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New Political Party

NATURAL LAW PARTY

Organization Meeting
November 6, 7, 3:00 and 4:00 P.M.
Ben Linder Room, EMU
November 8, 4:00 P.M.
Cedar Rooms A&B, EMU

Questions?
Please call 822-3161

Workshop explains Chicano culture

HISTORY: Differences between Latin American cultures interpreted

By Cathleen Hockman
Freelance Reporter

Paper was on the table. Wide felt tip pens were poised for action. However, the 20 faculty and staff members who gathered last Tuesday afternoon for a workshop, found themselves reluctant to begin writing. Their task? To list words they'd heard to describe Mexican-Americans.

Uncomfortably, they began. "Wetbacks." "Beaners." "Taco-benders." "Apple-pickers."

"We're here to balance the kind of information you've already been exposed to about Mexican-Americans — much of which is not very accurate or positive," explained workshop leader Jim Garcia, advising coordinator for the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

"We have this image that all Latinos are migrant workers, that they all have that agricultural background," Garcia said. "This may have been true at one time, but not anymore."

Approximately 130,000 Latinos currently live in Oregon, and the numbers are growing, said Garcia, a second-generation Chicano from southern California. According to the 1990 census, 22.4 million Hispanics live in the United States. That's a 53 percent increase in a decade, compared to a 10 percent increase in the total population.

"Chicano History and Culture," the Oct. 31 workshop held in EMU Walnut Room, provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to establish a basic understanding of Chicano culture.

"We want to provide a safe environment for people to ask questions dealing with the Latino population," Garcia explained. "The end goal is for people to understand why our community

identifies itself as Chicano instead of Mexican-American."

From this understanding, he said faculty and staff can be challenged to find ways to better accommodate Chicano students.

The workshop also addressed the fact that there are important distinctions between the terms Latino, Chicano, Hispanic and Mexican-American.

"Hispanic," a bureaucratic term that lumps together people from Central America, South America and the Caribbean, does not recognize an individual's indigenous heritage. The word may be traced to "Hispania," Spain's name when it was ruled by the Roman empire. Because such a general term simplifies and eradicates particular histories and cultural heritages, it may be offensive to some people.

"Chicano" refers to people of Mexican-American heritage, but also recognizes their indigenous background. The title comes from the word "Mexica" (meh-chi-ka), the name of Mexico's indigenous people. Chicanos are "sons and daughters of Mexico," Garcia said.

"Latino" is a broad term to identify people of Mexican, Caribbean and Latin American heritages.

Another term is "La Raza," literally translated "the race" but better understood as "our people."

Workshop participants viewed a video, *Adelante Mujeres*, produced by the National Women's History Project. The video traced the history of "New Spain," and explained how parts of this territory became pieces of the United States.

During the workshop, Garcia briefly outlined some of the earliest explorations in the New World, many of which were done by Chicanos. For example, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca made the first transcontinental

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journey in the early 1500s — 300 years before the more recognized Lewis and Clark expedition.

Many places in Oregon retain the names given by Mexican settlers. In Lane County, for example, is Mt. Popocatepetl, which means "smoking mountain." Linn County has Latigo Lake that is translated as "whip" or "saddle strap", a reflection of the settlers' ranching culture.

Given this history, Garcia finds it ironic that Latinos are considered "illegal aliens," while people of European ancestry were "settlers" or "pioneers."

He believes the best way for individuals to learn about Chicano culture is to talk to people.

"Interact face to face," he said. "Just be aware that one person isn't going to represent 22 million Mexican-Americans." The 510 Chicano/Latino students here on campus are each individuals, he added. Each has their own perspective and experiences.

The second half of the two-part workshop will continue Tuesday. The workshop is primarily targeted toward faculty and staff. However, students can register for future workshops, which will cover various topics, if space is available.

For more information, contact Human Resources at 346-3159.



Monday Night Margaritas

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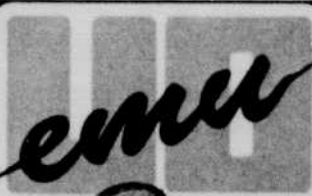


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346 • 3711



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