

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

DAVID SANCHEZ

activist, educator

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Background Information

Born January 3, 1948

David Sanchez was born in Los Angeles, California, and is of Mexican ancestry. His grandparents emigrated from Mexico, making his parents first-generation Mexican-American/Chicano. He holds a bachelor’s and doctorate degree. Sanchez is best known as a founder of the Brown Berets, a member of the Chicano Moratorium Committee, and played an instrumental role in the East Los Angeles (LA)

walkouts. In the 1960s and 1970s, he elevated Chicano civil rights issues, and his activism continues today.

Sanchez’s Resistance

At 15, “I had a mistaken identity and got beat up by some policemen, and after that I had a different picture of the world,” Dr. Sanchez recalled in an interview.ⁱ This experience led him and his peers to create the Young Chicanos for Community Action, now known as the Brown Berets. This pro-Chicano grassroots organization tackled educational reform, police brutality, illegal occupation of Mexican land, anti-Vietnam war, and welfare issues. His leadership as the “Prime Minister” of the organization influenced the beginning of the Chicano movement. The Brown Beret’s demanded more educational opportunities and better school conditions for the Chicano community. Their efforts led to the East LA Walkouts in 1968.ⁱⁱ A year later, he and the Berets would establish the “East LA Free Clinic,” now known as “El Barrio Free Clinic.” The welfare initiative aimed to combat a lack of access to affordable healthcare in the East LA community.ⁱⁱⁱ The same year, Sanchez would be a key player for the Chicano Moratorium, one of the largest Mexican American anti-war protests during the Vietnam War, gathering about 200,000 to 300,000 protestors.^{iv}

Achievements

The Brown Berets went from a local chapter to nation-wide organization that still exists today. Dr. Sanchez is still active alongside new members. He taught Chicano Studies courses at colleges across Los Angeles and collaborated with a former U.S. Representative Yvonne Brathwaite Burke and the Health Department of Los Angeles County. They launched campaigns to “Stop the Violence” within Latinx, Black and other communities that experienced violence at disproportionate rates within the city and county.¹

Essential Questions

1. At 15, Sanchez's picture of the world and how he fit in it completely changed.
 - a. What is your picture of the world?

2. Sanchez changed the stereotypical narrative that society placed on him as a Chicano. By creating the Brown Berets, he focused on cultural pride, education, advocacy and more.
 - a. How do you think his efforts affected young people?

3. ***"We were in a war, but most of our war was a cold war that we were fighting, a cold war to win our people on our side so we'd have the support, but also a cold war to make demands on society so that society could understand what our demands were, what our concerns were."***
 - a. Being an activist requires work. What are ways you can balance being a student and being a community leader?

ⁱ Nast, C. (2018). "The Brown Berets Got Their Start After Police Violence." Teen Vogue. Retried from <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/brown-berets-as-explained-by-founding-member-dr-david-sanchez>

ⁱⁱ Partida, M. G. (n.d.). "Research Guides: A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States: 1968: East Los Angeles Walkouts." Library of Congress. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/east-la-walkouts>

iii ⁱⁱⁱ Editors, KCET (2022). "El Barrio Free Clinic | Los Angeles Conservancy." Public Media Group of Southern California. Retried from <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/el-barrio-free-clinic>

iv Partida, M. G. (n.d.). "Research Guides: A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States: 1970: National Chicano Moratorium." Library of Congress. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/national-chicano-moratorium>