

The Philosophy of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán



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Preface

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A) hereby establishes the following principles based on our knowledge, ideas and opinions to enhance the progress of M.E.Ch.A. In order to have an understanding of M.E.Ch.A., we bring forth this document to guide Mechistas in their principles, values and conduct.

Historical Foundation

The Chicano Movement of the late 1960's helped spark cultural and historical pride in our people. Chicanas/Chicanos demanded to be treated as equals and denounced acculturation and assimilation. Brown pride began to express itself through poetry, literature, art and theater. The contributions of the Chicano Movement are numerous and continue to be very valuable to our society.

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A.) is a student organization that promotes higher education, cultura, and historia. M.E.Ch.A. was founded on the principles of self-determination for the liberation of our people. We believe that political involvement and education is the avenue for change in our society.

In March of 1969, at Denver, Colorado the Crusade for Justice organized the National Chicano Youth Conference that drafted the basic premises for the Chicana/Chicano Movement in El Plan de Aztlán (EPA). A synopsis of El Plan stipulates: 1) We are Chicanas and Chicanos of Aztlán reclaiming the land of our birth (Chicana/Chicano Nation); 2) Aztlán belongs to indigenous people, who are sovereign and not subject to a foreign culture; 3) We are a union of free pueblos forming a bronze (Chicana/Chicano) Nation; 4) Chicano nationalism, as the key to mobilization and organization, is the common denominator to bring consensus to the Chicana/Chicano Movement; 5) Cultural values strengthen our identity as La Familia de La Raza; and 6) EPA, as a basic plan of Chicana/Chicano liberation, sought the formation of an independent national political party that would represent the sentiments of the Chicana/Chicano community.

In April of 1969 over 100 Chicanas/Chicanos came together at UC Santa Barbara to formulate a plan for higher education: El Plan de Santa Barbara. With this document they were successful in the development of two very important contributions to the Chicano Movement: Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A.) and Chicano Studies.

The fundamental principles that led to the founding of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán are found in El Plan de Santa Barbara (EPSB). The Manifesto of EPSB sees self-determination for the Chicana/Chicano community as the only acceptable way for our people to gain socioeconomic justice. El Plan argues that a strong nationalist identity is a necessary step in building a program of self-determination. Self-determination, in this regard, challenges those involved in principle struggle to respect the rights of all Chicano and Chicanos. EPSB stresses that in organizing M.E.Ch.A. every opportunity must be taken to educate Raza. At the same time, El Plan exhorts Mechistas to preserve Chicana/Chicano culture in this culturally diverse society, both in community and on campus. Thus, a Chicana/Chicano Nation is a necessity defined as an educational, socioeconomic, and empowered Chicana/Chicano community. The Manifesto of EPSB warns us in part:

We recognize that without a strategic use of education, an education that places value on what we value, we will not realize our destiny. Chicanos [and Chicanas] recognize the central importance of institutions of higher learning to model progress, in this case, to the development of our community. But, we go further: we believe that higher education must contribute to the formation of a complete man [and woman] who truly values life and freedom. (p.10) EPSB

Both El Plan de Aztlán (EPA) and El Plan de Santa Barbara (EPSB) served as the historical foundation for the establishment of a viable Chicana/Chicano Movimiento and are therefore fundamental to the M.E.Ch.A. Philosophy.

M.E.Ch.A.'s Philosophy

The Chicana/Chicano student movement has been plagued by opportunists that have sought to rechannel the energies of our people and divert us from our struggle for self determination. The educational plight of Chicana and Chicano students continues to be ignored by insensitive administrators. Overall, Chicana/Chicano junior high, high school and college pushout rates have risen since 1969, forcing many Chicanas and Chicanos to a life of poverty. These factors along with a growing right wing trend in the nation are combining to work greater hardships on Chicanas and Chicanos. New repressive and racist immigration laws are continuously directed at our Gente. Along with this, the current administration has started the process of dismantling Affirmative Action and Civil Rights protections. Just as Hispanics seeks to deny our indigenous heritage, so does Latino. The terms Hispanic and Latino further ignore our unique socioeconomic and historical aspects of our Chicana/Chicano Gente. This cannot be ignored. We cannot coin terms for unity sake when these terms fail to fully represent our diverse communities. Chicanismo does not seek to use the word "Chicano" as an umbrella term when representing all of "La Familia de La Raza". Rather,

Chicanismo seeks to educate our barrios and campos about our history y cultura to further create a movement of self-determination for the Liberation of Aztlán, something that Hispanic and Latino has yet to represent or recognize. These factors have made it necessary for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán to affirm our philosophy of liberation (i.e. educational, socio-economic, and political empowerment) for our Chicana/Chicano Nation.

We, as Mechistas, see the process of Chicanismo as evolutionary. We recognize that no one is born politically Chicana or Chicano. Chicanismo results from a decision based on a political consciousness for our Raza, to dedicate oneself to building a Chicana/Chicano Nation. Chicanismo is a concept that integrates self-awareness with cultural identity, a necessary step in developing political consciousness. Therefore the term Chicano is grounded in a philosophy, not a nationality. Chicanismo does not exclude anyone, rather it includes those who acknowledge and work toward the betterment of La Raza.

Chicanismo involves a personal decision to reject assimilation and work towards the preservation of our cultural heritage. Recognizing that all people are potential Chicanas and Chicanos, we encourage those interested in developing a total commitment to our movement for self-determination for the people of Aztlán to join Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán.

Thus, by all means necessary, We Chicana/Chicano estudiantes or Aztlán, dedicate ourselves to taking our educational destiny into our own hands through the process of spreading Chicanismo, in the spirit of carnalismo.

M.E.Ch.A. is committed to ending the cultural tyranny suffered at the hands of institutional and systematic discrimination that holds our Gente captive. We seek an end to oppression and exploitation of the Chicano/Chicana community.

As Mechistas, we proclaim that we are the people of Aztlán and that we recognize our indigenous unity with our brothers and sisters of Ixachitzlan (Alaska to Tierra del Fuego). We declare that we are the descendants of El Quinto Sol. Our fundamental drive is to organize and challenge Chicana/Chicano estudiantes to maintain self-respect and dignity to overcome historical prejudices and discrimination against the Chicana and Chicano Gente. The historic mission of M.E.Ch.A. involves an educational plan of action that builds an educational ladder for the advancement of our people. Recognizing that the strength of our movement is rooted in our barrios, M.E.Ch.A. pledges itself to reach out to the community and schools, to establish new educational opportunities. We also recognize that our M.E.Ch.A. chapters are much stronger when they are rooted in and accountable to the Chicana/Chicano community. Consequently, We, Mechistas commit ourselves to return to our community and contribute to the development of the Chicana/Chicano Nation.

The Challenge of the Future

Despite growing repression and a lack of progress by our people in this society, we must be optimistic. As, M.E.Ch.A., we must accept the challenge to combat all forms of oppression, and manifestations as experienced through racism, sexism, and homophobia, both inside and outside of our Movement, in order to better develop a more meaningful educational plan of action (refer to Goals and Objectives). Advocating an educational revolution, we recognize that our bullets are our books and our victories are an increase in Chicana/Chicano graduates committed to our people's progress. We, as Mechistas must dismantle the co-optation of Raza students from becoming "corporate Hispanics" claiming to be leaders of our community with no understanding of El Pueblo Chicano. Instead, M.E.Ch.A. seeks to train future community leaders to be consciously committed to serve the people of Aztlán.

M.E.Ch.A. also supports Chicana and Chicano worker struggles to abolish economic and political exploitation. In the final analysis, we recognize that the destiny of the movement will be determined by each Mechista accepting responsibility for carrying the Movement forward.

Each MEChista's Responsibility

Accepting our responsibility for the Movement requires self-discipline and understanding that our behavior becomes a reflection of M.E.Ch.A. For this reason, we must be consistent in our thinking and our actions. Rationalizing our inconsistency and accountability. Mechistas in leadership roles setting poor examples only betray the Movement. Since we are seeking the freedom of our people, our motivation should be high, recognizing the need to commit ourselves fully for the sake of La Causa.

Finally, as Mechistas, we vow to work for the liberation of Aztlán, leading to socioeconomic and political justice for our Gente. M.E.Ch.A. then, is more than a name; it is a spirit of unity by comadrisimo/carnalismo, and a resolution to undertake a struggle for liberation! Tierra y Libertad!

M.E.Ch.A. Structure

In the past, the structure of M.E.Ch.A. allowed any individual wanting to organize a chapter on any particular campus the opportunity to do so. This could occur without prior knowledge of the history and philosophical objectives of M.E.Ch.A. Thus, vast numbers of M.E.Ch.A. chapters with dissimilar and contradictory objectives as well as conflicting philosophies.

Recognizing the ineffectiveness of this previous M.E.Ch.A. organizational structure and the philosophical polarity that it allowed, we propose that the following structure be adopted which makes every Mechista accountable to its Region, and every Region accountable to the National.

Campus M.E.Ch.A.

General membership shall consist of any student who accepts, believes, and works for the goals and objectives of M.E.Ch.A. including the liberation of Aztlán. College students shall be limited to six years active membership (excluding high school) as an undergraduate and two years service at the graduate level in a non-voting advisory role. Active membership will be officially recognized by their campus M.E.Ch.A. Graduates are encouraged to refrain from voting to allow new leadership to develop. When M.E.Ch.A. meetings are being conducted and M.E.Ch.A. business is being discussed, voting shall be limited to active members only.

Affiliation

Each M.E.Ch.A. Chapter shall gain its affiliation through and only through the recognized M.E.Ch.A. Central they geographically fall under. In order to be a M.E.Ch.A. Chapter recognized by the Central, they shall accept and adopt the following responsibilities: 1) Orient all members by discussing and reading historical documents of our movement including El Plan de Santa Barbara, El Plan de Aztlán and the Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A.; 2) Make important aspects of the Chicana/Chicano Movement relevant to Mechistas; and 3) send two representatives to Central and Regional meetings to be recognized as a voting chapter.

Central

Centrales shall outline and implement plans of action for their particular region. The Centrales shall be divided by counties with isolated campuses going to the nearest active Central. Each campus shall have one vote and a meeting shall be official when 50% plus one of the voting membership is present. The Central shall have two standing positions including the External and Internal Directors. Member campuses shall alternate hosting Central meetings with the hosting campus in charge of notifying participating campuses.

Responsibility of the M.E.Ch.A. Central includes: 1) screen, recruit, and educate campuses wishing to form a M.E.Ch.A.; 2) keep a record of all officially chartered M.E.Ch.A.s in their Central; 3) seek fundraising strategies to fund activities, academic outreach, and a newsletter.

Responsibility of the Central Representative includes: 1) one year of M.E.Ch.A. experience (except new chapters); 2) take a written report back to their campus for discussion of Central issues; 3) bring campus M.E.Ch.A. minutes to Central meetings; and 4) vote on Central issues in the manner that their campus has decided.

Responsibility of the Internal Director includes: 1) one year of M.E.Ch.A. experience (no exceptions); 2) nonvoting status in Central meetings; 3) official spokesperson for the Central; 4) shall set up visits by Central members at new, prospective campuses for membership recruitment into the Central meetings; and 5) head the Central newsletter committee.

Region

The M.E.Ch.A. Region shall consist of all representatives from the M.E.Ch.A. voting campuses. The Region is a logistical planning committee and receives its direction from the voting campuses. Region shall convene once a month.

Responsibility of the M.E.Ch.A. Region includes: 1) Screen, recruit, and educate campuses wishing to form a M.E.Ch.A.; 2) Keep a record of all officially chartered M.E.Ch.A.s in their Region; and 3) seek fundraising strategies to fund activities, academic outreach, and a newsletter.

Responsibility of Regional Representatives includes: 1) Take a written report back to the campus, outlining issues under consideration (i.e., actions, workshops, or speakers); 2) Vote on issues in the manner their campus has decide; 3) Each campus shall have on vote; and 4) A quorum shall be 50% plus one of all Regional Campuses.

Statewide

There will be two Statewide conferences during each year that will focus on one and no more than two major issues at which time a plan of action will be discussed. The purpose is to come out of each conference with a well planned strategy to take action on the imminent issue.

Statewide Rules includes: 1) Only M.E.Ch.A. campuses certified by a M.E.Ch.A. Regional process will be allowed to vote; 2) Community people shall be allowed to participate as observers only; 3) Individuals and/or groups with a history of party-building and cadre raiding inside of M.E.Ch.A. are not welcome to attend; 4) All entertainment shall be culturally, educationally, and/or politically oriented; 5) Nonvoting individuals attending the conference shall not be allowed to participate in debate or discussion of questions before the assembly; and 6) In a

general assembly, there will be on vote per campus and in the workshops, voting shall be done by students, certified by a M.E.Ch.A. Regional Process.

National

A M.E.Ch.A. National Conference shall be held once a year. The purpose of this conference shall be to bring all M.E.Ch.A. chapters together in an effort to form a M.E.Ch.A. National Conference structure that advocates a common M.E.Ch.A. philosophy, works towards unified goals and objectives, and reaffirms the principles of M.E.Ch.A. to consolidate our Movement.

At the M.E.Ch.A. National Conference, steps will be taken to establish ties amongst the M.E.Ch.A. chapters throughout Aztlán. As a vibrant and responsive network of activists who will respond as a unit to oppression, racism, sexism and homophobia, we will work in harmony when imitating and carrying our campaigns of liberation for our people.

M.E.Ch.A. Goals and Objectives

Objective One: We recognize that Chicanismo is evolutionary and that a Chicano identity is not a nationality but a philosophy. Chicano nationalism is the key to taking our people forward. M.E.Ch.A. will not discriminate against any Mechista who works for and adopts Chicanismo as indicated in El Plan de Santa Barbara, and the Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A. This philosophy is the key to taking our people forward.

Objective Two: In the spirit of our past and for the spirit of our future, M.E.Ch.A. will not condone, tolerate, or perpetuate sexism. Indigenismo teaches us that duality is the base for respect and dignity among our people. As Mechistas, we have instilled this very fundamental principle as our foundation.

Process of Implementation: 1) Every M.E.Ch.A. chapter will hold workshops and/or forums dealing with the contributions of mujeres to our movimiento; 2) At every National M.E.Ch.A. Conference and Statewide M.E.Ch.A. Conference there will be a gender caucus. These caucuses will be the Chicana and Chicano caucuses in which gender issues will be thoroughly discussed. There will be separate Chicana/o caucuses in which mujeres and hombres will have an opportunity to talk to each other about their experiences. Then there will be combined Chicana/o caucus in which mujeres and hombres will talk/discuss their experiences; and 3) At every M.E.Ch.A. National Conference and M.E.Ch.A. Statewide Conference there will be a Chicana Workshop in which the contributions made by Chicanas will be presented.

Objective Three: Understanding that homophobia exists in our community, M.E.Ch.A. must undertake the task of educating ourselves to put a stop to homophobic remarks in our organization. Being that there are Chicanas/os who are of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) community we must work for providing a safe environment in M.E.Ch.A. Therefore, M.E.Ch.A. will not tolerate disrespectful comments to LGBT members as they are a vital part of our Chicano community. Our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community is a very important asset not only in the growth of M.E.Ch.A. but it also provides strength and unity between our Mechistas.

Process of Implementation: 1) Every M.E.Ch.A. chapter must provide homophobia educational segments on their campus. 2) At every Statewide and National M.E.Ch.A. Conference workshops on our LGBT community and the harms and injustices of homophobia must be provided to educate Mechistas; and 3) Any Mechista who makes homophobic remarks must be stopped and

corrected. M.E.Ch.A. will not allow for any segment of our Chicano community to be disrespected as these remarks are self-defeating in M.E.Ch.A.'s purpose to help create a safe environment for members who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT).

Objective Four: M.E.Ch.A. must commit its chapters to building a consolidated M.E.Ch.A. structure that is capable of applying political pressure at the local, regional, state, and national levels without being co-opted by outside interests.

Process of Implementation: 1) M.E.Ch.A. should establish campus and issue coalitions (see M.E.Ch.A.'s Relationship to Outside Organizations); 2) M.E.Ch.A. should identify community centers in each chapter's area and establish liaison with parents and community people by doing a series of workshops on educational issues, and pressure university/community college EOP/EOPS/ Financial Aid units to regularly provide information workshops at such centers; 3) Each M.E.Ch.A. Chapter must establish and support a Central in their local area that includes high school, community college, and university M.E.Ch.A.s, with the ultimate goal of organizing a M.E.Ch.A. at every school in the area that will become part of the Central.

Objective Five: M.E.Ch.A. must work for the establishment of an alliance for Chicano educational rights that will be built locally and then linked to region, state, and national levels.

Process of Implementation: 1) M.E.Ch.A. chapters should push for area-wide conference on Chicana/Chicano educational rights and then mobilize on issues of concern on an ongoing basis.

Objective Six: M.E.Ch.A. must create educational mentor/tutor type programs organized at the Central level that shall serve as the foundation for all other organizing efforts for Chicana/Chicano educational rights. Such mentor/tutor programs should have the following goals: 1) Training Mechistas as mentors/tutors to serve as a fundamental retention strategy since such training enhances the mentor/tutor's own academic skills; 2) Mentor/tutors, when trained become a key element in recruitment; and 3) Utilize mentor/tutors to work with parents in establishing a communications network on college preparation, educational issues, and advocacy through educational issues, and advocacy through educational institutions.

Objective Seven: Each M.E.Ch.A. chapter must assess outreach, retention, and financial aid and how these services impact Chicana/Chicano students. Such an assessment must include the demand that the recruitment/attrition numbers game, which brings Chicana and Chicano students into the university and then

fails to provide adequate academic and financial support services to retain them, must stop.

Process of Implementation: 1) Every campus outreach program must be analyzed to see if early outreach and supportive counseling is being provided at surrounding junior high school and high school; demand that Mechistas receive work-study to augment such services at the junior high and high schools; 2) Demand that your campus fund a student run, student initiated summer academic enrichment program for high school students that will be organized by the respective M.E.Ch.A. chapter and that will give Mechistas jobs; 3) Understanding that Chicana/Chicano attrition rates are high on all campuses, demand that the university/community college fund the following educational modules: stress management, time management, study skills, writing lab, self-esteem, public speaking, critical thinking, Chicana and Chicano Identity/History, library research, a M.E.Ch.A. National Hotline, and free tutoring; 4) Since services are demand of the university, M.E.Ch.A. must demand that its membership be committed to these services and to academic achievement; 5) Demand that M.E.Ch.A.'s key officers be funded through work-study and offer the rationale that M.E.Ch.A. coordinates youth leadership through retreats and Central activities; 6) Demand that the financial aid office at the respective campus not acknowledge outside scholarships as affecting the final financial aid award from the university and federal/state aid.

Objective Eight: Given the poor track record of institutions of higher learning in fulfilling their mission to recruit and retain Chicana/Chicano students, demand that the president or chancellor of your campus immediately establish a community advisory committee to promote the increased allocation of resources for our Gente; submit a list of credible community people, who are sensitive to our needs, to serve on the Calmat, as well as a M.E.Ch.A. Representative; request a commitment from the president or chancellor to assess enrollment, retention, and financial aid services, then ask that a campus/community task force be formed to recommend changes to improve services.

Objective Nine: Currently, Chicano Studies programs, in most cases, have been co-opted by the mainstream educational system and communication with M.E.Ch.A. is at an all time low. Many Chicano Studies faculty have submitted to the pressures of the system and no longer support student activism, leaving their departments vulnerable to attacks from school administrators. To correct this lack of linkage with Chicano Studies, M.E.Ch.A. proposes the following goals:

Process of Implementation: 1) The immediate re-establishment of communication with student program input, and M.E.Ch.A.'s Campus Chair having a vote in departmental meetings; 2) The establishment of inter-campus Chicano Studies Concilio Networks at the local level with student and community

participation; 3) The redirection of a portion of Chicano Studies resources into cooperative recruitment and retention projects with M.E.Ch.A. and the Chicana/Chicano community; 4) Demand that Chicano Studies fund M.E.Ch.A. officers out of work study; and 5) M.E.Ch.A. should cement a positive relationship between Chicano Studies and their respective M.E.Ch.A. chapter.

Objective Ten: At the present time, very few Mechistas are involved in student government even though they sometimes could win several seats with a concerted effort. While increasing M.E.Ch.A.'s political power on campus, student government is a strong training ground to acquire leadership skills.

Process of Implementation: 1) Establish a coalition slate that pools resources, campaign workers, and votes; or 2) Establish a Chicana/Chicano coalition slate.

Objective Eleven: To augment education, each Central needs to organize a one week M.E.Ch.A. Leadership Retreat for high school students and incoming freshmen that provide political and academic skills. In addition, M.E.Ch.A. must establish Saturday Schools to assist grade school, junior high, and high school students in overcoming academic problems and instilling cultural pride.

Objective Twelve: The establishment of a National Newsletter, augmented by Regional Newsletters that provide important information on issues occurring at various campuses; this also promotes tighter linkage through ongoing communications.

Process of Implementation: Each member campus in your Region should be given the task on a rotating basis of putting out the Regional Newsletter, with each Region responsible for contributing to the National Newsletter that should eventually become a newspaper for the process.

Objective Thirteen: Collective fundraising at the local Central level should be organized with 50% going to the campuses that contribute to the Central fundraiser and 50% remaining with the Central to fund area projects. Incorporation and nonprofit status should be pursued to organize fundraising efforts for educational programs. Raza businesses should be approached to become sponsors and contributors to a Central Scholarship Fund and other educational programs promoted by the Central. Eventually, M.E.Ch.A. should work to establish a National Chicana/Chicano Scholarship Fund.

Objective Fourteen: M.E.Ch.A. must adopt principles to insure that M.E.Ch.A. functions democratically. These principles include:

1. Leadership will be based on the collective, with equal representation of Chicanas/Chicanos;
2. Authorized Representation means that individual Mechistas should not offer the endorsement of, or formally represent, any M.E.Ch.A. chapter without the authorization of the body;
3. Central and Campus Autonomy: Centrales and Campuses that accept the Regional Process and its positions statements, should be allowed to resolve local disputes without interference;
4. Organizational Issues should be brought before the body for democratic discussion and resolution, without individuals or small groups deciding outside of the chapter, since this promotes factionalism;
5. Personal Issues should be handled in an individual and private manner so that they do not affect organizational unity;
6. Slander and Rumor Spreading causes misinformation, disunity, and dissension and cannot be tolerated by M.E.Ch.A.;
7. Decisions of the Body must be respected and not undermined by individuals or small groups acting outside the recognized structure of M.E.Ch.A.;
8. Conflict of Interests between individual's within a chapter shall call for an abstention;
9. Honest Representation by Mechistas in disclosing outside organizational interests when such interests impede the democratic process of M.E.Ch.A. must be mandatory. Anyone attempting to orchestrate organized secret activity for any outside organization inside of M.E.Ch.A. must face expulsion and public exposure; and
10. Respect for M.E.Ch.A.'s Integrity and Autonomy as an organization is a requirement for membership in M.E.Ch.A.

M.E.Ch.A.'s Relationship to Outside Organizations

The importance of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán having organizational autonomy is a key prerequisite to establishing a cohesive movement that will serve the interests of the Chicana/Chicano community. Historically, Chicana and Chicano estudiantes have had to contend with opportunistic organizations that have attempted to use M.E.Ch.A. to promote goals inconsistent with the needs of our Gente. Such opportunists have promoted such goals at the expense of the Chicana/Chicano students' calling to serve La Familia de La Raza.

Meanwhile, on an apparent "different" side, opportunistic, multi-national "left" organizations continue in their manipulative covert attempts to control and/or destroy our Movement. For this reason, it is imperative that, We, Chicana and Chicano students that want M.E.Ch.A. to control it own destiny without being co-opted by outside organizations, provide our analysis on the role of outside organizations wording inside of M.E.Ch.A. In providing this analysis, we recognize the fundamental role that Chicano nationalism plays in promoting nuestra causa.

National Pride

Recognizing that the majority of our Raza are members of the working class, we avow an anti-imperialist analysis that includes Chicana/Chicano self-determination. Chicano self-determination must begin with the recognition of what is implied in using the term M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). Essentially, we are a Chicana and Chicano student movement directly linked to Aztlán. As Chicanas and Chicanos of Aztlán, we are a nationalist movement of Indigenous Gente that lay claim to the land that is ours by birthright. As a nationalist movement we seek to free our people from the exploitation of an oppressive society that occupies our land. Thus, the principle of nationalism serves to preserve the cultural traditions of La Familia de La Raza and promotes our identity as a Chicana/Chicano Gente.

Historical Examples of Infiltration into M.E.Ch.A.

Why would outside organizations seek membership inside of M.E.Ch.A.? Recently and historically, opportunistic outside organizations and/or individuals have utilized the legitimacy of M.E.Ch.A. as a voice of the Chicana/Chicano Movement to promote their own agendas inside of our movement. Such groups, lacking the same legitimate reputation with the Chicana and Chicano community, began to promote class-wide multi-nationalism that sought to displace Chicano

nationalism as the central focus for our Movement. Falsely claiming to be advocates of M.E.Ch.A. such outside organizations, groups and/or individuals have consistently attempted to erode the full development of Chicano nationalism in the student movement.

Much of the problem, with regard to confusing organizational goals has occurred due to the existence of dual loyalties, membership, and accountabilities (by individuals who often lie about their membership and accountability to an outside organization). Claiming dual membership in M.E.Ch.A. and other outside organizations, let it be understood that, We, Mechistas, condemn any outside organizations, groups and/or individuals which seek to subordinate the goals of M.E.Ch.A. to those of its own. More specifically, we condemn the practice of outside organizations, groups and/or individuals seeking to use M.E.Ch.A. and its membership to party-build. Party-building is defined as using our Movimiento to pull away membership from our organization to work for another organization. One example, is organizations, groups and/or individuals who seek to come into M.E.Ch.A. for the purpose of inviting our members to work on certain issues and then attempting to convert them into members of the outside organization.

Party-building is negative because it disrupts the normal functions and processes of any organization by creating division. For this reason, let all outside organizations, groups, and/or individuals understand that M.E.Ch.A. demands: 1) the right to self-determination; 2) that no person or outside organization shall determent our goals, structure, and philosophy; 3) that all organizations, groups, and/or individuals must respect the internal organizational dynamics of M.E.Ch.A.; and 4) that no other organizations, groups, and/or individuals may use the power of our organization to develop future student and community leaders to promote the ideals and principles of their organization.

Such leadership should be principled and not liberal. For this reason, we cannot believe in unity for unity's sake since there are many opportunistic organizations, groups, and/or individuals who care only for themselves and not for our people. Just as we would expel FBI or CIA agent provocateurs from our organizations, such opportunistic organizations, groups, and/or individuals must be exposed and expelled to strengthen our Movement.

Forming Coalitions on Principle

Generally, M.E.Ch.A. must approach coalitions with outside organizations carefully, El Plan de Santa Barbara warns us never to compromise M.E.Ch.A. principles, goals, and objectives in forming coalitions. Coalitions with outside organizations should always be limited to work around issues that affect our community directly. Therefore, involvement in issue coalitions must be based on the benefit that our community will derive from working on such a coalition.

An important consideration in forming coalitions is M.E.Ch.A.'s working relationships with Chicano grass-roots community organizations. As Mechistas, we recognize that Chicano nationalist organizations based in the community are a logical extension of our Movement beyond our years in school. Such coalitions assist M.E.Ch.A. in developing close ties with the community. Yet, M.E.Ch.A. should only enter such a coalition with the understanding that both organizations must respect each other's autonomy.

Understanding that coalitions must be based on mutual respect and mutual benefit, M.E.Ch.A. has also learned from its history that we must be cautious and not liberal in dealing with organizational opportunism when it threatens M.E.Ch.A. As Mechistas we have a responsibility to protect our organization's autonomy (which includes EPA, EPSB, and the Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A.). El Plan de Santa Barbara urges various student groups (MAYA, MASC, UMAS, etc.) to adopt one unified name - M.E.Ch.A. - as a symbol of unified philosophy with a common objective: LA UNION HACE LA FUERZA! We reaffirm our common force (M.E.Ch.A. creating solidarity for the movement).

This document was last changed or amended in whole or in part by a 2/3 vote at the 1999 National M.E.Ch.A. Conference at Phoenix Community College.