

# RPMA HOLDS WORKSHOP: EXPOSING THE ROLE OF COLONIAL MEDIA IN THE GENOCIDE OF OUR COMMUNITIES

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHICANO/A STUDIES CONFERENCE



RPMA members Ernesto Bustillos and Francisco Romero

### Raza Press and Media Association

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Under the theme of "CHICANA/O ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STRUGGLES: For A Post-Neoliberal Age", the National Association of Chicano/a Studies (NACCS) held its 37th annual conference at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Seattle, Washington. Attended by about 300 people, mostly professors and students, the conference was held from April 8 to the 10, 2010.

Extended over a period of three days, the conference consisted of close to 100 sessions (panels and workshops) and several plenaries. Focusing on "environmental justice", the workshop topics ranged from the "Environment and the Capitalist Crisis" to "Environmental Justice-Indigenous Perspectives". Awards and recognition were given to student and community environmental justice groups and individuals. A book exhibition of Chicano/Latino books also formed part of the conference.

Some of the key presenters with a history of progressive teaching, research, and writing, included Dylan Miner (Michigan State), Jerry Garcia (Eastern Washington), David Rodriguez (Cal-State Northridge), Ignacio Garcia (BYU), Rosa Furumoto (Cal-State Northridge), and others. Plenary speakers were Rufina Juarez (South Central Farmers Feeding Families-Los Angeles) and Diana Bustamante (Director of the Colonias Development Council -Nuevo Mexico). Professor Carlos Maldonado, who passed away on September 18, 2008, received the "community recognition" award for his work to establish Chicano Studies at Eastern Washington University.

### FOUNDED AS A CHICANO SCHOLAR-ACTIVISTS ASSOCIATION

NACCS was founded in 1972 and since then, with few exceptions, has held annual conferences in different cities of the United States and Mexico. In 2003, in an effort to sum-up the history and reason for the existence of NACCS, the RPMA wrote the following:

"Chicano Studies, and subsequently NACCS, were products of the Chicano Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many activists of that period of struggle, understood clearly that our movement needed an intellectual and academic component that would provide us with the information needed to construct clear and scientific strategies of struggle, as well as the documentation and expansion of our understanding of the cultural, historical, and political realities facing the Mexican communities north of the militarily imposed border. During this period, movimiento activists held literally thousands of protests, crashed school board meetings, organized school walkouts (or blowouts, as they have often been called), forcing school districts, colleges, and universities to implement Chicano Studies courses throughout occupied America."

"According to NACCS documents, the idea of a national network of Raza scholars and students began to reach actualization in 1972. It was at a meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association (SSSA), which was being held in San Antonio, Texas (in 1972), where a caucus of Raza faculty and students, separated from the rest of the SSSA, sat down to discuss the need for a "Chicano scholar activist" formation. (Read, "Community Activism and the Struggle for Raza Liberation within the National Association For Chicana/Chicano Studies", by Ernesto Bustillos, *Voz Fronteriza*, Spring 2003, Vol. XXVIII No. 3.)

Its aim, along with embedding itself within the academy (university), was for Chicano Studies to be a science that would be in the service of the community (workers and the poor) and the struggle for Mexican-Raza liberation. This meant that Chicano Studies would be first and foremost an action and solution oriented science, and its "practitioners", scholar-activists.

### TODAY, MOST PROFESSORS NEGLECT OR REJECT COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Unfortunately, today its revolutionary/activist and solution orientated aspects have been neglected or straight-out rejected by the majority of Chicano Studies instructors and professors. In the main, Chicano Studies has been institutionalized or "co-



Raoul Contreas, COMPAS caucus chair (standing) and RPMA member Jose Moreno (center)

opted" by the university; meaning that at its best it no longer struggles and resists the colonialist-capitalist nature of the university, but rather "peacefully" co-exists within the institution. At its worst, it serves to discourage activism and politically numbs students. This accounts for the lack of a militant political response from educators (old and young) to vicious wave of racist attacks currently confronting La Raza.

A recent development that might signal a return toward its original activist mission was the main program statement written by Devon Peña, current NACCS Chair. In his message to the conference attendees, Peña criticized the preoccupation of NACCS with "deconstruction of texts and narratives and a narrowing of our political work into acts of interpellation in discursive politics". He questioned, "How many times can we deconstruct a text before we realize that this is more an exercise in intellectual navel-gazing than a socially and politically useful form of knowledge that advances the struggles of our predominately working-calls and indigenous Diaspora communities? Furthermore he asks, "If our voices are heard, without those voices being grounded in actual community based struggles and social movements, then what have we really accomplished?" This is exactly what the RPMA has been saying for two decades!

### RPMA SEES NACCS AS A SPACE FOR STRUGGLE

Whether the NACCS membership become more active in the community or not, the RPMA continues to see Chicano/a Studies as valuable science. The NACCS conferences have more often than not, been spaces of struggle where new forces can be introduced to the necessity for revolutionary fundamental change. The RPMA also understand that many of those attending the NACCS conference want to ground their scholarship to community base struggles and social movements. Moreover, the majority are honest compas who, provided with an alternative, will opt for concrete activism, rather than engage in "intellectual navel-gazing".

To the RPMA, NACCS has provided a space for networking, outreach, and distribution of its propaganda. This is why its membership has attended and presented at the NACCS conference for more than ten years.

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This year the RPMA facilitated a workshop titled "The Mainstream Media: Keeping Gentrification and Environmental Genocide A Secret". Speaking at the workshop were RPMA members Francisco Romero and Ernesto Bustillos.

The objective of the workshop was to sum-up how the media "conceals" the genocidal impact of gentrification on Mexican-Raza (and other oppressed) communities and how the creation of a revolutionary Raza Media can expose the capitalist/imperialist economics behind gentrification and environmental injustice, and work with the community in their struggle for survival, justice, and self-determination.

Through a power point presentation, readings, and dialogue, compas Francisco and Ernesto, gave concrete examples of the ongoing attacks against poor/working class communities and how RPMA members work with community base groups to resist and fight back against the manifestations of gentrification and cultural genocide.

Compa Ernesto made it clear, that the purpose for the RPMA presence at the conference was not only to expose environmental injustice and genocide, but to recruit and build a revolutionary media that will be part of the struggle to -once and for all- destroy all forms of oppression.



NACCS Conference Program Cover/Poster 2010