

“Alternative Media: History and Perspectives”

Editor's Note: The following a summation of a recent forum co-organized by the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) and Agencia de Medios Alternativos (AMATE). The summation was written from a RPMA perspective.

On Nov. 20, 2009, “Dia de La Revolución Mexicana”, a forum co-organized by the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) and Agencia de Medios Alternativos y Taller Editorial (AMATE) titled “Alternative Media: History and Perspectives” took place at the Francisco Villa Cultural Center, headquarters of Unión del Barrio in Los Angeles. About 20 people in attendance listened to four panelists speak on the question of the media and the Mexican/Latino community. Each of the panelists had years of experience working with different forms of media; they were

Rodolfo Barragan (Spanish language programmer for KPFK), Luis Arritola (Independent journalist), Benjamin Prado (RPMA and editor of *La Verdad*, newspaper of Unión del Barrio) and Rey-mundo Reynoso (AMATE). The forum was facilitated by Adrian Alvarez. One of the key organizers of the event was Daniel Montes, a leading member of Unión del Barrio.

The forum had several objectives; summing up the (1) history of alternative media, (2) analyze how the mainstream/capitalist media functions as a tool of oppression, and (3) what can “alternative media”, especially Mexican/Raza media, do to achieve its goals of informing and raising the social/political consciousness of the Mexican/Raza/Latino community. To the RPMA, the general aim of the forum was to move forward our goal of building a strong collective of revolutionary media workers, which at this particular time, does not exist.

Since its re-establishment in 1990 (it existed in the 1960s/70s as the Chicano Press Association) the RPMA has been working hard to build the necessary press/media that our movement and community needs. Throughout this period, the RPMA has organized numerous events and activities with objective of reaching this critically important goal. The November 20th forum was part of this effort.

SACRIFICE AND COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE: MUST BE THE BASIS OUR MEDIA

During the presentations and “question and answer session” at the end of forum, the following points were raised or suggested by the presenters and those in attendance:

- Today, the print media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) is going through a crisis; which, due to new technology—is causing people to read less and less. This, in turn, is leading to a monopoly of the print media by a tiny group of international corporations.
- The importance of history must be recognized by all involved in progressive and alternative media. We find that too many people are reinventing the wheel due to fact that there is no connection between past movement journalists and today’s media workers.
- During the last period of struggle (1960s-70s), those living within the belly of the beast saw clearly the oppressive and imperialist nature of the United States. This understanding permitted the putting aside of petty political differences and create, to a large extent, a united alternative media.
- We have to understand, as history has taught us, that to be effective media workers, we must be willing to sacrifice and take risks.
- The reality is that radio jockeys such as “Piolin” are nothing but puppets and clowns in the service of U.S. imperialism. They are controlled by the large corporations and must be exposed to our community.
- The media that we are creating must be an organized-collective effort and not an individual exercise.

RAZA MEDIA MUST CREATE SPACES FROM WHICH TO STRUGGLE

- We must create a media that connects the struggles of Raza, from Alaska to Patagonia (Argentina)
- Our media must be involved in the process of liberation. It must be a revolutionary press that sees our struggle as both a class and national liberation struggle.
- Raza media must be on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor, on the side of the poor against the rich, and on the side of the colonized against the colonizer.
- The role of the mainstream media is to create and maintain ignorance and makes us consumers; the liberation press, on the other hand, must inform and raise consciousness among the people.
- The mainstream media puts the politics of the right and ultra right as the only two options available to our communities. It refers to them politically as “right and left,” when in reality they are the right and ultra right.

Our goal is to find the means to challenge this falsification of reality.

RPMA A LIBERATION RESPONSE TO OUR OPPRESSION

The forum concluded with some follow-up suggestions and and future actions. These included:

1. The need for the alternative and Raza media to create community-based media whose message and expressions arise from the bottom to the top.
2. We need to promote the importance of creating spaces of struggle, as UdB is doing now at the Centro Francisco Villa, where the foro took place.
3. We must understand that nothing comes out of nothing; everything is based on some kind of historical process. Alternative press is not new, the PLM and Ricardo Flores Magon produced an alternative press during the first decade of 1900s.
4. Dialogue and analysis needs to continue
5. We must go beyond analysis and unite and work on actual projects.
6. Build networks, such as RPMA.

IT WAS REFRESHING TO SEE SUPPORT FOR THE ISSUES RPMA SEES AS CRITICAL TO OUR STRUGGLE

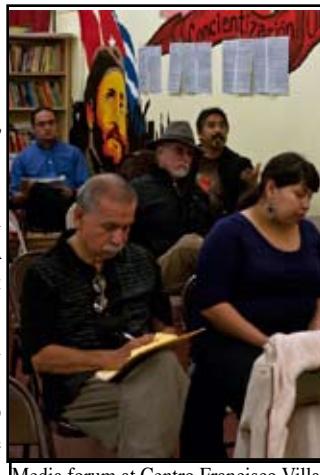
Overall, the mesa of the RPMA found that even with the limited number of people in attendance, the forum was successful. This understanding comes from the fact that the content of the forum presentations were clearly on the side of the working class and national liberation of Mexicanos/Raza. It also contributed to our understanding of how the media works and how we, as progressive and revolutionary media workers, can improve our work and struggle. It was refreshing to see media workers who currently are not members of the RPMA, raise concerns that RPMA has for 20 years seen as critical issues facing our communities.

The limitations that did represent itself (small attendance, program starting late, and so forth) is something that members of the RPMA need to address at our next general meeting, so within the association we can move to minimizing these weaknesses and errors. Venceremos!

Photos by Oscar Michel (RPMA)



A. Alvarez, R. Barragan, L. Arritola, B. Prado, and R. Reynoso



Media forum at Centro Francisco Villa



Benjamin Prado, editor of *La Verdad*.