

# Students erect fence to protest illegal immigration

By Kelsey Husky And Sarah Mason Daily News Staff Writers

Posted on: Thursday, April 14, 2011

Photos:

[+enlarge](#) [purchase](#)



**Dean Hare/Daily News**

A few people - as many as six - stood alongside a temporary chain-link fence Wednesday on Washington State University's Pullman campus.

As many as 50 people, some with facepaint, T-shirts and signs, crowded around them on either side of the separating structure.

WSU's Youth for Western Civilization club and College Republicans club erected the fence outside of Compton Union Building to protest illegal immigration.

University of Idaho student Alex Rowson, a member of both WSU groups, said, "Our message was that we can build a fence, so why can't the federal government build a fence on the Mexican border when the majority of Americans support that idea?"

Christina Finley, 19, said she thinks putting a physical barrier on a public university is symbolic.

"If anything, we should include everybody," she said, not try to separate different groups and cultures.

Counter-protesters lined up along both sides of the fence, chanting, "Build bridges, not fences," and "If you teach history distorted, you should be deported."

The group was loosely assembled online and via text messages that went through campus shortly before the fence was put up. Many protesters said the fence carried a message of racism and intolerance.

There was lively debate around the fence, Rowson said, which wasn't what YWC aimed for - they wanted to share their message to those passing by.

He said it's interesting to him that classes would be cancelled to protest five or six people "taking a stand for the law and American sovereignty."

"Apparently, the multicultural classes or what-have-you cancelled classes today so that all of their students could come out and protest us," he said.

Counter-protesters denied his claim.

"We support the law, and they support crime," Rowson said about the counter-protesters.

Audrey Utupo, 19, said the College Republicans haven't done anything positive, such as helping people register to vote.

Rather, they sold T-shirts reading promoting "straight pride" last semester and erected a fence.

The erection of the fence on campus is a slap in the face to those who have witnessed or been involved in racial injustices going on around the United States on a daily basis, said Vhonda McElroy, a fifth-year at the university.

"Their facts don't promote peace and equality, which I swear to God is what America was founded on," McElroy said.

Rafael Pruneda said librarians, school officials and other student groups showed up throughout the day to stand with the protesters.

McElroy and other protesters said they were afraid the fence demonstration would spark more anti-immigrant and racist movements on campus.

Some protestors wore shirts that displayed the southern border of the U.S. before the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo, when the U.S. purchased what is now Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Texas, California and Arizona from Mexico.

Tim Krautkraemer said the shirts were meant to illustrate how borders change and that borders don't accurately represent the cultural and ethnic groups in the southwest. In 1848, native population in that region suddenly found that they were American, though many were not Caucasian or English speaking. Now, with anti-immigration sentiment rising, the Hispanic groups in those states may feel the need to hide their heritage and culture, Krautkraemer said.

Rowson said he found the shirts deplorable and said such maps illustrate a conspiracy to return the region to the Mexican government.

"As far as I'm concerned that's an act of treason," he said.

YWC had to pay for WSU police officers, something other groups don't have to do, he said.

"WSU shows its bias all the time," he said.

However, WSU Police Lt. Steve Hansen said extra officers are assigned to many different campus events, and each time, the organizer of the event pays for the service.

- Youth for Western Civilization and College Republicans print Northwest Alternative, a conservative publication that is distributed among many campuses in Washington. Contributing writers are from various colleges and universities in the region. Read the publication online at [www.nw-alternative.blogspot.com](http://www.nw-alternative.blogspot.com)

**Kelsey Husky and Sarah Mason** can be reached at (208) 882-5561, or by email to [khusky@dnews.com](mailto:khusky@dnews.com) or [smason@dnews.com](mailto:smason@dnews.com).