

Press Release

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LIBROTRAFICANTES SMUGGLED 1,000 BOOKS, worth \$20,000, TO ARIZONA, Launching 4 Underground Libraries in the Process. Phase II begins today.

Arizona Legislators, THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING.

HOUSTON (March 23, 2012) - The Librotraficante Caravan, merely a post in twitter verse two months ago, attracted crowds of more than 500 attendees to the El Paso and Albuquerque Banned Book Bash readings and delivered a payload of 1,000 books, about \$20,000 worth of mind-altering prose, to newly established Underground Libraries in four cities – Houston, San Antonio, Albuquerque and Tucson.

The magic bus full of love letters in the form of books destined for the students of Tucson rang in the Latino Renaissance as Latinos as well as non-Latinos united to preserve Freedom of Speech, and to defy the Censorship created by Arizona House Bill 2281 which PROHIBITED the Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District.

"This is only the beginning," said, Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante, "Arizona legislators need to know the whole world is watching. This is just the first chapter in a future book about this Civil Rights Movement that some regime will want to ban some day just as the book CHICANO, about the Mexican American Civil Rights movement of the 60s, is now prohibited. Evidently every 60 years despots try to destroy the American Dream. We did not let them before, and we won't let them now. Freedom of Speech is at stake for all Americans. We beseech people from all walks of life to unite to defy the Censorship imposed by Arizona's Draconian laws. Right now, you are deciding what side of history you are on. There is a ban in Tucson. If you enforce the Double Speak that denies there is a ban, you are on the wrong side of history. Let Freedom ring. Phase II of the Librotraficante Movement begins today."

Phase II of the Librotraficante Movement:

1. Expand the network of Underground Libraries: the Librotraficantes will become the hub to coordinate the distribution of books, workshops plans, instruction for workshop leaders, visits from writers, so that not only will our communities always have access to our art, literature, and culture, but these sites will fortify a generation of readers, writers, thinkers and activists through the

literary arts in the same manner that Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say has done so in Houston, Texas.

2. Librotraficante Speakers Bureau: We have several experts in different areas who can give readings, lead workshops, give multimedia presentations about the experience on the Librotraficante Caravan, etc.

3. Librotraficante Cultural Caucuses: We will be inspiring 6 Campaigns for School Boards in each of the towns that we stopped in. The most urgent is the elections of 3 posts on the Tucson Unified School District this November. We meet with some candidates already from Tucson. The entire nation must watch this election. People across the country must donate, and must reach out to those in Tucson who can vote, to vote. The latest elections will be in 2 years in Houston, Texas. However, we are letting all candidates know that they must have a positive, and specific platform for instituting Ethnic Studies. Also, we profess Quantum Demographics. This means that candidates who are Latino will not be automatically endorsed. In fact, there are some Latino public officials who we must vote OUT of office. We want to help elect wise people, with great minds and an appreciation for our history and community.

4. Librotraficante Book Festival: Our Teach-In in Tucson at the Valenzuela Community Center was very much like a Book Festival. As author Diane Lopez lead some teachers in a discussion of how to use Mexican American literature in the class room using the work book with lesson plans titled MADE IN TEXAS, the companion to the book HECHO EN TEJAS: An Anthology of Texas Mexican Writers edited by Dagoberto Gilb (Whose work is prohibited in Tucson), while Librotraficante HighTechAztec, aka Bryan Parras lead students in a workshop using the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, pioneered by Paulo Freire, another prohibited author; an artist from the California caravan created stencils for attendees, and students, parents, and writers sorted, touched, read the books we brought for the Underground Library located there at the Valenzuela Community Center.

[Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say](#), the parent group of the Librotraficante Movement has organized the largest book fairs in Houston, Texas. We would love to add this experience to the talent and institution present in Tucson, to create an event that would rival the Tucson Book Festival in size and prestige.

5. First Amendment Fund: We hope to organize fundraisers to lend support to those who are leading the fight for Freedom of Speech. Right now, it's the Tucson students who are in court defending freedom of speech. They have lawyers who are working pro bono, there are filing fees as well as other costs that can limit the success of this case.

6. Librotraficante Studies: We want to inspire PhD's as well as Doctoral Candidates to conduct and further research on issues that add a very important Intellectual Critical Apparatus to our movement. Elain Romero is our first PhD

candidate in Librotraficante Studies. She is doing an investigation into the impact of Ethnic Studies courses in Southwestern States that border Mexico: Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

This will help us fine-tune our strategies for introducing Ethnic Studies in every state. It is clear from our experience on the Librotraficante Caravan that we need to prevent what happened in Arizona to happen in other states. But we also see that one reason it can't is that most other school districts do not have such a cutting edge Ethnic Studies program like Tucson had. That will change soon.

With its radio program and blockbuster literary showcases, [Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say](#) has 13 years of experience promoting Latino literature and literacy with authors and thinkers from across the country. This once informal alliance of artists, activists, educators, and professionals has galvanized to create cornerstone structures for a network that will remain in place for future causes as well.

WEBSITES: www.Librotraficante.com and www.NuestraPalabra.org

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