

From: neal SHIGEMITSU

Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 7:24 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Appendix B: Sample Lesson 7, Line 1120: The East L.A. Blowouts

Dear Committee Members:

I grew up in central Los Angeles and attended Belmont High School, one of the schools at the center of the East Los Angeles Blowouts. I knew Sal Castro, the leader of the Chicano Blowout movement, when he was a teacher at Belmont HS. I discussed his views with him and attended his lecture at USC concerning Mexican-American academics. I wish to comment on the inclusion of the ELA Chicano Blowouts subject in the Ethnic Studies MC.

The premise espoused in the Ethnic Studies MC was that the ELA Blowouts was necessary because of "...discrimination and injustice within the educational system". This propaganda is divisive and fosters hostility towards Whites, educators, and American society. It is patently false, self-serving, and self-deceiving.

The leaders of the Chicano Blowouts espoused the false narrative that the lack of academic achievement of Mexican-American students was solely due to racism. The leaders put forth the myth that White educators were figuratively slapping the textbooks out of the hands of the Mexican-American students.

The Chicano leaders claimed they were not allowed to speak Spanish during school. However, no one was allowed to speak any other language in school. This was to instill the English language skills needed to function in the American economy. All other immigrants who came to this country had the same restrictions and agreed it helped them.

The Chicano leaders charged racism was the reason only about 40 students attended UCLA at that time. But there was no quota or discrimination to block Mexican-American admissions. The fact there were concurrently many more African-American students attending higher education suggests other explanations for the dearth of Mexican-American students.

The Chicano leaders claim the education in East Los Angeles was inferior. This is not true. Most of my friends went to schools in South Central and East Los Angeles. Most of them attended universities. They would not have been able to meet the academic admission requirements if the schools were actually inferior.

The Chicano leaders claim that Mexican-American people faced discrimination. This is true. However, Mexican-Americans were not the only group who suffered discrimination. Mexican-Americans suffered no worse than many other ethnic groups. The Irish, Italians, Poles, etc. were treated as bad, if not worse. Asians were definitely treated worse. And there is no comparison to the barriers and discrimination suffered by African-Americans.

The section on the Student Walkout Demands should include a discussion that they are Chicano racist demands, as follows:

- All administrators where schools have majority of Mexican-American descent shall be of Mexican- American descent (emphasis added).
- Bilingual-Bi-cultural education will be compulsory for Mexican-Americans (emphasis added).
- All administrators in the elementary and secondary schools in these areas will become proficient in the Spanish language (emphasis added).
- Administrators and teachers who show any form of prejudice toward Mexican or Mexican-American students, including failure to recognize, understand, and appreciate Mexican culture and heritage, will be removed from East Los Angeles schools (emphasis added).

As stated above, I attended Belmont HS where I interacted with Sal Castro, the leader of the ELA Blowouts. I disagreed with Sal Castro that the school teachers and administrators were racist. At Belmont HS, no one was academically segregated by race. My college prep classes were completely diverse and included Mexican-American and African-American students. In fact, the White students were a minority. And not all Asian and White students were tracked into college prep classes. Mr. Sal Castro opined that even academic requirements for student awards and service clubs were discriminatory.

Belmont HS was probably the most diverse school in the city. There were students from every ethnic background. There were immigrants from Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and European Captive Nations (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.) who faced the same challenges as the Mexican-American students; language, poverty, culture. But many attended universities, even attaining professional and post-graduate degrees.

I agree that educators should have tried harder to encourage Mexican-American students towards higher education. However, I know when they tried, they were

often rebuffed by the parents. Many Mexican-American students, especially girls, were not allowed to accept scholarships. Many Mexican-American students were discouraged from pursuing higher education, much less graduating high school. I know several who suffered hostility from their families and friends because they attended college.

I write this letter without any animus towards Latino people. I believe a frank and truthful discussion is necessary as it affects the future of California as well as the United States.

Sincerely

Neal Shigemitsu