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## Horne takes to task Raza Studies teachers

Opinion by Tom Horne

In a Nov. 18 column, the Star's Ernesto Portillo Jr. alleged: "Horne generally doesn't like TUSD." That's a stretch. I have personally delivered certificates to a number of Tucson Unified School District schools, including some in poor neighborhoods that have achieved academic excellence. While there, I usually get the students to deliver loud cheers for the teachers, principals and parents that made their academic success possible.

In many hundreds of speeches delivered across the state over the last five years, I have held up TUSD's arts program as a model to be imitated by others. And TUSD has been very cooperative in working with the Department of Education to turn around failing schools.

I do have a philosophical problem with TUSD's Ethnic Studies Program. In the summer of 1963, having recently graduated from high school, I participated in the civil rights march on Washington in which Martin Luther King stated that he wanted his children to be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. That has been a fundamental principle for me my entire life, and Ethnic Studies teaches the opposite.

I personally observed this at Tucson High Magnet School. My deputy, Margaret Garcia Dugan, who is Latina and Republican, came to refute the allegation made to the student body by a previous speaker that "Republicans hate Latinos."

Her speech was nonpartisan and professional, urging students to think for themselves and avoid stereotypes. Yet, a small group of Raza Studies students treated her rudely, and when the principal asked them to sit down and listen, they defiantly walked out. By contrast, teenage Republicans listened politely when Delores Huerta told the entire student body that "Republicans hate Latinos."

In hundreds of visits to schools, I've never seen students act rudely and in defiance of authority, except in this one unhappy case. I believe the students did not learn this rudeness at home but from their Raza Studies teachers.

The students are being ill-served. Success as adults requires the ability to deal with disagreements in a civil manner. Hector Ayala was born in Mexico and is an excellent English teacher at Cholla High School. He reports that the director of Raza Studies accused him of being the "white man's agent" and that when this director was a teacher, he taught a separatist political agenda. The director's students told Ayala they were taught in Raza Studies to "not fall for the white man's traps."

I sent a public record request, as any citizen has the right to do, to TUSD, seeking information about its Ethnic Studies program. I did this quietly, preferring to reserve public comment until I had the information from TUSD.

TUSD apparently panicked by what would be revealed and complained to the Star about my request. On Nov. 15, the Star reported the story, and correctly characterized my position: "He said he is concerned about what he calls 'ethnic chauvinism,' which he described as 'Teaching people to make their primary personal identity the ethnic group they were born into rather than identifying as an individual in terms of character and ability.'"

Let's cut the racial-identity politics and teach kids to treat each other as individuals.

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