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Professor Wills

Humanities

Dear Davidson College Archives & Special Collections,

I am an undergraduate student currently evaluating the connection between Southern college students and their responses to changes in political climates created by the United States' presidential policies. Specifically, I look to contextualize college students' reactions to President Obama's strengthening of I.C.E policies within the historical and cultural framework of his presidential terms (2009 to 2014). Obama's presidential terms were well-known for the transformative policies they pursued in healthcare, economic recovery, pro-LGBTQ initiatives, and international relations. However, during his presidency, Obama also strengthened ICE and went on to deport 3 million families. Latinx students on college campuses have been responding to I.C.E. violence and fear-mongering since the beginning of Obama's presidential term. My curiosity about their timeline of events between 2009 and 2014 has led me to my research question and proposal: How do American Latinx Southern college students react to the tense political climate from 2009 to 2014?

I'd like to analyze the Davidson student responses to the I.C.E. threat with the help of the Davidson College Archives. Given the ongoing I.C.E. threats on college campuses and in towns, I would like to analyze student involvement in spreading information and keeping their communities safe. Specifically, I am writing to express my interest in the "O.L.A.S.," the Latinx-focused group on campus's subsection of the Davidson College Archives reaction to immigration reform policies. I'd run a study on how it evolved, particularly in the universities in the South, and at Davidson College. The historical document I found was an email from Claudia Ramirez, a member of O.L.A.S., to other members on the

16th of February, 2011. In the email, Claudia reacts to a 'SAE' frat party theme named "South of the Border Party" in a negative way, stating that she was unsure of its context, but was greatly offended and confused. Her reaction to a possible mockery of the Latinx immigration population in the United States amplifies my question of how Latinx students built community in the South during Obama's presidential terms.

ICE strengthening has led to the hunting down of individuals and forcefully ripping them apart from their homes and family members. Their terrorization specifically of the Latinx communities is the opposite of justice. Justice is fairness and making sure all individuals are treated with dignity, kindness, and respect. Not their ethnic roots or characteristics. The analysis of the Latinx communities in Southern colleges from 2009 to 2014 in opposition to ICE is important to the historization of victims of I.C.E. and telling their survival tactics. It is important to analyze the cultural context of how Latinx communities reacted to I.C.E. policies from 2009 to 2014, and how the Latinx communities are reacting to I.C.E. policies in 2026. There is a connection between the time periods, with important historization that needs to be done to find justice for the Latinx community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm Regards,

Amber Montoya

O.L.A.S. Member Concerned About Party Theme

Email from Claudia Ramirez, member of O.L.A.S., to other members, 16th of February, 2011, Digital Davidson, College Archives, Student Organizations, O.L.A.S. Records, Correspondence and Notices, 2010-2011, RG 12-66_Correspondence and notices, 2010-2011.

Context of Source

The archived email I found from Claudia Ramirez to other members of O.L.A.S. (Organization of Latin American Students) reveals a tense political climate on the Davidson campus for Latin American students. With the ongoing debates going on in 2011 over immigration and strengthening of border policies, both the theme of the party being “South of the Border” and OLAS members being concerned over appropriation and mockery reveal a deep fear of being unsafe on the Davidson College campus. In her email, Claudia writes, “I am offended because I can only guess how people are going to “dress up”... how people are going to pretend to act like people from 'south of the border.’” It is clear, as stated by herself, that as a Latina-American, she is offended at the concept of an entire culture being possibly mocked. The party was hosted by frats ‘SAE’ and ‘Turner.’ Their theme, “south of the border,” demonstrates the lack of seriousness in the current political climate, as addressed by Claudia previously. Though it is unclear to even Claudia herself whether the theme is meant to be a racist mockery or not, the confusion and hurt she experiences reveal a fear of being misrepresented, as she labels the email's importance to be high. The fear stems from being “appropriated” in a mocking way by other Davidson students, despite the current immigration policies sparking fear, as seen by her imagining the mockery. Claudia is deeply offended that it could even be considered a theme. Her quickness to reach out to other OLAS members to organize and discuss the theme for the party show a need for community against stigmatization. In connection with the current events of the time, Claudia's demonstrates how Latin American students, even in higher education, felt the need to prove themselves worthy of respect as they fought for their situation to be shed light upon.

General Context/Historical Background

Though Obama's first and second terms are looked back upon as one of the most progressive eras for the United States, his administration focused heavily on strengthening borders and funding for ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) (Congressional Research Service). Following the Bush presidency, his administration's focus going into office consisted of 'immigration reform' (Bostdorff, pg. 699). This included ICE funding, a new ICE strategy to crack down on immigrants, family processing facilities, and, later, policy shifts to emphasize prioritization of supervisory checks, border strengthening, and immigrant criminals as opposed to non-criminals (Bostdorff, pg. 699). Amongst these policies came selective programs like DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans), dedicated to protecting children who came to the US before 16 and parents of children born in the US (American Immigration Council).

While the presidency ended up employing policies later in Obama's first term (2011~) and early second term (2014~), the political climate for Latin American individuals in the United States was tense from as early as 2009. Seen as an ongoing threat to the economy, Mexican-American students in particular were seen as 'illegal aliens' who were taking jobs (Saenz, R. & Population Reference Bureau, 5-9). The stigmatization of Latinx students led to a decrease in Latinx students in higher education and an increase in hostility on campus for those who were. Therefore, college students were affected by the surge in anti-immigration policy and racist crackdowns against Latinos.

Conclusion

Upon further investigation, the study of Latin American students' events and reactions between 2009 and 2014 can reveal an accurate timeline of events after the strengthening of ICE, border crackdowns, and an increasingly negative political climate. Through historization, there is a possibility to

accurately assess the effects of the political climate and the enforcement of I.C.E. policies. Latin American students in higher education, like those at Davidson, experienced fear and a need to prove themselves worthy of being taken seriously, especially during this time. With more research, it can be shown how Latin American students, both immigrant and citizens, fight to spread their voice and fight for their right to be in higher education. As seen by the historical document I found, it is especially against the crackdown on immigration and Latinx lives.

Works Cited

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