

Chicano Park

- Barrio Logan is located on both sides of the Coronado Bridge and Interstate 5. It has historically been a neighborhood made up of mostly Mexican immigrants who established their families and homes there. The community was changed forever when city zoning laws were changed and Logan Heights was characterized as Industrial rather than Residential. Community leaders and members had to constantly fight to keep their neighborhood safe from the toxins that were filling the many dumps in the surrounding area. The community demanded that the city set aside a space for a public park for families to take their children to. However, the city went back on their promise, and when bulldozers were brought into the space that was where the park was supposed to be built in order to make room for a new Highway Patrol station, people took action. Over 200 people built a human chain around the bulldozers and planted trees and flowers, claiming the park for themselves.

Chicano Art in the Past, Present, and Future

- Born in Los Angeles, Victor Ochoa has always loved art since the age of five when his mom noticed that his drawings consisted of complicated masterpieces instead of the stick figures that were being drawn by the rest of his classmates. Art has been a part of his life ever since. He got his B.A. in Fine Arts with a minor in Education from San Diego State University in 1974.
- Victor knew that education is an important tool to build up the community, especially since he was so inspired by the teachers who influenced him in his own life. “I really feel fortunate for living and being born in the time I did,” he said. “A lot of my teachers were very progressive, interesting characters and brought revolutionary ideas to the classroom.”

- When Victor was at school at SDSU the Chicano movement was just picking up, both in the university community and also in the community of Barrio Logan. He remembers as a child that he and his family got deported to Mexico, and he was faced with having to learn Spanish after only being allowed to speak English in his home. "I learned about Mexican history and culture," he said. "I remember the difference between being 'American' and being 'Mexican' because of the experience my grandfather had growing up in the 30's, seeing how poorly Mexicans were treated." Victor said when the movement was going on, artists would meet at each other's homes- dancers, musicians, actors, poets, painters, writers- to discuss events they could hold at the aerospace museum. They would discuss the true history of their people, the one not told in school textbooks and this prompted Victor to become more involved with the movement. "The history of Mexico was always portrayed as negative," he said. "I saw myself as a Mexican defender of our history. My *chicanismo* was kind of forced upon me."

- At the time of the takeover of Chicano Park, Victor was working at a local silkscreen shop and was increasingly becoming more interested in painting, specifically in political murals. He saw murals in Chicago and he thought that painting some on the concrete freeway pillars in Chicano Park would be the best way to get the word out about their cause. “We didn’t have newspapers or the media to get our messages out,” he said. “The murals were a sort of propaganda to get the word out.” The first murals were done in 1973 when Victor was the director of the Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park.

- Since the first murals were painted, various artists and community members have contributed to the creation of the many beautiful murals that make Chicano Park what it is today: a place to remember the past and to look toward the future. Victor is currently working on a restoration project to restore the murals to their original state, as time has weathered them down. According to Victor, the murals are just as, if not more, relevant today than they were forty years ago. “I think what the murals stand for is historical elements and community elements of the Chicano movement,” he said. “The same issues we had forty years ago are the same issues we have today.”