

The Chicano Movement

People join groups for a variety of reasons, but mostly because they want to get more accomplished. Blending into the background and feeling like you belong are nice bonuses. There's a reason that school uniforms and "volunteer" shirts with the same colors actually help people work together and act as a unit. During the Chicano Movement, the concept of "chicanismo" served a similar purpose. It declared Mexican-Americans to be one culture and one nation, and many found it inspiring. Chicanismo taught Mexican-Americans to think of themselves as descendants of the Aztec and Mayan civilizations of Meso-America, as well as the Spanish conquerors of those races. They were a unique nation without a country. But being a Chicano was more than a political statement – it evolved into an artistic one, too. Poems and paintings by Chicano artists blended Mexican, ancient Meso-American, and modern American art styles to show off their mixed racial heritage. Like the Black Power movement that resulted from the black Civil Rights Movement, the Chicano Movement started as anger about racism but evolved into something that was occasionally violent but generally more positive. Chicanismo allowed Mexican-Americans to share and revel in their common identity, as if they were members of the same team wearing the same uniform. After decades of second-class treatment from their government and their neighbors, they wanted to feel proud instead of inferior.
