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LEAD Original Programming

“Latin@ Students and the School-to-Prison-Pipeline” (2014)

START – 00:00:00

[Music]

>> [Foreign language] and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media programming from Studio 54 campus of California State University San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders and community activists and advocates. Taking our message directly to the people, to the gente. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis discussion critique, dissemination and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr., and this episode is a syndicated replay from season five of LEAD Summit 2014. The theme that year was Latino male crisis in the educational pipeline and the question why Latino males are banishing from America's colleges is highly complex. This panel was entitled Latino Students and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. At the time, the Association of Mexican American Educators, AMAE, the Journal, had just published a special issue on the topic which helped illuminate how the School-to-Prison Pipeline has been and continues to marginalize schools, communities and families by derailing the educational success and progress of our youth. Continue to enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteer speakers and panelists, production team, of course, affiliates and town hall chapters and commend them for lifting voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you, gracias, [foreign language]. Next, we have Dr. Anthony Peguero who will offer introductions and moderate the next panel. This panel was made possible through a working collaboration with the Association of Mexican American educator, AMAE, the Journal, the editors Oscar Jimnez-Castellanos, Antonio Camacho and Patricia Sanchez. And the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University. [Foreign Language].

>> Is this mic working? Okay. I'd like to start off by thanking Professor Murillo and everyone with LEAD for giving us the opportunity to share some of our research here today with you. I also want to acknowledge again as Professor Murillo just suggested the editors of AMAE giving us the opportunity as well to facilitating us having this special issue on this very important topic. This special issue was published in 2013, co-edited by Drs. Donaldo Macedo, Lilia Bartolome, Victor Rios and myself. This special issue focused on the consequences of the Latino's School-to-Prison Pipeline. The School-to-Prison Pipeline is marginalizing schools, communities and families by derailing the educational success and progress of Latino youth. It restricts and excludes youth from the labor market and promotes mistrust and resentment toward authority, the criminal justice system and all forms of social control. We're going to have an opportunity to speak to some of the contributors of this special issue. We're going to have three or four

minutes for each of the contributors to talk about what they contributed as well as the issues associated with the Latino's School-to-Prison Pipeline. We're going to start off, we're going to go alphabetically, so we're going to start off with Jesus Cortez. He's an Orange County community advocate.

>> Good morning everyone. So, I'm going to start off by actually reading the poetry which was what I contributed to the Journal. I'm going to start out with a poem called Northbound Letters. I heard the news. You were back behind bars. The scars reopened. The madness must have taken over your soul, and I failed you. I did not embrace you goodbye. I did not say those words you might have needed. Now I write you letters that carry my soul to you behind those walls, behind those bars, physical and mental. I wish I could break you out with my words. That the brotherhood that binds us could break down walls and rip apart those bars. That your smile would return you to freedom. I remember you as a boy, running free down those mean streets as I hoped you wouldn't follow the path of street warriors. The path to redemption lies in your soul, in the purity of your heart that will never be imprisoned. The next poem is called The Incarcerated King. I remember you as a boy, running playfully through the city, among the wretched of the earth, those rejected by America, learning the ways of street kings. You grew up among the spirits of the departed, the children of mothers the color of the earth, children of the sun, sons of the city that condemned them to live amongst a dying city. You became a king among children, a God of the streets among sinners and borrowers of hope, a hope that you carried in your pocket, a hope that would kill the hopes of others. Who could blame your ways? Who can judge your actions? Who is without sin to say you are bad? Who can say they would do otherwise? Who carries your pain with the same honor? You will always be the king of the streets that will remember your soul, your name, until the day you return.

[Applause]

So I'd like to share a few words also. These poems were in honor of a friend of mine who has spent more of his life in prison and in juvenile hall than in the streets free. He was young when I met him. I actually sent him the poems to him in prison. I figured it was the least that I could do for him. I'd write the poetry that I write in order to shed light, you know, on the humanity of our people, of all people. I think me also as an undocumented person, we know what it feels like to be persecuted on an everyday basis. We know the weight we carry on our shoulders just for existing in a country that feels we are not worthy of existing. And just to carry that weight around, it's a heavy load. And I think I let that load go every time I write, and I hope that, we are here. We do more than just research. That we actually go into the community and talk to people and work with the community and make sure that we bring about change that actually changes the structure of the whole country. Because the school reflects only the values that we are taught on an everyday basis by the government, by the media, by everything that influences us. So I invite everyone to be open minded to everyone and to listen to all the panelists, because I think we all have something valuable to share. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Next, I would like to introduce Dr. Eugene Fujimoto. He's an assistant professor at Cal State University Fullerton.

>> Thank you very much.

[Applause]

I'm not nearly as creative as Jesus there, so I'm going to talk a little bit about a research study that we did out of Cal State Fullerton. And I'm actually here representing also my three co-authors. And I want to thank Dr. Peguero and the other editors for giving us a chance to talk about our work. But Yvonne Garcia, Noemy Medina and Eddie Perez were also co-authors of this piece. And I'm representing them as well. And actually, Dr. Dawn Person was the, actually the leader of project as well, one of my colleagues at Cal State Fullerton. Some of the backdrop for the study that we did is a relationship that Cal State Fullerton has developed over the last five years with the city of Maywood in South Central Los Angeles. It's largely Latino Spanish-speaking low income neighborhood with a high percentage of undocumented students there. And we've been working the last five years in partnership with them to try to increase the college going rate in that area. And so it's been a really fruitful partnership for us, and we hope for some for the community as well as our students learn in our master's degree program about what it means to work in a community in a meaningful way. So that's kind of the backdrop. And as a result of that, we had did a research project and looked at the issues that had to do with leadership, both in the community and in the schools in that area. And as we did research, we discovered things like that in LA unified school district that the Latino population in LA unified graduates at about a 40% rate in one of the largest school districts in the country. We also discovered that if you are between the ages of 16 and 24 and incarcerated, if you do not finish high school, you are 63 times more likely to be institutionalized for the rest of your life as opposed to if you actually finish high school and go on to college. And then as a result we also found out that in 2010 there's over 345,000 Latinos who are incarcerated in state and federal penitentiaries across the country. So it's a major, major issue, not only for Latinos but for the country as a whole. So we decided to take a quick look at seeing what was going on in terms of the leadership in the area. We're interested in whether the School-to-Prison Pipeline, whether a legitimate alternative to that was being able to create more of a college going culture. And so we wanted to know what the school leaders in the area thought about that, so we did interviews of school leaders, counselors and principals. And it was a very useful study in terms of our findings. And in a nutshell because we don't have too much time, I can tell you that to a large degree the people that we interviewed see the importance of creating college going culture. And at the same time, they have not taken any action in terms of being able to really develop the kinds of partnerships, the kinds of community-based programs, the kind of relationships with community that we need to have in order to have any kind of change in this area. So it's a major problem, and I think our study as a result could go in a lot more detail. But as a result, I think part of our finding has to do with not so much demonizing the principals

and the counselors as much as seeing kind of the larger systemic and structural issues that are problematic. For example, we have school principals who are needing to deal with immediate issues. One of them talked about when our kids don't have, are hungry and they don't have shoes on their feet, it's hard to talk to them about college. And she had a box of shoes in the corner that she'd make sure their kids have shoes. So here's really immediate needs that are happening for some of the leaders. And at the same time, there's a need for them to see the bigger picture and work to see how the communities themselves have many, many resources and cultural richness that we don't capitalize on and we don't develop relationships around to be able to develop these kinds of, the ways in which we can create more of a college going culture for these young people. So it was a really fruitful study, as I mentioned. And there's a lot of recommendations we make in the study, but I look forward to hearing more from our colleagues as well. So thank you.

[Applause]

>> I'd like now to introduce Mario Galicia. He's a doctoral candidate, sorry, Mario Galicia, Jr., doctoral candidate, University of California, Santa Barbara.

[Applause]

>> Thank you. Apparently, I have some fans in the crowd. So first of all, I'd also like to thank Dr. Victor Rios who is not able to be with us today. He actually helped co-author, I say helped in a very lax way, he helped guide this publication with me last year. And so it really is an honor to work with him, be mentored under him, and to delve into this area of research that, you know, it's really at an emergent stage right now. So I do want to thank Dr. Rios who might be watching right now. Our article actually came about during one October day in the middle of a four-year ethnographic research study. So I was on my way to a local high school that we were observing at the time, and I got a call from the outreach worker who asked me to meet him across the street from the high school because the high school had been put on lockdown. Now if any of you are familiar with what lockdown means, lockdown is typically a term that's used when a school is closed off from anybody entering or exiting its premises. And during this time, what occurred was there was a lot of policing. The police came in, they closed off streets. They held parents across the street. And so one of the things that I witnessed as I arrived was actually parents that were scared for their children, and rightfully so. One of the stories that we heard was that there was a shooter that was loose on campus. Another story we heard were that there were some gang members that had gotten into a fight and that as a result some of them had ran into the school. So as you can see, there were a couple of different accounts that we were starting to listen as we initially approached this campus. The unique thing about what ended up occurring from the situation was that all of the youth that were involved were actually a part of the group that we were researching. So in terms of access to provide us information, data and just their perspective on what occurred during that day was a little easier for us to take. And so the accounts of the day are mixed depending on who you would ask. What we observed and what we were told by the youth were that, you know, there were police officers that

came in with assault rifles. They were pulled out of classrooms. They were handcuffed. They were all put into separate rooms, interrogated individually. After several hours, they were put back together into a room without any kind of warning or any kind of [inaudible] as to what they should do. An hour later, someone walks in, a police officer, they grab a chair. They sit it right next to a desk. They step on the chair, and they reach on top of the desk into a box. They pull a recorder from the box. And then they look at the youth and tell the youth, we've got you. You should have cooperated when you had a chance. And so when we asked the youth, you know, what they were discussing during that time, part of the discussion, we've actually outlined in the paper. And what these youth encountered during that time is police officers refusing to provide them lunch. And when they were asked to provide them with some lunch, their response was to throw a potato chip into the direction and tell them that that was their lunch if they so chose it. And a similar instance happened to more than one of these youth. So it wasn't just a single incident. Then when they were put into the room again, this is what they were discussing. They were discussing what was being done unto them rather than what they had quote/unquote done earlier in the day. Ultimately, it was not a gun that was found on these youth. The story ends up happening that the youth were confronted by other people in a vehicle outside of a supermarket, across the street from the school. And what occurred was that these youth just in their exchange with the people in the vehicle raised the water bottle and told them to leave. Come on, you lames, just take off. The response to that was that a parent apparently felt they had witnessed somebody waving a gun. So they went into the school. They let administrators know what had occurred. And then the administrators called for the lockdown. At which point was when the sheriff showed up, and the police department assisted with it. So, you know, there's two very different accounts as to what one might feel that had occurred. But what we received from the youth was one that showed that, you know, they faced criminalization at all levels, even in schools, by labels that might not even be cast upon them from other people. You know, and so one of the things that we get into here as we describe some of these themes, you know, we describe that the youth have gone from learning to labor in their schools producing a working class society to preparing them for prison. And this all came, you know, as a result of the 90s installing the zero tolerance measures across our country and across the US. And so one of these results is that we have police on campuses constantly surveying youth. So what the schools do is rather than take the discipline component of the youth, they pass it on to the police. So rather than taking care of an individual for a very minor infraction with a referral, maybe some restorative justice, they're sent to the police officer or probation officer in which case more punitive measures are taken into account through the courts one would assume. You know, we end up discovering that these youth feel they're segregated from their communities for many reasons as a result of this as well. They feel that the policing doesn't just occur in their communities where, you know, if they're out in the street and they're quote/unquote being deviant, you know, the police are going to run up on them. They're going to flag them down and stop them for what they're doing. But rather, they're now at school as well and suffering severe punishment for minor infractions. And this ends up leading to the School-to-Prison Pipeline because ultimately people are being pushed out from these schools for very minor nonaggressive, nonviolent infractions when we could have dealt with youth in a very different manner. So in 2011

when the Department of Justice decided to crack down on the School-to-Prison Pipeline by targeting zero tolerance measures, this was one of the instances that they actually exemplified. They exemplified, you know, youth being criminalizing schools for discipline that the schools could actually take rather than passing them on to local authorities. And so, you know, I could discuss, I could give many examples as far as what these youth face as far as discrimination, as far as marginalization and segregation. But the reality is that there is some things that we could be doing for these youth in order to help them out. And so one of those things that we can be doing for them is providing them with culturally relevant outreach workers, teachers, educators so that with these culturally relevant teachings, they're able to forge a stronger allegiance. We found that the outreach worker that is in charge of this group that we researched, that he has a similar cultural background as the youth in which he works with. This helps them in establishing rapport. It helps them in establishing trust and confidence later on in sharing some of these difficult personal situations that they encounter in and outside of school. And so we have found that that cultural relevance model from the outreach worker helps. We've also found that from an educative standpoint in other classrooms when teachers have brought in culturally relevant work that that has also helped the youth in that place. We need to invest more in our education, quite frankly. There just isn't enough money in our education these days. One key instrument that we could also focus on on reversing the School-to-Prison Pipeline could be to implement restorative justice approaches. And I mentioned this a little earlier. Restorative justice approaches allow for closure to occur between the two, between the people involved in any kind of a crime or any kind of a situation. And so by allowing there to be communication and closure from both sides, you know, it allows for people to be able to move forward and not cling onto any one past. So, you know, we feel that while this article might note that there are a lot of structures institutionally that are in place that hold some Latino youth from moving forward in their education and ultimately push them out. And they end up becoming a part of this. We also realize that there are ways to stop this. There are ways in which we can assist our youth in getting their education rather than promoting them towards our prisons. So I think that I'm done at that point. I'd like to thank you all for your time. One last thing, I'd like to send a shout out to my parents that are in the back. Mom and Dad made it out. They don't actually get a chance to do that often. So I want to just send them a thanks.

[Applause]

>> I'd now like to introduce Dr. Luis Nuno. He's a lecturer at California State University Los Angeles.

[Applause]

>> Good afternoon everybody. I'm happy to be here. My essay is kind of an autobiographical ethnography of having a parent incarcerated. When I was 18 years old, my father was arrested and taken away to jail. And I write about this experience. And I describe it as a process whereby the families of men who are serving time are punished alongside with them. The term for this process is secondary prisonization. I

describe how being a child of a farmworker who didn't know, my father didn't speak English very well. While he was in jail, we had to visit him in the jailhouse. And going to the jailhouse was a very heart wrenching experience. Going to the court, I was barely graduated high school. Didn't understand much of the language that was used inside of the courtroom. And I use that experience to try and educate myself about how the American criminal justice system works. While my father was incarcerated, we are originally from Raleigh, California. My father and my mother had children here in the United States. The rest of our family was in Mexico. So during the incarceration, there was the question that we confronted, do we return to Mexico? Is America no longer the place for us? We decided to see it through. And at 18 years old, I moved to Riverside, got a job working the graveyard shift here in Ontario, California. As I was working the graveyard shift, anybody who's ever worked the graveyard shift knows that there's a lot of negative influences, drugs, to keep you awake. Sometimes you get off work early, but you don't go home. You go and continue the party. And as I was working the graveyard shift, there were a lot of guys doing things that were kind of leading me down that road towards what eventually would become to prison. I met a guy who had just finished, he'd completed his sentence at Chino Men's Correctional Facility, put his arm around my shoulder several times, I remember him sharing advice about looking for alternate paths. Looking for something different than what I was doing at that point in time. I was 18, 19, 20, 21 years old. I thought I could, you know, live the American dream. You get a job and you work your way up the ladder of command and eventually, you know, maybe I could become the manager. Maybe I could become a shift manager. The one person who offered me the best advice that I got during that time was a young man who had served a prison sentence telling me to seek alternate paths. Telling me that the friends that I had at that time were probably not the best choice of friends. And I did eventually enroll back into a community college and went to Riverside Community College. At Riverside Community College I studied sociology. While I was at Riverside Community College, my father was released on parole. He had to do his weekly parole officer, visit his PO every two weeks in the beginning and then eventually every month. So I witnessed firsthand that status degradation where he was no longer just a Mexican living in the United States. Now he was a convicted felon. The family, we were sort of, our status is degraded [phonetic] alongside with his. Once I completed community college, I transferred to a four-year university. Two weeks before my college graduation, my father passed away. I never got to see him after I went away to college. And I've gone on to write about the incarceration experience. For people whose families are incarcerated, I now teach a course inside Norco Prison with about 20 of, 25 of my students at Cal State LA where we go and teach prisoners career development skills. We teach English for Spanish-speaking inmates. We help young men earn their general education diplomas in the process of getting all the paperwork together to go inside the facility at Norco. I came to realize that a lot of my students had a background that was similar to my own. They came from families whose parent, whose father was currently serving time. They all had a family member who was currently incarcerated. And I think that us who are privileged in a university setting, it is our responsibility to give back, our responsibility to build bridges with those folks who are inside of the prison walls to help make the world a better place. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> I'd now like to introduce Alicia Pantoja, doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

I want to thank everybody on the panel and also at the summit for having this panel and having these conversations that are so important. And I wanted to say that the contributions that I'm going to give right now are coming from my experiences working for a decade teaching participatory English as a second language or English for speakers of other languages courses and also working in family literacy groups. What I'm going to do is bring up a few questions that I've been thinking about over the last year reading the literature on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and also through my work with families in Philadelphia. And then after I bring up these questions, I want to offer a few thoughts on these questions and then open if we still have time for your questions. My first question is I'd like us to think about what the affordances are of using the metaphor of a School-to-Prison Pipeline, focusing on the metaphor of a pipeline and what could be the drawbacks of doing so. To think about what additional sites and policies and practices apart from the school and the criminal justice system that also fundamentally shape the criminalization of our youth and our families, I think, as Dr. Nuno has brought up. Whose voices are being absent from our conversations around this criminalization of our Latina and Latino youth, whose experiences. And I'm thinking about the deportation of families, the incarceration of families, crimmigration, the experiences of LGBTQ students, those of us who identify as queer, who identify as multi-ethnic, multi-cultural who are female. I think it's important that we consider how these different identities and experiences intersect to shape the kind of criminalization that we experience. And I think it's important perhaps so we consider that the pipeline metaphor has been extremely useful thus far to get us to be enraged, to get us to understand that there's a terrible relationship that is taking place between the communitive school policies that are taking place and the likelihood that our communities end up being incarcerated. But then that also we expand our understanding of what's going on and more complexly think about how, for example, the immigration system among other systems outside of the school and the criminal justice system come to intersect and interdepend on the other systems. So it's not only the school and the criminal justice system, but it's also immigration system or broken immigration system. Also policies within our schools, language and literacy policies that deny our students their ability to speak their languages, to practice their literacy practices. To feel proud and respect for their culture. It's also important, I think, for us to think about how the privatization of schools is also contributing to the criminalization of our families and our youth and high stakes testing as another example. So all of these policies, these practices, I think, intersect, come together, become interdependent and mutually constitute each other. So that it's not just the school and the criminal justice system. And I think this is important because when we think about how to address this

issue, which I think you did extremely well, thinking about what could be done to disrupt this pipeline, we also need to think about that part of disrupting this criminalization is forcing our government and our communities to really change the immigration system, the current immigration system. We need to combine forces with other movements in this country that are working for equity. So the educational equity is also about equity in our society. And consider that a lot of these problems are not only starting at the school. I think it's dangerous when we think that it starts at the school, this pipeline, because then we blame teachers for things that are coming from outside to. So I think we need to think about the way in which school reproduces inequity but also the way in which we need to hold accountable practices and systems outside of the school system for the criminalization of our youth. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Well I would like to thank the contributors of this special issue. I also want to highlight that this special issue is open access. If you go to the Journal website, that is something that everyone can do just via the website. I keep getting the cue from onside that our time is running up, so I don't know if we have one question or no questions. No questions. Okay. So again, thank you very much for the opportunity for us to share your work. I'm sure that all of us can, if you address us via email, can address many of your questions. So thank you for the opportunity for us to share our work. Thank you.

[Applause]

END – 00:35:41