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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

In 1972, Chicano graduate students formed the National Association for Chicano Studies. For twenty years, Chicano scholars, students, and community members have met annually to disseminate research and to reaffirm our commitment to the connection between scholarship and community.

We are an Association of women and men who work in the dissemination and production of knowledge. Members of NACS -- through study, research, and writing -- do not "overlook the crucial political role of ideas in the construction and legitimation of social reality" (from NACS preamble). Thus, we remain committed that "our research should address itself to the pressing problems and issues affecting our communities." Our commitment is reflected in our individual research which is widely circulated and through our conference proceedings. This volume is, therefore, presented in the spirit of the connection between community and research.

The impetus for this project came from the Political Action Committee which was formed in 1985 as a result of a Women's Caucus resolution. It was activated in 1986 and has since sponsored discussions within the Association regarding itself, acted upon resolutions of the body, and waged Congressional letter campaigns. While the role of the committee itself is evolving, members of the Association have been active in the following ways: many testify as "expert" witnesses in court cases and legislative hearings; serve as members of boards and commissions of community agencies, neighborhood based organizations, unions, and government; write newspaper columns (opinion-editorial pieces); organize, volunteer, lobby, support workplace struggle etc. We have remained active in the academy through committee work, program development, and most especially the development of students. Finally, we have emphasized the "personal and the political" particularly as it relates to resisting elitism and the extent to which, we in our individual ways, may reproduce the same power relations that maintain the University as an elitist institution. As a body, most especially since 1982, we continue to engage in struggles to combat sexism and heterosexism within the Association and on University campuses.

This Special Volume of the Association marks the Twenty Year Anniversary of NACS and 500 years of resistance as a people. This volume, entitled, Chicano Studies: Critical Connection Between Research and Community, contains essays from both NACS scholars and "community" activists. The first essay is by Rudy Acuña, author of Occupied America, fondly referred to as the Chicano Bible. Acuña is currently waging a struggle with the University of Santa Barbara over their refusal to hire him as a Professor in the Department of Chicano Studies. In light of the reasons given for refusing to hire him, Acuña's case highlights the assault against Chicano Studies.

According to University documents which state the reasons Acuña was not considered qualified, Occupied America was referred to as a "cult book". The document, rejecting the request for hire from Chicano Studies, said: "This is a political appointment more than a scholarly one. Acuña's a polemicist more than a seeker of truth, and his appointment is, therefore, biased." Despite the extensive research that has gone into Acuña's work, the University has deemed his work "unscholarly". As such, despite the sophisticated and thorough work of Chicano scholars, Universities still make the effort to define our research as outside the realm of legitimate knowledge.

Thus, we are reminded of the importance of Chicano Studies and that as Chicano scholars we are engaged in an ideological battle over the construction of knowledge. In the essay in this volume, Acuña addresses some of the concerns he sees regarding Chicano Studies and the importance of alertness in continuing the fight with the same ideals that motivated us in the first place.

In the second article, Deena González, another insightful, well-trained historian, contributes to the reinterpretation of the so-called "discovery of America". In doing so, she joins numerous Native Americans and Chicanos in emphasizing the indigenous perspective of the European conquest of the Americas. An integral component of the Chicano Studies movement has been the promotion of affirmative action for education in the university. The loss of the ideological battle over the legitimacy of affirmative action has translated into a reversal of policies that made possible the education of many of us who might not have otherwise received a higher education. The article by Margaret Montoya, a Harvard educated Chicana from New Mexico, and member of the University of New Mexico legal counsel, provides us with some legal tools to understand where we are in the affirmative action struggle.

In the final essay in Part One, Tey Diana Rebolledo shares an essay that she presented at a conference of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambios Social. Many men in the early days of the movement dismissed Chicana feminists as "dupes of White women." Should there still be doubts, this essay serves to lay to rest the notion that we were ever dupes of anyone and that, indeed, we have had to struggle with Women Studies over issues of race and class -- at the same time we were struggling with Chicano Studies over sexism and homophobia. For Chicanas, both sets of struggles continue.

Part II of this Special Volume is devoted to the topic of Free Trade. The Political Action Committee was charged with the task of providing the Association more information on the implications of NAFTA for Mexicanos on both sides of the frontera. As such, the National Association for Chicano Studies was a co-sponsor with the Southwest Voters Research Institute of a series of hearings on Free Trade. These hearings have been held in Los Angeles and San Antonio with additional hearings to be held in Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, and Albuquerque. The statements in Part II were presented at either the San Antonio or Los Angeles hearings. These

include statements by José Luis Calva, Professor of Economics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico; David Brooks, Director, Mexico-U.S. Dialogos Program; and Maria Jimenez, Director, Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project, American Friends Service Committee; and Congressman Estevan Torres from California. Also included are two "Op-Ed" pieces by Avelardo Valdez, NACS member and this year's coordinator of the Annual Conference in San Antonio. Part II is introduced by Antonio González, Director of the Southwest Voters Research Institute, with an update on the status of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Finally, Part III contains two essays on issues related to Indigenous Roots: Culture and Spirituality. In the first essay, we hear from a junior high school teacher who is a graduate student studying language, culture, and literacy. Heriberto Godina begins with the notion that our base of cognitive structure should arise from our indigenous roots and argues for a need to develop instructional material relevant to students' roots and environment. His points are consistent with the philosophy of Chicano Studies which has always argued for the connection between culture and curriculum.

In the final essay, a practicing curandera and spiritual healer urges us to make time from our politics for our souls. She warns us against the dis-ease our antepasados called "susto" and recommends soul retrieval as a mechanism to spiritual well being. Elena Avila represents a growing awareness of the importance of our spiritual selves and reaffirms our connection to our ancestry and to our indigenous roots.

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