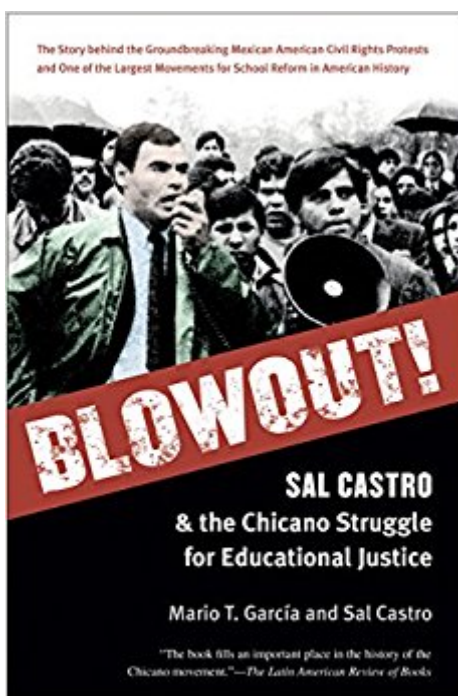


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# Blowout!: Sal Castro And The Chicano Struggle For Educational Justice



## Synopsis

In March 1968, thousands of Chicano students walked out of their East Los Angeles high schools and middle schools to protest decades of inferior and discriminatory education in the so-called "Mexican Schools." During these historic walkouts, or "blowouts," the students were led by Sal Castro, a courageous and charismatic Mexican American teacher who encouraged the students to make their grievances public after school administrators and school board members failed to listen to them. The resulting blowouts sparked the beginning of the urban Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the largest and most widespread civil rights protests by Mexican Americans in U.S. history. This fascinating testimonio, or oral history, transcribed and presented in Castro's voice by historian Mario T. Garcia, is a compelling, highly readable narrative of a young boy growing up in Los Angeles who made history by his leadership in the blowouts and in his career as a dedicated and committed teacher. *Blowout!* fills a major void in the history of the civil rights and Chicano movements of the 1960s, particularly the struggle for educational justice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A compelling story of individual courage and commitment personified by Sal Castro. . . . A masterful and inspirational life story that is brilliantly contextualized by the larger Chicano Movement.--*Journal of American Studies* An excellent read for casual readers as well as serious students of the Chicano experience, education, the history of the 1960s, leadership development, and California history. It will make an excellent choice for undergraduate classroom use and reading lists.--*Western*

Historical Quarterly A worthy learning experience. Solidly researched, with extensive notes, photographs, and a valuable appendix of Chicano historiography. Highly recommended. All levels/libraries.--Choice The book fills an important place in the history of the Chicano movement.--The Latin American Review of Books An important perspective on a major event in the history of Los Angeles schools and the reform efforts, however controversial, that needed to be made on behalf of Chicano students.--Los Angeles City Historical Society The influence of [Castro's] teaching methods and the walkouts resonate today, underscoring the importance of this publication in Chicano and U.S. History.--49th Parallel This book is a significant contribution to the literature of the Chicano/a movement.--Journal of American History This book is an important contribution to Chicano history and the field of American education.--The El Paso Times

Garcia's oeuvre has mapped Mexican American history and allowed us to imagine a different kind of past--one filled with efforts to rectify social injustices. This book is no exception; it sheds much needed light on Sal Castro's struggles to expand educational and civil rights and in so doing prods us to follow in his footsteps and build a more emancipatory future.--Ernesto Chavez, University of Texas at El Paso Sal Castro is a force of nature, a man on a mission. His story, this book, is the history of the Chicano student movement. He has left an indelible mark on the lives of hundreds of young Chicanos aspiring to achieve their unique place in the American dream.--Carlos R. Moreno, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of California Empowering the powerless requires a movement inspired by leaders who transform the consciousness of those at the bottom. The Chicano blowouts in Los Angeles schools were such a movement, and Sal Castro helped empower the students. Too many of the terrible conditions they fought against still exist today, and the kind of leadership Castro showed in the 1960s is urgently needed in a society where more than a fifth of U.S. students are Latino.--Gary Orfield, co-director, Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA Sal Castro inspired countless young people--including me at the time--to fight for change in the community, and not just in our youth but well into adulthood. The story of the school walkouts is, to a great extent, Sal Castro's story. And it is a powerful tale not only because he personified the Chicano Power Movement then, but because--to this day--he still motivates Latinos and people of conscience to fight for a better community.--Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor, First District

The real beginning of the story that became Stand And Deliver. The kids in East LA owe a debt of gratitude to Sal Castro, Henry Gradilla, Ruben Zacarias, Judd Perrine, and Sheila Smith

Fantastic book. Picked it up for a class but very informative and insightful!

excellent book!

Got this book for my father because he was a student during time and a student of Mr. Castro I read the book and learn about that time, I think it is great book to read and learn about the Chicano struggle as stated by Mr. Castro

A great book written by an inspiring person who recently passed away. There is a movie on this too but nothing compares to the book. A reflection of the student walk out movements.

A hero among all students. Motivator and supporter of children. Castro reached thousands through his charismatic mannerisms, unwavering belief in the power of the human spirit and the intelligence of all children.

It was a super interesting book with a lot of information. Not only about the Walkout, but also the Chicano movement in general as well as education. A really good book!

Blowout! is the testimonio of American educator and activist Sal Castro. A phrase adapted by a Garfield High School student from a jazz term that means "to be expressive", Blowout! was heard from tens of thousands of high school students, primarily Chicano, as they walked out of their classrooms in 1968 in protest at the poor quality of education they were receiving in East L.A. Carried out over a ten year period, this book is the result of hundreds of hours of recorded conversations compiled by historian Dr. Mario Garcia with Sal Castro as well as with a wealth of other students, teachers, administrators, artists and activists who knew Sal personally, many of whom had also been part of the High School Blowouts. These blowouts are hailed as the impetus of the urban Chicano Movement, following on from the rural Chicano Movement that had begun some time earlier with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers thus placing Sal Castro as one of the most important Chicano Civil Rights activists of the 60s and 70s. This is the first time his story has been written. Garcia frames the main autobiographical text of Blowout! with an introduction and epilogue that situate Castro's story within that of the larger Chicano Movement. In the afterword, Garcia outlines the strong links between Castro's approach to teaching and the theories of Brazilian pedagogue and educational theorist, Paulo Freire. While Freire is no stranger to most educators

today, during the 60s and 70s his work was not widely read outside of Latin America. Castro was completely unaware of his work. However, the concepts of conscientizaÃ³n (conscientization or critical consciousness) are undeniably present as you read this testimony. Unlike most other testimonios, Garcia peppers Castro's accounts with quotes and excerpts from different people and news articles. While there is the obvious danger of fracturing the narrator's story, in this case it has worked quite well and the fluidity of the text is maintained. Moreover, Castro repeatedly emphasises his desire to empower the students and community, to have them speak out so the infrequent additions adds a symbolic connection between teacher and community that suits the text. Blowout! tells the story of Sal Castro from his early childhood in Mexico to his present retirement. His firsthand experience of discrimination in the U.S. educational system as both a student and educator; in the U.S. Army where he experiences Jim Crow during his travels in the South; and society in general, with stories such as when his father is returned to Mexico after WWII as part of the "repatriation" program thus forcing his parents to separate, which ultimately leads to their divorce, all provide insights into the challenges faced by immigrant communities in the U.S. at the time. These experiences would also help Castro as he critically assessed and challenged the U.S. education system. He gives personal accounts of the Zoot Suit riots, the Watts riots, the Chicano Moratorium against the war in Vietnam and more. As a teacher of history and politics as well as his background in campaigning for various senators - including John and, later, Robert Kennedy - Castro masterfully contextualises the political and social climate of the 60s and 70s in the build up to, and the later repercussion of, the blowouts, all the while managing to maintain a sense of humour that can only endear him to the reader. This book is a strong asset not only to Chicano Studies but also to U.S. History, Political Sciences and Education Studies.

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