

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Conference Commemorates 40th Anniversary of Chicano Student Walkouts

In March of 1968, thousands of high school students walked out of their East Los Angeles classrooms in protest of educational conditions in the five public high schools that comprised the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Classes ground to a halt as the students left their schools, chanting "Blowout, blowout, walkout, walkout!"

A conference commemorating the student walkouts -- or blowouts, as they were known -- and the history behind them will take place at the University of California, Santa Barbara on Wednesday, February 20. Titled "Blowout: The 40th Anniversary Conference on the 1968 East Los Angeles Chicano Student Walkouts," the event begins at 2 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. It is free and open to the public.

Conference organizer Mario T. García, a professor of history and Chicana and Chicano studies at UCSB, will give the keynote address. The title of his talk is "Blowout: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice."

Castro, also one of the conference speakers, was a faculty member at LAUSD's Lincoln High School during the time of the walkouts. The founder of the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences (CYLC), he inspired the students to take action and

participated in their protests. CYLC, which began in 1963 and continues today, focuses on problems that exist in inner city schools and on developing ethnic awareness among Chicano students. Many of the student leaders of the walkouts were CYLC alumni.

Other Blowout conference participants include Tara Yosso, an assistant professor of Chicana and Chicano studies at UCSB; Mario Barrera, a professor of ethnic studies at UC Berkeley; and five Lincoln and Garfield high school alumni who took part in the walkouts. They include Paula Crisostomo, Bobby Verdugo, Mita Cuaron and Harry Gamboa. Also participating in the conference are Vicki Castro and Henry Gutierrez, who as students at California State University, Los Angeles and Occidental College helped organize the walkouts.

"The blowouts resulted in the gradual beginning of various reforms, including bilingual education, Chicano studies, more emphasis on academic subjects, more encouragement of Mexican American students going to college, and more Mexican-American teachers and administrators," said García. "Many problems continued -- and still do -- but what had changed was the consciousness of Chicanos both among students and in the community concerning the need to fight for educational justice. There is no question about the significance of the blowouts in the history of the Chicano movement and in Chicano history."

The conference is co-sponsored by UCSB's Chicano Studies Institute and Chicano/Latino Research Focus Group. Other sponsors include the campus's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, and Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Academic Policy.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.