

The Librotraficante Manifesto
by Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante

The 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to Tucson was intended to smuggle books back into the hands of our youth, after they were boxed up and carted out of classrooms during class time, in order to comply with Arizona House Bill 2281. This law was created to prohibit courses in high schools in all of Arizona. However, the only course, for now, those administrators saw fit to prohibit was the innovative and brilliant K through 12th grade Mexican American Studies program in place at the Tucson Unified School District.

This led to the prohibition of all the courses that fell under this curriculum and the confiscation and boxing up of all the books, more than 80, that were taught in those courses.

I had time to re-read some of these important texts on the bus during our caravan. Yes, books help me step into the mind of our greatest thinkers and help me see history differently, in three dimensions - in 6, even 7 even more dimensions. As we convened with our brothers and sisters in the Southwest from Houston, to San Antonio, to El Paso, Texas; to Mesilla, to Albuquerque, New Mexico, then Tucson, Arizona; with the Madrinos and Padrinos of our literature - Sandra Cisneros, Carmen Tafolla, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Denise Chavez, Rudolfo Anaya and Dagoberto Gilb - it became clear that our magic bus of mind-altering prose was marking the launch of the new Latino Renaissance.

As we walked hand-in-hand with our brothers and sisters across the Southwest, after having joined with our brothers and sisters in New York just a few weeks prior, our extended family fed us, loved us, gave us books to take to our people and helped us start Underground Libraries. It was clear that we were walking in a special moment in history.

We need only to re-read some of the now sacred texts confiscated from classrooms in Tucson. We need only re-read the texts of our deepest and greatest thinkers to see that we are reliving the Civil Rights movement archived in the book CHICANO by Arturo Rosales. We are all like the members of the Raza Unida party, and thus, we must like they did in Crystal City, begin to win elections.

The Aztecs, creators of the Sun Stone, the greatest work of art in North America, believed that every 50 or 60 years the world must be recreated. Well, here we are, about 50 or 60 years later - reliving the Civil Rights Movement. This is the beginning of the new world that the Maya were predicting.

It is now the duty of our people to unite, and to struggle on behalf of all Americans, to preserve the most essential of American values, Freedom of Speech. We must defy censorship.

It now falls on us, the Children of The American Dream, to defend the Civil Rights of all Americans, because that is what is on the line.

And thus, with this great mission, I urge all of us to assume our full power and vision and step boldly into this historical charge. For this, I offer up as did my predecessor Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez with the writings in his confiscated book MESSAGE TO AZTLAN, I, Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante, offer to history, the Librotraficante Manifesto.

THE LIBROTRAFICANTE MANIFESTO

1. Arizona House Bill 2281, created to prohibit courses in Arizona high schools must be repealed. The powers that be would like to make it seem as if it was designed to target only Mexican American Studies, however, as with the anti-immigrant legislation that Arizona created, this template will spread to other states and be used to eliminate all other Ethnic Studies programs.

2. The brilliant and innovative Kindergarten to 12th grade Mexican American Studies program, which the Tucson Unified School District prohibited to comply with AZ HB 2281, must be re-instated.

3. Sean Arce, former director of MAS in the Tucson Unified School District must be reinstated.

4. We must laud and support, as heroes, all the students leading teach-ins, protests, and championing our culture; the Tucson 11; the teachers who lead the MAS courses; and the 3 the young students who are locked in legal battle suing the state of Arizona to defend their Freedom of Speech and thus all our first amendment rights.

5. We profess Quantum Demographics, which embraces deep links between cultures that seem disparate at first glance. We want and need to study our own history so that we can then study other histories more fully. We do not strive to exclude others from our history or to deny others their history. We strive for the day when we all know our own stories to such an extent that we can see the links and bridges to the stories of others.

6. Every state of the Union must incorporate Ethnic Studies programs that not only provide a global perspective but that value and archive the local history of their own people, so that scholars, writers and artists can be inspired to archive the many

facets of American history and the many local stories that are our national story.

7. We must organize in every city to elect school board members with great minds and big hearts, who truly care about our youth, and who will answer to the people of a community. Under Quantum Demographics, it should be obvious that we do not suggest that we would vote for only Mexican American candidates. In fact, there are some Latinos that we must vote out of office.

8. The architects of AZ HB 2281 have been quoted as having their sights set on prohibiting Mexican American studies at the University level as well. We must never tolerate impositions on Freedom of Speech at our school of higher learning, ever.

9. We must create and maintain Librotraficante Underground Libraries throughout the nation, so that our histories and our cultures are never at the whim of an administration ever again.

10. We owe it to future generations to create networks and leave in our wake community resources that will last for decades and beyond. As such, we must recognize that we, like our best fields of study, must be multi-disciplinary, as must our institutions, and must be the make up of all our groups and alliances. We must employ Quantum Demographics in our activism as well, thus, writers must advocate justice, but must also be entrepreneurs. Only then will businessmen and women become poets. We all must respect and become teachers. We must proceed with the knowledge that we are not simply paving the way for our youth, but we are teaching them how lead.

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And also

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Please forward far and wide, but also please respect that we mean business.