

Mario T. García and Sal Castro. *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Struggle for Educational Justice*.

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In *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice*, we learn about Sal Castro, the son, the student, the husband, the father, the teacher, the organizer, and compassionate leader. It is a carefully crafted and well organized memoir about a key historical figure in the 1968 East Los Angeles Chicano student Walkouts. While those familiar with the history of the Chicano Movement in the U.S will already be familiar with Castro's leadership role in the L.A. Blowouts, Mario T. García's layered and detailed work sheds new light on the many formative events of Castro's life: his up-bringing, primary and secondary education, military service, marriage and parenthood, college education, his experiences as teacher and coach, and his life-long career as an organizer. Of course the work addresses his role in the Blowouts, and in the course of doing so, the voice of Sal Castro shines through.

Blowout, does much more than give an account of the Chicano Movement. It addresses an array of historically important markers in Chicano history including, but not limited to, the Mexican Exodus of the 1910s, Repatriation, barrio formation, educational racism, Mexican American military service, Chávez Ravine, the Chicano Moratorium, Viva Kennedy Campaigns, and, of course, the Blowouts and the Chicano Movement. Its mapping of these events introduces

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those new to Chicana/o histories to key events and issues in the field. The nuance and depth *Blowout* brings to these same events will be appreciated by more senior scholars.

García does not claim to bring an objective view point to his subject matter. Instead, he opens the book describing the time he invited Castro to speak to his students at UC Santa Barbara and notes that for him, Sal Castro is “someone who has made history” (1). Even while positioning himself as an admirer of Castro’s life and work, the text does not read as a hagiography. This, no doubt, is because of García’s skill as a historian, but also because the text is based on over 50 hours of interviews. Blending primary source material, including extensive interviews with Castro, with secondary sources, García is able to bring an activist and an era to life for a new generation of historians and interdisciplinary scholars.

Although the book is inspiring, it romanticizes neither the era of the Chicano Movement, nor the life of Sal Castro. Instead, it addresses the insurmountable obstacles by Castro after the Blowouts and the ways he was ostracized in the schools where he taught. Castro was shuffled from school to school, harassed by supervisors and forced to live his life in constant vigilance. The beauty of Castro’s story is that he continued to be committed to changing the sub-standard educational conditions of Chicana/o students—and in essence, their lives. While some Civil Rights scholars tend to overlook or not write about the personal, emotional, and economic tolls organizing takes—frequently only emphasizing the positive and the “accomplishments” of a person’s organizing efforts, García, and Castro himself, do not do this. In *Blowout*, we learn the cost of leadership and the cost of challenging the system. This, perhaps, is one of the strongest innovations of the memoir.

Blowout is part of a new generation of Chicana/o Studies scholarship—work that is intersectional and interdisciplinary. This generation includes the work of Alma García, Lorena

Oropeza, Dionne Espinoza, Angie Chabram, Maylei Blackwell, and others who bring a gendered analysis to the field and insist on the body as a site of knowledge. As such, it will prove an important resource for American Studies, Movement Studies and Chicano Studies scholars for many years to come. García's attention to the context and politics of the time, his careful crafting a story that is just now beginning to be told from an intersectional perspective, makes this volume invaluable. Equally important, the voice and inspiration of Sal Castro shines throughout the text. Because of this text, his life will also prove an inspiration for many generations to come. Castro himself writes of the work as a *testimonio*, and, in its closing remarks states "This *testimonio* is a continuation of my teaching. I want my tombstone to read: 'Sal Castro—A Teacher'" (288). For professors of American Studies, Chicana/o Studies and a number of other interdisciplinary fields, this new text will allow them to introduce their students to an important and critical movement in U.S. history, while allowing them to learn from an inspirational teacher. Perhaps they too will be inspired to use their education to change the world around them.