Sent this email to UMN administrators, LMK if you're down to send an email in support, I'll share email addresses. Also, [this post is public](https://www.facebook.com/chantiko/posts/10152376610736333), in case you want to share with others.
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President Kaler, Dr. Olsen, Dr. Albert, and OED administrators,

I am contacting you in my capacity as an alum of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, as a concerned member of the academic community, and as a working class Mexicana immigrant who navigated the University of Minnesota for seven years both as a student and a staff member. Earlier this year, I completed my Bachelor's Degree in the Department of Chicano and Latino Studies, with High Distinction, and I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

I recently learned that the St. Paul Student Center hosted a "Galactic Fiesta" themed party, where people were encouraged to wear zarapes, sombreros, and sugar skull makeup, and to take photos in a booth depicting a mariachi and what can only be described as a racist Spanish fantasy depiction of a Mexican woman. Given the demographics of the UMN campus, it was mostly (if not exclusively) white students engaging in said activities.

It is with great concern that I am contacting you, as this is not an isolated event, and it speaks volumes to the lack of racial and ethnic sensitivity I experienced as a member of the UMN community. On November 18, 2011, I expressed concern via facebook on the Minnesota Gophers page when I noticed that a white male wearing a sombrero was rewarded with a $25 gift card as a SuperFan of the Game winner (see screenshot attached with my comments). I also found a laminated printout of his photo on the fourth floor of Ford Hall, where I worked as an Executive Office and Administrative Specialist.
URL:[https://www.facebook.com/GopherAthletics/photos/a.10150398297007943.383227.6129582942/10150398312332943/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/GopherAthletics/photos/a.10150398297007943.383227.6129582942/10150398312332943/?type=1)

While cultural appropriation and racism are problems that are not unique to the University of Minnesota campus, these actions and the absolute lack of critical engagement with them as microaggressions/ macroaggressions reflect poorly on the image of the campus, and they send clear messages that racism is acceptable, and that extracting cultural elements is not only accepted, but encouraged. I cannot proudly claim this institution as my alma matter until it begins to address these problems in substantive ways. As we collectively learn how to respectfully engage ethnic and racial communities that may not be our own, avoiding the dehumanizing caricaturization and stereotyping processes that hurt so many must be a priority. Still, this racist event provides the UMN community with a great opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to diversity through direct action.

I strongly encourage the organizers of this racist event to issue a public apology, while encouraging UMN administrators to publicly commit to support the only department on campus that prioritizes social critique through the analysis of the struggles and contributions of the Chicana/o and Latina/o community. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that the University does not tolerate nor encourage cultural appropriation and/or racism. CLA needs to, at a minimum, commit to replacing Prof. Louis Mendoza's line in Chicano and Latino Studies, and to restore the Community Liaison position to at least a 75% appointment.

Drs. Albert and Olsen, I greatly encourage you to advocate on behalf of the Chicano & Latino Studies Department to see these changes take place. In doing so, you will send a clear statement that racism is not one of the values that you want to see associated with the University of Minnesota, and that your offices are truly committed to engaging in substantive diversity.

Looking forward to your response,
Idalia Robles De León

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Idalia Robles De León
Doctoral Student
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara

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