

Raza Press and Media Association General Membership Meeting Report

Editor's Note: The Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) "General Meetings" are a space where members can report on their own work, listen/respond to RPMA board reports, and make proposals/recommendations for future work of the association. The general meetings enable the RPMA to be a truly democratic, collective, and participatory, formation. The following is a report from the RPMA general meeting held on Dec. 19, 2009, in San Diego, at Salazar's Mexican Restaurant. The meeting began at 12 noon, and ended at 2:30 PM.

RPMA Agenda

SECTION ONE:

A. Introduction/Reports

(Each member had 5 mins. to report/share on their most current work. No proposals are made during reports)

1. Jose Moreno: Has been working with the Xicano Development Center, a non-profit association, as director in the area of finances. Compa Jose recently helped organized the conference on Democracy and Direct Action held at Michigan State University -Lansing, Nov. 6-7, 2009.

2. Luis Moreno: Has been working on web pages for the RPMA, *La Verdad*, and other organizations. He also designed the cover for a new book titled *Chicano Journalism: Its History and Its Use As A Weapon For Liberation*.

3. Antonio Velasquez: Presented at a workshop on media at a high school conference organized by SDSU MEChA (Nov. 14, 2009). Currently working on production of a three-volume collection of commentaries published in Clavo En El Corazon. Also, Compa Antonio has been working on activities that empower youth in Santa Barbara.

4. Francisco Romero: Continues to work on collection of reflections/commentaries called "Midnight Special" and is closed to compiling them into a book. He also is completing a political novel, *Luz del Dia*. Compa Francisco made three presentations in the Lansing, Michigan area, two of them at the conference on Democracy and Direct Action (Nov. 5,6, and 7, 2009).

5. Ernesto Bustillos: Continues as coordinator of the RPMA. He has written several pieces for the Raza Rights Coalition bulletin and is the Editor of *Las Calles y La Torcida* (newsletter of the Chicano Mexicano Prison Project). Ernesto has just completed a book (second edition) on Chicano Journalism. He also presented at the conference on Democracy and Direct Action (Nov. 2009, Lansing, MI).

SECTION II.

B. Mesa Directiva Reports/Coordinator's Report

Raza Press and Media Association:

TWO DECADES OF STRUGGLE 1990 to 2010

Compas:

This coming year, the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) will celebrate 20 years of consistent struggle to produce the media that our communities need to liberate ourselves, and freely, as a people, determine our future.

Progress during these last twenty years has been painfully slow. A struggle often marked by substantial hardships made by a small group of committed individuals who have refused to give up in our attempts to resolving the question of the media and its relationship to Raza liberation. Unfortunately, few outside of the RPMA have recognized or even know about the sacrifices and struggles that our members have been through. The reasons for this "failure to recognize" the work of the RPMA by forces within our "movement" is something that must, some time in the future, be addressed.

Inspite of the contradictions which we have faced these last twenty years, we are confident of success. To us, it is a just a matter of time and conditions, before La Raza wins its liberation. Creating these conditions is the task of the revolutionary Raza Media; and history and present realities demonstrates that the RPMA is playing a significant role in bringing about these conditions. Only the blind can fail to see the important contributions of the RPMA.

All of us agree, that critically summing-up our work is essential to ensuring that the RPMA functions in a manner that recognizes the dialectical connection between the media and the struggle (sacrifices, advances, failures, etc.). The following summation was formulated with this understanding in mind. Hence, it includes weaknesses, strengths, and suggestions for future work of the RPMA.

As we know, the reasons we raise weaknesses is that they are the best lessons that the struggle offers us. On the other hand, identifying our strengths helps us focus on what is working and directs us to the path that the association must take.

WEAKNESSES:

(a) RPMA's membership continues to be unacceptably small, making us dependent on a small group for both leadership and work. We will not be able to reach our goals unless we get more active members into the association.

(b) We have not been able to, in any significant way, influence Raza media activists to unite with the progressive and revolutionary positions being advanced by the association. What we see as "Raza Media" continues to be, in the main, liberal and reformist. Anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist Raza media is so small that we can argue that it is non-existent!

(c) We have a situation where "Raza media" (progressive or revolutionary), for all intents and purposes, is an expression limited to the Web/Internet. Raza media, in hard copy, video or radio, is rarely found. While this may not be a problem for middle class Raza (which is a very small sector of our communities), the majority of our people do not have access, or their access is limited, to the Internet.

(d) Our work, though professional, still needs to be more artistic, creative, and innovative. As it has been raised before, our work, in all its forms (writing, images, etc.) has to be more attractive. Our analysis and work must articulate and represent the rich history of struggle that RPMA has accumulated these last 20 years.

(e) Most media workers continue to be "internet revolutionaries" (we used to call them "armchair radicals"). They are not active in any "real physical struggle" and do not volunteer their services to community/barrio based groups.

(f). We continue to see widespread individualism among media workers. They prefer to do their "own thing", versus working in a collective fashion. This is a petty bourgeois tendency that must be combated.

(g). Most "media" workers fail to demonstrate the personal sacrifice necessary for real progress. We cannot consider ourselves to be progressives or revolutionary, if we are not willing to sacrifice of our time and resources necessary to attend "at least one" RPMA event per year, or that of "any other" group or organization.

(h) We need to put an end to liberalism. This means that once a decision is made, we must do all we can to ensure that it is carried out. We have to follow through with our commitments.

STRENGTHS:

(a) The RPMA continues to be the only pro-liberation Raza media group in existence within the current U.S. borders. This means that we are the only group that functions with a structure and truly organizational process, and is independent from government and corporate funding. In a transparent fashion, we post and mail out our agendas, decisions, minutes, etc. –no other Raza media group does this!

(b). We have been the media organization (within our movement) with a consistently updated web page. Thanks to Compa Luis, it is updated regularly, at least once a month. A search through the Internet for “Chicano or Raza Journalism” will reveal the RPMA as one of the few sources under this particular subject matter.

(c) We have been productive. This can be seen in the timely commentaries, organizing of conferences and forums, newsletters, photography, and newspapers, and other media, produced by members of the RPMA.

(d) The RPMA members have engaged in community outreach and in supporting community-based groups, which demonstrates our commitment to an activist media. This includes working with youth, prisoners, workers, poor, etc., making us the only media organization concretely working with the masses.

(e) Current structure of the RPMA appears to working smoothly and has stabilized the association. We hold four general meetings per year, and in between these meetings the mesa meets to ensure that the our objectives are being carried out.

FUTURE:

(a) We need to continue with our strengths, cultivate and enrich them, as a way of moving forward and reaching our goals.

(b) We need to increase production of media, especially media that can reach the masses (flyers, pamphlets, posters, film/video, radio, etc.).

(c) Web page/blog work must continue -with addition of more video and audio clippings. This means we have to recruit members who have these expertise.

(d) Without being or seeming elitist, we must be bolder with our stance and the recognizing of our contributions. We need to make the RPMA a “must join” organization.

(e). We need to archive/store the RPMA's history (journal, selected articles, flyers, art/images/photos, etc.). Not only as a resource for our membership, but for the use of future generations of Raza media workers who can learn from both our accomplishments and our errors.

(f). We must create a list of associates who are willing to submit news/information that are critically/progressive/or revolutionary based, so that we can create a “media service” –one that actually serves are community. This should be a long term goal.

(g). Members need to make more sacrifice and at least once a year, meet or organize an event out of the So. Califas region. This will give media activists outside Califas an opportunity to participate within the association.

(h) We are depending too much on the Internet. There has to be more “face to face” interaction, otherwise we never really know who we are communicating/or working with. This is the reason that attending general meetings are so important.

(i) In order for members to attend General Meetings, these meetings have to be made more attractive and worth the time. This can only be done if the meetings consist of meaningful business, are well organized, productive, and other activities (in conjunction with the general meetings) are accessible to those attending the meetings; we are talking about cultural/social

events, forums, marches, etc.
VENCEREMOS!

SECTION III.

C. Old Items

Summation of work, critique, and recommendations:

1. Web Page (Luis): A updated web with new, user friendly format has been developed and will allow for various forms/folders to be posted. Articles, photos, etc. of members have been regularly posted. Luis has laid-out *Guerrillero/a de La Pluma*.
2. *La Pluma* (Luis/Ernesto). *La Pluma* has been completed, edited, and posted, as called for by deadlines. Four issues were produced this year (2009). We have received excellent feed back.

Themes for next two issues (Spring & Summer 2010) will be:

- A. Spring: Education (critical pedagogy, cut backs, teacher's/ student movement, etc.)
- B. Summer: 40th Commemoration of the Chicano Moratorium (war, imperialism, etc.). Compa Jose M. will coordinate this particular issue of *La Pluma*.

Priority will be given to articles/materials that connect the media to these themes.

3. Report on the Festival del Libro (Francisco). Tentative program was presented and discussed. The outline will be sent out to all members within two weeks. Book Fest will take place in San Diego, on March 7, 2010. Heading this work will be compas Francisco and Ernesto.

4. Update on projects (books, etc.). Book on Chicano Journalism has been printed. Books by Antonio Velasquez and Francisco Romero should be out within 2 to 3 months.

5. Balance/feed back on Nov. 20, 2009 foro. Round table discussion took place. Both strengths and weaknesses were pointed out.



Ernesto Bustillos, 2009 *Guerrillero/a de La Pluma* Award (foto by L. Moreno)

SECTION IV

D. New Items

1. Guerrillero/a de Pluma 2009 award. The 2009 Award was given to Ernesto Bustillos. Ernesto was recognized for his contributions to production and promoting Raza revolutionary/liberation media in general, and RPMA in particular. Ernesto was one of the founders (in 1990) of the RPMA, *La Verdad* newspaper, *Las Calles y La Torcida*, *Somos Raza Magazine*, and author of several books, including the recently released book, *Chicano Journalism: Its History And Its Use As A Weapon For Liberation*.

2. Announcements . Up coming conferences: National Association of Chicano/a Studies ((Seattle, WA., April 7-10, 2010)), Association of Raza Educators (May 10, 2010, San Diego), and Allied Media Conference (June 18-20, 2010, Detroit). All members are encouraged to attend.

3. Next General Meeting will be held in Santa Barbara the last week of Jan or first week of Feb. Details will be sent in early January.

*For those wishing to join the RPMA,
the following are the general criteria:*

1. Agree to, and be guided by, our principles of unity (see constitution posted on our web).
2. Attend at least one RPMA event per year (general meeting, forum, etc.).
3. Be active in some form, in the social justice movement/Raza liberation struggle.
4. Contribute work to be posted on our web (photo, art, video, articles, etc.)