

About La Raza

Editor of The Bee—Sir: Mexican-Americans are celebrating Mexico's independence from Spain. The celebration never fails to be colorful, but this year the affair was almost marred by the shameful violence during student registration at Fresno State College. The perpetrators of this ugly demonstration were youths of Mexican descent. It was a mere handful of youths and hardly representative of the great majority of students of Mexican descent.

There are now twice as many Mexican-American students enrolled at FSC as there were in 1966 when the writer retired after nearly 40 years of teaching. It gladdened our hearts as more and more students of this racial minority joined the student bodies. It meant economic improvement at home and better competition for jobs after graduation.

The writer was born in old Mexico. It was good to see the young and eager faces appear on registration days. They like to think of themselves as Americans. They know that they can preserve their language and culture in the country that their parents or grandparents adopted. They are proud of it, as they should be.

Specifically, FSC did not have to have a La Raza program last year if all the Chicano advocates wanted was to study their Mexican heritage. All but one or two courses for this purpose were already in the college catalog — admittedly offered by several disciplines. They could have been combined and organized and taught by the same staff using English. There are no qualified teachers whose native tongue is Spanish for some of the disciplines. Moreover, the use of Spanish would be discriminatory to students who do not know Spanish.

As President Norman Baxter and Professor Chester Cole have said, they were not able to get a special staff together. It is perhaps just as well because now the administration will have time to organize the ethnic program — if they believe it necessary. It takes from one to two years to organize a new program of studies. The courses are proposed, then organized with the needed library facilities, then staff is made available if the monies have been provided. Since the money comes from public funds it is only right and proper that the program be responsible to the administration.

Recent events, favorable and unfavorable, remind one of the very appropriate words of the greatest Mexican president, Benito Juarez — a full-blooded Zapotec Indian and contemporary of Abraham Lincoln (the writer's two greatest heroes) — who said: "Respect for your neighbor's rights is liberty." There have been many definitions of liberty. Juarez' is still best.

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Emeritus Professor of Foreign Languages, Fresno State College.

Fresno.