



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 12, 2011

## Tucson Parents Challenge Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Parents in Tucson, Arizona, are beyond disgruntled over the content of an anti-capitalist, anti-American textbook used in an ethnic studies curriculum for grades 3-12. At a Tucson board meeting on May 10 (picture, left and video below), parents articulated their anger over the curriculum's content, and read aloud excerpts from the controversial book.



One mother began the tirade against the curriculum by asking, "I want to know why books like this one are being taught to our kids." She explained that she confronted the issue with administrators at the school, and was told that the book was used in at least five classes, including third graders.

She then proceeded to read jaw-dropping excerpts from the textbook, including "An Epic Poem," which states:

I shed tears of sorrow, I sow seeds of hate  
The force of tyranny of men who rule by farce and hypocrisy,  
In a country that has wiped out all my history, stifled all my pride....  
My land is lost and stolen, My culture has been raped  
Poverty and city-living under the colonial system of the Anglo has frustrated our people's culture  
One note, especially to those young chicanos, hard drugs and the drug culture is the invention of the gringo because he has no culture.  
We have to destroy capitalism...The Declaration of Independence states that we the people have the right to revolution, the right to overthrow a government that has committed abuses and seeks complete control over the people. This is in order to clean out the corrupted, rotten officials that developed out of any type of capitalistic systems.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZzovZasFms>

Another section of the textbook indicates, "Today I have a message....to the children, the students, the workers, the masses, and to the bloodsuckers, the parasites, the vampires who are the capitalists of the world: The schools are tools of the power structure that blind and sentence our youth to a life of confusion, and hypocrisy, one that preaches assimilation and practices institutional racism."

The parent then pointed to several areas of the textbook with inappropriate and explicit language, including Spanish curse words.

Ironically, as the mother read aloud the expletives found in the textbook, one board member interrupted and said, "I'm going to ask that the language be not mentioned during public meetings. We have young people in this room. It's inappropriate." Fortunately, the irony of the board member's assertion was not lost on the crowd, which could be heard on video articulating disgust over such an order. As public



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school students are obviously exposed to that language in the textbook on a regular basis in the classroom, one parent yelled out from the audience, “They’re teaching it in your classroom!”

Sadly, as the mother pointed to excerpt upon excerpt, each which ultimately proved her point that a book such as that had no place in a publicly funded school curriculum, board members appeared uninterested, unmoved, and utterly bored.

Stephen Lemons of the *Phoenix New Times* came out in [defense](#) of the curriculum. In a piece entitled, “Ethnic Studies Equals Politically Conscious Latino Students — Which is Exactly Why Its Enemies Want to Kill It,” with “White Lies” as the subheading,” Lemons wrote:

This is also the general line, BTW, that the [Arizona Republic](#)’s official crotchety old white man, Doug MacEachern, who — like a lot of mean, ornery, tea-bagger-esque ofays — is genuinely terrified of young, intelligent Latinos, armed with facts and logic.

God forbid these young people ever grow up, go to college, and become [Attorney General Tom] Horne and MacEachern’s worst nightmares: members of a new political establishment that will condemn theirs to a timely grave.

Such a goal is exactly what prompted the signing of HB 2281, an Arizona law that bans ethnic studies that promote the overthrow of the United States government and resentment toward a race or class of people.

However, Tucson district’s Mexican American Studies program may prove to be in violation of the law, which took effect on January 1. While Arizona superintendent John Huppenthal considers this, the Tucson district is considering changing the program. The *Christian Science Monitor* [explains](#):

Currently, Mexican-American courses can help satisfy the social-studies requirement for graduation (although students don’t have to take the courses to fulfill the requirement). Under the proposal, the Mexican-American classes would not count toward the social-studies requirement and would instead be electives.

Supporters of the program contend that making it an elective would destroy the program by eliminating students’ incentive to enroll in the classes.

Sean Arce, director of Mexican American Studies, states, “Students, particularly Latino students who have traditionally struggled to graduate, will not take the additional courses and double up for an additional history class.”

Mark Stegeman, the board president seeking to make the changes, asserts, “There’s been a sense in the district that the Mexican American Studies program is flawless, and despite its positive qualities, this rhetoric doesn’t serve the district well. Almost all of our programs have some room for improvement.”



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