
Why Banning the Mexican American Studies is Biased

Freedom of speech is just one of the many rights we ensure as citizens of America. Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion, or so it's said. Sadly, it seems as though that's not always the case. In the instance of the ban of Mexican American Studies in Arizona, the opinion of those who didn't fully understand the concept was taken over the students and teachers fighting for their rights to education as United States residents. The decision to ban the Mexican American Studies was a biased decision and it does not make America appear equal when it comes to racial identity.

When these ethnic studies were officially banned, it constituted a form of oppression for the folks who were affected by this action. The teachers whom all the students in these classes looked up to were reassigned and the bond the students had built with each other and their teachers was taken away. For some, coming to school and learning about their own heritage was a life changing experience. "Providing students a way to interact with notions of identity, history and culture in an academic setting clearly improved the graduation rates of low income Hispanic students" (Ramos 1). It gave them hope that someday things would get better, and it even created a sense of belonging in today's society. But the individuals who supported the ban did not take the time to actually experience what went on in these classes. "The state legislature contends that these programs are indoctrinating students with anti-American biases but there has been no such evidence to support this claim" (Ramos 1). They just assumed the teachers were giving Americans a bad name for how poorly they treated Mexican Americans in previous years and wanted these students to eventually "overthrow" the government. These assumptions were certainly not the intentions of the teachers, in fact the actual intentions were just to show the students they had rights as Mexican Americans and deserved to be treated equally. Forbidding these students to obtain knowledge about equality is definitely a form of oppression.

America, as a whole, has a history of poor treatment for races or ethnicities other than white, and this forbidden Mexican American Studies ban in Arizona could be the foundation of additional bans around the country. If that begins to happen, it could cause a lot of controversy nation wide with Mexican Americans because it is preventing them from learning who they really are. "The Arizona ethnic studies ban has more to do with the politics of our countries changing demography and political power than they do with educational attainment and what is best for the future of the state" (Ramos 1). This makes America look like a racist country because its citizens are disposing of the opportunity to study the history of differing races. As one student stated, "America is full of people with different backgrounds. If learning ethnic studies is anti-American, then what does it truly mean to be American?" Regrettably, it appears to mean that Americans can be very judgmental toward others not similar to them. It's quite unfortunate that the definition of an American is questionable. The country is constantly changing, and those who are surrounded by it must adapt.

At the core of the Ethnic Studies ban is fear; much is at stake for each side. The side opposing the education of these studies is prominently made up of white officials high up in the government. They are afraid of a prospective uprising of the Mexican Americans and what consequences that may cause. There are numerous points to be taken into consideration, such

as government positions potentially taken over by Mexican Americans instead of the Caucasians currently holding the positions. These white officials undoubtedly mull over the idea of losing control of the government, so to avoid any possibility of this happening they took the easy way out and got rid of any threat they may have had. The ban was placed on courses that meet the following criteria: 1) "promote the overthrow of the United States government;" 2) "promote resentment toward a race or class of people;" 3) "are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group;" or 4) "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals" (Lee 1). This created a safety net for the opposing side by making sure no class like this would be taught again in Arizona. "The reality is the ethnic studies ban in Arizona is nothing more than a byproduct of a state legislature which has become adept at manufacturing crises in order to win elections" (Ramos 1). The sad reality of the situation is the fact that power is more important than the history of an entire race.

The side attempting to save the Ethnic Studies assembled the Mexican American students and teachers who believed in the program and its success. They were fighting for their rights as American citizens for freedom of education. Not only that, but the future was at stake for almost all of these individuals. For the students, these classes kept their interest in school and education as a whole. Many anticipated graduating, going off to college, and eventually making a life for themselves. "A Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) analysis revealed the MAS programs improved the graduation rates of low income Hispanics" (Ramos 1). This shows that the curriculum immensely aided to the success of the teenagers taking the course. Without it, several of these adolescents could potentially lose interest in school and not persist with the plans they once had. It was very ironic when the new law stated "the legislature finds and declares that the public school pupils should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not be taught to resent or hate other races or classes of people" because in their classrooms, they were all treated with dignity and respect and were taught that they had rights, too (Lee 1). Banning the Mexican American Studies is resent or hate toward the Mexican race, so the legislature is very hypocritical and unfair.

The Mexican American Studies ban in Arizona was an unfortunate event for a multitude of Mexican American students and teachers. It removed so many opportunities for these people, and could potentially change the future for some. "Bottom line these programs help the educational attainment of those that need it. If there is a crisis, it is in the leadership of the Arizona State legislature, which has chosen to manufacture a controversy, when the focus should be on how best to educate Arizona's future workforce" (Ramos 1). Numerous controversies could occur and that would cause a great deal of problems. Equal rights should be dispersed for everyone living in the same region, no matter the ethnical differences.