

We the People

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.
Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors in that State.
Section 3. The Senate shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature of the State for six Years; and each Senator shall have the Qualifications requisite for Senators in that State.



¡¡¡ CHICANO! ¡¡¡

HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Chicano! is a production of the National Latino Communications Center and Galán Productions in association with KCET/Los Angeles.

Watch *Chicano!* on PBS April 12 and April 19 from 9-11 pm
(check local listings)

Major funding has been provided by the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the CPB/PBS Challenge Fund.



COMING SOON: Book, CD-ROM, audio CD, and School Kit.

For further information, contact the National Latino Communications Center, 3171 Los Feliz Boulevard, Suite 200, Los Angeles, CA 90039, 213-663-8294, or visit the Chicano Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.pbs.org/chicano>.

Program Descriptions

Episode 1. Quest for a Homeland examines the events at Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico, that sparked a national movement for social justice. It focuses on the 1967 struggle by Mexican Americans to regain ownership of New Mexico lands guaranteed them by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and then visits the landmark Denver Youth Conference in 1969, where hundreds of Mexican-American youth met to plan their national agenda. The program concludes with the Chicano Moratorium March against the Vietnam War, held in East Los Angeles in 1970 — an event that turned into a tragic riot resulting in the death of renowned journalist Rúbén Salazar.

Episode 2. The Struggle in the Fields chronicles the efforts of farmworkers to form a national labor union. Under the leadership of nonviolent advocate César Chávez, farmworkers launched a strike against California grape growers in 1965, demanding better working conditions and fair wages. In 1970, they undertook a national table grape boycott that eventually led to the first union contracts in farm labor history. An important milestone in the struggle was the passage of the California Labor Relations Act.

Episode 3. Taking Back the Schools documents the Mexican-American struggle to reform an

educational system that failed to properly educate Chicano students, causing more than 50 percent to drop out, and leaving many others illiterate and unskilled. It focuses on the 1968 walkout by thousands of Mexican-American high school students in East Los Angeles, which resulted in conspiracy indictments against 13 community leaders — each of them facing a possible sentence of 66 years! This event was emblematic of a national movement for improved educational opportunities.

Episode 4. Fighting for Political Power focuses on the emergence of Mexican-American political power and the creation of a third political party, *La Raza Unida* (The United People). The episode opens with the exodus of a large number of white citizens from Crystal City, Texas, following the election of five Mexican Americans to political office in the town. It shows how a protest against a high school cheerleading tradition (only one Mexican American per year!) escalated into a movement that pitted the Mexican-American population against the town's Anglo-American power structure. Although the idea of a third party eventually proved ineffectual, *La Raza Unida* inspired a generation of political activists and pioneered voter registration strategies that eventually led to the election of thousands of Chicanos to political office.



Chicano! will be broadcast on PBS in two, two-hour blocks on Friday, April 12 and Friday, April 19, 1996 at 9 pm (check local listings). Educators may tape the programs off the air and use them for one year.

CHICANO!

HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

VIEWING GUIDE

For more than a century — since the time of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 — Mexican Americans have struggled to achieve equality and full rights as citizens of the United States. During the 1960s and 1970s, many Mexican Americans took stock of their lives and began a nationwide movement to claim their civil rights and assert their cultural identity. They took a name that had been used disparagingly against them for years — Chicano — and fashioned it into a term of pride, affirmation, and struggle. In four one-hour programs, this landmark public

television series examines why the Mexican-American experience is distinct from other immigrant experiences and explores the cultural and political conflicts that have marked the relationships between Mexican-American and Anglo-American institutions in the United States. *Chicano!* focuses on four themes — land, labor, educational reform, and political empowerment — documenting pivotal events that took place in the important ten-year period between 1965 and 1975 that was the focus of the Mexican-American civil rights movement.

Chicano! is produced by the National Latino Communications Center and Galán Productions, Inc., in association with KCET-Los Angeles. Major funding is provided by the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the CPB/PBS Challenge Fund.

The National Latino Communications Center (NLCC) is a non-profit media arts and production organization located in Los Angeles whose mission is to provide national quality programming that illuminates the diversity of national Latino ideals through expressions of its arts, cultures, and histories. It was established in 1974 by a group of 10 public television broadcasters as the Latino Consortium. It was incorporated as an independent non-profit entity in 1990. Over the past 21 years, the NLCC has packaged and distributed more than 600 hours of Latino-themed programs to PBS stations.

Among the organizations that have endorsed *Chicano!* are the American Association of School Administrators, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, MANA — A National Latina Organization for Bilingual Education, the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, the National Council of La Raza, the National Education Association, and the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Issues to Think About and Discuss

The following ideas can be used by educators and community groups to stimulate discussion of key issues related to the *Chicano!* series.

Overall

- What is in a name? Historically, the U.S. Census has had no means of identifying Mexican Americans as a specific group. In fact, for a long time, Mexican Americans simply were characterized as *Other*, later they were grouped under the term *Hispanic*. What are the pros and cons of having Mexican Americans specifically identified on the U.S. Census?
- Americans of Mexican descent variously have been called Hispanics, Latinos, Hispanos, Mexicanos, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos. What do these different terms mean? What do they imply? Think about how you identify yourself. Does race or ethnicity play a role? Why or why not?
- The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights guarantee certain inalienable rights to all U.S. citizens. Yet many groups have found the need to fight for and protect these rights. Why has this been true? What civic responsibilities do individuals have when their Constitutional rights are threatened?
- The Chicano movement was one of several civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. What factors made this a period of such political action?
- By 2010, Hispanics are predicted to be the largest minority in the United States, with a population that is expected to exceed 39 million and constitute roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population. How will this affect the United States?
- Some people think only English should be spoken in the United States. What do you think and why?
- In what ways have Mexican Americans affected American culture?
- In regard to patterns of migration, what factors have pulled Mexicans toward the United States and what factors have pushed them from Mexico? Compare and contrast these to the factors that caused other ethnic groups to emigrate.
- Why have Mexican Americans been targets of discrimination in the United States? In what ways has the nature of this discrimination differed from that leveled against other ethnic groups, and what factors might account for such differences?
- Dissent and political expression have been a part of United States history since our founding. How does

the Chicano movement reflect this aspect of American history?

- Several individuals emerged as leaders in the Chicano movement, among them Sal Castro, César Chávez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, José Angel Gutiérrez, Dolores Huerta, Reies López Tijerina, and Willie Velásquez. What qualities did each have that made him or her suited for leadership?

Quest for a Homeland

- Why is a homeland important?
- During the mid-19th century, when the United States was growing rapidly, we followed a policy of manifest destiny. What does this mean and why is it important in the context of the Chicano movement?
- In 1848, as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the U.S.-Mexican War (see excerpt below), thousands of individuals living in the Mexican territory that now constitutes much of the Southwestern United States were Mexican one day and residents of the United States the next, without having moved. What do you think your reaction would have been if you had been one of these people? What would you have wanted to know? How might your life have changed? Would you have chosen to become a U.S. citizen or continued your Mexican citizenship and why?
- Many people consider the actions of Reies López Tijerina to be quite controversial. Do you think his tactics were justified? Would you have followed him?
- "I Am Joaquín," the epic poem written by Corky Gonzales in 1967 (see the final stanza below), became a rallying symbol for many Mexican Americans. What images does Gonzales use to describe his experience? How universal were these experiences? Why do you think this poem had such a great impact on individuals involved in the Chicano movement?

The Struggle in the Fields

- César Chávez and Dolores Huerta tried several different tactics to win a contract for the farmworkers in California. Which succeeded and which failed and why? If you were trying to organize farmworkers today, what tactics would you choose and why?

El Grito: Journal of Mexican American Thought is founded.

David Sánchez forms the Brown Berets, a self-defense group that supports Chicano community action.

The first Mexican-American studies program in the United States opens at California State University, Los Angeles.

The Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is formed.

- 1968** The Chicana Welfare Rights Organization is formed with Alicia Escalante as director. More than 1,000 students walk out of Lincoln High School in East Los Angeles, beginning a Chicano student movement that will spread throughout the Southwest and a seven-month struggle with the Los Angeles School Board that will include the indictment of 13 community leaders on conspiracy charges.

- 1969** The Crusade for Justice sponsors the first national Chicano Youth Liberation Conference at which the poem "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" is presented.

Chicano students in Santa Barbara, California, draft *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, promising to apply their education to the benefit of their communities.

- 1970** All Delano-area grape growers sign three-year contracts with the United Farm Workers.

More than 25,000 people attend the National Chicano Moratorium March against the Vietnam War in East Los Angeles. Journalist Rúbén Salazar and two others are killed.

Chicanas form *Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc.* at the Mexican-American National Issues Conference.

- 1971** The Houston Chicana Conference attracts over 600 Chicanas from 23 states.

- 1972** *La Raza Unida* holds its national convention in El Paso.

- 1974** Willie Velásquez establishes the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project.

- 1975** The 1965 Voting Rights Act is extended to the Southwest.



A Brief Overview of Mexican-American History

- 1840** Having fought for independence from Mexico in 1836, the Republic of Texas claims land in parts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

- 1845** After repeatedly petitioning Congress for annexation, Texas finally is admitted to the Union as a slave state. Approval is managed by annexing land as far south and west as the Rio Grande. Texas is the 28th state.

- 1846** The United States declares war on Mexico after provoking a skirmish in disputed territory along the Rio Grande.

- 1848** Mexico surrenders after the U.S. occupies Mexico City for nine months. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo cedes Mexican territory in the Southwest for a sum of \$15 million. It promises to respect the property rights of Mexicans living in the territory and allow them to become U.S. citizens.

- 1863-1865** Following the Emancipation Proclamation, which ends slavery in the U.S., more and more African Americans leave the fields, creating a need for low-cost farm labor. Former soldiers push westward, joining the growing numbers of settlers looking for land.

- 1890s** Many Mexican Americans are forced from their lands as mining and other development lures settlers to the Southwest.

- 1892** Eusebio Chacón publishes one of the first Mexican-American novels, *El hijo de la tempestad* (The Son of the Storm).

- 1894** The *Alianza Hispano Americana* (Hispanic American Alliance), one of the first mutual aid organizations, forms in Tucson.

- 1900** More than 125 Spanish-language newspapers are in circulation throughout the United States.

- 1910** The Mexican Revolution begins. Many Mexicans cross the border for safety and employment. Mexican immigrants become a source of cheap farm labor in the Southwest.

- 1914** U.S. Marines are detained by Mexican authorities at Tampico, Mexico. Although Mexico apologizes, President Wilson orders the U.S. fleet to Tampico to protect U.S. rights. U.S. naval forces bombard and occupy Veracruz, Mexico.

- 1916** Gen. John J. Pershing is sent on a punitive expedition to Mexico, in search of Gen. Francisco Villa, who has been raiding U.S. border towns. Pershing leads 12,000 men 400 miles into Mexican territory and stays for ten months. Gen. Villa escapes; Mexican-American relations suffer.

- 1918** More than 50,000 Mexicans are recruited from 1918 to 1921 to combat a labor shortage in the rapidly growing Southwest.

- 1921** The Sons of America is organized in San Antonio, Texas, to fight for equality and raise awareness of Mexican Americans' rights as U.S. citizens.

- 1924** *Mexican Painters and Photographers of California*, one of the first exhibitions of contemporary Mexican art in the United States, opens in Los Angeles.

- 1924** As the Immigration Act of 1924 halts the flow of other immigrant groups, border stations arrange for the formal admission of Mexican workers, collecting a head tax on each. No immigration quotas exist for Mexicans, and more than 89,000 enter the U.S. on permanent visas. Others enter illegally to avoid border fees.

- 1926** The newspaper *La Opinión* begins publication in Los Angeles.

- 1928** The *Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas* (CUOM) is formed to organize all Mexican workers in the U.S., to achieve wage parity, and to end discrimination.

- 1929** The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) forms at a convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, to help Mexican Americans assume their rightful places as U.S. citizens and to fight discrimination.

- 1930** LULAC organizes its first school desegregation case in Del Rio, Texas. While the case is lost on appeal, the court rules that segregation based on race is unconstitutional.

- 1931** Mexican-American women in the Los Angeles garment industry are unionized by labor organizer Rose Pesotta.

- 1936** Bert Corona of El Paso, Texas, begins to organize unions for cannery and warehouse workers in the Southwest.

- 1938** *El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Española* (The Spanish-Speaking Congress) is founded by Luisa Moreno. Led by Josefina Fierro de Bright, this working-class movement aims to secure basic rights for all Spanish-speaking people in the United States. It emphasizes a unified labor movement to combat discrimination and poverty.

- 1939** Mexican Americans in Beeville, Texas, desegregate the local high school.

- 1941** Novelist John Steinbeck publishes *The Grapes of Wrath*, calling attention to the poverty of migrant workers in the California grape-growing industry.

- 1941** LULAC protests discrimination by the Southern Pacific Railroad, when it refuses to provide skilled apprenticeships to Mexican Americans.

- 1942** The Bracero Program begins, allowing Mexican nationals to work in the Southwest as a source of cheap labor. Growers prosper by having a regulated labor supply. The program will remain in force until 1964.

- 1942** About 300,000 Mexican-American men serve in World War II. Seventeen are awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

- 1943** In June, gangs of servicemen fill the streets of downtown Los Angeles in a week-long assault against Mexican Americans, in what comes to be called the "Zoot Suit Riots," after a popular clothing style of the day. In response to an appeal by Josefina Fierro de Bright to the Roosevelt administration, the Navy orders all personnel to stay out of the Mexican districts of Los Angeles.

- 1945** Josephina Niggl publishes *Mexican Village*, ten stories portraying the alienation of being part Mexican, part Anglo.

- 1946** LULAC supports a class-action suit by Gonzalo Méndez against several school districts in California that argues that Mexican-American children are segregated because they are thought to be primarily Spanish-speaking. The Federal District Court rules the segregation to be unconstitutional.

- 1946** Unity Leagues are formed by returning Mexican-American war veterans to promote Mexican-American political candidates.

- 1946** Andrés Morales becomes the first Mexican American to be elected to a city council in California since the 19th century.

- 1947** Mexican-born actor Ricardo Montalban makes his Hollywood film debut in *Fiesta*. The Community Service Organization (CSO) is established in Los Angeles to encourage voter registration and provide grass-roots political support for Mexican Americans.

- 1949** The *Asociación Nacional México-Americana* (ANMA) is established at a two-day meeting in Phoenix to support the peace movement, workers' struggles, housing needs in the Southwest, political representation, and an end to police brutality.

- 1954** The U.S. Immigration Service arrests and deports over 3.8 million workers of Mexican descent during Operation Wetback, which continues until 1958. Many U.S. citizens are deported unfairly, including political activist Luisa Moreno and other Mexican-American leaders.

- 1962** César Chávez organizes the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in Delano, California.

- 1963** The *Alianza Federal de Mercedes* (Federal Alliance of Land Grants) is incorporated by Reies López Tijerina.

- 1965** Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales is appointed director of Denver's War on Poverty program.

- 1965** An Immigration and Naturalization Act limits immigrants from countries in the Western Hemisphere to 120,000 per year.

- 1965** César Chávez and the NFWA begin a grape boycott, targeting Schenley Industries and the DiGiorgio Corporation.

- 1966** Luis Valdez creates *El Teatro Campesino* (the Farmworkers Theater) to support the NFWA.

- 1966** Rodolfo Acuña teaches the first Mexican-American history class in Los Angeles.

- 1966** César Chávez and the NFWA march from Delano to Sacramento, arriving on Easter Sunday, 25 days later.

- 1967** Corky Gonzales establishes the Crusade for Justice in Denver.

- Reies Tijerina and César Chávez both took extraordinary actions to make a point: Tijerina took a town hostage; Chávez went on a fast that almost took his life. In each case, what were the consequences of these individual actions?
- In what ways did activists in the Chicano labor movement adopt the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. in regard to nonviolent political action?

Taking Back the Schools

- In 1968, Mexican-American students in Los Angeles used a California law that denies schools monetary support for each day a student is absent as a way of putting fiscal pressure on the Los Angeles school district. What did they want to see changed? Given their demands, do you think their actions were justified? Would you have participated and why?

Longer-term Projects

- In what way did the Chicano movement affect your community? Ask your local newspaper to run a query to identify local Mexican Americans who were involved in the Chicano movement. Interview them to learn more. Create an oral history that can be accessed at a local library or other community institution.
- Learn more about the current Mexican-American population in your community. Determine the size of the local Mexican-American population and how it has changed over the years. Interview current Mexican-American residents to learn their views on the issues presented in the series, e.g., land, labor, education, and political empowerment. Compare these contemporary views to the experiences depicted in *Chicano!*
- What are the legacies of the Chicano movement? An excellent resource is *The Hispanic-American Almanac: A Reference Work on Hispanics in the United States* by Nicolás Kanellos (Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1993).
- An Aztec legend suggests that the ancestral home of the Chichimeca Indians was Aztlán, located somewhere in what is today the Southwestern United States. The concept of Aztlán and of a Chicano nation unified Chicano activists throughout the country. Read about the myth of Aztlán (see *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* edited by Rodolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomeli (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989) and *The Lost Land, The Chicano Image of*

- In what ways did the tactics and goals of the Brown Berets differ from those used by other Chicano activists?
- Are there still educational needs that need to be addressed that are specific to Mexican Americans? What strategies could you use to bring about such change?
- Why should students get involved in the political process?
- Fighting for Political Power**
- Why was *La Raza Unida*, the all-Chicano political party, created? At a time when Americans are once again discussing the need for a third political party, do you think *La Raza Unida* should be reborn? What should its goals be?
- What are the legacies of *La Raza Unida*? What goals still need to be addressed?

- the Southwest* by John R. Chávez (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984). Use some form of artistic representation (e.g., drawings, writings, a mural, poster, poetry) to depict this concept.
- Read Mexican-American literature and poetry. Mexican-American fiction writers include: Rodolfo A. Anaya (*Bless Me, Ultima: Heart of Aztlan; Tortuga*); Ron Arias (*The Road to Tamazunchale*); Raymond Barrio (*The Plum Plum Pickers*); Nash Candelaria (*Not by the Sword*); Ana Castillo (*The Miquihuuala Letters*); Denise Chávez (*The Last of the Menu Girls*); Sandra Cisneros (*My Wicked, Wicked Ways*); Tomás Rivera (*The Harvest — La Cosecha, This Migrant Earth*); Thomas Sanchez (*Mile Zero*); José Antonio Villarreal (*Pocho*); and Victor Villaseñor (*Macho!*). Mexican-American poets include: Jimmy Santiago Baca, Ana Castillo, Lorne Dee Cervantes, Denise Chávez, César A. Gonzalez, Angela de Hoyos, Pat Mora, Henricus Luis Pacheco, Leroy V. Quintana, and Luis Omar Salinas.
- Conduct research to determine the working and living conditions of the average Chicano farmworker today and compare what you learn to that depicted in *Chicano!* What has changed?
- Historically, voter registration has been a key factor in gaining political power. What could you do to increase the number of Mexican Americans who vote?

Learning Resources

From "I Am Joaquín" By Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, 1967

And now the trumpet sounds,
The music of the people stirs the
Revolution,
Like a sleeping giant it slowly
rears its head
to the sound of

Tramping feet
Clamorous voices
Mariachi strains
Fiery tequila explosions
The smell of chile verde and
Soft brown eyes of expectation for
a better life.

And in all the fertile farm lands,
the barren plains,

the mountain villages,
small smeared cities
We start to MOVE.
La Raza!

Mejicano!
Español!
Latino!
Hispano!
Chicano!
or whatever I call myself.
I look the same.
I feel the same
I cry

and
Sing the same.

I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed.
I am Joaquín
The odds are great
but my spirit is strong
My faith unbreakable
My blood is pure
I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ
I SHALL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!

— Used with permission.

From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848

Article VIII.
Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States ... shall be free to continue where they now reside or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof and removing the proceeds wherever they please; without their being subjected, on the account, to any contribution, tax or charge whatever.

Those who shall prefer to remain in said territories, may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But, they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year ... and those who shall remain ... without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING WORLD WIDE WEB HOME PAGES

Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement — <http://www.pbs.org/chicano>

Chicano/Latino Net Home Page — <http://latino.sscnet.ucla.edu>

Chicano Resource Center (CRC) — <http://ceegopher.fullerton.edu/admin/library/service/CRC/CRCINTRO.HTM>

LatinoLink — <http://www.latinolink.com>

LatinoWeb — <http://www.catalog.com/favision/latnweb>

**TEACHER
MAGAZINE**

How To Stop Bullies • Getting Girls To Dream

\$3.00 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1997

TEACHER

m a g a z i n e

OFFICIAL SCENIC HISTORIC MARKER

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Vaughn, a division point

HISTORY OR HATE?

Nadine and Patsy Cordova were teaching Hispanic students about their people's struggle for civil rights. The district said they went too far.

BRAGGING RIGHTS
Iowans are happy with their schools. Should they be?

Lessons from a teacher's murder

The NEA's Baptist preacher

For Adults Only?

Most Americans would probably accept without question that the primary purpose of public schools is to educate all children to the highest level possible. But anyone who spends much time in schools—especially middle and high schools—can only conclude that far too often this noble goal is honored more in rhetoric than in reality. Although we may insist that schools exist for the benefit of children, many are in fact operated by adults who seem preoccupied with their own interests and beliefs. They are often more concerned about authority and control, power and turf, than about doing right by kids.

The most virulent form of adults' preoccupation with themselves is displayed in two articles in this issue: "Sisters in Arms" [page 28] and "The Rest of the Story" [page 46]. Here are depressing examples of adults so concerned with power and politics that they turn their schools and classrooms into battlegrounds and their students into victims. They wrangle in public, take each other to court, and generally influence students more by their own unseemly behavior than by their curricula and classroom teaching.

In "Girl Trouble" [page 52], Sallie Tisdale provides a more subtle but equally depressing portrait of the institution that adults have created for children. Tisdale is an author who, as part of an experiment, spent several weeks teaching writing to freshmen and sophomores in an unidentified urban high school. It was a voyage of discovery for her as she struggled to reach youngsters for whom writing is an alien experience. She laments that her female students don't seem to have any dreams and notes with dismay "that all of these children who are almost grown have spent their entire lives ruled by a clock and the demands of strangers. They have grown up in a fragmented and chaotic place over which they have no control. I know they've rarely thought about the possibility of getting out; they don't see anywhere to go not ruled by bureaucratic entanglements and someone else's schedule and somebody else's plans. If the girls are somehow wired toward pliancy, then the helpless role of student in the shadow of the institution is the worst place they can be."

"State Of Contentment" [page 36] is about Iowa's public schools. By objective measures, they are among the best in the nation. Iowa students score higher on national math tests than their peers in any other state and rank fifth in reading. If there is anyplace in the United States where schools are for kids, surely it must be Iowa, where parents are interested, teachers are caring, and students are well-behaved.

The fact that nearly two-thirds of the state's students do not score at the proficient level in math or reading doesn't seem to worry most of the adults in Iowa's schools. Teaching in those relatively small, mostly rural schools is pretty good duty compared with the challenges of urban schools like the one Sallie Tisdale taught in. Most Iowa educators seem content with schools that are much as they were in the 1950s; they even boast at how little has changed. One vice principal notes that if anything has changed, "it's the students, not the school." Obviously, for many of the adults in charge, neither a changing student body nor a rapidly changing world is a sufficient reason to change the school.

Amid the bucolic complacency of Iowa's cornfields, however, is a small but growing number of educators who are beginning to worry about kids becoming bored and disaffected. One principal says, "Just teaching the basics isn't cutting it anymore. Kids aren't going to be able to go back to the farms and raise crops the way they used to. That work is vanishing. So we've got to prepare kids for different kinds of work, and that means getting kids to solve problems, to interpret data."

He's right, of course, and his fellow Iowans would be wise to heed the warning. More than any other institution, schools must be continuously changing and improving—and the adults in them continuously learning—if they are to fulfill the vital mission that society entrusts to them. Their primary purpose must be the intellectual and moral growth of children, and that's what the adults must be dedicated to. We cannot allow schools to be places where adults merely take jobs, exercise authority, and concentrate on their own interests.

—Ronald A. Wolk

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Cover photograph by Wendy Walsh.

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Sisters *in* Arms

Veteran educators Patsy and Nadine Cordova believed they were teaching Hispanic students about the history of their people and the fight for civil rights. To local school officials, they were preaching the gospel of hate.

Vaughn, New Mexico, is

a dry, dusty hamlet on the high plains about 100 miles east of Albuquerque. Once a thriving railroad junction, Vaughn now has the faded look of a town that's barely hanging on. It has eight motels, seven gas stations, two convenience stores, one hardware store, and not much else. The cars on Highway 285 hardly slow down as they pass through on their way to Santa Rosa or Roswell. According to a historical marker on the edge of town, Vaughn has a population of 737, but locals say it's more like 600, at most. It comes as no surprise to learn that Diamond Rio, a popular country band, filmed the video for their song "Nowhere Bound" on one of Vaughn's more run-down streets.

Until last winter, few people outside of New Mexico had ever heard of Vaughn. But that all changed in February, when two of the town's schoolteachers were suspended from their jobs. Vaughn was suddenly thrown into the spotlight, and the quiet little town in the middle of nowhere hasn't been the same since.

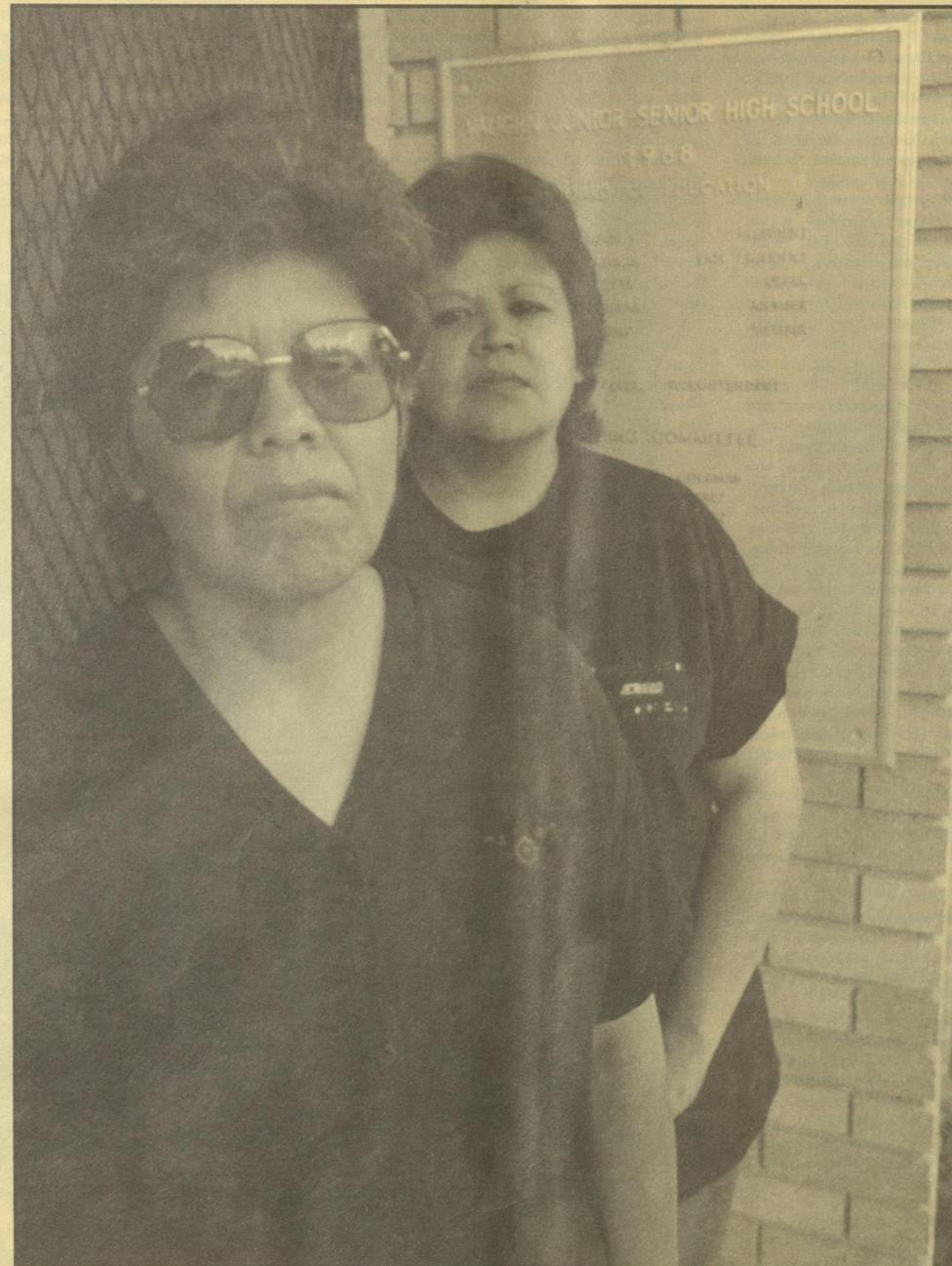
On Friday, February 28, at 3 in the afternoon, Patsy and Nadine Cordova—sisters and

longtime teachers at Vaughn Junior and Senior High School—were in Patsy's classroom when the town's chief of police, J.R. Romo, walked in and handed them each a letter from Arthur Martinez, the school superintendent, informing them that they had been suspended, effective immediately. Romo waited until the Cordovas had finished reading the letters and then said, "Mr. Martinez has directed me to stay here until you give me your keys."

Months later, the sisters are still shaken by what happened that day. Sitting at the dining room table in Nadine's small house, which rests about 50 feet from the busy railroad tracks that run through Vaughn, they can't hide their bitterness. "After teaching at the school for 17 years," Patsy says, "I had 10 minutes to gather my belongings and leave. I was floored." But she stayed calm. "I didn't fall apart, because I knew I had done nothing wrong."

Chief Romo, Patsy recalls, seemed uncomfortable with the task he had been given. "He said, 'Look, do you think you can give the keys to the secretary?' And I said, 'Of course I can give them to the secretary.' So he left, and when I walked out to my car with some of my books,

by David Hill



Fighting back: Patsy (left) and Nadine Cordova.

Photographs by Wendy Walsh

the secretary stopped me and said, 'Patsy, you have to give me your keys!' So I took out a few more things, gave her the keys, and walked out of there for the last time."

Nadine, who had taught at the school for 12 years, followed her sister out the door.

"It's been a nightmare," says Patsy, 47, who was also head teacher at the school, which has no principal. "Like I'm on the outside looking in at something that I can't even believe happened."

Nadine, 40, shakes her head in disgust. "I gave so much," she says, "and now for them to treat me this way..." She doesn't bother to complete the sentence.

Indeed, the Cordova sisters were considered outstanding teachers at the tiny school, which has fewer than 70 students and only eight teachers. In the spring of 1996, superintendent Martinez gave both instructors high marks on their annual evaluations. He called Patsy—who taught 7th grade New Mexico history and 10th, 11th, and 12th grade language arts—"a very dedicated staff member," and he called her sister—who taught 7th grade math, 7th grade "Skills for Living," 8th grade language arts, and drama—"a hard-working staff member" who "produces positive results with her students."

But according to court documents, the Cordova sisters were suspended "for insubordination for refusing to teach the prescribed curriculum." Specifically, they were told to stop using, in the words of superintendent Martinez, "racially divisive" materials in their classes. He and several school board members accused the Cordovas of injecting their own political views into their teaching of Chicano history. "They created racism and promoted stereotypes," Martinez told a reporter for the *Albuquerque Journal*. "They divided our school, and morale went down to the bottom. I heard complaints from staff, students, board and community members. They completely destroyed the educational atmosphere."

But Patsy and Nadine Cordova, who were born and raised in Vaughn, say they were only trying to connect with their students, nearly all of whom are Hispanic. They deny using divisive materials.

Back when they were in high school, the sisters say, no one bothered to teach them about the history of their own people. "There was a lot of shame in my generation, a lot of shame in being who you were," Patsy says. "You didn't want to be associated with being Mexican."

"It makes me so mad when I look back," Nadine adds. "Why didn't anybody teach me about Chicano history? I don't want my students to walk away and say, 'No one ever tried to teach me.' At least they know I tried to teach them something relevant. Students today do not have the same kind of attitudes that the older generation has. I mean, they're really proud to learn about Cesar Chavez and the people who took part in the civil rights movement."

"They taught us stuff that was going on in the world," says 14-year-old Naomi Chavez, a 9th grader at the school. "And they asked us what we thought. The other teachers, whatever they tell us, that's how we're supposed to think about it. They don't tell us different views."

Under threat of being fired, the Cordovas stopped using the disputed materials. Instead, they decided to incorporate parts of a curriculum package called *The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in America*, published by Teaching Tolerance, the education arm of the nonprofit Southern Poverty Law Center. This, apparently, was the last straw for Martinez and the school board members. At a special board meeting, they told the sisters to stop using the new materials, but the Cordovas said they would do so only if the order were put in writing. Two days later,

they were suspended with pay. In July, the board voted 3-2 to fire the teachers.

Now, with the help of the New Mexico Civil Liberties Union, the sisters are fighting back. Nadine Cordova has filed a federal lawsuit against the Vaughn Municipal School District, alleging that her First Amendment rights were violated and that she was unjustly fired from her teaching position. She wants her job back, along with unspecified compensatory and punitive damages. Patsy Cordova plans to file a similar complaint.

Meanwhile, the people of Vaughn are bitterly divided over the matter. Patsy and Nadine are no longer on speaking terms with their cousin Andrew Cordova, a local sheep rancher and school board member who, as they see it, orchestrated their removal. "There have been many relationships that have been damaged because of this," Patsy says. "Absolutely. Because it's a small town, and everybody knows each other."

Leandro Abeyta, the mayor of Vaughn, concurs. "It's a bad situation," he says from behind his desk at City Hall, a white stucco building in desperate need of a paint job. "I don't like it. It's not good for anybody."

The Cordovas say it all

started with the MEChA club. In June 1996, Nadine offered to sponsor a MEChA club for



Patsy Cordova's use of *500 Years of Chicano History* drew a stern rebuke from school officials.

junior and senior high school students. The fledgling group already had 23 members, but they wanted it to be officially recognized by the school administration.

MEChA, which stands for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, is a national student organization founded in 1969, at the height of the Chicano civil rights movement. Although some local chapters still espouse radical political rhetoric, most MEChA clubs have joined the mainstream, and they are common at many high schools and universities, particularly in the Southwest. The goal of the Vaughn club, according to a mission statement, was to promote "an understanding through knowledge, awareness of, and sensitivity to culture, tradition, history, and issues of the Chicano people and our communities." Organizers hoped to provide "a positive, sensitive, and supportive environment in which Chicano youth can network and learn about each other."

Superintendent Martinez approved the club for the 1996-97 school year. On August 19, the first day of school, MEChA's two student leaders—Naomi Chavez and Daniel Ayala, who is Nadine's son—spoke at a school assembly and urged more students to join the organization. When they finished, a girl in the audience raised her fist up in the air and shouted, "Viva la Raza!" ("Viva la Raza," or "Long Live the People," has long been the rallying cry of Chicano activists.)

"I don't remember anybody responding to her," Patsy says. "We didn't know she was going to do that. It just came out. But pretty much from that point on, we never heard the end of it."

According to Nadine, Andrew Cordova, who at the time was president of the school board, complained about the student's behavior—and about

history, they should use books written from "an Anglo point of view."

Virginia Dugan, a lawyer for the school board, says that Martinez had, in fact, been getting complaints from members of the community about the materials being used in Patsy and Nadine's classes. But the sisters say they were only doing what they had always done: integrat-

ating "a biased political agenda," and promoting "a militant attitude" in her students. He warned her that if she did not "delete the MEChA philosophy" from her classes, she risked being charged with insubordination and fired.

However, two weeks later, on November 5, when Martinez met with Nadine and Patsy, the superintendent was apparently less strident.

To Nadine, Martinez admitted that he had no evidence that either teacher was promoting intolerance or militancy, and he told them they could continue to use the same materials provided they were presented in an appropriate manner. But he reiterated his demand that the Cordovas remove "the MEChA philosophy" from their teaching.

While the embattled MEChA club dissolved, "We had a few meetings," Nadine says, "but we were under so much attack that we couldn't get it together."

For the New Mexico

Teachers Union, the state chapter of the National Education Association (October, the organization had agreed to meet with Nadine in her dispute with the superintendent. "It seemed like such a simple case," says Richard Rosenstock, one of the NMCLU lawyers. In mid-September, Rosenstock's colleague, Andrew Dugan, sent a letter to superintendent Martinez asking for more specific information about what Nadine could or could not teach in her classes. (It was still unclear whether Patsy's classes were also being scrutinized.)

Martinez responded on January 8, 1997. He sent two nearly identical letters to both Nadine and Patsy in which he detailed his specific objections to their teaching methods and materials. He said he did not have the authority to continue to allow teachers that are judged by the board and found to be ethnically divisive and demeaning derogatory stereotypes that are racist and derogatory to majority populations," he wrote. "I want you to stop immediately."

Martinez told the teachers that he had received many complaints from the community, students, and the complaints deal with the racism and the preoccupation with other matters related to the Chicano community. "Students in their classes, he complained, received literature that refers to racist empire builders. In such literature, the Vietnam War is described as one in which the rich and powerful Anglos used the threat to make young Hispanics die. The children are taught that the Spaniards are noble and honorable while the Spaniards are greedy and hurtful people." The superintendent added, uses such phrases as "the Anglo Colonizers."

Chavez [students] that 'Anglo Colonizers' enemy is to place a giant chip on their shoulders," he wrote.

Superintendent Martinez was apparently referring to *500 Years of Chicano History*, a textbook edited by Chicano activist Elizabeth Martinez and published by the SouthWest Organizing Project, in the book as "a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization that seeks to disenfranchise in the Southwest. It may realize racial and gender equality and economic justice."

In the introduction to the book, which contains photographs and captions, Martinez asserted that the Vietnam War "benefited the rich and powerful, who saw the 'Communist threat' to make our youth lie." The book purports to tell "the real story of La Raza and other truths so long hidden, but it is so tendentious that high school



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"I don't remember anybody responding to her," Patsy says. "We didn't know she was going to do that. It just came out. But pretty much from that point on, we never heard the end of it."

According to Nadine, Andrew Cordova, who at the time was president of the school board, complained about the student's behavior—and about MEChA—to superintendent Martinez, who passed on the information to Nadine. The next day, Nadine and several MEChA members met with Cordova and explained to him why they wanted the club to be recognized by the school district. But Cordova was unconvinced. "He said that we were making the students forget that they were Americans first," Nadine says. "And that if they wanted to say 'Viva la Raza!' it should be behind closed doors at their own meeting, and not in public."

Two weeks later, according to Nadine, Andrew Cordova met with Martinez and told him that no school funds or equipment were to be used for or by MEChA, even though all other approved student organizations were given such privileges. When Nadine protested that Cordova was acting beyond the scope of his authority as a school

history, they should use books written from "an Anglo point of view."

Virginia Dugan, a lawyer for the school board, says that Martinez had, in fact, been getting complaints from members of the community about the materials being used in Patsy and Nadine's classes. But the sisters say they were only doing what they had always done: integrating Mexican-American history in their regular classes in an attempt to motivate their students. And yes, self-esteem was part of the reason. "We thought this would make our students want to reach higher than maybe they normally would," Patsy says.

During the 1995-96 school year, for example, Nadine had shown the acclaimed PBS documentary *Chicano! History of the Mexican-American Civil Rights Movement* to several of her classes. Martinez, she says, had approved the use of the video. Further, during the spring of 1996, Nadine had submitted proposed curriculum outlines for the 1996-97 school year. Certain classes, she said, would include materials on Mexican-American history, racism, and discrimination. Martinez approved the outlines.

The sisters also say that Martinez had always

Vaughn's superintendent objected to texts depicting whites as racist empire builders. To teach students that 'Anglo Colonizers' are their enemy, he wrote, 'is to place a giant chip on their fragile shoulders.'

board member, Martinez allegedly told the teacher that he did not want "to go against Andy's wishes." Subsequently, Martinez ordered that MEChA—which had become the school's largest student club—could no longer use the school bulletin boards or hallways to post announcements of its meetings. In a letter to Nadine, he said that there could not be "any instruction nor activity involving students that reflects the MEChA philosophy during the school days."

"Our MEChA kids couldn't even talk about MEChA in the halls—that's how bad it got," says Patsy, who had become co-sponsor of the club.

"And who decided that MEChA was not going to be officially sanctioned?" Nadine asks. "They never had a board meeting where they decided that. Everything they did was done behind closed doors. Everything they did went against school policy."

(Martinez, Cordova, and the other school board members declined to be interviewed for this article.)

Nadine says she was unaware of any complaints about her teaching, so she was baffled by Martinez's order to cease "any instruction... that reflects the MEChA philosophy." She sent the superintendent a letter asking him to spell out exactly what she could and could not teach in her classes, but she never got a reply. However, on October 4, she and her sister met with Andrew Cordova, who, they say, accused both teachers of trying to build up their students' self-esteem by "tearing down the white race." He also allegedly told them that if they wanted to teach Chicano

given them a great deal of latitude in choosing what materials to use in their classes. Indeed, Nadine says that when she began teaching 7th grade Skills for Living—the purpose of which she describes as "how to get along in this world, how to deal with social problems like drugs and violence, things like that"—she was allowed to create her own curriculum. For their language arts classes, the Cordovas say they were given copies of the New Mexico "Content Standards With Benchmarks," which outlines exactly what is expected of students. (For example: "Students will speak clearly and write effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes.") But the benchmarks list outcomes, not methods. The sisters say they had long used an integrated curriculum to achieve those goals, incorporating materials from a variety of sources.

They must have been doing something right, for at the end of the 1995-96 school year, Martinez gave them outstanding scores on their annual evaluations. Both teachers received a score of four—the highest mark—in the following categories: "The teacher accurately demonstrates knowledge of the content area and approved curriculum" and "The teacher appropriately utilizes a variety of teaching methods and resources for each area taught."

Nonetheless, throughout the fall of 1996, the Cordova sisters—Nadine in particular—found themselves increasingly under fire for their teaching methods. On October 22, Martinez sent a letter to Nadine in which he explained that he and the school board members had concluded that she was teaching "racial intolerance," advocating

"a biased political agenda," and promoting "a militant attitude" in her students. He warned her that if she did not "delete the MEChA philosophy" from her classes, she risked being charged with insubordination and fired.

However, two weeks later, on November 5, when Martinez met with Nadine and Patsy, the superintendent was apparently less strident. According to Nadine, Martinez admitted that he had no evidence that either teacher was promoting racial intolerance or militancy, and he told them that they could continue to use the same materials provided they were presented in an unbiased manner. But he reiterated his demand that the Cordovas remove "the MEChA philosophy" from their teaching.

Meanwhile, the embattled MEChA club disbanded. "We had a few meetings," Nadine says, "but we were under so much attack that we really couldn't get it together."

Enter the New Mexico

Civil Liberties Union, the state chapter of the ACLU. In October, the organization had agreed to represent Nadine in her dispute with the school administration. "It seemed like such a clear First Amendment case," says Richard Rosenstock, one of the NMCLU lawyers. In mid-November, Rosenstock's colleague, Andrew Vallejos, sent a letter to superintendent Martinez asking for more specific information about what Nadine could or could not teach in her classes. (It was still unclear whether Patsy's teaching was also being scrutinized.)

Martinez responded on January 8, 1997. He sent virtually identical letters to both Nadine and Patsy, in which he detailed his specific objections to their teaching methods and materials. "You do not have the authority to continue to teach matters that are judged by the board and myself to be ethnically divisive and demeaning and using derogatory stereotypes that are racist in describing majority populations," he wrote. "This must stop immediately."

Martinez told the teachers that he had received "many complaints from the community, staff, and students, and the complaints deal with objections to the racism and the preoccupation with colonizers and other matters related to the 'movement.'" Students in their classes, he continued, "had received literature that refers to Anglos as racist empire builders. In such literature, the Vietnam War is described as one in which the rich and powerful Anglos used the Communist threat to make young Hispanics fight and die. The children are taught that Mexicans are noble and honorable while Spanish and Anglos are greedy and hurtful people." The material, he added, uses such phrases as "the gringos" and "Anglo Colonizers."

"To teach [students] that 'Anglo Colonizers' are their enemy is to place a giant chip on their fragile shoulders," he wrote.

The superintendent was apparently referring to *500 Years of Chicano History*, a textbook edited by Chicano activist Elizabeth Martinez and published by the SouthWest Organizing Project, described in the book as "a multi-racial, multi-issue community organization that seeks to empower the disenfranchised in the Southwest so that they may realize racial and gender equality and social and economic justice."

In her introduction to the book, which contains mostly photographs and captions, Martinez does indeed assert that the Vietnam War "benefited no one except the rich and powerful, who used 'the Communist threat' to make our youth fight and die." The book purports to tell "the real story of La Raza and other truths so long denied," but it is so tendentious that high school

students might have a hard time separating the propaganda from the facts.

Nonetheless, Patsy decided to use the book as a supplementary text in both her 7th grade New Mexico history class and her 10th, 11th, and 12th grade language arts classes. She insists, however, that she never presented the material in the book as the absolute truth, but rather used it to show her students an alternative point of view. She encouraged her students to compare the book with other, more mainstream, textbooks. "That's how we used it," she said. "I never told them what to think. They have to do it on their own." Nadine says she never used the book in any of her classes. (Copies of the book, incidentally, had been purchased by the Vaughn school district for use in other classes.)

The Cordova sisters are pioneers, says one Chicano studies advocate. 'And pioneers often have to suffer so that others can follow in their footsteps. We always have to fight. This kind of thing happens all the time.'

Superintendent Martinez, Nadine says, "just picked out phrases from the book, took them out of context, and used them against us."

The superintendent told both teachers to stop using the textbook, and he told them to eliminate from their language arts classes "any run-off sheets copied from different sources that promote 'La Causa,' any further study of the Farm Workers Movement with Cesar Chavez, [and] the bulletin board displays depicting the 'movement.'..." ("La Causa," or The Cause, and the "movement" both refer to the struggles of Mexican Americans.)

To Nadine, he included a copy of a previously approved outline for her Skills for Living class on which he had circled several discussion topics that were now to be eliminated from the curriculum, including "Racism," "Discrimination," "Oppression," and "Militia Groups." He did not, however, circle "Chicano Civil Rights" or "Chicano or Mexican-American Heroes," but he did tell Nadine to eliminate one of her objectives for teaching Chicano Civil Rights: "Provide a missing element from our students' lives, that is, a knowledge about their own history."

Martinez also directed Nadine to stop teaching her students about, among other subjects, Robert F. Kennedy, the U.S. Constitution, Chicano activist Dolores Huerta, and the concept of justice.

The Cordovas were outraged by the letters. They and their lawyers—the NMCLU was now representing both teachers—believed that the superintendent's directives violated the teachers' rights under the First Amendment, and they also believed the directives were in violation of the district's written policies and procedures regarding complaints about teachers. Still, Patsy and Nadine decided to comply with the orders until the matter could be resolved.

On February 15, the *Albuquerque Journal* published a front-page article, headlined "Chicano Studies Out in Vaughn," about the controversy. The article quoted NMCLU lawyer

Andrew Vallejos, who said, "Initially, we hoped we could work out a compromise with the superintendent, but I think there's a strong likelihood that this could go to court." It also quoted a former school board member, Jude Gallegos, who objected to the Cordovas' teaching. "If these classes were being offered as electives," he said, "then it wouldn't bother me. But those classes are necessary for graduation, and the kids are bringing home stuff that has nothing to do with grammar or literature." Another parent, Sandra Ulibarri, joked that MEChA stood for "Mexicans Educating Chicanos Against Americans."

The article, Nadine and Patsy allege, angered Martinez and the board members, who blamed the teachers for putting Vaughn in a negative light. The dispute, the sisters say, was turning

into a witch hunt. After the article appeared, they allege, Martinez began soliciting complaints about them, including information about incidents that had occurred years earlier and that had never been brought to the attention of either teacher. "I knew there was some conspiracy going on," Patsy says. "There had to be. Someone at the top did not want us here." That person, they say, was their cousin Andrew Cordova. They now accuse him of putting pressure on Martinez to fire them.

Nadine had heard about

the curriculum package published by Teaching Tolerance of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The curriculum, called *The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in America*, includes a 40-minute video, a booklet titled "Us and Them," and a teacher's guide. Teaching Tolerance provides one free copy of the kit to any school that requests it. According to Jim Carnes, editor of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine and author of the "Us and Them" text, the package has been sent to more than 55,000 schools.

Nadine ordered a copy of the curriculum, and after she and her sister examined it, they decided that they wanted to use some of the materials in their classes. Their students, they say, had become "bored" with the traditional curriculum; the *Shadow of Hate* video and the accompanying booklet, they believed, would captivate their students in the same way that the now-banned materials had. They felt certain that Martinez would go along with their plan. After all, he had accused them of teaching "racial intolerance." How, then, could he object to a curriculum whose stated goal is to encourage teachers "to educate students about the importance of tolerance in a democracy?"

On February 21, Nadine and Patsy sent Martinez a letter stating their intention to use some of the Teaching Tolerance materials in

their classes. They enclosed the table of contents from "Us and Them," the kit's statement of purpose, and a copy of one of the booklet's articles, a discussion of violence along the border between the United States and Mexico in the early part of the century. The Cordovas say Martinez never responded to their letter, so on February 24, they began using the materials. Patsy had her students read and discuss the article that had been submitted to Martinez, while Nadine used a section on the Trail of Tears, the forced removal of Cherokee Indians from Georgia in 1838. They both showed their students the *Shadow of Hate* video.

The next day, Martinez told Patsy that he and the school board wanted to meet with her and Nadine to, as Patsy remembers the conversation, "resolve the whole problem peacefully." She says he promised that the board members would conduct themselves "in a gentlemanly fashion." The Cordovas agreed to attend the closed meeting, to be held on the evening of February 26 in the district's boardroom, without their NMCLU lawyers.

The meeting, however, was anything but civil. According to Nadine's federal lawsuit, Andrew Cordova began the encounter by addressing the sisters "in a confrontational and hostile manner, demanding to know whether they intended to use the Teaching Tolerance project materials again." Nadine answered yes, and as Patsy attempted to explain what the curriculum was all about, board member Art Dunlap "angrily got up and walked out of the meeting," according to Nadine's complaint. Another board member, Ernest Aragon, told the Cordovas that he was getting pressure from certain members of the community to resolve the dispute. Nadine and Patsy then accused the board of ignoring the desires of the poorer parents in the district and responding only to some of the wealthier ones, particularly a local rancher named Joe Vicente, who, they believed, had told the board that if the Cordovas were not fired from their teaching positions, he would remove his three children from the school district. (In sworn testimony, Vicente denied saying this to the board, but he admitted telling "various people" that if the Cordovas continued teaching in Vaughn, "my kids won't go to school here because they're scared of them.")

Martinez asked Patsy and Nadine if they would agree to stop using the Teaching Tolerance materials, but the teachers said they would only do so if the request were put in writing. They say they never got an answer. When the meeting ended, about an hour and a half after it began, it seemed as if nothing had been resolved. Still, the teachers were hopeful about their future.

"We walked away thinking that a couple of school board members understood our point of view," Patsy says. "Well, they never sent us a letter, they never put their demand in writing." Indeed, she believes Martinez had already made up his mind to suspend them. "I think that meeting was a trap. I believe they planned to fire us long before that meeting."

"It was a setup," adds Nadine. "They were looking for a reason to fire us."

Two days later, on February 28, Richard Rosenstock of the NMCLU sent a letter to Art Martinez in which he acknowledged, in his words, the board's "apparent" decision on February 26 to disallow Patsy and Nadine from using the Teaching Tolerance curriculum, even though the Cordovas had provided the superintendent "with notice of their intent and even submitted sample articles."

"Unfortunately," the letter continued, "you chose to extend the pall of orthodoxy and banned the use of these materials. Although neither of them believes the Teaching Tolerance curriculum in any way violates your previous directives

to them, under threat of losing their jobs, Nadine Cordova and Patsy Cordova will cease using this acclaimed program."

But it was too late. Martinez had already decided to suspend the teachers for insubordination. On the very day that Rosenstock mailed his letter, Martinez directed police chief Romo to personally deliver his letters of suspension to each teacher and to make sure they handed over their keys to the building before leaving. In the letters, the superintendent told the teachers that he was recommending to the school board that they be discharged for "willful refusal" to follow a prescribed curriculum and for replacing that curriculum "with a course of instruction which is racist, inappropriate, [and] disruptive within the school." He quoted from New Mexico State Department of Education Regulation No. 70-13, which states, "No material shall be introduced into public elementary or secondary school curricula by any individual or organized group to promote a biased attitude on religious, racial, or political issues."

He also accused the Cordovas of ridiculing the prescribed curriculum in front of students and staff; referring to Martinez as "Smurf"; encouraging the students to lobby against the prescribed curriculum; and calling a schoolwide assembly on a day that Martinez was out of town, at which they allegedly encouraged students to meet with the media to express their opinions on the prescribed curriculum.

(The sisters deny the allegations, although Patsy does admit that she, in her capacity as head teacher, called an assembly to try to ease some of the tension at the school. "I called it to tell the students that we have to respect each other's opinions. I wanted Mr. Martinez to be there, but he was at a three-day conference. I never encouraged anyone to go to the media.")

Martinez informed Patsy and Nadine that they had a right to a hearing on the matter before the school board, which would then vote on whether to uphold the superintendent's recommendation.

The Cordova sisters were out of work, but their legal battle was just getting started.

On March 4, 1997, Patsy

and Nadine formally requested a hearing before the school board. But because three members—Andrew Cordova, Ernest Aragon, and Leopoldo Gutierrez—had witnessed the "act of insubordination" that led to the Cordovas' discharge, lawyers for the board argued that a hearing would be inappropriate. The dispute, they argued, should be decided by a neutral arbitrator. But the Cordovas would have none of that. "We want them to be accountable for their actions in front of the community," Nadine said in May. "We think it's too easy to say, 'Go to an arbitrator and let him make the decision.'"

A state judge in Las Vegas, New Mexico, agreed, and after several delays, a hearing was set for the end of June.

Meanwhile, thanks to the *Albuquerque Journal* and the Associated Press, among other news organizations, the Cordova sisters were becoming known far and wide. Hispanic leaders from all over the country praised the teachers for taking a stand against censorship. A number of organizations—including the University of New Mexico's department of Chicano studies, the National Association of Chicano Studies, and the National Council of Teachers of English—sent letters of support. The SouthWest Organizing Project, which publishes *500 Years of Chicano History*, paid for Patsy and Nadine to attend a national conference on Chicano studies in Sacramento. In Albuquerque, four state senators

sponsored a resolution requesting that the teachers be reinstated. Even *Lowrider Magazine* published an article about the dispute. More recently, *Dateline NBC* came calling.

Ironically, the debate in Vaughn comes at a time when Hispanics are finally seeing their history being included in the curricula at a number of school districts around the country. "Hispanics have traditionally been left out of the mainstream curriculum," says Kathy Escamilla, an associate professor of language, literacy, and culture at the University of Colorado at Denver. But that's changing.

"What the Cordova sisters were trying to do is really part of a much larger movement," says Luis Torres, chairman of the Chicano studies department at Metropolitan State College in Denver. Torres is helping to develop a curriculum—called *Alma de la Raza*, or Soul of the People—that will be used in the Denver public schools, where 47 percent of the students are Hispanic. Supporters of the program, which will cut across a number of different disciplines, hope it will boost the academic performance of Hispanic students while promoting cultural awareness. "This kind of curricula is now beginning to be taught," he says, "and in most cases, it's not that controversial." He adds: "It's not just reserved for Chicano students. All students should learn about this."

Torres calls Patsy and Nadine Cordova pioneers. "And pioneers often have to suffer so that

others can follow in their footsteps," he says. "It's discouraging. We always have to fight. The Cordova sisters' story is not unique. This kind of thing happens all the time."

But what makes the Cordovas' story unusual is that it is taking place in a town that is nearly all Hispanic. It would seem that teaching Chicano history in a place like Vaughn would be no big deal. But as Torres points out, "The Hispanic community is not monolithic. No community is. And most administrators tend to adhere to a traditional curriculum."

Then there's New Mexico's jumbled history. Valerie Santillanes, who has covered the dispute for the *Albuquerque Journal*, notes, "There is a schism in New Mexico between people who consider themselves Spanish and people who consider themselves Mexican."

The Cordovas, who have deep roots in New Mexico, refer to themselves as Mexican Americans. Joe Vicente, one of their chief accusers, calls himself a Spaniard. "My grandparents are direct descendants from Spain," he said in his deposition.

Chicano history, which tends to be told from the point of view of the conquered and not the conquerors, is bound to ruffle the feathers of those who claim Spanish ancestry. In *500 Years of Chicano History*, for instance, Elizabeth Martinez portrays pre-colonial Mexico as a kind of Eden, where "private property did not exist" and "people respected cooperation—not competi-



Nadine Cordova was suspended even after she embraced a curriculum for teaching tolerance.

tion." Then came "the Spaniard to grab gold and enslave the Indians."

In one of her articles for the *Journal*, Santillanes quoted an unidentified Vaughn resident, who said, "If [the Cordovas] want to teach that stuff, they should go to Mexico. Most of us here are Spanish. We're not Mexicans, and our kids don't need to be taught all that bad stuff about our people."

On June 18, a few days before the discharge hearing was scheduled, the Cordovas had a change of heart. After spending the better part of a month taking depositions from school board members, parents, and students, their lawyers had concluded that the cards were stacked against the teachers. "It became clear that the hearing was going to be a farce," says Richard Rosenstock. Besides, Leandro Abeyta, the mayor of Vaughn, had contacted the National Guard and asked that it be put on alert during the hearing. This, according to Rosenstock's colleague, Daniel Yohalem, had created an "intimidating and fearful atmosphere." In a letter to Art Martinez, Yohalem accused the superintendent, the board, and the board's lawyer of listening only to those who had an ax to grind with the Cordovas and ignoring "the many other students and parents who approved of their work."

"Like the Salem witch trials and the McCarthy accusations of 40 years ago," he added, "it is striking and quite frightening that the teachers' accusers, yourself in particular, had no direct knowledge of the facts underlying the accusations they made—accusations which we will show were based on rumor and gossip and have no basis in reality." He concluded the letter by withdrawing the Cordovas' request for a hearing.

Six days later, the NMCLU lawyers filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Nadine against the superintendent and the school board.

But the hearing went on as planned. Robert Castille, a lawyer for the school board, argued that the board was still obligated to act on the superintendent's recommendation, with or without the participation of Patsy and Nadine Cordova. So, on Saturday, June 28, in the Vaughn High School gymnasium, the board held its hearing, which, as it turned out, took place mostly behind closed doors. But before the members went into executive session, Martinez made an impassioned defense of his actions. Before a crowd of about 50 townspeople, he said that recommending to the board that the Cordovas be fired "will be one of the hardest things that I will ever do in my life."

The superintendent painted a picture of two exemplary teachers who had gotten carried away by their own political ideals. "Maybe MEChA is the best thing in the world," he said. "But the way it was implemented in Vaughn, New Mexico—maybe the people that were implementing it did not know what they were doing—it came across in a very negative way. It was racist, politically divisive, and it just didn't work."

He said that he tried to resolve the dispute, but the Cordovas "refused to work" with him. "I noticed that we were losing communication with these two people. I had always had good communication with Patsy Cordova. I appointed her to head teacher. I felt that confident in her disciplinary method. But when these other ideas came into play, we started losing communication. They didn't want to talk to me." When the Cordova sisters decided to fight back, Martinez and the board took it as a threat. "We found this to be insubordination from the very beginning."

(Martinez, it turned out, was speaking as superintendent of the Vaughn Municipal School District for the last time. Back in February, he had announced he was resigning from his post in June, one year before his contract expired. He

denied that he was quitting because of the dispute with the Cordova sisters.)

According to reporter Valerie Santillanes, who attended the meeting, the superintendent's remarks drew a long round of applause from the audience. Then the board members went into executive session, where for two hours they examined the evidence against the teachers, including: letters exchanged by Martinez and the sisters; the superintendent's handwritten notes; depositions of students, parents, and teachers;

Although the Cordova sisters' lawyer claims this is 'a clear First Amendment case,' the outcome of the lawsuit is far from certain. For one thing, teachers have never had an absolute right to academic freedom.

and two student-drawn political cartoons that had been taken from Patsy's classroom walls. One drawing shows the barrel of a gun pointed at a government official, who is holding a piece of paper that says, "Manifest Destiny." The person behind the gun is saying, "¡Oye, Gringito! You're taking who's [sic] land?" The other cartoon shows a comedian onstage telling the following "joke": "What do you call a million dead black people? Planet redecoration."

Patsy insists the cartoons were part of a *Newsweek* magazine curriculum lesson on political cartoons. She had told her students to create satirical drawings based on material they had covered in class, including the loss of land grants in New Mexico and the burning of black churches in the South. "I was trying to teach them how to use irony to get their point across," she told Santillanes. "This is just nonsense."

Unable to reach a decision Saturday night, the school board scheduled another meeting for Monday, July 7. This time, about 70 people showed up. Many of them had come from Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Vegas to show support for the embattled teachers.

In the end, the board voted 3-2 to fire Patsy and Nadine Cordova. The vote was met with applause and boos. Some students cried. And when the meeting adjourned, many in the audience raised their fists in the air and shouted, "Viva la Raza!" The story that began on August 19, 1996, at the school assembly had come full circle.

Ultimately, a federal judge will decide whether Martinez and the Vaughn school board acted properly when they decided to suspend and then fire the Cordovas. But despite Richard Rosenstock's claim that the dispute is "a clear First Amendment case," the outcome of the pending lawsuit is far from certain.

For one thing, teachers have never had an absolute right to academic freedom. Local school boards and state departments of education have always had the authority to set the curriculum for public schools, and teachers have long been discouraged from pushing their own political beliefs on students. "Since public school teachers

work for the government, they are expected to teach from specified curricula and to present controversial issues in such a way that each student can make informed and individualized decisions concerning what conclusions should be drawn," advises legal scholar Fred Hartmeister in his book *Surviving as a Teacher: The Legal Dimension*.

If Patsy and Nadine Cordova were indeed advocating their own political beliefs to their students, or if they were teaching subject matter

that was beyond the scope of the prescribed curriculum, then the Vaughn school board may well have been right to fire them.

On the other hand, if the sisters were, as they assert, teaching their students different points of view without biasing students, then their claims against the school district may be valid. As Patsy puts it, "The people of Vaughn have to understand that teaching Chicano history does not mean we're being militant."

"School districts have a great deal of authority to define what is taught in the classroom," says Michael Simpson, assistant general counsel for the National Education Association. "But they can't impose a 'pall of orthodoxy,' in the words of a famous Supreme Court decision." (In that case, *Epperson vs. State of Arkansas*, the court ruled unconstitutional an Arkansas statute that made it illegal to teach about evolution in the state's public schools. "The First Amendment does not tolerate laws that cast a pall of orthodoxy over the classroom," the court wrote.)

As the legal wheels slowly turn, Patsy and Nadine are moving on with their lives. Patsy is looking for another teaching job, while Nadine is planning on going back to school for her master's degree, probably at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. But they say it won't be easy leaving Vaughn, despite the tension that still lingers in the town. For one thing, they both take turns caring for their 79-year-old mother, who has Alzheimer's disease and lives with Nadine and her family. "But we'll make our changes as we have to," Nadine says philosophically. "We don't live and die for these jobs. There are other options."

The sisters, however, are certain about one thing: They have no doubt that they will win their lawsuits against the Vaughn public schools. "These men," Patsy says, "did not believe they were ever going to have to prove these things against us. I think somewhere along the line they thought they were going to scare us off, and that was going to be it."

"That we were just going to agree to leave," Nadine adds, "with them not ever having to prove what they accused us of."

"And now they have to prove it," Patsy says. "And they can't." ■

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MALCS CONFERENCE
RECOGNITION OF
CORDOVA

Date: July 16, 1997

To: Dr. Elisa Facio
University of Colorado
Fax #: 303-492-7799

From: Patsy and Nadine Córdova
505-584-2526

Subject: Biographies for MALCS Conference

Patsy Córdova:

Teacher for 23 years, 18 years in Vaughn Public Schools. Attempted to return something to the community in which she was born. Through integrated English curriculum, she introduced units on 500 years of Chicano History, Cesar Chavez, and Teaching Tolerance. These topics were considered too controversial, racist, and demeaning by the superintendent and some community members. This led to termination of employment just two years from retirement. The American Civil Liberties Union plans on filing a federal complaint on her behalf within the next two months.

Nadine Córdova:

Teacher for 12 years in Vaughn School District. In the spring semester of 1996, she organized a MEChA organization, which was welcomed enthusiastically by students. The MEChA organization was labeled as militant and racist, although there was no basis for complaints. On July 7, 1997, she was terminated. The A.C.L.U. filed a federal complaint in U.S. District Court on June 24, 1997, in her behalf.

** Elisa, if you feel that these biographies must be shortened or changed, please feel free to do so. Call if you have any questions.



1995 VAUGHN SCHOOL 1996

MR. RICHARD GALLEGOS & MS. NADINE CORDOVA

SENIORS

ROW 2: NADINE CORDOVA, ADAM CHAVEZ, GERMAINE CHAVEZ, DANNY LOPEZ, RICHARD GALLEGOS **ROW 1:** ROSARIO MENDEZ, MARLENA ARGUELLO, MELISSA ARGUELLO, STANNA CHAVEZ, AUGELA LUEVAS



1995 VAUGHN SCHOOL 1996

MS. PATSY CORDOVA

MS. MARGARET ARGUELLO - SOPHOMORES

ROW 2: PATSY CORDOVA, AARON ARAGON, ROBERT CHAVEZ, DANIEL AYALA, JACOB TENORIO, MARGARET ARGUELLO

ROW 1: CIPIO AGUILAR, HEATHER ABEYTA, SHELIA MADRID, MICHAEL HARRISON

**VAUGHN LETTERS OF
REPRIMAND**



AGUILAS

VAUGHN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

P.O. BOX 158, VAUGHN, NEW MEXICO 88353

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE: 584-2283

FACSIMILE: 584-2355

PROVIDING GOOD EDUCATION: THE FLIGHT TO FREEDOM



EAGLES

October 22, 1996

Nadine Cordova
Vaughn, NM 88353

Dear Ms. Cordova,

This pursuant to the letter, dated September 24, 1996, in which I advised you that the Vaughn School District would not support the MEChA organization and would not allow any instruction or activity that reflects MEChA philosophy during the school day.

This is to inform you of the following information: The Vaughn School Board has the duty to supervise and control the public schools within its District. The Board has the final approval of curriculum. The Board members feel, as I do, that the MEChA philosophy as implemented by you is divisive, teaches racial intolerance, promotes a militant attitude in the students and promotes a biased political agenda.

It is my duty as the Superintendent of Schools to carry out the administrative and supervisory functions of the local board. Therefore, when I instruct you about restructuring the curriculum, to delete the MEChA philosophy and to stay within the boundaries of a Life Skills class, I expect that you must abide by those directives. I must inform you that if you have not ceased MEChA activity during the school day and if you disregard direct supervisory instructions, you risk charges of insubordination and possible discharge.



AGUILAS

VAUGHN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

P.O. BOX 158, VAUGHN, NEW MEXICO 88353

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE: 584-2283

FACSIMILE: 584-2355

PROVIDING GOOD EDUCATION: THE FLIGHT TO FREEDOM



EAGLES

February 28, 1997

Ms. Nadine Cordova
Vaughn Municipal Schools
P. O. Box 213
Vaughn, N.M. 88353

Dear Ms. Cordova:

"Effective immediately, you are suspended with pay pending the outcome of this discharge hearing."

Sincerely,

C. Arthur Martinez
C. ARTHUR MARTINEZ
SUPERINTENDENT

CAM/ynph

**CORDOVA CHALLENGE
TERMINATION LETTER**

March 4, 1997

BY HAND

C. Arthur Martinez
Superintendent
Vaughn Municipal Schools

Re: Proposed Terminations of Nadine Cordova and Patsy Cordova

Dear Mr. Martinez,

Pursuant to section 22-10-17 NMSA 1978, Nadine Cordova and Patsy Cordova hereby elect to have a hearing to challenge your recommendation that we be discharged from employment as certified school instructors by the Vaughn Municipal Schools. We want this hearing to be open to the public.

We strongly dispute each and every allegation made in your February 28, 1997 letters to us and believe that this proposed action constitutes a substantial breach of our employment contracts. It is remarkable to us that you have made these "factual" claims without ever asking us whether they were true. You seem bent on listening only to the false statements of a few people who see this as an opportunity to get us. Unbiased witnesses will show how wrong your accusations are.

It is also remarkable to us that you and Andy Cordova persist in viewing our teaching of tolerance for all points of view as threatening to the point of attempting to fire us. We have been teachers for many years (Nadine- years; Patsy- years) with consistently excellent records and, frankly, your attitudes and actions aimed at controlling information are frightening in a democracy. We know that our open and caring approach to knowledge about all people (including Hispanics) and our multi-cultural approach to learning will prevail in the public hearing and in court if we have to go that far.

Sincerely,

NADINE CORDOVA

PATSY CORDOVA

**VAUGHN NOTICE OF INTENT TO
DISCHARGE**



VAUGHN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

P.O. BOX 158, VAUGHN, NEW MEXICO 88353

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE: 584-2283

FACSIMILE: 584-2355

PROVIDING GOOD EDUCATION: THE FLIGHT TO FREEDOM



AGUILAS

EAGLES

February 28, 1997

Ms. Nadine Cordova
Vaughn Municipal Schools
P. O. Box 213
Vaughn, N.M. 88353

NOTICE OF INTENT TO DISCHARGE

Dear Ms. Cordova:

By this letter, I am giving you written notice of my intent to recommend to the Board of Education of the Vaughn Municipal Schools that you be discharged from your employment as a certified school instructor. This action is taken pursuant to NMSA 1978, ~22-10-17 (1993 Repl. Pamp.)

The causes for discharge are as follows:

You were directed by the superintendent and school board to teach a prescribed curriculum and you have insubordinately refused to do so. The directive was communicated to you clearly and your willful refusal to follow it was equally clear. In addition to refusing to teach the prescribed curriculum, you have replaced the prescribed curriculum with a course of instruction which is racist, inappropriate, disruptive within the school, and, you were expressly told not to teach this material.

Under ~22-10-5 (C) NMSA 1978, a certified school instructor must "teach the course of instruction prescribed." State Department of Education Regulation No. 70-13 includes the following resolution:

No material shall be introduced into public, elementary or secondary school curricula by any individual or organized group to promote a biased attitude on religious, racial or political issues.

It has been explained to you orally and in writing that the curriculum you thought would instill pride and self-determination in young Mexican Americans, has instead caused ethnic frictions and grave concern in the community that you are not teaching about racism, but are teaching racist stereotypes.

Instead of heeding the directives and listening to the concerns, you sought to undermine the curriculum prescribed to you.

- *You ridiculed it at school in front of students and staff,
- *You ridiculed the superintendent of schools as "Smurf,"
- *You encouraged the students at school to lobby against the prescribed curriculum.
- *On a day when the superintendent of schools left the district, the two of you called a school wide assembly of students and staff to encourage students to meet with media to express their opinions on the prescribed curriculum. Dissent was silenced by threats and ridicule,
- *You gave students the choice of your curriculum or the prescribed curriculum.

Hispanic and Anglo parents have objected to your curriculum as offensive in its racism. Some parents have disenrolled their children and others are considering this option.

In summary, the superintendent and board gave you a clear directive that was lawful and reasonably within the scope of their authority on a matter of significance. Your explicit refusal to obey such a directive is insubordination and is good and just cause for your discharge.

You have a right to a discharge hearing before the Board if you give me written notice of your election of a hearing. The written notice to me must be given within five (5) working days of your receipt of this Notice of Intent to Discharge.

The Board will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the hearing and will give you this written notice at least ten days before the hearing. It will also be held within a period no less than twenty (20) and no more than forty (40) working days after you submit your written request for this hearing.

You may have a representative, including an attorney, accompany you at this hearing, Section 22-10-17 describes how the parties can gather information by depositions, request for documents, and use of subpoenas. The Board has authority to issue subpoenas to compel witnesses to attend and testify and/or to produce books, records, documents, and other evidence. The Board has the power to administer oaths.

The school superintendent or administrator has the burden of proof on the issue of whether there is just cause to discharge you. Therefore, the superintendent or administrator shall present evidence and you can thereafter present your evidence. You have the right to call, examine, and cross-examine witnesses and to introduce documentary evidence.

The Board will make an official record of this hearing and provide it to you at no cost.

A written decision will be rendered within twenty days of the conclusion of the discharge hearing.

Sincerely,



C. ARTHUR MARTINEZ
SUPERINTENDENT

CAM/ynph

**ACLU SETTLEMENT
PRESS RELEASE**

KEITH D. ELSTON
Executive Director

DENISE CLEGG
Development Director

DOLORES CAMPOS
Office Manager

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, November 18, 1998

Contact: Keith D. Elston, Executive Director
505/266-5915; 505/266-5916 - fax

Vaughn School District And Lawyer Agree to Pay Teachers \$520,000 To Settle First Amendment Claims

Teachers completely vindicated in last year's controversial firing.

ALBUQUERQUE--Late yesterday afternoon (November 17), a federal magistrate approved a \$520,000 settlement in the Vaughn teachers' federal lawsuit. The case, filed last year, challenged the firing of Nadine Cordova by the Vaughn school district. The school board's attorney, Robert Castille, was also a defendant in the case because of his role in the teacher's termination. Patsy Cordova, Nadine's sister, who had been fired along with Nadine, participated in the settlement. The school district agreed to pay the two teachers \$450,000 in damages and to expunge all derogatory references to the teachers from Vaughn's records. The school board's attorney agreed to pay the teachers an additional \$70,000 in damages to settle the claims against him.

The case alleged that in late 1996 the two teachers, long-time employees of Vaughn with excellent teaching records, became involved in a curriculum dispute with the school's superintendent, board president and attorney, largely over the teaching of a curriculum that presented a comprehensive view of the Hispanic experience in U.S. history. The case further alleged that when the teachers sought the help of the ACLU-NM in their dispute and were later quoted in a newspaper article, the district and its attorney retaliated by firing them. The suit further alleged that the district's reason for the firing--that they were insubordinate in teaching the nationally acclaimed *Teaching Tolerance* curriculum of the Southern Poverty Law Center (labeled a racially divisive curriculum by the district)--was really a pretext to hide the fact that the Cordovas were fired for exercising their First Amendment rights to speak with the media and gain assistance from the ACLU-NM.

"We are thrilled with this result," said Nadine Cordova. "This is a complete victory for teachers who stand up for their rights and seek assistance from legal counsel," she said. "All we were ever trying to do was teach multi-cultural understanding and tolerance for peoples' differences."

"The size of this settlement shows that the district and its attorney were totally wrong in what they did to us," added Patsy Cordova. "We see this as a complete vindication of everything that we tried to do for our students."

"The case set an important precedent for school board attorneys, teachers and school boards in New Mexico," stated Keith Elston, executive director of the ACLU-NM. "School board attorneys must insist that the facts be fully investigated and present balanced legal advice, rather than becoming an advocate in a dispute. School boards must follow their own policies, which was not done here. Finally, they cannot punish teachers for exercising their First Amendment rights, including contacting the ACLU or other lawyers for assistance," said Mr. Elston. "Because the school district's insurance will pay for its share of the settlement, no textbooks or supplies will be taken away from Vaughn students as a result of the settlement. Sadly, though, the students of Vaughn have been deprived of two outstanding educators," Mr. Elston concluded.

The teachers were represented in this case by ACLU-NM cooperating attorneys Richard Rosenstock, Daniel Yohalem and Andrew Vallejos.

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NEWS

EL Bilingüe

SEPTEMBER 5 - 18, 1997 • A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION • YEAR 2 - NUMBER 36



"buenas noticias" económicas. La atención de la ciudadanía, inversionistas, empresarios y opinión pública estaba dirigida a si la Cámara de Diputados podría sesionar y a si el presidente podría presentar su informe en el Congreso. Las actitudes tradicionales tuvieron como respuesta la unión del bloque opositor. Las conjeturas iban y venían. Arturo Nuñez, líder de la bancada priista, habló de "crisis constitucional" hubo opiniones divididas entre los juristas mexicanos. Desde el que señaló que la instalación de los opositores era plenamente ilegal hasta

Zedillo rinde informe

El Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) creció en forma sostenida, se tuvo superávit después de una de las peores crisis de la historia, la Bolsa Mexicana de Valores (BMV) fue la Bolsa de Valores más rentable del mundo. Todo vislumbraba un informe triunfalista, un informe en que por enésima vez Ernesto Zedillo fustigaría a los adversarios de su modelo económico. Pero eso no pasó. El "informe que iba a ser" era distinto del "informe que fue".

Apenas hace un mes (el 30 de Julio) el presidente hacía declaraciones sobre la inmutabilidad de la política económica. Aún sabiendo que el partido oficial no tendría la mayoría en la Cámara de diputados, Zedillo indicó que ningún sector, partido o grupo podría cambiar el rumbo económico que se había fijado. Un mes después el panorama era totalmente distinto. Los diputados opositores hicieron valer su condición de mayoría.

De un día a otro dejaron de ser importantes las

quien la consideró plenamente válida. Para variar, la Constitución no es clara y deja huecos que se pueden llenar con todo tipo de interpretaciones. Pero lo más importante no es establecer quien tiene la razón jurídica y quien no. Lo verdaderamente importante es que el presidente tuvo que cambiar su actitud.

El primer síntoma de cambio fue el llamado a la cordura hecho por el presidente. De ahí el acuerdo de fracciones parlamentarias se dio fácilmente.

"El informe que fue" empezó con el deseo presidencial de una relación madura con el Legislativo y fue hasta una hora y media después de que inició el informe que Zedillo dijo que México cuenta con bases sólidas para el crecimiento e invitó al Congreso a que juntos consolidaran el modelo económico. Que se conciliara el gasto social y el crecimiento. Se acabó el fustigamiento. Se convirtió en propuesta. Cabe preguntarse ¿La economía determina a la política o la política determina a la economía?

Clovis tendrá su dinero

Las probabilidades para recobrar los 4 millones de dólares que están congelados en un banco de Barcelona, España, se miran bien, de acuerdo a las noticias.

Dos inversionistas extranjeros persuadieron al Director de Finanzas de Clovis, NM, Terri McCully quien transfirió los 4 millones de dólares a un Banco de New York, después a las Islas Canarias y de allí al banco español.

El abogado del Distrito Noveno Randy Harris regresó del Reino Unido con buenas noticias acerca del regreso del dinero.

Por otra parte McCully fue despedido el 9 de junio por haber "extraviado" los fondos. Pero el 15 de julio fue hallado culpable 11 veces de manosear fondos públicos. McCully es acusado de proveer falsa información acerca de las inversiones de la ciudad cuando dijo que el dinero de Clovis estaba en New York cuando sabía que no. Actualmente se encuentra libre en \$50,000 de bonds sin seguro.

Desde entonces el manejador de Clovis, Donald Clifton se ha movido al trabajo de director de finanzas y el jefe de Policía Raymond Mondragón es el manejador interino de Clovis.

These little girls just want to have fun



As school started everywhere in the Panhandle, little girls like these ones at the Friona Elementary, have started a new phase of their lives; school.

Al comenzar la escuela por el área del Panhandle, las muchachitas como estas en la Escuela Elemental de Friona, comienzan una fase nueva de sus vidas: la escuela.

From left to right: Page Herbert, Shelby Hutson, Bianca Soto and Mayra Pío while waiting for their teacher, have a long way to the Prom.

Su despido dividió amargamente a Vaughn, deshuesándose miembros de familia en contra de otro miembro y aventando chispas de acusaciones que las mujeres abiertamente abogaron por el racismo, odio a los Anglos y hasta violencia racial.

"Estoy contento que despidieron a esas muchachas," dijo el dueño de un motel quien habló en condiciones de anonimato. "Eso se debió de hacer desde el principio. Por lo que oigo, ellas querían mandar la escuela."

La estudiante Janice Ulibarri de 15 años, no está de acuerdo. "Ellas eran dos buenas maestras; tenían mucho que enseñar y se deshicieron de ellas," dijo la adolescente, una miembro de la clase de drama de Nadine. "Aquí estaban las dos mujeres con valor que encontraron algo que les gustó y algo que también nos gustó y ellos apenas acaban de deshacerlo."

Patsy de 47 años de edad, de los 23 años de enseñanza, 18 de ellos los enseñó en Vaughn. Dos años antes, el Superintendente Art Martínez la nombró maestra guía de la escuela, equivalente a principal en la escuela de 65 estudiantes. Nadine de 40 años, enseñó por 12 años en Vaughn.

Las dificultades comenzaron el otoño pasado, cuando las hermanas buscando un programa relevante a sus estudiantes, fueron más allá de los libros de texto y desarrollaron un curso corto alrededor del líder laboral César Chávez y otros en el movimiento Chicano por los derechos civiles.

Nadine encontró un documental en PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) mientras que Patsy tornó a

Siga en la página 12

Racismo o Injusticia?



Que caramba que Nadine y Patsy Cordova sean un par de personas improbables.

Las hermanas nacieron, crecieron y criaron varios niños en este pueblo quieto de moteles y estaciones de gasolina llamado Vaughn, Nuevo México sobre la carretera 60, cien millas al sureste de Santa Fe. Viven lado a lado en la tierra que por generaciones ha estado en la familia.

Juntas han puesto una combinación de 30 años desarrollando una sólida reputación así como una excelente y fiable enseñanza.

Pero el mes pasado fueron sacadas de la escuela local junior y senior por insubordinación.

Ellas rechazaron obedecer las órdenes del superintendente en detenerse de enseñar la a

veces violenta historia del movimiento de derechos civiles de los Chicanos y la larga historia de la colonización Hispana y Angla del Suroeste.

Los residentes de esta pequeña comunidad Hispana del este-central de Nuevo México fueron dejados deseando saber: ¿Son las dos hermanas víctimas de políticos locales que sienten inseguridad sobre lo que sus hijos y los hijos de sus amigos estaban aprendiendo acerca de su propia historia? O, ¿Son ellas dos maestras celosas que excavan en sus talones cuando su jefe les pidió que dejara de hacerlo?

el mayor y un suplente de mayor.

El comité debe aprobar todas las inversiones de más de \$100,000 y por lo menos dos miembros deben firmar dicha inversión, también se deberá de leer un reporte mensual.

Clovis, opera con un presupuesto de 25 millones de dólares anuales.

La Princesa Diana muere en París

El chofer del automóvil en que iban la princesa Diana y su acompañante Dodi Fayed llevaba un nivel "ilegal" de alcohol en la sangre cuando

ocurrió el accidente en que murieron ellos tres, dijo el lunes la fiscalía de París. Una fuente judicial dijo que la cifra era más del triple del nivel considerado legal.

"El análisis de la sangre

reveló que el nivel de alcohol era ilegal", dijo la fiscalía en un comunicado. La declaración no incluye el nivel de alcohol, pero un portavoz judicial que requirió no ser identificado dijo que era de 1.75 gramos por litro de sangre, o sea más del triple del nivel considerado legal en Francia.

La ley francesa establece un límite legal de 0.5 gramo, aproximadamente el equivalente a dos vasos de vino. Es un delito de índole criminal conducir con nivel de más de 0.8 gramo.

Por otra parte, una fuente allegada a la investigación dijo el lunes que el vehículo iba a 196 kilómetros por hora

cuando entró al túnel, en que el límite era 50 kph.

Una portavoz del Hotel Ritz, donde Diana y Fayed cenaron poco antes de que ocurriese el accidente en la madrugada del domingo, dijo a la Prensa Asociada que el chofer se llamaba Henri Paul, y que era el número 2 de la seguridad del hotel, propiedad del padre de Fayed.

Un guardaespaldas de Fayed sufrió heridas de gravedad, pero se anticipa que sobrevivirá.

La portavoz dijo que Paul tenía experiencia como chofer y que había recibido

Siga en la página 3

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CAPRICORNIO: (dic. 22-ene. 20) Obtendrá un mensaje de Sagitario. Mezcle el humor con la profundidad -- haga saber que no se va a dejar intimidar.
ACUARIO: (ene. 21-feb. 19) La clave es perseverar, recrear y remover objetos dañinos de su hogar. Saldrá victorioso muy a pesar de los obstáculos.
PISCIS: (feb. 20-mar. 20) El énfasis estará en las palabras -- podrá salir de cualquier apuro si escribe. Le visitará algún familiar lejano.
ARIES: (mar. 21-abr. 20) La luz verde está en su vida. Existe la oportunidad de imprimir su estilo y obtener popularidad por algún concurso.
TAURO: (abr. 21-may. 21) Percibirá su potencial al máximo. Tratará con algún Leo. Cheque bien sus fuentes de información.
GEMINIS: (may. 22-jun. 21) Obtenga mayor información al leer el mensaje de Tauro. Alguna relación que involucra un corto viaje se transformará en una vacación.
CANCER: (jun. 22-jul. 23) La posición lunar acentúa reparaciones en el hogar y acuerdos con trabajadores. Habrá música en su hogar.
LEO: (jul. 24-ago. 23) Estudie el mensaje de Cáncer. Manténgase alejado de alguien que dice tener poderes místicos. Insista en la información clara.
VIRGO: (ago. 24-sep. 23) Algo que parecía estar perdido finalmente lo encontrará en su hogar. Enfóquese en la responsabilidad, las fechas límite y las inversiones en el futuro. Irradiará una aura de sensualidad y atracción sexual.
LIBRA: (sep. 24-oct. 23) Algunos dicen que usted puede predecir el futuro. En algunos aspectos, están en lo cierto. Acentúe el idioma y la habilidad de conquistar límites geográficos.
ESCORPION: (oct. 24-nov. 22) Dará un nuevo inicio. Embárguese en la aventura. Leo desempeñará un papel importante.
SAGITARIO: (nov. 23-dic. 21) Cuidese de los colores rosa y morado. Hable claro con familiares sobre asuntos de propiedad.

CAPRICORN: (Dec. 22-Jan. 20) You will obtain a message of Sagittarius. Mix the humor with profoundness-- let them know that you are not been going to be intimidated.
AQUARIUS: (Jan. 21-Feb. 19) The key is perseverance, recreate and remove harmful objects of your home. You will be victorious in spite of the obstacles.
PISCES: (Feb. 20-Mar. 20) The emphasis will be in the words--you will get out from any difficulty if you write. A distant relative will visit you.
ARIES: (Mar. 21-Apr. 20) The green light is in your life. The opportunity to print your style exists and to obtain popularity for a competition.
TAURUS: (Apr. 21-May. 21) You will perceive your potential to the maximum. You will deal with a Leo. Check well your sources of information.
GEMINIS: (May. 22-Jun. 21) Obtain more information upon reading the message of Taurus. Any relationship that involves a short trip will become a vacation.
CANCER: (Jun. 22-Jul. 23) The lunar position accentuates home repairs and agreements with workers. There will be music in your home.
LEO: (Jul. 24-Aug. 23) Study the message of Cancer. Stay away from someone who says to have mystic powers. Insist in clear information.
VIRGO: (Aug. 24-Sep. 23) Something that seemed to be lost finally will be found in your home. Focus in the responsibility, the deadlines and the future investments. You will glow a breeze of sensuality and sexual attraction.
LIBRA: (Sep. 24-Oct. 23) Some say that you can predict the future. In some aspects, they are right. Accentuate the language and the ability of conquering geographical limits.
SCORPION: (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) You will have a new beginning. Get aboard in adventure. Leo will play an important part.
SAGITTARIUS: (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Watch out of colors pink and purple. Speak clear with family members on property matters.

Viene de página 1

"500 Años de Historia Chicana," un libro lleno de fotos que ella usó el año previo.

Ambos, el documental y el libro han sido aprobados por el distrito escolar. Mientras que el distrito los juzgó apropiados, el material contiene algunas imágenes fuertes. Por ejemplo, en una sección del Alamo, el libro presenta referencias de David Crockett jactándose que freía sus papas con la gordura de los Mexicanos.

Patsy comenzó usando los materiales en su clase de Historia de Nuevo México del grado siete y en su clase de Inglés del grado 10 al 12. Nadine empezó usando la película en la clase de inglés del grado ocho y su clase de habilidades de vivir del grado 7 que rutinamente cubrió eventos al corriente como la SIDA, desórdenes alimenticios y los efectos de la violencia.

"Sentí como que estos estudiantes necesitaban algo que fuera estimulante para sus mentes," dijo Nadine.

Su hermana Patsy dijo: "Comienzas enseñando con

Beowulf and Shakespeare, no hay un alumno escuchándote. Esto (su programa) abre un gran número de ideas para discusión por los niños."

Nadine quien patrocinó a las porreras (cheerleaders) y al concilio estudiantil, también organizó un capítulo local de MEChA, un grupo estudiantil hispano de nivel national.

El problema siguió cuando en una reunión introductoria con los padres de familia, un estudiante alzó su puño y gritó, "¡Que Viva la Raza!"

"Y eso partió a nuestro pueblo," casi inmediatamente, Art Martinez comenzó a nivelar cargos de racismo contra las hermanas, aunque el grupo de estudiantes no hizo nada más que vender luminarias y leerle a los niños, dijo Nadine.

Las hermanas y sus abogados mantienen que la controversia fué parte de un conPvenido esfuerzo de echarlas fuera.

¿Y usted que piensa?

'Una Gran Cena para Septiembre 11

Reservaciones para "Una Gran Cena," en la Wesley Community Center de Amarillo con el fin de levantar fondos anuales, tiene como fecha límite el 9 de septiembre. La recepción anual de sopa de tortillas y comida será a las 7 p.m. el 11 de Septiembre en el centro, 1615 S. Roberts St., de acuerdo a las noticias. La noche también incluirá entretenimiento musical. Para más información, llame al 372-7960. El costo es \$25 por persona. El Dr. Gilberto Hinojosa, profesor de historia y decano del College of Arts and Sciences en la Universidad de Incarnate Word College en San Antonio, dará el discurso acerca de "El desenvolvimiento de la comunidad México-Americana."

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#2	TU Y YO	BRONCO	FONO VISA
#3	DESESPERADAMENTE ENAMORA	JORDI	FONO VISA
#4	ANILLO DE COMPROMISO	TENTACION	LMC
#5	MIENTE	ENRIQUE IGLESIAS	FONO VISA
#6	QUE SOLO ESTOY SIN TI	EL RECODO	FONO VISA
#7	ESTATUE DE MARFIL	VICENTE FERNANDEZ	SONY
#8	CHIQUILLA	CAMINANTES	LMC
#9	ACEPTA MI ERROR	TEMERARIOS	FONO VISA
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Teachers' authority over curriculum divides New Mexico community

School board objects to teachers' use of English classes to stress oppression of Chicanos

By Diane Brockett

To the Vaughn, N.M., school board, the issue is retaining control of the schools and what is taught there.

To teachers Nadine and Patsy Cordova, the issue is their right to teach students about the community's Chicano heritage.

When school officials challenged the teachers' instructional approach, Nadine Cordova filed a lawsuit against the district. The school board then fired both teachers. Patsy Cordova also is expected to sue.

The dispute has hit a nerve in Vaughn, where 90 percent of the 700 residents are Chicano. The case also is attracting national interest because of the issues it raises about the relative authority of school boards and teachers and about the emphasis schools should place on multicultural education and a community's ethnic heritage.

Both teachers grew up in Vaughn—Patsy was the district's senior teacher—and their cousin, Andy Cordova, was president of the local school board when the dispute erupted more than a year ago. Both sides agree that, until the dispute, the sisters were valued teachers in the small district, which only has 18 teachers.

Andy Cordova—re-elected to the board recently without opposition—is one of four individuals named in the suit, in addition to the school board itself. The other defendants are former board member Art Dunlap, former superintendent Art Martinez, and school district attorney Robert Castille.

Administrators had reprimanded the two teachers for using as the central theme in their English and Skills for Living classes the abuse of Chicanos by Anglo-Saxons throughout the history of the American Southwest. The board told the sisters to concentrate on the required curriculum.

The suit, filed by the New Mexico Civil Liberties Union, charges that the school district violated Nadine Cordova's First Amendment rights of

freedom of speech and association. She is seeking damages, reinstatement with full back pay, and an order to let her "discuss the subjects in her classroom that were banned in January 1997."

In her suit, Nadine Cordova says she integrated "teaching basic skills through the use of non-traditional subject matter" in order "to interest the students and thus motivate them to do the [course] work necessary."

The suit states the school board's charge that the sisters were "teaching racism" is an attempt to "prevent students from learning that Native American people were subjected to oppression and brutality during the Spanish conquest of the New World and . . . that minority groups, including Mexican-Americans, have continued to face discrimination from European-Americans, including those who came from Spain."

"That they want the court to order that Chicano views must be taught, instead of teaching English, boggles my mind," says Castille.

"Patsy and Nadine felt students were only getting the Anglo point of view [under the district's curriculum], and their students needed the Chicano view," says Andy Cordova. "That's well and good, but you don't put that point of view across by tearing down other races and doing it in your English classes."

He says that while the superintendent told the teachers to stop making the anti-Anglo viewpoint the heart of their courses and return to teaching English, Martinez also offered to work with them on creating a Chicano history class for next year. "But they refused."

"Teaching general philosophy is different from indoctrination and advocacy, and the school board felt they were doing the latter," adds attorney Jerry Waltz. He is representing the school board because its regular attorney, Castille, is also a defendant.

"But the real issue here," Waltz continues, "is whether the Cordova sisters were insubordinate or not. School boards have the right to set and review the curriculum, but that is somewhat a false issue in this case, put forward to take away the focus on insubordination."

Several observers suggest the conflict between the teachers and the school board reflects the underlying tensions in Vaughn between the 10 percent of the population whose ancestors came from the Basque area of Spain in the early 20th century and the rest of the community who are related to more recent immigrants from Mexico.

Richard Rosenstock, the teachers' attorney, says, "Those who like to think they came from Spain" don't want students to be taught New Mexico history that says "Spanish conquistadors murdered Indians and stole their lands. Is there another version of what happened?"

He also says the main critic of the Cordova teachers is Joe Vancente, who is related by marriage to Martinez and, along with Andy Cordova, is among the area's biggest ranchers.

Nadine and Patsy Cordova have included in their classes lessons on Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers movement, Rosenstock points out, and the two ranchers "employ agricultural workers, some of whom may not be U.S. citizens, at substandard wages."

The Cordova sisters say their most vocal detractors are Vaughn's more successful residents, including their cousin Andy, who prefer to see themselves as Spanish rather than Mexican. Andy Cordova, noting that he and his cousins share the same family blood, says, "I don't say I am European or Spanish. I'm an American."

He describes the teachers' actions as "very anti-American. They lifted up the United Farmworkers' flag while discouraging pledging allegiance to the U.S. flag."

The first issue before the court will be a motion to dismiss the suit against Castille on the grounds that he is being sued for giving legal advice to his client, the Vaughn school board. Castille says that if he is not excused, "this could have a very chilling effect on attorneys giving advice to school boards."

Rosenstock says, "it is clear Castille was involved in more than advising the board of its options," and sometimes acted against the teachers without board direction.

After being ordered by the board and superintendent to limit themselves to teaching English, the two teachers incorporated into their classes a "teaching for tolerance" project, produced by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Rosenstock describes the material as "designed to make students sensitive to racism."

Waltz says the teachers changed their courses "technically, but they were just circumventing the board's order, giving the same themes, the same message."

Both sides describe similar events, but put a vastly different spin on them. For instance, Castille says the school board was troubled by two student drawings hanging in Patsy Cordova's classroom.

One showed a rifle barrel aimed at a pop-eyed government official, with the outline: "Oye, Gringito! You're taking land!" The other, Castille says, depicted a comedian on stage, asking: "What do you call a million dead black people? Planet redecoration."

Patsy Cordova explained to the *Albuquerque Journal* that the drawings were from a *Newsweek* curriculum lesson on political cartoons. She says she told students to create their own cartoons "to teach them how to use irony to get their point across."

The two sides also differ on their descriptions of a first-day student assembly in August 1996, in which students spoke about their student organizations' goals for the year. One student talked about the new MEChA club being sponsored by Nadine Cordova, in which students would learn about the history and culture of Mexican-Americans and carry out community service projects.

More than 20 of the district's 68 middle and high school students were members of MEChA, which has clubs in many Southwestern schools, and Superintendent Martinez initially supported its formation.

The MEChA member, according to the suit, gave a brief talk, introduced the club's officers, and said five members were going to Washington,

D.C., to attend a Hispanic pride rally. Then, the suit continues, "in a show of pride, one student said 'Viva la Raza' and a few put their fists in the air."

Andy Cordova and Castille say the assembly scene was much more raucous than the court papers suggest, and they heard from a number of upset parents afterward.

Cordova says he met with the club soon afterward and said: "I didn't think it was a very positive thing they were doing to outwardly display aggression, putting the few Anglo students we have in a very uncomfortable position. It's fine kids want to learn about their history, but they shouldn't put down somebody else just to rise up themselves."

He also told the students the Washington, D.C., march "was clearly a political march," and state rules "don't allow spending school money for political purposes."

As tempers escalated in the coming days, the school district denied any further funding for MEChA and prohibited Nadine Cordova from including "the MEChA philosophy" in her classroom teaching.

The teacher answered that the direction was "extremely vague" and asked to be given specifics of "what she could not say in class, what topics could not be taught" and materials and teaching methods that couldn't be used.

Later, according to the suit, she received a letter from Castille and Martinez that she says "falsely accused [her] of introducing racially biased materials into her curriculum" to promote "racial intolerance and ordered her to change the curriculum." The letter also warned that if she did not "stop teaching racially divisive matters," she would be fired.

In doing so, the suit continues, the board failed to follow its own policy of having a committee of three professionals review a teacher's classroom materials that were of concern.

Nadine and Patsy Cordova were suspended with pay in late February and terminated July 7 by a school board vote of 3-2. Andy Cordova says a number of students were unhappy but other teachers, who publicly had kept quiet, "showed up and applauded when we announced the termination." ■



Nadine Cordova



Andy Cordova



Patsy Cordova

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POLITICAL
CARTOON**

C O M P A S

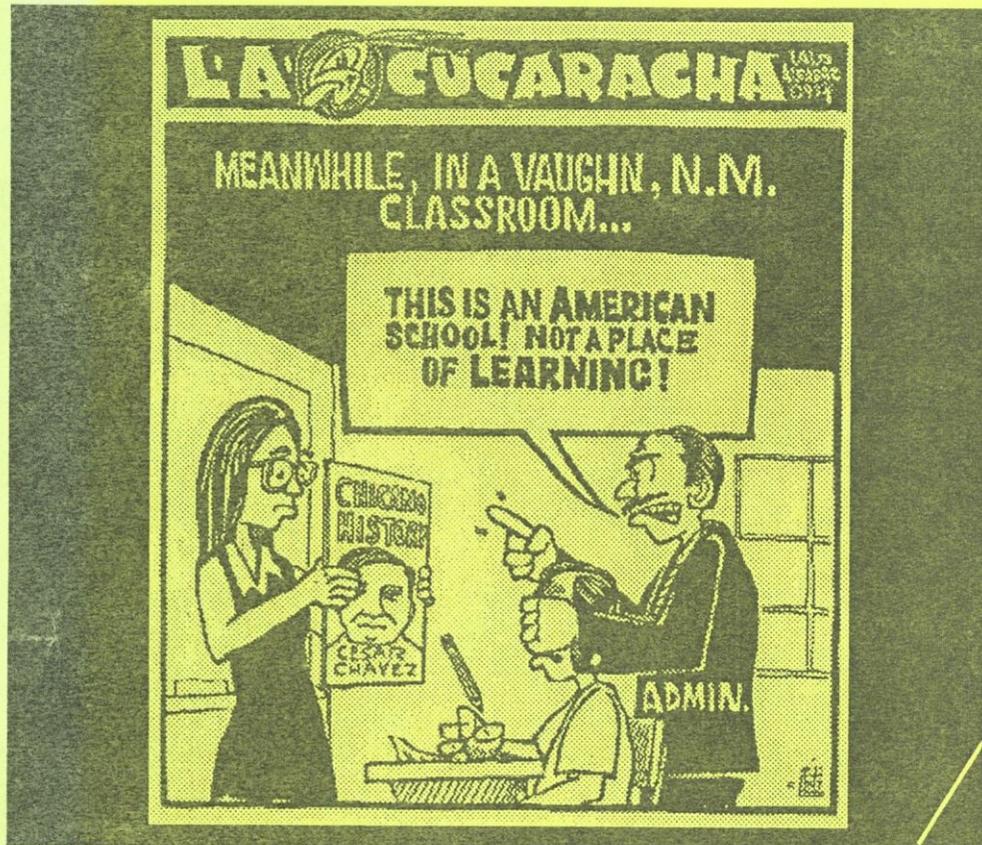
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S W O P

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P r e s e n t



Nadine & Patsy
Córdova

Meet the high school teachers from Vaughn, New Mexico who were suspended and banned from teaching Chicana/o Studies.

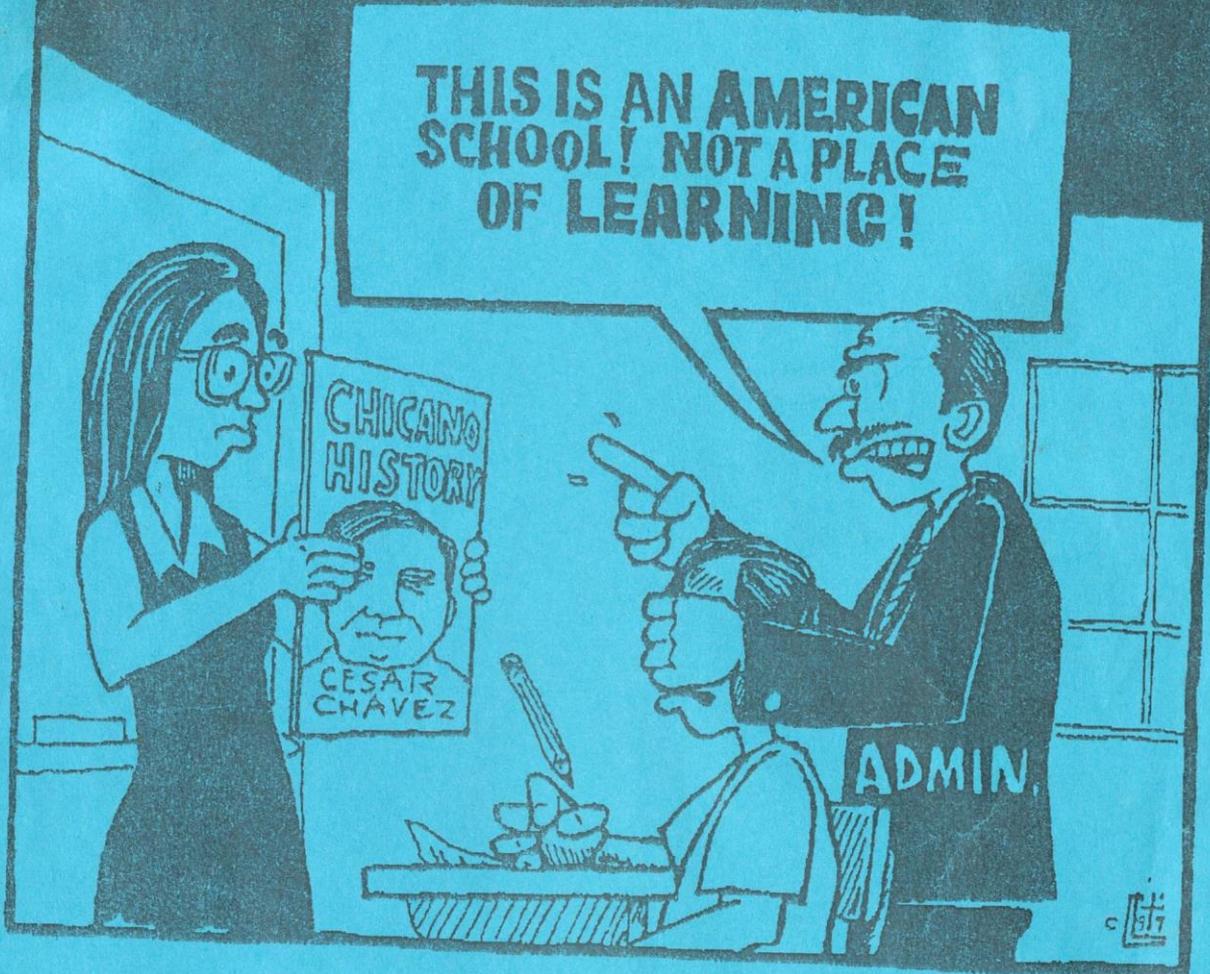
Come hear the details and how you can help!

The National Association For Chicana and Chicano Studies

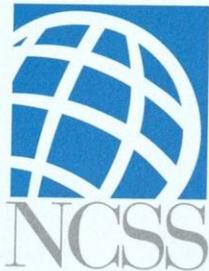
Saturday, April 19, 1997 • Radisson Hotel Room 307 • 12:55 p.m. - 2 p.m.

MEANWHILE, IN A VAUGHN, N.M. CLASSROOM...

THIS IS AN AMERICAN SCHOOL! NOT A PLACE OF LEARNING!



AWARDS



National Council for the
Social Studies
3501 Newark Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016-3167
202 966-7840
202 966-2061 fax
www.ncss.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1999

Contact: Janet Lieberman, 202/966-7840, ext. 113

**Patsy and Nadine Córdova Will Receive
1999 Defense of Academic Freedom Award**

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has selected Patsy and Nadine Córdova as recipients of the 1999 Defense of Academic Freedom Award. The two teachers were fired for using curricula focusing on Chicano studies and racial tolerance. The Córdova sisters will receive the award as part of the 79th NCSS Annual Conference, *Defining the Common Good: A Challenge for the 21st Century*, which will be held in Orlando, Florida, from November 19-21, 1999. The award will be presented at a reception on Saturday evening, November 20.

Sponsored by SIRS Mandarin, Inc., the Defense of Academic Freedom Award is designed to recognize and honor those who have distinguished themselves in defending the principles of academic freedom in specific controversies, in fostering academic freedom through advocacy, and in defending or advocating the freedom to teach and learn.

Nadine and Patsy Córdova were born and raised in the small community of Vaughn, New Mexico, about 100 miles east of Albuquerque. Patsy Córdova went on to receive a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish and physical education from Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She received her endorsements in bilingual education and English from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Nadine Córdova received a bachelor of science degree in elementary and special education from Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. She also studied business administration at Highlands University for two years.

Nadine and Patsy Córdova then returned to their community and established their teaching careers of 12 and 23 years, respectively. Both received outstanding evaluations for their work at the 65-student Vaughn Junior-Senior High School in Vaughn. Patsy taught 7th grade history and 10th, 11th, and 12th grade language arts, and also was head teacher at the school, which has no principal. Nadine taught 7th grade math, 7th grade "Skills for Living," 8th grade language arts, and drama. Nadine also sponsored the school's MEChA club. MEChA, which stands for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, is a national Chicano student organization. Nearly 100 percent of the school's student population is Chicano or Mexican American.

More

Defense of Academic Freedom Award - p. 2

On February 28, 1997, Nadine and Patsy Córdova were suspended with pay by the superintendent for alleged insubordination. Earlier, the superintendent had ordered them to stop sponsoring the school's MEChA club and stop using Chicano history education materials, which he viewed as divisive and racist. The sisters complied with the order. The sisters began to use materials from a curriculum package, "The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in America," published by Teaching Tolerance of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Córdova sisters were then called to meet with the school board to address the issue, and within days, they were suspended.

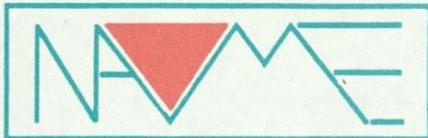
On July 7, 1997, three of the five school board members voted to fire Nadine and Patsy Córdova. With legal assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union, the teachers sued the Vaughn school district for violation of their First Amendment rights. In November of 1998, the school district settled out of court for \$520,000. As part of the settlement, the teachers' personnel files have been purged of negative references relating to the case, and the sisters are free to speak about the case.

Since their suspension, Nadine and Patsy have traveled throughout the United States to tell their story at several colleges and universities and in several cities. The Córdova sisters also have received the following awards: Guardian of the Constitution Award from the New Mexico Civil Liberties Union; Pilgrimage for Peace Award from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Multicultural Educators of the Year Award from the National Association for Multicultural Education; and Albuquerque Human Rights Board Special Recognition Award from the Albuquerque Civil Rights Office.

Patsy recently retired from teaching, and Nadine is currently employed as an administrative assistant for the Chicano Studies Program at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Both sisters currently reside in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

National Council for the Social Studies was founded in 1921 and has grown into the largest membership association in the country for social studies professionals, with 25,000 members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 69 foreign countries.

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**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR
MULTICULTURAL
EDUCATION**

1511 K Street, NW, Suite 430
Washington, DC 20005
202-628-NAME

October 5, 1998

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Ms. Patsy Cordova
6900 Welton NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Dear Patsy:

It is with great pleasure that I write to inform you that you have been selected to receive the 1998 Multicultural Educator Award from The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME). NAME recognizes the commitment and professionalism you and your sister, Nadine, have demonstrated in designing and teaching multicultural curriculum in a way that fosters critical thinking and the development of multicultural perspectives in students. You both have been willing to stand up for what you believe and to do what is best for students.

The award will be presented at the President's Banquet during the annual conference of NAME. This event will take place on Saturday, October 19, 1998 at 7:30 pm. at the Regal Riverfront Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. We invite you to be our guest at the banquet. Please let me know if you will be able to receive the award (or if you will designate a representative to receive it) so that I may make the arrangements. I can be reached at (518) 459-7354 or (518) 454-5176.

Congratulations from the Board of Directors of NAME and from all of our membership! We are honored to recognize your commitment to students and to multicultural curriculum and we wish you the best as you continue your educational pursuits.

Sincerely,

Maureen D. Gillette, Ph.D.

Secretary, National Association for Multicultural Education

**UFW STUDENT ART POEM AND
RESPONSE LETTERS**



**Living through the struggles everyday
Hoping to find a better way
Through all the pain and hardships
One man struggles to end all the pain
With hardly nothing but pride gained
They all got together to form a symbol
Representing the struggle
With this flag we understand
Red is the bloodshed by those who struggled
White is for the hope we have
Black is for the one's who suffered
To bad violence had to end this movement**

April 15, 1997

Dear Nadine & Patsy,

Forgive me for taking so long to get these letters from my students to you, and for not writing sooner to personally thank you for visiting our classroom. I've heard from those who attended the MEChA Conference that you found a lot of support, and that your students enjoyed being in a more accepting (and liberal) environment. We hope you'll have an opportunity to return to AHS.

one of the reasons I was out of town for the MEChA Conference weekend was because I had some job interviews at the University of Northern Colorado — in Greeley, Colorado. The interviews went well enough that I thought I would take the steps needed to leave Albuquerque; I've given notice, and am hoping to sell my house this spring.

I wanted to let you know this, in case you're interested in applying for my position in the AHS Gifted Program. One of my concerns is recruiting and keeping Gifted kids of color in the program through high school — so that their needs can be met thru independent study, mentorship, and our smaller classes — and also because I feel it is important that they have someone to help them w/ scholarship opportunities and the application process for out of state colleges and universities. I'm going to miss my high school students, but I hope whoever takes over for me will enjoy this job as much as I have.

The other reason I am writing is to offer to "pay back" your visit to my classroom with a visit of my own — if you are reinstated before the school year ends. I am a published writer, and have taught writing workshops to all ages, as well as doing "readings" of my poetry and short fiction, and I have talked to students + teachers about the writing/publishing process.

I'm enclosing a couple of anthologies which contain some of my work.

If you do return to the schools before I leave for Colorado, please give me a call — and we can arrange a time that will work with all of our schedules. If that doesn't work out, I hope we'll still be in touch. Who knows? Maybe I can figure out a way to bring you out to a MECHA conference in Greeley!

Again, Thank you so much for all the inspiration you've given me and my students. I hope that the future brings you reward and resolution for your hard work!!

Yours in strength & struggle,

Marie-Elise Wheatwind

(505) 344-7570