UH Move to Abolish Ethnic Studies Opposed

By MAYETTE RAMOLETE

The University of Hawaii administration is currently moving to abolish the Ethnic Studies Program on the UH Manoa campus.

The UH Ethnic Studies Program, which began in the Fall of 1970, gives course offerings on the various ethnic groups in Hawaii—Chinese, Hawaiian, Filipino, Japanese, Blacks and Caucasians.

What differs the ES Program from the regular academic subjects taught at the University, is the special emphasis given to community service and making the courses in Ethnic Studies relevant to the problems confronting the contemporary island society.

"Since its beginning in 1970, the UH ES Program has been active in many community struggles—for better housing, against racist education, for small farmers and the preservation of agricultural lands, in support of striking unions, etc.—and this made the program unpopular with certain elements in the community, particularly Big Business, conservative educators, and those politicians who are wishy-washy," said a student member of the People's Committee To Defend The Ethnic Studies Program.

Another student remarked: "Over and over again, the UH administration has tried to kill the Ethnic Studies Program. They tried to manipulate the faculty members against each other; they chop and cut our funding; they try to obstruct our development with all kinds of technicalities and academic requirement; they even set up a pseudo E.S. program in the American Studies department trying to coop our efforts. Despite all this and more hassels, we survive and won't give up."

The People's Committee to Defend The Ethnic Studies Program is calling a Public Hearing—Oct. 20 (Wednesday), 3-6 pm at the Campus Center Ball Room. The public is invited. Purpose of the hearing is to air the crisis facing the Ethnic Studies program.

Speaking last week before the Ethnic Studies class on Filipinos In Hawaii, Ben Junasa, Director of the Immigrant Service Center in Kalihi, said "This state (Hawaii) and this country was built by the hard work of the immigrants. Ethnic Studies is important," according to Junasa, "because it talks about the immigrant's hardships and experiences, and the need to build ethnic pride in ourselves and in our young people."

The attempt to kill the Ethnic Studies program comes at a time, when the UH is boiling with various controversies: including the unpopular West Oahu College; the financial scandals in the Athletic dept.; the steep rise in tuition fees; and the over-all deterioration of undergraduate education at the Manoa campus and in the Hawaii community college system.

Speaking with the *Pacific Courier*, Mrs. Davianna Alegado, who is in her third year as acting director for the Ethnic Studies program, said: "The first academic review was in '72. Because of wide-spread popular support we got from the community, some legislators, the students, and the general public—the UH administration was forced to extend the program at a time when they hoped to terminate us."

"The second review came in '74," Mrs. Alegado explained. "The College of Arts & Sciences and the Manoa campus faculty endorsed the ES program and recommended that it be permanent, and be given full support of the UH. The Administration ignored the faculty, the community, and the student body—and instead gave the ES program two more years under 'provisional status' 1975-June, 1977."

"So now we've come down to the wire," Mrs. Alegado said. "The future of the program, its very survival is at stake." Mrs. Alegado stated that she believed "that if Ethnic Studies at the University was curtailed or dropped, it would very seriously hurt the development of Ethnic Studies and bi-cultural/bi-lingual programs in Hawaii's public school system."