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A Guest Editorial: One Problem of Racial Heritage in the Americas

It is the policy of HILTON: HIGHER EDUCATION to encourage feedback from readers. Periodically we print editorials that are designed to stimulate discussion and further feedback - pro or con to our positions.

The following is an editorial by Mr. Larry Abrams of Venice, CA in which he responds to an earlier column titled, "Some Latinos Are African Too".

If readers wish to comment on this or other essays or submit an article, please write: c/o HILTON: HIGHER EDUCATION, 3179 N. GareY #101, Pomona, CA 91767. Let's talk (909) 899-0650.

Racial and cultural heritage in the Americas, whether Latin or North American, is fraught with misconception precisely because race and culture are in fact distinctly different names for the different classifications that have been made to bear more than a casual relationship to how we identify ourselves.

Up until the Civil War, the United States had the same system of differentiation between degrees of miscegenation exemplified by Brazil, which has some 136 different names for the different shades of race mixing between whites, Indians, and Africans.

This system, called "racial democracy" in Latin America, was developed specifically to serve as a buffer between the exploited and the exploiters, which positioned the whites on top in all things, and the Africans on the bottom.

"Mestizos", which could and should replace the clumsy "Amerafrohispanic" appellation suggested in an earlier guest editorial has a long history in the United States, and didn't belong (collectively speaking) to any specific culture or racial identity.

Scorned by the whites as inferior, but considered more able than Africans or Indians to "manage" whites' interests, they became the "wannabes" of the whole Eurocentric experiment in the Western Hemisphere.

After the Civil War, however, "mulattos" (another name for mestizos, which means "mule" in Spanish) were classified as simply black, although up until that time they generally wanted nothing to do with African peoples if they could help it, and racially and culturally identified with the white master. Sound familiar?

It should, since that is in fact what prevails all over the hemisphere today, even in the U.S. where officially validated African American leadership has always pointed towards cultural assimilation, if denied the heretofore longed-for racial submersion, into Eurocentric identity.

But in Latin America new stirrings of cultural self-determination have begun to rise above the chatter of *Mestizaje* so avidly promoted by the national entities in those arenas. Indigenous peoples have long fought for recognition and validation of their cultures, and the political and economic self-determination that must underpin it.

The fact that these people have a different identity than that

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accorded them by the term "Amerafrohispanic" converges with the fact that long scorned and exploited, and now genocidally attacked, African people have come to see themselves as having a legitimate

agenda and identity which, in fact, has traditionally been in opposition to these mestizo nations' political, economic, and cultural agendas, including that most mestizo nation of all, the United States.

NSEA REACTS TO NV DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPORT

RENO —The Nevada Department of Education has released its 1991/92 Status Report on education.

Rick Millsap, Nevada State Education Association president, had the following reaction: "The incredible growth in our diverse student population gives a realistic feel for the challenges faced by our public schools. Citizens can be proud of the fact that we have been able to both reduce the drop-out rate and increase test scores during this period."

The Association did not, however, feel the report told the whole story about class sizes, teacher salaries, or the number of administrators in Nevada.

Regarding class size reduction efforts, President Millsap said, "Although there is a small drop in our student/teacher ratios as the result of the Legislature's efforts, we still have the sixth most crowded classes in the nation. Children are not getting the individual attention they deserve under such conditions. Given the funding available for the next two years, we are likely to see the number of kids packed into a single classroom increase."

"Among far western states," Millsap continued, "Nevada ranks last in terms of average teacher salary and last in terms of percentage increase. We must compete with these neighboring states to both retain and attract the best teachers and we are losing that battle."

Millsap also took issue with the Nevada Department of Education's press release that downplayed the increase in administrative staff. "Nevada has

always been top-heavy in administration. Even before Clark County's reclassification, Nevada had the fifth highest number of administrators per student in the nation. This number would be even higher if they

counted teachers who have been pulled out of classrooms to attend to administrative duties. It is time our school districts started looking to their administrative staff for cuts before they look to classroom teachers, support

staff, or direct services to children."

The Nevada State Education Association represents 15,000 teachers and education support personnel throughout the state.

JUNE 3 MARKS END OF 1992-93 SCHOOL YEAR

June 3 marks the end of the 1992-93 school year for most of the Clark County School District's 136,000 students. The only exceptions are students at the districts 27 year-round elementary schools and afternoon kindergarten students. The last day of school for the latter groups was Wednesday, June 2. Year-round schools will maintain their normal schedule.

In nine-month schools, both elementary and secondary students will be released from classes early Thursday. Bus transportation will be pro-

vided for students normally serviced by buses.

Elementary school students in grades one through five (and grade six at elementary schools with a sixth grade) will be released at 12:40 p.m. and kindergartners will be released at 10:40 a.m. Students at sixth grade centers will be released at 10 a.m.

Senior high school students, as well as students at Guinn and Hyde Park junior high schools, will be released at 11 a.m. All other middle/junior high school students will be released at 11:55 a.m.

OPENINGS FOR STUDENTS AVAILABLE AT AREA TECHNICAL TRADE CENTER

Openings are available for students at the Area Technical Trade Center (ATTC) in the following programs: electronics, finished carpentry, framing car-

penry, masonry, welding technology, landscape technology, computer technician, diesel mechanics and hotel operations.

Interested students may pick

up applications from the school's Counseling Office.

For more information, contact the ATTC Admissions Office at 799-8300.

SCHOOL SECURITY FACT SHEET

Currently there are 70 officers in the Clark County School District Police Department. These officers work as patrol officers, high school and junior high campus police and investigators. They are responsible for security at the district's 170 schools and an enrollment of 136,188 students.

As of April 1993, school police officers responded to more than 6,000 calls during this school year. School Police logged 1,448 arrests and citations during that same period.

During the 1992-93 school year, more than \$300,000 in damage due to theft, arson, break-ins and vandalism occurred at area schools. The school security tax measure would provide funds for additional officers who would patrol schools 24 hours a day. New and upgraded alarm systems would also be installed in schools to help reduce vandalism and theft.

This school year, 308 students were referred for expulsions due to infractions that included arson, assault, battery, drugs, fighting, immoral conduct, theft, weapons, extortion and insubordinate language. The largest single reason for the referrals was weapons (208).

In wake of the student shooting at Eldorado High School at the beginning of the 1990-91 school year, the district began installing video surveillance cameras in area high schools. In the three years since the shooting, surveillance systems have been installed at seven high schools: Cheyenne, Clark, Eldorado, Las Vegas, Valley, Rancho and Western. Cost for the equipment, a total of 85 cameras, was approximately \$27,000 per high school. Cameras are installed in high traffic areas such as hallways, lunchrooms, quad areas, and are not installed in private areas such as restrooms and dressing/locker rooms. The use of security cameras is a controversial issue. (See *School Security*, Page 9)

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