

THE RAZA PRESS AND MEDIA ASSOCIATION: Where We've Been and Where We Are Going.

Editor's Note: The following statement is a report from the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) coordinator, Ernesto Bustillos. It was developed from notes of the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA) mesa meeting held in Oxnard, Califas, and comments made at the RPMA general meeting held at Centro Francisco Villa in South Central Los Angeles, on August 29, 2009, the "39th Commemoration of the Chicano Moratorium March of August 29th 1970".

Compas:

First, an update on the status of the structure of the Raza Press and Media Association (RPMA).

Currently, we have a four-person "mesa" (board of directors). This mesa is of an "ad hoc basis" as we need to align it in accordance to our constitution. The present mesa consists of the Coordinator (Ernesto Bustillos), Membership/Organization (Francisco Romero), Secretary (position vacant), and Editor/Web master (Luis Moreno).

The RPMA general membership presently meets four times a year (every three months) and the mesa meets in between the general meetings. This timetable of meetings was agreed upon at the last RPMA of 2008 and re-confirmed at the association's summit held in January of 2009. The mesa meetings are held before each general meeting. The objectives of the mesa meetings is to follow-up on tasks/work of the RPMA (La Pluma, projects, etc.) and prepare an agenda for the following general meeting. We have found that this calendar of meetings ensures that RPMA gatherings are efficient and productive.

The mesa of the RPMA met on August 6, 2009, in Oxnard, Califas. Present at the mesa meeting were Luis Moreno, Francisco Romero, and Ernesto Bustillos. An item on the agenda included a discussion as to how we saw the RPMA: (1) Where have we (RPMA) been? (2) What is the present situation of the association? And (3) where are we going? Also on the agenda were the book festival, on going projects, and future actions/activities of the RPMA.

On The Question of, Where Have We Been?

Everyone agreed that generally speaking, relative to the current conditions in which the RPMA exist, things are going well and we have been productive. We discussed the fact that the RPMA has gone through some changes/transformation in which at times it has attempted to be a formal organization with a tight framework, strict rules, with unified philosophical line, etc. And on the other hand, we have also existed, **as we do now**, as a loose network united under basic principles with the primary objective being the sharing of resources and "collectively working" on one or two projects per year.

There was a consensus that the "bottom line reality" is that the conditions as they currently stand, do not support a RPMA that is solidly organized. The real world informs us that no matter how much this type of association is needed, Raza media workers, at this particular time, are not ready for it or demonstrate an interest in the development of such an organization. This information has come to the RPMA as a consequence of the contacts we have made with literally "hundreds" of Raza doing work on some kind of media (writers, artists, muralists, musicians, webmasters, radio broadcasters, film makers, so forth). It is an understanding, which has come about through outreach we have made throughout Aztlán and at cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Portland, Newark, etc. –as well as other means, such as the Internet and mailings. It is also information that comes from two decades of working around the question of uniting Raza journalists/media workers!

The truth is that within the movement in general, and media/cultural workers in particular, there exist a deep individualism in their approach to social struggle. A style of work that enables them to do whatever "they think" is important, "without" accountability to anyone.

We're talking about people who "pick and choose" their struggles (or "projects") according to "their personal needs and interests", versus the collective. By not belonging to an organization, these elements can wake up in the morning, take off, and do what ever they want do. As is often the case, hypocritically, they front themselves off as "movement people" without really belonging to a "movement". They call for unity, but don't belong to an organization.

On the other hand, we have the external factors, which are the contradictions imposed upon us by capitalism/colonialism best characterized as one of "suppression or cooptation". A strategy where the empire (mainstream media) completely "whites out" the existence of our journalism and "rewards" the sellouts; ensuring that the community sees them as its "leaders". This has resulted in a situation where most of the so-called "Latino" or "Hispanic" media has been co-opted (bought off) by capitalism, making them more harmful than useful to our communities. This placing of individualism over the collective has to do with our inability of escaping the influence that bourgeois society holds over us.

Yet, in spite of these conditions and obstacles, the RPMA continues to exist. It remains committed to its goal: the development of a real, principled and committed organization that will produce the media necessary to move forwards our struggle for liberation.

On The Question of, Where Are We At?

The mesa felt that RPMA currently exist as the material/real conditions permit us. The present structure has been clarified and accepted by our membership, and now we must work vigorously and move forward. This means that for the near future, will continue to exist as a loose network united under (1) broad basic principles, (2) which shares resources and information, (3) and with the objective of creating and promoting revolutionary journalists/media workers. In an effort to be transparent as possible, this information is posted on our web page, so that our members and those interested in the RPMA can see what we are all about.

The mesa also identified some present weaknesses that we must work hard to eliminate. These include: (1) that lack of follow-up, as most of us are not completing projects/tasks which we took on; (2) the need to connect all issues whether they are local, regional, national, or international to community struggles; (3) we must place more effort into working in alliance with other groups doing media work; and (4) we have to make sure that the work of all current members is represented on our web page and journal.

A particular strength of the RPMA has been its ability to be consistent, both in its meetings and workshops, as well as in the publication of *Guerrillero/a de La Pluma* and updating of our web page.

On The Question of, Where Are We Going?

We need to continue with the consolidation of the RPMA and our attempt to reach the objectives (both long term and short) we have set for ourselves (as posted on our webpage and journal). Without selling out our principles and the right to criticize, we have to work in “alliance” with others as much as possible; if there is a particular issue (opposition to police brutality, ICE raids, etc.) that we can unite with others, we should go forward. At our next meeting (August 2009) we must identify our objectives for the year and begin planning activities for 2010.

It is important to the survival and growth of the RPMA, that while maintaining its loose structure, that we do not fall into a situation where we become an association of “flakes” and “ding bats” (a grouping of nuts or lunatics, or empty-headed individuals). Our movement, unlike capitalist/colonialist organizations, has often become a space or “magnet” for these types of people. Capitalist organizations never permit “just anyone” to join them or attend their meetings, while movement organizations have a history of being too liberal and tolerant towards those who we allow inside our organizations. The ramblings and outburst of flakes and dingbats have often destroyed organizations or kept our work from moving forward.

Therefore, we want to make it clear, that as open and as loose as we presently are, we must be cautious and not allow these elements within or circles and spaces of work, and certainly not at general RPMA meetings. RPMA members need to demonstrate commitment, discipline, and political maturity –as well as advanced media skills.

In conclusion, we call on all media workers who support the general objectives of the RPMA to join the association. La Union Hade La Fuerza.

Venceremos