

On Dia de la Raza, UCSD Announces Acquisition Of First Major Chicano Collection, The Archives Of Chicano Rights Activist Herman Baca

October 12, 2004

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Today, known throughout the Americas as Dia de la Raza - Day of the People -- a prominent figure of the Mexican-American community has been honored by the University of California San Diego Libraries, which have announced their acquisition of the archives of Herman Baca.

Baca is the founder and prime mover of the Committee on Chicano Rights (CCR), an organization active in the South Bay and throughout California for the last 34 years. The acquisition of his archives is UCSD's first major Chicano collection.

Baca has been at the forefront of organizing efforts in underserved communities in National City, San Diego County, the U.S. Southwest and the U.S.-Mexico border regions, and worked closely with many of the leading figures of the Chicano movement during the Vietnam War era, including Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Reies Lopez Tijerina, Rodolfo Corky Gonzales and others. He became a key organizer in the creation of La Raza Unida political party during the early 1970s, and continues to be a respected expert on immigration and social justice issues.

"I have attempted to leave for posterity a historical record of the Chicano and Mexicano people's struggle," said Baca, "a struggle rooted in the principle of self-determination."

UCSD University Librarian Brian E.C. Schottlaender said that the acquisition by the Mandeville Special Collections Library of Baca's archives - containing numerous documents, photographs and original graphics - is of significant historical import.

"Herman's papers are the first archival collection of Chicano materials to be acquired by UCSD," Schottlaender said, "and a major archival collection, at that. We at UCSD place a great significance on these materials and their importance in illustrating the contributions of the Chicano community to San Diego, to California, and to our nation."

According to Lynda Corey Claassen, director of the Mandeville Special Collections Library at UCSD, the Baca materials are a "tremendous" addition to the libraries. "We believe scholars of Mexican-American history and the San Diego/Tijuana region will learn a great deal about the relationship of Spanish-speaking communities to other groups and interests," she said. "Baca's long personal involvement in the major events of contemporary Mexican-American history makes him and his collected papers invaluable resources for future study."

Jorge Mariscal, director of UCSD's Chicano/a - Latino/a Arts and Humanities Program, said that the university's acquisition is "the beginning of an improved relationship" between the campus and surrounding Spanish-speaking communities. "Without exaggerating its potential impact, I feel confident that the collection will have a number of positive consequences for improving real diversity at UCSD," Mariscal said.

Claassen said the UCSD Libraries are proud to become the home for the archives of Baca and the Committee on Chicano Rights. "It was my pleasure over the past months to work with Herman, his family, and his colleagues to achieve this archive, and I look forward to our continued collaboration," she said. "These unique materials will be used in instruction and research, enabling the creation of new works and new thinking about the spirit and the struggle of a movement - and the people who are that movement."

A UCSD and community celebration of the acquisition of the Baca archives is being planned for spring 2005.

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