

Ortego advocates changes

Dr. Phillip D. Ortego, executive director of Chicano Affairs Programs at the University of Texas at El Paso speaking here Tuesday, said the success of the Chicano movement depends on the participation of middle-class Mexican-Americans.

He told about 75 members of the Las Cruces community at a luncheon at the Holiday Inn that "middle-class Mexican-Americans must challenge the rules; not to overthrow the system but to bring about change for the betterment of the Chicano."

Ortego also addressed NMSU students and faculty on the NMSU campus and spoke at a meeting of Los Chicanos in Corbett Center Tuesday evening. His appearances were sponsored by the NMSU Chicano Ethnic Studies Program.

Ortego told the Holiday Inn crowd that the Chicano movement is youth-oriented

and middle-class Mexican-Americans, in high positions and able to help, should take the initiative to assure youth that the middle-class will help.

"The middle-class Mexican-American must tell youth, 'look brother, I've made it and I'm not going to forget you,' but we (middle-class) are not out to destroy the system. We are out to change it and make it responsive to our needs."

Ortego told the group that many middle-class Mexican-Americans do not identify strongly with the Chicano movement because many of them "aspire to be white."

"It had always been my great desire to be white. When I discovered I wasn't, I was able to deal with myself."

Ortego, on the subject of middle-class Mexican-Americans wanting to be "white" and having "made it," questioned if they had really made it and if they had why aren't there any Chicano bank presidents, more Chicano politicians, college presidents, vice-presidents, department chairmen and deans.

"So what we have to ask ourselves is: have we really made it," Ortego asked his audience.

"We have to relate with restless youth who are impatient. They want to see tangible evidence. They knock and bang on college presidents' desks because there is no response."

Ortego said the Chicano or Mexican-American has been deprived of the "fruits of the American dream" because of his Indian background and his language, and his children have been deprived of the role played by their forebearers in the history of and development of the United States.

"Taking a poke at text books used in schools, Ortego said, "...in history, the text books used in the schools don't begin with the conquistadores. They give passing mention to Columbus but then immediately take off on the history of the Anglo conquest of the new world."

He said Chicano studies programs are aimed at overcoming the lack of cultural and ethnic education offered in schools.

Speaking to Los Chicanos in Corbett Center Tuesday evening, Ortego credited the youth with starting the Chicano movement which created many positions currently being held by middle-class Mexican-Americans and thanked youth for making it possible for many middle-classers to take stock of themselves to see how they could help the movement.



DR. PHILLIP D. ORTEGO