



State of Arizona  
Department of Education

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Public Instruction

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CITIZENS  
OF TUCSON

I. The TUSD Ethnic Studies Program Should be Terminated.

The citizens of Tucson, of all mainstream political ideologies, would call for the elimination of the Tucson Unified School District's ethnic studies program if they knew what was happening there. I believe this is true of citizens of all mainstream political ideologies. The purpose of this letter is to bring these facts out into the open. The decision of whether or not to eliminate this program will rest with the citizens of Tucson through their elected school board.

II. Philosophy.

First, let's spend a minute on underlying philosophy. I believe people are individuals, not exemplars of racial groups. What is important about people is what they know, what they can do, their ability to appreciate beauty, their character, and not what race into which they are born. They are entitled to be treated that way. It is fundamentally wrong to divide students up according to their racial group, and teach them separately.

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 principal for me my entire life, and Ethnic Studies teaches the opposite.

III. Personal Observations.

I personally observed this at the Tucson Magnet School. My Deputy, Margaret Garcia Dugan, who is Latina and Republican, came to refute the allegation made earlier to the student body, that "Republicans hate Latinos". Her speech was non-partisan and professional, urging students to think for themselves, and avoid stereotypes. Yet, a small group of La 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 teachers. The students are being ill served. Success as adults requires the ability to deal with disagreements in a civil manner. Also, they are creating a hostile atmosphere in the school for the other students, who were not born into their “race”.

Hector Ayala was born in Mexico, and is an excellent English teacher at Cholla High School in TUSD. 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, and his students told Hector that they were taught in Raza Studies to “not fall for the white man’s traps.”

#### IV. Textbooks.

As I will describe, the evidence is overwhelming that ethnic studies in the Tucson Unified School District teaches a kind of destructive ethnic chauvinism that the citizens of Tucson should no longer tolerate.

The very name “Raza” is translated as “the race.” On the TUSD website, it says the basic text for this program is “the pedagogy of oppression.” Most of these students’ parents and grandparents came to this country, legally, because this is the land of opportunity. They trust the public schools with their children. Those students should be taught that this is the land of opportunity, and that if they work hard they can achieve their goals. They should not be taught that they are oppressed.

One of the textbooks is *Occupied America* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). One of the leaders it talks about is described as follows: “José Angel Gutiérrez was one of the leaders, and he expressed the frustrations of the MAYO generation. His contribution was indispensable; it influenced Chicanos throughout the country.”

One of Gutiérrez’s speeches is described as follows:

We are fed up. We are going to move to do away with the injustices to the Chicano and if the ‘gringo’ doesn’t get out of our way, we will stampede over him.” Gutiérrez attacked the gringo establishment angrily at a press conference and called upon Chicanos to ‘kill the gringo,’ which meant to end white control over Mexicans.

The textbook’s translation of what Gutiérrez meant contradicts his clear language. In describing the atmosphere in Texas where Gutiérrez spoke, the textbook states: “Texans had never come to grips with the fact that Mexicans had won at the Alamo.” (P. 323.) It is certainly strange to find a textbook in an American public school taking the Mexican side of the battle at the Alamo.

Another textbook is *The Mexican American Heritage* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). One of the chapters is “The Loss of Aztlan.” Aztlan refers to the states taken from Mexico in 1848: Arizona, California, New Mexico and Colorado. This chapter states: “Apparently the U.S. is having as little success in keeping the Mexicans out of Aztlan as Mexico had when they tried to keep the North Americans out of Texas in 1830.” (P. 107.) In other words, books paid for by American taxpayers used in American public schools are gloating over the difficulty we are having in controlling the border. This page goes on to state: “...the Latinos are now realizing that the power to control Aztlan may once again be in their hands.”

#### V. M.E.Ch.A.

The extracurricular activity at TUSD related to ethnic studies is called M.E.Ch.A. When I was at Tucson high school, the librarian was wearing a M.E.Ch.A. tee shirt. If you Google M.E.Ch.A., you will find its goals and constitution. In the introductory paragraph, M.E.Ch.A. states:

We are Chicanos and Chicanas of Aztlán reclaiming the land of our [sic] birth (Chicano and Chicana Nation); 2) Aztlán belongs to indigenous people, who are sovereign and not subject to a foreign culture...

In section 2 of the M.E.Ch.A. Constitution it states:

Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent.

#### VI. Teaching the Wrong Things About Literature.

When I began speaking out publicly against ethnic studies, one of the ethnic studies teachers had his students write me letters. One of these letters states: “All that the English classes teach is mainly about some dead white people.” I believe schools should teach the students to judge literature by its content and not by the race or gender of the author.

#### VII. MacEachern Investigative Reports.

After my confrontation with TUSD over ethnic studies had begun, Doug MacEachern, a columnist for the *Arizona Republic*, ran a series of investigative reports on ethnic studies. This is the kind of thing that the *Star* and the *Citizen* should do, but thus far only the *Republic* has done. One of his sources was a former TUSD teacher named John Ward, who despite his name, is Hispanic. Ward reports:

But the whole inference and tone was anger. (They taught students) that the United States was and still is a fundamentally racist country in nature, whose interests are contrary to those of Mexican-American kids. Individuals in this (Ethnic Studies) department are vehemently anti-Western culture. They are vehemently opposed to the United States and

its power. They are telling students they are victims and that they should be angry and rise up.

. . .

By the time I left that class, I saw a change (in the students), he said. An angry tone. They taught them not to trust their teachers, not to trust the system. They taught them the system wasn't worth trusting.

Because Ward no longer worked at TUSD, he was willing to be quoted. Many current TUSD employees have talked to me about the horrors of what they have witnessed in the Ethnic Studies Program, and the almost totalitarian climate of fear at TUSD which keeps them from being quoted. Here is what MacEachern found:

In the past several weeks, messages have filtered out from teachers and other TUSD employees (some directed to Horne; others who have contacted me, following two previous columns on this subject) about what an officially recognized resentment-based program does to a high school.

In a word, it creates fear.

Teachers and counselors are being called before their school principals and even the district school board and accused of being racists. And with a cadre of self-acknowledged 'progressive' political activists in the ethnic-studies department on the hunt, the race transgressors are multiplying.

The director of the TUSD Ethnic Studies Department, who keeps a portrait of Ché Guevara on the wall of his classroom, spoke to MacEachern: "Our teachers are left-leaning. They are progressives. They're going to have things (in their courses) that conservatives are not going to like, he told me."

#### VII. TUSD's Intimidation of Its Employees.

Ward eventually wrote his own column. He describes how the TUSD administration intimidated him by removing him from his class, and calling him a "racist," even though he himself is Hispanic. This tactic, he writes:

...is fundamentally anti-intellectual because it immediately stops debate by threatening to destroy the reputation of those who would provide counter arguments.

Unfortunately, I am not the only one to have been intimidated by the Raza studies department in this way.

#### VIII. The Time for Action Is Now.

TUSD can intimidate its employees. But it cannot intimidate you, the citizens. You are in a comfortable position. You can speak out. If the TUSD board eliminates ethnic studies, it will save \$2 million a year of your money, the cost of ethnic studies

administrators and consultants alone. That is your money. The school board represents you. I can use my pulpit to bring out the facts, but only you can bring about change.

Sincerely,

  
Tom Horne

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