

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE

The documentary *Precious Knowledge* illustrates what motivates Tucson High School students and teachers to form the front line of an epic civil rights battle. While 48 percent of Mexican American students currently drop out of high school, Tucson High's Mexican American Studies Program has become a national model of educational success, with 93 percent, on average, of enrolled students graduating from high school and 85 percent going on to attend college. However, Arizona lawmakers are trying to shut the program down because they believe the students are being indoctrinated with dangerous ideology and embracing destructive ethnic chauvinism.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE:

The documentary *Precious Knowledge* interweaves the stories of students in the Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson High School. While 48 percent of Mexican American students currently drop out of high school, Tucson High's Mexican American Studies Program has become a national model of educational success, with on average, 93% percent of enrolled students graduating from high school and 85 percent going on to attend college. The filmmakers spent an entire year in the classroom filming this innovative social justice curriculum, documenting the transformative impact on students who become engaged, informed, and active in their communities.

Precious Knowledge is timely as the nation turns its focus toward a wave of anti-immigration legislation in Arizona, with other states planning to follow suit. Along with their harsh anti-immigrant stance, Arizona lawmakers recently passed a bill giving unilateral power to the State Superintendent to abolish Ethnic Studies classes. *Precious Knowledge* provides an insider's perspective to a historic battle over civil rights as the student leaders in Tucson High fight to save their classes. The students are able to mobilize rapidly with texting, facebook, optimism, and a megaphone.

Mounting a public relations campaign to discredit the passionate students, lawmakers and politicians express concern that Paulo Freire's textbook, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* teaches victimization and sedition, and they ask that the classroom's Che Guevara posters be replaced with portraits of founding father Benjamin Franklin. Meanwhile, the students answer back by fighting for what they believe is the future of public education for the entire nation, especially as the Latino demographic continues to grow. *Precious Knowledge* dramatically illustrates what motivates high school teachers and students to form the front line of an epic civil rights battle.

EREN ISABEL MCGINNIS

Eren Isabel McGinnis is the co-founder of the feminist filmmaking company Café Sister Productions and has produced 21 movies including POV's *Tobacco Blues*, *The Girl Next Door* (shortlisted for an Oscar!), *Beyond the Border*, *The Spirituals*, and *Dos Vatos-México*. McGinnis received the NALIP 2012 Documentary Filmmaker of the Year award. She has a degree in Cultural Anthropology from San Diego State University and a certificate in Film and Video Theory and Production from the University College Dublin, in Ireland. McGinnis, a Fulbright scholar, spent a year of living, writing, and filmmaking in Juchitán, México.