

Regeneración

the Association of Raza Educators Quarterly

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The Attacks on Public Education

Statement by the A.R.E. State Concilio
Chapter Reports
Political Analysis
Teachers Talk Back
North-South Struggles
Cultura: Muralist/Painter Victor Ochoa

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Introduction to the Second Issue

Regeneración, the Association of Raza Educators Quarterly, 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

In this second issue titled, "The Attacks on Public Education," the collection of articles address the current attacks on public education. Dr. Thomas Philip (UCLA) charts the ways in which conservative ideologies shape critical educators' framing of the problems of education today. Teachers Nikhil Laud and Anthony Martin address the call for educators to respond to the current attacks on education through decolonizing pedagogy and community-activism, respectively. The action-research report by A.R.E. Los Angeles teachers brings together various research strands in helping teachers make sense of local and federal privatizing policies.

Two articles, the interview with Juan Orozco, A.R.E. State Concilio Chair, and the reflection by the A.R.E. San Diego Education Committee, touch on the question of community activism and what this means for individuals and organizations who fail to see the long-term nature of organized struggle.

The issue also includes a review of Ernesto Bustillos's *Chicano Journalism* and artwork by Chicano muralist Victor Ochoa.

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.

* Raza is a term used to represent all oppressed people of color.

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MESSAGE TO A.R.E. MEMBERS

January 15, 2010

Since the founding of the Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E.) in 1994, we have witnessed a deterioration of public education, particularly as it relates to Raza communities. Since 1970, the height of the “Chicano Movement,” the demographics in California have changed to the point where Raza are fast becoming the majority; while at the same time, the funding for public education is declining (California Budget Project, 2007).

To A.R.E, the correlation between the historical de-funding of public education and the growing number of Raza students across the nation, is not a coincidence. In fact, it is calculated and designed by Right wing racist groups in our society that want to maintain the political and economic subjugation of all *raza*, i.e. oppressed people of color. Research conducted by California Faculty Association at Cal State Los Angeles, suggests that from being one of the premier states in education in 1970, California now has one of the highest populations of adults without a high school education in the nation (Wire Services, 2009). In short, these last few decades have seen a record number of cutbacks to education that will have severe consequences on the quality of education for years to come and, in particular, on communities of color, the poor, and other historically dominated groups.

With almost three-quarters of our membership having received pink-slips, many in A.R.E. have experienced first hand the consequences of the cutbacks. As a result, half of our members are losing their jobs, even though most ARE teachers are fully qualified and experienced educators. Needless to say, we ended 2009 in a troubling situation. Not only has high unemployment, foreclosures and increased homelessness

weakened the living conditions of our communities, but something so essential to human development—education—is becoming more and more a privilege for the few. Despite these conditions A.R.E. will continue to honor the legacy of organized struggle.

Hence, it is admirable to be part of an organization such as A.R.E., where the students and parents, as well as the community have a voice and place to exercise their own self-determination. With the birth of two chapters in the past four years, and increases in membership in the Los Angeles and San Diego chapters and the constitution of a State Concilio in 2008, we ask that our members continue with the legacy of struggle that we are a part. Recall, “We must approach our work with humility. Being humble means that we recognize our work as part of a long struggle for self determination, a struggle that we did not begin,” (A.R.E. Code of Conduct, 2008).

Members in A.R.E. have immersed themselves in struggling to defend the rights of our communities, creating unity with our communities, and leading the creation of an organization that is seen as a model of what teacher associations should be. We are grateful to all our members for persevering and having the patience that has enabled us to face and overcome our challenges, as well as moving forward our development as an organization. We say gracias to our membership. ¡Que vivan l@s maestr@s luchando!

A.R.E. State Concilio



INSIDE THE CONCILIO

Editor's Note: The following is a conversation between Concilio members Juan Orozco and Miguel Zavala that took place on January 26, 2010. Juan Orozco, a San Diego organizer, has held leadership positions in the A.R.E. San Diego chapter, and is currently a representative in the A.R.E. State Concilio. Miguel Zavala, a community organizer in LA, has also held leadership positions in LA, leads the discussion. The State Concilio coordinates cross chapter work and deals with organizational and national political issues as they pertain to A.R.E..

Miguel: Can you tell us a little bit about corporate charter schools its history and what it has meant on a local level in San Diego and on a national scale?

Juan: The history of education as a tool of state oppression against Raza, Black, and working class people in the U.S. has a long history. It doesn't begin with the past two years of an acceleration to privatize education, or with Arne Duncan's position as Secretary of Education. When we talk about the oppressive character of education we have to understand this history. We have to analyze public education within its relationship to oppressed people; Mexicans, African Americans, Pacific-Asians, Native Americans, or what some call "people of color". This history tells us that for oppressed people education was and has been a form of controlling and or indoctrinating us. Education was made to indoctrinate our people, to build this system, to perpetuate this system.

Take for example Native Americans whose education was a way of institutionalizing cultural genocide upon them. Then, when we look at San Diego and what is known as the "Lemon Grove Incident", in 1932, Raza was fighting to desegregate schools and the right for our children to attend local quality schools. Or take the historic case of Mendez v. Westminster, ten years later, in 1945, in Orange County, when parents fought against the segregation of children in terrible institutions known

as "Mexican Schools." Also look at the East LA walkouts of 1968 when Raza, young and old, fought against the racist-colonial education that Mexican/Raza were receiving. So the current crisis and struggle taking place around education is nothing new; we have always struggled for a right to a quality and relevant education. Therefore, this struggle has been going on for a long time.

Presently, we witness that there are some progressive folks that finally recognized that oppression is here. We believe that this recognition has come about because of the "blatant" move by corporations to take over public education and the creation of these charter schools who are limiting the rights of teachers and the type of education that our children receiving.

But the idea of privatizing education, like the lack of education of oppressed people, is nothing new. We have seen the business sector trying to move on education since the early 70s with the "Business Roundtable". It was a group of super rich people creating these plans that would permit corporate America to control schools. Look at the history of Arne Duncan, the so-called "U.S Secretary of Education", and what he's done with the Chicago City Schools, where he turned over schools to corporations and militarization, to see what his track record is. He is basically acting as a corporate CEO and is pushing the privatization of education, and has publicly said that education is tied to capitalism.

It is because of this "coming out of the closet" of capitalist control of education, that there's now a national level of awareness, and why people are up in arms, so to speak, in opposition to this. But the sad reality is that educators are up in arms because it is hitting their wallet. It is directly affecting them. They care more about their wallet, than the students. Because if they really cared about education, they would have been active years ago; because like we said, the crisis in education is not new.

The reason we were able to create a mass based movement of educators here in San Diego, is that we recognized this issue a long time ago. In fact, when we move to establish A.R.E. in 1994, some of its founders had already been struggling around the question of education for more than ten years. The founders of A.R.E., some who were members of Unión del Barrio and worked at Memorial Academy Junior High School, had already made an analysis how education was becoming more and more a capitalist “commodity” and a privilege for a few, and how teachers were losing control over the educational process itself.

Miguel: What else besides privatization have you seen in San Diego that has been an issue with education?

Juan: A particular issue of importance to us is the need for organization. What we don't have is an organized teacher struggle focused on the type of education as it pertains to our people. We see our counterparts in Latin America, who have had a history of organizing and being in the forefront of social change; yet, here, although we have a history of 16 years, A.R.E. is just at the beginning stages of growth or as a mass movement.

A.R.E. has been saying that things are going to get worse. What happens is that people tend to react and just take action from their personal experiences. But we say we need more than that. We need a movement led by an organized struggle that can project the possibilities for a better future.

Like we said, these issues are nothing new. We have to look again at the history of education, but this history should be viewed in the context of our people and struggle for self-determination. The unfortunate thing is that most Raza Educators do not know and therefore do not understand our historical struggles and what it has meant for our people. Educators themselves, have to be educated. This is an issue that we have to work to resolve.

Miguel: Why is political education necessary and important in our work? And why is it important in understanding the present crisis?

Juan: I think it's very important. Without political education, we cannot develop political maturity. It allows us to understand our present reality, our past, and where we need to go. Political education allows us to develop and understand the long-term struggle and to put theory into practice. Without this “political maturity” we really do not have an understanding of the educational crisis.

Most of the people graduating from teaching programs do not get political education and that is why they do not get involved. This lack of political education has developed certain tendencies in educators that will not allow them to sacrifice for a struggle; or see a movement that is much bigger than our individual selves.

Miguel: This reminds me of the A.R.E. Code of Conduct, in which it says, “Being humble means that we recognize our work as part of a long struggle for self determination. Engaging our work with humility entails that we do not subscribe to elitist tendencies.” The question for you is how can this help us understand the history of struggle?

Juan: I think humility is very important. We have to be able to humble ourselves to get to understand our true selves, both as individual people and as an organization. We are not saying we are the “only” solution, we're saying we're a group of educators attempting to do something to create some change within education, our communities and society. Being humble is necessary and important because that grounds us in a concrete reality.

For example, our oppressor, due to the fact that we have accepted their hegemonic cultural norms, explains the reason that individualism is so

much a part of us. We not only get our K-12 education through the oppressor, but we also get our bachelor's, master's, and PhDs –we become so indoctrinated, that we perpetuate the system. Some of us, who think we are “educated”, actually end up being the ones that embrace the system. And some of us don't even see that; so it takes us a while to understand and pull ourselves out of that and say, ‘hey, I'm actually perpetuating what I'm against because I've fallen into this trap.’

It's like those good-hearted Raza educators that become principals, teachers, or counselors. They go to work with great ideas, but because the system is setup in a certain way, it won't allow them to really do any long term change; instead it controls them and ultimately changes them.

The education profession has become so individualistic and elitist, it makes us unable to connect with the community and get involved in collective struggle. The profession and education is not set-up in a way that permits us to do these things. So that is why humility is important; it permits us to see this reality, open our eyes, and start struggling in a more collective way.

Miguel: Where do you see us right now with the March 4th mobilization in defense of public education?

Juan: It is a mobilization that has potential for us as educators to make significant progress and take important stands. But we have to be clear as to what we want, especially in relationship to the “mainstream” educators associations, such as the CTA (California Teachers Association). These organizations call for members to do “something”, but to do it within the paradigms imposed on us by the system. They say do something, but do it “before or after school hours”. It's like they're scared to really take a stand.

For example, the biggest thing teachers did last year was to wear pink as

a symbol of opposition to the mass firing of teachers. It's kind of discouraging, because the CTA has the resources and membership to make a call and say, “hey, no one is going to work, and we're going to mobilize throughout the state”. But it seems that we're scared to take action, to call for a substantial act. This is part of not having that political education, that political maturity that tells us that working within the system, we will never make changes. We have to be willing to take risks, think and act “outside the box”.

Many groups are planning to come out on March 4th because of opportunity. It's like they are jumping on the bandwagon. Because like we said, the crisis of education has been going on ever since we were colonized. To us, March 4th should be not only “one day of action”, but also a part of a continuing struggle to win real education for all.

In relation to March 4th, we're looking collectively at what endorsement is going to mean for us. We are looking at our capacities and what our contribution will be, such as teach-ins, developing curricula, and other resources that other people can use.

Miguel: Let me move on to the next question that is related, what is the difference between organized struggle and activism?

Juan: The idea with March 4th is to commit to action, to do something. However, with an activist mentality, you just do an action. On the other hand, with an organized struggle mentality, it's an action with a long-term purpose, that involves a thorough analysis of how this is one step that leads to something bigger.

Activism works when there is a strategy behind it, when there is organization. However, if it's just a onetime event, we don't need our people to be arrested or to take adventurous types of routes for something that has no long term social change.

Many folks believe that there's going to be a revolution after March 4th. We have to be realistic. This goes back to political maturity. We're not fighting for middle class individuals at Berkeley so that they can continue their education and finish their careers. No! We're fighting to change the conditions where most of the masses of our people are denied an education, which is a basic human right.

We don't have an organized struggle in higher education at the state level. What we have are individuals or small groups doing something at individual campuses, but it's not an organized struggle where there are three or four campuses at one time collectively coordinating and organizing efforts at a regional or state level.

Activism is cool; we all need that, because it's what drives our passion. But our activism has to meet the current needs and times, in a concrete way. We can't just replicate past movements. Therefore political maturity will make it possible for us to understand what organized struggle entails, an analysis of past struggles, which are incorporated in current struggles. Anyone can be an activist: all you have to do is have rebellious tendencies and take a stand against something that is not right. But in organized struggle, it means taking a stand against something that is not right, for a purpose, with an outcome, to implement something long term.

And just to clarify, by organized struggle we don't mean "just any kind" of organizing. Organized implies organization. But here we are talking about what some people call voluntary organizations or others call participatory democracy. And it's grass-roots, community-based organizing that we are talking about and not "non-profit struggle," because a lot of people tend to confuse the two and they think that the only option they have in creating organization and community is through the non-profit, which seems to be the only model out there that absorbs people trying to make some kind of change.

I just want to add that some people erroneously call us a non-profit organization. But A.R.E. is built from the bottom up. We are not in any way tied to the state (government) or corporations. This is important to note that organized struggle is moving forward. It has a history of building from the consciousness of the past and forward looking, and it is building organization.

Miguel: Thank you Juan for your insight.

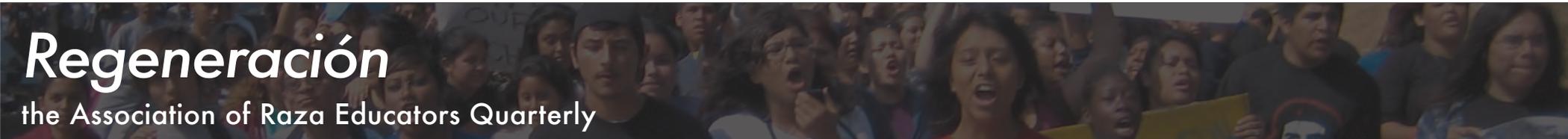
DESEGREGATION, THE ATTACK ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, AND THE INADVERTENT CRITIQUES OF CRITICAL EDUCATORS

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Thomas M. Philip is an Assistant Professor in the Urban Schooling Division at UCLA and a former high school teacher in Los Angeles. One strand of his research focuses on how teachers understand inequity and see it in relationship to the nature and purpose of their work. The second strand of his research addresses critical science learning.

INTRODUCTION

The effects of the current California budget crisis on education are staggering: the University of California Regents voted to triple tuition from what it was a mere ten years ago, the California State University Board of Trustees endorsed a plan to save money by reducing enrollment and effectively denying admission to tens of thousands of eligible students, and as I write, the Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District threatens to notify 20% of the District's employees of their imminent layoffs. The dreams of students in California continue to be deferred,



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denied and deadened. Some believe these troubles are only temporary while others question the viability of a publicly funded educational system. Another critique, however, argues that the current crisis is a continuation of the assault on public education that has been years in the making. Perhaps, it is one of the final nails in its coffin. This attack on public education must be examined in light of California's "genteel racism"[1] that has systematically defunded public services, spaces and institutions after legally mandated racial integration and the Civil Rights movement. Contemporary discourses regarding equity and educational reform must be considered critically to understand how they might intentionally and unintentionally undermine public spaces, services and institutions. Critical educators need to ensure that our demands go beyond superficial changes in "student achievement" or school conditions. We must work to fulfill the vision of the Civil Rights struggle and ensure that the resources and commitments that existed for the public in white segregated spaces become truly inclusive today.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE ATTACK ON THE PUBLIC

The language and rhetoric of political campaigns that protect and enhance the privileged position of wealthy white California residents has changed since the early sixties. Ronald Reagan's campaign in support of Proposition 14 might raise more eyebrows today than it did in 1964. Reagan's proclamation, as he worked with the California Real Estate Association to undo the Rumford Fair Housing Act and reinstate racial discrimination in housing might remind us of the racial undercurrents (so often called "charisma" in Reagan's case) that propelled him to political power in the state and nation: "If an individual wants to discriminate against Negroes or others in selling or renting his house, he has a right to do so." Reagan's words betrayed the campaign's racial motives, but the language and strategies in California's political battles have become increasingly "color-blind" over the years. Policies that favor

upper-class whites have been framed progressively as a matter of individual rights that are universal and have nothing to do with race. This discourse of individual rights, however, has continually and implicitly appealed to the fears and desires of upper-class whites. For example, in 1979, when Senator Robbins introduced Proposition 1 to overturn mandatory interschool busing, bumper stickers proudly declared that the apparent rationale to end busing was a concern for all children: "We love all kids: Vote Yes on Prop 1." [2] By its notable absence, the proposition purportedly had nothing to do with race. In campaigns such as these, white segregated spaces were vehemently protected through "democratic" processes without explicitly evoking race.

California's "genteel" racism stands in stark contrast to parallel movements around the country that blatantly and unashamedly refused to integrate the "public." An illustrative example is that of Prince Edward County in Virginia, which chose to close its entire public school system in 1959 rather than integrate. Through a private foundation, white residents created a network of private schools that were funded by public state tuition grants and county tax credits. These schools educated the county's white children and effectively denied any schooling to its black children for five years. This assault on African American children's right to public education continued until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1964 that the state tuition grants were unconstitutional. Similarly, as the nation contended with the hate and violence to which the Little Rock Nine were subjected, or with the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer of 1964, regions such as California[3] stood out as apparent beacons of tolerance and good-will. But, as public spaces such as schools, recreational facilities, transportation and parks desegregated, whites - particularly middle-class and wealthy whites - created private and semi-private alternatives. They leveraged race-neutral policies that did not explicitly exclude others and, in fact, often operated under the guise of tolerance

and acceptance. Most often they invoked supposed common or universal interests. These policies effectively maintained segregation and in some instances, intensified inequality. They shaped nearly every facet of public life and ranged from publicly-subsidized incentives for private automobiles to the prohibition of school busing. The systemic outcomes of these policies were immensely detrimental to the Civil Rights cause. For instance, transportation policies that promoted private automobiles over public options were superficially benign from a racial perspective and offered a brand of American “freedom,” characterized by unrestricted choice. However, these policies effectively decreased whites’ reliance on public (integrated) transportation, facilitated suburbs that were largely segregated, and lead to the demise of public transportation for poor people of color in many regions. Campaigns to end busing evoked parents’ “right,” regardless of race or class, to send children to their local schools. In terms of outcomes, however, they too operated to maintain separate and unequal schools. In these actions, white residents did not simply withdraw physically to the suburbs or urban enclaves. They withdrew economically and opposed the use of taxes to support what was no longer their exclusive sphere. The contemporary attack on public education, and more generally, on the public, must be understood in the context of the historical moment when the public was legally mandated to include non-whites.

CONTEMPORARY IDEOLOGIES

While white tax flight is illustrative in understanding the dynamics during

The contemporary attack on public education, and more generally, on the public, must be understood in the context of the historical moment when the public was legally mandated to include non-whites.

“desegregation,” it does not explain the continued onslaught of attacks on the public despite the significant shifts in class and race demographics over the years. Even with a changing electorate, there has been a significant withdrawal of commitment to the public, matched by increased support of private alternatives that arguably continue to benefit upper-class and white residents the most. Activist and social theorist, Antonio Gramsci, argues that such hegemony is maintained and supported through ideology that manifests in “commonsensical” ways of thinking about the world – ways that are based in people’s real, but partial, experiences and realities. The Right has effectively associated the public with inefficiency, waste and pandering to protected jobs, while private alternatives have been associated with innovation, efficiency and progress. These associations are not simply in the usage of the Right, but imbue people’s language across classes, races and other stratifications of society. We all partially make sense of our lives, our work, and our purpose through these meanings, and they partially name and limit the possible solutions for which we strive. It is essential for us to critically examine how our own “commonsensical” ways of talking about and working toward social justice might undermine our commitment to the public. Below, I discuss the implications of three common statements that I hear, particularly in my work with new and beginning teachers who are firmly committed to the vision and work of a more just world. How might these critiques that often circulate in progressive or critical teacher groups, critiques that are meant to address the gross injustices in our schools and society, inadvertently operate to further undermine the public?

Critique 1: “Young people in urban schools fail because their teachers don’t care enough about them, don’t connect to them, and don’t teach content that is relevant to them.”

Work by scholars such as Valenzuela speaks to the importance of authentic care and relevancy for student success. These are valuable and indispensable qualities that we, as educators, must use to gauge the

purpose and effectiveness of our work. They should be central when we engage our colleagues in conversations about their practice. However, this statement is made too often as an easy explanation for the injustices and inequities in our schools. This critique is articulated in the same vein as mainstream arguments that students would succeed if teachers were only more passionate, thoughtful and engaging. In doing so, it individualizes the systemic and institutional problems that undermine effective public education by focusing on individual teachers. It bolsters the narrative that a hardworking teacher can make *the* difference and plays into the myth that schools would be successful if “teachers just gave it their all.” In many ways, the Right, the Left, parents, schools, students, the media and teachers themselves are blaming teachers. As we place responsibility on individual teachers who aren’t able or willing to put forth extraordinary efforts to meet the needs of students, the conditions and resources that made it easier for teachers to engage in authentic caring and relevant curriculum – teaching assistants, resource specialists, materials, counselors, field trips, etc. – fade into the past era of segregated white schools. Teachers must engage in authentic caring and relevant curriculum. Those who fall short of this expectation must be supported. Those who consistently cannot meet this requirement should not remain teachers. But, our critique cannot be the Left’s version of the Right’s call for people to simply try harder. We should work with individual teachers, but our critique must focus on the ways in which public resources for an equitable and just education have been withdrawn, and our struggle must focus on restoring a public commitment to education.

Critique 2: “Teachers need to stop making excuses about things outside the classroom. A good teacher can create a community of successful learners within his or her four walls regardless of what’s happening on the outside.”

The devastating effects of deficit-thinking, where teachers, schools and society attribute the lack of student “achievement” to the values, behaviors and choices of oppressed groups are extensively discussed by scholars such as Valencia and Solórzano. Such deficit models that presume and reproduce students’ failure because of the color of their skin or the

language they speak are rampant. The critique that a teacher must focus on his or her practice within the classroom is important in countering notions of deficit. But, when we say that nothing outside of the classroom matters for a student’s success, we are in effect standing by and witnessing the defunding of communities’ health, nutrition, housing, employment, transportation, etc. We play into the myth that our students’ current and future life situations and opportunities will be significantly different even if we don’t work to transform this society’s inequitable distribution of income, wealth, resources and opportunities. We spend tireless hours with the hope of perfecting lessons so that all of

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our students will succeed, without asking ourselves what such success means in a society that requires stratified labor. We share heartfelt stories about how we have supported our students’ needs through our own financial sacrifices and donations from friends, families and private and corporate donors, without reminding ourselves that these individually significant actions pale in comparison to the federal and state dollars that proportionally supported segregated white schools. If we construct the narrative of successful school-

ing and a young person’s future opportunity as dependent on teachers who wear themselves thin, it allows society to abdicate its responsibility to provide what should be inalienable, publicly guaranteed rights of shelter, employment, nutrition, health and learning. In this multi-decade ideological shift from public to individual responsibility, both free-market propo-

nents and critical educators have increasingly highlighted the importance of “local” change through choice, charity and faith-based organizations on the part of the Right, and more commonly, sacrifice and community-based organizations for the Left. Individual sacrifice and locally-initiated alternatives are undoubtedly essential for transformation, but we cannot lose sight of the systemic nature of inequity and injustice. By emphasizing the role of individual, sacrificing teachers, to the point of obscuring every other societal injustice in a young person’s life, and presuming that “we” can do justice on our own regardless of the lack of equity in resources and opportunities across communities, critical educators inadvertently undermine the demand for equitably funded schools, and community spaces and services.

Critique 3: “School Districts are large bloated bureaucracies that are disconnected from the needs of students and teachers. Successful schools must be small, autonomous and community-based.”

While critical educators place a distinguishing emphasis on community control in this critique, this line of reasoning parallels contemporary arguments from the Right and some on the Left that solutions lie with local choice and decentralization rather than with systemic change that addresses the racialized nature of wealth and income distribution in this country. The critique of disconnected districts is based on the assumption that it is their bloated quality, as opposed to their progressive underfunding, which is responsible for the districts’ alienation from the communities in which they are situated. Public schools for segregated white communities not only offered a wide array of services that connected schools and communities, but also provided stable, well-paying jobs to many in these all-white communities. The employment and services were essential to a thriving community, both economically and educationally. They have become construed as vestiges of “bloated” institutions only as these spaces were desegregated. A well-funded public school district can continue to provide important services and jobs to communities of which they are a part. Critical educators must be on guard that in our critique of the increasing wage inequality between administrators and other workers, we are not undermining the importance of well-paid public jobs that serve a diverse range of the school’s and community’s needs.

CONCLUSION

Critical educators must move beyond the confines to which our critiques are limited by the Right’s articulation of the causes and solutions for inequity in schools. Our critiques have been framed in response to the Right. They have progressively focused on individuals, such teachers, rather than the fundamentally unjust system. This focus has led to the further deterioration of the public. The Right has largely won the ideological battle by disassociating the defunding of the public from the struggles of integration. There is a historical amnesia even among the Left. The critiques discussed above are important when we examine our practice as educators. They are indispensable in our struggle and vision for education in a just world. But, these must be critiques that we use when we look at ourselves as educators. In our dialogue with others, we must move out from the ideological corner in which we’ve been pushed and demand that the same commitment to the public that existed in all-white neighborhoods is essential for an equitable and just society that is more inclusive today. In our critiques such as those above, we cannot fall into the trap of individualizing inequity or injustice as the discourse of the Right prompts us to do. We cannot forget and must constantly emphasize that the rules of supporting the public changed when the public was forced to include non-whites. This cannot be overlooked or understated. The form of our demands for a well-funded public will be unique to our contexts and positions, but they must be made. Our struggles and critiques cannot simply address the symptoms of defunded public services, spaces and institutions. It must work to fulfill the vision and the struggle of those who demanded, along with educational desegregation, true social, political, and economic integration.

NOTES:

1. See Daniel Martinez-HoSang’s “The Triumph Of Racial Liberalism, The Demise Of Racial Justice,” in *Race and American Political Development*, edited by Joseph Lowndes, Julie Novkov, and Dorian Warren.
2. <http://digital-library.csun.edu/u?/SFVH,1553>
3. See Kruse’s (2005) analysis of Atlanta for other examples: “The Politics of Race and Public Space: Desegregation, Privatization and the Tax Revolt in Atlanta” in the *Journal of Urban History*, 31(5), pp. 610 – 633.

A.R.E. MEMBERS STUDY UP AND TALK BACK: CORPORATE CHARTERS AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION

Editor's Note: The following statement was generated as part of a four month action-research project undertaken by the A.R.E. Los Angeles, Publicity / Community Relations Committee in its study of corporate charters, and especially in light of the Los Angeles School District's motion, 'Public School Choice: A New Way at LAUSD'.

CHARTERIZATION in EDUCATION: A QUESTION OF POWER AND GROUP INTERESTS

By Miguel Zavala

As part of a long history of business involvement in education dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s (Apple, 2002; Callahan, 1962; Knopp, 2008), the political and economic alliances that have made charter schools possible existed prior to No Child Left Behind, and prior to the ascendance of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who, acting as CEO for Chicago City Schools, became the public spokesperson for Renaissance 2010, the blue-print for introducing charter schools nationally. More recently, key federal policies that have set the institutional groundwork for privatization through charter schools include: A Nation at Risk (Reagan), Goals 2000 (Clinton), and NCLB (Bush). Thus, the historical record shows that neo-liberal privatizing agendas do not discriminate between and among the two dominant political parties in the U.S. Rather, we see a convergence of interests that align the political elite, no matter what political party is the majority in Congress or who sits in the Presidency.

The original concept and goals of charter schools, which were first implemented in the state of Minnesota in 1991, involved providing "choice" or "open schools" to make education accessible to underserved communities. In a twist of language that conceals middle-class, corpo-

rate, and state interests, the discourse of "choice" has been pitched to poor, working-class families and communities of color as a kind of offer they can't refuse. It is for this reason that proponents of voucher plans, the historical predecessor to charters, and now Charter Management Organizations (CMOs), have laid claim to the idea that people need more "choices" and "options" as a way of gaining "access" to education. Framed within the logic of the market, neo-liberal policies and our capitalist culture have seriously distorted the meaning of "public education" (Lubienski, 2001). To note, in the 1998 World Trade Organization summit held in Uruguay, a document was published that stated that member states would promote the "liberalization" of public services. Not surprising, on top of this list was public education. We should worry, when the WTO has sanctified the "liberalization," read "privatization," of public education.

Undoubtedly the effect of neo-liberal discourses, corporate interests wedded to local politics and the marketization of education did not begin with the intrusion of Charter Management Organizations into the public education sector. From the perspective of the disenfranchised and groups who have been historically excluded from participating in educational, political, and economic spheres, White, middle-class families have always expressed an economic imperative in educating their children at the exclusion of other groups. To think of public education as an economic enterprise is nothing new. What we are seeing are the effects of global capitalism with its ensuing economic "adjustments" and the reproduction of a new, flexible, high-tech labor force. Thus, the advent of privatizing reforms such as charter schools and merit pay, are an expression not so much of the poor, Black, and Raza group interests, communities which are still disenfranchised and excluded from the political and economic decision-making of this nation, but of the vying interests that make these policies possible: corporations, political elites, and the different sectors of the managerial middle-class.

RACE TO THE TOP: A RACE TO PRIVATIZATION?

By Antonio Nieves-Martinez and Jerica Coffey

It is believed Race to the Top (R2T) will be that window of opportunity school reformers have been waiting for. This new legislation will award money to states that apply for federal assistance if they demonstrate a willingness to focus their funding in the following four areas:

- o Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- o Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- o Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most;
- o Turning around our lowest-achieving schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

As states scramble to allocate the resources needed to apply for this grant-like award, we must not overlook the far reaching impact this policy will have across the United States. For instance, in an attempt to meet the R2T criteria, states must create legislation that allows for the formation of charter schools and permit the use of student performance data for teacher evaluation (The New Teacher Project). Critics argue that although teachers, schools and states should be held accountable for student achievement, if school success continues to be measured by performance on standardized tests, we may continue to see a perpetuation of the status quo.

Applying for the R2T funding is no small task. The application asks states to create a plan that addresses the aforementioned four major components; in short, the federal government is looking to states to create an action plan for education reform. To help with the costs surrounding the creation of a state specific education reform plan the Gates Foundation is funding an organization, New Venture Funds (NVF), to offer financial support to states seeking to apply for Race to the Top funds. In order to be considered for the NVF grant, states must meet yet another set of criteria outlined by NVF. As we consider the necessity of private foundations in the process of

applying for this grant-like federal funding we must ask ourselves if this will only continue to create inequities among the states that are able to apply for the grant.

The implementation of R2T remains to be seen but given the appointment of Joanne Weiss, previously from New Schools Venture Fund (a charter management organization), as director of R2T there is concern public schools will begin to take on the corporate charter school model. To further compound this fear, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's advisory team includes two former Gates employees. His chief of staff, Margot Rogers, was special assistant to Gates' education director and the Assistant Deputy Secretary, James Shelton, was a program director for Gates' education division.

While this team of education venture philanthropists seems to have a hold on public education under the Obama administration, our community must look for the cracks in the concrete where the roses can grow. This next phase of NCLB can, if communities organize for change, be a window of opportunity for community-based charter schools to form. An alternative to the corporate charter model, community-based charters can offer a more culturally relevant curriculum responsive to community needs.

STUDY FINDS CORPORATE CHARTERS ARE LEAVING RAZA STUDENTS BEHIND

By Arturo Molina

Much of the policy that determines the direction of education is driven by data derived from standardized tests. This data is usually central in crafting educational policy. The recent "charterization" trend, especially within the second largest school district in the U.S., LAUSD, is no different. Much of the reasoning the powers provide to justify the privatization of education within LAUSD comes from data derived from standardized tests. This data suggests, according to the supporters of the move to privatize education, that charter schools do a better job at educating students when compared to the success of traditional public schools (Toney, & Murdock, 2008).

A report released in June 2008 by the California Charter School Association makes the claim that, when comparing charter schools and traditional public schools, while using data collected from the 2006-2007 school year, charter schools have an overall higher median Academic Performance Index (API) base and growth (Toney, & Murdock, 2008). This, along with many other statistics, seemingly have been taken as the whole truth when assessing the future of public education, particularly within LAUSD. A more nuanced look at the data, data that is reported by the California Charter School Association, which is a pro-charter organization, suggests that the claim that charter schools will serve LAUSD students better is false.

Although looking at the aggregate data may convey that charter schools are better than traditional public schools at educating LAUSD students, examining the data at a more critical level suggests that traditional public schools do a better job at educating the students of LAUSD when looking at specific populations.

In their report, the California Charter School Association chose API base and API growth as a variable to assess the level of success that charter schools have had at closing the achievement gap compared to traditional public schools. When assessing the achievement gap through API base for the 2006-2007 school year between Whites and Latinos, the report finds that there is no difference in the level of success that charter schools and traditional public schools had at closing the achievement gap. The median API gap between White and Latino students for both charter schools and traditional public schools was 189 API points. A different story is told, however, when we examine the achievement gap between White and Latino students in LAUSD through the scope of API growth. While the median API growth achievement gap between White and Latino students for charter schools is 161 API growth points, the median API growth achievement gap for White and Latino students for traditional public schools was a difference of 141 API growth points (Toney, & Murdock, 2008). Thus, according to research conducted by a

pro-charter school group, charter schools widen the achievement gap between White and Latino students.

According to the same research, charter schools do a poorer job at servicing socioeconomically disadvantaged students when compared to traditional public schools while using 2007 API growth to assess achievement. "SES disadvantaged" students in charter schools had a median 2007 API growth of 693 while "SES disadvantaged" students in traditional schools had a median 2007 API growth of 704 (Toney, & Murdock, 2008).

Given that LAUSD, as of the 2008-2009 school year, is 73.2% Latino, and 74.7% of its students qualify for free or reduced price lunch (California Department of Education, 2009), and given that research from a pro-charter school organization states that charter schools have not been as successful at servicing these students when compared to traditional public schools, one must subscribe to a "doublethink" epistemology to believe that charter schools are going to fix all of LAUSD's problems. Although reform is urgently needed to better serve Raza students in LAUSD, the research confirms that broad stroked "charterization" is not the answer.

TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS ON LAUSD'S 'PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE' MOTION

By Eleazer Franco & Patricia Gillikin

Sitting at the LAUSD Board room lounge on August 26th was a surreal experience. Hearing praise after praise about this Public School Choice motion from most of the school board members was ridiculous. "We are doing this for the children" echoed through out their meeting, but to us it seemed like the last thing on their minds. If they were creating change for the sake of the children then why weren't they being more critical of

Making ****it** Matter: Teaching in the Face of the Attacks on Public Education

By Nikhil Laud

Nikhil Laud teaches U.S. History and Latin American Studies at Cleveland High School in Los Angeles, where he also coaches boys basketball.

CONTEXT

It has been well documented that state budgetary educational cuts have disproportionately targeted working class students of color (Cabrera and Camangian, 2009). So when we, as urban educators, analyze the attacks on public education across this nation and in California specifically, do we envision our students, their families and the communities we serve as targets of assault? We should. The cuts are not name-less and face-less. They are personal, and we must respond to them as such. However, the under-funding and under-serving of our students is but one thread in a disturbing social tapestry. The theme of this tapestry includes varying and continuing assaults on poor communities of color:

- physical: increasing policing and incarceration;
- social: under-resourcing of urban schools and the mis-education of urban youth;
- economic: massive poverty and inadequate access to employment;
- spatial: community gentrification and predatory lending practices;
- psychological: trauma caused by inequality and social/personal neglect;
- ideological: cultural deficit models.

When these attacks are analyzed in totality, the fact that our students show up to our classrooms day after day is a testament to their hope for a life raft in this flood of oppression and injustice. Their attendance begs the question: Do our pedagogies and methodologies provide our students with a path through the storm (Duncan-Andrade, 2009)?

“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, FRIENDS, AND I SEE SOME ENEMIES”
- MALCOLM X

As truly reflexive social justice educators, we must ask ourselves, how have we become so extremely well-adjusted to the mis-education of our young people (West, 2008), especially when the perpetrators are our supposed allies? While the pedagogies of most urban teachers are undoubtedly troubling, it is the approach of many so-called “social justice” educators that is particularly problematic. As some teacher education programs deem themselves social justice simply by placing teachers in urban schools, regardless of their graduates’ pedagogy or commitment to serve those communities, it is clear that the definition of social justice teaching has become diluted. Though often well-intentioned, these teachers generally have one of two pedagogical shortcomings as I have observed them:

- They utilize instructional methods that overwhelmingly emphasize performance on state mandated testing and rarely develop their students’ critical social analytic skills;
- They may include “socially relevant” or “culturally responsive” curriculum but in their attempts to engage students with “culturally relevant” material, these teachers often fail to develop the critical academic literacies necessary for higher levels of education. Such skills include higher order thinking, reading, writing, and speaking skills.

In the former case, some “social justice” teachers have political analyses that their own students will never come close to attaining. For instance, this particular mis-guided educator might be able to articulate the vicious legacy of white supremacy in American history but they fail to provide their students with the opportunities to develop similar analyses. The latter pedagogical approach is harmful because it often results in students who have high levels of social awareness, but are unable to articulate this awareness in ways that are academically empowering. In both cases, the student is mis-educated.

So then, what is required of each of us? I argue for the *relevance* and the *rigor*.

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As Duncan-Andrade puts it, nothing less than capturing the hearts and minds of the young people we teach (2005). To what ends? Nothing less than turning them on to a deep desire for truth, justice and freedom (West, 2008) while struggling with them through the materialistic consumption and self-defeating resistance (Solorzano, 2001) so common in urban centers today. We must strive to construct pedagogies that respond to the ever increasing and varied attacks on working class communities of color through creative and engaging methods that aim to “arm” our students with the psychological, emotional and intellectual tools to resist such destructive forces. Or as I ask myself when creating annual unit plans that address student suffering and agency, “Does this ****it really matter?**”

A HISTORY UNIT MODEL:

Race and (In)Justice in America: Slavery, American “Democracy,” and the School -> Prison Pipeline

Considering our current state of emergency, it is imperative that we innovatively structure unit and lesson plans that provide students with the tools necessary to both interpret their social realities and imagine more humane possibilities. This 7-week American History unit on the exploration of race and (in)justice in America emerged from the need for students to recognize that present inversions of justice (Cabrera and Camangian, 2009) in the failure of the public school system is a product of the historic inversions of justice in the “founding” of America. In other words, I wanted my students to be able to explicitly understand the ways America’s present racial dilemmas- specifically in regards to the education and incarceration of its poor youth of color, are deeply rooted in the racist foundation of the United States of America. To encourage students to recognize their agency in combating the societal iniquity they face, I team-taught the last 2 weeks of the unit with 2 recent high school graduates, currently working as community organizers, in our school around issues of the urban school-prison pipeline. The end result was a typed essay on student conceptions of race and (in)justice in America, imagining a socially-just America, and what it would require personally, communally and socially to create a truly democratic America.

My mentor teacher, Patrick Camangian provided me with a framework for

designing unit plans, which I have found to be invaluable over the years. He asked, “What 3 things do you want your students to know, think or believe at the end of the unit?” For this unit, the 3 essential understandings were:

1. The foundations of America’s construction of race and (in)justice are rooted in its disgraceful history of Indigenous colonization and African slavery.
2. Race and justice in America, rather than being 2 distinct social constructions, have been formed simultaneously (i.e. to be of color in America was defined as receiving unjust treatment. This was the rule, not the exception.)
3. The present attacks on public education corresponding with exorbitant incarceration rates reflect the diminishing social value that those in power place on the lives of poor black and brown youth.

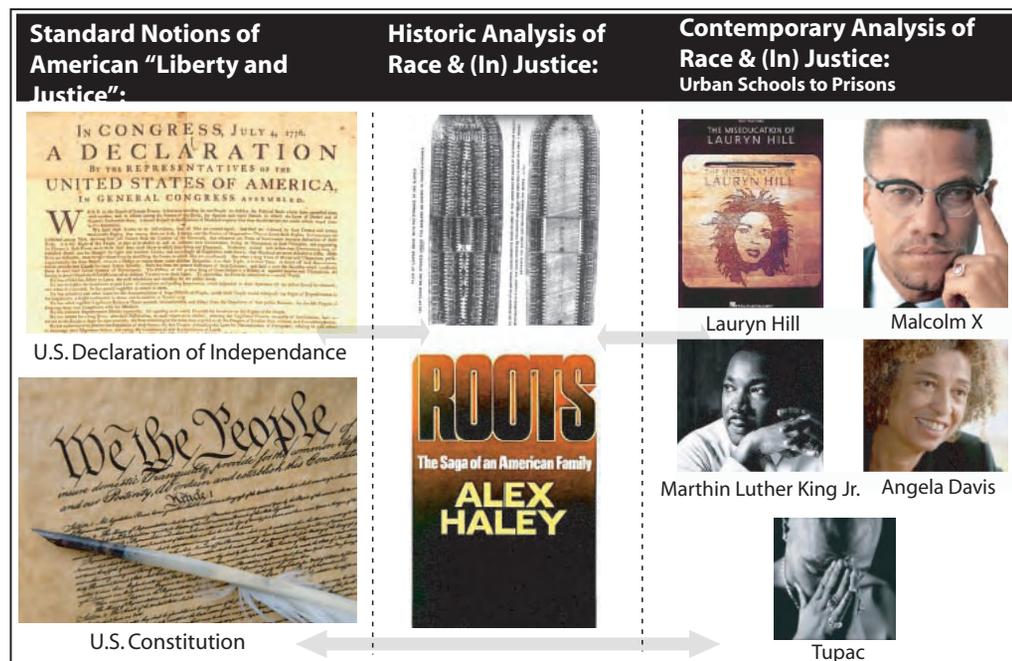


Figure 1. Framework for a Teaching Unit Outline

Rather than running from state standards, I have learned them so well as to creatively use them to fit the needs of my students. California State History Standard 11.1 states, "Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence." It's no coincidence that the words "genocide," "colonization," or "slavery" are not found in the 11th grade requirements, it doesn't matter. The words "significant events in the founding of the nation," provide me the ideological justification for an in-depth analysis of African slavery as central to the creation of America. Similarly, the phrase "attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence" allow teachers and students to thoroughly interrogate the contradictions of the phrase "all men are created equal...they are endowed...with certain inalienable rights...these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Essentially, urban social justice educators must exploit the vagaries of state standards to develop the skills our students need to identify, survive and attack societal injustice.

To develop these literacies in my students while simulating college level academic environments, I create and photocopy unit readers for each student that include every text we will analyze. (The texts used in this unit's course reader are listed at the end of the article and the PDF version of the unit reader will be available for download from www.arelosangeles.com).

As the chart above demonstrates, the unit sought to problematize dominant notions of American "liberty" and "justice" from the historical perspective of the have-nots. So we juxtaposed the writing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution with the dehumanization and commodification of African bodies, as studied through the video version of Alex Haley's *Roots*. A particularly insightful moment for students generally occurs when the auctioning of Kunta Kinte is interrupted by my reading of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. This unit

then sought to utilize the analyses of contemporary scholars of color to help students wrestle with the ways America's inversions of racial justice are manifested today in our education and prison systems. Finally, through writing an analytical essay, students simultaneously developed their academic capacities while exploring their own (as well as their community's and society's) transformative potential.

The following is an excerpt from a student reflection on the unit.

"I enjoy learning and becoming aware of justice issues incorporating class, race, and gender because in the past I never had the opportunity to compare such topics together. A lot of times I didn't really see the different side of history nor get taught the truth; but from learning about the roots of justice back in slavery days and justice now in society, I get a view on the reality of how justice has not changed much for us. Through this class I feel I've expanded consciously to look at things very critically which has been an amazing eye-opening experience for me as a student and person." - Chantal

S.O.S.

Our students and communities are in distress. They are continually under assault by powers that function to negate their human potential and therefore limit productive living (Tejeda and Espinoza, 2003). When we are at our best, we respond to these distress signals with a pedagogy that humanizes the least well off amongst us. We do so by resisting the social forces that traumatize them with disturbing regularity. Unfortunately, our students do not have the luxury of waiting while we decide whether we want to be at our best all the time. Their spirits and psyches continually remind us that they need ****it to matter, and they need it to matter now.**

UNIT READER TEXTS

U.S. Pledge of Allegiance

Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Howard Zinn's *A Young People's History of the U.S.* Chapter 2-6

Willie Lynch's "Let's Make a Slave"

Malcolm X's "The House Negro vs. The Field Negro"

The U.S. Declaration of Independence (First Draft)

Frederick Douglass' "The Meaning of July 4th for the Negro" (July 5, 1852)

The U.S. Bill of Rights

Jerry Fresia's *Toward an American Revolution*. Chapter "A Constitution that Disrespects It's People"

Angela Davis' "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex"

Lauryn Hill's "Mystery of Iniquity"

David Cole's *No Equal Justice* Chapter "The Color of Punishment"

Tupac Shakur's "My Block"

Johnathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* Chapter 1: "Life on the Mississippi: East St. Louis, Illinois"

Lauryn Hill's "I Get Out"

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Unity, Organization, and Accountability In Struggle

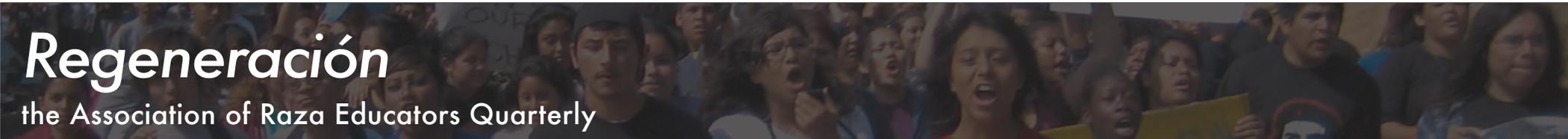
Editor's Note: The following is a collective statement written by the Education Committee of the San Diego Chapter of A.R.E. It consists of (1) a self-reflection from an A.R.E. teacher who has witnessed members come and go into the organization (2) a brief description of unity within political struggle and our movement, (3) an example of the lack of unity and accountability found within some forces in the teachers/educators front of our struggle, and (4) a closing statement on what should be done. The aim of the article is for educators to come to some common understanding of the need for unity, organization, and accountability in struggle.

LOOKING FOR SERIOUS AND ACCOUNTABLE ORGANIZED ACTIVISM

Having been in A.R.E. for almost five years has given me the opportunity to learn, share, and struggle for our pueblo. I felt confident in my craft before A.R.E.; I believed I was affecting change on my school site and with my students. I had taken on many leadership positions on my campus: I had established a strong "Latino Club"; I "diversified" our A.S.B. (Student government), I was helping Raza students get into college through the AVID program, and I felt that I created a safe place on this campus for Raza students.

Unfortunately, everything mentioned above began with an "I". And as "I" left that middle school and/or my students left onto high school, "I" began to see all the progress easily erased by a system that is set up for non-white students (or as some refer to them, students of color) to either completely assimilate to succeed or get pushed out of school into a life of servitude. Everything that "I" had worked so hard for because "I" knew deep down in my heart it had to be done, was easily reversed on a daily basis. "I" would attend their High school graduation and only a handful of these youth would be walking even though 65% of the High School was comprised of Raza youth. What was happening? "I" would ask myself, how could this be?

I began to feel isolated and alone; just as demoralization was beginning



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to set in, I was invited to join the Association of Raza Educators. I agreed with the mission wholeheartedly but the goals were and still are far from being achieved. However, one thing was for sure, the members of the organization were honest forces who were willing to dialogue and struggle in defense of our pueblo; a true collective that included all voices including my own. We have learned, we have shared, and everyone has benefited; our students, our parents, our community, and ourselves.

Now in my fourth year in ARE San Diego leadership, I have seen many educators come and go. Some visit once and never come around again, others join for a series of months only to disappear with time, while others remain no matter how hard the struggle may become. It seems as if anger has been the catalyst for many to join our organization. For some this anger stems from an individual perspective, how they have come under attack and/or how they are frustrated with others. While others are angry because of how our families, our students, and our communities come under attack. Those who stay, have not only been angry, but believe in collectivism, which requires compromise, patience, and struggle – and those who have left, in my opinion, lack the willingness to set aside their petty individual differences and see beyond the struggle as something much greater than ourselves.

WHAT IS REAL UNITY AND ORGANIZATION?

In order to address the concerns raised by this teacher, we need to understand what is true unity, organization, and accountability. Unity is the “state of being one” with others. It means being together, working together, and “being collective” in the decisions we make. In political struggle (movement), unity is best represented by organization.

As we witness the worsening oppressive conditions facing our communities, the question of unity of those involved in the struggle for justice and self-determination becomes more and more important. Hence, the ability to unite becomes a critical question for our movement.

Since the Chicano Power Movement of the late 60’s and early 70’s, the cry for unity has been at the forefront of those involved in the struggle. Yet, creating unity has been an objective that has rarely been achieved. What we have seen, in most cases, has been a dysfunctional or “superficial” unity.

The history of our struggle is filled with examples of how this lack of real unity has led to failures and defeats. Organizations have been destroyed, battles lost, events canceled, errors committed, activists burnt-out, and opportunities lost, due to lack of unity among those in struggle. Therefore, the question before us is what is unity and why, if everyone agrees to its importance, has it been so difficult create? We believe that the answer is found in the liberalism or the ignorance in our relationship to this particular question.

The reason this unity we speak of has been so elusive throughout decades of struggle is due to what many in the movement call “liberalism” – a practice that manifests itself by letting things or people slide for the sake of peace, friendship, being liked by others, cowardice, or selfish reasons. In our drive to create unity and not hurt anyone’s feelings, we deny the existence of contradictions in individuals with whom unity is impossible. On the other hand, some of us are simply ignorant of the concrete elements that must exist within a group or organization in order to have a functional unity.

We put forth that unity must be based on four basic elements:

- Political Principles
- Accountability and Discipline
- Democracy/Collectivism
- Honesty and Sincerity

What happens when these elements do not exist within a group who claims to be “united”? The following are just but a few examples:

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- The group becomes a “cover” for the opportunists (people use the organization or “unity” for their own individual gain or selfish interests);
- Often times in an effort to appease those with whom we have no political unity, the group comes to wrong conclusions or decisions;
- We waste precious time discussing issues with people who are really not about unity;
- For the sake of unity, we compromise too much, leading to actions that become politically meaningless;
- Everyone puts in hard work into the struggle, but the opportunists take all the credit and benefits;
- We witness how once a decision is made collectively, those who are individualistic and non-collective, end up doing whatever they personally chose to do anyway;
- Individualists and dishonest forces are rarely self-critical, as they only see faults in others, but never in themselves.

THE MOVEMENT IS NOT ABOUT INDIVIDUALS; IT'S ABOUT ALL OF US

Unity is what we strive for, but in this process, do we find ourselves “catering” to those opportunistic forces that only take action when they come under attack? As we struggle to work with teachers who view ARE as too radical or too militant, we find ourselves trying everything in our power to be inclusive. We find ourselves working with educators who either don't know what unity, organization, and accountability is, or are opposed to it.

As we sit with colleagues, as we converse with other educators, and as we march down the streets of San Diego in defense of our communities, we begin to wonder – what do we need to do to get the thousands of Raza teachers, counselors, and other educators from all backgrounds to stand alongside our youth and their families in defense of what is rightfully ours? A reality free of fear, free of ICE terror, free of attacks against our students and community; a reality where what we learn reflects the lives we live.

We need unity, but it seems that others are only willing to unite under their

conditions. Therefore, we try to accommodate them in hopes that they will actively participate. We go to the extent of scheduling events at dates and times that they can attend even though those may not be ideal for the purpose of the action. Even though this is a concession other educators make for the sake of “unity”; we never see the educators we catered-to defending the rights of the families and community from which their students come from. When we march in front of our schools or district offices to demand our educational and human rights, rarely are those educators in attendance and of no surprise, their students aren't either.

Would the students have attended if they were aware or given rides? Are their students even aware of the events? Are they denied information? Are they told not to become too politicized? If so, who is oppressing our youth? Is it the system or is it “Raza” teachers and other “progressives” who have gained access only to deny the next generation the opportunity to fight by denying a possible path to struggle? How can we call ourselves progressive teacher activists or call ourselves “Chicana/os”; if we don't defend our youth and instead “remain politically neutral”?

During the recent struggle at a local University to oppose policies that would severely limit access to Raza and poor/working class students, most high school educators and the student groups that they sponsor, again, were not present – even though many had promised to be there. Those in attendance are to be respected because they stood in solidarity with our youth.

This call is not about us, or you! This is about a movement that is dormant and needs to be awakened; it's about the liberation of our people. We can't wait until we live in a completely fascist state or have lost complete access to the University. Unity is the only path towards our liberation and organization is the highest form of unity. As the great peoples' historian Howard Zinn reminds us, “Keep in mind that great movements in the past have arisen from small movements, from tiny clusters of people who have

gotten together here and there. If you have a movement strong enough, it doesn't matter who is in the White House, what really matters is what people are doing, what are people saying, what are people demanding!" [2]

CONCLUSION

If we agree that change only comes when people build communities of struggle, then we understand that unity is essential for the liberation of the oppressed. "Organization is not only directly linked to unity, but is a natural development of that unity." [3] When organizations and individuals take advantage of the movement for their personal interests, the goal of liberation will always be beyond our reach. It is here where we must confront the questions of liberalism and honesty.

Liberalism, as defined previously, has reduced the movement to activism without context, direction, or accountability, and thus impedes unity. In essence, this lack of unity is synonymous with a lack of organization. Due to prevalent fear and/or lack of honesty, we see the absence of accountability within our movement; an accountability that can only take place within a collective where individuals must make concessions in exchange for unity.

Instead, what often happens is the dialogue needed for reflection is overlooked. The fear of realizing how we perpetuate negative tendencies can impede one's contribution to the movement. "Yet, if we are to build a broad-based movement for social change these concerns must be addressed." [4]

Many educators have not contextualized the concept of social justice, yet they find themselves working for this necessary reality within their classroom or in an organization. Honest self-reflection, dialogue and action must take place before an individual can positively contribute to a struggle for political change. The most essential part of this self-reflection must uncover one's need to leave behind their individualistic tendencies in exchange for

unity with others, an honest unity that can only take place where accountability is commonplace. This space can only be found within an organization filled with honest forces driven by corazón; love for their people.

One must be up-front and courageous when encountering this fear of self-reflection. It is an uncomfortable task, but if individuals truly believe that this movement is necessary, then it will not be seen as a burden. If liberalism is a disease that has had a negative effect on unity, then honesty is its prescription. Ultimately, lack of, and/or fear of honesty is what immobilizes an individual, an organization and a movement.

This article is a call for honest, open dialogue. Some individuals and organizations have conveniently taken benefits of camaraderie and collective work without having to contribute to a liberating praxis. These are the same groups and individuals that owe their very existence to years of struggle and political organizing by previous social justice organizers. Reflection at an individual and organizational level is necessary to advance our movement. We need to end liberalism, be honest, and join any honest organization in the struggle for justice and liberation of our students, our families, and our community. Unity – Organization – Liberation!

¡La Union Hace La Fuerza!

NOTES:

1. What the Association of Raza refers to as a push out rate is what most believe is a drop out rate. A.R.E. believes our youth are pushed out of school as opposed to dropping out.
2. Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*.
3. Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*.
4. Laura Pulido (2006). *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

On Bookmarking the present in order to advance the future: A call to respond to the critical state of education today

By Anthony J. Martin, ARE

Anthony Martin is a high school educator at West Adams Preparatory High School in South Los Angeles and is a member of the Association of Raza Educators.

As time goes by and the economic situation (the so-called “crisis”) worsens, more and more educators worry about losing their jobs, no differently than last year. Lately, however, these extremely urgent and totally legitimate worries have yet to take form as a collective indignation ready to respond appropriately to the absurd cutbacks that will be dealt to public education in Los Angeles this year.

Never mind the local resistance from the last academic school year, which included numerous student walkouts and sit-ins, hunger strikes and even teachers striking in the face of a court-order proclamation against strikes. Never mind the growing public disillusionment with a new president who ran his campaign by way of bastardizing the concept of “change”, and in the meantime appointed a new Secretary of Education (Arne Duncan) that, while being a top CEO in Chicago, imposed a corporate and privatizing agenda upon Chicago Public Schools.[1] Never mind the numerous examples of resistance in Latin America against neoliberal politics being imposed upon education (examples include Puerto Rico, various states in Mexico, Honduras, among others, in which the price for protesting frequently has involved imprisonment, disappearances, and even assassination) which have clearly and consistently served as an ideological compass for teachers here to follow. If one is even minimally conscious of these circumstances, significant at local, national and international levels, one understands that their responsibility in this historical context is to resist with unflinching conviction for the sake of our youth and the generations to come.

This year, one does not hear of a strong United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) front, or even a strategy, to challenge the all-out attack on public education. Really, any mobilization and true action has been carried forth by students of California’s public universities over the unheard-of tuition increases,[2] and has yet to be modeled by teachers of the K-12 system, especially in L.A., where the budget crisis has hit with particular severity. The proposed solution to the crisis? According to LAUSD superintendent Ramón Cortines, the options are nothing less than four furlough days and a 12% pay cut, or else up to 8,500 layoffs.

Indeed, the social contradictions of neoliberal politics and capitalism are being charged at the expense of the general public, and especially educators.

Indeed, the social contradictions of neoliberal politics and capitalism are being charged at the expense of the general public, and especially educators. These contradictions are especially insulting in a state such as California, celebrated as having the world’s eighth largest economy, yet seem-

ingly incapable of doing better than ranking 48th in education spending in the country. It is the responsibility of all educators with any sense of dignity to be part of a collective resistance (which, if possible, they should be leading, as they do in our neighboring Latin-American countries) that not only points out but also responds accordingly to the contradictions that expose taxation without representation in our social and political context. Once we become truly conscious of the state apparatus operating for its own self-interest at public expense and livelihood can we begin to organize effectively around the basic and universal human right of education, which is always the critical and fundamental heart of the well-being of the working class. Of course, this is even more true as it involves oppressed people of color, who suffer ever-increasing “push-out” rates from a marginalizing “public education” institution, which, moreover, finds itself yielding to Charter Management Organizations driven by the profit motive rather

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than by any responsibility to the youth that compose their populations. The fact that Los Angeles has more charter schools than any other city in the country, coupled with an increasing trend of both the superintendent and the board of education facilitating the takeover (or giving-over) of public schools to the highest bidder, has resulted in the exacerbation of the division among educators and communities, who are yet fully aware of the implications of the charter-school movement. The reality is that data-driven charter schools do not always admit students with disabilities or IEPs (among other factors), as many times they do “not have the resources to support fine arts, physical education, and extracurricular activities”.[3] Moreover, the lack of mobility on the part of United Teachers Los Angeles has created an even more slippery slope for those educators who will get laid off (by not protecting them) only to end up in charter schools, the majority of which do not respect union rights either.

In my estimation, no educator has the right to complain about being potentially laid-off so much as they have the ideological and social responsibility to see that the public institution that they are a part of fulfills its obligation to its students. The collective goal is to not only have our youth graduate and become “educated” individuals, but also to empower them and the underrepresented classes that they represent. To stand by and do nothing is to give a poor example to our students and the community and is, moreover, treachery to the very profession that we dedicate ourselves to. Because the state has not assumed responsibility in educating its young constituents, also the heirs of a socially dysfunctional “democracy”; it is the duty of educators to not only make their students literate of both the word and the world, but also to have them organize around the very issues that affect them both within the “education” institution as well as on the streets. Though studying about such interesting topics as the Black Panthers or the movements towards socialism in South America may serve as inspiration for students who are unaware of the potential of historically oppressed people of color, the best education towards participatory democracy and self-determination is that which is gained through experience. A case in point is the Education Not Arms Coalition in San Diego, which just last year pressured San Diego City Schools district officials to remove all JROTC gun ranges from their cam-

puses. This victory came about because of the organized efforts of teachers and especially students who understood that these gun ranges did nothing but promote ignorance and violence. Though history has taught us that our corrupt government’s reactionary response to organized progress has been violence, history has also taught us that it is only organized groups of dedicated individuals that make lasting change and provide the inspiration needed to guide us to victory in the long road towards freedom.

NOTES:

1. *Rethinking Schools Online*: Volume 23, No 3: Spring 2009: Arne Duncan and the Chicago Success Story: Myth of Reality?
2. CNN U.S.: November 20, 2009: Protests of tuition increase continue on California campuses
3. http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Charter_Schools&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=30&ContentID=5008



COVER PHOTO. Association of Raza Educators State-wide caravan to Sacramento in protest of the state budget cuts to social services, including public education. May 8 - 9, 2008. Participating cities: San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

NORTH-SOUTH TEACHER STRUGGLES

VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

Mexican Education Like A Tree: Let's Go To The Root (Of the Problem), Not The Branches, Much Less The Leaves

By Pedro Echeverria V.

Editor's Note: Pedro Echeverria is an independent Mexican journalist. The article was originally published by AMATE, Alternative Media Agency and Trade Editions. It has been translated and published with permission of AMATE.

A few days ago the Los Angeles Times published an article on its website about education in Los Angeles. Accompanied by a photograph, the article tackled the theme of "charter" schools, model of private education, classifying this type of school as "Revolutionary". The following response, written by educator and contributor to AMATE, Pedro Echeverria, offers a critical perspective on public education in Mexico which we estimate is clearly applicable to the case of education in Los Angeles, in the state of California, and a large part of Gabacho [society]. – Raymundo Reynoso, AMATE.

1. With a deeply rooted dominant class ideology, the most conservative right-wing sectors in Mexico have always attributed to teachers, children and their parents essential fault with the ills of education, while critiquing the government for not exercising severe punishment against teachers and students. On the other hand, most progressive sectors focus their criticisms against the corrupt and ineffective government that does little to remedy education ills and, generally, have drawn a list of the problems in public education, giving them all equal importance, without distinguishing which are the most fundamental, primary and which are the most visible, the most spectacular, that blur our vision and entertain, while the class in power advances with effectiveness, imposing its objectives, plans, and programs.

2. After the great student movements of 1968, in particular after the Prague Spring, a magnificent book arrives in Mexico by Czech philosopher-activist Karen Kosik, *Dialectic of the Concrete*, that many of

us turned into a basic reader for our students of CCH/UNAM. Koski taught us that, "Reality presents itself to man as the terrain in which he exercises his practical activity and through which emerges practical, immediate intuition of reality; grounded in this practical relation, man develops the representations by which he captured the phenomenal world; his everyday practical activity creates 'common sense' which is the ideological form of everyday work. But the world that reveals itself in fetishized activity, in the world of exchange and manipulation, is not the real world, although it may have the 'consistency' and 'validity' of this world, but is the 'world of appearances' of a pseudo-concretization that is a obscured clarity of truth and deceit."

3. When I reflect on educational problems I realize that if I dedicate my thoughts to saying that teachers should comply with their work hours, that the school should always be clean, that students should greet the teacher, that they should stand upright and sing the national anthem, that the cooperative should not defraud, that one should avoid selling junk food at the school door, that students should cut their hair, that recess should not be prolonged, etc., is to talk about the leaves or some of the weak branches that obfuscate our vision, that impede us from seeing the fundamental, primary problems. Kosik explains that to discover the essence of things one must practice a special activity (to investigate, meditate), which very few can realize, that allows us to separate appearance from reality so as to avoid that which hides it. Leaves hide powerful branches, along with the trunk and the roots we don't see.

4. A phrase of Kosik's that I remember quite well: "We live in the world of appearances," that is to say, we only realize that which is in front of our noses. For example, that Calderon's designee is ignorant, that Esther Gordillo is the daughter of Chuki, that union leaders redistribute our monthly dues to their lovers, etc. And so we seek to build an education that imparts its lessons well, that school facilities be well cared for and clean, that teachers be well paid and responsible, that we hire highly qualified and capable professionals, that union leaders fulfill all responsibilities to their associates. That is to say, again, that the leaves return to blur our vision and impede us from going further to the root of the problems, and ask such questions as: What kinds of students and professionals are we producing? What country are we building, with what ideologies, plans, and programs?

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5. Why do we want a damn education that is “really efficient,” with corporate programs—so that we continue benefiting a few select families and at the same time impoverishing the great mass of workers—a well organized education, with well educated students, with their matching tie and hair, that exit school like well prepared professionals in the service of capital? Where is there room for critical, reflexive thinking and self-directed inquiry, highly recommended by Brazilian theologian Paulo Freire who taught us how to combat “banking education” where corporations and the capitalist system deposit whatever they desire in the heads of students

through well crafted plans and programs. It appears as though the more we see the leaves we lose sight of the root of the problem, the essence.

6. The root of education is not located where education is imparted (the classroom), with who delivers it (the teacher), and with what instruments it

takes form (methods, pedagogy, encyclopedias); these are only the leaves and branches. The essence is located in the contents imparted and why these and not others; what are they useful for, that is to say, what goals are sought and what type of students and professionals are we trying to produce. This is what is called the ideology of the politics of education which, every six years, occludes itself, transfigures, or appears to be different, when in reality it has been the same since capitalism has reigned over the region. This is why we find ourselves with self-searching rebellious youth who are willing to break with social structures, but once they acquire their titles they are transformed into the most domesticating beings ready to serve the system.

Further, even if we were to remove the entire gamut of corrupt union leaders headed by Gordillo, we would change nothing if teachers’ ideologies were to remain the same. That is why the struggle has to be a radical one, that gets at the root, so that we don’t repeat the same national and international mistake: to change something in order to maintain structures of domination.

7. While 99 percent of professionals march as if they were automations in order to earn the daily bread that allows them to live, or live wrongly, next to their automatized family, while lawyers abide by unjust laws that they don’t seek to change, doctors cure diseases caring little about their origin, engineers build only and exclusively for monetary gain. And so, while all professionals continue living in appearances, without an interest in knowing the essence, that is the root of social problems, the dominant class continues disseminating its ideology as if its class ideology were the only way of thinking, the only one of value. And why do progressive sectors, above all teachers, allow the leaves and branches to distract us while not uprooting the root of social problems that would allow us to learn the essence of reality? For this, the study of Kosik, as well as Freire, is fundamental.

8. That is why those who will fight for a deep structural transformation of capitalist schooling in Mexico have to go to the root of the problem. The CNTE has more than a 30 year life span and, although it represents more than 30 thousand teachers who control sell out union leaders and ‘charros’ through their dues, it has not been able to eradicate the self-serving, individualistic thinking and ideology that pervades the entire teaching profession. Further, even if we were to remove the entire gamut of corrupt union leaders headed by Gordillo, we would change nothing if teachers’ ideologies were to remain the same. That is why the struggle has to be a radical one, that gets at the root, so that we don’t repeat the same national and international mistake: to change something in order to maintain structures of domination.



CULTURA

ACTIVIST-ARTISTS

VICTOR OCHOA is a Chicano Muralist/Painter who has been active in the San Diego community. Co-founder of the Centro Cultural de la Raza, he has been creating public art that represents and documents the history of Chicano/Mexicano/Indigenous peoples.

He describes himself as a "Chicano artist/muralist/teacher border phenomenon. I use art as a tool for solutions in the community."



Colores del Sol, Canvas, oil, 48" x 48"



Geronimo Mural, 1982, 70 ft. x 22 ft., Centro Cultural de La Raza, San Diego

"Geronimo, a mural depicting the kneeling Apache warrior on the outside of the circular Centro Cultural de la Raza building. The mural is a metaphor that symbolizes from an indigenous perspective the Centro Cultural de la Raza's concern over social disparities and inequities throughout our history," - California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives, UCSB

BOOK REVIEW

Chicano Journalism: Its History and Its Use as a Weapon for Liberation, 2nd Edition

By Francisco Romero, Raza Press and Media Association, Editorial Board Member

A little over two months ago, from deep within the streets of Barrio Logan, the oldest Mexican neighborhood in San Diego, California, Ernesto Bustillos, a veteran Raza Liberation organizer, was hacking away at the keyboard, digging through boxes, and dusting off old diskettes. In some cases, Bustillos had to re-type entire writings in a humble attempt to compile them from the 1st edition of *Chicano Journalism*, which was printed over 17 years ago, to add them to this new book, an essential tool for progressive, radical and revolutionary media workers, titled *Chicano Journalism: Its History and Its Use as a Weapon for Liberation*.

This compilation of 264 pages of thought and analysis on the question of Raza Media is arguably one of the most important historical texts on Raza Media for this new millennium. It is a book that "dissects and reconstructs—from a liberation perspective—the foundations of many of the major problems facing our people and the movimiento activists who are trying to find solutions to our oppression."

It is a book that divulges into the role of Raza Media in raising the political consciousness of Mexicanos living within the Belly of the Beast. It arms media activists with the knowledge needed to defeat the oppressor's imperialist agenda of domination through information control. Bustillos adds on the importance of the book by stating, "There can be no revolution, without revolutionary consciousness, and this book, is an extension,

tied to, and is the product of the hundreds of thousands who, historically and presently, are struggling for the liberation of the masses, from violence, poverty, an oppression in all its forms."

A unique aspect of this book is that it comes from the Barrel of the Pen, a reflection, from the point of view of an activist and revolutionary. The writings in this book are not that of an ivory tower professor in a privileged elite campus, they are not words coming from a full-time professional media worker on the clock, rather, they are *palabras*, words, coming from a barrio street organizer committed to liberation for nearly four decades.

The book is organized into seven sections, beginning with articles from the original edition, and contains close to fifty speeches, essays, and presentations which have been preserved from the past two decades of contributions to the history of Raza Media, critical analysis and resistance. In the final section of the book, Bustillos, includes the "Detroit Papers", which was a plan of action, a guiding document for liberation-oriented media fighters, developed at the 2003 Raza Press and Media Association's Michigan summit titled, "Develop The Means to Wake Up the Masses-Become Part of History, Help Build an Independent Raza Press Association."

Bustillos ends, one of the final sections of the book by stating that, "Revolutionary Media Workers must be in the Front Lines of Struggle..." and that this book is dedicated "to those, who in the face of the most terrible obstacles and sacrifices, never give up and continue to struggle..."

A limited number of *Chicano Journalism*, 2nd edition have been printed. To order this historical book, visit the Raza Press and Media Association website: <http://razapressassociation.org>.

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San Diego Chapter: www.ARESanDiego.com

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