

Regional Chicano/a Studies Conference, Arizona State University

THE STRATEGY OF FEAR AND THE CULTURAL REPRESSION OF A PEOPLE

Raza Press and Media Association
Nov. 21, 2011

More than 100 professors, students, and community activists attended the Rocky Mountain Foco Region of the National Association of Chicano/a Studies (NACCS) conference. Organized under theme of "The Strategy of Fear and the Cultural Repression of a People", the conference was held on the campus of Arizona State University, Tempe (near the city of Phoenix).

Held on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 19th and 20th, 2011, the conference consisted of over 15 panels and plenaries. The focus of these sessions included topics such as Chicano Studies In The U.S. Empire, Chicano Studies As A Pedagogy, The Struggle Against Cultural Repression, Chicana-Latin Feminist Scholarship, and Indigenous Knowledges.

DOZENS OF LEADING SCHOLARS, ACTIVISTS, AND STUDENTS ATTEND CONFERENCE

Scholars and community activists such as Rudy Acuña (one of the founders of Chicano Studies and activist),

The overriding message of most panels consisted of a call to all Ethnic Studies scholars, students, and supporters, to unite around the struggle to save the Mexican American Studies Program in Tucson City Schools, as it is but the tip of the ice-burg of racist-rightwing plans to destroy any form of education that is relevant to the experience of non-European peoples in what today is called the United States.

CURRENT ATTACK IS A PRECURSOR FOR AN ATTACK ON ALL OF US

As professor Raoul Contreras explained: "the elimination of the Mexican American Studies Program is an attack on all of us, at all levels of education—from the high school to the university. It is a precursor for an attack on all. Hence, supporting Raza Studies is a way to build political and social power."

Prof. Jose Moreno gave a critical analysis that shed light on the fact that many Chicano Studies programs and departments had been "hijacked by academicians

Fotos by Luis Moreno & Francisco Romero

struggle central to the work of the RPMA.

These objectives were met, as RPMA members attended most of the plenaries and panels, and the RPMA was able to interview over half a dozen key participants. The recordings will be used as podcasts for the RPMA's radio program, Radio Lucha.

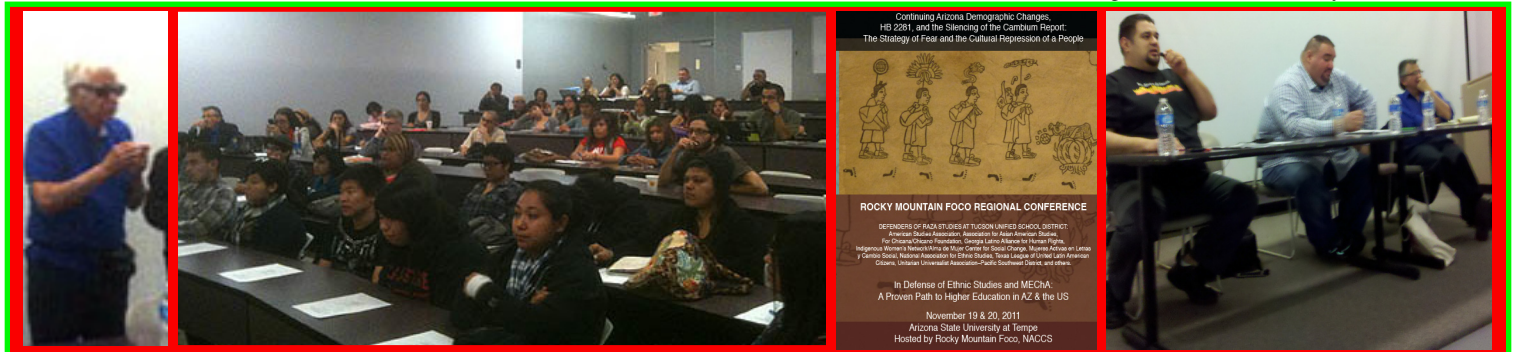
RPMA members attending the conference were Ernesto Bustillos, Luis Moreno, Jose Moreno, and Francisco Romero.

STRENGTHS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF CONFERENCE

As in all political events and social justice activism, the conference had its strengths and weaknesses.

In the area of weaknesses, we found that not enough outreach was done to ensure more participation. The conference was way too long and consisted of too many panelists. Half way through the second day of the conference most people had left. This led to at least one panelist to become angry as the organizers sought to combine panels.

On the positive level, the first day was well attended,



Rudy Acuña

Conference Attendees

Conference Program

Sean Arce, Jose Moreno, and Raoul Contreras

Mary Pardo (CSUN), Raoul Contreras (Indiana University Northwest), Norma Gonzalez (Mexican American Studies, Tucson), Sean Arce (Mexican American Studies, Tucson), Jose Moreno (Heritage University-Washington and member of Unión del Barrio), Roberto Rodriguez (University of Arizona-Tucson), Devon Peña (University of Washington), Salvador Reza (Tonatierra, Phoenix, Az.), and others, were presenters who shared their thoughts and reflections on the current attacks on Chicano/a-Raza Studies.

Also, a delegation of more than fifty students from Cal State University Northridge (CSUN) attended the conference.

OVERRIDING MESSAGE WAS TO UNITE AROUND THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE RAZA AND ETHNIC STUDIES

The conference, as explained in its statement of purpose, aimed to "engage in a constructive intellectual dialogue" around the current attacks on the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) Mexican American Studies Program in particular and against all Ethnic Studies in general, by racist right-wing sectors of the U.S. Government and society.

who are not politically active and are not fighting back against the empire".

While Prof. Rudy Acuña said that people "should be pissed off, outraged, angry, and feel the effects of the current attacks against La Raza". He pointed to the fact that "behind all social movements are the feelings of outrage".

Like Prof. Moreno, Acuña also questioned the lack of activism of current Chicano Studies scholars and professors, asking the question, "What kind of Ph.Ds. do we have, if they are not active in the struggle to save Chicano/a Studies?"

ROLE OF THE RAZA PRESS AT THE CONFERENCE

For two decades now, Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) members have attended and have been active participants in many aspects of NACCS conferences—from helping in organizing, to presenting at various workshops. This year, our purpose for attending this particular conference included:

- Support the struggle for Chicano/a Studies.
- Document the proceedings as the issue of Education is of importance to our community
- To critically participate and have a voice in an area of

the panel presentations were generally very informative, and participants were able to critique both the empire (colonialism and capitalism) and the internal contradictions (self-criticism) within Chicano Studies practitioners themselves. Self-criticism is necessary since it brings clarity to the problem in question, enabling us to rectify the situation and more effectively fight against the forces of white supremacy and capitalism who are conspiring to destroy Chicano Studies, teachers unions, and all forms of progressive education.

The organizers of the Conference, heading by Dr. Manuel Hernández (Save Ethnic Studies in Arizona Committee) should be recognized for their work in ensuring that the conference, in spite of many difficulties, took place. As a follow-up, the conference presentations will be summarized and compiled into a document, which will be made accessible to the general public.

For more information on the conference, contact: Manuel.Hernandez@asu.edu.

For information on the RPMA please visit:
<http://razapressassociation.org/>