



CCR

Committee on Chicano Rights, Inc

June 12, 1997

Mr. Andy Cordova, President
Vaughn Public School Board

Sr. Cordova:

Shame, shame, shame on the Vaughn Public School District. As a former resident who was born and raised in New Mexico it was with great sadness, disbelief, shame, and anger that I read that two teachers, Nadine and Patsy Cordova were fired from their teaching positions in Vaughn, New Mexico, by Superintendent C. Arthur Martinez. Their crime, attempting to teach Chicano students...Chicano studies!!!

In reading about your superintendent's actions, I thought that I was reading about the U.S. segregated South 40 years ago or maybe South Africa 25 years ago when apartheid existed, but not New Mexico in 1997. The disbelief of your superintendent's action represents the height of ignorance, when one considers the following:

- A) New Mexico's name (Mexitili, meaning war god) was derived from the original Mexicans, the Aztecs.
- B) New Mexico was settled and founded by Mexicans in the 1500's (80 years before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock).
- C) New Mexico was guaranteed protection of it's culture, language, and religion by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
- D) New Mexico has, and continues to the present, a large population of persons of Mexican ancestry.

In light of the above historical facts, the action of Superintendent Martinez, aside from being ignorant, is an insult to our ancestors who settled and founded New Mexico, and also to every person who calls themselves Mexicanos, Chicanos, Mexican-Americans or Spanish speaking.

(Over)

710 E. 3rd Street
National City CA 91950
(619) 477-3800

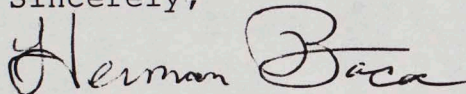
We can only presume that Superintendent Martinez's action is "political," since his actions and that of racists thru-out the Southwest who are attempting to pass legislation such as California's Prop. 187 and 209 and English as the official language, etc.... are similar. Or, on the other hand, Superintendent Martinez's action could be just another case of "self hatred," and the best reason why Chicano and ethnic studies are needed in this country.

Whatever the reasons, since the Superintendent has, in the District's name, insulted and degraded every student and parent of Mexican ancestry, we as a rights organization are now calling on the Vaughn School Board to initiate the following:

1. Rescind the decision of Superintendent Martinez and immediately reinstate Patsy and Nadine Cordova to their former position
2. Reinstate the MEChA student organization.
3. Implement Chicano studies as part of the district's curriculum.

We await your decision on this matter. Remember, the eyes of the Southwest are upon you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Herman Baca". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Herman Baca, President

cc. Southwest Organizing Project
News Media

June 26, 1997

Henry Collins
7322 Loma Verde Way
Sacramento, California 95822

Mr. Andy Cordova, President
Vaughn Public Schools
P.O. Box 489
Vaughn, New Mexico 88353

In Re: Reinstatement Of Nadine And Patsy Cordova To Their Teaching
Positions With The Vaughn School District.

Sr. Cordova:

I ask to be noted on your records as a staunch supporter in favor of reinstatement of Nadine and Patsy Cordova to their respective teaching positions with the Vaughn School District. Further, I want to express my disgust with the actions taken against these two teachers due to their efforts to conduct Chicano history education. The educational instrument in question in this case is entitled "500 YEARS OF CHICANO HISTORY" mostly pictorial in content still it is an excellent reference to enlighten any young mind about the struggles of chicanos in the southwestern states. Every single incident depicted in this book is based on facts as they occurred during that period. I applaud any teacher for using this book as a reference. I will make certain that my grandchildren have it available along with their bibles.

Superintendent C. Martinez would be very welcomed here in my city of residence where the Sacramento Unified School District has demoted all of its chicano administrators on the basis that they are mostly responsible for the short comings of the student body within the district. It is unfortunate that the lawyers involved in the defense of these teachers elect not to air these issues in public hearings. The entire nation should be apprised of what is going on.

Little wonder that there's shootings at the border patrol at the San Diego-Mexican border. Superintendent C. Martinez would feel right at home with the likes of Governor Pete Wilson, Ward Connerly, as well as most of the members of the Sacramento Unified School District. History is written according to the will of the conquerors or victors of any war. What is happening here in New Mexico is, indeed, a reprisal against those who attempt to expand our knowledge beyond standard history.

Superintendent Martinez should be terminated from employment in the state of New Mexico for obstructing the truth to be taught. The people in Albuquerque and throughout Aztlan will not tolerate this unjustified action against Nadine and Patsy Cordova.

Sinceramente,

Henry Collins

Henry Collins

cc: The Sacramento Bee
The Coaliton Of Spanish Speaking Organizations
The Chicano Consortioun
Committee On Chicano Rights, Inc.



League of
United Latin
American Citizens

MARIO G. OBLEDO

Past National President

P.O. Box 1026

Sacramento, CA 95812

916/441-5000

July 10, 1997

Mr. Andy Cordova, President
Vaughn Public Schools
Post Office Box 489
Vaughn, New Mexico 88353

Dear Mr. Cordova:

It has come to my attention that two teachers have been suspended for teaching Chicano history. Chicano history is a part of the history of the United States which should be taught to every American school child, particularly those in the southwest. I strongly urge the reinstatement of both teachers.

Any consideration extended would be appreciated by the undersigned.

Sincerely,

MARIO G. OBLEDO

MGO:dw

bcc: CCR

Chicano history book banned in Vaughn

Teachers suffer consequences for challenging traditional history

by Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez, *Latino Spectrum*

Teacher Nadine Córdova is an accused racist. She has, for example, taught impressionable young minds about César Chávez, the late leader of the farmworkers' movement, whom many have likened to Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and other dangerous thinkers. Worse yet, Córdova wanted to teach her students about tolerance of our country's various different racial, cultural and religious groups.

As a result, at the end of February, she was suspended with pay from Vaughn High School in New Mexico. Her specific crime? Teaching Chicano history.

Teaching ethnic studies has always been controversial because it challenges the notion that history is simply the story of great white men and great events, rather than the stories of the courage and struggles of ordinary people. Today, however, critics of ethnic and women studies are going one step further, alleging that the teachers of multicultural history are racist.

As we mentioned in another column at the beginning of the year, Córdova was the sponsor of her local high school club, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). Due to the hostile anti-Chicano environment on campus, it has since been disbanded. Córdova, who has taught for 12 years, was ordered by superintendent Arthur Martínez to quit teaching the "MEChA philosophy" and to refrain from teaching about Chávez and using the *500 Years of Chicano History* textbook. He deemed the curriculum racist.

The same action, for the same reasons, has also been taken against Córdova's sister Patsy, who has taught at Vaughn High School for 23 years.

Vaughn, which was settled as a railroad town at the end of the 19th century, "was built on the sweat of Mexican labor," says Hermán García, a professor at New Mexico State University. In fact, the entire infrastructure of the West was built on the backs of Chinese, Mexican, Native American, African American and other immigrant labor. So it is totally appropriate for the Córdovas to teach Chicano history, he says.

The racism of this region in New Mexico is such that many people of Mexican or Indo-Hispano origin proclaim that they have Spanish, rather than Mexican blood, says García, who grew up in the area. This misidentification partly underlies the curriculum debate at the high school, he says. "Many Mexican-origin people say they're Spanish, French or Portuguese. Everyone looks into a false mirror. I too grew up calling myself Spanish."

Jeanne Gauna, co-director of the civil and environmental rights SouthWest Organizing Project, which distributes *500 Years*, explained that after the Mexican American War ended in 1848, people of Mexican origin faced lynchings, land theft and virulent racism. Later, in times of economic depression, people of Mexican origin—citizens and noncitizens alike—were deported en masse. "That's why no one has historically wanted to identify as Mexican," she says.

As a result, many Mexican-origin people internalized the racism and learned to despise all things Mexican, says Gauna, who was also raised in Vaughn.

They equate being Mexican with being Indian, and to them, that's an insult.

That *500 Years* teaches this history of oppression does not make it racist, says Gauna. Quite the contrary. It helps open people's eyes—and many students often tell her this with tears in their eyes.

University of Colorado's Evelyn Hu-DeHart, one of the nation's top ethnic studies scholars, says that the efforts to



Nadine (l) and Patsy (r) Córdova. They recently forced the Vaughn School Board to hold a public hearing on their dismissal in the near future.

prevent the teaching of ethnic studies is tied to the "core knowledge" or "back to basics" curriculum movement. It is a backlash against curricula that challenge standard history. Instead of viewing those new curricula as expanding our knowledge, many educators see them as dumbed-down education. When that new knowledge is introduced, "standard [American] history loses its centrality, its primacy and its supremacy," she says. "It's not the students who are afraid of that curriculum, but rather the older generations. They feel that their world view has been taken out from under them."

The debate over ethnic studies is not the first time our

(continued on page 19)

SouthWest Organizing Project • April 1997

Banned in Vaughn (continued from page 5)

educational system has been challenged. Last century, Ivy League students studied Greek and Latin history. English and American literature was not deemed worthy of study. Universities now teach English and American literature and the academy is still standing. Similarly, the broadening of our intellectual and cultural knowledge with ethnic studies can only strengthen our educational system, not weaken it, says Hu-DeHart.

Nadine Córdova is not fazed by the action against her. She believes she is on solid legal grounds and plans to sue if necessary. She feels the material she uses in class benefits the students, and says, "If you're not teaching relevant education, then you're not teaching." In a sense, it's sad that it will perhaps take a court of law to determine how relevant she is.

You can ask for their reinstatement and show your support of the Córdovas by writing letters to: C. Arthur Martinez, Superintendent, or Andy Córdova, School Board President, Vaughn Public Schools, PO Box 489, Vaughn, NM 88353.

To: Governor Gary Johnson
Mr. Tom Turney, State Water Engineer

Dear Sirs:

Intel Corporation has requested a transfer of 2,027 acre feet of water from Socorro County to offset its negative impact on the Rio Grande. This will allow Intel to pump an additional 2.9 million gallons of water a day from their plant in Rio Rancho. This transfer is not only contrary to water conservation but it will be detrimental to the economic development and public welfare of Socorro County. I am urging you not to approve this transfer of water rights from Socorro County to Sandoval County.

Sincerely,

Name (please print)

Address/City/State/Zip

Signature

Please clip out or photocopy the above "card," fill it out and mail it to SWOP at 211 10th St. SW, Albuquerque, NM 887102

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