

Spring 2012

Spring 2012 Newsletter

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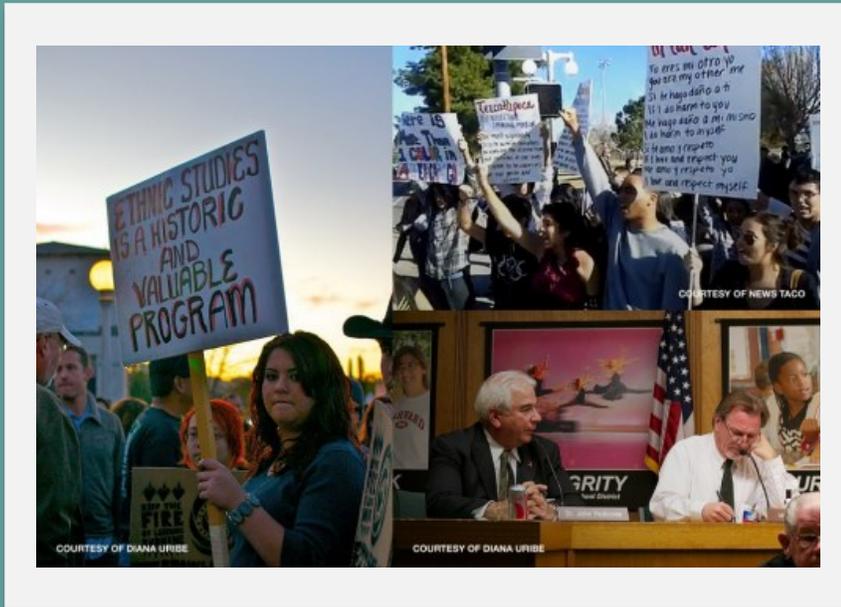
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XICANA/O GRADUATE COUNCIL

San José State University



POLITICS AND COMUNIDAD

Photo retrieved from: <http://rethinkingschoolsblog.wordpress.com/2012/02/01/no-history-is-illegal-campaign-pledge-to-support-tucson/>

IN SUPPORT OF ETHNIC STUDIES

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours.”
-César Chávez

As members of the Xicana/o Graduate Council at San José State University, we stand with those in protest of Tucson Unified School District’s banning of the Mexican American Studies program and its curriculum. As students, we recognize the importance of a Mexican American Studies program and other autonomous, social justice based programs that explore and address issues and histories of marginalized, disenfranchised, and often forgotten communities.

We commend and applaud the efforts led by students, educators, and community members who continue the struggle to regain autonomy over the Mexican American Studies program. We stand in solidarity with the students,

educators, and community members that continue to fight for their fundamental rights to equitable education through non-violent means such as protesting, walk outs, and participation in community teach-ins. These efforts speak to the resilience of the community’s spirit and commitment to social justice and demonstrate that knowledge production happens everywhere; it is not solely limited to institutionalized forms.

We will continue our support, and stand with our brothers and sisters in Arizona, as we understand that their struggle is our struggle.

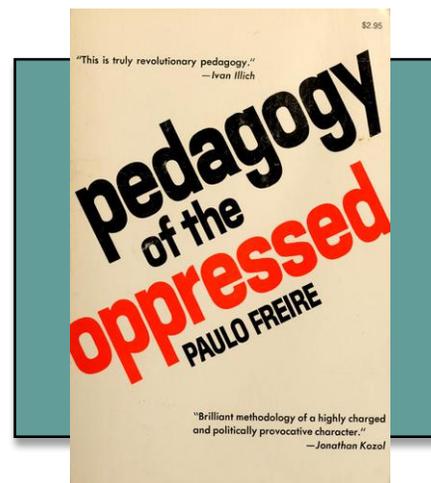
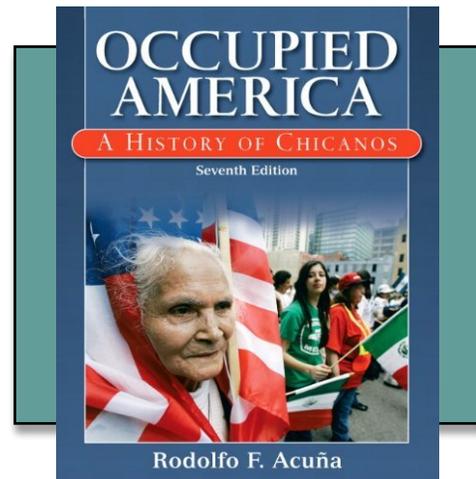
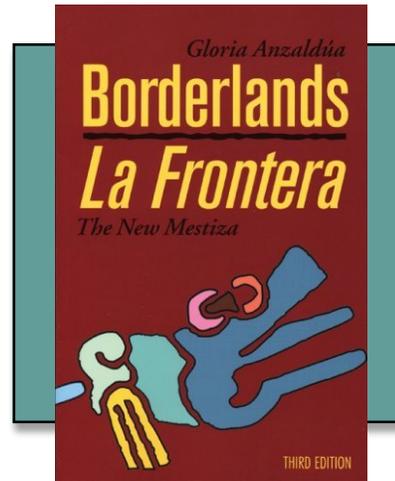
In solidarity,

XGC at San José State University

LETRAS Y MACANAS
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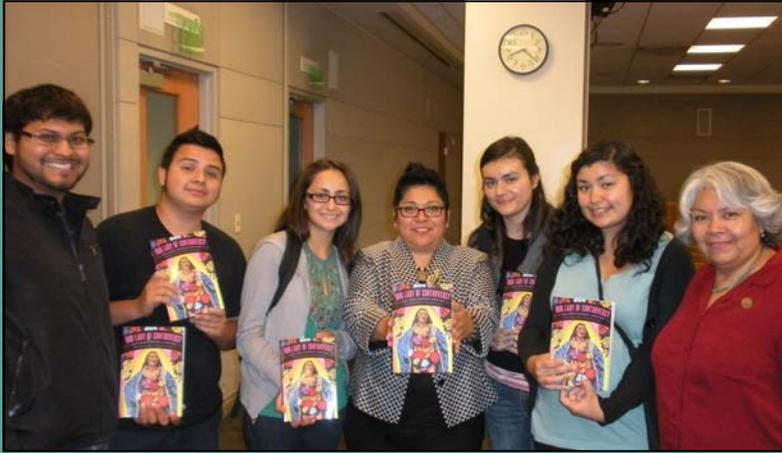
LIST OF BANNED BOOKS

Chicano! The History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement, by Arturo Rosales
Critical Race Theory, by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic
500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures, edited by Elizabeth Martinez
Message to Aztlan, by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales
Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, by Rodolfo Acuña
Pedagogy of the Oppressed, by Paulo Freire
Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years, edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson.
Rodolfo Anaya, The Anaya Reader
Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands
Sherman Alexie, The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven
Jimmy Santiago Baca, A Place to Stand, and five other books by him.
James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time
Ana Castillo, Loverboys and So Far From God
Cesar Chavez, Address to the Commonwealth Club of California
Sandra Cisneros, Woman Hollering Creek
Junot Diaz, Drown
Martín Espada, Zapata's Disciple
Laura Esquivel, Like Water for Chocolate
Bell Hooks, Feminism Is for Everybody
Dagoberto Gilb, The Magic of Blood
Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities
Luis Rodriguez, Always Running
Roberto Rodriguez, Justice: A Question of Race
Luis Alberto Urrea, By the Lake of Sleeping Children and Nobody's Son
Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States



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GUADALUPE, LUPE, LUPITA by Malena Hernández



From left to right: Roberto Reyna, Raul Navarro, Melena Hernández, Alma Lopez, Ivy Torres, Maribel Gómez, Prof. Curry-Rodríguez

El doce de diciembre was one of the few days my mother allowed us to miss school. We would wake up en la madrugada, go to the peregrinación, participate in the obra de la aparición, and then help serve free menudo and pan dulce to hundreds of people after las mañanitas. My sister Conchita took the obra to Saint Mary's College her freshman year and started a tradition that after 7 years still remains. It was these traditions that I found

Contradictions are almost inevitable; and that is the home I grew up in. I was raised by a devout Catholic mother, and an anti-religion, atheist father. Both my parents held very strong and outspoken opinions regarding the Catholic Church. For my mother, it was a sense of community and of belonging; a place where she shared with others her deepest beliefs. My father found it to be an oppressive institution that brainwashed people in order to enriquecer those already in power. Yet I was raised in a town where my only extended family was the Latinos at Church. I loved going to misa and staying afterwards eating elotes and churros with my "cousins" while my mother chatted with her best friends. I remember that I could not wait to do my first communion in order to become an acolyte, (not to be confused with *alcoholica*). Being Catholic was core to my understanding of social justice, especially living in a country where we were immigrants too.

Much changed when I went off to college. It was during the car rides home with my father and sister, in my anthropology courses, and taking history classes with my madrina Myrna Santiago that I became more critical of what I assumed to be "the Truth". By the time I was a senior in college I no longer shared my mother's beliefs regarding the Church, as I realized that social justice and community were truly the foundation of her enseñanzas. However my senior year I co-chaired the "Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrations". La Virgen was part of my personal and collective history. I did it because of my Mexican tradition, the connection I felt to La Virgen, and some of the fondest memories I had as a child.

important to continue, especially at a private Catholic University where, as a low-income immigrant woman of color, I had to continuously fight to demonstrate that my presence was more than rhetoric in an advertisement pamphlet. Yet leading this celebration did not come without its contradictions. I too thought of the Catholic Church in a similar way my father did. Yet la Virgen is one of the most important people in Mexico, and as a feminist I was proud she was a she. To the women in my family she was never submissive, but instead a strong woman in action defending her pueblo, contradictory to many other feminist's experiences. All these contradictions were inseparable to the emotions I had towards this image, and continued into my 1st semester of my Masters program in MAS at SJSU.

Last semester Alma Lopez came to San Jose State to present her book "Our Lady of Controversy". It was then that these contradictions no longer felt as a struggle. Alma Lopez focused on La Virgen de Guadalupe as a revolutionary figure. This was nothing new (I thought) as I knew the importance of her image in Mexico's revolutions. Yet, as Alma Lopez presented la Virgen de Guadalupe, she made me realize La Virgen's origins are more revolutionary than many of us believe.

(Continued on page 16, **Guadalupe**)

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A *JOTO* IN ACADEMIA by Jaime Barajas Hernandez

As an educator, I want to enhance my tools to best serve the needs of my community. I am interested in pursuing a Master's in Mexican American Studies because it is the first step towards my goal of one day being a Professor and publishing works about systems that promote higher education to first generation college students. I am interested in studying Chicanos within the educational system. I would like to find ways of addressing issues of the gentrification of marginalized communities and learn to create sustainable educational practices that promote education as an avenue for success.

I currently work at East Palo Alto Phoenix Academy (EPAPA), a public charter school that was opened 6 years ago. The City of East Palo Alto has not had a public high school since the early seventies causing students here to be bussed out to the nearest high school. This, I believe, has had a huge effect on the community itself. The high school dropout rate in East Palo Alto (EPA) has risen to approximately seventy percent. This is heart breaking because most of the people who live in EPA are of Latino, Pacific Islander or of African American decent. Conversely, just west of EPA is Palo Alto, which is home to Stanford University, one of the leading institutions in higher education.

I am honored to be a part of the Aspire's Phoenix Academy where I am working to change the statistic here in East Palo Alto. Our school is about ninety-seven percent Latino, most of whom will be first generation college students. I work daily to bridge the educational gap and provide opportunities for youth that come from marginalized communities such as the one I work in. All of our first graduating class had an acceptance letter from a four year college. I started off being a proctor to college classes offered on site for our student's rigorous academic electives. Slowly, I started pushing in to help our English 1 teacher with our largest class of students at the time. We ensured that every graduating student has the opportunity to take all A-G requirements needed to attend any University of California or California State University.

I am a big believer in using education to progress as a society and because so, I call myself a promoter of higher education. I was just as eager and clueless about the world as most of my teenage students, and though I feel I still have a lot to learn, working at EPAPA has

changed my work ethic in order to challenge the negative stigma East Palo Alto has and to create a college going culture. Like my students, I too am creating a new path for myself. I have established the systems needed to support our early college success program. Pursuing a Master's in Mexican American Studies will allow me to look at theory and apply it in the community that I already work in while continuing to support my community by sharing the knowledge I already know (whether that is Calculus or how to write a five paragraph essay). With the acceptance of my professional persona I have developed the courage to accept my flaws and work towards being the best that I can be.

I thrive on new challenges and for a while I had a fixed mindset about what I could accomplish. I was limiting myself because of fear of failure rather than the acknowledgement that I have room for improvement. The year after being Director of University Affairs, I received the Cuauhtemoc Award from MEChA Spring 2007 and since then, I have lived by the quote, "Against all odds, *siempre mi gente primero*." I do believe education is key in bridging gaps set in place by ignorance. I still have both the binders from my first two Chicano Studies classes. On the top of my syllabus of my Intro to Chicano Studies course I wrote, "UCSB here I come!" After Dr. Lopez, our Professor mentioned it was the only university in California that offered a PhD in Chicano Studies. I aspire to be a Professor at the University level but for now I know taking graduate level classes is the first step in making my dream a reality.

I am a proud member of the Fall 2011 cohort of students for the Master's in Mexican American Studies. I will bring my expertise in providing support for first generation college students, a perspective that is crucial in making a queer Chicano like myself confident in an unknown world like academia.

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OUR STRUGGLE

by Luis Xacon



“The movement is growing, more people are coming in, we are getting to know people that we did not know before.” –Subcomandante Marcos

I am a young organizer and activist; physically and mentally. Yet, one issue that I have quickly realized as I engage in a struggle for justice, peace, and dignity, is that the struggle can undeniably, at times be detrimentally and unfortunately exclusive. Don't get me wrong, not all organizing spaces that I have encountered have been exclusive. And by exclusivity, I do not mean that there are membership fees, applications, or that you will be outright denied entry into a space. What I mean by exclusivity is that there are definitely spaces where permission has to be granted before entry and a person must be allowed to enter. Although a strong argument can be made for the asking and granting of permission, I strongly feel that the only way to fight and have a chance at bringing about legitimate change is by welcoming folks to learn and work with each other. It's especially important for youngsters to learn about this struggle, learn about what we may already be doing, and learn about where we can go and how we can get there. As an exaggerated example I offer this: I would be against bringing in a member of the FBI into an organizing space; yet, I would more than welcome a fellow *hermana* or *hermano*—new to the struggle or not—if I know that they will be committed to what I am committed to even if we are not in the same place intellectually.

Further, for an organizing space or group to be exclusive is not only detrimental but dangerous in the fight against the state. This exclusivity, unfortunately, also reaches beyond membership and the allowing of new people into a space. This exclusivity is also evident

and prevalent within groups, where sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, and other prejudicial, judgmental, and ignorant ways of thinking may arise.

One important and perhaps even more dangerous form of exclusivity is practiced by those that put up a front. I have been guilty of this. There are many of us that do not practice what we preach. We call for the respect and dignity of Womyn, the LGBTQIA community, all people of color, the poor, and all those that are indignified by society. Yet, behind closed doors, and sometimes out in the open, we do not question any privilege we may have; we do not always question our practice, benefit, and engagement in patriarchy; we do not always question our engagement and benefit in heterosexual privilege; we do not always question our engagement and benefit in white privilege (including being a light skinned person of color). We may definitely question these things in the public eye, and to a certain extent within internal dialogue. Yet, when a “joke” or “comment” is made, or an idea shared, whether it be to a person that “understands what we mean” or whether it be to an auditorium full of people—the idea and consideration that we are in solidarity with all that are oppressed, is shattered.

We are at war. We continue to organize and fight every single day. Some of us by engaging in simple dialogue, others by organizing communities, others by sharing knowledge, others simply by remaining alive, and many others in many different ways. Yet, if we are not true to ourselves, true to the struggle, and true to our *comunidad*—through physical and mental inclusion—any talk, discussion, and perception of creating a dignified world is washed away. We must create an open and transparent space in our activism and work towards a just and dignified world. We must understand that struggle is not exclusive. We all have a right to engage—we must all engage. If one person is denied that right, either through not being allowed in a space, or being put off by oppressive and repressive attitudes and language, then our purpose is defeated.

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XICANA/O COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY: THEORIZING AN AGENDA

by Robert M. Gutierrez

“I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me” (hooks, 1994, p. 59).

Like bell hooks in the quotation above, I felt a pain within my own brown body so intense that I could not go on living; I was desperat(ly) grasping to comprehend my experience in the classroom. Tired of hearing too many stories (dis)like my own, my response was a paradigmatic turn to queer Xicana feminism and subsequently to a theory of communication as Art. Like a *nagual* (shapeshifter), I transformed. Communication as Art is a metaphor rooted in communication theory as a *techné* (Sterne, 2006) and as a performance (Calafell, 2007). When utilized in the classroom, this approach bridges the supposedly-safe classroom to the embodied experience of the everyday laborer. For example, many teachers complain about the sterile white walls that unconsciously aids the process of indoctrination; however, I look at these walls and see hours of painstaking labor—every careful stroke—do you think it was easy to create this work of Art, whose working class hands labored for years to perfect this skill? By emphasizing our interconnectedness as intellectuals and artists, we begin acknowledging the marginalized and supposedly missing bodies that are in fact, already and always, part of the classroom experience. This autobiographical performance and performative writing envisions a merging of Xicana/o studies, pedagogy, and advocacy as a political agenda for Xicana/o Communication Pedagogy.

A Xicana/o Communication Pedagogy (XCP) must begin with an understanding that the status quo of the education system in the United States fails Chicana/o and Latina/o bodies. By Xicana/o, I am referring to those that identify with this political affiliation and/or anyone in close alliance to this identity (Moraga, 2011, p. xxi). Historically, the classroom is a place of violence for Xicanos. By violence, I am referring to the myriad of stories whispered from one generation to the next, concerning physical and psychological punishment for speaking Spanish or appearing brown in the classroom. Or, in other words, “a university education in the United States is more than an education for an intellectual specialization; it is also ritual US assimilation (Moreman & Persona Non Grata, 2011, p. 309). Within the Latina/o community, there are too many statistics

that outline the disparities in high school drop out rates and lack of higher educational achievement (Fry, 2010; Lopez, 2009). Even within the discipline of Communication Studies, Latina/o scholars have utilized their own lonely experiences within graduate school and as professors to theorize the contours of brownness in higher education (Calafell, 2007; Calafell and Moreman, 2009; Delgado, 2009; Moreira & Diversi, 2011; Moreman and Persona Non Grata, 2011). Therefore, any mapping out of an XCP needs to begin with a radical rethinking of theory and praxis in the classroom because the stakes are real—for the author as well.

When I walk across campus to teach my two public speaking classes, my heart races and pangs flutter across my body as I transform into a teacher. As a shaman, I would be called a *nagual* or shapeshifter, and my transformations into teacher would take the form of an animal that was spiritually-linked to me from birth. Oftentimes, I write of transformations into a fish, but lately, I’ve transformed into something beyond my control—a mentor. However, when faced with the faces of the next generation of Latina/os, how can we honestly repeat the same mantra that the previous generation said to us? Isn’t it a lie? Anzaldúa (2010) claims that “in our self-reflexivity and in our active participation with the issues that confront us, whether it be through writing, front-line activism, or individual self-development, we are also uncovering the interfaces, the very spaces and places where our multiple-surfaced, colored, racially gendered bodies intersect and interconnect” (p. 125). If I approach the classroom fully focused on the real-life issues confronting my students, then perhaps together we can understand the classroom as a different space. A space for social justice as spirituality. As healing? Using metaphors in the tradition of the shaman, I will continue to weave my poem-writings into my scholarly thought and teaching to heal the spaces and places I find myself. How will I transform?

(Continued on page 16, **Theorizing an Agenda**)

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THE NEW XGC LOGO by Raúl Navarro



The Xicana/o Graduate Council at San Jose State University has been constantly changing since its initial days as the Mexican American Studies Graduate Association for Students [MASGAS]. This year, the Xicana/o Graduate Council's membership decided to update its logo to something that would be more representative of

the group. We came up with this new logo based on suggestions that we then attempted to incorporate into a centralized image. Although much has changed in this version, some aspects of the previous design have been kept. The original "Letras y Macanas" slogan remains at the center of the circle with an "X" composed of a

pencil in reference to "letras," or our academic work, and a macuahuitl, or "macana" to denote our people's resistance over the centuries that continues for many in the educational system. Currently, the version seen above is very *rascuache* and still needs

some revisions here and there but we just wanted to take the opportunity to showcase our latest work through this newsletter.

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? by Isidoro Guzman

It has been almost two years since an intense feeling that San José and the Bay was where I needed to be, propelled me to make my move north from southern Califas. San José has provided me with a space where like-minded people have facilitated my intellectual growth and understating of the work that is our struggle. Additionally, the Mexican American Studies department here at SJSU has sharpened my analytical, oral, and writing skills. However, as I approach my final semester, I find myself grappling over, the at times, overwhelming question of: “where do we go from here”? I pose this out of a realization that as emerging Chicano/a Studyists, community and social activists we are now in a place where our future work and passions will shape what our beloved discipline becomes and dedicates itself to. Put it simply: “It’s on us”. (Yet, just because “it’s on us” does not excuse us from not recognizing our privilege as academics. Moreover, we must continually be mindful to *listen* and *ask* in order to *build* with the communities we so love.)

It is my hope that we do not necessarily look past the issues revolved around identity but incorporate them into a deeper analysis of why our communities continue to be in resistance and struggle. I hope that we refrain from being stagnant and continue to push Chicano/a Studies to stay active through action. This is not to minimize our experiences and/or histories/herstories, for they are not only vital to our cultural endurance but also play a critical role in the development of our very being. What I am imploring here is that we be more than mere revisionists who indeed connect us to our past; but sometimes do not supplement this narrative with a sound, strategic, and collectively constructed plan of action. At the other end of the spectrum, let us be more than mere futurists whose romantic notions of what a revolution may bring or looks like, quixotically roots us in the future without appreciating and committing to the now—the contemporary. Or as the Hopi messenger of prophecies Tomas Banyacya puts it, “We are the ones we have been waiting for”.

If we commit ourselves to planting real seeds for change, let us be prepared and mindful of what that harvest may bring. Let us lead by example and find ways to disrupt capital instead of merely flirting with resisting it. Let us live with less and not only be comfortable with it, but also prepare for it. Our careers too must be put on the line because as the neo-racists of Arizona have unabashedly shown, the social realities leaked through Ethnic Studies threaten the white hegemony; hence their recent attempts at neutralization. As so-called “provocateurs,” we may then face occupational isolation for refusing to bow down to “traditional” pedagogical

models. As more attacks are sure to come, I hope we too will come together and fight against the onslaught of cowards and bigots who hide behind supposed color-blind policies.

Let us live by our mantra of Letras and Macanas. I say this not as a call to arms but as a recognition that while we fight with our pens/minds, we cannot afford to be naïve when it comes to the states’ historical penchant for violence to quell BOTH peaceful and armed civil disobedience.

But then again, let us not make this a conversation around the tired issue of how “down/militant/Chicano/a” one is. Let us instead frame this conversation around our labor of love for not only our Latino/a communities, but remember that we must stand in solidarity with ALL communities whose humanity, dignity, and self-determination have been assaulted under the guise of neo-liberalism and free-trade.

Let us be conscious of our consciousness, but always wary of the divisive effects of political and ideological neutrality. Much like being aware of our privileges as academics, we must take into account that we all process things at various speeds. An awareness of this demands of us a certain level of patience and willingness to let those around us grow at their own level of spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

My stay here at San José leaves me excited for our future work and extremely honored to have been surrounded by not only some of the best and brightest, but also some of the most genuinely passionate people I have ever met. Yet, we all know the work and road ahead of us may be rocky and require of us a tremendous amount of mental and physical will.

Lastly, as I finish this piece and reflect on the uncertainty that is the future, I can hear the words of the late Tupac Amaru Shakur echoing in my head: “Are U Still Down?”.

With so much at stake, I don’t see how I couldn’t be . . .

Peace and Love,

Isidoro Guzman

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CALIFORNIAN FAMILIA

by Roberto Reyna



Top left to Right: Juan Carlos, Malena, Ricardo, Raul, and Roberto

Bottom: Maribel and Jaime

As a second semester graduate student in the Mexican American Studies Program, I can look back and say that each person that I have met at San Jose State University has impacted me. Before arriving in San Jose I had already made up my mind that I would be *solo*, my mission was to get in and get out of the program as quickly as possible. I relocated close to 2,000 miles, long ways from Harlingen, Texas, my hometown leaving behind family, loved ones', close friends and practically everything I was used to. It would be hard enough getting to know the people, but even more difficult to understand, love and be accepted into the Bay Area culture. The only familiar person I knew within the program was a friend from my undergraduate career, Annabel Salamanca. I knew facing and being successful within my graduate seminars would all depend on me.

What a nerve-wrecking feeling I had the first days! Having this feeling of being nervous was not only because of this unfamiliar place but for the fact that I was about to embark on this new challenge attempting to gain a Master's degree. I met many new people from various areas of the California region, some from Southern California and the Central Valley, others from Northern California and even the Bay Area. This mindset I had when I arrived of being *solo* was not going to cut-it to help me out through my graduate career. As the semester progressed fellow peers from my cohort along with peers from the Xicana/o

Graduate Council helped make my transition not only easier, but also enjoyable. Soon, I had a group of friends that I could rely on and ask questions about class assignments when in need. Our Friday nights turned into study sessions which simply added to the community building within our cohort and even when we did not have study sessions we all seemed to end up together wondering what to explore. I now did not face the demands of our rigorous program alone but instead faced it with many *colegas*. As the semester came to an end, hours of studying turned into nights and days which we spent together providing encouragement, and support, along with many laughs. I could not believe that it is true that time does fly because by the time I realized it was time for me to catch my plane to head back home.

All in all, I know that a strong community within a cohort is essential for one's success. Spending a whole month away from the Bay Area made me realize how much I missed my Californian *Familia*. Truth is that we all need that moral, encouraging, emotional support and that is something my fellow *colegas* provided for me.

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THOUGHTS ON BEING A BETTER FARMWORKER ALLY by Maribel Gómez

As a vegetarian and foodie, I think a lot about the food I eat and food in general. I go to sleep thinking about my breakfast and I plan out in advance what my next meal should be. I have the privilege to pick and choose what my next meal will be and what grocery stores and restaurants I want to purchase my food from. I also face a lot of bullying from people that think that me choosing what I eat is ridiculous, although I try to keep my food choices and practices away from people and the choices that they make (but that is a whole different story).

I realize that I am a privileged person because of this. I want to shed light on the food industry. I believe that all forms of oppression are equally important and relate to each other and that we should use our privileges to contribute to social change.

As a person that condemns cruelty and inequality to everyone and everything, I feel it necessary to become an ally to the people who work long and hard to provide me the food I eat.

I am discontent with the way farmworkers and food service workers are exploited. As someone whose diet is composed of vegetables and grains, I have a problem with focusing simply on the suffering of animals and forgetting the people whose lives are tarnished by the food industry. I am tired of reading from liberal people who do not acknowledge their privilege and forget that they too have a role in the exploitation of workers in the food sector.

Latina/os are affected by food production because a large portion of Latina/os, whether documented or not, are employed as agricultural workers. As agricultural workers, they are often exploited for their labor and exposed to toxics, pesticides and as workers, deal with the strenuous labor and poor working conditions. Yet, although they have employment, as farmworkers they are treated differently than workers working in any other field.

According to the United States Department of Labor:

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) states that: for nonagricultural operations, it restricts the hours that children under age 16 can work and forbids the employment of children under age 18 in certain jobs deemed too dangerous. For agricultural operations, it prohibits the employment of children under age 16 during school hours and in certain jobs deemed too dangerous ("U.S. Department of Labor - A Summary of Major DOL Laws).

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempts agricultural workers from overtime premium pay, but requires the payment of the minimum wage to workers employed on larger farms (farms employing more than approximately seven full-time workers. The Act has special child-labor regulations that apply to agricultural employment; children under 16 are forbidden to work during school hours and in certain jobs deemed too dangerous. Children employed on their families' farms are exempt from these regulations" ("U.S. Department of Labor - A Summary of Major DOL Laws).

Here the contrast between agricultural work and non-agricultural work is evident. Children under the age of 16 are not allowed to work during school hours, but according to the statement above, there is no current law that says they cannot work any other time. Furthermore, agricultural workers get no over-time pay and only require minimum wage on large farms with seven full-time workers. Not only are the working conditions that agricultural workers are faced with difficult, but in many instances do not receive a fair living wage. Not to mention, the various documented cases in Florida that demonstrate instances of modern-day slavery in which farmworkers have been forced to work against their will with little or no pay. The Department of Justice has successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations involving over 1,000 workers in Florida's fields since 1997. In 2010, federal prosecutors indicted two more forced labor rings operating in Florida (Just Harvest USA). These current and historical instances of unfair practices toward farmworkers demonstrates how little agricultural workers are valued, yet their work and hardships provide most people with food. It also demonstrates the lack of consideration for children working in agriculture and the conditions that they too may face.

As consumers, what we purchase says a lot to the growers, restaurants, and supermarkets in the United States; it's a simple supply and demand equation. When we as consumers begin to demand safe food that has been picked through ethical and humane procedures, establishments will have to comply with our needs.

(Continued on next page)

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BETTER FARMWORKER ALLY CONT.

As individuals, however, and as people that are affected and part of a larger system, and as a Xicana/o community, which continues to be affected by an oppressive system, we need to take it into our own hands and within our own personal capabilities to be agents of change. We need to be allies to all marginalized peoples within our community including the large percentage of people who work in the food sector.

Below are some of the demands current farmworker organizations want:

A guaranteed minimum fair wage for farmworkers

A process for farmworkers to pursue workplace complaints without fear of retribution

An employee-controlled health and safety committee

Opportunities for labor rights education on company time and property

Opportunities for advancement

An employee-controlled time clock system to maintain accurate records of hours worked

Farmworkers hired directly as employees with wages and benefits paid directly to employees

Housing must be voluntary and in compliance with the law (housing payments cannot reduce a worker's wages below the minimum fair wage)

Zero tolerance for forced labor, illegal child labor, and systematic discrimination or wage violations

<http://www.justharvestusa.org/fairfood.html>

Some things to consider when you have your next meal:

Educate yourself: Find out what types of products you are consuming. Where is your meat, your vegetables, grains, or other food products from? Keep in mind that even processed food may contain food products that are harvested and that even packing facilities may not address worker's rights. Whether you eat meat or not, think about the facilities and whether they have historical or current difficult conditions workers are exposed to.

Some questions to think about with each meal:

Are the farm workers being exploited to provide you with your food?

Are farm workers being paid a decent wage?

Do they work under difficult conditions?

What type of chemicals/pesticides are the people providing you your food exposed to?

Be a conscious consumer:

Support those companies that support worker's rights. Support family farms. Support local farmer's markets where local growers sell their products. When you purchase agricultural products, please help farmworkers by looking for Union Label products and products under agreements with farmworker groups

Take action:

Educate others. Educate your family and community about farmworker and food service worker issues. Write letters to representatives; sign petitions, join a local advocacy group for worker's rights, demand that your grocery stores and restaurants support campaigns for fair food.

For more information and sources:

<http://www.sfalliance.org/>

<http://ciw-online.org/>

<http://justharvestusa.org/>

<http://www.ufw.org/>

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THOUGHTS ON THE POLICE by Tenoch Ortiz

Struggling people throughout the world are uniting to broaden their resistance against capitalistic forces, which foster economic inequalities that have given rise to imperialistic oppression. These protestors, who are willing to make their voices heard, are not without deep concerns about confronting their local police. These special task forces, which

are funded by their very working-class tax dollars of the protestors, use repressive tactics to ultimately protect and defend the wealthy and elite class.

At this very moment, we are witnessing in cities all over the world the use of police to dismantle mass protests with extreme force. The most violent attacks on peaceful demonstrators have been in Oakland, California. The Oakland Police Department has been instructed to use tear gas, concussion grenades, and “non-lethal rifles” to stifle protestors. As history has shown, this is not the first and probably will not be the last attack on demonstrators in Oakland. These actions demonstrate the true purpose of police departments globally.

This very police department that claims to protect and serve shot and killed Oscar Grant, in which the officer responsible for Grant’s death Johannes Mehserle, was charged with involuntary manslaughter. The unjust verdict led hundreds of enraged protesters back into the streets of Oakland. Once again we saw the use of police force to suppress protestors. The painful reality is that the police attacks are far too common in low-income communities of color.

Through my observations I have come to understand that a primary function of the police is to maintain the strongholds of inequality where the white, one percent, elite class only benefits. Today police departments nationwide enforce gentrification of low-income



Photo retrieved from: https://encrypted-tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcToqz4uJG5410VUd1HKPxFjywX9OdownM83F_sozqb3CdKIZzfu

neighborhoods, engage in acts of racism through racial profiling, the dehumanizing laws intended to criminalize peoples of color especially aimed at our youth, systemic sweeps of illegal immigrants that feed the Prison Industrial Complex owned by private prison corporations.

In my very own community of Salinas, CA, I have seen the political discourse of imperialism play a dominant role in promoting a culture of “fear,” where the police terrorize residents of the impoverished East Side. The police suppression units travel in all black police cars, driving five units in a row, slithering in and out of traffic like a snake with the intention of striking fear in the heart of my community, like in Oakland and many other cities where the marginalized reside.

The police are not here to protect or serve my interest or the interest of my community. They are an extension of a repressive institution that plays the hand of, and maintains an overtly unjust system. It stands to protect the interest and the property of the elite class, while keeping everyone else in a submissive, docile, and incapacitated state.

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IN DEFENSE OF WAL-MART

by Juan Carlos Jáuregui

Since 2001, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a non-profit farmworker organization operating out of Immokalee, Florida, whose mission includes improving working conditions and fair wages for farmworkers, has been persistent in promoting their push for labor reform through their nationally acclaimed Campaign for Fair Food. This campaign has targeted major food corporations who employ “powerful downward pressure on wages and working conditions.”¹ To combat these corporations and the detrimental effects their business policies have on farmworkers, the CIW uses the age-old tactic of boycotting; effectively calling for national boycotts against these corporations until these companies and the CIW strike an agreement that leads to more humane working conditions as well as equitable wages for farmworkers.

Thus far, this campaign for equity has been largely successful. In March of 2005 for instance, the Campaign for Fair Food was successful in convincing Taco Bell and its parent company Yum Brands to agree to the CIW’s request. In exchange, the CIW ended their four-year boycott against the fast-food chain.² This formative agreement was a critical piece in improving farmworker’s wages as Taco Bell agreed to have complete transparency when purchasing tomatoes and agreed to pay 1 cent more per pound for all the tomatoes purchased in Florida.³ Since then, the Campaign for Fair Food has been triumphant in negotiating similar agreements with McDonald’s, Burger King, Subway, and even Whole Foods Market.

Currently, the CIW has focused its efforts on the California-based Trader Joe’s, and for sometime now, has urged the company to pledge—through the actual signing of an agreement—to the same humane working conditions and fair wages that other corporations have already agreed to. Trader Joe’s however, has yet to agree. Rather, on their website, Trader Joe’s has informally responded to the CIW’s request. Their response essentially, explains that because they already pay growers a fair price for their crops—who in turn, pay farmworkers a fair wage—such agreement is not necessary. In addition, Trader Joe’s also addresses the issue of humane working conditions, writing that they only deal with agriculture companies who abide by their code of conduct—a code of conduct that coincides with federal, state, and local laws.

Unfortunately, many, including myself, feel this is not enough. What’s to stop Trader Joe’s from purchasing tomatoes from companies that do not pay their workers

fair wages? The absence of accountability is at issue.

When I was first introduced to Trader Joe’s, I was impressed with their ideals and was told they were progressive in terms of selling products that were largely organic, sustainable, and otherwise good for the environment. I fail to see how signing such agreement would go against these ideals.

So why the title, and what does Wal-Mart have to do with any of this?

No I am not here to place Wal-Mart on a pedestal and praise the company for becoming one of the largest and most profitable in recent years. Rather, as my family and I drove past a Trader Joe’s earlier this year, I mentioned we should not consume their products until they sign an agreement with the CIW. I was immediately countered with, “You shop at Wal-Mart, don’t you? They are far worse than Trader Joe’s.” I was taken aback. They were right, and I did not have an answer.

It wasn’t until a few days later that the answer came to me, and it parallels something Malcolm X once referred to. Indeed, in his autobiography, Malcolm X mentioned that individuals had a choice: they could choose to be eaten by “the ‘liberal’ fox or the ‘conservative’ wolf.”⁴ Reflecting on this, the wolf doesn’t conceal its growl; showing you its teeth, the wolf lets you know upfront what it is capable of. In contrast, the cunning fox, in a sly and more deceitful manner, works diligently to gain your trust, presenting itself as harmless and inviting. When in turn, the fox, just like the wolf, will eat you at the first chance it gets.

Without a doubt, I have my issues with Wal-Mart—none more so than the opening of a Wal-Mart in Teotihuacán, México—however, in Wal-Mart’s defense, at least the company is brave enough to show us its teeth.

Note to reader: On February 9, 2012, Trader Joe’s and the CIW signed an agreement. For more info visit: http://www.ciw-online.org/TJ_agreement.html

¹ <http://ciw-online.org/101.html#cff>

² <http://www.ciw-online.org/agreementanalysis.html>

³ <http://www.ciw-online.org/agreementanalysis.html>

⁴ Page 408 of The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told by Alex Haley

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A CHANCE FOR REDEMPTION by Felipe Ponce

Imagine spending your entire adulthood, 60-plus years, locked behind bars with absolutely no chance of tasting the bits of freedom that most Americans enjoy. This is a reality for almost 300 young people in California, more than 80% of which are young people of color. Dumb decisions they made as adolescents have devastating consequences. Current California laws authorize youth to be sentenced to life without parole (LWOP). SB 9, a recent bill introduced to the California legislator would give these young offenders a chance for redemption. SB 9 is not a “soft-on-crime” initiative, and will not release “hardened criminals” to society. It will provide these young offenders with the opportunity to show remorse and to demonstrate that they truly have been rehabilitated. These youth will only be considered for release if they have served a minimum of 25-years in prison.

Not all juvenile offenders will be eligible for parole if this bill passes; many will not meet the rigorous criteria it sets forth. To be eligible to see the parole board, the juvenile offender must not have had a prior criminal record. Prior to their convictions, these juveniles must have no previous interaction with the web called the justice system. Over half of these young people sentenced to LWOP will meet this criterion. They are not the hardened criminals that many SB 9 opponents portray—these are young people with no prior convictions who have made a single mistake, which they are paying for with their lives.

California has some of the strictest laws in the nation. People are convicted of murder even though they were not the actual “trigger-person”. Recently a young man was convicted of murder when his crime partner was killed by the man they were trying to rob. It is estimated that almost half of the juveniles sentenced to LWOP fall into this category, where they neither intended nor participated in the actual murder. Shouldn’t we as a society at least give these young people who are not guilty of the ultimate sin a chance to prove that they have changed?

With our state in financial turmoil it is economically unfeasible to continue to sentence our children to the “other death sentence”. With an average life expectancy of 77 years, these kids will be in jail for over 60 years!



At an estimated cost of \$47,000 per year to keep a person locked up, it will cost the state over \$2.8 million per juvenile sentenced to life without parole. Wouldn't this money be better used to help prevent these types of tragedies? This revenue can be used for better schools, better teachers, after school programs and gang-prevention. With the state in desperate need for every dollar they can muster, and a prison system under federal mandate to reduce overcrowding, it just does not make economic sense to continue sentencing youngsters to LWOP.

I have spent many years working with young people in some of the most notorious and nefarious neighborhoods in the Bay-Area. Recently I was teaching 8th and 9th grade in a neighborhood in which a 14-year-old resident is now facing life without parole for taking another young persons' life. I have witnessed firsthand the many social ills that perpetuate violence and contribute to the high number of our youngsters going to jail. With easy access to guns and almost no access to a virtuous education, these young people turn to the violent life glorified in movies, music, television and video games.

(Continued on page 17, **Redemption**)

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In Caldwell, Idaho I had the invaluable experience of being a teacher at Jefferson Middle School. There, I led the 21st Century C.L.C. after school program for the 35 youths, grades 6th through 8th in need of social and academic enrichment in their lives. I led a structured curriculum that enriched my students academically, physically and socially. Not only creating essential opportunities and experiences for my students, but also reducing the social and academic achievement gaps that unfortunately exist in the community. The educational and social enrichment that I been providing for my students and their parents, fortunately been successfully aiding the prevention of gang activity, drug use and delinquent behavior. Unfortunately on the other hand, there still remain the unrelenting issues that plague our communities and are a constant battle amongst our youth on a daily basis, not to mention the rural/urban poverty. From this experience, my desire to bring the honorable change to the long-standing issues in Chicano communities has been genuinely revealed. Therefore, I have decided to begin preparing for the Mexican-American Studies graduate program for the fall of 2011, to further build towards my aspirations in the field of study.

My future goals are to receive my Master's degree and grow intellectually stronger in the Mexican-American Studies department. With that, I intend to further continue my efforts in the educational field, fully prepared as a (public) teacher/mentor for our youth in East San Jose. I look to particularly work with the Alum Rock and East Side Union High School Districts because those were the school districts that I attended. Thus, giving me a good idea of what constant challenges and issues our kids face in their respective communities; but also every community that needs change, nonetheless. Furthermore, along with the first-hand experience that I have cultivated at Jefferson Middle School, I have also realized that I still have many things to learn and practice about



Picture retrieved from:
<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/72fall/images/page14.jpg>

critically examining and addressing contemporary issues in Chicano communities (and everything that precedes it). Thus, the M.A.S. graduate program's interdisciplinary study is not only the preparation I need to build the stout foundation of knowledge and practice, but it is also the experience I need to truly become an effective leader in the classroom in our communities.

When all is said and done, I really believe we all have an obligation to help the kids in our communities in less-fortunate circumstances. Thus, joining the M.A.S. graduate program for the fall of 2011, a place where I can truly be provided with a renowned education and preparation, is the opportunity for me to achieve my aspirations. Thank you for reading everyone and let's get to work!

(Continued from page 3, **Guadalupe**)

Most of us think of La Virgen's origins as either a true Miracle, or as a tool created by the Catholic Church. Yet Alma Lopez questioned us, "why do we continue to believe the colonized interpretation of La Virgen's story"¹? Lopez explained that la Virgen is "the poster image for the first successful act of mass nonviolent civil resistance/ disobedience on this continent"². That is, the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe is a codex. La Virgen's image was actually created by indigenous communities as a way to codify and continue their resistance towards the Europeans, very similar to (as an undergraduate student pointed out) the way Cuauhtemoc tells el pueblo to resist in his "last mandate". Alma Lopez did a spectacular job presenting historical evidence of how this image was truly a form of revolution against the invaders, and it

finally made sense, and gave me pride, as to why nuestra Virgen Morena is so deeply rooted in many of our traditions, families, and part of our deepest emotions.

"Our Lady of Controversy" By Alma Lopez

¹ Lopez 261

² Lopez 257

(Continued from page 6, **Theorizing an Agenda**)

It isn't easy.

Doing the work
taking the consequences
shedding truths
relying on Others.
What are you?

It isn't easy.

Diving into new worlds
tending wounds
shrieking against the wind
relishing in pain.
How are you?

It is done, already took and
shredded
what are you relying on
how you avoid pain
it isn't easier

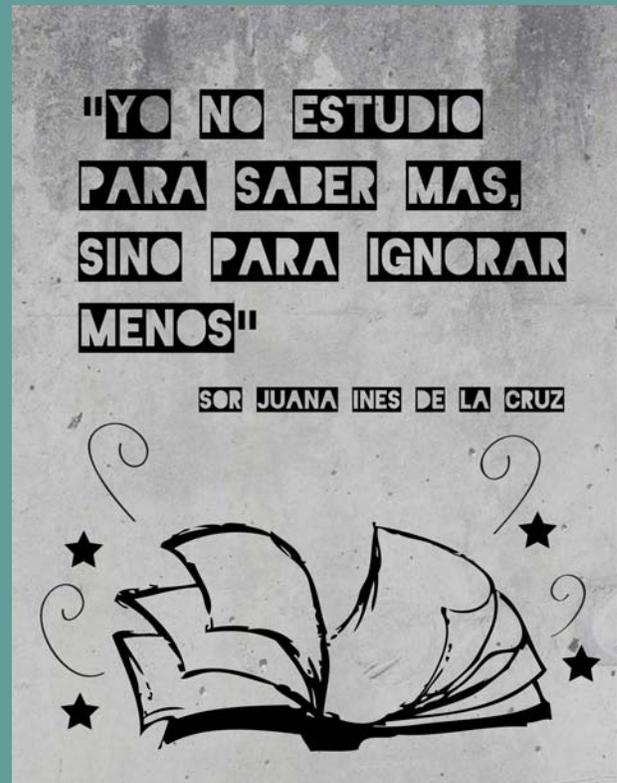
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NI DE AQUÍ NI DE ALLÁ

Ni de aquí ni de allá
Ni de aquí ni de allá
Trapped between two mundos
Mujer ChicanaMexicana
Muxer revolucionaria
Muxer BisexualQueerPansexual
Muxer Con X
Y *Jota* también
Mujer Fighting oppression
Fighting legacies of internalized racism, sexism and homophobia
Pero sin embargo, trapped
Between dos mundos que no pueden entender
What it is to be me
Hell no, I'm not a fucking traitor
Malinchista but the womyst kind
Pero si tu sigues pensando que *my struggle isn't your struggle and your struggle isn't my struggle*
Then baby, there's something fucking wrong
Y eso quiere decir, that our fight isn't over! That it's only just begun!!!!!!
Pero ahorita, si que me siento que no soy *Ni de aquí ni de allá*



(Continued from page 14, **Redemption**)

While sitting in court as a sign of support for one of the many young people I have worked with, I was dumbfounded by his innocence and inability to understand the gravity of pulling a trigger. On trial for shooting into a crowd and wounding an innocent teenager, he faced multiple years for aggravated assault. When queried by the prosecution about why he had decided to shoot at innocent people, his answer was childlike and innocent. "They always get up in the video games." This kids' view of his actions lacked the perception that an adult would have. How can we punish him as an adult if he does not have the mental capacity of one?

There is not an adult who can claim they have the same long-term decision making power that they did when they were 15 years old. So how can we hold these

children accountable for actions they may not realize the consequences of? The institution that is holding these kids behind bars is the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Let me emphasize the last word, **REHABILITATION!** Keeping these kids in jail for life is contradicting this very title. If it is true that this major state institutions' aim is to rehabilitate, then we must pass SB 9. If not, then it is time to dismantle the entire institution altogether because it is failing miserably by keeping these youth locked up with no possibility of ever tasting freedom again.

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M.A.S. ALUMNI UPDATES

Mi barrio de Utah by Robert Unzueta

When I think of community the first place that my subconscious travels to is my grandparents' house in mi barrio in North Sacramento. A sense of serenity takes over my psyche, as if seeing myself in a space that I know very well. I could smell my abuela in the kitchen cooking food for whatever family members decide to stop by to visit. I see my abuelo in the backyard attending to his crops, telling me to sit down so I can learn to provide pesticide free food for my family. I can hear the bass from my brother's car as he pulls up to the house yelling out to the homies to show love, and I can feel the dry summer heat beat off my chest as I embrace my world. In these memories I find comfort. I find my home. Mi barrio is what raised me to be who I am, but this is not my only community nor is it my only home.

I now find myself in the state of Utah, a transplant at the University of Utah's Education, Culture and Society program. A space that is nothing like home and the vivid memories where I find peace, are over 700 miles away. But I am still at home. My new

surroundings are strange to me but still very familiar. Instead of walking up and down my path streets, I find myself walking from building to building, on campus either to my class, to meet with a student, or to a quiet place so I can put my thoughts down on paper. Utah? Yes Utah, I am here amongst mi gente, abuelas, abuelos, tias, tios and other brothers who are not biologically my kin but in everyway my family. I can feel, see, hear, and sense the same kind of belonging here in Utah. I have been welcomed here by my community and like home, I have developed relationships that are critical to helping me grow. I have embraced my new home and community with open arms, never forgetting about mi barrio but still understanding my community is nowhere but at the same time everywhere there is love, struggle, and dignity.

Love,
Rob



After receiving my MA in Mexican American Studies from San José State University, I was fortunate enough to be offered a position as an adjunct instructor at Hartnell College (Salinas, Ca), where I teach Ethnic Studies, Chicano Studies, and Social Justice Research for the ACE Program. The relationships that I formed and my experiences as a graduate student mentor for the MAS Department and EOP at San José

State, directly led to my position at Hartnell. Lecturer Philip Tabera recommended me for the position, a position previously held by another MAS alum, Robert Unzueta before he left to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Utah. In addition to teaching I also serve as the Northern California Foco Representative for the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS). Dr. Julia Curry Rodríguez was instrumental in preparing me for this position and has served

as a tremendous mentor and friend. Although it has been over a year since I have taken courses at San José State, I still keep in regular contact with several Professors, alumni and current students from the department. I truly appreciate the time I spent in San José and will always look back at it as a special moment in my life.

Juan Pablo Mercado,
MA 2011



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M.A.S. ALUMNI UPDATES CONT.

A Morning in the Life of a Paisa Doctoral Student

by José García

I step on the *dobleuele* blasting the going-to-school mix that starts with “*primero me dieron alas*” and usually ends with an Immortal Technique rant. I sit as the bus makes its way down the hill to Riverside. We pass through a neighborhood that resembles the Crows Landing area of Southside Modesto or perhaps the King and Story corner of East San José.

The *jornaleros* huddle outside the Walgreens to keep warm on a cold Austin morning. “*Yo soy un ave nocturna, que aterriza en cualquier milpa.*” We pass through *Paeteria Tropicana*, *Iglesia de Cristo Roca Eterna*, the condos with the downstairs gym and shops. The 35. We’re about to cross the border, *el río*; there is no turning back.

It is here that I think of my dad’s calloused hands as I search for that song and of *el fajo piteado* he gave me *pa que no se me olvide* before I moved to Austin to work towards a PhD in Cultural Studies in Education. I think of the eight times my mom has given me a *bendición* as I left to pursue educational experiences. I think of the words *profe* told me not so long ago, “*hay gente que todas las mañanas se levanta pensando que tu estas aqui.*” I realize that *mi familia* is always with me in my everyday actions and in the *compas* with whom I am building *comunidad*.

It is not 9 AM yet and it feels late. The bus stop is in the belly of the University of Texas-Austin, next to the stadium. Two blocks north, the dorms named after Col. Simkins, the Grand Dragon of the Florida KKK still stand. Right across from the dorms there is a stream and a small plot of land where run down shacks used to house African American students. The shacks are gone but the eyes of the South, of White Supremacy, still look upon the green grass. I walk up the hill, past the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. statue that points to the east, and I can

see the top of the Robert Lee Moore Hall building, named after a mathematician who would not allow Black students in his classes.

I am right across the Tower and from here I can see the State Capitol; both open their front door to the South. A few steps ahead César Chávez cast in bronze with a flag over his shoulder looks to the west. A plaque reads, “You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.” *A machetearle a los libros!*

Note: Some of the information for this reflection was taken from the UT Racial Geography tour/plática led by Dr. Edmund T. Gordon.

The logo for The University of Texas at Austin, featuring the text "THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN" in a serif font, with "TEXAS" in a larger, bold font, all in orange and white colors, set against a teal background.

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JOIN US AT DIA Y NOCHE CON XGC



We would like to thank:

Cielito Lindo
195 E. Taylor St
San José, Ca 95112

1st St. Billiards
420 South 1st Street
San José, Ca 95112

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Xicana/o Graduate Council
San José State University
San José, California



ASSOCIATED STUDENTS

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