The Identity Of Chicanos

“I am Joaquín. I must fight and win this struggle for my sons, and they must know from me who I am... La raza! Méjicano! Español! Latino! Chicano! Or whatever I call myself, I look the same, I feel the same, I cry, and sing the same.” An excerpt from the poem I am Joaquín by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales one of the many activists of the Chicano movement. A movement that Chicanos nationwide pushed for civil rights against discrimination against the Mexican American community in society. As a result, many organizations, such as the Brown Berets and the UFW (Union Farm Workers), unionized and fought against their oppressors. One of the main protests of civil rights and reform was the school walkouts in East Los Angeles, California. The identity of Chicanos has many layers and has become the embodiment of pride and honor within the community.

The main beliefs and ideology of Chicanos were civil rights, but in modern society, things have changed for the better. Currently, the Brown Berets, who are still active in the community, are continuing to fight discrimination but also immigration, fight for LGBT, and women’s rights. For example, the San Jose Berets, founded in Silicon Valley in the year 2016 by Peter Ortiz says, “There was a lot of toxic masculinity in the movement's past... We’re not down with that.' (Romero 8). Some Chicanos have changed the term into a more gender-neutral term in order to restore the roots of their ancestors and oppose colonization to Chicanx, some may spell the term as Xicanx. The first “X” is from the original, Nahuatl, or Aztec language, and the second “X” was introduced to be more inclusive with non-binary people. At the University of Wyoming, Professor Francisco Rios says that the latest social reform of Chicanismo (Xicanismo) “works to recognize the multidimensional and intersecting nature of identities.” (Flores 4). With the younger generations being more vocal with who or what they identify as such as, genderfluid, transgender, non-binary, etc. the list goes on and on, thus changing Chicano to Chicanx allows the individual to be more included in their own community. Although major changes are happening in the community the current Chicanos feel as though the newer generation needs to act for their brothers and sisters either in America or the ones across the border.

In addition to new ideologies, Chicanos have been known to be very vocal about issues in many different forms, the typical more recognized forms are protests, walkouts, and boycotts. Apart from this there is also many forms of art a part of the movement such as poems, songs, paintings, etc. The art has spread the message of the Chicanos since the 1960s. In 2018 an exhibit for Chicano art called “Bridges in a Time of Walls: Mexican/Chicano Art from Los Angeles to Mexico” was displayed in Mexico City. Julian Bermudez, the exhibition curator stated, “You have a group of people who are born with Mexican heritage who have chosen to explore themes to help them and others understands that they are more than just Mexican and more than just American,” (Hernandez 1). Art, in general, has been a way for people to express themselves but for Chicanos, it goes deeper than just expression it’s a way to showcase their identity to the people who may feel unrepresented or overlooked in the rest of society.

To summarize, the identity with Chicanos runs deep with the community especially with the connection with ancestors. Whether it be through protest or through art being Chicano brings meaning to who you are as a person and to the ones who stood before you