

Chicano Studies and the Chicano Intellectual



**Chicano
Studies
and the
Chicano
Intellectual**

Chicano Studies and the Chicano Intellectual



1969 Third World strike at SF State College was the longest student strike in U.S. history, and it won many important programs, including Third World Studies.

© 1985
Published in the United States by
Getting Together Publications
P.O. Box 29293, Oakland, CA 94604
All rights reserved.



A crisis is brewing on the college campuses for Chicano students and faculty, one that threatens the future and direction of Chicano Studies. Over the past two years, I have watched friends rejected for tenure by their departments or universities at campuses like Stanford, and the University of California at Santa Barbara, Berkeley and Davis.

The official explanation varies, but at the crux of the matter is that the universities do not want progressive Chicano faculty. As Carlos Muñoz, Chicano Studies faculty member at UC Berkeley, told me, "It's the 1950s all over again. McCarthyism is alive and well. They aren't just going after 'leftists.' They want to get rid of anybody left of center, and Chicanos are the first to go. All they want is a few tokens on campus that will agree with them politically."

University administrators criticize Chicano scholars as "inferior" and "unobjective," while right-wing scholars receive no such criticism for slandering Chicano culture and history. Chicano intellectuals are denied tenure for not publishing enough in journals of their academic discipline — yet these journals seldom accept articles by and about Chicanos.

Part-timers are fired. Chicano Studies classes are shifted to "regular" departments like history or political science, or else they are merged with other programs such as at UC San Diego, where Chicano Studies was recently absorbed into "Border Studies."

Under the guise of academic criticism, these attacks are really political. The attacks are aimed at intimidating Chicano intellectuals from doing work which benefits the Chicano people (anything too "relevant" is automatically academically suspect for not being "rigorous" and "objective" enough). This cuts off Chicano intellectuals from the Chicano community

Today students on many campuses are defending Ethnic Studies and gains won over the past 20 years. UNITY PHOTO

(merging Chicano Studies into more "respectable" departments like anthropology and border studies) and weakens Chicano Studies by isolating it from other Third World Studies (splitting Chicano Studies from Black Studies).

How to fight these attacks

Chicano intellectuals can take one of two approaches to deal with these attacks. One path would be to try to become more academic, more "qualified," along the lines the university is demanding. This means being less active in the Chicano Movement, less radical, less willing to rock the boat. Some Chicano faculty see this as the safest way to keep their jobs given the growing conservatism.

However, this is where Chicano scholars must look back and recall where their jobs and Chicano Studies itself came from. Past experience has shown that the only effective way to fight is by linking up with students and community, as part of the Chicano Movement.

Chicano Studies was won only through the massive Third World student-community strikes and struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It had to be forced down the throats of the universities, with Chicano faculty to teach Chicano Studies. Many of these younger faculty came out of the student movement and were the sons and daughters of farm workers and steel workers. As Muñoz told me, "We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the '60s, and we can't forget that."

The movement had a revolutionary outlook, which exposed the very role of the universities as racist institutions, fundamentally opposed to the interests of the Chicano people. The movement said no to university research for weapons to be used against third world peoples fighting for their liberation. Chicano students and faculty protested the use of university

funds to develop tomato harvesters for agribusiness capitalists, who wanted to use this equipment to break the strikes of the United Farm Workers union.

In this early period, Chicano Studies challenged the orthodox, racist views of Chicano history. Journals like *El Grito* and *Aztlán* carried articles by Chicano scholars written from the perspective of an oppressed people. These writings hit at the lies of bourgeois social science which still blame poverty on the "defects" of Chicano culture, and many articles pointed to capitalism and imperialism as the source of Chicano oppression. Chicano intellectuals also aided community groups, such as in helping to develop studies to stop urban renewal projects aimed at destroying the Chicano communities.

Serve the Chicano Movement

Today, there is still a crying need for more research and theoretical work which draws its inspiration from the lives of the Chicano people and serves the Chicano Movement. Articles are needed exposing the national oppression of the Chicano people, and highlighting and analyzing the people's resistance. We need studies on everything from Chicano voting, land and immigration rights, to health and living conditions of Chicanos in the rural and urban areas. But to do this, Chicano intellectuals must consciously view themselves as being on the side of the masses, and must put their skills at the service of the struggle for democracy and liberation.

In turn, the Chicano Movement must value its intellectuals. Mass struggle involving students, faculty and community must intensify to defend Chicano Studies and secure the jobs of progressive Chicano faculty. Recently, Chicano students joined Black and Asian students and progressive faculty in opposing a move by the San Diego community colleges to eliminate Ethnic Studies. Similar struggles have taken

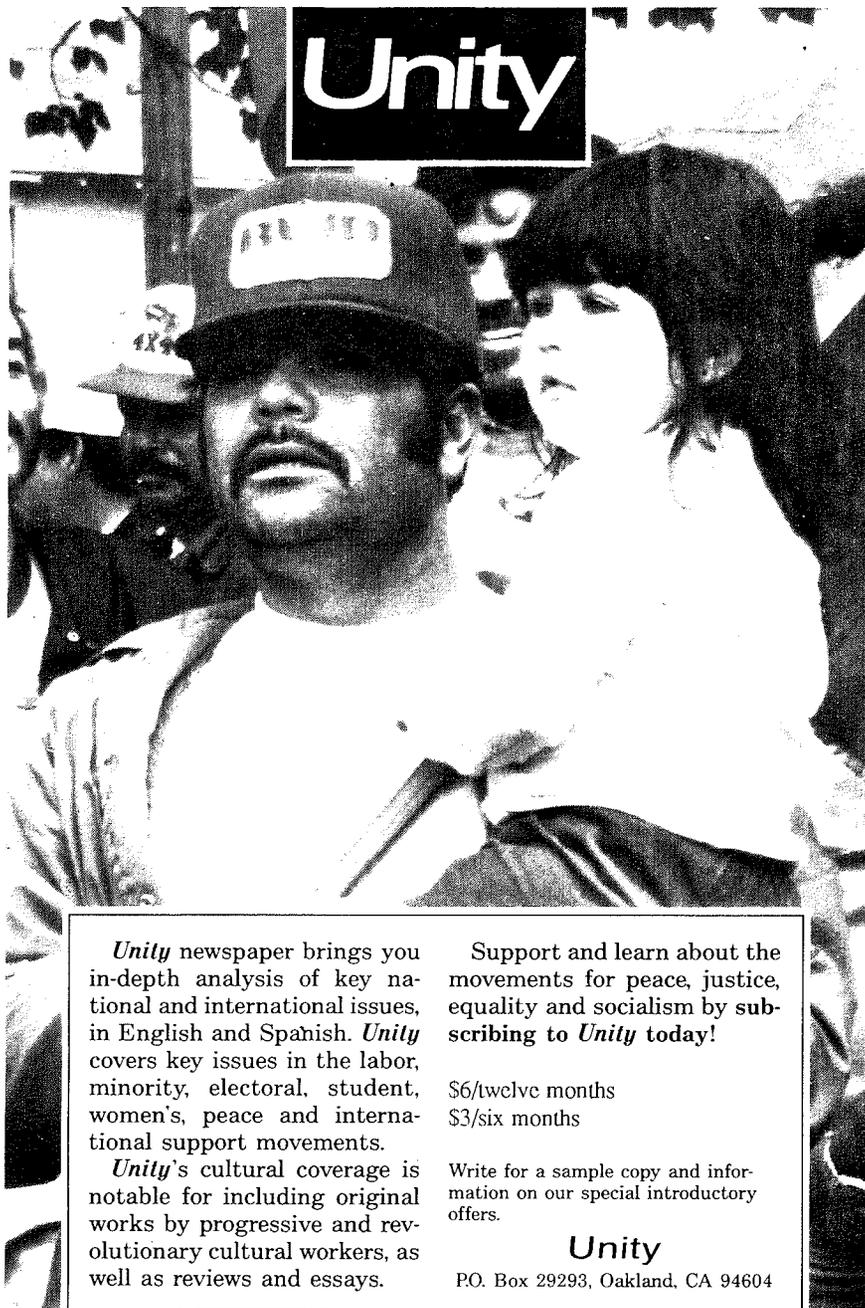


place at the California State University at Long Beach.

Groups like the National Association for Chicano Studies (NACS) are important in this context, because they provide a natural network for organizing mutual support among Chicano faculty. The theme of the 1985 NACS conference was "Chicano Politics After 1984." It involved groups such as the Latino Agenda Coalition, the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project and the Rainbow Coalition. This can help link faculty, graduate students and community activists, and help build the unity of the Chicano Movement.

As Chicano intellectuals, we owe much to the movement, and it is in our interests that the Chicano Movement grows strong and powerful. There is a saying from the early 1970s which is still appropriate today: "*Luchar es aprender. Aprender para luchar.*" (To struggle is to learn. Learn in order to struggle.)





Unity

Unity newspaper brings you in-depth analysis of key national and international issues, in English and Spanish. *Unity* covers key issues in the labor, minority, electoral, student, women's, peace and international support movements.

Unity's cultural coverage is notable for including original works by progressive and revolutionary cultural workers, as well as reviews and essays.

Support and learn about the movements for peace, justice, equality and socialism by **subscribing to *Unity* today!**

\$6/twelve months
\$3/six months

Write for a sample copy and information on our special introductory offers.

Unity

P.O. Box 29293, Oakland, CA 94604

ADELANTE!

A slide show history of the Chicano Nation — Aztlán

Without a doubt **ADELANTE!** is the best documentary that I have seen on the Chicano experience. It is very well documented from pre-Colombian times to the present. It's enlightening to see the Chicano struggle for self-determination and for political power presented in a very objective manner. . . .

Oscar Somoza

Professor of Chicano Literature, University of Denver

This 40-minute slide show/narrative has over 350 slides. The narrative cassette tape is available in English or Spanish and includes music from the Chicano Nation. Also available in video cassette (VHS).

For sale or rental information, write P.O. Box 29293, Oakland, CA 94604



Education is a right not a privilege

*Bilingual and cultural programs
financial assistance • Central America
immigration • self-determination*

*In five articles this new pamphlet
hits the key issues facing
Chicano students. Featuring:*

**A Program of Struggle for Chicano Students
by the League of Revolutionary Struggle**

For a copy of *Education is a right not a privilege* send

\$1 plus \$1 shipping to: P.O. Box 29293, Oakland, CA 94604