

**Save Ethnic Studies, Inc.
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November 30, 2010

Hand Delivered

Judy Burns, President
TUSD Governing Board Members
Tucson Unified School District Governing Board
1010 East 10th Street
Tucson, AZ, 85719

Re: School Board Member Dr. Mark Stegeman, Board Member Elect Michael Hicks, and Tucsonans United for a Sound District Request for Ethnic Studies "Review Panel"

Dear Ms. Burns and Governing Board Members,

We find ourselves the mist of turbulent times; there is a deep anti-Mexican sentiment openly expressed throughout our state that has now found its way into policy making and enacted legislation. Too many have forgotten some of the core values that have made our country unique in its stature and history.

If the United States is to remain the "land of opportunity" and one where all individuals can pull themselves up and succeed regardless of where they came from, our commitment to public education cannot waiver or be compromised. Our success as a nation exist in no small part due to the great equalizer that the public schools have been for many people, allowing them to achieve greatness regardless of their circumstance.

The passage of HB 2281 represents a significant step in the wrong direction, a misguided effort to turn back the clock on Latino students and deny them the opportunity to be exposed to their own history, literature and culture. The recent requests by Tucson Unified School District Board Member Dr. Mark Stegeman, School

Board Member elect Michael Hicks, and Tucsonans United for A Sound District represents an endorsement of HB 2281, one that Save Ethnic Studies, Inc. laments that it lends legitimacy to an unconstitutional law that represents bad public policy. This is especially true in an era when the public schools have been abandoned by the majority and left to educate minority students.

Ethnic Studies programs within TUSD have been a success with a population of students that were otherwise ignored and left behind. Since it's inception the program has increased the active engagement of at-risk students in the educational process. The educational efficacy of these programs have been demonstrated by the students who have gone through the program. For the past seven years these students have achieved higher college entrance rates than their peers (84% for MASD students compared to the 24% national average for Mexican Americans), considerably lower drop-out rates than their Mexican American/Latino peers (the program has essentially eliminated the drop-out rates for the students they serve); and higher Arizona high-stakes test passing rates than their peers who do not take MASD classes.

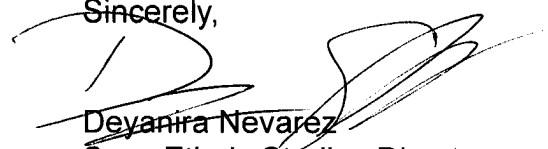
The request to the Tucson Unified School District Board for a "review panel" is flawed and represents a presumption of guilt. The persons behind this request appear to have forgotten that one is innocent until proven guilty? The process suggested will subject the Mexican-American studies teachers to a process that no other teacher in the District will be subjected to. In addition, the Board would be ignoring the originators of the bill. Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne has made the MASD his punching bag throughout his tenure. He claims that "these classes separate students by race" and that this is not acceptable but he finds it completely acceptable to separate MASD teachers, MASD students, and the Mexican-American community as a whole and make them his sole target. The reality is that Superintendent Tom Horne has used this issue to propel himself into higher office. He has used our children, our school district, and our Ethnic Studies program to get himself elected to Attorney General.

Save Ethnic Studies, Inc. is an organization committed to making sure that the Ethnic Studies program in TUSD continues to be a success. We are in the process of becoming a 501 c 4 tax exempt organization under the 501 c 4 section of the IRS code. Since our inception earlier this year we have made sure that we keep our operation as transparent as possible. We have even teamed up with other organizations to hold public forums and educate the public on the program and the current lawsuit filed against the State Board of Education against HB 2281. We hope that the Board as a whole will join in our effort and reject the anti-Mexican agenda that you have been requested to join.

TUSD's Mexican American Studies program is a national model. In these times it is vital that the program is defended and allowed to continue its path of allowing all students to find success in their education. Your support is vital to the future of the program and the lives of thousands of students who are depending on you to be there for them in this unprecedented time of attack and bias.

We look forward to working with the Board as we continue our efforts to preserve our gains and expand new opportunities for all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deyanira Nevarez', written over a horizontal line.

Deyanira Nevarez
Save Ethnic Studies Director