STATEMENT AGAINST ARIZONA LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

The Faculty of the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio condemns the following legislative actions in Arizona: the passage of SB1070 and HB 2281. In addition, we condemn the state’s practice of firing or “re-assigning” public classroom teachers who speak English with an accent. Below are short descriptions of each of these measures:

**Senate Bill 1070**—(signed into law April 23, 2010) This law requires police “when practicable” to detain people they reasonably suspect are in the country without authorization. It also allows the police to charge immigrants with a state crime for not carrying immigration documents. And it allows residents to sue cities if they believe the law is not being enforced.

**House Bill 2281**—(signed into law May 11, 2010) This bill bans ethnic studies in Arizona K-12 schools. It bans schools from teaching classes that are designed for students of a particular ethnic group, promote resentment or advocate ethnic solidarity over treating pupils as individuals. The bill also bans classes that promote the overthrow of the U.S. government.

**Teachers with Accents**—(April 30, 2010) The Arizona Department of Education has told schools that teachers with "heavy" or "ungrammatical" accents are no longer allowed to teach English classes in the state’s K-12 public schools. Teachers who do not meet the new fluency standards have the option of taking classes to improve their English, but if they fail to reach the state's targets, teachers who speak with accents can be fired or reassigned.

The first measure, SB 1070, is draconian and politically short-sighted. Its implementation has increased the likelihood of Arizona police officers to suspiciously view those who are “Latino-looking.” This law is ultimately a form of racial profiling and discrimination because officers (will) rely on appearance, phenotypes, language and accents to make judgments that will lead to the unnecessary harassment or detention of US citizens and residents. ([Click here](#) for a series of researchers discussing the controversy in-depth.)

HB 2281 is another politically-motivated and misguided measure directed at one particular program: Raza Studies in the Tucson Unified School District. This law was crafted in the midst of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment to aid the political ambitions of its promoters. Its implementation denies research which demonstrates how Raza Studies is actually closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color in the district.

And finally, removing teachers with accents in Arizona public schools is, yet, another manifestation of intolerance and hegemonic insecurities. The accountability of teachers should be measured by their performance in the classroom, their interactions with their students, colleagues, and parents as well as other standards set within their profession. Using the criteria of speaking with an accent instead mistakenly promotes a set of standards for removal that are arbitrary. The Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Education in Arizona are setting a dangerous and completely erroneous precedent without considering research to the contrary.

In sum, regardless of intent, partial and short-sighted “solutions” as described above carry the potential to contribute to a humanitarian disaster while undermining the United States’ commitment as a democratic nation to human rights. We recognize that these laws and practices are part of a larger trend of discrimination against Latina/o immigrants in the state of Arizona. Therefore, the Faculty of the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio strongly opposes SB 1070, HB 2281, and the removal of teachers who speak with accents from both academic and social justice perspectives. We regret this pernicious trend and encourage local, national and international efforts to intervene through the use of non-violent tactics.
such as political organizing and economic boycotts. In the meantime, we continue to offer support as these law(s) move through the courts to be repealed and deemed unconstitutional.

**SIGNED:**

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The following three sources were referenced in this statement:

http://www.utexas.edu/know/2010/07/19/border_views/


http://www.u.arizona.edu/~hammond/ling_statement_final.pdf