

Regeneración

the Association of Raza Educators Journal

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The Attacks on Education, Teachers, and Our Communities

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Introduction to Volume 2, Issue 2 (Summer)

Regeneración, the Association of Raza Educators Journal, borrows its name from Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneración*, the revolutionary newspaper published during early 1900s as a voice against the Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz. In the spirit of Magón's vision for a people's newspaper and press, *Regeneración* is a medium where educators and community organizers provide analyses on education issues and reports of struggles on the ground.



Ricardo Flores Magón

This second issue, titled "The Attacks on Education, Teachers, and Our Communities," brings together a collection of articles and essays that address the major social forces impacting public education today. The collection of essays provide a snapshot of how privatization is impacting schools and students in major cities throughout the United States, from Los Angeles to Chicago. Brown, Gutstein and Lipman's well known analysis of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's instrumental role in privatizing Chicago City Schools is republished here.

The issue also brings the voices of Chicano activists who critically re-frame the current attacks against Raza Studies within a broader historical context. Indeed, for Raza and Black communities, the current onslaught against public education is part of a longer legacy of cultural and economic domination.

The issue ends with "Institutional Bullying," a walking mural developed by youth in South LA high schools, and photographs of grassroots resistance to the attacks on education, teachers, and our communities.

A.R.E. Mission Statement

The Association of Raza Educators was established to uphold the rights and liberties of the Raza community.

Education is essential to the preservation of civil and human rights. It provides the foundation for all political and economic progress and it must be a basic right of all people. Making this right a reality is the fundamental objective of A.R.E.

Raza has been and continues to be oppressed by the educational system within the United States. Therefore, we are obligated to ensure that education serves as a tool for the liberation of our community.

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Statement by the A.R.E. State Concilio

Community Self-determination: Our Capacity To Think For Ourselves and To Build New Structures and Institutions

The Attacks on Education, Teachers, and Our Communities” is a timely theme for this third volume of *Regeneración*. This is especially true given the current trend to privatize most public sectors and the de-funding of public education across the globe. Using the pretext of assisting underperforming schools, business and right-wing political alliances are using “reform” and “charterization” as strategy to make fundamental changes in major school districts such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles. In August of 2009, for instance, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) School Board passed *Public School Choice: A New Way at LAUSD*, which opens for corporate take over up to two-thirds of its schools!

Moreover, in the wake of major fiscal crises, which are integral to the capitalist system, state governments across the United States have resorted to mass teacher layoffs and increasing class sizes as tactics for balancing their books.

These attacks against public education are not only economic but are interlocked with other draconian policies that are racist and xenophobic. In places like Arizona, under laws such as HB2281, ethnic studies programs have come under attack, precisely at a time when Raza communities are being singled out for the “cause” of regional economic recessions.

More recently, one of the most racist policies since the Jim Crow laws of the late 1800s and early 1900s, in June of 2011, Alabama Governor signed into law HB 56 –a law that embodies many of the elements behind Arizona’s HR 4427, which was challenged nationally and led to a wave of massive protests in 2006 and 2007 by Raza communities.

From the standpoint of Black and Brown peoples living within the neo-colonial United States, the current onslaught to privatize public institutions is an extension of the continuation of domination. To oppressed peoples this domination is the continue exploitation of their labor.

As Chairman Omali Yeshitela of the African Peoples Socialist Party has noted, the expansion of capitalism as a global economic system that grew out of the “primitive accumulation” of capital derived from the exploitation of

Black slaves, the expropriation of lands and their raw materials from Africa and the Americas, including the cultural domination of indigenous and mestizo peoples who were integrated into the new world dis-order as “working class” subjects.

Given this history, the “education” of Black and Brown peoples within the United States has served two primary functions: to deculturalize them (strip us of our culture and identity as a people) and to maintain their subservience within the existing economic and racial order.

The neo-liberal privatization of public education, therefore, which, by the way, is now also impacting the middle-class and historically dominant groups—whose frustrations are evident in the occupy “movements” sprouting throughout the United States under the banner “We Are the 99%”—has further increased the strain that Black and Brown working class communities have always experienced. It is an existence of survival against day-to-day violence in the streets, at work, in school, and in virtually every space. Yet, amidst this world wrought with violence and dehumanization, hope continues to grow out of the very contradictions generated from these oppressive situations:

People of Color throughout the world are responding to capitalist development and global crises in unprecedented ways, including socialist strategies in Latin America spearheaded by working class mestizo and indigenous peoples. In countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela, the masses are working to create educational systems that truly meet their needs and interests.

Locally, we are witnessing the sprouting of grassroots education projects, such as Escuelita Aztlán in San Diego by Unión del Barrio and the ARE Freedom School summer program spearheaded by the Los Angeles Chapter. These local, grassroots examples, however small, represent alternatives to the corporate charter school model and true alternatives to institutional remedies that are merely band aids that attempt to cover the wound of colonialism.

As conditions worsen with more layoffs and as more of our students are tracked into the prison and military, we will experience the need to create our own schools. Yet, what matters most will be not so much how many schools we open and how many students we “rescue” from public schooling—but our own community self-determination: Our capacity to think for ourselves and to build new structures and institutions with our own hands and with our people.

Educational Transgressors: Higher Learning In Spite of Schooling

Julio Soto, ARE San Diego Chapter Coordinator

Year after year, students across the board but especially our Raza students continue to be oppressed by institutions of higher education in American society. Parading themselves as ultimate social equalizers and as the path towards the elusive American dream, institutions of higher education profit tremendously from these false promises. Hungry for change in their adverse circumstances Raza youth enter centers of mass transmission of technical knowledge with little to no space to explore their imagination or to express or highlight their cultural heritage. Pressing societal problems of our time for the most part go unchallenged due to the limited spaces for critical thinking in higher education. Lacking curriculum that aids socio-analytical reflection, institutions of higher education morph into nothing more than credential mills and the antithesis of higher learning.

But, in spite of a schooling process strategically designed as a mechanism of social control and assimilation, Raza students defy all odds; going beyond the limits imposed by an oppressive educational system. Across the United States they are demanding higher learning of a different form with a sense of urgency. Our Raza youth are becoming hopeful for a better tomorrow in spite of the educational system, calling for a framework that restores hope “not merely as a psychological sense of optimism, but as a crack in the façade of oppression” (Murphy, 1989). Hope is no longer accepted as a banal slogan for political distraction but reclaimed as resistance against a status quo and their “endless deferral of the promise of a better life” (Giroux, 2011). They demand an education that becomes “the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” (Freire, 1970).

Raza youth are refusing to be relegated to obscurity and are fighting back. The same socio-political landscape of their oppressed existence seems to be giving fruit to their resistance. Inside and outside the edifices of higher education, students are discussing their circumstances, challenging each other’s lenses and presenting new arguments found in readings, poetry, music, and activism. Wrestling with their differences and discovering their

commonalities, students are developing new pedagogical discourses. Learning of the vulnerability inherent in a system that collectively oppresses masses of individuals and finding strength in solidarity with others, students are organizing to redefine what they want their education to look like. The alliances they are forming are making room for valuing lived experiences and cultural heritage. Students are taking courageous steps by reconsidering the importance of their role in larger social issues. No longer is the capitalistic framework of higher education being accepted as the pathway to follow and new alternatives are being proposed. The demand is for an education that is anti-schooling, the unveiling of status quo repression that permeates the corporate university apparatus. While obligated to jump numerous hurdles in their schooling process, students are finding avenues of expression outside academia in the music and poetry of artists with the ability to “enflame the ambers of discontent” (Aronowitz, 2008). Artists such as Immortal Technique philosophizing about freedom and social democracy or Bob Marley calling for emancipation from mental slavery are but two examples of how Raza youth are transforming their social awareness that is fed up with the suffocating technical schooling of academia. The harshness of their existing conditions is giving birth to the collective consciousness of Raza students indignant over growing social inequities. While schools continue to be corporatized, students are dancing to a different tune. Dusting-off theoretical alternatives discarded by many as inadequate for academic learning, students are finding their voice in the works of Gloria Anzaldua, Malcolm X, bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, Cherrie Moraga, Paulo Freire, Angela Davis, and Howard Zinn amongst many others. Literature and art of various forms are helping students negate the technical, dehumanizing and alienated approach towards higher education pressed upon them. Discovering the multidimensional world of culture in literature they encounter new alternatives for higher learning suppressed or discredited in academia. These unique possibilities seem to be found strictly in the “in-between” realm where individuals interact and work on giving meaning to their life experiences (Murphy, 1989). These spaces are facilitated and created in our communities and by our communities. Organizations such as A.R.E., Union del Barrio, Raza Rights Coalition, and M.E.Ch.A., among many others, are examples of our resistance in action. Becoming aware of their collective agency, Raza students are connecting with the origins of their revolutionary consciousness latent in the residue of their misery, fueling their demand for

an education of a different form (Feenberg and Leiss, 2007).

This is not a fairytale, it is happening right now, during our time. Students are no longer allowing their demands for social justice in education to be relegated as naïve and utopian longings. Their collective struggle is making them aware that “behind the illusion lies knowledge” (Marcuse, 1955). Raza students are learning to be utopian and non-apologetic as they “open the mental space and faculties for the emergence of new historical projects, new possibilities of existence” (Marcuse, 1965). They are voicing a narrative that “speaks of resistance, indignation, the just anger of those who are deceived and betrayed. It speaks, too, of their right to rebel against the ethical transgressions of which they are the long-suffering victims” (Freire, 1998). Our Raza youth are becoming Educational Transgressors claiming their right to dignity and self-determination. Rollover corporate university apparatus, your deceptive benevolence is being unmasked by our Raza youth!!

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Voices From the Halls of a Corporate Charter School

ARE Los Angeles Mesa



(Above Photo: The student on the left holds a sign that reads: “Our LIBRARY is CLOSED There is no \$\$\$ for a librarian at our school - I am the 99%”; On the right the sign says, “Yet our school officials hold meetings in the very same library with big BANKS and companies to receive funding. The “funding” is used on police officers - We are the 99%”)

Above is a picture taken at an after school program facilitated by ARE-LA teachers at a corporate charter school, where students know first-hand the impact privatization has had on their education. Each week students meet to discuss issues they face at their school such as policing and violence.

This picture was taken after students discussed the Occupy Movement and were then asked to describe the ways they, too, are part of the 99%. In a collaborative spirit, these two students decided to capture the irony of their situation--the library is closed to the students, but is used as a space to host private funders and corporations when they visit the campus. The students provide a critique of where they see resources being allocated on campus--to policing the students and not educating them.

At a time when LAUSD is giving schools over to corporate charter management organizations we must pay close attention to what charter school

students are experiencing. While it is clear that public schools in urban areas are currently failing students, we must be critical of what alternatives are presented to our communities. With an increasing number of privatized charter schools heavily dependent on private funding being opened in our communities we must be concerned about the accountability mechanisms in place to address the issues described in this photo. Overall, we should be most concerned with where the priorities of these schools fall and how private charter management organizations are held accountable.

In 2009, ARE Los Angeles released a statement regarding our position on corporate charter schools which reads, “We believe in a fully funded and truly public education. This means that federal and state bureaucracies should be responsible for providing an adequate and quality education for every child; and that all education policies and practices be fully inclusive of the voices of all stakeholders. Public education should remain a right and not a commodity that only a select few can purchase” (Publicity / Community Relations Committee, 2009). Today, as a chapter, we continue to stand firmly behind the notion of a fully-funded public education for all.

Reflections on the Film *Granito de Arena*

Ergin Erhuy, Teacher

Editor’s Note: “*Granito de Arena* is the story of hundreds of thousands of public schoolteachers engaged in a grassroots, non-violent resistance movement struggling for social and economic justice in Mexico’s public schools for over 25 years, despite facing brutal repression. Completed in 2005, *Granito de Arena* provides context and background to the unprecedented popular uprising that exploded in Oaxaca, Mexico, in 2006,” (<http://www.corrugate.org/granito-de-arena.html>).

Perhaps what is most unsettling about *Granito de Arena* is the future the film promises. At the start we join the struggle of protestors fighting a new

government sanction supposedly designed to improve conditions in Chiapas, one of the poorest states in Mexico. We see the violent end of the battle at Mactumactza—a well-known rural college in Chiapas—which acts as the symbolic end to a system that one interviewee claims is “like a mother to us.”

As education is left in the hands of the world bank [sic], phrases like “human capital” become commonplace and performance on standardized tests determine which schools become *escuelas de calidad* or “quality schools.” If this sounds familiar, it’s because it should; NCLB, and other recent reform movements like “Race to the Top”, work basically the same way. As corporations take over elements of public education, teachers and students suffer. Students in Mexico are victims of poverty and a system with sinister goals and interests. In the end, the world bank only seems to want “schools to prepare a workforce that they can exploit in sweatshops” (Friedberg, 2006).

While public education remains “free” in the United States, the World Bank and the demands of globalization have changed the landscape of public education in Mexico. Coupled with the fact that the union has become corrupted, most public educators in Mexico have no choice but to protest. “We’re fighting because we’re poor and we have to,” says one of the protestors at the beginning of the film.

There is a similar war being waged here in the United States, but it certainly feels a lot different than the war in Mexico. It seems that we, too, face the pressures of structural readjustment reforms except that here it seems like more people welcome the change. At the heart of the Libertarian movement is the desire to privatize everything and diminish government control, and we’ve been proselytized by corporate propaganda in the form of major Hollywood films (*Waiting for Superman*), which push the charter schools initiative. And while they may seem rather innocuous, the establishment of charter schools is the first step in transforming education into the development not of educated citizens, but of human capital. The standardization of curriculum has replaced culture with efficiency and has laid the groundwork for our schools to be transformed into the kinds of schools seen in *Granito de Arena*. While Mexico faces corruption, the major struggle in the United States seems to be apathy; protest rallies like those seen in the film are almost inconceivable here in the States.

It's almost as if director Jill Friedberg is urging public school educators to become the voices of change. It's almost assumed that if you are a teacher in Mexico, you are also a social activist in some respect. In the United States, teachers are silenced and public concern about education is assuaged by corporate propaganda. When we're shown ads created by major corporations about the so-called positive effect they've had on public schools in Mexico, I'm reminded of Bill Gates extolling the virtues of charter schools in *Waiting for Superman*.

In the United States it seems as though we're headed in the same direction. We use standardized testing to reduce the identity of our schools to a single API score, and we've also taken measures to pre-emptively silence teachers. We have legitimized standardization under the guise of professionalism. Michael Apple refers to this phenomenon as "intensification": teachers are less likely to resist change if they are kept busy. In "Standardizing Knowledge in a Multicultural Society," authors Sleeter and Stillman argue that curriculum is too strongly framed and that major decisions about curriculum are

With all of these elements in play, it's only a matter of time before a few major corporations take over public education here in the United States. It's already being done on a small scale and with dubious results. As we're fed propaganda about the effectiveness of charter schools, we're conveniently not told that these schools exclude English learners and students with special needs. We're also not told that major corporations view public education as an untapped goldmine. "Privatizing education is a \$4 trillion industry" (Levin, 2006)...

made without the input of teachers and local communities. And since, as Sleeter and Stillman argue, most of our curriculum is written from a "white" perspective, we have virtually eradicated any sense of multiculturalism ignoring and silencing the cultural perspective of minority groups.

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being done on a small scale and with dubious results. As we're fed propaganda about the effectiveness of charter schools, we're conveniently not told that these schools exclude English learners and students with special needs. We're also not told that major corporations view public education as an untapped goldmine. "Privatizing education is a \$4 trillion industry" (Levin, 2006) and it's no surprise that many corporations are vying for a piece of our public education system.

In my own experience, I find that lack of funding is a major problem in education. I worked at a school with few resources, which made it nearly impossible to be an effective educator. Students knew they attended a failing school, and I felt like I couldn't do anything about it. Public education is a messy and expensive hindrance to taxpayers, and I fully expect to see a major movement to begin privatizing education. It's financially irresponsible to keep funding a system that seems to be so disappointing. Our scores on standardized tests are woefully inadequate and according to most global measures, our public education system lags behind several other nations. Students in other countries consistently outperform our students, so it makes sense that eventually we'll hand public education over to the corporations. But don't fret; I'm sure Coca-Cola has it all figured out.

All of these elements predict an unsettling future. The standardization of curriculum, along with high-stakes testing and the increasing privatization of education all point to a similar apocalypse here in the United States. Lars Von Trier once said that a good movie should be like a rock in your shoe, and at the conclusion of *Granito de Arena*, we're left unsettled by the future that awaits us.



1979 Teachers Strike, Mexico. Photo: Jorge Acevedo.
Source: <http://www.corrugate.org/photos.html>

Arne Duncan and the Chicago Success Story: Myth or Reality?

Jitu Brown, Eric (Rico) Gutstein, and Pauline Lipman

Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Rethinking Schools* and is reprinted with permission here. For information on *Rethinking Schools*, please go to: www.rethinkingschools.org.

When ex-President Bush was elected in 2000, he brought with him former Houston Superintendent of Education Rod Paige to be Secretary of Education. He also brought the "Texas miracle" — supposedly increased test scores attributed to Texas' strict accountability system. All eyes smiled on Texas as those measures quickly became part of No Child Left Behind, passed into law in 2001 by both political parties. Before the end of Bush's first term, Paige would leave in disgrace, thanks to revelations of cooked scores, forced-out students, and other barely legal means of inflating test results.

With the appointment by Barack Obama of Arne Duncan — a noneducator from the business sector who was Chicago's "chief executive officer" — as U.S. Secretary of Education, this phenomenon may repeat itself. For the past several years, Chicago's model of school closings and education privatization has received national attention as another beacon of urban education reform. This may have special relevance as the number of schools "identified for improvement" by NCLB criteria grows, numbering 11,547 nationally in the 2007-08 school year. Other school districts across the U.S. have already undertaken programs similar to Chicago's — New Orleans, in the wake of Katrina, has had a massive privatization of schools (see the special report on New Orleans in *Rethinking Schools* Vol. 21, No. 1), New York City has proposed closing and phasing out schools using criteria similar to Chicago's (e.g., test scores), and Philadelphia has followed suit as well, with a number of new charter schools. As Chicago Mayor Daley said in a 2006 press conference, "Together, in 12 years we have taken the Chicago Public School system from the worst in the nation to the national model for urban school reform." The Chicago Commercial Club's Renaissance Schools Fund Sym-

posium, "Free to Choose, Free to Succeed: The New Market in Public Education," in May 2008, was attended by school officials from 15 states. The headline for a Dec. 30 article in the Washington Post claimed, "Chicago School Reform Could Be a U.S. Model." And outgoing Secretary Margaret Spellings praised Duncan as a national leader for his teacher incentive pay program.

However, Chicago school policy has not really been set by Duncan — Chicago's education agenda is bigger than him and is about more than schools. Of course, he brought to the job his own strengths and weaknesses, and undoubtedly his own perspectives. We do not argue with those who claim that there have been some constructive steps while Duncan was CEO of Chicago's schools. We recognize that his administration has responded to some initiatives that have emerged from the community and been organized by grassroots organizations. These include, for example, support for the state-funded Grow Your Own Teachers program, designed to recruit community members to be credentialed in order to teach in local schools and a program to help 8th graders make a smoother transition to high school. However, the larger agenda has been corporate and privatizing.

But Chicago Public Schools (CPS) policies are not really about Duncan or his successor. The biggest threat to finally achieving equitable and quality education in Chicago's low-income African American and Latino/a schools is not the individual who carries out the policy but a system of mayoral control and corporate power that locks out democracy. The impact of those policies includes thousands of children displaced by school closings, spiked violence as they transferred to other schools, and the deterioration of public education in many neighborhoods into a crisis situation.

So it is important to describe the agenda in which Duncan is complicit. Two powerful, interconnected forces drive education policy in the city: 1) Mayor Daley, who was given official authority over CPS by the Illinois State Legislature in 1995 and who appoints the CEO and the Board of Education, and 2) powerful financial and corporate interests, particularly the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago whose reports and direct intervention shape current policy. As Pauline documented in her book, *High Stakes Education*, the mayor and Civic Committee are operating from a larger blueprint to make Chicago a "world-class city" of global finance and business services, real estate

development, and tourism, and education is part of this plan. Quality schools (and attractive housing) are essential to draw high-paid, creative workers for business and finance. Schools are also anchors in gentrifying communities and signals to investors of the market potential of new development sites. For Chicago's working-class and low-income communities, particularly those of color, this has meant gentrification and displacement, including of thousands of public housing residents. As in other U.S. cities, Chicago has also handed over public services (public housing, schools, public infrastructure) to the market and privatized them, and public education has been in the forefront. Although not the architect, Duncan has shown himself to be the central messenger, manager, and staunch defender of corporate involvement in, and privatization of, public schools, closing schools in low-income neighborhoods of color with little community input, limiting local democratic control, undermining the teachers union, and promoting competitive merit pay for teachers.

On the Ground in Chicago

CPS is the nation's third largest public school system, behind New York and Los Angeles. According to the CPS website, the slightly over 400,000 students attend around 655 schools (including 56 charter campuses), and are 46.5 percent African American, 39.1 percent Latino/a, 8.0 percent white, 3.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American, and 2.9 percent multiracial. The student body is 85 percent low-income. Chicago's principals are majority African American (54.1 percent), and 13.2 percent Latino/a, and 31.3 percent white. The almost 25,000 teachers are 35.8 percent African American, 13.2 percent Latino/a, 47.3 percent white, and 3.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American. And Chicago is well-known for having one of the most segregated school systems (and housing patterns) in the nation; literally hundreds of schools are 90 percent or more African American or Latino/a (e.g., 216 are 99 percent or more black!).

Let's separate myth from reality. The myth is that Chicago has created a new, innovative way to improve education — Renaissance 2010. The heroes in this myth are Mayor Daley, who introduced Renaissance 2010 in June 2004 at a Commercial Club event, and Arne Duncan, who oversaw its implementation and was its chief spokesperson. Renaissance 2010 was touted as the future of education in Chicago, with a plan to close 60 schools and open 100 new, state-of-the-art, 21st-century schools. These schools

would be either small, charter, or contract schools. Renaissance 2010 was (and is) marketed as an opportunity to bring in new partners with creative approaches to education. That's the myth.

There is a completely different reality on the ground. For affected communities who have longed for change, Renaissance 2010 has been traumatic, largely ineffective, and destabilizing to communities owed a significant "education debt" (to quote Gloria Ladson-Billings) due to decades of being underserved.

The first phase of Renaissance 2010 was called the Mid-South Plan, announced in 2004. The Mid-South is a historic, primarily African American community on the South Side. It is also important to know that the Mid-South Plan ran parallel to the Chicago Housing Authority Plan for Transformation — the dismantling of public housing, a large concentration of which was in the Mid-South and on the African American West Side.

Collateral Damage

The Mid-South Plan was designed to close 20 of its 22 schools, almost entirely African American, over a four-year period, replacing them with Renaissance 2010 schools. Parents received notice from the Board the final day of school in 2004 that their children's schools were closing. Children have been treated as cattle, shuffled around from school to school. One Mid-South school, Doolittle East, received over 500 students from June to September 2005 without additional resources to facilitate this change. This resulted in spiked violence. On the west side, the closing of Austin High School (another African American school) resulted in over 100 students who used to walk to school having to leave their community to go to Roberto Clemente High School, a primarily Latino school over five miles away. The results were spiked violence. When Englewood High School closed in 2006, hundreds of students were parceled out to Robeson, Dyett, Hyde Park, and Hirsch High Schools — all are African American. The community warned CPS that these moves would result in increased violence and put children's lives at risk due to crossing neighborhood and gang boundaries. As usual, Duncan and CPS ignored community wisdom, and the results at all of these schools were destabilizing spikes in student violence.

Arne Duncan has overseen the beginning destruction of neighborhood schools with neighborhood students. Schools are no longer community

pillars because many students no longer live in the area. When CPS closes schools and reopens them as Renaissance 2010 charter or contract schools, there is no guarantee or requirement that students who attended the old schools will go to the new ones — and many don't. For example, not all new schools are the same grade level as the old schools. There are complicated applications and deadlines, limits on enrollment, requirements of families, and informal selection processes that may disadvantage some students.

Families with multiple children who used to attend one school have had to scramble as schools close and their children are split up. Young children who walked to their neighborhood school have had to leave their community and cross heavily trafficked streets. Schools that are "turned around" terminate all adults in the building, including security, custodial, clerical, paraprofessional, and kitchen staff (as if they contributed to students' poor performance),

causing severe dislocation and job loss in the community. Tenured teachers who are released are reassigned for 10 months as negotiated in the union contract. During this time, they receive their salary and benefits, sub some days of the week, and look for a position on other days. At the end of the 10 months if they have not found a position, they can be "honorably terminated." As one parent of a child in a closing school said, "when you close a school, you kill the heart of the community."

Dumping Democracy

In a democratic society, instruments of engagement allow citizen voice in decision-making processes. In Chicago education, that instrument is Local School Councils (LSCs). The most powerful parent, community, and

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teacher, local-school, decision-making structures in the country, LSCs' responsibilities include hiring principals, monitoring budgets, and developing school improvement plans. With support, LSCs have demonstrated that they are effective models of local school decision-making. A 2005 Designs for Change study of 144 of the most successful neighborhood schools in Chicago serving primarily low-income students listed effective LSCs as a key reason for success. Despite this and other evidence documenting LSC effectiveness, CPS, under Duncan, has worked tirelessly to weaken LSCs by whittling away at their authority.

The LSCs came out of the grassroots movement to elect Harold Washington, Chicago's first black mayor, in 1983. Parents and community members across the city made alliances and worked with school reformers to fight for local school councils, which the state legislature created when they passed the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act. Chicago's LSCs are probably the most radical school reform in the country and are the largest body of elected, low-income people of color (especially women) in the United States.

In implementing Renaissance 2010, CPS ignored LSCs in the decision-making process. In many instances, the LSC at a school targeted for closure played a major role in the resistance to the school being closed. Why is CPS working to eliminate LSCs? Consider this: Chicago has almost 7,000 LSC members. If they were organized, they would be a major force in the struggle for equity in education. In fact, CPS has worked extremely hard to underserve LSCs. When LSCs started in 1988, CPS provided all the training to LSC members. However, over the years, literally thousands of LSC members have complained about that training. CPS provides no information on the general history of Chicago school reform, nor specifically how LSCs came into being as we explain above. CPS also does not provide any specific training to students on LSCs (each high school has one student member). In response, a number of community organizations have done their own, independent LSC training for years. Duncan publicly stated in April 2007 that he wanted to break the "monopoly" of the LSCs, and in October 2007, Board of Education president Rufus Williams, in a speech to the City Club of Chicago — a major grouping of business people — likened LSCs running schools to having a chain of hotels being run by "those who sleep in the hotels." Nor is this attitude

merely rhetorical. Until 2007, when public scrutiny exposed them, Duncan's office overseeing LSCs had a staff of 7 facilitators to train and develop LSCs at nearly 600 schools. This leaves LSCs operating at a structural deficit — set up to fail.

In a democracy there must be opportunities to impact decision-making. CPS has refined sham hearings to a twisted art form. When schools are slated to close, CPS is supposed to hold public hearings (which Duncan never attended) so that a hearing officer and board members (who almost never attend) can engage the school community and listen to their rationale as to why the school should not be closed, or other alternatives should be explored. In virtually every case, parents, students, teachers, and community pour out their hearts. In many cases, they document how their school has been drastically underserved by CPS or that their school has consistently improved. Tears are shed out of fear for their children's safety or the destruction of a family atmosphere in a school building; yet the CPS Board — on Duncan's recommendation — consistently votes unanimously to close the school. This has prompted a revitalized effort by community members and organizations to remove the mayor's authority to appoint the CEO and the school board and move towards an elected school board.

Militarizing Public Education

To justify Renaissance 2010, Duncan has been a strong proponent of school choice — including military schools. He was quoted in the Nov. 2, 2007, issue of *USA Today* saying: "These are positive learning environments. I love the sense of leadership. I love the sense of discipline."

According to the CPS website, Chicago has "the largest JROTC program in the country in number of cadets and total programs." CPS has five military high schools, more than any city in the nation, and 21 "middle school cadet corps" programs. The military high schools teach military history and have military-style discipline. Students wear military uniforms, do military drills, and participate in summer boot camps. The hierarchical authority structure mirrors the Army, Navy, and Marines, with new students ("cadets") under the command of senior students who work their way up and require obedience from those in "lower ranks." Like in the military itself, questioning, let alone challenging, authority is not looked upon kindly. In a city where barely 50 percent of entering high school students graduate (Swanson, 2008), and in a country involved in two wars, the option of military service tempts many,

especially in a period of economic crisis. All but one of the military high schools are in African American communities, and all the middle school cadet programs are in overwhelmingly black or Latina/o schools. The rapid increase in these programs has occurred largely under Duncan's watch, and CPS plans additional ones in the future.

Narrowing the Curriculum

Although gutting bilingual education, curtailing culturally relevant and critical pedagogies, and teaching to the test were byproducts of Chicago's high-stakes accountability policies before Duncan, since he took over, accountability has increased. Before Duncan, schools could be put on probation and have external partners forced upon them, but now schools are phased out, closed, or "turned around" by private contractors (some funded by the Gates Foundation). In the turn-around model, everyone is removed from their position, from principal to custodial workers. Accountability measures drastically increase pressure to do well on standardized tests. "Extracurriculars" rapidly disappear, like art, physical education, and recess, as reported in an Aug. 25, 2008, *Chicago Sun Times* article.

Attacking the CTU

Two thirds of the 76 Renaissance 2010 schools are charter or contract schools. Not only do charter schools (since 2003) need only 50 percent certified teachers, but their teachers cannot be part of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) bargaining unit of 32,000 members. As one might expect, the union opposes Renaissance 2010. Contract school teachers can join the CTU — but only if their administration permits it. Chicago is losing its certified, union teachers as schools are closed or "turned around," and displaced teachers with long-time seniority are becoming common. At a January 10, 2009, public forum on school closings attended by 500 people, veteran and award-winning teachers testified that they had lost their jobs through school closings and had not been rehired. As it is, charter schools pay thousands of dollars less, on average, for teachers with equal longevity, and many new schools substitute younger, less-expensive teachers for veteran, experienced union members.

Chicago's policies have no doubt influenced Obama's recommendations to double charter-school funding, institute merit pay for teachers, and emphasize standards and accountability. With Duncan as Secretary of Education,

Regeneración

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Chicago's so-called successes and model of privatization, disinvestment, corporate/charter schools, and neighborhood school closings linked to displacement will garner attention and likely shape the discourse, policy, and practices of the Department of Education for the nation's schools. Since Duncan was an eloquent proponent of all these in Chicago, we should assume that he would continue to be so — unless other voices make themselves heard.

Lessons from Chicago

Every time CPS proposes closing a neighborhood school, Chicago parents, teachers, and students organize, resist, and fight hard. Across the city, for the past several years, at every so-called hearing CPS has organized, the community turns out to fight — not for school choice and Renaissance 2010 schools, but for quality schools with qualified, conscious, caring teachers and adequate resources, in the existing school buildings in their neighborhood. Chicago's experiences demonstrate that when people organize around their needs, victories can be won. Community organizations and residents, joined by progressive teacher and school reform groups, fought back and derailed most of the plan to close 20 of the 22 schools in the Mid-South (see "We're Not Blind. Just Follow the Dollar Sign," *Rethinking Schools*, Vol. 19, No. 4). But we have also seen the school closings shift to other parts of the city, some of which are less organized.

This speaks to how we understand our current tasks. We know that we have to continue to be involved in local educational issues while demanding that our communities be paid the education debt they are owed. And with the Obama administration, we should open the window of opportunity to demand that education be a top-tier issue in the U.S.

But we also understand two other key points. First, while we fight hard against educational privatization as well as displacement, we have to collectively develop a positive alternative, a strong and unifying vision of what education should be and a program that makes it real. We have to work for, and rally people around, what they themselves have repeatedly expressed — quality schools in every neighborhood that any resident can attend, adequate and equitable funding, qualified and caring teachers, genuine opportunity for parent input and decision-making, smaller class sizes, multiple and authentic assessments, and socially just and culturally relevant curriculum that prepares students to take their rightful place as makers of

history and actors in the world. A critical means to this end is a community-based, democratic process of school improvement.

Second, it will take a social movement to push this agenda, no matter who is in the White House and Office of Secretary of Education. Our experiences and observations tell us that genuine partnerships between educators and engaged communities, and links between community wisdom and academic knowledge, can contribute to this social movement. We cannot build toward education for social justice without real partnerships in which teachers understand that their interests and those of their students' neighborhoods are fundamentally aligned and that they need to express real solidarity with the ongoing struggles of those communities. This is needed not only to defend but also to transform public education in the real interests of all students, families, and their communities.



COVER PHOTO: Students walk-out and march through the streets of Los Angeles, CA, from their *Ánimo Justice High School* campus to the offices of the corporate charter management organization *Green Dot Public Schools* in this photo from March 26, 2010. Students and their parents organized this demonstration and a series of others after being notified that their school would be closed. (Photo Courtesy Oscar Michel)

The De-Funding of Education

By Luis Reyes, Member, ARE Los Angeles

Education in low-income communities has been de-funded on a regular basis for decades now. Recently, those cuts have been expanded to include all of public education. But don't think that the schools that have been previously targeted were spared, no. They have been further ravaged through more budget cuts.

That schools in low-income communities tend to be predominantly Black and Brown can be seen as a coincidence, as a great misfortune. But that perspective would be nothing more than convenient ignorance or, more precisely, convenient negligence. Those who would paint the picture that the schools under siege have been unfortunate targets, and nothing more, would be complete liars. Whether contrived or happenstance, liars none-the-less.

It is no coincidence that Black and Brown schools are among those with the least resources. This is by design. Legislators and bureaucrats are well aware that this is occurring because they are making those decisions knowing the poorest sectors of all school districts are the most impacted.

Let us ponder why this continues to happen... Maybe because poor people are seen as being worth less than others... Maybe because Black and Brown children are seen as less deserving... Perhaps it's because the existing resources are scarce and must be preserved for affluent and white public schools... Maybe it's because those in power, who are either White or beholden to White interests, look at those poor Black and Brown students and don't see themselves reflected... And it might be, as a good friend and colleague once stated, because "They look at our schools and say to themselves, 'I don't care! Those aren't my kids!'"

Have we come to a place and time in America where racism and classism are so prominent that we would deny children a decent education?! No, we have not come to that place and time; we have been living there for generations!

A decent education is the only viable way out of poverty. Luck, miracles, and the kindness of others do not exist. So to systematically deny poor Black and Brown children a decent education is to cut-off their only hope for escap-

ing poverty. In other words, government agencies and the school districts they oversee are creating and perpetuating poverty. By starving the schools Black and Brown children attend they are sending a message. That message is, "You are not worth the investment. We will not give you an opportunity to succeed. You deserve to live a life of poverty and misery," plain and simple. Painful? Yes. Racist? Yes. Despicable? Yes. Yet it remains: plain and simple.

And this begs the question: Do we have a choice? And the answer is: YES! We do have a choice because we have a voice. But complaining to each other is not the solution. Nor is it to complain to those in power. They're too myopic and crass to care. We need to organize in our families and communities to start strategizing plans of action. We need to invest our time and energy, as scarce as those are when we're scratching and surviving. We need to join and create progressive organizations that speak directly to what our children need and deserve.

Our collective voice is much more powerful than our individual ones, so let us harness that strength. We must demand, in no uncertain terms, that our children receive a quality education. We must hold politicians and bureaucrats accountable by demanding that school funding become an immediate priority. We demand that those schools most needing of resources be addressed immediately and without reservation.

Our children have suffered long enough and it is time for constructive change. But nothing can be achieved if we are not willing to do battle, if we are unwilling to fight for our children and their future. Yes, life is hard. We are facing many obstacles and fighting powerful interests. But it is up to the poor, the working class, to rise up and challenge us to make that effort. Our children are too intelligent, too deserving, too hard working to not fight for.

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Profile of a Venture Capitalist: Eli Broad and His Influence on Urban Education

Susan Friendson

Public schools have often been compared to factories, but in the past ten years or so, some schools have been penetrated by the ideology of corporate billionaires who seem to take the comparison literally. To men like Eli Broad, a retired businessman whose foundation funds the Broad Superintendents' Academy, underperforming urban schools can increase their efficiency if they're led by authoritarian leaders. Broad's academy turns seasoned corporate managers and military officers into the promoters of what he considers positive school reform efforts: charter schools and merit pay for teachers whose students improve their standardized test results. In reality, his academy fertilizes the privatization of public schools, and its graduates disseminate a culture of fear with their top-down, my-way-or-the-highway brand of control. After their short training, these education greenhorns demand obedience, caring nothing for the ideas of experienced students, parents and teachers. If our communities don't wake up to this violation of urban school districts by businessman like Eli Broad and others like them, authentic urban innovation will likely shrivel up, and democratic education will be reserved for the wealthy only.

Like most non educators, Eli Broad knows how to help low performing schools improve. He believes the success he found in the world of business can simply transfer to the world of teaching and learning. On the Broad Superintendents Academy's website, he and his wife's biography claims, "Their mission is to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education" ("Eli and Edythe"). But Broad might not have enough understanding of the complexities of urban education to even know what "the public good" is. According to Diane Ravitch, former United States assistant secretary of education, "The [aim] of the corporate education reform movement is to push market norms into education. The corporate reformers assume that teachers aren't working hard enough and will work harder if they have the lure of more money and if they compete with one another" (Strauss). In fact, Eli Broad believes that traditional teacher education is no longer effective in preparing America's teachers. He refuses to consider that urban educators' difficulties are compounded by problems that accom-

pany high concentrations of poverty. Instead, he and others like him extol the virtues of charter schools, even though charter schools drain public coffers and help investors make profits. Money manipulators – some billionaires like Broad, and some Wall Street hedge fund managers – have recently been "...creating charter schools, the tax-funded, independently run schools that they see as an entrepreneurial answer to the nation's education woes" (Hass). Along the way, they either skim the more motivated students from public schools, thus reducing those schools' chances of success, or push out students who don't perform to their standards – an option real public schools do not have, or both. Despite protests by people who work with urban youth, these business people feel they're doing noble important reform work.

Charter Schools are only one element with which philanthropists like Broad hope to influence the landscape of urban education. He is also among several wealthy Americans pledging a multimillion-dollar endowment to Teach for America, a program that trains college graduates over a summer and then places them in urban schools for two years. Broad donated twenty-five million dollars. He believes the organization has become a leader in innovative strategies for public education, but this actually pushes veteran teachers out of a job. How, exactly, is Teach for America innovative?

Observe how the Broad Foundation has been marking territory in a variety of ways: on its website, the foundation boasts, "The Broad Residency places participants in school districts, charter management organizations, and federal/state departments of education nationwide" ("Residency Network"). To imagine that Broad's interest in charter schools reflects

In fact, Eli Broad believes that traditional teacher education is no longer effective in preparing America's teachers. He refuses to consider that urban educators' difficulties are compounded by problems that accompany high concentrations of poverty. Instead, he and others like him extol the virtues of charter schools, even though charter schools drain public coffers and help investors

nothing more than his desire to help the needy is naïve, because here is an important finding: the very tests that No Child Left Behind depends on to measure teacher success or failure is monitored by a system supported by the Broad Foundation. In 2003, the Bush administration began accepting contributions from the foundation for a new data analysis system used to assess how well schools were meeting No Child Left Behind criteria (“Broad Foundation”). Moreover, an article in the *Napa Valley Register* maintains, “Much of the growth [in charter schools] is being driven by charter school management organizations that have received million dollar grants from...foundations funded by philanthropists such as...Eli Broad” (Chea). In other words, Broad supports a variety of endeavors that benefit his organization’s graduates. Isn’t this like letting the fox guard the hen-house?

In only a few short years, Broad Superintendents Academy has spread its influence into an alarming number of school districts. The academy proudly declares that it takes people with no prior educational experience and quickly trains them, and releases them to head urban school districts. This army of commanders is moving quickly through our nation. According to Senior Military:

The Broad Superintendents Academy has trained more working superintendents in large urban school districts than any other national training program. Since the academy was founded in 2002, graduates have filled 71 superintendent positions and 101 senior school district executive positions, including 36 per cent of all external superintendent openings in large urban districts in the past two years (“Senior Military”).

It’s important to remember that all these leaders have stepped into powerful positions after only ten months of training, mostly during long weekends. Does this mean that urban schools are indeed factories, military bases, or what?

Critical voices have emerged from the world of educational expertise, from people not personally affected by Broad but who recognize flaws in his thinking. A North Carolina professor of educational leadership notes that although the academy claims its graduates bring great success, no hard data exists to prove this claim is accurate in the urban areas they’ve infiltrated (English). More to the point, when Fenwick English created a list of public education’s enemies, he named Eli Broad enemy number one.

English says, “Eli Broad’s millions are going toward a top-down corporate takeover of urban school systems.” He noted, too, that the Superintendents Academy refuses to publicize its curriculum, something all accredited universities do without question. In other criticism, Diane Ravitch, “one of the nation’s most influential writers on education,” explained why she’s suspicious of the new “teacher accountability and market-driven incentive” types of school reform. She said during a recent address in Providence, “Now is the time to question their logic...and to investigate [the reformers’] ties to philanthropic arms of wealthy corporations that have their own agendas, in particular the Broad, Gates, and Walton Family foundations” (Jordan).

Surely some alternatives must exist that can help urban school districts to thrive. Deborah Meier, a noted education scholar and advisor, discusses how schools in Finland manage to do so well. While granting that in Finland children live in far less poverty than is found in the United States, the Finns also run their schools differently. For example, students don’t begin studying until the age of seven, the school day and school year are shorter, educators – rather than business people – create curriculum and assessments, and teachers have plenty of paid time in which to plan lessons and meet with parents. Most remarkably, Finland does not conduct standardized tests in its schools. Standardized tests are at the center of complaints that American education is in trouble, but in Finland the students manage to learn well without them.

Why are we so test-driven in the United States? One would do well to question who profits from the manufacture and distribution of multiple high stakes tests. In 2005, Frederick Hess, American Enterprise Institute director of educational policy studies recommended that public education should carefully examine any “private efforts to reform public institutions.” While he admitted that innovation might come from these new investors, he also reminded Americans to be wary.

When school success is judged by test scores, certain variables cannot be ignored; parents’ education level, family income, and access to good nutrition and health care all play a part in how students fare in school. When people like Broad advocate corporate intervention in public education, they punish the people they claim they want to help, because students now spend their days preparing for tests, thus denying them opportunities to

think critically. Do the promoters of all these reforms want to discourage critical thinking? Essentially, when people who know little about education interfere in public school policy, the effects harm students and communities. When interviewed for the *Wall Street Journal*, Eli Broad admitted that his interest in educational reform is a kind of speculation, or a gamble (Riley). So he takes a risk with his foundation, but if he's wrong, the only ones to suffer will be urban youth. How smart is that? How fair is it?

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Fighting Back: The Struggle For Raza Studies, Notes On Strategies and Tactics

Ernesto Bustillos

Editor's Note: The following commentary was reconstructed from notes of a presentation that was to be delivered by Ernesto Bustillos at the "National Association of Chicano/a Studies Rocky Mountain Regional Foco," which took place on the campus of Arizona State University at Tempe. It was a two-day conference (Nov. 19th and 20th, 2011) organized under the general theme of "The Strategy of Fear and the Cultural Repression of a People." The presentation was part of a panel titled "Counter Hegemonic Chicana/o Studies in the U.S. Empire: A Political and Community Struggle for Social Justice and Change." Unfortunately, because of low turn out at the end of the last day of the conference, some panels were combined and others were cancelled. The presentation for this particular conference was one of the panels canceled.

Introduction

The following perspective on the current crisis and attacks confronting Raza Chicano/a Studies and Progressive Education in general, is drawn from my experience as an educator, *movimiento* activist, and the political stance of Unión del Barrio.

It is a position based three important historical facts:

1. It was the Chicano Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s that gave birth and greatly contributed to the development of Raza Studies (Chicano/a Studies) and other progressive and liberating forms of education—such as Bilingual Education, Multicultural Education, and so forth. (1)
2. Raza Studies was perceived by many activists of that period as a weapon to be utilized to fight and oppose the Empire: capitalism, colonialism-imperialism, and all its forms of oppression. (2)
3. To many in the struggle, Raza Studies was created as a "science" that would both raise the social-political consciousness of the Mexicano-Raza masses and a means to motivate people into political action. (3)

It is these three factors that guide us as we address the question of

strategies and tactics that must be used in the struggle to defend Raza Studies from the current assault by reactionary forces within the United States.

You Can't Solve a Problem Without Understanding Its Roots

But we can't solve a problem without understanding its roots. Otherwise, we just deal with the symptoms and never get down to the cure. Therefore, the strategies and tactics that we are proposing today, as a means to "fight back" against the situation in which Raza Studies finds itself, necessitate that we expose the roots and foundations behind what is obviously a well-organized and concerted attack.

The truth is, that we find ourselves engaged in a war for the survival of Raza Studies. A war, which we have been fighting since the first day that a Raza Studies class came into existence. There was never a time when even just the idea of Raza Studies was free from attack. (4)

In fact, to understand the current struggle around Raza Studies we must include it as part of the more than 500 years of struggle against the European (White) practice of genocide, colonialism, and cultural domination, as well as for the national liberation of the Indigenous peoples of what some people call the "Americas".

The Enemy of Raza-Chicano/a Studies is Capitalism-Colonialism

It is here where we find that the enemy of Raza Studies is capitalism-colonialism (imperialism) –the enemy of all oppressed and exploited people. The forces of capitalism-imperialism, determined to destroy Raza Studies, attack it both externally and within the discipline itself. Out of these two, the one much more difficult to understand –and for many of us, the one more difficult to come to terms with– is the "internal enemy". Here we are referring to the contradictions that exist within Raza Studies programs and departments themselves.

These internal contradictions require that as we develop the strategies and tactics in defense of Raza Studies, we take into consideration the following realities:

1. The great majority of Raza Educators, from the elementary to the university, have been almost totally "neutral" in the struggle to defend progressive

pedagogy in general, and Raza Studies in particular. (5)

2. As a way of "protecting their jobs", some instructors and professors, who themselves are teaching Raza Studies or Ethnic Studies, are actually opposing those who are fighting for its survival. (6)

3. There are some contradictions and weaknesses that currently exist within our "movement" – such as the lack of organization, accountability, correct application of tactics, etc. that must be resolved.

The existence of these internal contradictions, along with the external attacks from the capitalist-colonialist system, continue to render us incapable of developing the strategy and tactics that could provide a strong response to both the current movement to dismantle Raza Studies and the overall violation of the civil and human rights of our communities.

Identifying the enemy and the contradictions facing Raza Studies demands an explanation as to the reasons for their existence and broaden our understanding of the complexity of the situation. We need to ask ourselves, "Why is there such opposition to Raza Studies?" We contend that:

1. The attacks against Raza Chicano/a Studies forms part of the ongoing war against any type of education that advances "thinking critically and living consciously" –principles that form the philosophical core of Raza Studies. The capitalist-colonialist ruling class understands that a critical thinking and conscious people will naturally oppose the ideology of white supremacy, wars for profits, occupation of other peoples lands, and the consumer-based culture imposed upon the people here within the beast (United States) and around the world. Raza Studies is a science that leads one to question and oppose all forms of oppression –it is an antithesis to the capitalist mentality.

2. The attacks on Raza Studies are part of the over-all strategy to destroy public education. Raza Studies has always been pro-public education and for the inclusion of all nationalities and social groups in the educational process. Cognizant of the elitism of private education, along with its working class origin, have placed those who struggle for Raza Studies on the side of a public education system that is relevant to the masses and one that delivers "equal" opportunities for all students. (7)

3. Forever searching for more and more profits, the super rich have been

working hard to privatize public schools and at the same time destroy teacher unions. Historically demonstrating some degree of opposition to the destruction of democracy and social-economic equality, teacher unions are obstacles to the corporate goal of complete control over all public spaces and resources. Raza Studies, besides being an “ethnic based” branch of learning, also forms part of a Working Class Studies discipline that is diametrically opposed to the privatization of public institutions.

In short, Raza Chicano/a Studies is an anti-colonial subject matter that challenges any form of foreign economic, cultural, and political domination. Its very existence is an act of self-determination. As a science that promotes an anti-colonial pedagogy, like all anti-colonial education, Raza Studies is about developing an awareness of the “varied conditions under which domination and oppression exist and operate”. (8)

Racism Serves to Conceal the Policies of Capitalism-Colonialism

Key to our ability to respond to the enemies of Raza Studies, externally and internally, is to understand the manner in which they wage war against it. This calls for us to make sure that we keep our eyes and responses on the concrete-material forces behind these attacks. Otherwise, our response is neutralized and side tracked –and thus, becomes ineffective.

For example, what is often “high-lighted” by the mainstream media and Raza social justice activists, are the racist actions perpetuated by system’s lackeys and mouthpieces (Arizona State Supt. of Public Instruction Tom Horne, Tea Party, etc.). The truth is, that racism –as terrible as it is– serves to conceal and camouflage the real motives of capitalism-colonialism (imperialism), which is the exploitation of

The truth is, that racism –as terrible as it is– serves to conceal and camouflage the real motives of capitalism-colonialism (imperialism), which is the exploitation of Mexican labor, wealth, resources, and the occupation of our land (Aztlán). Hence, the fundamental enemy of the struggle for Raza Studies and our right to justice, peace, and self-determination, is capitalism-colonialism.

Mexican labor, wealth, resources, and the occupation of our land (Aztlán). Hence, the fundamental enemy of the struggle for Raza Studies and our right to justice, peace, and self-determination, is capitalism-colonialism. Hence, most forms of oppression are the symptoms of capitalism and colonialism. (9)

In their effort to hide the nature of our oppression from its “own citizens” (white people) the system’s representatives and mercenaries, engage in the following:

1. Raza Studies is publicly introduced as a promoter of “reverse racism”. It is presented as being “anti-American”, which is a code word for “anti-White”. Something the majority of the white population readily understands. It plays up on “white people’s fear” of losing their privileges and “comfortable lifestyle”. It attempts to put fear into people by spreading all kinds of sensationalist lies, including the idea that Raza Studies leads students towards violence and terrorism.
2. They depend on the white population’s hatred of Mexicans (and other oppressed nationalities) and the psychology of white supremacy, which is imbedded in Europeans (White People) by the capitalist-colonialist propaganda institutions (School, Media, Church, etc.) –to assist them in the oppression and exploitation of our communities. It is an ideology that enables the existence of a mental process of denial that helps most white people negate the historic and present realities of their complicity in the genocide, enslavement, and colonization of the Indigenous-Mexican, Africans, and other nations and peoples. (10)
3. They promote the notion that students are “held back” from advancing or integrating into the so-called American “melting pot” by what they are taught in Raza Studies classes. They accuse Raza Studies of promoting the separation of Raza students from the rest of America –when the truth is that White America has never accepted Mexicans and other non-European people into its fold.

While it is an unquestionable fact that racism motivates the large majority (i.e. workers and the poor) of the white population to oppress and fear Mexicans –the fundamental and leading force behind the existence of racism and the opposition to Raza Studies, is the drive, on the part of the capitalist-colonial ruling class, to maintain the profits that they generate

from our oppression. Hidden by its propaganda, this is a self-evident and material reality of capitalism, and not a public articulation of its policy.

This means that those of us fighting to save Raza Chicano/a Studies must keep in mind that the main goal of the racism espoused by the system's flunkies is to side track and confuse us. Instead of exposing and confronting the real motives behind our oppression (profits for the capitalist ruling class) –it is a trap that moves us to addressing it as one based simply on the question of racism. Most importantly, rather than uniting around a revolutionary program that calls for the destruction of capitalism-colonialism itself, it tricks many of us into supporting a reformist politic that “hopes” –in spite of what history teaches us– to somehow make capitalism a “kinder, gentler system”.

Our Fight Back Strategy Must Be Based on Principle, Unity, and Organization

With this in mind, our defense of Raza Studies demands that it includes a response that has as its foundation the understanding that the problem originates from the very nature of the imperialist beast itself. For this reason our struggle must be one that ultimately works to destroy capitalism and colonialism.

Thus, we must create a “collective” strategy that includes sound objectives and the unity and organization of as many progressive forces as possible –and one that informs us that the struggle to save Raza Studies will be a protracted one.

We suggest, as initial steps in the development of our “fight back strategy”, that we include the following:

1. A national call for a congress or convention to discuss and create a vision where the majority agrees on some general, but principled, objectives around the question of education. This will entail the forming of a broad united front with as many progressive and revolutionary activists as possible. This will also necessitate the formation of a committee (coordinating body) that is representative of Raza educators and community activists from all regions within the current borders of the U.S. (Occupied America).
2. The building of “Alliances” or coalitions with as many progressive forces

(of all races and nationalities) as possible with the objective of learning from each other, sharing our resources, and finding ways in which we can struggle together.

3. The coordinating committee must immediately begin to make contact with the various areas of education and programs that share the same mission as Raza Chicano/a Studies –such as: Latin American Studies, African/Black Studies, Indigenous/Native American Studies, Asian-Pacific Islander Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, Global Studies, Working Class Studies, etc.
4. The broadening of our struggle “Internationally”. This means sending delegations to different countries, meeting with progressive educators, and forming alliances that will support each other’s struggles. We need to drive home the point that we share the same enemy: Capitalism-Imperialism.
5. Reinforce/Strengthen the work that we are already doing. Unite our work as part of the same struggle. This calls for advancing –through workshops, meetings, plenaries, conferences, publications, and media of all types– the knowledge, research, and pedagogy that already exist.
6. The need to be creative. This means creating new programs and arenas of resistance, and bring new resources to our struggle. The coordinating committee should form a special group to search for the funding of its efforts (fund raising, grants, and international assistance).
7. Struggle against the “enemy within”. We need to expose and take “the covers off” those who claim to be Raza educators and Raza Chicano/a Studies academics, but objectively side with the forces of oppression. While this is the most difficult of tasks, allowing neo-colonialism to exist within our ranks, confuses our community and provides capitalism-colonialism with another weapon to be used against us.

At this particular time, the forces most capable of initiating this strategy, that we are aware of, are (but certainly not limited to) the Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E), National Association of Chicano/a Studies (NACCS), and community based formations such as Unión del Barrio. It is within these entities that we have witnessed discussions and actions that emphasize the necessity of a liberating education and Raza Chicano/a Studies for our community. (11)

Our Strategy Must Include the Unity of Action With Our Communities

Central to the success of our strategy requires unity of action and support from the masses in our communities. This demands that we take Raza Studies outside the Academy and into the community. We must:

1. Take Raza Studies to the masses, wherever they are found: the neighborhood, the streets, etc. This calls for holding classes and study sessions in community centers, barrio schools, people's homes, and so forth.
2. Make real what is known as "praxis"; the unity of both theory and practice—a Raza Studies that is truly an activist science.
3. Put into action a critical pedagogy that solves problems and empowers the people; Raza Studies must always be solution oriented.
4. Creating the forces that will struggle for social justice and liberation; Raza Studies must be central to the regeneration of social justice and liberation activism.

The suggestions we are putting forward call for a critical understanding that we are experiencing a war against the whole of the Raza-Mexican community and that our movement is a "front" of a worldwide struggle that has historically been taking place between the have and have-nots. It is political stance that enables us to understand that we must be pro-active and are not always reacting to attacks.

Our response must be in the form of organization. Educators must work collectively, with defined accountability, unity of strategy, and consciousness of tactics. Only through organized struggle can we save and advance the humanizing, liberating, democratizing force we know today as Raza Chicano/a Studies.

Notes:

- (1) "The Development of Chicano Studies 1968-1981", by Carlos Muñoz, in *Chicano Studies: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. 1984
- (2) "The Strategy of Fear and the Cultural Repression of a People", Raza Press and Media Association Website. Nov. 21, 2011.
- (3) Education, Chicano Studies, and Raza Liberation! by Ernesto Bustillos, La Verdad

Publications. 1992

- (4) At the Conference itself, key organizers such as professors Rudy Acuña and Manuel Hernandez, questioned during the main assemblies, the absence of Chicano/a Studies professors and instructors, both at the conference itself—as well as within the movement in defense of Raza Studies.
- (5) "Without A Colonial Education, Colonialism Cannot Exist", *Guerrillero/as de La Pluma*, Spring Issue 2011.
- (6) "Observations on the 'New' Chicano History: Historiography of the 1970s", by Albert Camarillo. Stanford Center for Chicano Research. Jan. 1984.
- (7) According to some organizers of the conference, it was originally to be held on the campus of the University of Arizona at Tucson, but was opposed by two Chicano/a Studies professors who didn't want to jeopardize their positions at the university.
- (8) For a description of an anti-colonial education see, *The Politics of Resistance*, edited by George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf. Sense Publishers. 2006
- (9) Read, *Overturning The Culture of Violence*, by Penny Hess. Burning Spear Publications. 2000.
- (10) "Colonialism: The Main Problem Confronting Africans In The United States", *Not One Step Backward!* by Omali Yeshitela, Burning Spear Publications. 1982.
- (11) A.R.E. San Diego Chapter and Unión del Barrio have for years offered Raza Studies classes/escuelas in neighborhood/barrio centers and schools.

The Raza Studies Discipline and Why We Need it in Los Angeles High Schools

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When I was in high school, my brother brought home some "Chicano books" that I began reading. Two things were different. For the first time in my life I could identify directly with the topic: my own people. Secondly, the style was sincere and unapologetic. The three books I remember reading were: *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* by Elizabeth Betita Martinez, *Barrio Warriors* by Gus Frias, and *Assault With a Deadly Weapon* by Roberto "Dr. Cintli" Rodriguez. The texts spoke to me and motivated me to excel at school, and subsequently enroll at UC Berkeley where I majored in

English and Chicano Studies.

This essay hopes to lay theoretical groundwork and justification for implementing Raza/Chicano Studies curriculum in Los Angeles and any other region or community where Latino students are present. By addressing the historical and ideological underpinnings of Chicano Studies I hope to provide a better understanding of the discipline and its formation up to the present, while I argue that Chicano Studies is an organic scientific discipline, just like math, history or sociology. By bridging Composition Studies (rhetoric) to Chicano Studies, I deal with my own special field of study (I am an English PhD student specializing in rhetoric, Chicano studies and visual culture) but more importantly I aim to demonstrate specific ways Raza Studies is practiced while I argue for Raza Studies to reclaim academic space in composition instruction. This essay is a result of three years of studying different literatures, Xican@ student activism and the beginnings of Chicano Studies. Rudy Acuña has said “polemics are the engine of revolution,” and I would add that theory (along with dialogue and praxis) is the architecture for that revolution.

Finally, this essay is inspired by the heroic student and teacher struggle to defend the Raza Studies Department in Arizona. I have attended numerous academic conferences, protests, and community gatherings on Raza Studies over the last four years. Their subject and the results in the classroom is what drew me to the department. When the political attacks stepped up, I consciously drew a bridge between my academic work and their struggle. The praxis between Chicano Studies epistemology and student activism became my main area of study, justifying my studies and communication with activists. On April 26, 2011, UNIDOS students (Raza Studies students and alumni) saved the classes from being turned into electives (and therefore terminated by budget cuts) took over the Tucson School Board. Their melodic protest chant – “When your education is under attack, what do you do?? Fight back!!!” – were heard across the country. At present, the Tucson 13 fights the constitutionality of the anti-Ethnic Studies law in federal courts. This now national conflict, I want to emphasize, is also an opportunity to ignite movements locally for Raza Studies, movements that will need informed arguments. This is a way to back up our Tucson brothers and sisters, but it should also be seen as an opportunity for us here in LA to open up battlefronts for our own communities in this war against racism and ignorance. As Hugo Chavez says, “invent or err.”

A History of Chicano Studies

Chicano students and their rhetoric were central to the Chicano Movement. Raoul Contreras argues that the Chicano Movement and its ideological currents were and must continue to be central to a vibrant discipline. Most of the movement’s leadership and membership during the late 60’s and early 70’s were students and of college age. As Berkeley MASC (later MEChA) president and Third World Liberation Front leader Ysidro Macias observed, students came to view themselves as a “vanguard group,” and the unification of Chicano student groups in the Southwest under the name MEChA, accomplished at the April 1969 conference at Santa Barbara, signaled their political maturity, militant style and potential. El Plan de Santa Barbara, published soon after the conference, became a blueprint for starting programs, and has been called an album of nascent ideologies among Chicano/a students and educational leaders at the time. Although male-dominated, the movement was also influenced by Marxist historians, Black Nationalism, internationalism, and feminism. The Chicano student movement made critical ideological breakthroughs, especially through the organizational aspect of the rhetoric of Chicano/a students.

The emphasis on a rhetorical study is to emphasize how rhetoric functions as epistemology, how groups are seen to espouse a “rhetorical vision” which identifies problems, “frames” these ideologically, organizes mass bodies, foreshadows threats, and envisages systems of what social justice looks like. I foreground rhetoric for three reasons. First, emerging theories on rhetoric, and ethnic rhetorics in particular, stress the productive function of language; namely, that “words do work” in the world. Rhetoric is the grounds for epistemology. Political struggles, for instance, play out ultimately in the field of language, and are as effective as the group’s “rhetorical vision” is in articulating desired outcomes. Secondly, the Chicano Movement depended heavily on the rhetoric of its leaders in order to educate masses, mobilize these, and articulate the direction of the movement. In its artistic and political fusion, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto notably called this the “Chicano poetic consciousness,” insisting how political poetry was central to the politicization and radicalization of Movement participants. This legacy is visible in the impact and the numbers of movement participants, as well as in the continuing importance of poetic work in Chicano culture. This work, Ybarra-Frausto emphasized, was also bilingual/bicultural and contained a working class aesthetic unique to Chicanos (rasquachismo).

Subsequently, the third reason to emphasize rhetoric in this study is to assert that this unique rhetorical tradition is key to educational outcomes of diverse classrooms of 21st century America. Recent scholars such as Damien Baca emphasize a “mestizo@ rhetoric,” that US Latinos have their own rhetorical traditions rooted not chiefly in ancient Greece but more so in indigenous traditions such as codices, ritual dance, murals, and the bi-lingual/ bi-cultural modes of communication in the Southwest. This speaks to the role of Chicano Studies in Composition pedagogy and the education of the burgeoning Latino student population nationally. While traditional literacy and composition practices emphasize the linguistic/cultural assimilation of Latino students, a (mestizo@) Chicano rhetoric recognizes multiple identities and foregrounds “invention between different ways of knowing.”

This analysis of insipient student organizing and its articulations (plans) also builds from and informs more current student movements - as in the 1993 UCLA Hunger Strike, Tucson’s Raza Studies Institute more currently, and the ongoing university student struggle against the privatization of the university.

The Chicano Movement was influenced by the Black Power Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the South and the rhetoric of Malcolm X. The Movement was politically aware and influenced by Third World revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam and Algeria, as well as the volatile Mexican student politics of 1968 (Mariscal 2005, Oropeza 2005). Equally, if less visibly, Chicanos emphasized their own legacy of rebellion in the Southwest by resurrecting leaders and movements such as Joaquin Murrieta, Chemo Cortina, Pancho Villa, Ricardo Flores Magon, the Partido Liberal Mexicano, the Zoot Suit Riots, and Emma Tenayuca to name a few from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Historians like Rudolfo Acuña emphasized this legacy of resistance, even while he quoted the Algerian Franz Fanon at length, in the first edition of his seminal history, *Occupied America*.

Chicano students of the late 60’s and early 70’s ranged in age, experience and capacities. While today, many students are the first in their families to go to college, in the 1960’s these students were the first Chicanos to go to college – period. Prior to the late 1960’s EOP programs, universities were almost exclusively white. Many young men were Vietnam War veterans who took advantage of the GI Bill. Along with working class backgrounds, this may account for the willingness of students of this period to engage in

militant protest, resort to violent rhetoric, and to take on police during student protests. Several student leaders during this time were graduate students (notably in History programs) getting PhD’s, and were capable of synthesizing arguments and consolidating group agendas. They were especially keen to ideological currents of the late 60’s. Many were trained by Marxist historians, and influenced by Carey McWilliams, Americo Paredes, Ernesto Galarza, Julian Zamora and Carlos Castaneda. The Third World liberation theories of Franz Fanon, Che Guevara, Mao Tse Tung and others were also influential. These individuals were key in organizing, drafting plans and proposals, and later became prominent builders, scholars and advocates of Chicano Studies programs. Many of these Chicano students eventually took their graduate degrees and became the future Chicano Studies intelligentsia.

Schools Not Prisons: Carceral Politics versus Pedagogy of Liberation

“Schools Not Prisons” - Chicano picket sign circa 1969/ Youth Movement in 90’s in response to Prop 27

“Teach us to Read, Not to Kill” – Picket sign at the 1970 Chicano Moratorium

“SB 1070 is an attack on our bodies... HB 2281 is an attack on our minds... they are trying to kill our souls, but they don’t know where to look.” – Dr. Cintli, Mexican American Studies Profe, U. of A.

While the Right – Arizona Republican lawmakers in particular - attacks Raza Studies directly and Ethnic Studies abstractly, they propose a social imaginary that criminalizes Chicano Studies, polices Latino bodies, and warehouses “surplus populations.” For this reason, literature on the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is integral to understanding the social logics of public policies that privilege prisons over schools. This literature, for instance, demystifies crime as a social construction that takes place among groups with imbalanced relations of power, that racial groups have been effectively “criminalized” in the public eye and are hypothetically more likely to be arrested, convicted, imprisoned, or killed. I will focus on how the State’s (and specifically the state of Arizona’s) language and logics enlist citizens into complicity with systems of repression. Critical Raza Studies investigation contests this repressive “common sense.” Raza Studies, I

propose, keeps priorities in check when it foregrounds the interests of students and future students. Its epistemology and non-apologetic style continue to hold a special place for students.

As demonstrated in the film “The Murder of Fred Hampton,” during the 1960’s and 70’s the state tactically and brutally exercised a “translation of racial and revolutionary bodies into criminals.” In similar fashion, Arizona politicians attempt to criminalize Chicano Studies and have effectively banned books and are close to dismantling Tucson’s MAS department. A history of Ethnic Studies programs also reveals a turbulent genealogy marked by protest and police repression. Visible in student activist graffiti, protest signs and activist rhetoric, the awareness of the criminal justice system has also been used as powerful logos against the state, and to push forward Chicano and Ethnic Studies agendas.

While the idea is not evident in popular discourse, Raza Studies activist rhetoric exposes the connection between PIC, immigration and schools. Specifically, the Raza Studies conflict has everything to do with SB 1070’s intent to criminalize and lock up Latinos. As Dr. Cintli’s quote demonstrates, laws that aim to incarcerate brown bodies have everything to do with laws that aim to regulate Chicano minds. From Raza Studies classes coordinating group reports on the Prison Industrial Complex in Arizona, to the PIC’s use of Chicano Educational Pipeline research to determine jail capacities in the future, the issue of incarcerating Latino immigrants and the educational autonomy of Latino children intersect in Arizona political landscape.

Acuña’s influential Chicano history book *Occupied America* became one of the key texts, along with Paolo Freire’s landmark *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, targeted in HB2281’s attacks and was effectively banned from Arizona high schools. At issue were versions of the US invasion during the Mexican American War historical moments from a Mexican/Chicano/Latino point of view. Here, we have an important example of the intersection of Raza Studies with the prison industrial complex. The book contains acute attention to Mexican labor in the Southwest, especially that the number of exploitable Mexican laborers contributed a necessary surplus labor that kept agricultural costs down and profits up for growers. Gilmore emphasizes that this important surplus (as part of four key surpluses: capital, land, population, state capacity) is the Marxian “pivot” of a strong capitalist economy: the exploitable “reserve army” of workers. Gilmore proposes that these four

surpluses are the reason for what Angela Davis calls the “prisonization” of California in the 80’s and 90’s. Like the California Republicans who dropped “rehabilitation” and replaced it with the more repressive “incapacitation” as the logos which justified its prison construction boom, Arizona Republicans conflate “criminals” with “illegal aliens” to fill prisons to capacity. The pretext for this carceral economy is capitalism and racism.

In the film “Precious Knowledge” (2011), which documents the current Raza Studies struggle, then-MAS director Augie Robles reveals that future prison beds in Arizona are estimated by data on the academic performance of Arizona fourth graders. While the connection of Latino academic performance to prison building is not evident in mass media and popular discourse, in Arizona politics it is deliberate.

Chicano education scholars Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso, in studies connected to UCLA’s Cesar Chavez Chicano Studies Department, illustrate Latino education patterns through the Chicano Educational Pipeline. The graph and studies reveal a high drop-out rate (over 50% nationally) and low college enrollment and retention. While Chicano Studies scholars utilize such data to advocate for educational changes, Arizona lawmakers see instead opportunities to profit from this disadvantage. This does not escape Raza Studies activists. One member of the Tucson 13 – 11 teachers and 2 students suing the state on HB2281’s 1st and 14th amendment rights violations – Larry Lopez (recently at UC Riverside) alleges that

“The academic success of our students is a threat... to the status quo... There is empirical data that shows the academic success – the matriculation onto higher education, higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates. Those successes are why we’re being singled out.”

The status quo Lopez refers to is exactly the Chicano Educational pipeline Yosso and Solorzano illustrate, which only implies the connection of poor public schooling to the prison industrial complex. In this status quo reactionary politicians and prison builders connect academic performance to predict rates of incarceration and prison beds. It is a status quo, which has only gotten more repressive in recent decades.

Henry Giroux interrogates how the “zero tolerance” laws that have been used to fill prisons have found new currency in school policies that unequally target poor, working class and especially youth of color. He

explains how in the late 90's, 36 and 34 percent of black and brown youth, respectively, lived in poverty (compared to 14 percent of white youth). Simultaneously, schools adopted "zero tolerance" policies that criminalize poor youth of color in particular. "Instead of guaranteeing young people decent health care, jobs, and shelter, we offer them the growing potential of being incarcerated," in schools that have become more militarized. The country spends three times more on a prisoner than on public school students, and "as educators turn over their responsibility for school safety to the police, the new security culture in public schools has turned them into 'learning prisons'."

In the unlikely barren political landscape of Arizona, the MAS program and the student activism around it emerges as an opportunity for a new national civil rights movement that looks critically at the convergence of race, education, self-determination and that "noble struggle for equal rights." In the current struggle, as in 1960's Ethnic Studies student movements, a new wave of critical thinkers are challenging the culture of repression emblemized by the prison and the increasingly militarized school. In their struggle they are fighting the criminalization of radical brown bodies, and advocating for a new popular language that takes an informed critical look at issues of class, race, gender, social justice and culture.

Epistemology In the Eye of The Tempest: Tucson's Raza Studies Concepts

Dr. Cintli contributes two significant concepts to thinking about Chicano History: Maiz Knowledge and the Raza Studies Timeline. In one article contesting Horne's praise of Western Civilization, Cintli emphasizes that this is an imported epistemology and that Chicanos and indigenous peoples are guided by 7,000 -10,000 year old "Maiz Knowledge," the agricultural cultivation of corn which allowed settlement, economies, leisure and thus indigenous civilization, cosmology, culture and sciences. Chicano culture, based on this ancient hemispheric epistemology should be a requirement in schools. His Raza Studies Timeline is based on the last Aztec ruler, Cuauhtemoc's "Final Decree," when he instructed his people to "destroy our temples, our places of study, our schools, our ballgame fields and our houses of song," to preserve this knowledge deep in their hearts until a new sun arrived and these things could be brought into the light. Cintli identifies the 1960's and the current student activism as that day, "the new sun."

Chicano Studies has emerged, and the timeline cannot be reversed. Additionally, MAS pedagogy and epistemology is centered on indigenous models and concepts, importantly, the use of the Nauhui Ollin (four directions, four essences). This is a precise example of Baca's theory of mestiz@ rhetoric, inventing from different ways of knowing, both Western and indigenous.

The specialization of mestiz@ rhetoric in Acosta's Raza Studies classroom and the epistemology that is made possible there bears many similarities to what Vorris Nunley calls "hush harbors." Hush harbor sites such as the African American barber shop are spaces where African American men have traditionally found not only the space to speak freely, but for knowledge and truths to emerge. They are places where African American Hush Harbor Rhetorics (AAHHR) – the "commonplaces, tonal semantics, mascons, and the tropes and epistemologies" of Black folk - are at home. "Hush harbors authorize the unofficial, the underground, and under the radar rhetoric and epistemology." Classroom and pedagogical examples of AAHHR, such as the J. Baugh's "Lyric Shuffle" and Beverly Silverstein's teaching practices at Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles parallel the Chicano Literature class' (and Raza Studies more generally) goal to make Raza students and their culture feel at home. Like the vast many other public school spaces Latino students encounter throughout their youth, these are spaces where they are not asked or forced to "leave their identities at the hegemonic gate." Nunley's findings of the "Lyric Shuffle" reflect critical pedagogy's aim to acknowledge students' "funds of knowledge," and parallel the function of Acosta's Chicano Literature class:

"The classroom is transformed into a hush harbor site, a safe site, because the rhetoric, pedagogy, and knowledge circulating in and through the site reflect and attempt to inhabit the ground of the students before taking them on a journey to new territory."

Currently in Tucson Arizona, Chicano Literature teacher Curtis Acosta recently finished teaching *The Tempest* to a senior class. Acosta told me his intention with this highly non-traditional approach (even in Chicano Literature classes) was to build on indigenous concepts and epistemologies taught in many of the Raza Studies courses.

Although Chicano@ writers still serve as the spine of the class, I knew that I wanted to attach other great writers and works that explore themes

that my students could identify with in their lives. Nearly 90 percent of my students are Chican@s, so it was important to me for them to experience that writers and artists from other ethnicities are conscious of the issues and themes in their lives, their history. It was time to study *The Tempest* as a connection to our indigenous history with European contact. Our MAS classes in TUSD have been built upon indigenous principals and our pedagogy reflects this, so I wanted the content to reflect this, as well.

Understanding it as a first encounter text, students could discuss Shakespeare's meditation on colonialism during this historical "window" - after first encounters and before full-blown English colonization.

It is a moment in time where the English had not yet decided their plans, so Shakespeare's play has immense value into the mindset of his countrymen toward the Americas, natives, power and colonization... it was important to me for (my students) to experience that writers and artists from other ethnicities are conscious of the issues and themes in their lives, their history.

By not simplifying *The Tempest* into the "politics of blame" or an us and them binary, Acosta's point of departure avoids what Susan Giroux calls anti-racism, and instead takes a deeper approach towards tackling racism. She explains that

A more robust challenge (is) anti-racism, which insists on neither color-blind transcendence nor liberal celebrations of diversity or tolerance, but on policies that end racism.

Chicano Literature approaches are innovative, and Acosta's activities with *The Tempest*, as a First Encounter narrative resonated with students. Describing an exercise related to Caliban's expression of love for his island, Acosta states:

They immediately made connections to immigration, Mexican culture, and the legacy of Chican@ civil rights with Caliban's language... They made these connections on their own and wrote their essays and constructed their modern interpretations around the scene since it mattered so much to them. As youth in Tucson, Arizona Chican@ Studies classes in 2011, it is completely understandable why this called out to so many of them... I believe my students felt a respect for Shakespeare in

his construction of Caliban and his willingness to "fight" for his island regardless of the drastically inverted power relationship between Caliban and Prospero... I am very proud of our Chicanit@s in MAS in Tucson... It's tragic that our own superintendent, school board, and Republican state officials fear them so much that they want to take our space away.

Unlike Caliban's distrust of Western books, Chicano Literature approaches to the text combine vital criticism with lived experience. Acosta's Chicano Literature teaching is not only in the eye of the political tempest on race and epistemology in this country, but it is soundly practicing a key tenet of Chicano Studies epistemology - "taking the university back to the community." We could say it puts in practice Henry Giroux's call to place our studies strategically in real life application, to locate our investigations strategically in actual ideological battles. Arizona's HR2281 singled out and banned Acuña's *Occupied America*, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, music by Aztlan Underground, Culture Clash plays and numerous other texts, on the grounds that they are "seditious ... and encourage the violent overthrow of the United States." Acuña's history text, endearingly called "the Chicano Bible" by activists, was in fact a cornerstone of the construction of Chicano Studies as a discipline. Its history in published form effectively reputed triumphalist US histories that ignored Mexicans, distorted the Mexican American War, and promoted the myth of American exceptionalism. Young Chicano historians in the 1970's, many notably trained by Marxists, effectively carved academic space for the new discipline on the grounds of this contested history. Critical Chicano revisions of history, it could be argued, established Chicano Studies and continue to be sites of ideological battles. It is these same "seditious" histories, foundational to Chicano Studies that are being attacked today.

Running in the War Years: Activism, Ceremony and Preserving Our Institutions

Most recently, student activists took over a school board meeting one month ago preventing the downsizing of Raza Studies into a slow death. "They were going to take us out and kill us," Sean Arce, the director of MAS stated that day. As seen in the videos, the highly organized and brave students surprised guards and chained themselves to the school board chairs, chanting "When your education is under attack, what do you do? Fight Back!!!..." The video travelled that same night via youtube inform-

ing thousands via home computers. Edited versions emerged.

Two weeks before the school board takeover, Dr. Cintli circulated another a “Special-Length Column” in his digital Column of the Americas, titled “Running in the War Years: Running for Consuelo Aguilar.” This article did three things. First, it remembered Consuelo, who was a humble mannered yet highly active defender of Raza Studies. A cultural as well as political activist, she was known for bringing Chicano activist musicians from California to Tucson. The article also promoted a documentary film, “Precious Knowledge” scheduled to air nationally on PBS. Lastly, Cintli describes in detail and through the voices of participants, the protocol and experience of Sacred Runs. Indigenous running, like ancient sacred pilgrimage, are sources of shaping commitment and knowledge. Norma Gonzalez is quoted as stating that our ancestors “knew the beauty of having an intimate relationship with our Earth... they left us this way of knowing: Neteotlaotiliztli.”

Cintli in this piece taps into a community’s pathos while he continues marshalling an ancient logos through Mesoamerican epistemologies. His title tellingly alludes to Cherrie Moraga’s collection of poetry and essays, *Loving in the War Years* (2000). I think immediately of her powerful essay, “Out of Our Revolutionary Minds: Towards a Pedagogy of Revolt.” In it Moraga critiques academia and scholars who get PhD’s and have trouble integrating their knowledge back to Raza communities. She revisits the concept of Aztlan, calls for Raza Studies in high schools and critically recalls the idealist, revolutionary Chicano Movement “escuelitas” of the 1970’s. She ends, alluding to Frantz Fanon, by sanctioning all “impressive acts of revolt.”

Like Moraga’s message, this essay has tried to establish that Raza Studies is not a static discipline. Like the sacred runs it is *ollin*, “movement,” a discipline in constant (re-)formation. If it’s not getting students to organize and struggle for their community it is not doing its job. Raza Studies gives a community and its young people a voice. We become not only relevant but alive. Raza Studies humanizes Raza students and makes everyone more human.

CULTURA: MURALISM

Institutional Bullying

Luis Garcia, Teacher and Artist-Activist



Mural: Institutional Bullying Through Urban Planning

This Project originated from a partnership between the Cesar Chavez foundation, The Museum of Tolerance, and Jefferson High School. Through a partnership service-learning program, students were introduced to the non-violence philosophies and strategies of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Cesar E. Chavez. Students were also introduced to the unjust conditions in different parts of the world. They toured exhibits that reflected child labor, spousal abuse, bullying, civil rights, and prejudice. The 4-month classroom driven program allowed students to develop strategies or a plan of action to address an issue affecting them or their community. When students decided to address the topic of bullying, I also introduced the idea of bullying our communities and education. With the growing issue of gentrification in communities like South Central, Boyle Heights, McArthur park etc. and how education in urban communities works they wanted to reflect the realities that unjustly affect their lives through a walking Mural. The idea

Regeneración

the Association of Raza Educators Journal

came up in a dialogue where one student suggested they make individual paintings. Another student said “a painting is too small we need something bigger”, the discussion led to a Mural, but a mural, only being visible in one space was not enough. The idea of a walking mural that showed Gentrification in communities and a broken education system in their communities was the culminating project for this group of students.

Right: Photo of Students With Walking Mural. Bottom: Photo of Students’ Mural on Institutional Bullying of Education.

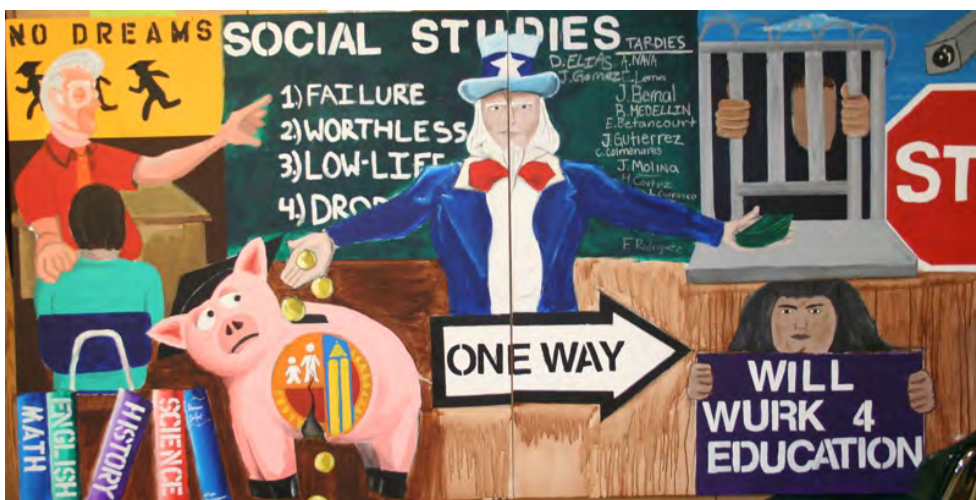


PHOTO MONTAGE

Resistance to the Attacks on Education, Teachers, and Our Communities

Photos by Miguel Zavala and Oscar Michel



August 2009 Santee High School students march over three miles to the Los Angeles Unified School District headquarters in Downtown Los Angeles. Over 600 students protested against teacher layoffs. Student organizers pressured then Superintendent Ramon Cortines to admit that mistakes were made by district officials.

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Los Angeles High School Youth Join the March 4th Coalition, Los Angeles, CA 2011



Martha Sanchez, South Los Angeles Parent Organizer, Strategizing Before Denouncing the Intrusion of a Charter School in Wadsworth Elementary in Front of the LAUSD School Board.



Watts Youth Protest Outside Jordan High School in a Campaign to Defend Their Teacher, Ms. Karen Salazar, Who Was Dismissed for Teaching Malcolm X.



49th Street Elementary Teachers Protest in Front of the LAUSD School Board the Intrusion of a Charter School in an Already Overcrowded Campus.

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Photo: Animo Justice, a former Green Dot corporate charter school, was shut down without any community input. Animo Justice Students march in protest of the closure to Green Dot headquarters. 2010.



Photo: The Association of Raza Educators Los Angeles chapter joins forces with the March 4th Coalition to Defend Public Education. 2011.

A.R.E. Events

6th ANNUAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

www.razaeducators.org

APRIL 14TH, 2012
SAN DIEGO, CA

For A.R.E. Chapter Events:
www.ARESanDiego.com
www.ARELosAngeles.com
www.ARESacramento.com
www.AREOakland.com

Other Events

www.nycore.org

NYCORE
New York Collective of Radical Educators

Education is a Right!
Not Just for the Rich or White!
NYCoRE's 3rd Annual Conference
New York, NY

Saturday, March 24, 2012



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