

Andrés Montoya Articles: Student Activism

The Fresno Bee, October 24, 1991

Political sign sparks racism charge

■ Some FSU students want student President Andres Montoya impeached because he supported a sign with an insensitive message for whites.

By Cyndee Fontana
The Fresno Bee

The president of the Associated Students Inc. at Fresno State University upheld racial intolerance by defending a "go home whitey" sign at an anti-Columbus Day rally last week, several students said Tuesday.

Craig E. Rose, a member of the student senate, asked his fellow senators to condemn the actions of President Andres Montoya and begin impeachment proceedings against him.

Senate officials said they



Steve K. Skibbie — Special to The Bee

The sides. Andres Montoya, left, ASI president, defended his actions. Craig E. Rose, right, senate member, wants to impeach Montoya.

would consider the motions at a meeting next week.

Montoya responded Tuesday by defending the intent of the

sign, which he said was meant to draw attention to the racism faced daily by people of color. "I'm willing to stand behind the

motive," he said.

Many whites "are willing to ignore racism when it doesn't happen to them," he said.

"That's what the sign was for, to wake you up."

Rose's call for impeachment proceedings Tuesday prompted a nearly two-hour discussion of racism at the campus. More than a dozen students spoke on the topic as hundreds of others watched and listened in the Free Speech area.

Many applauded Montoya for shining a light on the issue.

But Rose said Montoya "put a stigma on the ASI" when he defended the sign message. Rose said he heard 20 to 25 complaints over the sign.

A handful of students carried different signs to Tuesday's meeting. Those read: "Racism in the ASI," "Montoya Support All

Students" and "ASI Hypocrites on Diversity."

Some students blamed the complaints against Montoya on the Young Americans for Freedom club, though it has apparently disbanded.

Several students, including senate member Kathryn Jones, denounced the club as a "racist organization."

Steve Seewald, a former president of the club, rejected the label.

He said the club was unfairly called racist when it complained that Associated Students was overspending on minority clubs.

"That doesn't make me a racist because I said that," he said.

Seewald said the club has disbanded, but said that former members were holding the signs at Tuesday's meeting.

The Fresno Bee, October 30, 1991

Wednesday, October 30, 1991

VALLEY

FSU student body president backed

■ Student senators defeat resolution charging leader with 'racial intolerance' over sign incident.

By Cyndee Fontana
The Fresno Bee

The political colleagues of Fresno State University's student body president refused Tuesday to condemn him over a "go home whitey" sign at an anti-Columbus Day rally two weeks ago.

The Associated Students Inc. Senate voted 11-2 against a resolution that said President Andres Montoya "expressed hatred and racial intolerance" by advocating and defending the sign.

Montoya, who described himself as half-Chicano and half-white, said the sign was intended to draw attention to the racism directed at people of color. Several students said he succeeded, and applauded his action.

During Tuesday's debate, Sen. Shannon McBride said Montoya's election as presi-

dent does not mean that he cannot exercise his right to free speech.

"As an individual, you're allowed to protest," said Administrative Vice President Martin Rodriguez.

The Montoya controversy surfaced last week when Sen. Craig E. Rose announced that he would sponsor the resolution on behalf of students who were offended by the sign.

Rose also called for impeachment proceedings against Montoya, but was told by Legislative Vice President Nicole Kasa-

bian that those would have to be initiated by a student petition drive.

Most of the speakers at Tuesday's meeting were on Montoya's side.

Student J. Scott Walker warned that if the resolution passed, it would prove that "the ASI still has the power to keep people of color in their place."

Others argued that the term *whitey* had no historical, derogatory weight — unlike the uncomplimentary words used to describe other ethnic groups.

Letter from Montoya

Dear fellow students,

With this new semester, in addition to facing the already devastating cuts in services, we are now dealing with the possibility of a 40 percent fee increase for the 92-93 academic year. That means \$369 more a year for tuition while still having to cope with previously mentioned cuts in services; more money for less education. This has been a growing trend in the state for the past seven to eight years. The proposed fee increases have been endorsed by the CSU Board of Trustees and CSUF President John Welty, even though the majority of the people who will be affected are the people who attend public schools in poor and lower-middle income areas that prepare only a handful of token students for the University.

The CSUs are created to educate people from Firebaugh and Parlier, from the working class neighborhoods of Fresno, from any family who are not among the privileged in America. In the migrant town where I went to high school, none of our graduating class went to Harvard or the University of Iowa, Houston, and their children will not be accepted into U.C. Madera. Fresno State is all some of us have. Now, in addition to going to classes, studying and working, we must struggle against this most recent assault on our educations by Wilson, Welty and the traditional power structure they represent.

The proposed increase is the culmination of a campaign going on for the past 10 years, waged by those in power; not only in the state and federal governments, but also locally, in city councils and school boards, student government, all against lower-middle income and poor people. Who hates who? Who makes the decisions that pamper the pampered. Who attends superior schools, and know by the time they are five, that they will go to college and be like father.

The CSUs are the most accessible four-year institutions in the state if not the world. The UCs have not been attacked financially as much as the CSUs. But they don't serve us.

The CSUs, being one of the

working class's and minorities' only avenue for social and economic mobility, however, are being attacked for this specific reason.

In a system of oppression, the oppressor do not oppress other oppressors, but rather continue to oppress the oppressed: Namely the lower-income segments of our society, those who need the CSUs for their futures.

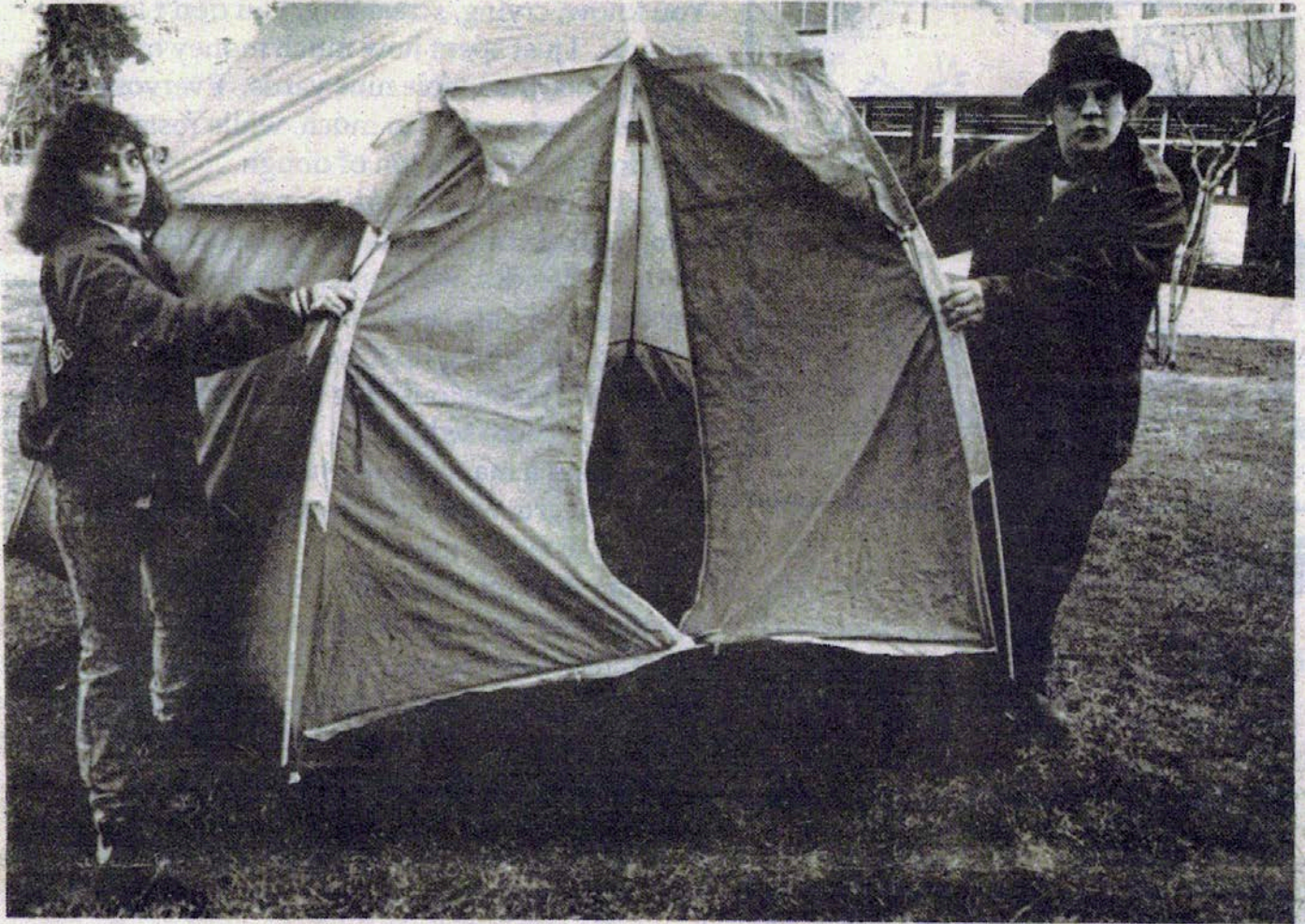
What is to be done? First we must deal with the proposed 40 percent increase. On February 12, a one-day boycott of classes is being called for, and we are asking that students attend a rally in the Free Speech area to protest these crippling fee increases. At this rally in addition to hearing various speakers, including Kim Williams, the California State Student Association President, students will be given the opportunity to register to vote, write postcards provided by the ASI to legislators as well as use phones to call our representatives. Phones and phone numbers for the legislators are also currently available in the ASI office, USU Room 316 and can be accessed Monday through Friday between 1:30 and 4:30. The ASI is heading a postcard campaign by which students will have the postcards provided for them and mailed by the ASI at no cost to individual students. We will also be soliciting you to come with us at various times throughout the semester to go to the offices of our state representatives. But our long-term success is dependent on two factors: The first is you; will you come to the rally, fill out a postcard and call your legislators; and the second; we need to change the direction of our state and federal governments through the vote or by any avenues that are open to us.

The following semester will be very trying for us all, but only together can we overcome the times.

Andres Montoya
ASI President

Letters to the editor may be dropped off in the Collegian office, Keats campus building. Letters will be edited for length only.

How many students will have to live like this?



ASI President Andrés Montoya and Lupe Gomez, an 18-year-old criminology major, move one of the five tents set up next to the library. A group of students are camping out until Friday at midnight in protest of the proposed 40 percent fee increase.

Hector Amezcua/The Daily Collegian

Student leader at center of storm

■ The outspoken student president at Fresno State University may face a recall election over his defense of a controversial sign.

By Cyndee Fontana
The Fresno Bee

The collegiate political career of Andres Montoya may crumble because of three words scrawled on a sign last October.

"Go home, whitey" read the sign, which student body president Montoya defended as part of an anti-Columbus Day rally at Fresno State University.

But students angered and energized by those three words are threatening to topple Montoya in what would be the first FSU presidential recall election in at least 20 years.

The recall has been postponed at least twice and confusion over student-election bylaws has thrown into question the latest announced dates for the vote, March 17 and 18.

The main issue is whether signatures collected and verified during the fall semester are enough to prompt a recall in the spring semester.

At the center of the turmoil is Montoya, 23, a pony-tailed history major who says what he thinks.

Montoya, who describes himself as Chicano/Mexicano, says he doesn't much care whether student voters give him the political boot.

"The reason that I wouldn't care is because I know I would keep working" on causes, he said. "This position doesn't make [define] Andres Montoya."

Montoya's supporters say he is honest, productive and candid about racism and the plight of minorities.

Lawrence Tovar, a graduate student and friend of Montoya, said the student politico makes some people uncomfortable because they expect him "to be one of those good minorities who won't really say what's occurring in the community."

"He's trying to show what people of color really have to go through."

Cyndi McCollister, a recent graduate and defender of Montoya, said the student president is controversial "because he's not afraid to speak what he believes."

But Montoya's detractors say he seems to focus only on racial issues and was wrong to defend a sign containing a slur.

Eric Vossenkemper, a senior who collected signatures for recall, said Montoya's behavior

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Monday, March 9, 1992

LOCAL NEWS

Montoya: Opponents charge student with bias

Continued from Page B1

at the rally was inappropriate and "derogatory" toward white students.

"It was just one sign, but ... one sign is all it takes to get people upset," said Craig Rose.

Rose, a member of the student senate, blazed a path for the recall when he asked the senate to condemn and impeach Montoya after the rally.

The senate refused and later adopted a resolution designating the campus in 1992 as a "Columbus Myth Free Zone," calling for a more multicultural view of U.S. history and culture.

Attacking Columbus Day

Columbus Day has come under attack by minority activists and others in recent years for glorifying the notion that the Americas did not exist until being discovered by Europeans.

Victor Olivares, staff adviser to the Associated Students, said the elections committee is recommending cancellation of the recall until questions about election procedures can be answered.

Olivares said the process has been complicated by confusion over election bylaws. The student senate is expected to discuss the issue Tuesday.

Montoya is a senior at Fresno State. He was born in San Jose and moved to the San Joaquin Valley at age 12. He is a graduate of Fowler High School.

He was a political novice until he entered FSU, where he won a student senate seat in 1989. Last spring, he stepped into the president's office with 603 votes.

In a six-way race, Montoya topped his closest competitor by only 32 votes. By December, more than 1,000 students had signed their names on recall petitions.

A variety of stakes

Thomas Boyle, associate dean of student affairs, said it would



Russell Yip — The Fresno Bee

No anxiety. Andres Montoya says he doesn't care whether student voters oust him as FSU student president, he'll remain active in causes. A recall effort is under way.

be the first recall election in his 20-year tenure.

Depending on who's talking, the recall is about power, money, racism or just plain politics.

Despite the controversy, Montoya still defends the "whitey" sign. He says it succeeded in drawing attention to the racism faced daily by minorities.

"Everybody would have just ignored [the rally] if the sign hadn't been there," he said.

"We had 300 people in the free-speech area discussing racism."

A conservative view?

McCollister and others said the Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative student or-

ganization that has disbanded, was the root of Montoya's political troubles.

But David Jones, a history professor and former faculty adviser for the group, said that explanation was off-base.

"It's a vote of the students, not YAF," Jones said.

Vossenkemper, a former member of Young Americans, said Montoya is "not interested in serving the entire student body."

Steve Burns, a senior and former Young Americans member, said Montoya has been "intolerant of those who disagree with his politics" and has been a one-issue leader.

Montoya disputed that, point-

ing to his work to land a new food service on campus and his campaign against a proposed 40 percent increase in student fees.

McCollister said Montoya was instrumental in bringing together resources for last semester's Violence Against Women week.

But Vossenkemper said Montoya and the student government show favoritism toward minority organizations by awarding them a disproportionate share of student funds.

Montoya said he has attempted only to correct the historical underfunding of minority clubs.

"I say what I believe. ... I think too often people keep silent when they should speak."

Election to recall student president canceled at FSU

By Cyndes Fontana

The Fresno Bee

A furor over election bylaws has prompted cancellation of a recall election aimed at Andres Montoya, the frank student president at Fresno State University who came under fire for his defense of a "go home whitey" sign.

While some appeal avenues exist, most students are writing an end to a recall effort launched by a sign at an anti-Columbus Day rally last October.

"There is no chance of a recall occurring," said Steve Burns, a propo-

nent of the campaign. Kathy Nieto, chairwoman of the student election committee, agreed.

"They would have to start the whole [recall] process all over again," she said.

On Tuesday the committee canceled the scheduled March 17 and 18 recall election. The committee cited violations of election bylaws and a general lack of guidance in the bylaws on recall elections.

The student senate tried but failed Tuesday by a single vote to muster the two-thirds majority needed to override the decision. The issue has

been referred to student court, but there is some doubt that the court can operate with vacancies in three of its five seats.

Montoya said cancellation of the recall was the election committee's prerogative. His chief concern was whether recall signatures collected and verified during the fall semester could legally prompt a recall in the spring semester.

Montoya said he wouldn't object to a recall if petitions were rechecked to ensure that those signing were still enrolled at Fresno State. "I want the rules to be followed," he said.

Burns and other recall organizers say those signatures remain "perfectly valid," expressing little interest in a second recall campaign.

"We've done everything that we were supposed to do," Burns said. "The fault is theirs [Associated Students]."

Burns said recall proponents plan to discuss their complaints with university officials.

Burns and others are also at work on proposals for change in election bylaws. One clause would require that a recall election be held within 30 days of its qualification.