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**THE LATINA/O ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:
A POLITICAL AND EPISTEMIC CHALLENGE TO THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

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Arizona House Bill (H.B.) 2281,¹ the law aiming to remove Raza and Mexican-American Studies from Arizona high schools, supports the argument that the modern/colonial/capitalist system is never solely about labor and access to monetary resources. The system is also about the politics of knowledge production: specifically who has the “right” to produce knowledge—to be understood as having an intellectual culture and history, and to educate future generations. Similarly, in a post-Proposition 209 California,² amidst massive cutbacks to public education funding and attacks on the purpose and validity of Ethnic Studies, there is a peculiar contradiction developing. On the political level, there is a continued (albeit extremely limited)

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1. See H.B. 2281, 49th Leg., 2d Reg. Sess. (Ariz. 2010).

2. CAL. SEC’Y OF STATE, 1996 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT PAMPHLET: PROPOSITION 209 (1996), *available at* <http://vote96.sos.ca.gov/bp/209.htm>. Proposition 209 was a controversial 1996 California ballot measure approved by 54% of voters. The measure prohibited the state from discriminating against or showing favor to anyone based on “race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.” *Id.* This measure effectively ended affirmative action in the University of California system. The numbers of admitted underrepresented minority students dropped at every UC campus, and by 50% at UC Berkeley and UCLA, directly following the introduction of Proposition 209. STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVS., UNIV. OF CAL., UNDERGRADUATE ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AFTER THE ELIMINATION OF RACE-CONSCIOUS POLICIES 2 (2003). In 1995, Chicanas/osLatinas/os, African Americans, and Native Americans constituted 21% of the UC undergraduate population. In 2008-2009, the percentage of underrepresented minority students in the UCs stood at almost 20%: Chicano/Latino students comprised 14% of the UC population and African Americans constituted 5%. UNIV. OF CAL., ACCOUNTABILITY SUB-REPORT ON DIVERSITY 5 (2010).

effort to recruit and retain underrepresented students.³ This political concern with maintaining a “diverse” campus (underrepresented students, staff, and faculty) manifests itself, in part, as limited administrative support of Ethnic Studies programs, to the extent that they are viewed as service departments whose primary purpose is to sustain such diversity. However, the support is outpaced by outright hostility and disregard towards the epistemic contributions of Ethnic Studies from those that question the field’s very existence.⁴ How then are we to understand these simultaneous dynamics? It is in this context that the Latina/o Academy of Arts and Sciences is emerging to support scholar-activists and challenge Eurocentric hegemony in academia.

The Latina/o Academy is clearly playing on the name of the hallmark institution, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS), an institution that was and continues to be central for establishing and validating the American intellectual canon and tradition as we know it today. Among its members are Jean Louis Rodolph Agassiz and Samuel George Morton—two leading contributors to nineteenth century theories of scientific racism.⁵ The entanglement between colonial nation-building and the establishment of an intrinsic intellectual culture are clearly stated on the AAAS website:

For over 230 years, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has been honoring excellence and providing service to the nation and the world. Through independent, nonpartisan study, its ranks of distinguished ‘scholar-patriot’ have brought the arts and sciences into constructive interplay with the leaders of both the public and private sectors. The Academy was founded during the American Revolution by John Adams, James Bowdoin, John Hancock, and other leaders who contributed prominently to the establishment of the new nation, its government, and its Constitution. Its purpose

3. As an example, see Donna Hemmila, *Regents Pledge Diversity Action*, UNIV. CAL. (Mar. 24, 2010), www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/23079.

4. See Christine E. Sleeter, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review*, NAT’L EDUC. ASS’N 5 (2011), http://saveethnicstudies.org/assets/docs/proven_results/Academinc-and-social-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf.

5. See generally STEPHEN JAY GOULD, *THE MISMEASURE OF MAN* (1996); SIOBHAN SOMERVILLE, *QUEERING THE COLOR LINE: RACE AND THE INVENTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN AMERICAN CULTURE* 22 (2000).

was to provide a forum for a select group of scholars, members of the learned professions, and government and business leaders to work together on behalf of the democratic interests of the republic.⁶

It is this under-examined triad between colonialism, slavery, and academic scholarship that the Latina/o Academy seeks to expose and go beyond by working towards another way of thinking about the human.⁷

The legal battle in Arizona to dismantle Raza/Mexican-American Studies is focused at the high school level, but the attack on Chicano/Latino and Ethnic Studies programs at the university level has been ongoing for years, albeit most blatantly in the form of polemics.⁸ David Horowitz—former member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and one-time editor of the left-wing magazine *Ramparts*, who turned into a right-wing conservative activist after a series of alleged incidents involving himself and members of the Black Panther Party⁹—stands as one of the strongest voices against the existence of race-based analyses at the postsecondary level. He insists that his objections do not include all Ethnic Studies programs, but rather a particular *tendency within* Ethnic Studies programs: that of replacing class with race in the analysis of poverty.¹⁰ David Horowitz insists on the nuance of his

6. *About the Academy*, AM. ACAD. OF ARTS & SCIENCES, <http://www.amacad.org/about.aspx> (last visited Feb. 28, 2012).

7. See generally Sylvia Wynter, *1492: A New World View*, in *RACE, DISCOURSE, AND THE ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAS: A NEW WORLD VIEW 5* (Vera Lawrence Hyatt & Rex Nettleford, eds., 1995).

8. Arizona Superintendent John Huppenthal recently stated in an interview that university-level Mexican American studies programs are now also under scrutiny. Roque Planas, *Arizona Official Considers Targeting Mexican American Studies in University*, FOX NEWS LATINO (Mar. 28, 2012), <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2012/03/28/arizona-official-considers-targeting-mexican-american-studies-in-university/>.

9. See DAVID HOROWITZ, *RADICAL SON: A GENERATIONAL ODYSSEY* 219-50 (1997).

10. In an online discussion regarding Ethnic Studies programs Horowitz stated,

I consider myself to be someone concerned with racial justice, and not just as an academic interest but as a lifelong vocation beginning in 1948, when I marched in support of President Truman's new Fair Employment Practices Commission. . . . I [did not] claim that everyone who regards

argument, lambasting those that he says overgeneralize his statements (despite the rather frequent contradictions evident in his texts),¹¹ yet other “liberal” commentators such as Stanley Fish¹² have been more forthright in stating their interest in dismantling Ethnic Studies programs that are too political.¹³ Although there are important differences between the political leanings of Arizona Superintendent of Schools Tom Horne (who spearheaded the H.B. 2281 effort and positions his critique of Ethnic Studies programs as a defense of Western civilization),¹⁴ David Horowitz, and Stanley Fish, collectively their public statements on Ethnic Studies have contributed to a frosty climate for Ethnic Studies educators irrespective of the

race as a valid category of analysis is ‘responsible for a resurgence of race-hatred in this country,’ which would be . . . absurd I was very specific in putting responsibility on the plates of advocates of ‘identity politics’ and proponents of ‘Afro-centrism’ and other leftwing ideologies that have substituted race for class in their ongoing war against bourgeois democratic societies like the United States.

David Horowitz, *Ethnic Studies or Racism?*, FRONTPAGEMAG.COM (June 1, 1998), <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=22652>. Although Horowitz’ criticisms of the left are abundant, it is still unclear how Horowitz thinks right-wing conservatism will help alleviate his stated concerns of racism and poverty. In *Radical Son*, Horowitz speaks of his intent as a young activist to write a scholarly book on Marxist theory; now that he has gone to the right, one could assume he would write a scholarly book on right-wing conservative theory or a systematic critique of Marxism. To date, there are more than a dozen books of polemics, but no monograph. *See id.* at 121.

11. For example, to prioritize class in social analyses and relegate race to the status of an epiphenomenon, as Horowitz suggests, is unequivocally a particular “marxist” position on the race/class debate. Yet, throughout books such as *Hating Whitey*, Horowitz is quite unforgiving to those who hold even latent marxist tendencies. *See* DAVID HOROWITZ, *HATING WHITEY AND OTHER PROGRESSIVE CAUSES* 232-39 (1999).

12. Stanley Fish is probably most widely known as a commentator for *The New York Times*, but he is also a professor of humanities and law at the Florida International University in Miami. Stanley Fish, *Opinionator*, N.Y. TIMES, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/author/stanley-fish/> (last visited Mar. 11, 2011).

13. Stanley Fish & Cary Nelson, *Academic Freedom in a Time of Crisis*, UNIV. OF CAL. TELEVISION (May 23, 2011), <http://www.uctv.tv/search-details.aspx?showID=20775>.

14. *CNN Newsroom*, (CNN television broadcast May 21, 2010) (transcript available at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1005/21/cnr.04.html>).

heterogeneous politics of said educators. Despite these attacks from various directions, Ethnic Studies and related programs continue to grow, granted at a snail's pace, at the postsecondary level, and underrepresented students and faculty continue to be recruited.

In California alone, a Ph.D. program in Chicana/o Studies was founded at University of California (UC) Santa Barbara in 2003, a Ph.D. program in Ethnic Studies at UC Riverside began in 2009, and another Chicana/o Studies Ph.D. program was approved at UC Los Angeles to begin in 2012.¹⁵ The annual Critical Ethnic Studies Major Conference¹⁶ was established at UC Riverside in 2011 and there have been several replacement hires in the Ethnic Studies department at UC San Diego over the last several years.¹⁷ In a post-Proposition 209 context, where underrepresented student numbers have fallen precipitously, research universities continue to make an effort to recruit these students.¹⁸ In the context of overt hostility to the presence of underrepresented students,¹⁹ and overt attacks on Ethnic Studies

15. See *M.A./Ph.D. Program*, UCSB CHICANO STUDIES DEP'T, <http://www.chicst.ucsb.edu/> (last visited Feb. 28, 2012); *The Ph.D. Program*, UCR ETHNIC STUDIES DEP'T, <http://ethnicstudies.ucr.edu/> (last visited Feb. 28, 2012); *Announcing a New Ph.D. in Chicana/o Studies at UCLA*, UCLA CESAR E. CHAVEZ DEP'T OF CHICANA/O STUDIES, <http://www.chavez.ucla.edu/academic-programs/graduate/announcing-a-new-ph.d.-in-chicana-o-studies-at-ucla> (last visited Feb. 28, 2012).

16. See *UC Riverside Hosts Ethnic Studies Conference*, UNIV. OF CAL., RIVERSIDE (Feb. 22, 2011), <http://newsroom.ucr.edu/2558>; *Ethnic Studies and the Future of Genocide*, UNIV. OF CAL., RIVERSIDE, http://cesa.ucr.edu/general_info.html (last visited Feb. 28, 2012).

17. See *Ethnic Studies*, UC SAN DIEGO, <http://ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu/> (last visited Feb. 28, 2012).

18. Horowitz claims that the University of California spends \$160 million on outreach programs annually. HOROWITZ, *supra* note 11, at 90. However, the UC Office of the President reported that it spent \$137 million dollars for the 1998-1999 year, and by the 2007-2008 year, the budget for outreach programs had dropped to \$12 million. *UC Budget Plan Provides for Enrollment Growth, Better Facilities, & Quality Education*, UNIV. OF CAL. (Oct. 15, 1998), www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/9462; *Intersegmental: UC and CSU Outreach Programs: Governor Proposes Outreach Reductions*, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE, http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_2007/education/ed_15_anl07.aspx (last visited Mar. 24, 2012).

19. See *Ethnic Studies Faculty and Student Response to UCSD Campus Crisis Precipitated by the Event Dubbed the "Compton Cookout," STOP THE RACISM, SEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA AT UC SAN DIEGO* (Feb. 23, 2010),

and related programs, one might wonder why the UC system continues to put time, money (however miniscule), and effort into recruiting underrepresented students and faculty and maintaining Ethnic Studies departments at all. It is important to understand why UC campuses have not ceased recruiting underrepresented students and faculty, and why Ethnic Studies and related programs continue to operate despite years of open attack.

In the late 1990s at UC Berkeley, the very possibility of being squeezed out of existence was on the horizon, as new tenure track professors were not being hired to replace retired senior faculty, and departmental budgets were being cut. Graduate students of the Ethnic Studies Department, the future professors, received little research funding and did not have any personal office space. In response, undergraduate and graduate students galvanized and protested the choking off of resources to the Ethnic Studies Department, which resulted in the May 7, 1999, Ethnic Studies Agreement.²⁰ This agreement included eight full-time equivalent (FTE) searches during the next five years, annual resources necessary to sustain curricular offerings, seed money of \$100,000 per year for five years for an institute of race and gender studies, the pursuit of extramural funds in support of this institute, equitable space allocation, an annual commitment of \$40,000 for student recruitment efforts, space for a multi-cultural student center, and the installment of a mural.²¹

This success speaks well to the fact that student mobilization has and continues to be crucial to the survival of Ethnic Studies departments. Today, the resources gained from the agreement largely define the parameters of the intellectual life of UC Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Department. However, another dynamic is also at play. At an administrative level, a basis for the continued effort to recruit and retain underrepresented students and faculty is found in the *California Master Plan for Education*.²² The *Master Plan*, first passed by the UC

<http://stopracismucsd.wordpress.com/2010/02/23/ethnic-studies-faculty-and-student-response-to-ucsd-campus-crisis-precipitated-by-the-event-dubbed-the-compton-cookout/>.

20. *UC Berkeley's Support for Ethnic Studies*, UNIV. OF CAL., BERKELEY, http://berkeley.edu/news/extras/1999/ethnicstudies_onhold/agreement.html (last visited Feb. 28, 2012).

21. *Id.*

22. Joint Comm. to Develop a Master Plan for Educ., *California Master Plan*

Regents and the State Board of Education in 1959, and then passed by the California Legislature in 1960, established the principle of universal access for students in the State of California.²³ To this end, the University of California campuses were designated to select from the top 12.5% of graduating secondary school classes, and to be the primary purveyors of doctoral degrees within the California higher education system.²⁴

The issue that has arisen is that the demographics of California are not represented in the University of California system. If California is a “minority-majority” state²⁵ and the *Master Plan* states that the higher education system would reflect and address the needs of California’s population, then the question of why student demographics in the UCs continue to lag behind state numbers needs to be asked. The *Master Plan* states:

The California State University and University of California systems should continue to adhere to the policy of guaranteeing that all students who apply for freshman admission and who are eligible to attend (students within the top one-third, in the case of California State University applicants, and the top one-eighth, in the case of University of California applicants) are offered admission to the system(s) for which they are eligible and have applied.²⁶

According to the *Master Plan*, and given the state’s population, there should be more underrepresented students at the UC campuses so as to render the moniker “underrepresented” irrelevant. So where are the underrepresented students and faculty?

for *Education*, UNIV. OF CAL. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT (2002), http://www.ucop.edu/acadinit/mastplan/master_plan2002.pdf.

23. *Id.* at 2, 4, 9.

24. *Id.* at 39; see also *California Master Plan for Higher Education: Major Features*, UNIV. OF CAL. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/ca_masterplan_summary.pdf (last visited Mar. 24, 2012).

25. California became a “minority-majority” state in 2000, which means the state population is more than fifty percent “non-white.” Daniel Byrd, *California’s New Majority: Population Report*, THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE, (Dec. 2010), <http://www.greenlining.org/resources/pdfs/PopulationReportFinal.pdf>.

26. *California Master Plan for Education*, *supra* note 24, at 39.

It would be hasty to assume this was just an issue of demographics and representation. The *Gulbenkian Commission Report on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*²⁷ reminds us that there was a push against the established academic community in the 1960s and 1970s by pointing out that the knowledge being produced by research institutions was extremely Eurocentric, effectively excluding vast groups of people.²⁸ The argument was that if researchers from excluded groups were recruited into the academy, then the scope of inquiry would also likely expand in radical ways (although now we can see that one does not necessarily follow the other).²⁹ Nevertheless, the issue was deeper than the social origins of researchers:

The new voices among the social scientists raised theoretical questions that went beyond the question of the topics or subjects of legitimate study, and even beyond the argument that evaluations are made differently from different perspectives. The argument of these new voices was also that there have been presuppositions built into the theoretical reasoning of the social sciences . . . [,] many of which in fact incorporated *a priori* prejudices or modes of reasoning that have neither theoretical nor empirical justification, and that these *a priori* elements ought to be elucidated, analyzed, and replaced by more justifiable premises.³⁰

It is this context that the *California Master Plan* emerged, even if it could not foresee the more profound epistemic consequences. Somewhere between the principles laid out in the *Master Plan* and the directives of Proposition 209, the UC system continues to tread a path for recruiting underrepresented students and faculty. Post-Proposition

27. IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN ET AL., OPEN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: REPORT OF THE GULBENKIAN COMMISSION ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (1996).

28. *Id.* at 54. See Charles Teddlie & John A. Freeman, *Twentieth-Century Desegregation in U.S. Higher Education: A Review of Five Distinct Historical Eras*, in *THE RACIAL CRISIS IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION* 77, 80-84 (William A. Smith et al. eds., 2002) for an overview of desegregation efforts in U.S. higher education.

29. To repeat an old political adage: One's political consciousness does not always correspond with the best interests of one's social location.

30. WALLERSTEIN, *supra* note 27, at 55.

209, at institutions such as UC San Diego, Ethnic Studies programs have become flagships for the recruitment and retention of students and faculty of color on campus. If the UC campuses are to keep to the legally mandated *California Master Plan*, but students from underrepresented communities are largely unable to attend UC campuses due to prohibitive costs, for those who *do* attend, Ethnic Studies programs often function as community hubs. In this light, the reason for the continued institutional (as opposed to epistemic) support of Ethnic Studies programs within the UC system becomes clearer.

Problematically, a catch-22 situation has been created for Ethnic Studies departments: they help retain underrepresented students and faculty on campus, yet wind up spending a great deal of time addressing the lived experience of these issues—such as campus climate, representation, and participation in campus policy development. An attendant problem is that some campus administrators understand Ethnic Studies programs primarily as diversity offices for the retention of underrepresented students and faculty and not as intellectual academic departments in their own right, engaged in the production of new, rigorous, and unique ideas and scholarship.

The misperceptions of some administrators and other observers of Ethnic Studies translate to a number of concerns that are not easily brushed aside. First, even in the one space on campuses where underrepresented faculty are the majority, they are likely not seen as legitimate knowledge producers within the university. A clear example can be found in David Horowitz' assessment of queer and feminist of color scholarship:

Today the alien power thought by the left to control our destinies is only rarely described as a 'ruling class,' although it is still perceived as that. Refuted by the history of communist empires, the left has turned to new vocabularies and concepts to rescue it from its defeats. Today the ruling class is identified as the 'patriarchy' or the 'white male oligarchy,' or in disembodied form as the force of 'institutional racism' or 'white supremacy.' The result is a kitsch

marxism that follows the basic marxist scheme but results in true intellectual incoherence.³¹

In this quote, it is evident that Horowitz does not see feminist of color scholarship as contributing new ideas or unique analyses to intellectual life, but rather, just incoherently rehashing problematic Marxist positions (while it is in response to such Marxist positions that much feminist of color critique is actually based!). Second, the added service work done for the campus around recruitment and retention issues may just be seen as a part of Ethnic Studies' role on campus rather than an additional expectation over and above what is required of a successful tenure track professor. Yet, when one comes up for review the very same service work, which often surpasses that of faculty in other departments, is not equitably considered towards tenure.

In this light, there are a number of goals that the Latina/o Academy of Arts and Sciences could accomplish. First, it would create an unapologetically intellectual space that affirms, recognizes, and rewards the kind of interdisciplinary, politically committed scholarship that critical Latina/o intellectuals do, defying the admonitions and belittlement from people like Tom Horne, David Horowitz, and Stanley Fish, among others.

The Academy could be at the forefront of redefining how "the arts and sciences" are currently understood. As of now, critical Latina/o intellectuals are not seen as scholars intervening in 500 years of colonial knowledge production, but rather, largely as service providers who are at best fulfilling liberal demands for diversity and multiculturalism. Further, Ethnic Studies departments at research universities are often viewed as a kind of holding station for underrepresented students to become part of the managerial class in whatever field they pursue: in essence, providing underrepresented bodies for an essentially Eurocentric enterprise. The Latina/o Academy would be a brain trust that insists on the fundamental epistemic challenges that Latina/o Studies and Ethnic Studies embody, and it would support and affirm that work.

A Latina/o Academy could help address the catch-22 situation where the work we do is evaluated on a supposed "level playing field"

31. HOROWITZ, *supra* note 11, at 85-86.

alongside our white male colleagues, but our intellectual work is actually reduced to being little more than service work for the campus, not *thinking* in its own right. An intellectual organization could support and give credit to the full complexity of our scholarship and point out the subject position from which we engage academic life and challenge Eurocentric institutions that present themselves as universal and disembodied.

Bourgeois patriarchal Eurocentrism has defined the parameters of scholarly excellence in the U.S. for the past few hundred years—it is time to point out these presuppositions that disconnect the mind from the body, that punishes community engagement, and posits European male specificity as universal objectivity. All scholars write from particular standpoints, even when making claims to dominant definitions of objectivity, and organizing under the rubric of a Latina/o Academy provides a space where we can think critically about our history and experience as coming from former Spanish colonies and now living in the United States. It would foreground the legacy of Spanish colonialism in an Anglo colonial context, thereby complicating existing discourses and narratives about “our place” in a settler colonial nation. As individual, usually small, departments, we are in a difficult position, but as an organized body, much more could be accomplished.

