

## **Statement on AZ HB2281 and SB 1070**

Adopted Fall 2010 by the Chicano/Hispano/Mexicano/Studies Program at the University of New Mexico and Supported by Additional UNM Institutes and Programs

The enactment of Arizona House Bill 2281 and Senate Bill 1070 dismays us. HB 2281 threatens to ban ethnic Studies in Arizona's public and charter schools. SB 1070 requires law enforcement to ascertain the immigration status of people based on a "reasonable suspicion" that they are undocumented. As the lawsuit by the U.S. Department of Justice and a federal court recently concluded, this is outside the scope of state government and, indeed, we believe it makes racial profiling inevitable. As faculty and staff members at the University of New Mexico we are especially disturbed to see such laws adopted by the legislature of a neighboring state that shares much of our history. Arizona and New Mexico, and increasingly other parts of the United States reside at the confluence of multiple national and cultural traditions. SB 1070 and HB 2281 undermine the dialogue that is necessary to address our nation's racial, ethnic, and immigration issues.

We concur letters written in 2010 to Arizona governor Janice Brewer from the presidents of the American Sociological Association (ASA) and Modern Language Association, among others. ASA President Evelyn N. Glenn noted that banning the teaching of an entire area of legitimate scholarship is a form of government intervention in schools that has a dangerous history. She further states that the "potential persecution of teachers and school administrators solely on the basis of presenting in their classrooms a recognized body of scholarship that has produced an extensive and useful body of knowledge becomes possible, and likely, under HB 2281." Moreover, the ethnic studies that HB 2281 ostensibly seeks to end bears little resemblance to the vibrant and diverse field that many of us have participated in since the establishment of Chicano Studies at the University of New Mexico and other institutions four decades ago.

The passage of SB 1070 itself demonstrates the need for the teaching of ethnic studies and immigration history. In his letter to Governor Brewer, the Chair of the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies, Devón Peña, faulted the law for its failure to consider the positive impact of undocumented immigrants on the U.S. economy, or its inflammatory nature and implications for racial profiling. Even more disturbing is the xenophobic arguments that advocate such profiling advanced by the law's supporters in the popular media and the internet. SB 1070 is not a reflection of public policy developed on the basis of sound evidence; it is a law motivated by fear, hate, and ideology.

Ethnic studies courses offer students the opportunity to explore the complexities of the American experience. The courses we teach and are familiar with encourage nuanced analysis and debate grounded in evidence and scholarship. Students live in a society in which such issues confront them on a daily basis. At UNM, we find that students of diverse backgrounds seek such courses to explore the sources of social stratification, the history of immigration, and Anglo-Mexican-Indian-Black relations in the U.S. and in the Southwest. We broaden the focus to include relations with Mexico. Perhaps if the members of the Arizona legislature had taken some of our courses their attitude toward this subject would be different and better informed.

In conclusion, we see HB 2281 and SB 1070 as dangerous and divisive. We support Arizona students who fight to protect ethnic studies being taught at their schools. We suggest that ethnic studies programs, in Arizona, New Mexico and elsewhere, can serve as a place for well-informed dialogue regarding immigration and ethnic issues. We conclude with a plea for solutions that are respectful of human and civil rights.

Programs and Institutes that subscribe to this statement on (1/28/11) are listed below.  
Chicano Hispano Mexicano Studies (CHMS) Program Southwest Hispanic Research Institute  
Institute for American Indian Research Center for Regional Studies  
El Centro de la Raza

*This statement was drafted by the Advisory Committee for Chicano/Hispano/Mexicano Studies.*