

Alegado tells her side

Editor:

The establishment of a program of Ethnic Studies as a permanent and co-ordinated program of academic instruction and research at the University of Hawaii has been a protracted struggle. It is a struggle of the multi-ethnic community and working people to learn our culture and our history.

Eleven major ethnic groups have immigrated to Hawaii, worked and struggled to make a living for themselves and their families.

HAWAII's multi-ethnic people have developed a common culture, lifestyle and pidgin language which is called "local," yet at the same time each particular ethnic group has also perpetuated its distinctive traditions and customs.

Rather than proudly identifying with this heritage, generations of Hawaii's youth have grown up feeling ashamed of their ethnic background and working class roots. This attitude has its

roots in the imposition of an alien economy on Hawaii and the subsequent development of the plantation system.

The school system reinforced this attitude from generation to generation through tracking systems, culturally biased literature and tests and standards limiting access to higher education.

HAWAII'S YOUTH need to learn about their heritage so that they will identify positively with their unique ethnic and common working class roots, respect the unique heritage of the diverse ethnic groups and become confident and socially aware persons better prepared to determine their own future.

The Ethnic Studies Program seeks to fulfill that need through a co-ordinated and systematic program of research and instruction.

The push for ethnic studies programs arose out of the great civil rights movement in the 1960s. Following this national trend, and spurred by a legislative mandate, the University of Hawaii Administration established the Ethnic Studies Program in 1970.

IT WAS REVIEWED in 1971 and extended for two years. In 1973, the faculty reviewed the program and recommended that it become a permanent and regular part of the University.

In 1975, the Chancellor recommended that the program only be extended for two years. In 1976, the Chancellor was forced to grant a new academic review. This review is currently being conducted. The result will determine the survival of the Ethnic Studies Program in Hawaii.

The Ethnic Studies program sponsored a series of events this week, culminating in a benefit concert at Andrews Amphitheatre Feb. 27. Ka Leo invited program director Davianna Alegado-McGregor and Vice Chancellor Geoffrey Ashton to air opposing views on the program's future. Ashton, however, preferred to wait until the current program review is released.

The question should not be if the Ethnic Studies Program should be continued or not. History and current community, student and faculty support proves that it is necessary. The question should really be—how can the program be improved? What strengths can be consolidated? What shortcomings rectified?

BEYOND THIS academic review, the program will also have to survive the budget cutbacks that threaten to abolish all provisional programs, including Hawaiian Studies, Philippine Studies and Women's Studies.

In April and May, support will be needed to pressure the Administration to follow faculty, student and community recommendations.

The question of making the Ethnic Studies program permanent is a political question as well as an educational one. Future generations of Hawaii should have the opportunity to know and appreciate their cultural heritage.

DAVIANNA ALEGADO
director, ethnic studies

Property of:
ETHNIC STUDIES LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII