

# Fighting Against Gentrification and For The Survival of Our Barrios

# AQUÍ ESTAMOS...Y NO NOS VAMOS!

Ernesto Bustillos

Raza Press and Media Association (5/9/10)

On Sat May 8, 2010, the Save Our Barrio Coalition (SOBC) led a march of about 100 residents and community activists through the streets of Barrio Logan. The objective of the march was to protest the “gentrification” that is taking place in Barrio Logan, one of the oldest Mexicano neighborhoods in San Diego, California.

## COMMUNITY DEMANDS REAL DEMOCRACY

The SOBC, which currently consist of the Chicano Park Steering Committee, Brown Berets de Aztlán, MEChA-SDSU, and Union del Barrio, summed-up the purpose of the march in a press statement released before the march:

“The Save Our Barrios Coalition will organize a march through Barrio Logan to inform the community about the need to unite and stop all ‘redevelopment plans’ until the voice of the community is clearly heard. The “plans” as they exist, have been created with little or no input from the community. Therefore, the Save Our Barrios Coalition is calling for a moratorium on all redevelopment until a democratic process that guarantees that residents of Barrio Logan have a say in any redevelopment of their community.”

“Barrio Logan has long been neglected by the city. For more than 60 years, it has suffered numerous forms of “redevelopment”, from the industrial zoning to freeway construction –leading to massive destruction of residential units and force relocation of thousands of families. Moreover, many of the businesses that have been allowed to establish themselves in the area have converted Barrio Logan into one of the most polluted

neighborhoods in the city and has led to a high rate of asthma and other health problems, especially among children.”

## RICH CORPORATIONS MAKE MILLIONS

“The redevelopment plans as they exist, can be characterized as nothing less than ‘Gentrification’: a process where poor and working class communities are demolished, residents forced to move out, and the area is replaced with housing and businesses that cater to the middle and upper class. It is a process by which rich corporations and land speculators make millions in profits at the expense of the original residents and city taxpayers. Gentrification destroys homes, ruins lives, and erases the history and culture of whole communities. We will not let this happen to Barrio Logan!” (SOBC Press release, 10/7/10)

The march began at 12:30 PM and proceeded through the community of Barrio Logan. The marchers, led by danzantes of Calpulli Mexica, carried signs and shouted slogans saying “The Barrio Is Not For Sale”, “Aqui Estamos y No Nos Vamos”, “Stop Gentrification”, and “En Califas y Ariza, La Lucha Es La Misma”. At the end of the march, several representatives expressed their opposition to the gentrification process.

While the march was small in numbers, it was effective in getting the message out to the community. Hundreds of people, most of them clapping in solidarity, were able to see the march. Hundreds of flyers were distributed throughout the march.

Thousands more got the message of the marchers as the event was covered by two local television stations (Channel 10 and Channel 51-KUSI).

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Speaking at the march were David Rico (Brown Berets de Aztlán), Ben Rivera (Logan Heights Neighborhood Council), Cathy Espitia (Unión del Barrio), David Rico, Jr. (Brown Berets de Aztlán), and Pedro Guardado (San Diego State MEChA).

As a means of raising consciousness and informing the community to the realities of gentrification, since its founding in Nov. of 2010, the SOBC has organized several open community meetings, leafleted throughout Barrio Logan, organized several literature tables at community events, and has had “delegation” of its members participate in pro-human rights marches.

In her comments, Cathy Espitia expressed the sentiments of the marchers when she said: “We are here because we want to save Barrio Logan. We want to stop the gentrification of Barrio Logan. Until the community has a voice on what the future holds for Barrio Logan, all the redevelopment and construction must stop. We know that the City government is not on the side of the community. Only united can we save Barrio Logan. Only united will our voice be heard. We are here today, because we believe in the power of the people.”

## EXPOSING RACIST-ETHNIC CLEANSING

To the SOBC, the gentrification that is taking place in Barrio Logan and other Mexican communities, which destroys and then rebuilds the neighborhoods for the benefit of rich white folks – is another form of racist-ethnic cleansing and yet other way for the corporate thieves to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the working class. It is the goal of the SOBC to expose these racist-capitalist plans and unite the people to effectively fight for their interests.



March Through The Barrio 5/8/10. Clockwise from top: Brown Berets de Aztlán, Community members of all ages, MEChA students, and Danza Calpulli Mexica. Fotos by