César Chávez Acción y Compromiso Human and Civil Rights Award  
The Father of Chicano Studies

Dr. Rodolfo F. Acuña

Professor Rudy Acuña co-founded the nation’s first Department of Chicano Studies. He is best known for his landmark history of Mexican Americans in the United States—*Occupied America, A History of Chicanos*. First published in 1972 and currently in its 7th edition, it has become the standard text in Chicano Studies classes throughout the United States. Today, Professor Acuña continues to teach “History of the Chicano” at California State University at Northridge.

In his most recent book, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933*, Dr. Acuña documents the history of Mexican workers and their families from 17th Century Chihuahua to 20th Century California, and he highlights their labor activism. In all, Dr. Acuña has authored 15 books, and three of his books have received the Gustavus Myers Award for the Outstanding Book on Race Relations in North America.

But Rudy Acuña has always been more than a scholar. In the 1960s, he was involved in the Latin American Civic Association, a grassroots Los Angeles organization of Mexican American parents, students and educators concerned with improving educational opportunities for their children. He advocated for migrant farm workers and supported César Chávez organizing efforts. And in 1989, he co-founded the Labor/Community Strategy Center, a multiracial think/action tank and school for organizers committed to building democratic social movement.

More recently, when the Mexican-American Studies Program in the Tucson, Arizona schools was banned and the books used in the program locked away in a warehouse, Dr. Acuña denounced the actions, and defended the faculty and students. “All we’re trying to do is teach people that they have a history they should be proud of. Everyone has a right to feel good about themselves.” His *Occupied America* was one of the banned books.

One of Rudy Acuña’s favorite lines is: “I am proud of being a radical. I’m very proud of my age. I’m very proud of being a Mexican.”