

# La Nueva RAZA

INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY \* HOUSTON, SAN ANTONIO, RIO GRANDE VALLEY, AUSTIN, DALLAS \* SPR 2005 \* ISSUE 3

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# La Nueva RAZA

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The primary purpose of *La Nueva Raza* is to address all aspects of Chicano and Latino affairs. Through its articles, commentaries, editorials, and other writings *La Nueva Raza* encourages discussion, dialogue, and debate over the issues, events, politics, culture, and conditions relevant to this community. *La Nueva Raza* embraces advocacy, journalism and subsequently publishes articles that focus on social justice, empowerment, community building, human rights, culture, and educational development of the Chicano/Latino community at the local, state, and national levels. The purpose of *La Nueva Raza* is to conveny an independent and progressive discourse and to

offer solutions for the challenges facing this community. *La Nueva Raza* is committed to expressing the voice of the people through its analysis, investigative reporting, interviewing, and other coverage.

*La Nueva Raza* also occasionally sponsors symposiums, leadership institutes, public discussions, summits, and other events relating to Mexican and Latino experience in the U.S. It is through these events that *La Nueva Raza* hopes to promote leadership development, cultural, and political awareness, and a more active, informed, and empowered community.

Individuals interested in submitting articles and other written works for possible publication or interested in purchasing advertising space may contact *La Nueva Raza* at Gallista2010@yahoo.com or m\_espinoza13@hotmail.com, or call 713-480-8358 or 832-277-3903. Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the staff and other agents associated with *La Nueva Raza*.

## Chicanos and the 2005 Texas Legislative Session

by A.S. Medellín

January 11, 2005 marked an important date in the lives of Mexican Americans and other Latinos around the state of Texas. The 79th Texas Legislative Session began with major issues affecting Latinos in Texas at stake, such as: education finance; higher education finance; women's health; children's healthcare; among other issues.

Now more than ever, it is important for all Latinos to educate ourselves on the issues that matter to us. *La Nueva Raza* and *La Raza Unida* are proud to provide this preview of things to come during this current legislative session that will end at the end of May.

### Education Finance

The constitution of the state of Texas mandates that the state government provide ALL Texans with a fair and equitable education. Of the almost 4 million children in Texas public schools, over 45% are Latinos. This issue truly affects those *La Nueva Raza* and *La Raza Unida* serves.

A recent court decision has forced the Texas legislature to find a new solution to equally fund public education in Texas. Texas conservatives (mostly Republicans) have attacked the current funding mechanism, known as "Robin Hood;" however, they have failed to develop any fair way of paying for public education.

The only idea most conservatives have embraced is an increase in the sales tax rate in order to decrease property tax rates. This would be detrimental to poor and middle class Texans, particularly Latinos, because the sales tax is regressive; meaning, it would take an increased

percentage of the income of those families making the least amount of money.

Republicans in the legislature are in favor of a tax increase for ALL Texans by supporting such an increase. Property tax savings for the poor and middle class would be insignificant if the Republicans get their way, compared to the tax breaks that will be given to wealthy property owners.

Texans must support a fair solution to funding public education. Among those solutions that have been considered in 2005 are:

(1) A broad-based progressive personal state income tax, like those collected by forty-one (41) of the other 50 states. This is probably the best solution to achieve fairness for all. An income tax can produce the money Texas needs to cut property taxes, reduce Robin Hood, increase equity, and improve public education for all children. Revenue from an income tax grows naturally (without rate increases) with the growth in the state's economy, so Texas would not continue to struggle to finance schools year after year. An income tax is also directly linked to an individual's ability to pay taxes, so it can help offset the unfairness of other taxes. Modestly taxing property, sales, and income would maintain adequate and stable funding for public education (CPPP, 2004).

(2) A business activity tax, or a value-added tax. This type of tax is one that taxes each stage of the production process of any product produced in Texas. As a product goes through the various stages of production, the net increase in value of that product is taxed. At its most productive, this investment in the

future of Texas could yield as much as \$4 billion annually.

(3) A broad expansion of the sales tax base to include services. Currently, the sales taxes that we pay are only for goods we buy at our local stores, but services, such as doctor visits, attorneys' fees, landscaping, mechanic services, etc. are not taxed at all. This type of tax is still regressive and will affect those with the least wealth more than any other group.

Currently, the Republican-controlled Texas House of Representatives has introduced their version of an education finance bill. While "reform" seems to be their goal, the people of Texas and a Texas court has demanded "equalization." This plan falls short of those demands. The Republican plan allows wealthy school districts to keep more money, while ignoring the needs of poor school districts.



State Rep. Eddie Rodriguez of Austin

The Mexican American Legislative Caucus pointed to the Highland Park district, a wealthy Dallas-area enclave that stands to see its state and local funds increase by as much as 52 percent under the House proposal. The Austin, Houston and San Antonio districts would each see increases of less than 5 percent. This plan does not meet the need for equalization. At this point, the caucus and the Democrats do not have the votes to defeat this bill, so

Latinos must get involved and contact their elected officials and organize to demand equalization.

Other ideas proposed by Republican Governor Rick Perry include legalizing gambling and creating new taxes on goods and services-ideas that would only be detrimental to the poor. Latinos must become involved in the discussion and debate over how the education of our children is funded.

Many conservatives favor taxpayer-funded private schools while further decreasing public education expenditures, and it is our duty to take on those who only want to further bankrupt the public education system that serves that vast majority of Latino children.

### Health Care for Poor Texans

Medicaid has covered the health care of Texas' poorest children for decades. In May 2000, Texas began the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to provide health care for those Texas children above the poverty line that did not qualify for Medicaid, but did not have health insurance.

In 2003, 1.6 million children were covered under Medicaid, while 506,000 children were covered by CHIP. One year later, a Republican administration and legislature changed the eligibility requirements for CHIP and cut almost 150,000 children from the insurance program in order to "cut state expenses." This cut in expenses also cut the amount of money the federal government contributed to CHIP through matching grants.

The majority of those left uninsured was placed back into Medicaid; however, 11,000 were still left uninsured. Texas census data shows that there are many more children who do not have insurance, and as the population increases, so will this number of uninsured kids.

Simply changing eligibility req-

uirements for the purpose of defunding CHIP is not a productive solution; however, the state continues to provide the bare minimum when it comes to Texas children. Unfortunately, other groups continue to be cut from Medicaid, including:

- \* All adults on Medicaid (more than 75 percent who are elderly or disabled) still are without coverage for most mental health professional services, eyeglasses, hearing aids, or podiatric care.

- \* Elderly and Disabled nursing home residents have had their monthly spending allowance for personal needs cut from \$60 to \$45 per month (the rest of their pension income goes toward the nursing home bill).

- \* Medicaid coverage for Medically Needy Adults-poor parents who have high medical bills-is still abolished. HHSC estimated in April that about 5,500 fewer adults per month are served because of this program cut.



Tx Sen. Judith Zaffirini of Laredo

Cuts in CHIP benefits and eligibility policy changes designed to reduce enrollment have not been restored. At the Governor's request, a moratorium on terminating coverage of children whose parents are behind on premium payments has been extended, but no permanent changes in the new policies has been made.

Gov. Rick Perry is set to attack Medicaid once again as its budget takes up about \$29 billion dollars-over 20% of the state budget. But why blame the poor for the mis-

takes of the Governor? Of the 2.7 million Medicaid enrollees, 1.7 million are Latinos. Of that number, 1.4 million are Latino children. With Latinos making up 52% of Medicaid enrollees, we must fight to protect their well-being, instead of attacking them for being poor.

#### Women's Health Care

The issue of Women's health care, especially when it involves legislation and funding benefiting pre-natal care, breast cancer awareness, basic family planning initiatives, and other healthcare benefits seems to always get caught up in the debate over a woman's right to choose. Latinos must be cautious of the religious right's and conservative's attempts at framing the discussion of women's health around abortion. The bottom line is that this issue is broader than this single issue that Republicans and conservatives make it out to be. Texans can expect conservatives to continue their attack on access to women's reproductive services (all services). Latinos must realize that conservative arguments go beyond abortion and a woman's right to choose; their arguments also include limiting health care and reproductive services to the poor.

Conservatives feel that the government should not be involved in assuring the health of poor pregnant women and their children; meaning, taxpayers should not be responsible for paying ANY health care costs of the poor. This legislative session, Latinos must defend women's health care access as it affects a great portion of the Latino and Texas population.

#### Other Health Care Legislation

State Representative Scott Hochberg of Houston has filed a bill that will help Texans with their hefty prescription drug bills. Hochberg filed House Bill 173, which sets up a program to have the state of Texas license Canadian pharmacies that will sell drugs to Texas citizens at prices far lower than those paid within the United States. The licensing process will ensure that the drugs are safe and handled properly.

#### Children's Protective Services

Over the last few years, more and more incidents of child endangerment have been occurring—many within the Latino community. Although individual parents bear the responsibility of such occurrences, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, which is in charge of CPS has been found to have been at fault for various occurrences in families where there had been prior occurrences. In other words, CPS failed to act in various situations of child endangerment because of a lack of staff, and the costs have been the lives of several children. The Texas Legislature has

committed to overhauling CPS by increasing the budget allocation to allow over 800 new staff members, decrease each staff member's caseload, and increase the pay of these staff members.

State Rep. Carlos Uresti of San Antonio, though, filed HB 194, which would increase cigarette taxes by \$1 per pack, generating nearly \$1.5 billion per biennium. The bill devotes millions of dollars to tobacco cessation efforts, but also restores funding to many programs that suffered budget cuts during the 78th Session, including child abuse and neglect prevention, the Children's Health Insurance Program, substance abuse treatment, adult guardianship services, and funding for Adult Protective Services (APS) and Child Protective Services (CPS). The bill also provides funds for new CPS caseworkers and more child abuse prevention programs. It would seem that Uresti's bill shows a stronger commitment than that shown by the governor's office.

#### Transportation

Texas legislators are hell-bent on increasing the number of toll roads around the state of Texas. There has been much controversy caused by conservative Governor Rick Perry as to the development of toll roads that in his vision would be paid for by taxpayers time and again—once to build them, and again every time a driver uses one. Some of the state's Republican legislative leaders have decided that the best way to combat clogged freeways is by building these expensive toll roads, but how will these pay-as-you-go highways be paid for? And what about maintaining the current infrastructure in rural and urban areas that are often ignored by conservative state legislators?

Texas road development and maintenance is paid for by taxpayers at the pump through a 38-cent-a-gallon gas tax. But the reality is that the money collected cannot keep up with demand for roads. According to Patrick Drisdoll of the San Antonio Ex-ress-News, inflation marches on, cars are getting better gas mileage, population is exploding and people drive more than ever. One solution is to increase the 38-cent-a-gallon gas tax we pay at the pump by as much as a dollar. Another is to increase the gas tax at the same rate as inflation.. Also up for consideration are ideas to free up more taxpayer money to build toll lanes, shuffle the budget to direct more funds to transportation, and allow state officials to spend more on rail facilities.

This issue affects Latinos both in urban and rural areas. Transportation is key to our individual and family livelihoods, so we do have a stake in this discussion. We

must ask questions, such as: Who do these toll roads benefit the most? Why must all Texans pay for toll roads for a minority that will benefit from them (suburban residents)? Which companies are in line to get the construction contracts and how much have they contributed to politicians? Where do Latinos and the geographical areas they are concentrated in fall on the transportation priority list? Everyone agrees that not much can be done without resolving education finance first. It seems some of these Texas legislators want to build more toll roads by shifting budget money from needed road programs by performing their own brand of "Enron accounting." What is known is that the old Bush adage of "no new taxes" will continue to be their mantra, while cutting road funding from those that need it most will become their practice. Latinos must fight for their share of those road monies to assure that our infrastructure is not ignored—whether in rural or urban areas.

#### Higher Education

With the growing population of Latino children in the public schools, the number of Latino high school graduates will also be increasing. The Texas Legislature must begin to improve funding levels of state universities and colleges in order to improve opportunities for a growing Hispanic college-ready population. Many state universities are putting strategies in place to improve Hispanic student admissions; for example, Texas State University-San Marcos has committed to increasing its number of Hispanic students to 25% to achieve the status of "Hispanic-serving institution." With this status, state colleges and universities have added opportunities for targeted grants and other federal funding for various programs that benefit Hispanic students.

The state of Texas must also commit funds to assure the retention of the growing Hispanic student population. Although the federal government must assure student grants and loans are available for this population to pay for tuition, fees, and other expenses, the state of Texas must assure funding for retention, tutoring, and mentoring programs to improve college retention and graduation rates.

Hopefully, by the time this article goes to print, legislation will have been submitted for the upcoming session to remedy these admissions and retention needs; however, Latino organizations must lobby college and university presidents to assure inclusion of these types of programs in their budget proposals to the legislature. Currently, the following bills have been submitted:

A majority of Latino college stu-

dents enroll at community colleges. The state of Texas, in 2003, cut funding for all community colleges which forced the college districts to cut programs or increase taxes to fund them. Other college districts increased tuition to make up for lost money; statewide, tuition at community college increased by 26 percent. Gov. Rick Perry has not submitted any ideas or plans in regards to community colleges, but something must be done to continue to make community colleges more affordable and accessible. We must demand action from our elected officials.

#### Criminal Justice

Each legislative session has hundreds of legislative bills introduced by criminal justice advocates for various purposes. The largest purpose, as well as the largest contribution of tax money, usually goes to state prison building and management. With the annual cost per state inmate skyrocketing every year and with the state prison system bulging at the seams with over 150,000 inmates, better solutions for effective prison and criminal justice management must be created.

The so-called "War on Drugs" has placed thousands of low-level inmates into the Texas prison system at a cost that is astronomical compared to the level of the crime committed. With average sentences for low-level drug violations at six months to two years, these inmates are not receiving the help they need and return to society with felony convictions that bar them from job opportunities, and housing opportunities that will allow them to be productive tax-paying citizens.

Because the Latino and other minority populations have suffered the most from ineffective sentencing and criminal justice practices, Latinos must step up and demand the better use of their tax monies when it comes to the management of prisons, criminal justice, and the rehabilitation of those considered low-level offenders.

Some kind of prison reform is in the minds of state budget writers as leaders are coming to the realization that prisons are more expensive than educational and counseling programs for low-level offenders. While a prison bed costs \$40 per day, a probation program only costs \$2 per day. Other proposals include: Lower caseloads for probation officers so they can better supervise the offenders who are on the streets; provide more drug-treatment beds for probationers, so they won't have to go to prison; and provide more in-prison and community treatment programs for more mentally ill offenders, so they don't commit new crimes.

#### Conclusion

By the time readers have the opportunity to view this article, thousands of legislative bills will have been proposed in Austin on hundreds of issues, ranging from issues that matter to Latinos (education, college, health care, economic opportunities) to issues that only matter to small sectors of the population around the state of Texas (designation of historical sites, naming of roads, etc.).

Please visit [www.LaRazaUnida.com](http://www.LaRazaUnida.com) for up-to-date lists of bills, as well as endorsements of those bills we feel benefit Latinos, and therefore benefit all Tejanos. 2005 marks an important year in legislative politics and Latinos must assure their fair share. It will no doubt be an uphill battle, but as Latinos begin to use their voices to demand that our needs are satisfied, and as our voices grow louder, we will be heard, and they will have no choice but to answer our call for fairness, justice, and equity.

*A.S. Medellin is a Houston political and communications consultant and serves as the political action chair for LaRazaUnida.com.*

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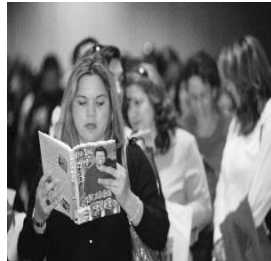
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# Nuestra Palabra:

## The Revolution will not be televised, but it will certainly be written and spoken.

California, featuring such big-name talent as actor and activist, Edward James Olmos in 2001 and the famed comedian and sitcom star, George Lopez this past October.



Young Latina at NP event

And it will happen live. And it will be our word put on center stage.

The Latino literary movement has reached a new pinnacle with the wild success of the Houston-based Nuestra Palabra- Latino Writers Having Their Say. Nuestra Palabra is poised to become the premier Latino literary institution in Texas, producing events, showcases for best selling authors and acting as avenue for up-and-coming Latino writers. More than that, it is set to take the market by storm.

In addition to his notoriety as the founder of Nuestra Palabra, Tony Diaz is also the author of *Aztec Love God* (Northwestern University Press) and has produced such other works as *Latino Heretics*, a compendium of essays by the palabristas, and other young talent in the community. He writes with a rich but accessible style that teases the senses but stays grounded in a true and gritty reality. A career educator and activist, Diaz has reached into the lives of the community through his work and through the classroom-both at the high school and college level.

In 1996, Diaz made Nuestra Palabra a reality with the help of his students, beginning with a few intimate readings to small crowds at a restaurant in Houston's historic Second Ward. As buzz began to build, however, NP moved its base of operations to Talento Bilingue de Houston, a larger venue next to the historic Our Lady of Guadalupe church, the oldest Chicano community church in Houston. Most recently Nuestra Palabra has begun hosting its showcases at MECA, a former school turned community cultural center, to standing-room-only crowds each month.

**The Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festival.** Nuestra Palabra is also the organizer of the wildly successful Edward James Olmos Book and Family Festival, now for the third year running at the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston. This has easily become the largest literary event in Texas and even the Southwest, outside of

selves.

It's almost like artists helping artists helping the community. And of course, the goal is also to create more artists- Tony has personally mentored many of the young artists who are set to make a splash in the literary scene in the coming months and years.

### Resistance Radio

In addition to the showcases, Nuestra Palabra takes the movement to the airwaves each week on its radio show broadcast on 90.1 KPFT. As one of only a handful of talk radio broadcasters that target Latinos, Nuestra Palabra fills the vacuum well in the Latino discursive politics of Houston.

In fact, Nuestra Palabra's brand of talk radio is rare across the country. With the rise of ultra conservative (and according to many people, anti-Latino) talk shows like Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, and Michael Savage, a progressive Latino voice on TV and radio is more important than ever. The times call for leaders and activists who are not afraid to say the things that need to be said; Tony Diaz and Nuestra Palabra are at the vanguard of the Latino community who refuse to be left silent on the sidelines.

### A New Generation of Activism.

The Latino community has come a long way from that old stereotype of the Mexican taking siesta under a cactus plant- today we are vibrant, dynamic and incredibly active. This is reflected in the people who have made Nuestra Palabra a success.

Bryan Parras, a published writer and second generation Chicano activist, is a true believer in the mission of NP and devotes a significant amount of time to the organization's success.

"NP brings the literature to the people, and that is a powerful thing," says Parras. "Because of that, my involvement is a necessity, not a hobby. This is something I was meant to do."

On the other hand, Liana Lopez, a long time NP organizer, has become a major mover and shaker behind the scenes of this movement as the producer and new co-host of the radio show with Tony. Lopez, who works as an HR specialist for a large multinational corporation by day,

had never been involved in any other Latino organizations, but felt the need to make her contributions to the movement through Nuestra Palabra.

uncultivated."

### Art & Literature for La Raza, By La Raza.

Recently, the NP radio show conducted its first open-mike night to a tremendous public response. This shows that people are ready to be heard, and have been waiting for someone to present the opportunity.

As Nuestra Palabra gains credibility and influence in the barrios, we can only expect to see younger Chicanos and Chicanas making their way into the public eye.

Tony Diaz has become one of the most influential Latino organizational leaders in Houston, and is quickly moving to the center of Houston's Latino elite. But his power is not in his notoriety- it's in his vision, and in the young energetic people that follow him. That is why success for this organization is not a question of if, but a question of when: Nuestra Palabra will become a major voice in the Latino community. It's only a matter of time.

Many people question the literacy of Latino people in the United States; they believe that we don't read and that our cultural production is limited to Mexican food and folkloric dance, but Nuestra Palabra has proven that this is not the case.

We are a sophisticated people who have been denied so many opportunities to express ourselves openly. We are a people with a long history and deep roots in this country. We are a people eager to tell our stories and share our collective wisdom with the world, and pass our legacy to the next generation.

Most of all, we are a people whose time has come, and Nuestra Palabra- our word- must be spoken for all to hear.

For more information on Nuestra Palabra, visit their website at: [www.NuestraPalabra.org](http://www.NuestraPalabra.org).

Mike Espinoza is a young Chicano activist and a Houston high school teacher.



Poet Raul R. Salinas

"I grew up in a family that was very distant from our culture," she confesses. "I wanted to learn and experience a little for myself."

Liana Lopez is just one of the many volunteers who become involved in Nuestra Palabra and are not professional writers.

This speaks to the organization's commitment to bringing literature to the entire community and breaking down barriers that delineate high and low culture- this is everyone's movement, and its art belongs to the entire Latino community. Unfortunately, this is something that many professional literary pundits fail to appreciate.

Literature for everyone is the cornerstone behind Tony Diaz' organizational philosophy: Literature is the story of all who read and identify with it, not just those who write and critique it.



Puerto Rican Author Ernesto Quiñones

"When I worked with high school students, I was always amazed at the amount of talent that most of these young people bring to the table," says Diaz. "One of the greatest tragedies in our community is that so much of that talent goes unnoticed, un-encouraged, and

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# Justice for all: Where is it?

## Killing Fields of Texas--Continued

By Iris Salinas

RIO GRANDE VALLEY -As the contamination case of Mission, Texas gains international attention and support, a topic of great interest in the case is that of the rapport between the Plaintiffs and their attorneys.

Reports of Plaintiffs being taunted by attorneys on both sides of the case in and out of the courtroom have echoed throughout the legal community as well as through the public at large. Just recently, the lead corporate attorney was quoted as saying "these people don't even know how to read or write...what are they, retarded?" Actually, abnormally high rates of mental retardation are present in this sick and toxic community. This type of harassment, many say, has been going on for years.

But surprisingly, it does not only come from opposing counsel. The discord that exists between the Plaintiffs and their own attorneys is notorious as are many of their morally and ethically debatable practices. To start, the lead attorney for the Plaintiffs is also the current-serving County Judge. Aside from the fact that he currently holds public office, he is personally trying the case, holding it in his own courthouse against companies he currently does business with in his county. Individuals from within the legal community have stepped forward and claimed that Mr. Garcia has at times negotiated agreements without the consent of the Plaintiffs. Several community members and Plaintiffs question the ethics involved in the case.



Ester Salinas

Fair representation and justice were the goals of Ester Salinas when she and the community first began the lawsuit almost seven years ago. "Justice for all, where is it?" asks Ms. Salinas. "As this case drags on, our people continue to die wrongful deaths." Some Plaintiffs state that at this point, they are extremely disappointed in what all has and hasn't happened both in terms of the case as well as with the lack of

proper reactions from responsible from state and federal entities.

A few weeks ago, the smallest of the 34 Defendants settled their part of the case. (Defendants range from the smaller Helena Chemical Company to major corporations such as URS, Dow, Monsanto,



Holland Street Bodega, Mission, TX

Union Pacific, and Shell.) Plaintiffs discovered a settlement had been accepted without their knowledge on their behalf through inside sources and have been in an uproar ever since.

Yet another twist: when many Plaintiffs went to sign settlement documents, they discovered their claims had been dismissed. "All of my children have cancer and only one is still in the lawsuit," exclaimed a former Plaintiff who refused to be named. "I was never told that they had been thrown out or that there was ever a problem."

Reportedly, hundreds of Plaintiffs have been thrown out of the case since it began. Initially there were over 3,000 and now only a few hundred remain. Many say they have been mysteriously and/or purposely dismissed from the case. Representatives from the three firms involved have reportedly lost the files of hundreds; so many ill and seriously contaminated people claim never to have been notified of any problem with their case until they went to sign their settlements. "I lived in the Holland area all my life - my mother, father and I all have cancers, more than one, each of us. So does everyone else on the block I grew up on, cancers, deformities, you name it. Why am I being told now that I had been dismissed long ago? I was always told everything was 'OK.' Why are the files of so many hundreds of us now conveniently 'lost?'" asks a former resident of the Holland Area plant. Other allegations of verbal assaults and threats of being dismissed by the firms' representatives were also mentioned during a recent series of community interviews on the topic.

Those that remain in the lawsuit have stated that the settlement was a complete disgrace. After massive (and questionable) amounts of attorneys' fees had been deducted, numerous individuals who are physically challenged, mentally ill, or worse received around \$100 each for past, present, and future damages caused by the contamination of the company. The attorneys' fees deducted ranged from several thousands for last-minute arbitrary teams, and an out of town Special Master judge to hundreds for notary fees many do not seem to recall. The majority of Plaintiffs are outraged. Presently, there is a call to action for complaints to be filed against the attorneys. Hundreds of grievances are being filed with the State Bar in hopes of reporting the questionable and suspicious activities of the attorneys. (Mission-Texas.com has an electronic version and link to the State Bar which wrongfully dismissed can join in the campaign.)

The community at large is disappointed not only with their legal counsel but as well as with the elected officials who have jurisdiction over these two Federal Superfund Areas. In the homeland of questionable practices like the Compadre system and the Politiquera system, it comes as no surprise to encounter such obstacles in the search for justice in the Valley.

The Mission-Texas movement (www.mission-texas.com) has recently gained popularity within the comunidad, the English, Spanish, American, and Mexican media, and even the United Nations. It has also fostered public attacks and feuds between local officials and activists for the cause. Elected officials and their fellow Compadres (which consist of other men of power, attorneys, and elected officials) have allegedly threatened Plaintiffs, activists, and members of media who promote the story. Several have claimed to have been told "Tu no sabes lo que te va pasar" (you just don't know what is going to happen to you) by a well-known City of Mission representative. The Mission case started as a lawsuit, but has now blossomed into a movement and in many ways, a political and cultural war. Its ties and problems with EPA and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, which comprise yet another facet of this case, also point to environmental racism.

"Se necesita escuchar los abusos del pueblo," says an activist for the cause. "The comunidad itself is not

only coming together to fight this, other movements and communities have joined in." With the support of organizations such as the United Farm Workers and the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, a lot of focus has been placed not only on the comunidad but also on the companies and government entities that have failed to address the needs of this Mexican-American community. Collectively they are not only informing and educating comunidades and the international public about the contamination of Mission, they also bring attention to the disparity of toxic sites in and around neighborhoods of color in the U.S. In a country where justice is hailed as the supreme law of the land, where is it for the gente of Mission?

Note: Two years ago, a class action lawsuit involving PCB's in Anniston, Alabama settled against Monsanto for \$7 billion. Settlement offers for the Mission case are nowhere near that figure, even though Mission was the birthplace of toxins such as Agent Orange, DDT, Arsenic, and Dioxin. The severity of the situation in Mission stems from the fact that many chemicals were 6 to 25 times more potent than normal. Mission produced and shipped them in their concentrated forms to other destinations where later they were to be diluted for use.

To be continued...

## TOXIC ANTO TOXIC SAN ANTONIO

A continuation of The Killing Fields of Texas

By: Iris Salinas

As the saga of The Killing Fields of Texas continues, a major twist in the story is uncovered that links the contamination from Mission, Texas to one of the largest cities in the country, San Antonio.

Word has it that Mission, Texas contracted with railroad companies like Union Pacific and the U. S. Military to create and distribute weapons of mass destruction - deadly chemicals and toxins - for decades. As you may remember, Mission is the birthplace of toxins like Agent Orange, Arsenic, DDT, Dioxin, and many others. Dioxin, which recently gained worldwide attention in the suspected poisoning and disfiguring of Ukraine's newly elected president, Viktor Yushchenko, is a bi-product of Agent Orange, which also gained worldwide attention during and long after its use in the war in Vietnam. For years, Agent Orange and several other toxins were reportedly shipped from Mission throughout Texas and other parts of the world with the help of

railroad corporations like Union Pacific, the United States military, the Texas state prison system, other corporations and government entities. Former workers of the bodegas (chemical factories) in Mission have mentioned the transport of toxic chemicals to and through cities like Austin, College Station, and San Antonio, leaving them also contaminated.

It just so happens that in San Antonio the issue of Agent Orange contamination has been one of great concern for this large city of over 1.5 million in population. Kelly Air Force Base, a closed and now privatized military base, used to be the headquarters for Operation Ranchhand and reportedly received and transported tons of the toxin, which is said to have contaminated anything and everything within a 20 mile radius. The regional water source for the South Central Texas region, the Edwards Aquifer, lies within these boundaries and parts of it are said to be contaminated, although no public statements have yet been made on the subject.

Operation Ranchhand was a military operation that allowed for surplus Agent Orange to be sold to the public. It began in 1973 and lasted a few short years. Any additional surplus that was not sold was then buried in and around parts of Kelly Air Force Base as well as other military bases in San Antonio. Contamination continues to be a major concern for the city, since former base properties eventually became residential and commercial areas. A little league park was built over one known burial site on the Southwest side of San Antonio.

Community members and organizations like the Southwest Workers Union have protested and voiced their concerns to EPA, the state, the Air Force, and the city of San Antonio for some time in an effort to gain attention and action to the issue. However, thorough and appropriate community awareness and involvement projects are yet to take place. Apparently, the entities involved want to keep the story under wraps. To date, EPA has refused to label the contaminated areas as Superfund sites, although they are well aware of how contaminated the areas are. Perhaps these entities fear that a major lawsuit and mass hysteria will ensue once all the communities involved discover how dire the situation really is and how much of San Antonio is contaminated with Agent Orange.

Continued on Page 11

# The Empowerment of Chicano and Latino Youth: Let's Paint the White House Brown!

By Lorenzo Cano

**"Mexicano and Latino youth in general are relatively powerless. We need to make up our mind and take power away from those that don't help us and keep us down. This will come about only when teenagers and young people decide to get serious and ORGANIZE!"**

**...16 year old male student from  
Cesar Chavez High School  
Houston, Texas-December 12th, 2004**

There are approximately six million Mexican American and Latino citizens between the ages of 18-30 living in the United States and many more Latinos that are undocumented or in the process of obtaining their citizenship. An increase in activities designed to bring about their empowerment is needed today more than ever in that it would improve their chances for more productive and successful lives. Today there are a number of young Chicanos and Latinos, including many immigrant youth that are involved in a number of organizations and public policy campaigns with the objective of improving the status of their community. Their work is honorable and courageous but it is not enough. Many of the gains that Chicanos have made in the past are now in jeopardy as the Congress and the State Legislature under Republican Party leadership have speeded up efforts to dismantle important social and political gains that have helped Latino youth in the past. To counter this, it is imperative that more young Mexicano and Latino teenagers and young adults get involved in empowering themselves in their schools, in their voting precincts, in their churches, jobs, and in their neighborhoods. A growing social movement, La Nueva Raza Unida, is spreading throughout Houston and the state of Texas precisely to stop the efforts of those individuals and organizations intent on supporting legislation against the interests of Mexican American and Latino youth. Supporters of La Nueva Raza Unida joke around about painting the White House brown, but in reality they are dead serious about the acquisition of political power and the running of a Mexican American for President in the near future; not any candidate, but someone that has a strong grasp on the pulse of Mexican America. Such an individual would place the interest of people of Mexican descent at center stage.

The empowerment of Mexicano and Latino youth means being able to determine one's own destiny in life. It implies that an individual and her/his community have the opportunity to make independent decisions from the local schoolhouse all the way to the White House. Through activism and organizing themselves Latino youth will have more resources to help them in their preparation for adulthood including increased employment opportunities, more resources to attend college, creative and exciting public schools, access to health care, affordable housing for young adults, and more money to travel and see the world.

Although things are not exactly how they were during the Chicano Movement young Chicanos and Latinos today can learn a lot from the experiences of young people during this time.

## The Power of Youth

In the late nineteen-sixties and seventies Mexican American students were not allowed to speak Spanish on the school grounds in most of the high schools throughout Texas without getting expelled or reprimanded in some manner. Paddling was common in many schools when Mexican Americans opted to speak Spanish in defiance of the rules. Some schools assessed small fines and threatened to expel students that defended their right to speak the language that they had learned at home. Few, if any college classes existed that taught the history of Mexican Americans. The need for more scholarly publications over the Mexican American experience was in great demand and there were no centers or departments of Mexican American Studies on university campuses. Many public school teachers and even college professors taught their students that people of Mexican descent had no history, or if they did it was of no significance. For the great majority of young Mexican Americans the future looked bleak and there was no light at the end of the tunnel as the incidence of poverty, a third-class education, and a generally hostile Anglo society continued to persist. In spite of all this, things were changing as a new breed of young Mexican Americans were already organizing and demanding change. They called themselves Chicanos, Mexican Americans that were proud of their Mexican ancestry, politically aware of their subordinated status in society, committed to creating meaningful social change, and with the goal of empowering their community.

During this era, the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) flourished and grew out of the discontent and frustration that young Chicanos felt towards their general second-class status and against a persistently chauvinistic and condescending Anglo establishment. The outspoken and critical voices of young MAYO members shook-up the political establishment locally and statewide as protest marches, pickets, voter registration drives, boycotts, public school walkouts and grassroots organizing took place throughout the state of Texas. Young Chicanos called for the reaffirmation and legitimization of the culture practiced by people of Mexican descent in the United

States; a culture that was generally ridiculed and looked down upon throughout society (by the media, public schools, books, magazines, newspapers and the White community generally). During this era young Chicanos and Chicanas were courageous, outspoken, articulate and willing to put their lives on the line as they took on the predominantly male Anglo establishment and the institutions that they mismanaged.

Most major social institutions in Texas had a long history in the exclusion, manipulation and repression against Mexican Americans including the public

Wherever there existed an identifiable Mexican community throughout the United States young Chicanas and Chicanos called for an end to the neocolonial status (a situation where Anglos dominated through legal manipulations as well as illegal means) that they faced throughout the country. The Young Lords organized like MAYO but concentrated primarily in advancing social conditions of Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rican youth organized in places where they had long roots and identifiable communities including Chicago, New York and New Jersey. Geraldo Rivera was the organization's legal advisor before becoming a

for social justice, dignity and political and economic power.

## Past Chicano Youth Conferences, Walkouts and Festivals

Chicano youth conferences were held throughout the country where young people established agendas and called for marches and other political actions to pressure the powers to be to make changes for the betterment of La Raza. In an effort to fight the "No Speaking Spanish" rule as well as other repressive measures, MAYO orchestrated approximately 36 high school student walkouts. Several, including the one in Crystal City, Texas, gained national attention and forced the local school board to agree to all of the demands. Its main organizer at that time, Dr. Jose Angel Gutierrez, continues to speak out and defend the rights of Mexicans throughout the United States and is one of the most sought after speaker at colleges, conferences, and other Latino gatherings. At the cultural level young leaders called for the rebirth of Mexican/Chicano culture in both traditional and contemporary genres and with an emphasis in music, art, theater, literature, poetry, and dance. Centros culturales sprung up in cities all over the Southwest and Midwest where Chicano art forms of all types were featured and displayed with pride. Chicano youth cultural festivals or floricultos displayed the latest in avant garde art forms.



Courtesy of the Houston Chronicle, 1989

schools, law enforcement agencies (including the Texas Rangers), the judicial system, the criminal justice system, colleges, universities, and government entities at all levels. Thousands of private businesses and corporations from the local to the national levels discriminated against Mexican Americans in the area of employment, compensation, promotions, and general treatment, as many still do today. Many Catholic priests were exposed for patronizing (to act as patron of) Mexican parishioners. Sermons were disconnected to the reality of the broader Mexican American community and many priests throughout the country preached that Mexicanos should be obedient and humble in their political lives, implying that Mexicanos should bow to the repressive and snobbish behavior of condescending and racist Whites. Interestingly, conscientious priests that did relate to the people, and that championed their concerns were usually quickly removed from their parishes and sent packing to other cities and states. This was one of the reasons for the establishment of PADRES, an organization of outspoken Chicano priests that took issue with the misguided policies of the institutional church and its patronizing qualities.

Although the activities of MAYO took place primarily in Texas other organizations such as UMAS (United Mexican American Students) and MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanas and Chicanos de Aztlan), the Brown Berets, Chicanos Por La Causa, and many others undertook similar actions throughout the country. Some were based out of the universities or the high schools and others organized at the neighborhood level.

well-known news correspondent.

## Chicano Youth: Global Citizens

Internationally a multitude of organizations led by Latino youth and young adults took on different forms and became the social and political consciousness of Latin America. Whether in Mexico, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, or in Cuba, young people spoke out for a more humane and just society. Students and other young people became the vanguard (the forefront of a movement) of many of these political movements. Songs often conveyed the concerns of the youth just as some singers and musical groups do today. The political song with social commentary prevailed wherever there was an organization or a political action such as a march, protest or rally.

Thus, Chicanas and Chicanos were part of worldwide effort to fundamentally transform society so that the world would function for the majority and not for a relatively small wealthy and powerful elite, or for only one privileged racial or ethnic group. Chicanos traveled to Mexico and other countries in Latin America to learn about the problems and struggles there. These trips became important educational experiences that advanced their knowledge over international relations and foreign affairs. These visits made young Chicanos cognizant of the similarities in their own struggle (the Chicano Movement) and the political and social struggles in Latin America. They also made youth in Latin America aware of the existence of the Mexican people in the United States and their historical struggle

## Indigenous Identity

During this time period a growing number of Chicanos began to reflect on their indigenous ancestry. They would no longer only acknowledge their Spanish-European heritage, but would embrace their indigenous heritage as a legitimate part of their identities. Danzantes, Chicano-indigenous dancers established dance troupes as a way of re-gaining their cultural past and appropriate identity. Others learned the influences of pre-Columbian cultures on their everyday lives including their food, language, and artistic expressions. Most importantly, they became aware that they were not immigrants but in fact indigenous to this part of the world with ancestors that went back thousands of years.

## See Other Struggles, Pg. 10

### Quotes from High School Students

"Empowerment means getting the power to control your life. I believe that the Latino community needs this, and it starts with young people like us."

Joanne Castillo, 17, Senior

"I think Latinos should empower ourselves by cleaning the environment and encouraging young people to get involve"

Claudia Ortega, 19, Senior

"As young Latinos, we must learn to empower ourselves and take ownership of our community."

Donna Alaniz, 17, Senior

"In order to rise as a community, we must all reach out and give of ourselves and our talents."

Helen Villarreal, 17, Senior

# EL PODER DE LA JUVENTUD MEJICANA Y LATINA

Por Lorenzo Cano

Traducido por Saul Olivares

A fines de la década de los sesentas, los estudiantes de origen México-Americanos no eran permitidos hablar español en las escuelas preparatorias en Texas sin ser expulsados o reprimidos de alguna manera. El castigo corporal era común en muchas escuelas cuando los estudiantes México-Americanos optaban por hablar español y desafiaban las reglas. Algunas escuelas establecieron pequeñas multas y amenazas de expulsar aquellos que defendían su derecho de hablar la lengua que habían aprendido en sus respectivas casas. Sin embargo, sólo algunas clases que enseñaban la historia de los México-Americanos existían en la escuela superior. Independientemente de la gran cantidad de libros que existían en el tema sobre los México-americanos, la necesidad de más publicaciones escolares en esta rama se encontraba con una gran demanda. Por consiguiente, no existían centros o departamentos de Estudios México-Americanos en ninguna institución universitaria. Muchas escuelas públicas, maestros y hasta profesores universitarios indicaron que la gente de herencia mejicana no tenía historia y que si la llegaran a tener era insignificante. Para la gran mayoría de los jóvenes México-Americanos, el futuro se miraba inhóspito, sin luz al fin del túnel tal y como la incidencia de la pobreza, una educación de tercera clase y una imponente sociedad anglosajona generalmente hostil. No obstante, algunas de éstas cosas ya estaban cambiando cuando una nueva ola de jóvenes México-Americanos se estaban organizando y demandando un cambio. Ellos se hicieron llamar Chicanos, México-Americanos que estaban orgullosos de su herencia Mexicana, conscientes de su subordinado estado social, conscientes de su capacidad para crear un cambio significativo social y

miembros de MAYO estremecieron la entidad política del momento con protestas manifestadas en marchas, huelgas, caminatas, propagandas para votar, caminatas dentro de escuelas públicas y otras organizaciones que tomaron lugar en todo el estado de Texas. La juventud chicana exigió la reafirmación y legitimación de la práctica cultural de la gente con herencia mejicana en los Estados Unidos; una cultura que era generalmente ridiculizada y subyugada por la sociedad (La prensa, las escuelas, los libros, las revistas, periódicos y comunidad anglosajona). Durante esta era los chicanos se mantuvieron con valor, voluntad, articulación y disposición a arriesgar sus vidas al enfrentar al imparcial establecimiento predominantemente anglosajón y masculino

La mayoría de dichas instituciones sociales han tenido una larga historia de exclusión, manipulación, discriminación y represión en contra de los México-Americanos. Esto incluyó las escuelas públicas, agencias de seguridad pública (incluyendo a los Texas Rangers), el sistema judicial, el sistema criminal de justicia, colegios, universidades y entidades gubernamentales en todos los niveles. Miles de negocios y corporaciones privadas locales y nacionales discriminaron a los México-Americanos en los sectores de empleo, compensación, promociones, trato que aún se manifiesta. Repulsivamente, muchos sacerdotes católicos fueron expuestos a la patronización (Actuar como patronos de) creyentes mejicanos. Los sermones fueron creados para hacer una separación de la realidad en la mayoría de las comunidades México-Americanas. Por consiguiente, los sacerdotes promulgaban que los mexicanos debían ser obedientes y someterse a sus vidas cotidianas, infiriendo que los mejicanos deberían de ponerse a los pies de los racistas y orgullosos blancos. Interessantemente, los sacerdotes

18-30. Un incremento en la participación de estos individuos en actividades diseñadas para impulsar el poder; tales como el voto y la postulación de políticos son unas de las cosas primordiales para mejorar las oportunidades de una vida más productiva y exitosa. En la actualidad hay un sin número de hispanos involucrados en varias organizaciones y campañas públicas cuyas políticas son relevantes a sus comunidades. Muchos de estos jóvenes no son ciudadanos y no pueden votar, más sin embargo reconocen que aun así pueden hacer la diferencia en el desarrollo de su comunidad. El trabajo de estos jóvenes es honorable, sacrificado y valiente, pero no es lo suficiente. Una creciente corriente denominada La raza unida se está esparciendo en las comunidades mexicanas de Tejas. Sus respectivos miembros bromean diciendo que planean pintar la casa blanca de color café, pero en realidad bajo el sentido de humor hay una gran verdad sobre la adquisición del poder político y la postulación de un candidato México-Americano a la presidencia en el futuro. No se espera cualquier candidato, sino alguien que entienda y acepte el pulso de la gente mexicana, al igual que un individuo que pueda poner los intereses de esta comunidad en su agenda principal.

El empoderamiento (empowerment) significa el poder determinar uno su propio destino en vida. Esto deduce que un individuo y su comunidad tienen la oportunidad de hacer decisiones autónomas e independientes desde la escuela del barrio hasta la Casa Blanca en Washington D.C. También se incita que mediante la organización, la juventud tendrá más recursos que los ayudaran en la madurez. Esto incluye, pero no limita a incrementar las oportunidades de empleo, más recursos para educación superior, más creativas, relevantes, y emotivas escuelas públicas, más programas de vivienda económica, menos estereotipos en la televisión y el cine al igual que menos acoso racial por parte de los representantes de la ley y seguridad pública.

Aunque las actividades de MAYO tomaron lugar primordialmente en Texas, otras organizaciones como UMAS (estudiantes México-Americanos Unidos) y MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano y Chicanas de Aztlán), los Brown Berets, Chicanos Por La Causa, y muchos otros que tomaron acciones similares en todo el país. Algunas de estas manifestaciones han tomado lugar en universidades al igual que en los barrios. En cualquier lugar que haya existido una comunidad mejicana dentro de los Estados Unidos, la juventud chicana ha hecho el llamando al renacimiento de la cultura Chicano-Mexicana y el fin del estado neo-colonial que se ha vivido en todo el país. En la ciudad de Nueva York, The Young Lords (Los señores de la juventud) organizaron algo similar a MAYO, pero se concentraron primordialmente en el avance de las condiciones sociales de los puertorriqueños. La juventud boricua se organizó en lugares cuyas comunidades hispanas mantienen fuertes raíces tales como Chicago y Nueva Jersey. Gerardo Rivera fue un miembro de The

Young Lords y sirvió como el consejero legal de la organización antes de convertirse un prominente corresponsal de noticias.

## La Juventud Chicana: Ciudadanos Globales

Internacionalmente, una multitud de organizaciones jóvenes tomaron aproximaciones diferentes y se convirtieron en la conciencia sociopolítica de Latinoamérica. En México, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Perú, Puerto Rico, Chile,

continúa defendiendo y exigiendo a los mejicanos en todos los Estados Unidos. Por consiguiente, el Dr. Gutiérrez es uno de los oradores más solicitados en las universidades, conferencias, y otros importantes eventos latinos. En el nivel cultural, las impresiones de la música, el arte, el teatro, la literatura, la poesía y el baile, los líderes jóvenes hicieron un llamado al renacimiento de la cultura México / Chicana tanto en el género tradicional como en el contemporáneo. Los Centros

**"En general, la juventud Latina y mejicana se encuentran relativamente impotentes. Nosotros necesitamos decidirnos a tomar el poder de esos que no nos ayudan y nos mantiene oprimidos. Esto sólo se cumplirá cuando los adolescentes y gente joven se adjudiquen con una postura más seria y ¡SE ORGANIZEN!"**

**...Estudiante barón de dieciséis años de edad de la Escuela Preparatoria Cesar Chavez, Houston Texas-12 de diciembre del 2004.**

Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, al igual que en Cuba, la juventud ha exigido abiertamente una sociedad más humana y justa. Los estudiantes se convirtieron vanguardistas de muchos de estas batallas políticas. Algunas canciones muchas veces expresaron dichas preocupaciones de la juventud y otros sectores populares tal como algunos cantantes y grupos musicales lo hacen hoy.

Como resultado, los Chicanos y Chicanas fueron parte de un esfuerzo universal de fundamentalmente transformar la sociedad para que el mundo funcionara para mayoría y no para una elite rica y poderosa o para un grupo o etnia privilegiada. Los Chicanos viajaron a México y otros países en Latinoamérica para aprender sobre los problemas y dificultades de ahí. Estos viajes fueron importantes experiencias educacionales que incrementaron sus conocimientos sobre las políticas y relaciones exteriores. Estas visitas hicieron que la juventud chicana se concientizara de las similitudes de su propia lucha, llamada El movimiento chicano, y las luchas socioeconómicas y políticas de Latinoamérica. De la misma forma, Latinoamérica se concientizó de la existencia de la gente Mexicana en los Estados Unidos y su lucha histórica por justicia y poder.

## Previas Conferencias de la Juventud Chicana, Marchas y Festivales.

Las conferencias de la juventud chicana tomaron lugar en todo el país donde la juventud estableció agendas y convocó a más marchas y otras acciones políticas para presionar los poderes y lograr hacer cambios para el progreso de La raza. En un esfuerzo de lucha contra la regla "No Speaking Spanish" No hablar español, así como otras medidas represivas, MAYO dirigió aproximadamente 36 huelgas de estudiantes en escuelas preparatorias. Una de las más memorables incluye la de Crystal City, Texas, la cual obtuvo atención nacional y forzó al distrito escolar a acordar todas las demandas de los estudiantes. El principal organizador de dicho tiempo, el Dr. José Ángel Gutiérrez con-

Culturales Chicanos emergieron en las ciudades por todo el suroeste y el medio oeste donde el arte Chicano de diversas formas fue presentado y exhibido con orgullo. Los festivales culturales de la juventud chicana o floricanos hicieron gala lo último en la expresión de arte avant garde.

Durante este periodo, un creciente número de Chicanos comenzó a reflexionar sobre su herencia indígena. No solamente se reconoció el legado español-europeo, sino el indígena como una parte legítima de su identidad. Los Danzantes chicano-indígenas fundaron grupos para recuperar su pasado cultural e identidad actual.

## Otras Luchas

Los Chicanos participaron en una amplia variedad de actividades políticas que los afectaron directamente y algunos casos formaron coaliciones con otras luchas populares tales como; el movimiento anti-guerra, racismo ambiental, la lucha contra la brutalidad policial, la reforma correccional de cárceles, la lucha por la protección de las libertades y los derechos civiles al igual que una política estadounidense de relaciones exteriores más humana. Muchos de estos temas afectaron más a los Chicanos que algunos otros grupos étnicos en la sociedad lo cual los motivó a iniciar acciones políticas en la defensa de sus comunidades. La juventud Chicana también viajó en todo el país para reunirse con otra gente joven que estaba organizando y desarrollando sus propias comunidades y subsecuentemente creando una red nacional o movimiento con organizaciones de todos tipos. La Asociación de Prensa Chicana (CPA) fue una red del movimiento de periódicos chicanos que se unieron para compartir historias y estrategias que los harían más efectivos en la cobertura de su lucha.

**Vea Multiple, Págs. 8**



Protesta estudiantil de la secundaria Austin (en Houston), 1989 (Chronicle)

persistentes en su visión de unidad entre toda la gente de descendencia Mexicana.

Durante dicha era, La Organización de Jóvenes México-Americanos (MAYO) se convirtió una red de jóvenes chicanos que lucharon por el poder de su comunidad. Los capítulos de MAYO florecieron y crecieron del descontento y frustración de los jóvenes chicanos al ser catalogados como ciudadanos de segunda clase, al igual que en contra del condescendiente establecimiento anglosajón. La franqueza y voces críticas de los

concientes de las injusticias y devotos a la gente fueron inmediatamente removidos de sus cargos y trasladados a otras ciudades y estados. Esta fue una de las razones del establecimiento de PADRES, una organización de sacerdotes chicanos dispuestos a participar y tomar agencia en las políticas manipuladas de la iglesia institucional sus cualidades de patronización.

## La Juventud Mexicana y Latina Hoy

Hay aproximadamente 6 millones de ciudadanos Latinos entre las edades de

**Continuado de Pagina 7**

**Multiple Marginalización y Estructuras de Oportunidades**

Actualmente la mayoría de la juventud Mexicana está experimentando una falta de estructuras de oportunidad generalmente disponibles a la juventud de clase media y accesible a manos llenas a la juventud de familia clase profesional. La falta de oportunidades, particularmente entre la juventud latina desde familias con un ingreso moderado a desfavorecido se ha multiplicado. Algunas formas modernas de discriminación inhabitan la habilidad de la juventud Chicana/Mejicana de integrarse exitosamente en la sociedad. Aunque existe un creciente número de Chicanos y Latinos asistiendo a los community colleges y universidades, una desproporción se encuentra sobrellevando un futuro menos optimístico. Muchos se hallan viviendo al margen de la sociedad (bajo ingreso, madre/padre soltero(a), segregado en escuelas de tercera calidad). La juventud solamente organizándose obtendrá la capacidad de abrir estructuras de oportunidades adicionales e influenciar las decisiones que afectan sus vidas. Cualquiera cosa menos significará el fracaso en su habilidad de convertirse en líderes efectivos para sus respectivos grupos al igual que para las comunidades México-Americanos y Latinas del futuro.

¿Está la comunidad Chichana y Latina perdiendo otra generación en la actualidad? Algunos dicen que esto se puede observar en el número de estudiantes desertores (35-52 por ciento) en varios distritos escolares de Texas. El número de de jóvenes latinos asistiendo a los sistemas criminales de justicia juveniles y adultos (42 por ciento), el número de jóvenes involucrados en pandillas (10-20 por ciento), el 80 por ciento de jóvenes graduados en las escuelas preparatorias que no logran obtener una educación superior, aquellos que toman el rol de padres de familia demasiado jóvenes, y aquellos que obtienen una educación peor que inadecuada en las escuelas públicas (75 por ciento) aunque hayan obtenido su diploma de preparatoria. Otros son manipulados por los reclutares militares y no informados de los recursos de asistencia federal disponibles. Muchos han iniciado huelgas escolares en protesta de la legislación y las reformas que han sido anti-mejicanas por naturaleza.

**Conclusión**

Las condiciones de múltiples margilizaciones funcionan para mantener a la juventud Latina subordinada. Esto puede cambiar mediante la creatividad, la energía, la entrega, y el activismo de la juventud Mexicana y Latina en su coordinada lucha con otros sectores de la comunidad. Como lo sugiere el estudiante de dieciséis años de edad de la escuela preparatoria Cesar Chávez en Houston, por la próxima generación joven, esto se tiene que hacer ahora y no después. Tiene que hacerse ahora para poder transformar las desigualdades actuales en nuevas oportunidades y la formación de una nueva y mejor sociedad. Mediante la crítica y el asesoramiento del estado actual y eventos vigentes es la decisión de la juventud Latina el definir el tipo de mundo en el que quieren vivir. Los esfuerzos ya han comenzado entre un creciente número de jóvenes Mejicanos / Latinos que han plantado la semilla del nuevo movimiento La Raza Unida con el intento de estremecer el establecimiento político una vez más, desde la escuela local hasta La Casa Blanca.

*Traducido por Saul Olivares.*

**Young Mexican American Running for Mayor of San Antonio, Texas**



Castro: A role model for young Mexican Americans everywhere

Thirty year old city councilman Julian Castro is currently running for Mayor of San Antonio, Texas. Although he would be one of the youngest mayors to have ever been elected to the city's top position, Julian Castro brings with him a wealth of information and education to back him up. In 2001, Julian Castro became the youngest elected councilman in San Antonio at the age of only 26, one of eleven council members who represent the nation's largest city.

Hailed as rising stars in Texas politics, Julian and his twin brother, Democratic State Representative Joaquin Castro, have been featured in Texas Monthly, People En Espanol, the Dallas Morning News, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the San Antonio Express-News, and publications of Stanford and Harvard. As the Dallas Morning News opined, the Castro brothers are "in a good position to help define the future of Texas politics." For many, they are an exciting example of what young adults can do once they put their mind to it.

Their commitment to public service has deep roots. Rosie Castro, a long-time San Antonio community activist involved in Mexican American and

women's issues raised the twins as a single mother and imparted to them a sense of pride in serving their community. Julian carries with him a strong conviction that the public sector can be a positive force for the enhancement of individual lives and community benefit.

Julian's hopeful message and campaign has resonated well in San Antonio as he gathers support each day. CNN has named Julian one of the "Fab 5 in 05", a distinction it awards to five political leaders each year to watch in the coming year. Early polls also showed Julian in the lead although this must be interpreted cautiously in that anything can happen in a race with multiple candidates. Anyone in the race however must know that Julian will be a formidable candidate and needs to be taken seriously. At the age of 30 he is a much more seasoned candidate than others older than he.

Prior to entering public service, Julian received a Bachelors of Arts degree, with honors and distinction from Standford University in 1996 and served as a White House intern in the Office of Cabinet Affairs in 1994. He also received a law degree from Harvard Law School in 2000 and currently practices business litigation at the law firm of Gonzales, Hoblit & Ferguson LLP. Julian Castro has also served as an adjunct professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Anyone interested in assisting with the campaign can call (210) 436-5284 or visit online at: [www.CastroforMayor.com](http://www.CastroforMayor.com)

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# "We Want the Whole Enchilada": Just Say No to Bush's New Bracero Program

by Roberto Calderon, Ph.D.

All progressive people of conscience must oppose Bush's "Guest Worker" Program, which amounts to nothing more than a revival of the old Bracero Program. We must instead demand that our statewide and national leadership pursue passage of a policy that will result in full amnesty and citizenship for the millions of persons who currently lead a life full of fear and intimidation as undocumented residents. We must bring everyone who is already here into the civic life of the nation as occurred with the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). We must make these new Americans fully participating citizens in the cultural, political, social and economic life of the nation. To quote former Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations Jorge Castañeda on the question of immigration and citizenship, "we want the whole enchilada." This position continues to be the only one that upholds the highest ideals of humanity and takes to heart the greater interest of people whose lives are in the balance.

The Mexican concern, as voiced by President Vicente Fox, is that they want "to make sure that [U.S. immigration policy] benefits as many Mexican immigrants as possible and does not lead to increased harassment and expulsion of others who live illegally in the United States."

This opinion is supported by a large majority of Mexican and other Latino undocumented workers in the U.S. today who don't favor the legislation. In their view they fear the same thing that Fox has already stated or expressed concern over. Once in place, if some version of it were to pass through Congress and reach the President's desk for his signature and then become law, the law would only allow them to be "legal" for three years at a time. And while you can reapply presumably for another three-year term what's to guarantee that it will be renewed? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. This means deportation. And by then they have your name, your fingerprints, your number basically, and will likely make any reentry punishable by forever taking away any possibility of U.S. citizenship if caught entering the country. Why? Because your name and those of your family will have been entered into the federal government's growing and emerging national security database. And what if you are a parent with U.S.-born children who are attending school? Do you leave them behind by themselves? Or do you take them with you to Mexico, where the children may have only visited but have not really lived for any extended period of time?

This whole mess reeks of a repatriation and deportation campaign on the scale of

what happened in the 1930s during the Great Depression and the early 1950s in Operation Wetback. Moreover, there is no guarantee that any agreement would put any enforcement or regulatory dollars into enforcing the letter of the law regarding workers' rights. It would undermine workers' rights, the very same workers who are the supposed beneficiaries of the legislation. Further, it would undermine the minimum wage and these newly put Mexican nationals, these new braceros, a.k.a. "guest workers," in direct competition with their immigrant and native-born brothers and sisters already in the U.S., both with or without documents. It will further undermine their ability to unionize, to earn a living wage, and the tensions will likely grow between the various existing sectors within the Mexican community in the United States. It's happened before. It can and will happen again. We don't need the aggravation and division that will be caused by such misdirected unilateral policymaking within our own communities. And how long will this new bracero program last?

Generally, the new bracero program would undermine wages for workers across the U.S. economy. It benefits employers, corporations, which would experience a boon in having unlimited legal access to cheap Mexican and other Latin American labor for three years at a time. And whether rights and benefits would be respected, those of the new braceros under these circumstances, is an open question: I suspect these wouldn't be respected as happened during the long ordeal of the previous bracero program from 1942-1964. In Orwellian fashion, this latest bracero program would actually increase the likelihood of labor repression in immigrant communities. The current tendency in the federal government is not to support regulatory enforcement budgets, thus there's no reason why we should delude ourselves into thinking that the new bracero program would be treated any differently.

Finally, one has to consider that bracero programs tend to favor male workers over females and certain families. In other words, the new bracero program will favor young male workers and their wives and children will be left behind in Mexico. This effect would be contrary to the family reunification emphasis of immigration law since 1965. Ironically, this would be the practice under an administration that pounds its baited chest with a holier than thou attitude that stinks of hypocrisy and bigotry. Are thousands and possibly hundreds of thousands of Mexican workers, males in particular, desperate enough for work to jump onto the new bracero bandwagon if given the chance? This is very likely. But this would only speak to the conditions on the ground in Mexico proper, and does not necessarily a political endorsement make.

The outcome politically for Chicanos and the Latino community generally in the U.S. is that this kind of new bracero program does not further the civic empowerment of these communities. The Mexican government doesn't really care either. Because it is as interested in squeezing as much money out of this class of migratory workers as the corporate capitalists and individual smaller employers are in the U.S., who would support this new bracero program. In other words, the strategy here is to funnel continued historic high amounts of capital toward Mexico from these millions of uprooted paisanos. This is to be achieved either through increased remesas and/or by keeping these Mexican workers and their immediate families indefinitely tied to a Mexico-centered national consciousness rather than a U.S.-centered one. The latter posture would ultimately lead to a decreasing flow of capital being sent by these workers through their weekly and monthly contributions to their families still living within Mexico.

With the annual contributions by expatriates in the U.S. now ranking among the second or third highest single most productive sector in terms of capital flowing into the Mexican economy, this is an important strategic consideration for Mexico's policymakers. It ranks right up there currently with the nation's two other most important economic sectors: oil and tourism. In the end Mexico cannot export labor at the great rate that it has been doing without affecting its own long-term economic prospects internally and quite simply, there aren't that many new Mexican workers to export in the not so distant future demographically speaking for the Mexican nation. Mexican expatriate labor is a valuable but limited resource and both the U.S. and Mexico know it.

Consider, however, that politically the right wing in the U.S. might not want to support this policy, irrespective of its being conceived and promoted by the Bush administration. The fact is that past bracero programs have led ultimately to increased undocumented immigration, not less. Everyone knows this. You will find that right-wing spokespersons are already saying as much. The political right's opposition is based as much on the sheer politics of the new bracero program, i.e., it will in time eventually increase the total number of non-whites, non-Anglos, living in the U.S., either way you cut it. The best proof of this troubling political concern resides in the knowledge that 88% of the historic record-vote cast recently for the Republican candidate -Bush- in the late presidential election was attributed to "white" voters based on existing survey data. It's no wonder, then, that they are concerned.

To pretend that race is unimportant in the political balance of things would be

naïve. The political concerns are not only about now but about four, eight, twelve, sixteen and more years from now, with Anglo political candidates, especially conservative ones, seeing their chances becoming increasingly less likely for winning office in the areas where these non-Anglo populations are increasing most significantly.

Undocumented immigration ultimately contributes to this trend, like it or not. The new bracero program would not solve the question of undocumented immigration but would rather only exacerbate it. Very likely the new law would ultimately contain punitive provisions that stipulate that those who "do not come out of the shadows," once the law were made binding, would forever lose their opportunity to gain U.S. citizenship. This will eliminate the potential future vote of this population and compromise their civil rights into the indefinite future. This is consistent with Republican national political strategy to stem the tide of a losing white demographic. It will also have the effect of perpetuating the political power of an increasingly smaller white voting population (especially the conservative base) that fears this scenario and is motivated to act on its fears. A future scenario where Texas and the nation as a whole experience white minority rule is not far-fetched. It already is in the cards so to speak, and policies being designed and implemented today have this more distant objective in mind. This is not a conspiracy. These are the practical conservative politics of self-interest and social viability.

Millions of currently U.S.-resident undocumented workers and their families will not step from out of the shadows because they fear more the likelihood of being denied the three-year work contract and later on of its not being renewed than the fury and punitive punishment that may be meted out by the U.S. federal government in its currently Republican-designed immigration policies. For these workers the new bracero program would make their undocumented status permanent. The most extreme conservative factions in the Republican Party will demand this condition as their pound of flesh if they are to give their support of any bracero program, which they have declared to be against.

Clearly, this can only hurt the cause of social justice and human rights in the end, for these workers will never gain a legitimate voice in the United States even though they contribute mightily to its economy and society in myriad ways both short- and long-term. The only policy that we as people of conscience can support is a full amnesty and citizenship program now. These otherwise halfway measures are the tricks of cowards, liars, and traitors, the politics of conservative right-wing elites basically. We seek first-class citizenship for all Mexican immigrants, and other immigrants, regardless of their migratory status in the United States. We equate amnesty and citizenship to basic social justice-this is a fun-

damental human rights issue.

The people's justice requires that our leaders in both the United States and Mexico see beyond the limits of the present and solve the issue once and for all, for the long term, and do so fairly and equitably. We will not and cannot settle for second best, this is a matter of life and death, and the deaths of some 4,000 Mexican immigrants and others on the U.S.-Mexico border since the early 1990s is proof evident that this much is true. Will their dream, a Mexican dream, an immigrant dream, a human drive to better one's life and those of one's loved ones, will it have been in vain? The new bracero program is not the answer to their prayers and what they gave their lives up for, this much is evident in our respective societies' contemporary relationship.

Consider the human toll in the low-intensity but high-tech warfare against innocent Mexican and other immigrants occurring on our 2,000-mile long border. First, consider that the death toll thus far is many times greater than the whole number of deaths recorded for the infamous Berlin Wall. Consider that this record of deaths on our borders happened in a much shorter amount of time than did the much fewer deaths in the Berlin case. Would it be too cynical of me to think that because those dying on our common border are poor Mexican immigrants, their lives are worth less than those of the East Germans who tried going over to the West? Are they heroes? Are they martyrs? Second, consider that already more Mexican and Latino immigrant deaths have occurred on the U.S.-side of the border alone than died in the Twin Towers in New York City. Where is the outrage? Where is the call for change and justice? This war on our border while being fought mostly out-of-sight and out-of-mind of the mainstream corporate media, except where it is the corporate media's intent to sensationalize the reality, has already cost tens of billions of dollars and counting. Imagine how we could spend all that money instead on education, health, housing, and any number of other standing needs waiting to be met both along the U.S.-Mexican border and elsewhere in our great country.

Based on the above I rather agree with the former Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations Jorge Castañeda, who well said a few years ago, "We want the whole enchilada." He had it right then, and it is still right today. Just say no to Bush's new bracero program.

*Dr. Calderon is a faculty member in the Department of History at the University of North Texas, Denton, TX.*

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### Other Struggles

Chicanas and Chicanos participated in a wide range of political activities that directly affected them and in some occasions established coalitions with other popular struggles at the time including: the anti-war movement; environmental activists; groups against police brutality; prison reformers; the struggle for the protection of civil liberties and civil rights; and for a more humane foreign policy by the U.S. government. Many of these issues had affected Chicanos more than other racial and ethnic groups so that it behooved them to initiate political actions in defense of their community in these areas and to establish their own organizations. Young Chicanos also traveled throughout the country to meet with other youth that were organizing and developing their own communities and subsequently established a national network of movimiento organizations of all types. For example, The Chicano Press Association (CPA) was a network of Chicano Movement newspapers that came together to share stories and strategies that would make them more effective in their coverage of the struggles and issues of the time.

### Multiple Marginalization of Latino Youth

Currently the majority of Chicano and Latino youth are experiencing a lack of opportunity structures generally available to middle-class youth and overwhelmingly available to White youth. The lack of opportunity structures, particularly among Mexican youth that come from moderate to low income families, coupled with subtle, modern day forms of discrimination inhibit the ability of this community to integrate successfully into mainstream society.

Although there are growing numbers of Chicanos and Latinos attending colleges and universities, a disproportionate number find themselves experiencing a less than optimistic future. Many face multiple indicators of living on the margins of society (low-income, single-headed parent households, segregated and third rate schools, racial profiling, etc.) Only by organizing themselves will youth obtain the capacity to open up additional opportunity structures and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Anything less will significantly stifle their ability to become effective leaders for their peer group as well as for the Mexican American and Latino community in the future.

Is the Chicano and Latino community today losing another generation of its youth? Some say this can be seen in the number of public school dropouts (32-54 percent) throughout various school districts in Texas, the number of Latino youth going through the juvenile and adult criminal justice system (Latinos make up 41% of inmates in Texas youth correctional facilities), the number of young gang members in communities in both urban and rural settings (10-20 percent throughout different communities), the percent (80%) that graduate from high school but fail to obtain a college education, and those that simply get a less than adequate public school education (75%) even if they do obtain their high school diploma. Others are manipulated by military recruiters and are not informed about the availability of

federal student financial assistance. Many of these conditions are partially a result of the lack of economic and political power.

For many young Latinos the opportunity structures are limited due to their immigration status as well. This is particularly felt in major metropolitan areas such as Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, The Texas Rio Grande Valley, and El Paso, but also in many other smaller cities and towns throughout the country. Young immigrant youth have initiated a number of political actions to defend their rights in spite of the fact that many have been or are currently undocumented residents. Within the last few years young immigrant Mexican youth have testified in Congress and state legislatures and other governmental bodies to defend their right to go to college. Others have initiated school walkouts in protest of legislation and referendums that have been clearly anti-Mexican in nature such as those held in the state of California in recent years.

### Let's Paint the White House Brown

In spite of improvements within the Mexican and Latino community since the Chicano movement conditions of multiple marginality today function to keep Latino youth repressed and subordinated. The moves by the Republican-dominated state legislature and Congress to take away money for programs that can help Mexican American youth has reached crisis levels. If this wasn't bad enough, other conservative and anti-Mexican interest groups and individuals outside government have made it clear that they disdain the growing Mexican population and will do just about anything to keep this community as powerless as possible. This can be challenged and changed through the creativity, energy, commitment, and activism of Latino youth in their coordinated effort to empower themselves. As implied by the sixteen-year-old student from Cesar Chavez High School in Houston, this must be done now. It must be done now in order to transform the current inequalities into new opportunities before another generation of Chicano and Latino youth is lost to a life with no light at the end of the tunnel. It is up to the current generation of Mexican American and Latino youth to define the kind of world they would like to live in by critically assessing the current state of affairs and their place in it. This has already started among a growing number of young and proud Mexicanos that have planted the seeds for a new social movement (La Nueva Raza Unida) with the intent of shaking up the political establishment once again--- from the local schoolhouse all the way to the White House.

*Lorenzo Cano is a long-time community activist and a veteran of the Chicano Movement. He has lectured extensively on issues pertinent to the Chicano and Chicana Community in the United States and is one of the founders and a contributing writer to La Nueva Raza. He teaches currently at the University of Houston.*

## College Students Speak Out!

### What do Young Immigrants Expect?

By Rodolfo Salazar

Today immigrants face challenges in making a living never before seen. When compared to the previous waves of immigration, the differences are striking: those coming are not overwhelmingly European, nor do they share a similar culture or language to that of those already here.

Recent immigrants, especially those from Latin America, are among the hardest hit by the cultural backlash since most are not familiar with the customs or history of the U.S., do not speak English proficiently, and have little education or pro-

fessional experience.

Does this mean that immigrants and their children are destined to dwell in the brackish depths of poverty, ignorance and remain unassimilated to American culture? Verily, not at all. Immigrant families have hope that stems from a characteristic that is seemingly shared by all immigrants, past or present-- the desire; the burning desire to work hard and get ahead in life. The desire to seek a better life for one's family in this adopted land. And the ability to see opportunity all around and the desire to take advantage of it.

Surely, that same desire, with a sprinkle of faith, can help us to adapt and over-

come minor setbacks and can be of great aid in these times of uncertainty and fear.

Most importantly, these same beliefs and desires can strengthen, not weaken, the probability of success for children of immigrants. The same mettle that allowed immigrant parents to stake their whole livelihoods on this ideal will serve their children well when confronted with fear and failure; the long hours worked in multiple jobs can highlight the responsibility, resilience and patience required to succeed in anything worthwhile.

Without a doubt, the sacrifice and perseverance of immigrant workers will pay off thanks to the opportunities that have been fought for in this country.

### Who are We?: Latino Immigrants and the Promise of the DREAM Act

by Julita Rincón

It is hard for us to get ahead these days. It sometimes feels as if we are non-existent- invisible. It's almost as if we have been infested by some rare repellent and not a soul will dare to come near us.

Who are we? We are the sons and daughters of hard-working people who only desired for us to have a choice; the choice where after high school we would not be forced to fill only blue-collar jobs. They wanted us to have a choice in which the idea of going to college doesn't seem so far from reality. That choice is now being hampered here, in the "land of opportunity." Ironically, in the very place where we should have a choice, we find ourselves otherwise caught.

We are a generation of immigrants who now pursue higher education but find ourselves in the limbo of an unknown future. Most of us were brought here as children and have grown into a culture that is now ours. We identify ourselves as Americans.

Since 2001 we have been allowed to attend college and in many states pay in-state tuition. This access has made the path clearer for us to walk through. We are walking all right, but how much fur-

ther are we going to be allowed to walk? This question hasn't been answered by the U.S. Congress, which has failed to pass the DREAM Act. The Dream Act would allow undocumented students, to obtain legal residency after meeting requirements such as graduating from high school, being currently enrolled in a higher educational institution, among other requirements. The DREAM Act would give us a security that after our college degrees are in front of us, we would have opportunities for a job. This is uncertain now.

We are a group that promises new doctors, architects, businessman, writers, and engineers. Sadly, we are being denied the right to follow up on our dreams. Is this country not the place where everything is possible?

We cannot stop now. As this generation of Latino youth, we hold the future in our hands. It is not a time to be defeated in spite of the uncertainty of our futures. It is time to get organized and fight for our human right to go to college and further our careers. It is time to raise our voices and let them know how loud we can resonate.

Pushing forward is the only option that it is left for us. We continue to walk and to persevere. Many of us hold two jobs while taking on full loads of classes. Often times we find jobs in restaurant kitchens, washing dishes or other

high demand, low-paying jobs that will pay our tuition bills. We are aware of the risks that doing this involves, but we find ourselves with no other choice. It is from our hard-working examples that we take on. The people at home that have stood arduous jobs to teach the principle that hard work does pay off. This is the principle that many of us believe as being the only driving force that keeps us pushing forward.

We do not feel that the Dream Act is an act of kindness; as members of this community, we are entitled to it's promises. As kids growing up we were taught by our teachers to believe that college was the place to become somebody. Grade school was the place to dream of becoming the doctor, or lawyer, or artist. We then get to high school and stay at the top of our class believing that by doing so greatness is on its way. This is the promise that we want to believe.

The struggle to pass the Dream Act into becoming a law hasn't been an easy one. It has taken the work and dedication of advocates to raise the voice that resonates by the day with passion. But the job is far from over.

We remain hopeful that we will be recognized as contributing citizens. We believe that this country still recognizes hard work. Our hope is to reap the harvest of the seeds we have sown in this country.

### Dawn of the Next RevoluXion

by Iris Salinas

I used to sit back and think that it was all my fault - the fact that I could not go to college, the fact that I was a teenage mom, and the fact that I was still struggling financially to make ends meet. It was not until I joined La Raza Unida and MEXA (Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan) that I saw the bigger picture. I quickly realized I was just a part of the plan, the big White House conspiracy to keep me as a Xicana trapped to a lower economic status and level of society than that of my Anglo peers.

"Discrimination doesn't exist anymore." I've heard that repeated to me a countless number of times when I would say that my major was Xicano Studies. In an effort to better understand the reasons for my struggles, I chose to learn more about myself and my people by learning more about the Xicano struggle. "Your parents had no education, it is no wonder you

ended up like you did" or "your people are just lazy" are phrases that have been told to me by ignorant people who fail to see the fault in the system and are quick to blame the individual or the culture for our inability to achieve more and escalate socio-economically.

Terms like "White House" and "minority" send subliminal messages that white is power and that people of other colors are inferior in some form. In a system like this, it is no wonder that Xicano youth appear to be discouraged and dormant. Our parents were paddled, fined, and expelled from school for speaking their native tongue; that lesson of shame of one's identity, history, and language was passed down to the following generations, along with society's racist and diminutive terms and notions of the Xicano. We learn from all throughout our schooling, we not only never existed, we have no past and had no part in the creation of this country. We have no ancestors and we simply happened to

"appear." No mention is ever made of the fact that our people have traveled back and forth from present-day Mexico to the Southwestern United States for thousands of years. According to American history books, history began in England, and this country of ours was not stolen and our people were not hunted, killed, and displaced. Sure, I once bought the notion of an Anglo history that was not mine. But I have since been awakened and I now understand that Manifest Destiny was not only a historical plan to rob and exploit land, it was a plan that is still in practice to this day that continues to rob the land and rich culture of our people. The American way attempts to relegate us to positions of servitude and lesser economic status for generations, then places the blame for the struggle inward, making the Xicano first question him or herself rather than the system.

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According to the Texas Department of Health, major health problems and unusually high occurrences of cancers are common in the areas and neighborhoods surrounding the base. Many zip codes have already been listed as having "Cancer Clusters" yet officials continue to fail to address and warn the community of the situation.

Robert Silvas, a community activist and former employee of the base, agrees that the community has not been properly informed of the dangers of this situation. He is a member of the Kelly RAB Committee, a group composed of the affected community as well as of responsible parties like the Air Force and Union Pacific. It meets monthly to discuss and supposedly address the contamination issues. To date, valid community concerns regarding community involvement, notification, and health have fallen upon deaf ears and lame hands.

The issue of contamination is a very sensitive one, particularly for Union Pacific. At the November

meeting, the Union Pacific Manager for Environmental Field Operations, Paul Person, publicly yelled and verbally attacked community members and activists during a community open mike period (where individual concerns of the community are supposed to be allowed.) It appears the public revelation of San Antonio's contamination is a big thorn in Union Pacific's side, since this year alone it had 5 train derailments there within weeks of each other, resulting in deadly and dangerous chemical spills. It is also one of the Defendants named in the landmark contamination case in Mission, Texas (Hidalgo County, C-4885-99) which has recently gained the attention of the United Nations, the U.S. government, and several countries around the world.

Glen Wilkenson, another former worker turned activist, witnessed and testified to several large barrels of surplus Agent Orange being buried at Kelly Air Force base in 1979, before it became privatized and open to the public. He testified before a grand jury and reported what he witnessed to several federal and state entities.

No appropriate or investigative measures were taken and he was soon thereafter threatened with death if he continued to share his testimony.

Although at face value the formation of the RAB committee appears to have the interests of the community in mind, many claim it is merely a front. Its existence may appease the few individuals of the community that are aware of the contamination, but the others that attend these sessions are not comforted. Robert Silvas, Glen Wilkenson, the Southwest Worker's Union, and a small number of concerned community residents regularly attend the RAB sessions and repeatedly voice their concerns. "We are not the only ones affected," says a resident. "Our families, friends, neighbors, and even travelers who come to or through San Antonio run the risk of Agent Orange exposure. Would you wish for your out-of-town relatives to get cancer when they come to visit?"

**For more information on the contamination in San Antonio, please visit:**  
[www.mission-texas.com](http://www.mission-texas.com)

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Many of us come from low income neighborhoods, whose schools are not capable of providing an education comparable to that of schools in predominantly Anglo neighborhoods. Our education is of lesser quality yet held to the same standards of richer schools, which in turn produces higher incidences of teenage pregnancy and dropouts. Educational obstacles and cultural and historical abnegation mixed with economic hardship does not paint a promising future for a young Xicano. Add this to the fact that we are targeted and racially profiled by the police at higher rates than any other race, and we have a culturally discriminating formula. Drugs and crime provide quick financial opportunities to those of us who do not have any other open doors before them.

The lucky few that make it to high school are then hunted by more military recruiters than college recruiters. The military success-

fully takes advantage of our youth, offering promises of scholarships, knowing full well that history has forced us into financial struggles that make paying for college virtually impossible for many of our people. This White House government then fills the front lines with warm Xicano bodies in wars created to reduce our numbers and profit the billionaires already in power. The death rates for Latinos in the military will compliment this gross system of population control that the White House has put into play. I am disgusted every time I am reminded that ever since the headlines stated that Latinos were the "majority minority" we began to see even higher incarceration and recruitment rates.

Although I do believe that many are brainwashed by the system, I also believe that our apparent dormancy is superficial. Xicano art, Xicano rap, low-rider car clubs, and MEXistas are alive and well. Although odds are against our cultural ascendancy, many of us con-

tinue to come together, continuing to unite with other Xicanos under countless titles and organizations, thereby creating and redefining our culture and our movement. It is only a matter of time before this generation as a whole will awaken to the grim reality of neo-racism and our government's cunning ways of discrimination.

I do not believe that we are a lost generation or that we have forgotten our roots. Yes, some of us in this younger generation are lost, but those of us who have obtained, regained, and redefined our cultural identity are lighting the way for the rest to follow. In reality, the next generation of Xicanos are alive and well and are already showing many others the way. The light of the Sexto Sol is just beyond the next horizon.

Awaken, my people! Let us understand our reality and rise. Mi gente, do not be afraid to question the system, do not fear: the dawn of the next revoluXion is already here.

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## Recommendations Toward the Empowerment of Latino Youth

The following are recommendations that can be considered as youth coalesce into a united front to open up the structures of opportunities for them. These recommendations represent a small part of what can be done in their struggle towards empowerment:

\* Call for a Constitutional Amendment to lower the voting age to 16.

\* Become a writer for La Nueva Raza and investigate the issues important to Latino youth/students and/or distribute copies at your church, school, or neighborhood.

\* Establish a Chicano/Latino youth organization in your school such as La Raza Student Alliance and work to improve the school and surrounding community

\* Learn the history of Mexicans in the United States and of other Latinos with relative long histories in the U.S. Knowing one's history is imperative in understanding contemporary politics and public policies. For information on speakers that can talk at your school call La Nueva Raza.

\* Read alternative histories of the United States such as those that highlights the role of American indigenous peoples, organized labor, women, and immigrants. American history books normally focus on the role of white men and the business community and write very little about the groups mentioned above.

\* Take Chicano studies classes in colleges and learn the role that Latinos have played in the development of our economy, politics, and American culture.

\* Travel to other countries in Latin America and meet with other young leaders from univer-

sities, neighborhood groups, cultural groups, and political parties.

\* Attend youth leadership institutes and develop leadership skills such as public speaking, decision-making, media relations, and community research. Call La Nueva Raza for information on sponsoring a leadership institute.

\* Establish youth think tanks and investigate specific problems in your neighborhood including the recommendations for the resolutions of these problems.

\* Learn the laws that govern protest activities such as marches, pickets, boycotts, sit-ins, and strikes. Understand the laws governing civil liberties and civil rights and the need to defend these rights, particularly among youth. Learn about the legal rights of students.

\* Do a power-structure research project that reveals the individuals and corporations that hold the formal positions of power in your school district, city council, county government, Chamber of Commerce, and other government entities. See which corporations and businesses have influence in these government entities including which corporations and individuals are getting business contracts from government entities.

\* See who owns and manages the local radio and television stations in your community and see how you can have some influence in terms of programming and public service announcements.

\* Learn the process of running for public office including the deadlines for filing, terms of office, major responsibilities of the office, pay rates if any, fundraising regulations. Much of this can be found in the Texas Election Code.

\* Learn the specific issues that affect women including the barriers that exist to inhibit the empowerment of young Latinas.

\* Understand the role and benefits of union representation for workers including the concept of a living wage and inquire about the forming of a union for part-time workers.

\* Learn how to do community and school surveys in order to determine the concerns and problems facing residents in different communities including the concerns of youth within our educational institutions.

\* Learn to produce new cultural forms that bring social and political consciousness to youth including music, dance, community teatro, puppeteering, mime, drumming, storytelling, parades, art, cartoons, comic books, and videos.

\* Learn the downside of materialism and consumerism. Understand the difference between being a consumer and a producer in society. Learn the values of self-reliance and self-constraint in terms of the consumption of goods and services. Learn how to establish a small and profitable business, even as a teenager.

\* Work towards sponsoring youth symposiums, conferences and other public events designed to empower youth and to expand the knowledge of youth over a wide range of issues. On-going Latino youth conferences must become annual events in the schools and in the community at the local and statewide levels.

## Recomendaciones Hacia El Poder de la Juventud

Lo siguiente son recomendaciones que pueden ser consideradas como colega joven en un frente unido para abrimos más estructuras de oportunidades. Estas recomendaciones representan una pequeña parte lo que se puede lograr en la lucha hacia el poder.

\* Incite a una enmienda constitucional para cambiar la edad para votar a 16 años.

\* Conviértase en un escritor para La Nueva Raza e investigue los temas importantes para la juventud latina/estudiantes o distribuya copias en su iglesia, escuela, o vecindario.

\* Establezca una organización de jóvenes Chicanos/Latinos en su escuela tal como La Alianza De Estudiantes de La Raza y trabajen para mejorar la escuela y los alrededores de la comunidad.

\* Aprendan la historia de los mexicanos en los Estados Unidos y otros latinos con una gran historia en el territorio estadounidense. El aprender la historia del semejante es imperativo para entenderlo dentro de la política contemporánea y las pólizas públicas. Para obtener más información sobre oradores que pueden hablar en su escuela llamen a La Nueva Raza.

\* Lean historias alternativas de los Estados Unidos tal como aquellas que recalcan el papel de los indígenas americanos, la organización laboral, las mujeres e inmigrantes. Los libros de la historia norteamericana normalmente se enfocan en el rol del hombre blanco y la comunidad de negocios lo cual margina a los grupos previamente mencionados. Tomen cursos de estudios Chicanos en colegios y aprendan el papel de los Latinos en el desarrollo de nuestra economía, política y cultura americana.

\* Viajen a otros países en Latinoamérica y reúnanse con otros líderes jóvenes de universidades, vecindarios, grupos culturales, y partidos políticos.

\* Asistan a institutos jóvenes de liderazgo y desarrollen destrezas de liderazgo como de discurso, disposiciones, relaciones públicas e investigación comunitaria. Llamen La Nueva Raza para más información de cómo patrocinar un instituto de líderes.

753 Establezcan grupos jóvenes de pensadores e investiguen problemas específicos en su comunidad incluyendo las recomendaciones para las resoluciones de los mismos.

\* Aprendan las leyes que gobiernan las actividades de protesta, tales como las marchas y huelgas. Entiendan las leyes que gobiernan las libertades civiles y los derechos civiles al igual que la necesidad de defender dichos derechos, particularmente entre la juventud. Aprendan sobre los derechos legales de los estudiantes.

\* Hagan un proyecto de investigación que revelen los individuos y corporaciones que tienen las posiciones de poder en sus distritos escolares, el concejal de la ciudad, el gobierno del condado, cámara de comercio y otras entidades de gobierno. Vean que corporaciones y negocios tienen influencia en estas entidades gubernamentales, incluyendo a las corporaciones e individuos que obtienen contratos de negocios con dichas entidades.

\* Vean quien es dueño y administrador de la radio y televisión local en sus comunidades e investiguen como pueden influenciar en la programación y anuncios de servicio público.

\* Aprendan el proceso postulación para una oficina pública de gobierno, incluyendo las fechas límite para solicitar, las reglas, responsabilidades principales, salario, regulaciones en cooperaciones. Mucho de esto puede encontrarse el código de elecciones en Texas.

\* Aprenda los temas específicos que

afectan a las mujeres, incluyendo las barreras que existen para inhabilitar el poder de las jóvenes latinas.

\* Entiendan el papel y los beneficios de la representación en unión para trabajadores, incluyendo el concepto de un salario de vida y el conocimiento en la creación de una unión para trabajadores de medio tiempo.

\* Aprendan como hacer encuestas en la comunidad y escuela para determinar las preocupaciones y problemas que viven los residentes de diferentes comunidades, incluyendo preocupaciones de la juventud en nuestras instituciones educacionales.

\* Aprendan a introducir nuevas formas culturales que traigan conciencia política y social a la juventud, incluyendo música, baile, teatro comunitario, cuentos, desfiles, arte, caricaturas, libros cómicos y videos.

\* Aprendan el lado malo del materialismo y el consumerismo. Entiendan la diferencia entre ser consumidor un productor en el sociedad. Aprendan los valores de auto-eficiencia y la auto-retención en términos del consumo de cosas y servicios. Aprendan como establecer un pequeño pero eficiente negocio, independientemente de su estatus joven.

\* Trabajen hacia la patrocinación de seminarios, conferencias y otros eventos públicos diseñados a alentar el poder de la juventud y expandir el conocimiento de la juventud en un amplio rango de temas. Las conferencias de Latinos jóvenes deben de ser constantes, anualmente en eventos locales dentro de las escuelas y la comunidad al igual que nacionalmente.

Traducido por Saul Olivares

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