized that attending college far from home was the best thing to do. She earned a degree in social work with a minor in Chicano studies from San Jose State University. While there, she chaired MEChA twice and was very active in the political movements of the city of San Jose. She currently works for a nonprofit agency that provides subsidized childcare services to low income families and is a graduate student at the USC School of Social Work. She has worked on the CYLC since 1999 in various positions including conference facilitator, coordinator, and chair. She is currently the CYLC board president. Her goal is to continue to work hard in making sure that every child receives the best education possible in a safe and loving environment.

Carlos R. Moreno

Moreno was sworn in as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of California on October 18, 2001, following his nomination by Governor Gray Davis. He began his career as a deputy city attorney with the Los Angeles City Attorney's office. In the fall of 1986, Governor George Deukmejian appointed Moreno to the Municipal Court, Compton Judicial District, where Moreno adjudicated criminal matters involving serious felony offenses and supervised the court's civil department. In October 1993, Governor Pete Wilson elevated Moreno to the Los Angeles County Superior Court. He was then nominated to the federal bench by President Bill Clinton. In February 1998, he was unanimously confirmed to the United States District Court for the Central District of California by the United States Senate. He has served as a federal district court judge for over three years, presiding over a broad range of complex civil and criminal matters. Moreno has served as president of the Mexican American Bar Association and has been a member of the California Judges Association, the Presiding Judges Association, and the Municipal Court Judges Association of Los Angeles County. He has served on the Board of Visitors of Stanford

Law School and the Board of Governors of the Association of Yale Alumni. He is a director of the Arroyo Vista Family Health Center and a former president of the Yale Club of Southern California. In 1997, Moreno received the Criminal Justice Superior Court Judge of the Year Award from the Los Angeles County Bar Association, and in 2001 he was presented with the *For God, For Country and For Yale Award*, given to distinguished alumni of Yale University.

Susan Racho

Racho is an award-winning Los Angeles-based Producer/Writer. A veteran of film and television, her work demonstrates a wide range of television production and programming interests. Ms. Racho produced/wrote/directed *The Bronze Screen: 100 Years of the Latino Image in Hollywood Cinema* for HBO cablecast, and the award-winning *Taking Back The Schools* from the acclaimed series *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Her diversified production credits include: Carlos Fuentes' *The Buried Mirror Series*, Carl Sagan's *Cosmos Series*, the *Vista L.A. Series*, *The Astronomers Series*, *Jazz in America Series*, the *Sound Festival Series*, Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker*, the *Olympics* for ABC sports, the *La Raza Series* for McGraw-Hill Broadcasting, *Reflecciones* for KABC, *Realidades* for WNET, *Trumbo Remembered* for PBS, as well as educational and documentary programming for the BBC. She is the recipient of numerous awards including an Emmy as producer of the Best Special Events Coverage, the Imagen Award as Producer of Most Outstanding Documentary, the Premio Mesquite Award for Best Documentary, and the Nosotros Golden Eagle Award as Producer of Best Informational Programming. Her work has been featured at the Rio de Janeiro, Havana, and San Sebastian Film Festivals and screened at the White House. Racho is co-author of "Yo Soy Chicano: The Turbulent and Heroic Life of Chicanas/os in Cinema and Television" in *Chicano Renaissance: Contemporary Cultural Trends*.

Leonard A. Valverde

Valverde received his Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University and is presently the executive director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute and professor of higher education at Arizona State University (ASU). He is celebrating thirty-six years as an educator, along with his wife, a former teacher and now community college student support person. Their son is an attorney at law and their daughter is a nurse, both in the Phoenix area. Valverde has experience at all levels, from preschool, elementary, secondary, and community college, to university at the undergraduate and graduate levels. His years of administrative and supervisory experience are also varied, having been a vice president for Academic Affairs, associate provost and graduate dean at University of Texas, San Antonio, dean of a college of education at ASU, a chair of the Educational Administration Department at the University of Texas. Austin, director of the Office of Advanced Research in Hispanic Education at UT, a director of a Bilingual Math and English program of 300 students at a Los Angeles Junior High School, and a central office supervisor of math teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. As a professor, he has been successful in acquiring over \$4.5 million for research and training. As a dean, he has helped raise over \$12 million. He is cited in *International Who's Who in Education*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest*, *Hispanic Who's Who in America*, and *Hispanic Notables in the United States of North America*. In 1984 he was selected as a W.K. Kellogg National Fellow. In 2002 he received the League of United Latin Americans Citizens National President's Award for Excellence. He was a scholar at the Tomas Rivera Center and most recently appointed a visiting senior scholar at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.

Sponsorship

The educational research project and this symposium were supported by the CSRC Latino Research Program, which receives funding from the University of California Committee on Latino Research.

About the Center

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) was founded in 1969 with a commitment to foster multidisciplinary research efforts as part of the land grant mission of the University of California. That mission states that University of California research needs to be in the service of the state and that it must maintain a presence in the local community. The CSRC serves the entire campus and supports faculty and students in the social sciences, life sciences, humanities, and the professional schools. Since its establishment, the CSRC has achieved international recognition for its leadership role in scholarly research on the growing Chicano and Latino population, which now constitutes nearly one-third of the population of California and one-half that of Los Angeles, but continues to have disproportionately low access to higher education. Given its campus and community-wide mandate, the CSRC reports directly to the Office of the Chancellor at UCLA. The CSRC also forms part of the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR), a consortium of Latino research centers located at eighteen institutions in the United States.

The CSRC houses a library and special collections archive, an academic press, research projects, community-based partnerships, competitive grant and fellowship programs, and the Los Tigres del Norte Fund. Current research areas include demographics, labor, education, public health, and arts and culture. In addition to the Latina/o Education Summit, the CSRC has published several policy briefs on educational issues. These can be downloaded at <http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/briefs/archive.html>.

Director Chon A. Noriega is professor in the UCLA Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media. He is author of *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minnesota, 2000) and editor of nine books dealing with Latino media, performance, and visual art. Since 1996, he has been editor of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, the flagship journal for the field since its founding in 1970. He became the CSRC director in July 2002.

For further information on the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, go to www.chicano.ucla.edu/.

Research Note

Blowout: The Sal Castro Story

Mario T. García

Professor of History and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara

In the 1990s, I organized a new class on the history of the Chicano Movement at UC Santa Barbara (UCSB). Some of my research at the time dealt with the movement and so a complementary class seemed appropriate. Of course, an important part of the class included a discussion of the famous 1968 blowouts when thousands of Chicano high school and junior high school students walked out of their schools in protest of years of inferior education. There is no question in my mind that the blowouts would not have occurred without the galvanizing and inspiring figure of Sal Castro, one of the few Mexican American teachers in the eastside schools and in the Los Angeles school district at the time. It was Sal (as he is popularly referred to) who came up with the idea of the walkouts and through his leadership and that of the students pulled it off. The blowouts were a defining moment for him and for the students who participated. As Carlos Munoz correctly notes, the walkouts inaugurated the urban Chicano civil and cultural rights movement.¹

As a result of my class on the movement, I began to invite Sal to visit my classes and to discuss the protest and its relevance to the present. After the 1995 PBS series on the movement, *Chicano: The Mexican-American Civil Rights Movement*, which included as one of its four segments the blowouts, I was able to show the film to my class and then have Sal come to the next meeting and talk to the students. It was Sal's visits that

convinced me that his full story needed to be told. I had just completed my oral history of Bert Corona, a legendary Chicano labor and community activist and so I approached Sal about doing a similar project or testimonio that would lead to the publication of his life story including his role in the blowouts.² As gracious as Bert was (may he rest in peace), Sal embraced the idea and we began to tape his story. I have now completed some 30 hours or more of taped interviews with Sal and will soon write the narrative. It is a truly inspiring story and will further add to an appreciation of Sal's leadership and place in Chicano and U.S. history.

There is insufficient space in this research note to discuss all of the different aspects of Sal's story. Consequently, and in keeping with the conference's theme, I will only focus here on how it was that Sal came to be involved in the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences in the 1960s, some of Sal's memories of those conferences, and his perspective on their significance.

One needs to understand Sal's life experiences prior to the youth conferences in order to better appreciate his role in those gatherings of Mexican American students. Sal did not just appear at those meetings ready to motivate the students to participate in a dramatic

action such as the blowouts. Like all of us, Sal went through a process of becoming who he was by the 1960s. The process, of course, continued as it continues even today. None of us, including Sal, ever stop becoming. This is how we constantly change.

What Sal brought to those early conferences was his own experience of the discrimination against Mexicans in Los Angeles. This profoundly affected his identity and political consciousness.

Sal was born in Los Angeles on October 25, 1933, a child of immigrant parents from Mexico who settled in the Boyle Heights barrio of East Los Angeles. Sal was too young to fully comprehend at the time the meaning of the mass deportation of Mexicans from Los Angeles during the Great Depression, but he knew that it affected him personally when his father became one of the deportees, due to his temporary visa expiring and thus becoming an undocumented immigrant. His father returned to his native Mazatlán. Sal's mother had a valid visa, but had to return to Mexico every six months to renew it. Sal recalls the train trips as a child that he took with his mother to visit his father in Mazatlán and for his mother to renew her visa. The stress on Sal's parents eventually led to a divorce.³

Because he spoke only Spanish at home (although his mother was bilingual) and because he started his education in Mexico (due to his mother's visits to Mazatlán), Sal knew very little English when he commenced his U.S. education at the Belvedere Elementary School. As a result, he encountered discrimination at the hands of his teacher:

My English wasn't so hot. I knew much more Spanish. I remember distinctly how the teacher would put me down because of my lack of

English. 'Sit in the corner until you learn English,' she scolded me.

Sal remembers still other acts of discrimination against him and other Mexican Americans. But he also remembers how his mother stood up to some of this prejudice. For example, when Sal's mother requested that her son be allowed to leave school early in order to study for his first communion at their Catholic church, Sal's teacher refused and threatened to suspend Sal if he did. Sal's mother was outraged and saw it as discrimination against Mexican American Catholics. "Sal's my son," she told the teacher, "and he's going to his first communion class. And if you don't accept him back, I'm going to speak to your boss!" The teacher relented and Sal, no doubt with admiration, witnessed his mother's courage and leadership.

When Sal was ten years old, shining shoes to earn some money on the corner of Seventh and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles in 1943, he experienced the Zoot-Suit Riots, when U.S. Navy personnel randomly attacked Chicanos wearing the famous Zoot-suit popular at the time. They also assaulted, according to Sal, other Chicanos not wearing "drapes"—their behavior ironically symptomatic of wartime racial tensions during a war against fascist racism. Sal remembers all hell breaking loose and seeing police just standing by while the sailors beat the Chicanos. He also recalls the curfew that local authorities imposed due to the riots and a tragic consequence that affected him personally:

One kid that I knew from Belvedere Elementary went to get a loaf of bread and went through the ally, thinking he could avoid the curfew. The cops shot him in the back and killed him. He was twelve years old.

As a young boy, along with other Mexican Americans, Sal had to suffer the indignity of

not being allowed to attend public swimming pools, such as the one on Vermont, except on Wednesdays, the day reserved for Mexicans, blacks, and Asians, and the day before they cleaned the pool.

Although Sal continued his education in Catholic rather than public schools, this did not mean that he was saved from discrimination. At the all boys Cathedral High School run by the Christian Brothers, most Mexican American students were tracked into the “Spanish track” as opposed to the “Latin track,” which consisted of Anglos mostly. The Spanish track not only signified that these students studied Spanish and not Latin, but that this curriculum was less college oriented. As a result, Sal observed that Mexican Americans took less advanced basic classes and industrial arts courses, such as auto shop.

After he was drafted into the army in 1953, a year after high school graduation, Sal witnessed even more discrimination against blacks, Latinos, and Mexican Americans such as himself. Stationed in the South, he encountered the apartheid system of that region.

I was in a state of shock when I got off the plane in Atlanta. Both at the airport and at the bus station, they had four separate bathrooms: colored men, colored women, white men, white women. And they had two drinking fountains. This was all brand new to me.

He also observed similar discrimination against some of his black Puerto Rican buddies in the army who were not served in restaurants, but had to go to the back to get food. “So I witnessed Jim Crow first hand,” Sal says, “and I thought it was chicken shit.” Sal himself, although light-skinned, was not spared such racism, especially in Texas. On a flight from Los Angeles to Jackson, Mississippi, he had a

layover in Dallas where he went into an airport restaurant to eat.

I had my uniform on. When you come out of basic training, you look like a general. I go over to the airport restaurant and those sons of bitches wouldn’t serve me. They still remember the Alamo. This was in 1954. I was in the U.S. Army uniform not the Mexican Army, the U.S. Army!

Despite these encounters with discrimination and despite his own rebellious nature, Sal had not by then developed political awareness of the reasons for this discrimination. But his experiences were leading him to questions about this problem, questions that would lead to his later and greater understanding. First he had to struggle against what he and W.E.B. DuBois called a “double consciousness.” Of this Sal notes:

I knew there was discrimination and racism. I had pride in who I was, but at the same time I was self-blaming. The reason why all this is happening to us is our fault. Sort of a weird mindset in those days.

Sal, however, began to overcome this duality in the late 1950s when he worked at public playgrounds and learned from the Mexican American kids about the problems that they were experiencing in the schools. At the same time, after enrolling at California State University, Los Angeles, Sal decided to study to become a teacher. After receiving his B.A. in History/Education in 1961, he entered the M.A. program in Education, where he wrote a thesis comparing Mexican American student performances with that of Mexican immigrant students. He discovered that the immigrant students performed better than the Mexican Americans, despite the fact that English was not their native language. Sal concluded that the reason for this was because many of the immigrant students had been exposed to better

earlier education in Mexico and because they as Mexicanos possessed a certain confidence in who they were as opposed to the Mexican Americans who, like himself, were more ambivalent and less secure in their identity. Through his college classes, Sal began to ask questions in the tradition of Paulo Freire, leading him to a more liberated consciousness. He began to have a better understanding of the structural basis for the discrimination that Mexican Americans experienced and that prevented their greater mobility.⁴

This growing awareness and political consciousness, in addition to his more outspoken personality, led Sal to confront his own education professors who had negative and stereotypic views about Mexican American students, especially when addressing the problems of those students. Sal challenged these views and corrected them based on his own experiences, his working with kids in the playgrounds, and his own research.

By then I started feeling that some of the things they [his professors] were telling us about [Mexican American] kids were not necessarily true. They stereotyped the kids too much and they were not really getting into how to motivate them. They saw all kids as white kids and that wasn't really the facts. I remember one professor saying that what you saw in *Westside Story* [the movie] was the way [Latino] gang kids were. I said "that's bullshit. First of all, *Westside Story* is the figment of the imagination of a white guy. Second, if there really was a *Westside Story*, the Puerto Ricans would never dance to the kind of music they played in the damn movie anyway. That's a myth."

It was these experiences and others that Sal Castro brought with him as he embarked on a teaching career in 1963 in the Pasadena public schools, then at Belmont High School, and

finally at Lincoln High School where he would organize the 1968 blowouts. Sal's encounter with discrimination and racism at a personal level and his evolving political consciousness or *conscientización*, to use Freire's term, led him to understand that Mexican Americans had to shed what Sal calls "self-hatred," and begin to understand that it was the system that had to be attacked as the source of the educational and social problems faced by Mexican Americans and other minorities in the United States. This is what Sal would bring to the table in his encounters with Mexican American students at the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences during the politically tumultuous decade of the 1960s. But, to further the Freire connection, this encounter was not be a monologue on Sal's part—it was a dialogue with the students who also brought their experiences and evolving identities to the conferences. Out of this dialogue—a moveable dialogue involving new students each year—would come a more critical consciousness on the part of both Sal and the students. These dialogues would involve praxis, again borrowing from Freire, that included not only reflection but action. That action would culminate in the blowouts.

In this section of my research note I want to note some of Sal's memories—a collective memory—of the initial conferences that led up to the blowouts. Little research has been done on the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences and my oral history with Sal is a way of bringing light and attention to their importance.

The initial conference took place in spring 1963 over the Palm Sunday weekend. At that time, the conference was called the Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference, a title it would carry into the early 1970s when it was changed to the Chicano Youth Leadership

Conference (CYLC). The change in titles clearly underscores the evolving ethnic and political identities of the participants. The conference was organized by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, due to growing concerns by some public officials, some educators, and some Mexican American leaders about the myriad problems that Mexican American students seemed to be facing in the public schools, including large dropout rates and low college matriculation. The conference was an effort to encourage students to stay in school, to do well, and to continue on to college. Tobias Katzen, who owned a trouser factory in Los Angeles with mostly Mexican American employees and who served on the Human Relations Commission, provided the initial funding for the conference. Arrangements were made to hold the conference at a newly established Jewish recreational camp called Camp Hess Kramer in the Malibu Mountains off the Pacific Coast Highway. The date available for the first conference and subsequent ones was the Palm Sunday weekend.

Sal became aware of the conference when he read an announcement asking for adults with experience working with youth to apply to be counselors at the camp. With his background already as a playground supervisor and his initial teaching at Washington Junior High in Pasadena, Sal applied and was accepted. The staff selected was small and included a few teachers such as Sal along with social workers, police and sheriff personnel, and those already working for the county. The students themselves were selected by their schools or by members of the Human Relations Commission. Students, for the most part working-class in origins, came not only from the predominantly Mexican American schools of East Los Angeles, but from other county

schools as well. About 100 students, all high school juniors, attended the first conference.

Sal recalls that most of the other staff members did not have much of a critical perspective on education or the schools. Some, according to him, were “self-haters,” who blamed Mexican Americans for their problems. They were not “change agents” or risk takers. From the very beginning, Sal found himself having to counter these views and offer a different interpretation to the students.

Sal discovered that some of the students also had low opinions of themselves and of their community. However, a good number expressed criticisms of the schools and were already articulating what the Chicano Movement would call “cultural nationalism.” They criticized their teachers, the failure to encourage them to go to college, the lack of high performance expectations, and the tracking of Mexican American students into vocational classes. “This was amazing to me,” Sal notes, “that they could be so observant.” Students expressed these concerns especially in the small group sessions at the conferences. As a result of these discussions, Sal noticed that even some of the “self-haters” began to change as they prepared to leave on Sunday.

Despite the common view that Sal Castro was the key director of the conferences from the very beginning, in fact, as he explains, he was always behind the scenes in working with the kids in the 1960s. He did his work with them and dialogued with them in the small group sessions and in table-hopping at mealtimes, where he could reach other students. In the small group encounters, Sal did not do all of the talking. That went against his pedagogy. He didn’t need to talk because many of the students took the lead in discussing and

sharing school problems. "I would throw out something and let it spin," he says. When the students asked his views or if they digressed from the main point, only then would Sal reinforce the dialogue and try to put it in an even more critical perspective. Guiding Sal's pedagogy was his overall philosophy about the conferences.

What I wanted out of these conferences was a positive self-image and self-confidence for the students, so they would go on ahead and know who the real enemy was and go on to achieve and go on to college, despite the lack of encouragement by the schools.

He also hoped and expected that the Camp Hess Kramer graduates would later in life provide leadership for the Mexican American community as a way of giving back to it, but not as apologists for but as critics of the system. In a way, without knowing it, Sal was adopting a Saul Alinsky philosophy of "not working with the system but within it."

As the youth leadership conferences continued into the 1960s, the critiques of the schools mounted, with every new cohort of participants voicing Sal's own growing frustration at the lack of progress in the schools. He also expressed disappointment at the failure of Mexican American political and community leaders in challenging the school system or even addressing the issues. He believed that Mexican Americans were falling further and further behind the black civil rights movement. Something had to be done.

Sal recalls that perhaps as early as the 1966 conference he might have started to discuss some more dramatic action to bring attention to the educational problems. One year later, he definitely had a plan. "I had the plan in my head, that's where it was formulated," he

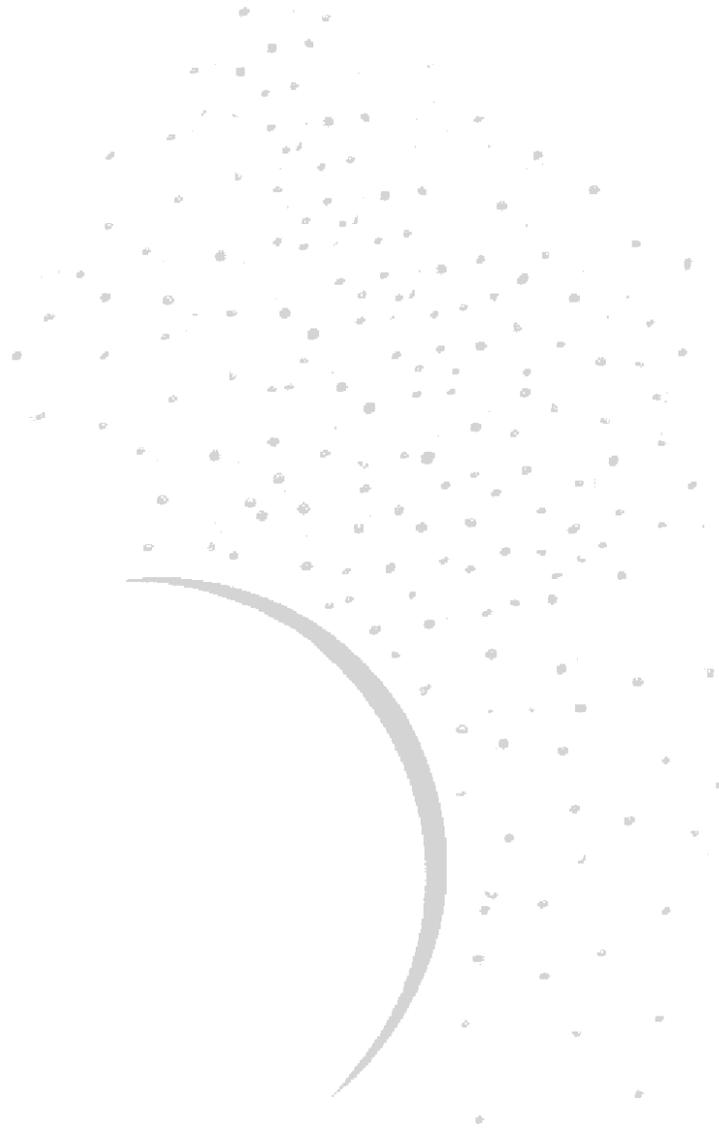
states. Beginning with the 1967 conference and into the rest of the year, Sal began to talk about a possible school walkout or strike that would shake the system. Besides talking about this at the 1967 conference, Sal also used the gathering to collect a phone bank of student telephone numbers that would become a critical information network in organizing the blowouts. "This was before cell phones," he observes with amusement. Many of the 1967 student cohort would go on to become leaders in their respective schools one year later. The 1967 conference was significant because the 1968 one would take place after the blowouts. Moreover, some of the college-age counselors at the 1967 conference (many, if not all of them, alumni of previous conferences) would also help plan the walkouts and assist the high school and junior high school students in the historic protests of 1968.

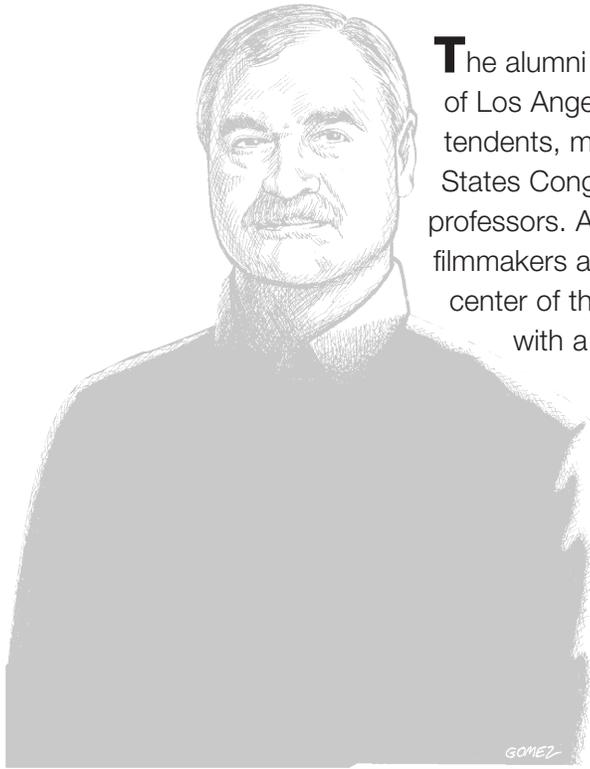
Let me conclude this research note by saying that from what I have learned about the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences from my interviews with Sal Castro reinforces my understanding, and that of others, that the conferences served to politicize a new generation of Chicano students who participated not only in the blowouts, but in the Chicano Movement as a whole. My oral history substantiates the importance of Sal Castro's role in the conferences through his work and discussions with the students, including sharing his own experiences with discrimination and his views that the educational system had to be confronted through nonviolent direct action such as the blowouts. But I've also learned through my oral history that it wasn't just Sal and the conferences themselves that led to this politicization and critical consciousness on the part of the

students. The students themselves, through engaging in a form of Freireian dialogue, served as historical subjects in the development of a progressive and oppositional praxis. It is this dialogical process and praxis that I will develop further in my presentation at this conference on Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences. Finally, I hope this research note provides an introduction to my larger project that involves the writing of the life narrative of a remarkable individual, teacher, counselor, and leader: Sal Castro.

Notes

1. Carlos Munoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso Press, 1989).
2. Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).
3. All information about Sal Castro's life and direct quotes by him are from interviews by the author with Sal Castro on May 15, 2001; July 24, 2001; July 25, 2001; and April 20, 2006.
4. Also see, Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2005; originally published in English in 1970).





The alumni of the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences include a mayor of Los Angeles, a state supreme court justice, several LAUSD superintendents, many LAUSD principals and teachers, members of the United States Congress, county supervisors, and a growing number of university professors. Alumni also include members of the print and electronic media, filmmakers and producers, artists, and members of every profession. At the center of the CYLC is Sal Castro, a life-long Los Angeles school teacher with a national reputation as a school reformer.

“Mr. Castro has inspired thousands of students, parents, colleagues, and community members to contribute to the educational and professional advancement of the community.”

Robin Avelar La Salle

Co-founder and Chief Program Officer for Principal's Exchange

“CYLC defines our educational mission and unlimited leadership potential.”

Carlos R. Moreno

Associate Justice, Supreme Court of California

“CYLC motivates and inspires.”

Fatima Castaneda

Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of Education, Occidental College

“Sal Castro is CYLC.”

Leonard A. Valverde

Professor of Education, Executive Director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute, Arizona State University

“Sal Castro has a gift for teaching.”

Susan Racho

Filmmaker

“CYLC provides power to Chicanos to control their future.”

Armando Durón

President of the Board, Self Help Graphics in East Los Angeles

“Miracles happen in Malibu.”

Araceli Lopez

Family Support Services Manager, Pathways nonprofit agency

“Sal Castro is living history.”

Mario T. Garcia

Professor of History and Chicano Studies; University of California, Santa Barbara

“He believed in us and we learned to believe in ourselves.”

Myrna N Brutti

Assistant Principal, Stephen M. White Middle School

“Sal was a teacher unlike any I had encountered during my years of schooling.”

Rita Ledesma

Associate Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, Los Angeles

“Camp Hess Kramer: Where the birth of the urban Chicano Movement occurred.”

Moctesuma Esparza

Filmmaker and Producer

