

SUPPORT LETTERS



Sent to the Cordovas

Southwest Workers' Union

Superintendent of Schools
PO Box 489
Vaughn, New Mexico 88353

March 13, 1997.

Dear Superintendent,

We in San Antonio, Texas are concerned to have read that your school is attempting to censor the classroom use of 500 years of Chicano history. We live in very crucial times in which many books that speak the truth of the real world are being censored in libraries and schools across this country. This trend is a sign of intolerance and limiting civil liberties, the bedrock of U.S. Democracy.

Students and teachers must have the safeguard of academic freedom or we will surely falter as a country when only one history becomes the "official" history. We must not persecute teachers and students who dare to learn in our public schools who usually only receive negative publicity because of the failing student population and associated youth problems.

We support the MEChA chapter and the teachers and students brave enough to challenge the institution and education. We must produce critical thinkers in the youth and not just robots.

We support the Southwest organizing Project (SWOP) for producing the 500 years of Chicano History and the editor betita martinez. The fact that the book is in pictures is to make the history understandable to all. It seems the students and teachers who are using the book in the classroom

JULY 15, 1999

Attention: Nadine Cordova
Chicano Studies, UNM

Ms. Cordova, I saw your interview with Arcie Chapa on Channel 5. The interview was in the program called "FOCUS" and it was aired May 1999.

I am writing to congratulate you and your sister Patsy in your "stand" for Truthful Education. I also would like for you to acknowledge you have set me on course for my Subject Matter. You see I am an Artist with a B. A. Degree from the University of Albuquerque (1979). I also made the Dean's List twice.

All of my life I have struggled with my true identity and how I am supposed to make a contribution to society. With your interview and my own research, at this present age of fifty, I have lovingly embraced my identity as a Mexican American.

Presently, I am incarcerated at the Los Lunas Correctional Facility/Mental Health Treatment Center (MHTC). I have been incarcerated since January, 1989. I must share with you I was in the military in 1968. I was in the Air Force and received a Medical/Honorable discharge. The discharge was for a Mental Illness. I have suffered all through my life with this illness and I have lost many joys.

I will be truthful; I shot my "dearest" friend in 1989. I was sentenced to 27 years and didn't get a Life Sentence because the courts could not find "Specific Intent". The mental illness did not allow me to *appreciate* the entire crime. Up to-date, I still don't understand *why* this tragedy happened and yet I do know it *did* happen. This illness is what brings me to prison.

At any rate, I was sent to the notorious Santa Fe prison. There I was exposed to this environment and was mentored by more seasoned Chicano inmates. I was advised the only way I was to survive Santa Fe was to speak *only* Spanish and to be proud of being Chicano/Hispanic. I soon started researching my Heritage and what I was all about. I guess you could say I traveled the Malcolm X road. I also started to admire Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Gandhi and of course, the most Honorable Mention, the man Jesus Christ.

I began to study these individuals and discovered one theme they all had in common. They were all making an effort to improve the status of their people. I was appalled when I observed so many of my *Raza* were incarcerated in Santa Fe. It was absolutely unbelievable, the first day of my prison experience. I had never been in trouble with the law before.

In trying not to create an autobiography of myself, I do want to tell you I was becoming very anglicized. The reason for this is I worked for the Department of Defense (DOD). I worked for the

Naval Weapons Evaluation Facility, (NWEF) the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) and the US Air Force. Included was the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Post Office. In these places of employment and a college degree, I found myself amongst many anglos. Sorry to say now, I resided in the white side of town. Towards the end of my civilized employment, I worked for the Health and Environment Department (HED) in Santa Fe. Once again, I was rubbing elbows with the anglo. Here is where I admired a young nutritionist that was brilliant. She had earned a BA by age 21 and by age 24 she had earned a Masters Degree. Next, she had her sights set on a Medical Degree. Needless to say we had an affair that culminated in murder. She was my very best friend.

Finally, I will thank you for that interview. When released in three (3) years I hope to re-locate (as most painters and artists do) to some American colony in Mexico. What I wish to produce is artwork that will *RESURRECT* the Mexican-American War and how the Anglo-American stole our land. How President Polk created a "reason" for going to war with Mexico. Our people and students "*Need to Know*" this information.

After ignorance has been vanquished in our people, I dream of a more secure attitude in ourselves. With this new acquired self-assurance, I pray we challenge the power of Television.

In the media of Television, I see the Afro-American has come a long way. I am tired of seeing Blacks and Whites only. (*A black and white TV, if you will*) Television now has many colors, just as in Art. America only advertises for Blacks and Whites. I want to see more Hispanic little children and parents on T.V. I would also like to see iridescent colors like the Red Man, the Yellow Man, etc, ...etc, ...

With these two objectives in mind, the Mexican-American War and more Television exposure of our people, I will be satisfied with my efforts.

Lastly, I want to emphatically say I Do Not condone violence. Ethnic cleansing, riots, government disturbances or militant groups.

My sole purpose is strictly to Inform and Educate our people for the better. I too, desire Truthful Education of History and Television.

Respectfully Yours,

Ernesto C. Flores

Ernesto C. Flores

P.S. If there is any useful literature that sheds light on these particular issues, I would most sincerely welcome them. Once again, many thanks for your interview.

February 20, 1996.

Nadine Co'rdova
MEChA Students of Vaughn
Vaughn, NM

Dear students and teachers,

I am writing in support of you efforts to include Chicano and Chicana Studies in the Vaughn Curriculum and for your efforts to maintain a MEChA Club in Vaughn.

I would also caution Superintendent Art Marti'nez and others in the community to stop acting on ignorance, but rather actively participate in the growth of students. I don't know how the school district has gone so long without a proper history of the Hispanic and Native American History of New Mexico and the Southwest. Denial of self identity should not be tolerated.

As for participation, it is my understanding that anyone can join clubs of all sorts. I know the club is not exclusive to only Chicanos, and the class serves to share Chicano history with all races.

Might I suggest all participants attempt to use the text book, The Mexican American Heritage by Carlos M. Jime'nez as a educational tool.

Clubs such as MEChA allow for student involvement, student activism, and historical & cultural pride and celebration. As a student at Albuquerque High School we formed a Hispanic Student Organization, which has since flourished into a vibrant MEChA Organization. In college I looked to the MEChA/ALAS [Association of Latin American Students] for scholarships, current events, issues facing our community, friendships, mentors, volunteering opportunities, leadership, and facts. Such organizations are very beneficial to the student body, to the institution, and for the community.

Buena Suerte con la lucha que viene. You have our support here in Albuquerque. Also if a Rally is planned, please spread the word so that we may show our support in person.

Sincerely,



Juan Fidel Larran~aga

~ Juan F. Larran~aga ~
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~p2

Please check out my homepage at <http://www.cs.nmt.edu/~larranag/homepage.html>

Cortland

State University of New York College at Cortland

411 Auburn Street
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(607) 273-4798
November 30, 1997

Dear Nadine and Patsy Cordova,

A graduate student shared a copy of **Teacher** which detailed the struggles you have waged for justice and historical truth. It will be required for all my graduate and undergraduate students.

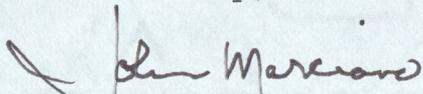
In my Foundations of Education courses, we begin the semester by discussing the context for all subsequent educational, economic and political development in the United States: European and Euro-American conquest and resistance by indigenous peoples -- using Ronald Takaki's fine **In a Different Mirror**.

We owe students the truth on these and other matters, and we fail in our obligation as teachers if we do not share such insights in a critical and thoughtful manner.

The article makes it clear that you attempted to do this with sound substantive and pedagogical principles in the face of fear and unprincipled attacks.

Thank you for your courage and dedication.

Sincerely,



John Marciano
Associate Professor, Social-Historical Foundations of Education
Former Chair, Tompkins County (Ithaca) Human Rights Commission



MEChA de New Mexico Tech

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana\o de Aztlan

MEChA de New Mexico Tech
PO Box 3679 c/s
Socorro, NM 87801

February 19, 1997

Arthur Martinez
Vaughn Superintendent
PO Box 489
Vaughn, NM 88353

Dear Mr. Martinez:

I read the article about Vaughns High School MEChA Chapter in last weeks *Albuquerque Journal*. After reading your statements, it is clearly evident that you have been misinformed about MEChA by your letter to Vaughn High School teachers telling them the school district, "will not support nor sanction in any way the ideals or goals of the MEChA organization." MEChA's are in place to serve students and the community. Some of MEChAs' goals are stated below.

Some of our goals are:

1. Provide a support system for all minority students.
2. Direct students to financial and educational resources.
3. Serve as peer counselors.
4. Promote cultural awareness through educational and entertainment activities.
5. To promote unity among student groups and to create a strong voice on campus.
6. To raise awareness of Chicano/ Latino social issues.

I hope you now understand how MEChA's can benefit students and the community. As for the Chicano Students and other students at Vaughn High School, they would all benefit by learning how Chicanos have shaped, changed and contributed to the history of the United States and especially the southwest. If you would like to know more about MEChA or its' goals, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address above or by e-mail at babeyta@nmt.edu.

Sincerely,

BRIAN M. CHAVEZ ABEYTA

Brian M. Chavez Abeyta
President, MEChA de New Mexico Tech

3/5/97

Vaughn High School Mecha,

I'm sorry to hear about what happen to your Mecha program. Hopefully it will not end for good. Mecha is a great organization for us to learn more about our ethnicity. I bell you should speak out for what you believe in no matter how hard the fight maybe. I'm sure there are many students who enjoy Mecha. It will be a shame if the students at your school can not have the opportunity to have Mecha at your school anymore. Good luck!

Always

Juanita

March 21, 1997

Nadine and Patsy Cordova
1126 Cedar Ave
Vaughn, NM 88353

Dear Nadine and Patsy:

I am an Assistant professor at New Mexico State University in the College of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. My teaching specialty is multicultural education taught from a decidedly sociopolitical point of entry. The vast majority of my colleagues (there are about twenty of us) and I stand strongly in support of your efforts to teach Chicana/o history and to coordinate el Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan club. Based on our own autobiographies, we know just how important it is for students to learn about the contributions of those like themselves to our collective history and to be able to congregate with other like themselves to discuss these contributions and plan for the future contributions that they too will make.

We also know just how isolating it can be to be championing these issues in a climate where you get little support and a great deal of animosity. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do, individually or collectively, to support you. If you need to talk, help with strategy, anything, do not hesitate to call. Our thoughts are with you.

En Solidaridad,



Christine Clark

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NMSU
Box 30001
Las Cruces, NM
88003

Twin Buttes High School Zuni Public School District



Linda Belarde, Principal

FAX: 505-782-4944

P.O. Drawer 680 - Zuni, NM 87327 - (505) 782-4446

April 10, 1997

Dear Cordovas -

Although you don't know me, I have been following your case in the Albuquerque Journal and just got your address from Alfredo Lujan on our BreadNet link.

I just wanted to thank you for having the wisdom and courage to insist on doing what's right for your students, despite all the pressures. It would have been "easy" to cave in - except that committed teachers such as you both are know there is no "easy" in teaching, but there is a "right".

Not only have you made many fellow teachers very proud of you, you have also provided a fine example to students - of commitment, concern, courage. Thank you.

With admiration,

Emily Graeser
(PO Box 1427
Zuni, NM 87327)