

Jan 1st, 2:02 AM

PART ONE: Building a National Scholar-Activist Organization - Chair Welcome

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Hernández, Roberto D., "PART ONE: Building a National Scholar-Activist Organization - Chair Welcome" (2022). *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings*. 12.
<https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/2022/Proceedings/12>

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Dear Colegas,

I want to welcome you to the 48th Annual conference of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the first ever gathering in 1972 in San Antonio that led to the creation of the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists (NCCSS), the first incarnation of what we now know as NACCS.

Nehuatl nitlacuiloa huan niltse iukpa Mat Kumeyaay! I write to you and bring you greetings from Kumeyaay Land. From the traditional territory of the Iipay-Tipay/Kumeyaay Nations that extend across the relatively recent man-made national-territorial boundaries of the entities currently referred to as the United States and Mexico. From present day Oceanside, California to Ensenada, Baja California, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River, these lands have nourished, healed, protected and embraced the Kumeyaay for time immemorial in a relationship of balance and harmony. As a faculty member in Chicana and Chicano Studies at San Diego State University we have long acknowledged this legacy and living present, and actively worked to build relations with the Kumeyaay, long before any officially sanctioned university land acknowledgement.

As an heir to *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* and of the legacy of the Toltecas en Aztlán and other community members of Logan Heights who were at the heart of creating Chicano Park, Chicana/o Studies and Centro Cultural de la Raza here in San Diego, we have long promoted and strived to maintain this balance and harmony with the land and with Kumeyaay relatives. As we acknowledge the rinconcito de tierra that we call our Tierra Sagrada, Parque Chicano, Aztlán, and our sacred home, El Centro Cultural de la Raza – La casa de tod@s – we maintain and uphold that this is first and foremost the land of the Kumeyaay, while simultaneously being the emplacement of an Aztlán arrived at through our living praxis. As such, Aztlán is not a territory on which we place any flag in the invented tradition of modern nation-states, but rather a place, a sacred geography we call home for on it Creator provides us with the nourishment for our seeds, and blesses us with the rain and sun to watch our crops grow, and from such harvests allow

us as a People to continue to survive and thrive despite a civilization of death that would like to see our extinction were it not for their dependence on our labor.

From this corner of a land that is known by many names, this year's theme of *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* serves as a reminder of all who pasaron por aqui. I am particularly reminded of the late Rene Nuñez, who would be among the first to make a call for that important and now historic gathering in Santa Barbara that laid the foundation for Chicana and Chicano Studies as we know it today. It was that activist impulse that he and others, such as our also recently departed Juan Gomez-Quíñonez and Gracia Molina de Pick, all of whom passed por aqui, through the halls of San Diego State University that I now call my home campus and through the gathering spaces in Santa Barbara in 1970, who helped galvanize a generation of young Chicanas and Chicanos to take up the challenge of producing knowledge in the service of our communities. Some have since made their journeys to Mictlan, others are still with us. Here in San Diego, we honor them and those with whose presence we are still blessed – among them Sonia Lopez, Enriqueta Chavez, Gus Segade, Pepe Villarino, Alurista and others – who helped plant those earliest of seeds and nurture them into the robust field that we have today. Fifty-two years later, as we gather for this also historic conference, and we begin a new fire, I welcome and invite each of you to also remember, recall, honor, and embrace – warts and all – the many respective elders and scholars of your particular geographies, or your particular home departments, whose efforts over the past 50 years have allowed each of your campuses to have a space from which you do the work that matters.

Let us gather and honor the activist energies without which there would be no Chicana and Chicano Studies. Pero ojo, this is not a call for melancholy, nostalgia, nor a blind romanticizing of an era bygone. Al contrario, we best honor *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* by recommitting ourselves and our work to be in the spirit of a transformative activism that continues to open spaces for all of our people, that continues to reflect on and learn the lessons from our own previous shortcomings, that continues to look and move forward, pa'lante siempre pa'lante, but not without remembering to be constantly vigilant for our own blindspots. Let us caminar preguntando, always open to continue learning and growing collectively from and with new activist voices of those that have chosen to also walk in the path of what Reynaldo F. Macias calls *La Perspectiva Chicana*. Let us leave behind any pretensions that we have all the answers, for what is transformative knowledge, if not knowledge that both seeks to transform our circumstances, while also remaining open to be transformed itself in the process. Let us not seek recognition or validation in others within an academic complex that is intricately tied to histories of colonization and domination, but instead let us instead authorize our damned selves to trust in the beauty and necessity of our work and our word, our flower and our canto, and indeed our power and our llanto!

Lastly, I wish to thank all who have worked on any and all aspects of making NACCS what it is today, especially over the past two years in the context of la pandemia. I want to thank NACCS members for entrusting me to serve as Chair, even if the circumstances of the last two years did not permit me to be the proactive Chair I had envisioned being. After this conference I will become Past-Chair for the coming year, yet will strive to be an active member of the board, before stepping down the following year. While the pandemic has proved challenging for us all in our teaching, research, and personal lives, it has also allowed for the time to reflect on our own inner workings, to sit with ourselves, our dreams, our aspirations, and the plethora of work that remains ahead. It is not an understatement to point out that the bulk of our work, and indeed the best of our discipline, is yet to come! A final prayer: let us have the serenity to know how to proceed with work que vale la pena, the patience to not give in to petty pleitos or be consumed by a predatory and extractive academia, and the wisdom to know the difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roberto D. Hernández". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "R" and "H".

Roberto D. Hernández
NACCS Chair, 2021-2022