

## Challenge #2: Pilsen

This week's challenge explores the rich history of the neighborhood of Pilsen. When Mexican and Central Americans immigrants came to Chicago, they faced many challenges. In response, they made choices that shaped the neighbor of Pilsen making it an essential part of the city's identity.

### Step 1

**Visual Exploration:** BEFORE reading the short article, *A House Called Aztlan* for our *Hood by Hood: Discovering Chicago's Neighborhoods Challenge* take a moment to explore the images in the article. When looking at the images ask yourself the following questions:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can you find?

### Step 2

**Reading:** Read the article *A House Called Aztlan*.

### Step 3

**Read Along with the Museum Audio:** After reading the article read it AGAIN but this time you can read along with a member of the museum. They have some fun insights about the article!

### Step 4

**Video Discovery:** Watch this short clips:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_2QMISXQWNA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2QMISXQWNA&feature=youtu.be)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_YQoEy4jzIY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YQoEy4jzIY)

### Step 5

**Chicago Flag Neighborhood Star Activity:**

The Chicago flag has 4 stars that signify important events to the city. However, the city is now 183 years old and many events have taken place since the flag was designed. As a large diverse city, different immigrants that came to the city changed the city. What if each neighborhood would add a 6<sup>th</sup> star to the flag to represent their neighborhood? Using the graphic organizer provided help design a neighborhood star for **Pilsen**!

## Pilsen: A House Called Aztlán



The front of Casa Aztlán, Chicago, 2011.

Pilsen is a neighborhood on the Southwest Side of the city of Chicago. In the 1840s, Ireland faced many challenges, and that is why some Irish people made the choice to immigrate to Chicago. When they arrived in Chicago, they moved into the Pilsen neighborhood. After the Irish, people from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Italy also moved to Pilsen. In the 1920s, Pilsen had the largest Czech population. They named the neighborhood after a city in Czechoslovakia, now called the Czech

Republic, called **Pižeň**.

In the 1950s, many Mexican migrants came to Chicago. When they arrived in Chicago, they faced many challenges. One of these challenges was the lack of government and social assistance for Mexican families. Another challenge was the lack of Latino teachers and bilingual classes.

They voiced their concerns to their city government, but they were not heard. That is why they made the choice to form their own organization. Mexicans in Pilsen created a community center called **Casa Aztlán**. Casa Aztlán was a place where they could find help like food assistance. It also hosted after-school programs for students that emphasized Mexican culture. Casa Aztlán also helped Mexicans living in Pilsen get access to medical treatment.

The Mexican residents of Pilsen faced many challenges in the education system of the city. Pilsen did not have a high school that helped students who spoke Spanish. Schools in the neighborhood made Spanish-speaking students attend special education classes. This was a problem because it held back students with a lot of potential simply because they

### Why Aztlan?

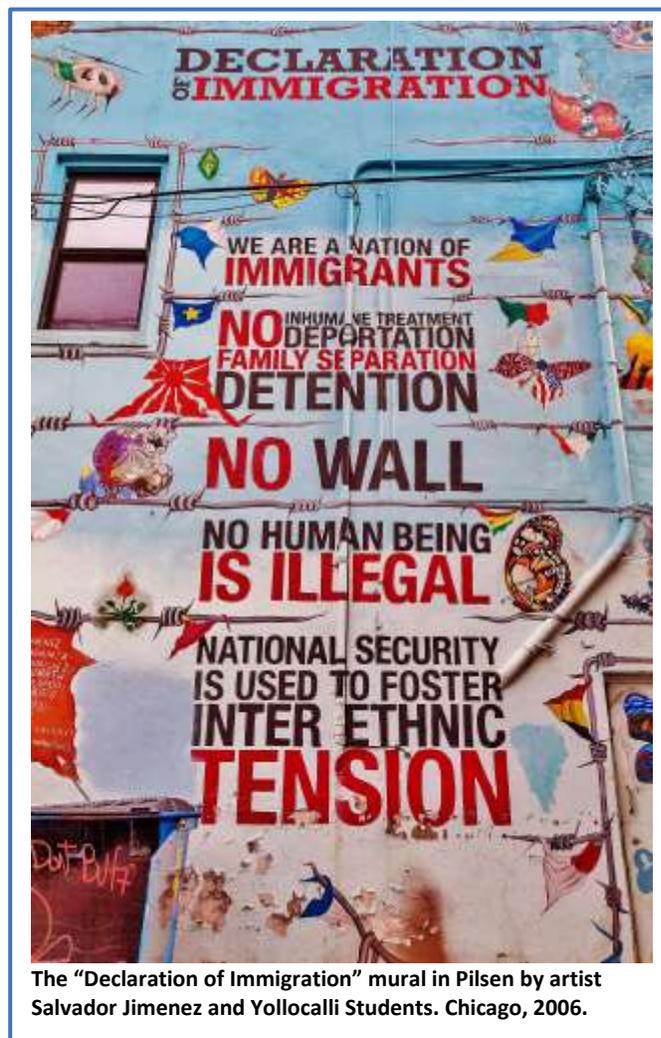
According to the Aztec people, they are descended from a place called Aztlán. Although the precise location of Aztlán is not known, some historians think it was located what is now California, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Texas. The name of the Aztecs also refers to Aztlán. Their name in Nahuatl means "people from Aztlán." Nahuatl is the language the Aztec and other indigenous people speak.

did not speak English. In the 1970s, mothers like Raquel Guerrero petitioned the city to build a school in their neighborhood. They wanted the school to be bilingual for the students in Pilsen. Sadly, the mothers were ignored. This is when the mothers made the important choice to protest. They did not give up and continued to protest for almost five years. Finally, the city gave in, and Benito Juárez Community Academy was built in 1977. The school was named after Mexico's 26th president Benito Pablo Juárez García.

Another challenge Mexicans living in Pilsen faced was a lack of access to medical care. They were afraid to go to hospitals because hospital workers did not speak Spanish. Hospitals also did not have translators. In 1989, Carmen Velásquez opened the *Alivio Medical Center* to help Mexican Chicagoans who did not speak English.

Despite the hardships they faced, Mexicans in Pilsen created beautiful murals in their neighborhood. These murals celebrate the history of the neighborhood. Some of the murals were created back in the early 1960s. The murals emphasize the rich culture of Mexicans. Some of the murals emphasize the rights of immigrants. Murals like the "Declaration of Immigration" affirm the rights of **ALL** Chicagoans to live in the city.

Despite all the challenges that Mexicans faced, they shaped the neighborhood of Pilsen into a place where Mexican immigrants could feel welcome. They changed Chicago Public Schools to make sure they serve all bilingual students, including those that spoke other languages, not just Spanish. They created lifesaving institutions, and their art made the city beautiful. During uncertain times, Mexicans help shaped Chicago into a city where immigrants feel welcome.



The "Declaration of Immigration" mural in Pilsen by artist Salvador Jimenez and Yollocalli Students. Chicago, 2006.

## Designing The Fifth Star on the Chicago Flag

What if each neighborhood added a fifth star to the Chicago flag to represent its neighborhood? For this activity you will design a star to represent the neighborhood you explored. Using what you learned about the neighborhood to help you design this star think about the following questions:

Questions	Draw a picture to represent your answer!
What was ONE challenge facing community members?	
What was ONE decision community members made about the challenges they faced?	
What was a change this community made to the city of Chicago?	

After exploring the challenges, decisions, and changes, choose ONE you want to represent neighborhood history and design your star. You can use markers, crayons, pencils, pens, and paints.

