

The Philosophy of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (POM)

A Brief Outline

I. Introduction

-Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan translates into: the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan

-(more explanation should be in MEChA 101 workshop
but important to note: Chicano & Student)

II. Historical Background

A. The Philosophy of MEChA (POM) derives from two important *founding documents*

1. El Plan de Aztlan

- i. Document developed in March of 1969 at the NCYLC
- ii. Identified: Nationalism
 - As the key denominator, to work as a unifying force
 - EPA has been criticized for having harsh language; it was an attempt to identify who we are not (“gabacho,” “gringo invaders,” etc...)

2. El Plan de Santa Barbara

- i. Book developed in April of 1969 by the CCHE
- ii. Addresses Chicano Studies
- iii. Creation of MEChA
 - it was decided that Raza orgs (MAYO, MAM, etc) would take on the name Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA)

These two documents emerged in the 1960s and are documents of their time. They have been criticized as being Mexican-centered and not inclusive of *la mujer*.

They are important documents that address issues that are still as relevant today as they were in the 1960s. (poverty, racism, access to higher education, etc.)

B. The POM was created **by** Mechistas **for** Mechistas

1. Brings MEChA chapters under a common understanding

- outlines MEChA goals & objectives
- modernizes ideology found in the planes
- addresses infiltration
- helps bring everyone onto the same page

III. The Philosophy of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan

A. 1986: an introduction

1. MEChA Position Papers on:
 - a) Philosophy
 - b) Structure
 - c) Goals & Objectives
 - d) Relationships to Outside Organizations

B. 1989: MEChA Position Papers are adopted

C. 1992: first round of revisions

D. 1996: the Northern Regional Task Force spearheaded work on another round of revisions
-(Northern Regional is now known as Alta Califas Norte MEChA Region)

E. 1999: endorsement to the recommended amendments to

1. Philosophy Papers at the MEChA Statewide Conference Spring at San Pancho
2. National adoption of the Philosophy Papers as amended at the MEChA National

Conference at Phoenix College included:

- i. Grammatical corrections
- ii. 3 new objectives to address
 - La Mujer
 - LGBT
 - Chicanas/os of non-Mexican descent

IV. Infiltration

- A. Definition: the systematic/deliberate introduction of individuals/organization into MEChA groups in order to benefit/promote/endorse outside agenda/goals & objectives; often through party building
 - i. Partybuilding defined as:
 - “...using our Movimiento to pull away membership from our organization to work for another organization.” P17
 - example: an organization/individual coming onto MEChA to invite members to work on an issue “and then attempting to convert them onto members of the outside organization.” P17
 - ii. Results:
 - Division among members
 - Attention/focus taken away from the Chicano community and Chicana/o issues
- B. ‘Liga’ infiltration of MEChA

The 1970’s saw a growth of MEChA chapters throughout Aztlan and the implementation of Chicana/o Studies in high schools and college campuses.

Opportunists saw MEChA as a means of furthering their own cause. The 1980s saw the emergence of the “League of Revolutionary Struggle” commonly known within MEChA as “Liga.” It was a group that held a Marxist, class based ideology. The presence of Liga in MEChA caused splintering and even disappearances of MEChA chapters across Aztlan, as MEChA’s focus on higher education was diffused.

- C. Why would any group want to infiltrate MEChA?
 - i. Because of MEChA’s legitimacy;
 - The name is familiar, has a history, and attracts individuals to it
 - ii. Because of resources
 - as students there is access to rooms, funding, etc.
 - iii. Because of the people
 - Any organization that wants to further it’s own goals or agenda, might see MEChA as a
 - Potential way to increase it’s own membership
- D. Results
 - i. Affects MEChA membership
 - ii. Diverts MEChA goals & objectives from higher education
 - iii. Ultimately affects *La Causa*

E. Resolution

- i. Development of the Philosophy Papers **to outline and define who we are and what we are about**

V. Reading the Philosophy of MEChA (things to remember)

- Table of Contents
- Preface
- Historical Foundation
 - i. Self-determination for the liberation of our people through education
 - ii. Nationalism
- MEChA's Philosophy
 - i. Addresses and helps define Chicanismo within MEChA
 - ii. Indigenismo, historical tie to the land
- The Challenge of the Future
 - i. importance of education and community
- Each Mechista's Responsibility
- MEChA Structure
 - i. Establishes accountability as Mechistas to one another
 - ii. Each Mechista to their chapter, each chapter to the central, each central to their region, each region to National MEChA
 - iii. Structure was put in as a safeguard; everything was put there for a reason, usually due to the shortcomings in the past
 - iv. Statewide applies to Califas, it is the only state with three regions
- MEChA Goals and Objectives
- MEChA's Relationship to Outside Organizations
 - i. Dual membership does not mean one cannot be part of two organizations, but instead that one cannot be part of MEChA and another organization that has ideals contradictory to MEChA Philosophy

VI. Conclusion and Question & Answer

The Philosophy of MEChA was written by Mechistas in the mid 1980s to serve as a foundation to work from. It derives from important historical documents and provides some guidance on organizing and student activism.

MEChA is one of the few organizations from the Chicano Movement that continues to exist today. Much of it is due to the dedication and hard work of Mechistas and a vision for MEChA provided within the founding documents.

As *estudiantes*, our time in MEChA is temporary, MEChA should provide the *familia* support not provided by the university. MEChA also allows for the fostering of leadership in order assist our future activism after graduation.