

# SELECTION 4

## La Causa

### Vocabulary Review

a large *influx* from Mexico  
*inequities* in education  
*de facto* segregation in schools  
a *catalyst* in forming the current Chicano movement

1 There is presently a major movement in this country. A  
2 movement most of us in the Midwest know little if any-  
3 thing about. It has been coming for centuries, it has been  
4 on the conscience of Americans for decades and it is upon  
5 us today. The movement is the Chicano movement; its  
6 people are Chicanos, Mexican-Americans.  
7 When I have the chance to talk with my fellow students,  
8 I like to talk with them about Chicanos and "La Causa,"  
9 the Cause, because many of us are unaware of the exis-  
10 tence of this movement and its people. Many of us don't  
11 know of America's second largest minority of nine million  
12 Mexican-Americans. Many of us simply gape as we drive  
13 down a highway and see fifty or sixty Mexicans stooped  
14 over picking tomatoes in a field. Many of us simply gape as  
15 we drive through a barrio, a Mexican slum, in northwest  
16 Indiana and see sub-standard living conditions. Many of  
17 us simply gape in our Sociology 161 and 163 classes when  
18 our "knowledgeable" professor goes on and on about  
19 Blacks and anti-Semitism, and it never occurs to us that

20 they're not the only ones who have problems. Everything  
21 is not either Black or White, there's a little bit of brown in  
22 between. But many of us continue to gape and nothing  
23 registers.

24 I am very much aware of and involved with the move-  
25 ment, first, because I'm a Chicano and, second, because I,  
26 like you, have a vital stake in the future of this country. I,  
27 like you, must have an awareness of the social ripples  
28 around us today which will be tomorrow's waves of ac-  
29 tion.

30 There are other reasons why this movement should be  
31 understood. If you're interested in politics, nine million  
32 people are hard to ignore. If you're interested in social  
33 problems, nine million people are hard to ignore. If you're  
34 interested in business, a market of nine million people is  
35 hard to ignore.

36 The history of today's Chicano dates back to the time of  
37 the Aztecs and other sixteenth-century Indian tribes. They  
38 were noble lords of a culture that was one of the high  
39 points of civilization. Along came the Spaniards, Chris-  
40 tians who looted, murdered, and raped, and for their  
41 crimes were promptly knighted. Spaniard and Indian  
42 joined and the Mexican was born.

43 Mexicans in the United States have come through two  
44 ways; annexation and immigration. In 1848 most of what  
45 we know as the West was taken over by the United States.  
46 This included the five states where most Chicanos live  
47 today: California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and  
48 Texas. The Mexicans living in these areas became United  
49 States citizens whether they wanted to or not. Although  
50 there had been immigration, since that time the numbers  
51 of Mexicans entering the country was small until the  
52 1900s. Between 1910 and 1930 there was a large influx  
53 from Mexico. People were attracted by agriculture, the  
54 booming railroad industry, and the industrial paradise of  
55 the North. My family, for instance, is fairly typical in the  
56 pattern we followed. First wetbacks, illegal entrants, then  
57 entering legally, we lived in southern Texas for a few years  
58 before we moved to East Chicago. There my father found  
59 work in the steel mills.

60 As I said before, most Chicanos live in the Southwest.  
61 One interesting fact is that Los Angeles has the largest

62 concentrated population of Mexicans anywhere, sur-  
 63 passed only by Mexico City itself. In Los Angeles there are  
 64 almost one million Chicanos. It is known by observation  
 65 that thousands of Mexicans live in the urban centers in  
 66 such states as Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan to  
 67 name a few. For instance, in my home town of East  
 68 Chicago, which has a population of 45,000, there are ap-  
 69 proximately 14,000 Chicanos.

70 The problems that we face in the Southwest and  
 71 throughout the United States are many. There are in-  
 72 equities in education, in employment, in housing—three  
 73 of the most important necessities in our society. Chicanos  
 74 average 3.9 years less education than Anglo or white  
 75 Americans—1.6 years less than Blacks. In Texas, for  
 76 example, 80 percent of Chicano students drop out before  
 77 they graduate from high school. Yet he is expected to  
 78 obtain an education despite de facto segregated schools or  
 79 classes, inferior school buildings, and unfair testing pro-  
 80 cedures. When a rural Chicano student in southern Texas  
 81 takes an achievement test, it is usually a test based on the  
 82 reality of Evanston, Illinois, or New Rochelle, New York,  
 83 rather than Crystal City, Texas, or Oxnard, California. Also  
 84 the absence of bilingual instructors and the presence of  
 85 teachers with negative attitudes toward their students  
 86 help reinforce the secondary status of Mexican students.

87 Chicanos throughout the Southwest are generally not  
 88 considered for higher paying jobs or certain job categories  
 89 and in some cases are not considered for employment at  
 90 all. Discrimination takes a variety of not-so-obvious forms  
 91 such as irrelevant testing, unfairness in promotion, and  
 92 unequal pay. Most Chicanos, especially the older people,  
 93 do not have the means to challenge these practices and  
 94 many are unaware of their right to do so.

95 The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has extensively  
 96 documented the fact that there is serious discrimination  
 97 against Mexicans in the administration of justice, espe-  
 98 cially in the areas of police brutality, illegal search, and  
 99 exclusion from juries. On the community level, regular  
 100 city services such as water, electricity, garbage removal  
 101 are often lacking in the barrios.

102 Two major influences created the process that is now  
 103 known as the Chicano Movement. The first was the grow-

104 ing urbanization that accompanied the mechanization of  
 105 farming. The second was the development of the Califor-  
 106 nia Grape Strike. The California farm workers' strike, led  
 107 by Cesar Chavez, has served as catalyst in forming the  
 108 current Chicano movement. Much of the rhetoric and  
 109 symbolic language of the grape strike has been incorpo-  
 110 rated into the movement. "La Causa" once meant the  
 111 cause of the strike and grape boycott. Now "La Causa"  
 112 means the cause of the entire political-economic move-  
 113 ment. The grape strike further demonstrated what unified  
 114 group action could achieve.

115 Leadership on a national level has yet to develop. The  
 116 person who comes closest to filling this need is Cesar  
 117 Chavez. However, many urban Chicanos identify him  
 118 with rural problems only and feel that his approach is too  
 119 moderate. Two other persons come closer to providing  
 120 leadership for less patient Chicanos. They are Reis  
 121 Tijerina of New Mexico, and Corky Gonzales of Colorado. I  
 122 personally feel that Cesar Chavez has the potential to lead  
 123 the movement on a large scale. He has the ability to attract  
 124 and develop wide support from many groups whereas  
 125 Reis and Corky appeal mainly to the young and to the  
 126 militant. Although Reis and Corky do not have the stature  
 127 of Cesar, they are probably closer to the feelings of many  
 128 Chicanos.

129 Hopefully, you should begin to understand why many of  
 130 us don't see ourselves as typical Americans and why we  
 131 don't embrace the culture and social standards of the  
 132 middle class. For many of us it is impossible; and for  
 133 others of us it is undesirable. Too often doing so means  
 134 negation of a long, rich, and truly beautiful cultural heri-  
 135 tage. We accept Mexico for what it is—our cultural  
 136 homeland—and similarly we accept this country for what  
 137 it is—the place where we must live our day-to-day exis-  
 138 tence. We do not believe we must become Anglicized in  
 139 order to take part in this society. Rather we intend to  
 140 improve America for our people without giving up our  
 141 unique cultural background. The name Chicano has  
 142 helped us come together and has given our movement  
 143 strength.

144 The Chicano Movement is here. "La Raza" or "Our  
 145 People" are organizing and petitioning for their rights.

146 The nine million people who became citizens of this coun-  
147 try willingly or unwillingly are no longer willing to accept  
148 the inequities in education, employment, and housing  
149 which have been part of our lives. We are reevaluating our  
150 culture and realizing that it is a thing to be preserved,  
151 indeed treasured. In short, we are coming to grips with our  
152 reality and a strong sense of unity is developing across the  
153 nation. La Causa is growing in momentum and its people,  
154 the Chicanos, are growing in pride, dignity, and determi-  
155 nation.

## Selection 4 Comprehension Questions

Decide whether each of the following statements is true or false according to the selection. Then mark T or F in the appropriate place.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A major influence in the creation of the Chicano movement was the California grape strike.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The problem with Chicano leaders other than Chavez is that they are not militant enough.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. One major way in which Mexicans came to the United States is through annexation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. According to the article there are more Mexicans in the United States than in Mexico.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "La Causa" today refers to the California grape strike and boycott.

Choose the correct answer for each of the following questions and circle the letter before it:

- 6. Which of the following is *not* mentioned as a way in which Mexican-Americans are discriminated against?
  - a. Higher food prices.
  - b. Lack of city services such as water and garbage removal.
  - c. Job discrimination.
  - d. Less or inferior education.
- 7. Which U.S. city has the largest concentrated population of Mexicans?
  - a. Laredo, Texas.
  - b. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
  - c. Los Angeles, California.
  - d. Tucson, Arizona.

- 8. How many states were made out of the territory that was annexed from Mexico in 1848?
  - a. 3
  - b. 4
  - c. 5
  - d. 6
- 9. Which of the following statements is true according to the selection?
  - a. Most Chicanos live in the middle west.
  - b. Among the ancestors of today's Chicano are Aztecs and Spaniards.
  - c. Cesar Chavez is the only leader that all Mexican-Americans can identify with.
  - d. Most Chicanos wish to become like middle-class Americans.
- 10. According to the selection, how many Chicanos are there in the United States?
  - a. Two million.
  - b. Five million.
  - c. Nine million.
  - d. Twenty million.