Ethnic Studies in Academe: Challenges and Prospects for the 21st Century

NAES Plenary Session
Saturday, March 19, 1994
Kansas City, MO

Moderator:
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Jesse M. Vázquez: Introduction

The primary intent of organizing the plenary that follows was to engage a number of dedicated and experienced ethnic studies scholar-activists in a focused conversation on the current state of ethnic studies in the academy. At this point many of us have been involved in ethnic studies for more than twenty years. The perspectives and observations offered in this monograph are transcribed from the recordings of the plenary. It offers the reader a far-ranging discussion of the field, its history, its struggles, its pedagogy, and some of its underlying principles.

It is clear that the climate, the politics, and the fiscal solvency of many of our colleges and universities have shifted dramatically since ethnic studies burst onto the campus scene in the late nineteen sixties and the early seventies. Many of us in ethnic studies are now facing serious challenges and perhaps new opportunities we never imagined possible

during the formative years of our programs, departments, centers, and institutes. From the early seventies, The National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES) has been both an active participant and a chronicler of the emerging discipline of ethnic studies. This plenary was designed to offer yet another "report from the field."

What we wanted to do when we planned this panel was to reflect on the current state of ethnic studies and to begin to examine our progress in the university, where we are headed, and what we see as the most critical challenges facing us in the next decade. To that end, we invited four distinguished ethnic studies scholars who, for many years, have actively engaged in the creation of a variety of ethnic studies entities.

In preparation, I asked the panelists to consider a number of issues and concerns. First, our sense was that the audience participants would be looking for those national trends and patterns that may or may not match their particular campus experiences. The panelists' considerable involvement in the national discourse on ethnic studies, both written and oral, we believed would allow those gathered at the conference to begin to piece together a more coherent picture of what was actually going on throughout the nation.

Each panelist was asked to present a general commentary on what he/she believed were the field's major accomplishments, and what our greatest challenges and prospects might be for the next decade. In addition, some of the following questions were suggested by members of the NAES Council:

1. Given the national discourse on the subject of multicultural education/ studies and the university curriculum, what is your assessment of the role that Ethnic Studies organizations, such as NAES, and ethnic studies programs can play in this national discourse?

2. One of the most basic aspects of establishing ethnic studies programs and departments in the early days was the principle of autonomy. And, what we may be seeing now as new programs emerge is an effort on the part of administrators to moderate that earlier period of autonomy by linking these new programs to established traditional departments. Do you think that control of curriculum, faculty selection, and the ultimate direction of our programs can only be achieved through autonomous academic entities? What role do you think autonomy plays in the success or failure of a program, department, center, or institute?

3. Another founding principle of ethnic studies was our involvement and concern for those issues directly shaping the community. Do you think that we have moved away from this aspect of our work as we have become more preoccupied with institutionalization? And, have you seen any evidence that our ethnic studies programs might be moving us back to that basic

issue of community?
4. Where is ethnic studies research taking us? What compelling national and international issues deserve more attention by ethnic studies scholars/scholarship? With the rise in popularity of postmodernist critique, deconstructionism, and culture studies, do you feel that Ethnic Studies research is shining the light in the wrong places?

5. On the matter of recruitment, tenure, and promotion, do you think that we in ethnic studies are improving in our ability to get through the tenure and promotion process and still hold on to the essential goals of our work?

6. On the matter of publications and ethnic studies scholarship, do you think that those who are in control of the publication process are continuing to lock us out, or are we beginning to make some headway in this critical arena of the mainstream method of measuring scholarly production?

7. Have you seen any evidence that ethnic studies scholarship is being used to shape public policy?

While a good many of these questions and issues were addressed by the panelists' presentations and touched upon in their exchanges with the conference participants during the Q & A period, some were clearly not covered because of the time limitations. But our hope is that these questions and concerns, as framed, will continue to provoke discussion on campuses throughout the nation.

The nature and content of any academic enterprise is dynamic and necessarily responsive to the greater social, cultural, and political context. The downsizing in corporate America is mirrored in the retrenchments and reconfigurations of programs and departments in the university. Witness the recent downgrading of the ethnic studies departments at the City College of New York (CUNY), where the administration, claiming fiscal exigency, dismantled four of the country's longest standing departments in academia. This only serves to illustrate the state of warfare that has existed since the inception of all of our programs and departments. And on a not too distant campus, only twenty city blocks south of the City College, the sustained effort on the part of Columbia University students to finally establish an ethnic studies department on that ivy league citadel resulted in a clear rejection by the faculty and administration. These and other academics around the country continue to distort and marginalize ethnic studies, some through a lack of understanding and others through a willful opposition to our principles. The same kind of resistance was evident during the protracted struggle several years ago at UCLA, but that effort resulted in the creation of a transitional program which will eventually lead to the formation of a

Department of Ethnic Studies. Still, at the University of California at Riverside, the loss of their Chicano Studies program signaled yet another assault on ethnic studies.

We hope that the publication of this important exchange will serve to stimulate more discussion and clarity in our collective struggle to sustain ethnic studies, establish new programs and departments, and see these programs evolve in the next decade. Permit me to introduce the panelists:

Professor Evelyn Hu-DeHart is Director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race in America, at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Professor Rhett Jones is the Director of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, at Brown University.

Professor Robert Perry is the Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

Professor Miguel Carranza is Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he has also been Director of that institution's Institute for Ethnic Studies. He is past President of NAES and serves as Editor of NAES Publications.

We will begin with Professor Carranza.

Miguel Carranza

I want to thank Jesse Vazquez for organizing this panel, as I see it as crucial that those of us in ethnic studies must take the time to assess and reflect on the role and place of our field in academe today. We cannot afford to believe that our place in higher education is well supported, and more importantly, secure within our academic institutions.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." You probably recognize that as the opening line from the Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities.* I use it frequently to depict the current situation for Ethnic Studies in higher education. On the one hand you have colleges and universities trying to establish new and maintain their existing ethnic studies programs; while on the other hand, you have universities not wanting to adequately support these same programs and make them central to the core and mission of their institutions. Many are content to have these programs exist in name or on paper only without bringing these programs into the very central core of the institution. To do this would call for a major restructuring of higher education and many colleges and universities are simply not willing to be leaders in this movement because there may indeed be risks, and they are not willing to be risktakers.

In most instances ethnic studies programs and scholars find themselves as still being outsiders in the inside of the academic world. We find ourselves really on the outmost periphery and not part of the central academic core. An example is when you have a colleague ask,"What is your field?" and you respond, "I'm in Chicano studies." Her/his response is usually, "No. I mean what department are you in?" The implication is that Chicano studies is not a *real* discipline, and you must have a more legitimate affiliation. This frequently happens with faculty who hold joint appointments. These questions revolve centrally around issues of identity, marginalization and legitimacy. Now should this happen? Absolutely not!

A key issue in transforming institutions into becoming magnets for establishing ethnic studies programs is recruitment. Universities must actively recruit ethnic studies scholars for ethnic studies programs as well as for the more traditional departments (e.g. political science). I use the term traditional intentionally because all too often universities and colleges see ethnic studies programs as non-traditional, and therefore less relevant and not part of the academic centrality of the university. If you do not see the program as being central then you are less likely to actively recruit faculty members for that particular program.

Low supply and high demand has always been posited by administrators as one reason for not recruiting for ethnic studies programs. Too often we hear, "There are not enough ethnic studies scholars being trained and, as a result, they simply cannot be found..., but we would hire them if they existed." Actually, the problem is that minorities are not being hired. At first they were not getting into the applicant pool. This has been the case on many of the searches in which I have been involved. Candidates were not getting into the applicant pool, let alone making a finalist list.

Given the recent growth of the field of ethnic studies, these scholars are now being trained and are coming into the higher education pipeline. Now we are getting into the applicant pool. We are making the finalist list. We're actually being hired. More and more minority scholars are being hired. In fact, some administrators say that any person of color who has a Ph.D. can find a great job and make $50,000 anywhere. There is that kind of demand. You all agree with that. Right?

Wrong! No! One of the things that happens is what I call the "halo effect" for the superstars, where you have people who are deemed superstars who are being recruited. What appears to be 20 hires is actually only one or two superstars moving twenty times. We, as minority scholars, benefit very little from that superstar phenomena.

Another problem raised by administrators is that, "We don't have a critical mass on our campus. We just can't hire enough of you folk to get you on this campus to have a critical mass. We don't have enough to establish an ethnic studies program."

Well, on some campuses and even at some of our most prestigious Research-I institutions--even when all those steps are being followed--you find very reticent administrators who don't want to develop ethnic studies departments. They don't want the permanence that a department entails. They see a real threat in that permanence.

Increased institutionalization should change the core. I underline should because as long as ethnic studies is defined as a non-traditional discipline, that's going to provide one of the major barriers for us becoming part of the academic core.

The issue of standards for tenure also needs to be addressed. Standards have been raised, but whose standards are they? They're very much the traditional higher education standards. We have some real problems in that approach. I've heard some horror stories in the past couple of weeks, that have affected some friends and close colleagues of mine. I'm disturbed.

Finally, I foresee significant changes in higher education. Ethnic studies needs to be prepared for these changes. One change is the new diversity requirements. Some of you are from institutions where there are new diversity requirements. Arizona State, Bowling Green State University and a number of other places have them. This is good news because with new diversity requirements you need to develop more courses focused on race, gender studies, and so on.

Another change I foresee is reallocation of resources. Reallocation is probably the new "R" word in higher education. We are no longer going to be addressing reduction of budgets but reallocation of budgets. Consequently, departments are starting to close ranks. They see reallocation of resources as more of a threat to them because they know the money is going to come out of somebody's hide and they want it to be somebody else's hide.

A further change on the horizon is that minority scholars will be increasingly hired in traditional departments rather than in ethnic studies or women's studies or other interdisciplinary units. Although minority professionals have high visibility in some ethnic studies programs, my overall assessment is that we are not expanding many of those programs. In fact, many ethnic studies programs are not strong programs or are not strongly supported by their institutions.

My personal experience at my institution is that ethnic studies is only a paper program that hasn't received a lot of support. For example, permanence implies bringing in tenure track faculty and starting to share control of the decision-making process.

In summary: I think its clear that, in general, ethnic studies has not been allowed to share in the governance of higher education. Until it does, we will continue to be outsiders in the academic world.

Robert Perry

Here is how I avoid being marginalized in my position as chair of a department of ethnic studies: When people ask me what I do, even though I'm a professor of sociology, I refuse to emphasize that, except in the context of ethnic studies. I take the position that I am not primarily a sociologist, I am an ethnic studies person. That's what I tell people and that's how I respond to those questions. I know what their agenda is when they ask that kind of a question.

I tell all my junior faculty, "If you're uncomfortable with being in ethnic studies, if you're uncomfortable as an outsider in an insider's game, if you cannot be proud to be in ethnic studies and celebrate that by telling everybody where you work, you don't belong with us." This is because we're the "niggers" in academe. We need to be very clear about that. I tell all the incoming people, "You need to search your conscience and be sure whether or not you really want to be in ethnic studies."

In any case, in terms of contributions, ethnic studies has been, and is, a major impetus for curriculum reform in American higher education as we approach the 21st century. The result of this transformation has been the creation of a new curriculum grounded in an ideology that produces new assumptions and new perspectives.

Students of ethnic studies gain novel ideas and novel views of the American experience and an alternative conception of the makeup of American society. Questions raised concerning the primacy of traditional literary canons have come from ethnic studies. Questions raised about the telling and writing of traditional American history have been raised by ethnic studies. Questions raised regarding scientific racism as practiced in traditional social science research have come from ethnic studies. The colleges of music, education, and business have suddenly discovered multiculturalism. The recognition of these so-called new voices has been influenced mainly by ethnic studies.

The responses to the impact of ethnic studies in our popular culture are demonstrated by movies such as Glory, Malcom X, and Schindler's List. They have been influenced by ethnic studies. The issues concerning political correctness, multiculturalism, and post modernism, are influenced by ethnic studies. The development of women's studies, gender studies, and culture studies, and the current contributions that they are making to curriculum reform has come through ethnic studies.

Many of us in the field of ethnic studies recognize the magnitude of the impact that we have had within our discipline. This impact is not formally recognized by the traditional power brokers of higher education. As we continue to implement ethnic studies within the academic mainstream,

we still remain David in pursuit of Goliath.

Our status in higher education has been affected by our genesis. We were literally forced on academia in response to student demonstrations and the civil rights movements in the 1960s. The response of universities was to ghettoize, underfund, and understaff for failure. Certainly that was what their intention was at Bowling Green and at most other places too.

For those of us who have survived the legacy of our origins without compromising the values of our discipline, the challenges continue. One of our current battles is tied to the competition of traditional disciplines over the shaping of the multicultural discourse. There are several questions involved here: How do we institutionalize ethnic studies in the academic mainstream? How do we establish the academic base of multiculturalism and who should control that base? How do we address those who want only to preserve classic Eurocentric dominant education in our universities?

These arguments and debates have captured the attention of politicians, the national federal bureaucracy, journalists, and the mass media. Ethnic studies is particularly affected by people from the new right. Patrick Buchanan, for example, former presidential candidate, called for the scrapping of multicultural education. William Bennett, peripatetic peregrinator, and academic dilettante, also called a historian and a drug czar, has been highly critical of multiculturalism, arguing that we need to return to a core curriculum that emphasizes classic scholarship and western thought. Lynn Cheney was in charge of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and funds for curriculum development dried up during her reign. Diane Ravitch describes ethnic studies as being animated by the spirit of filial piety and fundamentalist notions of racial and ethnic purity. Camille Paglia sees a kind of fascism of the left occurring within ethnic studies. These people are primarily from the new right. They see what we're doing in ethnic studies as some kind of left wing McCarthyism.

However, one of the most far reaching accomplishments of ethnic studies has been our emphasis on the emic or the insider's perspective of people of color and the demand that this perspective be heard through every facet of education. With all due respect to my colleagues in anthropology, they didn't do a very good job of accomplishing that. We've made tremendous progress in that direction in the last 25 to 30 year period; Perhaps it was not their mission.

There are those of us who think that research should be relevant and important to the ethnic communities that we talk about. This is an extremely important contribution that we can make. This is a part of our program that we should maintain. We should ensure that our work is useful in our communities. Traditionally, higher education has not been interested in any kind of applied effects of the works that come out of the academy. Applying our research is what defines us and makes us

different than what goes on in the academy.

It is very important that we hold onto these traditions. We do have some challenges. We need to set standards for departments and programs. We need to have some common definitions regarding standards. Organizations like NAES can be responsible for becoming an accrediting body. We need that kind of leadership. We need that kind of political base. We need that kind of political voice, if we're going to be able to be players with all those other people who are now entering into the whole multicultural debate. We have to be a political force in helping to shape the intellectual discourse that's going on now. NAES can be very useful in that.

We need to strengthen the relevancy of what we do by making our work relevant to the ethnic communities and programs that we represent in our work. We need to capitalize on the policy implications of our work. Given the kind of demographic changes occurring in American society, there is a need for what we in ethnic studies can do to have some impact on policy. We can have an impact. If we produce research that can have some political impact, it then begins to reify what we're all about.

I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues and for you to join in on this discourse.

Thank you.

Rhett Jones

Good, afternoon everyone. I looked at these people and said "why them" and then "why me"? And I think after listening to the first two presentations, I've got that figured out. These people are profound deep-thinking people, and then you have me.

I have a reputation of being--dare I say--simple. I even have empirical evidence of this! Most of you have colleagues to whom you send drafts, manuscripts, and rough stuff for their feedback. They write on it and they send it back to you. I have a good friend, who's also a historian, and we've been doing this with each other for years. A few years ago he wrote to me and said, "You know, Rhett, my wife, who is not an historian, really likes your work. She reads it and she really gets a lot out of it." Finally, one year we were both attending a conference in California and he brought his wife to meet me. She charged up to me and grabbed my hand and said, smiling, "You're Rhett Jones! You're Rhett Jones! I just love your work. It's so simple!"

After years of reflection, I've decided to take that as a compliment. I'm sure that was her intention. This will be simple in the same sense.

I'm not going to talk about issues that have already been covered. I'm not going to talk about the achievements of ethnic studies. The papers and presentations that I've heard at this meeting, and publications, speak for themselves. Further, I'm not going to talk about the link between the community and ethnic studies, though we all know this linkage is

important.

Some of you know that I've been at Brown since the establishment of the Afro-American studies program which is a de facto department. To the best of my knowledge, we are the only department in the university which requires reappointment, promotion and promotion-to-tenure letters of support from the people of the community, as well as scholarly letters and letters from students. This has been in our bylaws since 1980. We're serious about it. I'd be happy to talk to you about what we do, not for the community but with the community.

Instead of talking about what we have done, I'm going to talk about three challenges that I see for ethnic studies. I've been involved with multidisciplinary studies for more than 20 years. Working with people trained in different disciplines, I thought the basic problem would be vocabulary and terminology. Is an anthropologist's meaning of culture the same thing as literary scholar's? If they mean different things, how can they possibly work together either in research, in teaching or in the community?

As it turns out, that is not a very difficult problem at all. You can decide to use the terminology of the anthropologist. You can decide to use the terminology of the literary scholar. Or, you can make up one that will suit the problem that you are working on together.

The real problem, and I don't see much talk about it in ethnic studies, is what I call the nature of truth. We're all trained in what constitutes truth. We're not supposed to just make a good argument. We're supposed to document it and support it. However, since we are coming from different disciplines, there are different assumptions about the nature of truth. For example, I'm married to a psychologist. What some of those people consider to be truth is very strange stuff!

I went to a conference at the University of Mississippi on black archaeology. It was the first national conference held on African American archaeology. I went because I'm interested in 18th Century history and archaeologists have been doing a lot of work in this field. I went to a session on Jamaica because it was an area of my interest. Everybody there was an archaeologist except me. One archaeologist was showing slides of glassware and commenting on them. All the archaeologists were getting excited and bouncing up and down and elbowing me saying "Look! Look! Look!" I couldn't see anything up there. It was simply glass to me. It dawned on me that I didn't know whether this was profound stuff or surface stuff or stuff in the middle because I didn't have the training to evaluate this evidence. I didn't. I had to rely on the other archaeologists' belief that this was profound stuff.

Another issue we need to consider is the connection between ethnic studies and "traditional departments." As a someone who works in 18th century history, these departments don't seem that traditional to me. Most of these disciplines aren't even 100 years old. Anthropology, sociology,

political science are considered traditions?

Moreover, they try to put us on the defensive by asking "What do we do?" Then their next question is "What are your methods? What are your theoretical assumptions?" I turn it around and ask, "What are yours?" They are no more unified in their theories and methodologies, then are we. I don't know a single discipline that is, but I will say this about anthropologists: at least they get their dirt out front. The newsletter of the American Anthropological Association, carries debates about how anthropologists can't agree on theories and methodologies.

If you want to get into a real fight in the history department you start by asking, "Are linguistic data, oral tradition, and archaeology as valuable as documentary evidence?" This is not an idle question. Asking whether or not oral evidence counts as much as documentary evidence is not an idle question because it hasn't even been 15 years since a lot of people were arguing that black people didn't have a history because they didn't have any written documents. Do you remember that? When they started looking for black documents in the 19th and 20th century, they found a lot of them. So many, in fact, that they don't know what to do with them. They haven't found as many documents written by black people in my period. Does that mean there were no 18th century black people? I think not. These issues we're talking about are worth exploring. We need to stop defining ourselves in terms of "traditional departments."

One last point has to do with what I think our research priority should be. As someone who was chair of a black studies program for 12 years, I have learned that you cannot tell faculty to do anything. It's nice to have people in the community come up and tell me "Why don't you tell your professors. . .? Well, actually, it would work better if <u>they</u> would talk to some of the professors. You want somebody to get something done? <u>You</u> talk to them. But for me to tell them what to do, that's the kiss of death.

We need to devote more of our resources to studying the relations <u>among</u> people of color and less resources to studying relations between people of color and whites. I'm not saying that we shouldn't continue to study those relationships because even though the demographics are changing for the foreseeable future, white people are still going to control the wealth and the political power in this country. Hence, we need to continue to study whites. By our own history and by our own commitment to our communities, we are well situated and well suited to begin the study of relations <u>among</u> peoples of color.

We've already started this at Brown. We had a conference recently where we addressed "Afrocentrism: Scholars of Color Respond." To my knowledge, this is the first time a panel of non-black scholars of color addressed Afrocentrism. Evelyn Hu-DeHart gave a talk. David Carrasco began his presentation by acknowledging how the efforts of black scholars influenced his scholarship. Russell Thorton, a member of the Cherokee nation, closed by saying, "If Afrocentrism means people talking

over their own history, then as an Indian, I'm all for it."

I think we need more studies like that.

Evelyn Hu-DeHart

Well, I'm the youngest one here, and I don't mean by age. I am the youngest because I have the least experience in ethnic studies. I owe a lot to every one on this panel. I have cited and quoted every one of them in my own work.

The reason I am the youngest is that is I sneaked into ethnic studies. Actually, several of us probably sneaked into ethnic studies in the sense that we didn't begin our academic, intellectual career in something called ethnic studies which after all is quite new. The history of ethnic studies in fact parallels exactly my history in higher education and professional life in it.

I graduated from Stanford University in 1968 which is the beginning date of ethnic studies. I didn't go into ethnic studies. I went into something called area studies, particularly Latin American and Caribbean studies (the others being African studies and Asian studies). These are also called third world studies. I want to start out with that because I think there is often confusion between area studies and ethnic studies.

This confusion has carried over into a structural problem which we are now facing. Area studies has always been and continues to be organized in interdisciplinary or in multidisciplinary programs. Typically, they do not have faculty of their own. They draw faculty from the various disciplines and on paper they form a committee. Their commonality is their focus on a certain area of the world. This is all that is asked of area studies people.

The problem is that we ethnic studies people allowed ourselves to fall into that trap by thinking that ethnic studies can also be organized that way. And in fact, if you look around the country, most ethnic studies programs are still organized that way. A campus says, "Let's get ethnic studies together." They survey the departments. They ask who among the departments focuses on people of color and on the different ethnic groups which we call ethnic studies. They put these people together and now we have a program in ethnic studies.

There are drawbacks to this approach. None of the faculty have studied in something called ethnic studies. Further, no interdisciplinary work in the true sense of the word takes place under this format. I would be happy to engage any of you in a critique of this model of ethnic studies. However, I must say that this particular model has worked very well in getting ethnic studies into the curriculum. Most ethnic studies are formed under this area studies model with all its problems for ethnic studies.

One way for ethnic studies to be introduced into the curriculum is through other programs such as American studies which is an increas-

ingly common model that is to include or integrate some aspect of ethnic studies into an already existing American studies program. They do this at Brown to some extent.

Another model is to take an existing area studies program and put into it an ethnic studies component so you have such things as Latino and Latin American studies, Asian and Asian American studies, African and African American studies. It is a model of convenience. It works because it is an easy way for administrations to get ethnic studies on the books and into the curriculum.

If we consider all of these ethnic studies, the good news is that there are lots of ethnic studies programs all across the country. By one account, there are over 700 and I think there are many more. I believe that if you open up the catalogue of every college and university in the country, both big and small, from community colleges to big research universites, you will find something called ethnic studies today. Why is that? These are in response to a certain kind of public pressure. These are in response to the drive for diversity and multiculturalism, whatever those terms mean. We are so eager to get into the curriculum that we will take it every way we can no matter how it's handed to us. In the past, this approach might have been good and necessary. Yet, it is not good enough. We'd better watch out. We are facing some very serious problems.

Another issue in ethnic studies is both positive and negative. One reason why ethnic studies has received the kind of attention it has from administrators and why there are so many ethnic studies programs is the pressure for the administration to diversify the faculty. Administrators have learned that traditional disciplines simply aren't motivated to diversify their faculty. In response, they create ethnic studies programs to entice departments with additional positions, if they will hire someone that will do ethnic studies. Therefore, the new faculty member contributes from their department to an ethnic studies program. This indeed has worked well. But, we are reaping the problems of that convenience that we readily acceded to. There is an increasing confusion between ethnic studies as a discipline and as a field of study and affirmative action. This is a problem that we need to think about.

What happens is that a university says, "Well, we have enough ethnic studies people in place. We've done our affirmative action part." There are other variations of this thinking that we need to guard against because this mentality allows this confusion to continue. Note that, we acquiesced to it because we knew that was one way for us to get ourselves in the door. If that's the reason why administrators wanted ethnic studies, then we weren't going to quarrel with them. Now that we're in the door we are facing this colossal problem of administrators confusing us, in ethnic studies, with affirmative action.

There is another component to consider. Ethnic studies was born not only out of community demands but out of student pressure. John

Stanfield, the great African American sociologist, coins this term I just love. He calls ethnic studies, "fire insurance programs" because the administrators are so afraid of having more buildings burning that they gave us what we wanted back then in the 60s. But that continues to this day. In the summer of 1993, at UCLA, the Chicano students went on a lengthy and painful hunger strike in order to get a Chicano studies program. Can you imagine? UCLA does not have a viable undergraduate Chicano studies curriculum. Those students had to do something very drastic reminiscent of the 60s and early 70s.

Also currently, we know that the resurgence of ethnic studies is due in large part to the changing and growing demographics of people of color. This is another force driving ethnic studies, creating the responsiveness of administrators to ethnic studies. Yet, here, another problem arises. We know that our origins have a lot to do with student demands and changing demographics. However, because of that and because of our commitment to students and community, but especially to the student issue, ethnic studies continues to be confused with student services.

Here we are, a group of ethnic studies faculty, and we have a center, and by the way Rhett's center and my center have almost exactly the same name, that's entirely a coincidence. When I first went to Colorado, our center, which is an entirely academic program, was listed as student services in the university bulletins. I had to ask the student services people to take it out. Not that we're not committed to students--all of us do that--but if they continue to view us as student services, they would never give us the respect and legitimacy that we ask for and need. I'm beginning to believe that this confusion is deliberate rather than accidental.

There are severe and growing tensions between ethnic studies, women's studies and cultural studies. It's one of the questions that Jesse put in the list that he sent to us for this panel discussion. Because of our politics and our history, we want to think of women's studies as part of the same movement as ethnic studies. I just don't think it's true. It's a disservice to continue to conflate women's studies and ethnic studies in the same breath because they are currently very different entities. Complicating this is the growing tension between women's studies and ethnic studies. If you look across the country, if you look at the national status of women's studies and if you look at the place of women of color within women's studies, then you know what I mean. I think that is something worth looking at and examining instead of just following tradition by just saying women's studies and ethnic studies are all in the same bag.

I'll give you one way of looking at it. The progress of women faculty all across the campus, and I mean white women faculty, is significantly higher than faculty of color. Universities do not want to acknowledge this or separate the statistics because they prefer to lump us all together to

show that they have made progress in hiring underrepresented faculty and promoting diversity. Our diversity requirements at Boulder are very problematic because it is either gender or racial/ethnic diversity. Students aren't sure what is being asked of them in this diversity requirement. We are unsuccessful in asking the university and curriculum committee to separate the two.

Furthermore, ethnic studies has been deliberately confused with non-western studies, international studies, and global studies. Let's think about the implications of that. Anything that's not white, elite or mainstream, becomes everything else. We're the catch-all along with everybody else who is outside this narrow definition. This kind of confusion does a disservice to ethnic studies. It allows people like Dinesh D'Souza to propose that there is a correct kind of multiculturalism and it is not ethnic studies. He tells that the high cultures of India, China, and Japan are the kind of "multiculturalism" that should be in the curriculum, not what we do in ethnic studies. We need to insist that we are not like non-western studies.

Finally, I want to mention one other confusion for you to think about. We need to distinguish ethnic studies as an academic discipline based on research and teaching from what is often called multicultural studies particularly in the schools of education. This is not to diminish at all what they do in the schools of education under the rubric of multicultural education, but to insist that what we do is separate and different. If we don't do that, ethnic studies scholars like myself, will continue to be asked, as is the case by my children's teachers in elementary school and secondary school, to come in and do multicultural training or other aspects of what they call at that level, multicultural education. This confusion is due to lumping together what we do in academic ethnic studies and multicultural education.

Ultimately, I think we need to heed everything that has been said this afternoon. Everyone has spoken about some really hard-hitting truths. If we are going to last and survive into the 21st century, we need to stop and think about what we are doing instead of going willy nilly into the future being grateful for everything that comes our way, without thinking about what we are being asked to do and how it is we are fitting into this framework of American higher education and the power structure of the American academy. We shouldn't have to be grateful any more for everything they throw in our paths. We should insist on defining what it is that we are, what it is that we need, and to refuse certain kinds of cooperation when they are not what we say we are all about.

Thank you.

Jesse Vázquez

Our panelists today have ably addressed issues of multicultural

education, cultural studies, and conflicts of these areas with ethnic studies. They have discussed the question of autonomy and the structure of ethnic studies programs. They have addressed those issues which directly shape our relationships with the community, the origins of ethnic studies and their relationship to communities. They have asked, "Where is ethnic studies research taking us?" Additionally, the question of recruitment, tenure and promotion has been raised. Finally, they addressed the question of autonomy which takes us back to the founding principles of ethnic studies. I would now like to open the floor for discussion.

Q: If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would you do with ethnic studies?

A: Hu-DeHart: I would like to have a department. Currently, we have 10 faculty members but we don't have department autonomy. This is blocking our progress. We should discuss why the University of Colorado at Boulder put so many resources in building something in ethnic studies and is now stopping us dead in our tracks when we have gotten so popular and prominent in five years. The politics behind this is interesting to know. My wish is to have autonomy.

Perry: With regard to having that kind of organizational input, that kind of autonomy, I've been elected chair of the arts and sciences council. That is where you can get involved with the politics of your own survival. The politics of promoting ethnic studies requires that you become more politically astute in academe, more expert on how the bureaucracy works, and on being able to manipulate that bureaucracy. If you're not playing in that area, then you are vulnerable.

Jones: Can I just add something to that? I agree with what you both said. Departments are important. However, each institution is somewhat different and just to follow up, when I got to Brown, I thought that the Table of Organization said something about how the place was run. Dumb! Wrong! And as Bob says, it takes a while to figure out where the power really is. In the Table of Organization, for example, it might appear that a particular Dean has a whole lot of power. He has his budget and his slush fund, yet, all the power is really in the Provost's office. You have to learn how the institution works.

Second, generally I agree that departments make sense but you have to know what works at your institution. Departments might be key at your institution, but I've been at schools where departments are just paper. They don't have any real power. Power is at the Dean of the College's level or somewhere else. The bottom line is you have to know where the power is. You have to know how the place works. Then exploit that.

Vázquez: I guess I would also say in response that that reflects back to what Hu-DeHart said. You really have to know what ethnic studies is

on your campus. What do you want it to be? Then you need to understand the structure of that university--its politics and governance structure. At some universities and colleges, it may make real sense to have a center--a research center--and not get involved with curriculum: At others, the departmental route may be the way to go. I've talked about it in terms of looking at multiple strategies for infusing ethnic studies the way you define it onto your campuses. You must define what you want ethnic studies to be. Then you must decide what is the best way to accomplish that on your campus. Is it by having a department? Is it by having a research center? Is it by having an institute? Is it by having an area studies type of program? How can you best create what you need? What do the students want, and how can we move the administration and others to add the kind of resources we need?

Q: I was wondering what are the sentiments of the panel on what an ethnic studies association can do on a legal level to stop harassment of an ethnic studies department or program by a university administration?

A: Perry: I think the National Association will, at some point, become involved in establishing or helping to establish guidelines, procedures and policies for ethnic studies departments, centers, and programs. These policies will define what we are all about, what our values are. We will eventually have a structure so we can actually mediate disputes that happen in ethnic studies across the country. We need a very strong national association for ethnic studies. This group needs to get to the point where we can give some help to you. I'd like to say this, when you pick a fight like that, you should know that you're going to win. You really need to know that you can win. Otherwise what can happen could be disastrous. I'm hoping that the homework that you did means that you know you're going to win this fight because you have the right to fight back.

Hu-DeHart: I want to interject some realism into this. It may be nice to think that an Association like NAES could do something like that. But the fact of the matter is, NAES has developed separately from other ethnic specific associations and continues to do so. There is the National Council of Black Studies, the National Association of Chicano Studies, the somewhat defunct Native American Studies Association, the Asian American Studies Association, the Puerto Rican Studies Association, the Caribbean Studies Association and so on. We have a plethora of ethnic specific associations in addition to NAES. All of us can only relate professionally to only one or two of those. I'm a little bit concerned that NAES may not yet be seen as an umbrella organization. In a way, that's not bad because ethnic studies is extremely diverse. I don't know how we would go about establishing accreditation guidelines and whether people would accede to that at this moment. But maybe that's the direction we need to think about if that's what we think we are: a discipline or a field.

I don't see that myself in the near future. Alternatively, I see the growth in the ethnic focused associations.

Q: All of you represent institutes, programs, centers that are in fact ethnic studies. Would you comment on the continuing development of ethnic specific programs?

A: Perry: I somewhat agree and disagree with Hu-DeHart. I think that NAES can be an umbrella organization that's speaks to the hundreds of ethnic studies programs that exist throughout the country. I belong to National Council of Black Studies. A colleague of mine belongs to National Association of Chicano Studies. But still we are together in an ethnic studies entity.

In my own case, we're talking about reconfiguration. The politics of that is people are going to come in and look at the strength and weaknesses of programs, not just ethnic studies but throughout the entire college. For example, I'm now the chair of the arts and sciences council. I am going to be a part of deciding how evaluation is going to be done within our college. It would be very useful for us in ethnic studies to have people from the National Association of Ethnic Studies come in to help with evaluating ethnic studies departments. I would be more comfortable with some of you folks coming in and looking at our program. This kind of organization can provide this role and it should. To some extent, we could get cooperation from the other ethnic specific organizations. We should try and enlist at least the heads of those programs to be involved in NAES in order to gain some additional political clout. If we're going to be able to affect national and local policy, we need a strong organization. If organizations can come together, and participate together and yet maintain their own autonomy, we become a far more viable political force to contend with.

Vázquez: These issues are real. I see NAES as an umbrella organization. It's problematic when you talk about developing accreditation. It's not insurmountable; it's problematic. NAES needs to show even more support and encourage more scholarship in the area. We need to drastically increase communication between and among the various ethnic specific associations. We're trying to do that in NAES. We've developed a couple of plenaries in the past couple of years that have brought representatives together. Not only do we need to continue to do that, so we can talk about similar challenges that we face as well as and challenges that are different, but we also need to encourage other associations, (NCBS, Puerto Rican Studies, AAS) to continue that dialogue among themselves. We don't talk enough with each other, yet we face some of the same issues: the problem of legitimacy on campuses, promotion and tenure, and much more. We need to increase communication so that we can better link up with those associations. Fact is that many of our NAES members are also members of these organiza-

tions and they can help begin to build these bridges.

Hu-DeHart: But, we do need to be cognizant of the politics that continues to be behind ethnic studies. For example, when the Chicano students at UCLA went on a hunger strike, they would only settle for Chicano studies. There were people on the UCLA faculty who were trying to use the opportunity to develop a more comparative and cross cultural and multidisciplinary ethnic studies undergraduate department or program. Politically it just wouldn't go. Scholars and academics and even people linked to the community may know what should be in place. However, what the students and other people want may be different.

Additionally, let's speak the truth and put things on the table. African American studies is probably the oldest and longest established, and on those campuses where African American studies is well established with faculty and autonomy, even if the faculty knows otherwise, they are not genuinely ready to share that space with a broadly conceived ethnic studies unit. I have visited several campuses where there is growing tension among various groups of students of color. Asian American students--ironically the fastest growing group on campuses across this country--find that they have no academic presence in the curriculum. They look at black students on the campus, often a smaller, shrinking group and they see that African American studies is the largest ethnic studies type of program on campus. From the Asian American student point of view, they think they are disenfranchised in the curriculum. They go to the well-established African American studies program, and ask, "How about letting us in?" And, they find the door slammed in their face.

They continue to face this type of politics on campuses. We may all have a clear vision of ethnic studies that we can all agree on in principle but we have to deal with politics. The reason Boulder succeeded in having a center which retains four ethnic groups within an umbrella is that we didn't have a strong program in any of these four fields in place. So that it wasn't that hard to forge a different model of ethnic studies. But on campuses that I have visited, where you have one strong program or you have one strong demographic group, it just doesn't seem as easily achievable.

Jones: I don't think that scholarship and politics can be so neatly divided into those two categories. First of all, I think our students are not so much persuaded by what we say but by what we do, at least at Brown. They watch what we do as scholars of color. Do we support one another? Do we do joint scholarship? Do we turn up in one another's classes? Are we in one another's communities? When the Latinos tried to get a voters drive going, were there black studies professors there? Yes there were. That's what they look at and that's why we haven't had the problems at Brown. It goes back to the kind of scholarship that you do as well as the actions of the political establishment. I know about some of the incidents you talk about. There is a certain responsibility put upon black studies

people because we were there first, and most of us feel it.

Hu-DeHart: But it's a divide and conquer mechanism...

Jones: Most of us feel it. Also, you've got to do your scholarship, you've got to publish, you want to teach your students yet you have this whole other set of responsibilities. We need to do more interdisciplinary work on relationships among communities of color. Our students need to see us doing it, and it needs to turn up in our courses and in our publications. That's what needs to happen. But as for politics, as an old Chicagoan, I know that politics never takes care of itself. We have to take care of politics.

Q: Can we recruit students into ethnic studies and can they find jobs?

A: Perry: That's a primary myth that people in ethnic studies have. Can historians get jobs with B.A.s? Can sociologists get jobs with B.A.s? Can anthropologists get jobs with B.A.s? It's a question I think that people often ask. I've tracked people that we've graduated with ethnic studies B.A.s. They are more apt to get a job than those with B.A.s in history.

Hu-DeHart: I agree at the B.A. level, a B.A. in ethnic studies is as good a liberal arts degree as any. Most liberal arts degrees don't point you to a career. It's not like getting a business degree or accounting degree. Right? If you have a Ph.D. in ethnic studies, you are far more likely to get a job than if you have one in American history. That's the irony. There are more jobs than there are takers. But because most of us are not autonomous, we don't have enough graduate programs. We're not training people fast enough to meet the demand for people trained with ethnic studies to go out into the teaching force.

Q: Then I should give you my CV.

A: Hu-DeHart: What's your degree in?

Q: Comparative cultures which is American and ethnic studies.

A: Hu-DeHart: You might think so, but it may not meet other people's definition of ethnic studies. There are only two Ph.D. programs run by ethnic studies programs. Temple University's very afrocentric African American studies Ph.D. and the Berkeley Ph.D., and that's it. If people look specifically not for comparative cultures, not for culture studies, but for ethnic studies with its very clear definition, there is only one place and they can't produce them fast enough.

Q: People on committees who are doing hiring in departments pay more attention to the name of the degree than to the curriculum?

A: Hu-DeHart: Well, if you're hiring a historian, aren't you going to look for a person with a degree in history first before you look for a Ph.D. in something else?

Jones: I think that's part of the issue that Miguel discussed. Usually--and this gets back to the whole question of autonomy--an ethnic studies unit has a certain kind of person in mind and they may say: "We want someone who does Chicano history or we want someone who does Native American art, or whatever." That's really the kind of person they had in mind and that means that person could have been trained anywhere in a "traditional" department or in something else. But they generally do have something specific in mind.

Hu-DeHart: That's really important to keep in mind, Rhett. If we hire in our ethnic studies center, if we want somebody trained in African American literature, we are looking for someone completely different than what the English department is looking for when they are looking for someone in African American literature. We may still call it the same thing but let me tell you, we are looking for very different people.

Vázquez: And that goes back to the founding principles of ethnic studies which departs radically from the principles and the practices of "traditional" departments. You have very different assumptions of what folks can and cannot do, and you have different kinds of operating guidelines.

Carranza: We just had a search that ended unsuccessfully. It was a joint appointment in Latino studies and psychology. Each had very different ideas about the person that would fill their part of that joint appointment and it so ended unsuccessfully. The psychology people agreed on the best candidate and Latino studies agreed on the best candidate and they turned out to be two different people. They weren't going to hire two different people so the search went down the tubes.

Jones: Can I speak to that? We have joint appointments at Brown. We've been at it a long time. We sort of learned the hard way that the time to negotiate the kind of person you want for a joint appointment is up front, before you even advertise. That might mean a lot of meetings. But, if you can't do it up front, you just don't do it. The other thing that we have at Brown is joint appointments in which Afro-American studies controls the slots. Once we make up our minds that we want someone say, for example, in modern popular culture, then we can go to American civilization--that's what we call American studies at Brown--and tell them, This is the kind of person we would like. Is this somebody you'd be happy with?" And they might say, "Yeah, but we'd like this, this, this and this." And we might spend the better part of an academic year working out an agreement. Then we do the search. The person is appointed and he/she holds a joint appointment in American civilization and Afro-American studies so long as they are at Brown.

Hu-DeHart: Who does the tenuring decision-making?

Jones: Both, because it's a joint appointment. But that comes down to defining what you want up front and spelling all the rules out. Now if that person leaves the university, then the position reverts back to African-American studies. We could make another appointment with American civilization or with another department.

Carranza: Where's the tenure line?

Jones: The tenure is in both.

Q: What if the units don't agree on the reappointment or tenuring?

A: Jones: That shouldn't happen if you do your work right. We learned this the hard way. You have to do it step by step. We have had divided recommendations for appointments and in that case the person doesn't get appointed. That doesn't happen now as often as in the past.

Carranza: I just want to respond real quick to Rhett. I have an illustration that I could share. In this instance, there was considerable discussion ahead of time. It was during the time when I was the administrator in the dean's office. We felt that there was an agreement as to the kind of person that we wanted until the candidates came in. Then Latino studies said, "Here's this one we really like" and psychology said, "Here's this one we really like," and they were two different people. One other thing: at our university, tenure now resides only in one unit so that your tenure home is clear. I'm on the books as having a continuous appointment in both sociology and in ethnic studies (6-tenths in sociology and 4-tenths in ethnic studies). If they did away with ethnic studies, I guess I would be left with just 6-tenths in sociology. That might be an issue. They've now changed that. The university has said that you can only have a continuous appointment in one unit. Here's where the control of the position is very important. In this case, psychology was going to be the tenure home, the continuous appointment would be in psychology with a special appointment in Latino studies.

Perry: We have three joint appointments with five full appointments in ethnic studies. We have two with women's studies and one with sociology. For us, 60 percent of each appointment is in ethnic studies and it's negotiated up front. The other units only have input into the decision. They really don't even have a vote to block tenure or promotion. That's the kind of power you have to negotiate up front. You need that kind of protection in order to protect the survival of the candidate.

Q: I understand that a very large part of education is not just learning facts. It is a fact that students were participating in that aspect of education which led to the development of ethnic studies, but I would not have survived without ethnic studies. As I have been in the university I have discovered something that is quite frightening. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 89 percent of the faculty in higher education is whitenon-Hispanic. Ethnic studies is used as a unit for hiring people of

color. If the university must hire an "ethnic" they dump them in the ethnic studies department. They are not hiring blacks or Hispanics in traditional departments. They put you in another section where you are ignored as a less legitimate scholar. As a result, our scholarship is treated as more esoteric, meaningful.

A: Jones: Let me respond to the last part first. Esoteric and meaningless scholarship is found in traditional fields and in ethnic studies. I'm one of those people, as Evelyn said, who was old enough to start out before there was such a thing as ethnic studies. I had a full-time tenure track appointment in the department of history when tenure lines were created in Afro-American studies. I said, "There is no way that I'm going to sit over here in this history department when they are building something that's crucial to my people as a whole right across the street." I went to a dean and said, "I want a joint appointment." He said, "Well, what are we going to do with your slot in history?" I said, "That's your problem because I want it." You see, I don't think ethnic studies is illegitimate. I don't think that by being in an ethnic studies unit I'm losing anything. I certainly don't th ink the scholarship is esoteric. I think it's very relevant to the needs of our country.

Hu-DeHart: If you don't believe that about your own work in ethnic studies, then you don't fall into that line of thinking. That's what other people are saying about us and if we internalize it, then yes, we have fallen victim to that. But I want to say that we need to separate ethnic studies as a discipline and a field from affirmative action. Just because you're Asian American, African American or Latino, doesn't mean that all you do is ethnic studies. We do all kinds of things and we shouldn't just confine ourselves to ethnic studies. Similarly, there are non-people-of-color who are moving very energetically into ethnic studies. I hope that we will be able to open our doors more widely to people, based on their commitment and their work and not on their racial identity. We need to make that distinction. We just don't go hire any person of color off the street and think that person is eligible to do ethnic studies. We need to look just as closely as any other group of scholars at a person's credentials, commitment and values before we hire. We have white scholars in our unit.

Q.: The university remains 89.5 percent white, non-Hispanic. We have not fully integrated. . .

A: Hu-DeHart: That's true. But that's not our problem.

Perry: That's not our job. . .

Both: That's their problem. . .

Perry: It's not ethnic studies' job to do that.

Carranza: We should not let them equate ethnic studies with affirmative action.

Hu-DeHart: That's right.

Carranza: We're going to hire five racial minority faculty and put them in ethnic studies and there's our affirmative action? No! Affirmative action is on multiple levels and that means that you can hire an African American chemist who does chemistry and not necessarily African American chemistry. That's the reality of it.

Hu-DeHart: Let's give an example. Shelby Steele is in the English department at San Jose State University and wouldn't feel comfortable at all in African American studies and vice versa and that's fine. It's great that we have this kind of diversity.

Carranza: Here's another example of the mentality and the identity question that's placed on minority scholars. You get an African American student in chemistry and his advisor says, "Do you want to be black or do you want to be a chemist?" He's telling this to a graduate student. This is the kind of mentality that you face and it comes out in terms of affirmative action as well. You hire these people and then you put them off into these programs.

I see ethnic studies as on a mission to the core, the academic core of universities and institutions. To do that, we have to recognize that we can become part of that core. We won't just resemble the core as it was beforewe got there, we will actually change the environment of the core. Ethnic studies should produce a change in the university.

Vázquez: Part of the original mission of ethnic studies was to be a transformative force in the university. On that note, I would like to bringthis Plenary session to a close, and express our thanks and appreciation for this informative panel and to you in the audience for your attendance and participation. I am sure we all have much more to think about now. Thank you, all.

Editor's Note: A bibliography containing selected works published by these individuals on the subject of ethnic studies and ethnic studies programs is included here for readers' convenience.

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