"Tucson’s Mexican American Ethnic Studies: What are the Facts & Why the Pushback?"

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7:00p-9:00p
Domenici Auditorium on the Health Sciences Center Campus
University of New Mexico

National Trends:
- Current third grade reading scores are being used to calculate future prison needs.
- Latino and African American males score lowest in third grade reading tests
- Latino high school dropout rates nationwide hover around 56%
- Roughly 24% of graduating Latinos go on to college

Local Solutions:
Tucson Unified School District's Ethnic Studies and Mexican American Studies programs have reversed the bad trends. The dropout rate in this program is 2.5%, as opposed to 56% nationally. Students in the program significantly outperform their peers on the state's standardized AIMS tests. In addition, 66% of these students go on to college, versus 24% nationally. Since 1999, the program has grown from a single American History Mexican American Perspective class to some 44 high school level classes throughout TUSD, and more at the k-12 level.

A few days after signing Arizona Senate Bill 1070, Arizona governor, Jan Brewer signed HB 2281 to bring about the demise of all ethnic studies programs throughout state's public high schools. HB 2281 intends to push out “out-of-compliance” ethnic studies programs and under vague interpretations that label their educational content as “promoting resentment toward a class of people,” and “promoting the overthrow of the U.S. government.” HB 2281 strips elected local school boards of their governing and decision-making powers. Once enacted, this legislation empowers one man- the School Superintendent- to seek out violations. It permits him to impose severe fines on school districts that incorporate ethnic studies curriculums. Although, the previous Superintendent and now Attorney General Tom Horne steadfastly refused to set foot into a TUSD Mexican American Studies classroom or discuss the curriculum and learning process with students, he has publicly stated that this program will be his first target.

Sponsors: APS, LAPE & MCE at UNM COE, HSC Office of Diversity, School of Law, Hispano/Latino Academic Achievement Committee, Partnership for Community Action, Office for Equity & Inclusion, Latino Education Improvement Task Force, and individual contributors.

Donations to support the ongoing litigation to save the ethnic studies program will be solicited.