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# HARVARD JOURNAL OF HISPANIC POLICY

## FEATURE ARTICLES

Discovering Latina Women in Boston Politics

*Dr. Carol Hardy-Fanta*

Employment Discrimination of Hispanics in Local Government:  
The Failing of Equal Employment Policies

*Dr. Jerry Yaffe*

The Colorado Hispanic League:  
A Latino Public Policy System

*Dr. A. Steve W. DelCastillo*

## COMMENTARY

Hispanic Voices: Is the Press Listening?  
Including an interview with Ernesto Cortes,  
Founder of Communities Organized for Public Service  
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*Jorge Quiroga*

## FORUM

A Nation of Immigrants: Benefit or Burden?

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## EDITORS' REMARKS

On April 18, 1994 the *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* sponsored a forum event, "A Nation of Immigrants: Benefit or Burden?" focusing on the societal impacts of recent immigration. The event opened with a slide show by Paul Kuroda of the *Daily Breeze Newspaper* which reminded the audience that behind all the statistics lie real people, real faces, and real emotions. Congressman Xavier Becerra (D-CA); Antonia Hernandez, President and General Counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF); Muzaffar Chishti, Director of the Immigration Project at the International Ladies Garment Workers Union; and Peter Brimelow, Senior Editor of *Forbes Magazine* engaged in a healthy debate concerning this emotionally and politically charged issue. As a result of this discussion, many myths which engulf the immigration debate were shattered. Although much of the dialogue revolved around the economic impact of immigration, the panelists acknowledged that the real point underlying the entire debate is the fact that this generation of immigrants is somehow "different" from those who arrived at Ellis Island during the 19th century. This difference lies not only in the color of their skin, but also in the languages they speak and the cultures they bring with them to our shores. Could it be that this wave of immigrants may never "assimilate and integrate?" The forum event participants honestly and deftly attacked these difficult issues.

The dominance of immigration issues in national, state and local policy agendas necessitate their discussion; the *Journal* could have easily devoted an entire volume to this complex and pressing concern. However, as we edited the articles for this volume, we began to realize that a larger theme was emerging. Unlike Volume VI which had a thematic focus, the staff decided not to pursue this framework for Volume VII. Much to our surprise, all the articles that were selected for publication played on a theme which begins for our community as immigrants and persists as we become residents and citizens. Unintentionally, the theme of Volume VII emerged – the exclusion and the marginalization of the Latino/a community in the United States.

Despite great strides forward politically, economically, and socially, our community still faces obstacles in gaining access to and recognition from many American institutions. The articles in this volume serve to remind us of these existing barriers in the political arena, workplace and

media faced by our community and especially by our own *hermanas*. We find our voices excluded and ignored in many policy decisions which affect Latinos and Latinas. We are still not sitting at “the table” with fellow policy makers. As the Latino community continues to grow in numbers, it becomes imperative to break these barriers in order to prosper. By presenting the facts clearly, the authors of this volume educate us whether we are readers, organizers or policy makers. Yet, rather than leaving us with a bleak picture, their voices offer a means for change and progress within our community and U.S. institutions.

Our first author, Dr. Carol Hardy-Fanta, studies the role of Latinas in Boston politics. Her insightful article reveals that although Latinas are a driving force in the mobilization of the Latino community, they are invisible in both academic and media analysis of Latino political participation. What lies behind this disenfranchisement is the male-orientation of the definition of a “leader” and the traditional definition of political participation. Latinas prevail as “connectors” in Boston politics, and “[a]t the grassroots, the community level, women have been the major force for change.” Dr. Hardy-Fanta indicates that Latinas will continue to be a major force in the political sphere. It is also important to realize that if we are to demand recognition outside of our community, we must provide the recognition and support to those within our community.

At the opposite end of the United States, Dr. Jerry Yaffe deals with the issue of discrimination and under-representation of Hispanics in the local public (non-educational) workforce of Los Angeles County (LACO). He focuses on the disparities in hiring, earnings, and promotion of Latinos compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Although Hispanics comprise “41% of the population in LACO, they represent only 20.2% of the LACO government workforce.” This disparity prompts both an economic and political impact on the Latino community of LACO. Dr. Yaffe believes that a public workforce which is reasonably equitable in terms of racial and ethnic makeup allows for participation and inclusion of both employees and disenfranchised groups in an enlightened democratic political processes. However, “[t]he effects of social and institutional discrimination against Hispanics are not just fewer jobs, but the ultimate depreciation and dismissal of a people, expressed in a denial of equal opportunities and comparable pay and salaries,” which leads to exclusion in the political arena. What underlies this exclusion is what Dr. Yaffe calls “displacement anxiety” of whites and non-Hispanics — a reaction to the growth of the Latino community not only in numbers, but economically and politically.

Dr. Steve DelCastillo’s analysis of the Colorado Hispanic League’s influence on the Colorado legislature in 1992 provides us with a model for impacting public policy. A survey of the legislature revealed that the League influenced policy in four areas: congressional redistricting, legislative reapportionment, school finance, and health care. Dr. DelCastillo emphasizes the importance of coalitions and their political impact on social policy issues. Through such coalition-building, the Colorado His-

panic League proved able to overcome much of the exclusion and invisibility experienced so often by Latinos described in this volume's articles.

Finally, Jorge Quiroga's commentary illustrates yet another arena in which Latinos tend to be denied access: the media. Jorge Quiroga discusses the absence of Latino recognition or input in recent significant media events: a cross-burning in Charlestown, MA; the L.A. riots; the Mt. Pleasant riots in Washington, D.C.; and the appointment of Deborah Ramirez as the Chairperson of the Hispanic-American Advisory Commission in Boston. In all of these events Latinos played a major role yet Quiroga finds that the press either excluded them from the coverage or spoke "about" Hispanics rather than "to" Hispanics. Quiroga labels this "the transparency of Hispanics before the American press." What develops is a cycle in which Latinos' political clout determines the amount of media attention they receive, which in turn leads to an appropriate government response and may increase our community's political power. Thus, better and expanded media coverage becomes integral to the progress of the Latino community.

Filled with insightful comments, incisive analysis, and strong recommendations, the *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* staff is proud to present Volume VII. Following in the tradition of the *Journal* to provide a forum where ideas are exchanged, the publication serves as a resource for policy makers interested in a better understanding of the major issues facing all Americans. As the only national public policy publication focusing exclusively on the Latino community, the *Journal* becomes a vehicle for the inclusion and visibility of our community. Moreover, as a completely student-run publication, the *Journal* offers the staff an education that we are unable to attain by sitting in the classroom, an opportunity to develop valuable skills and access to valuable information which will enhance our ability to be effective policy makers.

Volume VII would not have been realized without the efforts of several individuals who deserve recognition. We would like to thank the authors who contributed to this publication. It is their work which enlightens today's policy makers. We would also like to thank our Executive Advisory Board, especially the Honorable Grace Flores-Hughes for her tireless leadership as Chairperson. The Kennedy School of Government community also deserves our thanks for their support. Finally and most importantly, we thank the *Journal* staff for their continued dedication, hard work, and sense of humor without which this organization would not exist. In particular, we extend special gratitude to Mitch Lew who dedicated the entire summer to produce this volume. We encourage all members of the Latino community and other communities to submit articles for publication. Your words are essential to our existence.

¡Sigamos Adelante!

Eduardo Pérez  
1994

Claudia Jasin  
1994-95



# FEATURE ARTICLES

## DISCOVERING LATINA WOMEN IN BOSTON POLITICS<sup>1</sup>

**Carol Hardy-Fanta, Ph.D.**

*Carol Hardy-Fanta received her B.A. from Occidental College in Los Angeles, her M.S.W. from Smith College and her Ph.D. in Social Policy from Brandeis University. She is currently Director of Hispanic Research Projects in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department at Boston University School of Public Health where she is examining Latina women's leadership in relation to public policy on AIDS. She is also a Research Associate at the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts - Boston. Dr. Hardy-Fanta has numerous publications on Latino social issues. Her research and publications on Latina women in politics have drawn attention to the contribution of Latina women to Latino political participation. She is currently working on a book on Latino community development.*

### INTRODUCTION

To talk about "discovering" Latina women politics is a little like Columbus "discovering" America: just as the land already existed for its original peoples, Latina women know they have been active politically in Boston for years. Latina women in Boston run for office, register voters, organize and participate in protests, and provide political education for new immigrants. In addition, as will be demonstrated when the definition of "*What's politics?*" is broadened beyond traditional electoral politics, one discovers that Latina women have consistently been the force behind political participation and mobilization in the Latino community.

In this article, I challenge the invisibility of Latina women as political actors that exists in mainstream political science literature, first by revealing their numbers and participation in traditional political roles, and then by examining the way Latina women's politics broadens our definition of political participation.

My conclusions are drawn from a study of the Latino community in Boston, Massachusetts. The community is a relatively small one: Latinos now make up 11 percent of the city's population (U.S. Census 1990). The community is also characterized by considerable diversity. Forty-two percent of the Latinos in Boston are Puerto Rican; the rest of the

community is made up of Central and South Americans (approximately 30 percent), a rapidly increasing Dominican population (13.1 percent, Cubans (3.5 percent), and Mexican Americans (3.5 percent).<sup>2</sup>

In this study I interviewed community activists, influential Latinos, and *la gente del pueblo*.<sup>3</sup> I also participated in numerous community events: protest marches, election campaigns, acquisition and dissemination of voter registration information, community forums, workshops and conferences, and formal and informal discussions throughout the community. In all the observations and interviews I conducted over the two year research period a recurrent theme emerged: Latina women are political actors and play crucial roles in Latino community mobilization.

### CHALLENGING INVISIBILITY: LATINA WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ROLES

Latina women in Boston have run for office more than their non-Latina female counterparts. Of the six Latino candidates who have run for office in Boston, three were women: Carmen Pola, a Puerto Rican woman, ran for state representative in 1980; Grace Romero won a seat on the Boston School Committee in 1983;<sup>4</sup> and the first Latino person to run for mayor of Boston was not a man but a woman, Diana Lam in 1991. Although, her candidacy was extremely short-lived, the *Boston Globe* belatedly wrote that Diana Lam would have presented the most serious challenge to the incumbent.<sup>5</sup> Thus Latina women in Boston have constituted 50 percent of the total number of Latino candidates in Boston. It might be pointed out that, statewide, many Latina women also have run for office more frequently than their invisibility in the academic press would predict. In Chelsea, a small city across the river from Boston, for example, Marta Rosa was recently elected to the school committee. As path-breakers, Latina women are noteworthy.<sup>6</sup>

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Latina women have constituted 50 percent of the  
total number of Latino candidates in Boston.

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Democratic party politics is also an area of activism for Latina women in Boston. They frequently attend the State Democratic Convention and have served as convention delegates. Women are also extremely active in the Latino Democratic Committee and have served as co-chairs of the Committee.

Efforts to mobilize Latinos to register and vote is another way women have contributed to increasing political participation in Boston's Latino community. I spoke with a Latina woman who runs a major government program and who was instrumental in creating the by-laws for the Latino Democratic Committee. She is also very active in ward politics in her neighborhood. When she identifies key Latino ward workers, she names

women in equal proportion to men:

I went back to Jamaica Plain where I had an already active core group of people like Camila Alvarado,<sup>7</sup> like Julio Rojas, Pedro Contreras, like Marisol Quiñones ... — Marisol Quiñones — ... She's a *terrific* person and we all knew each other, we lived in Jamaica Plain, active in other things together and we went back and we developed a Jamaica Plain Latino Democratic Committee. This was our local effort as part of the overarching organization, the Latino Democratic Committee. We raised some money, Dukakis came to our fund raiser (emphasis in original).

This core group of three Latina women and two Latino men was the most effective Latino political organizing group in the state; the woman recalled, "We were the stars — we were the stars."

Many Latina women have been involved in voter registration drives. In their roles as legislative aides for various state legislators, for example, Latina women whom I interviewed work to get out the Latino vote in their districts. One influential Puerto Rican man who had been a candidate for office and who has had substantial experience in registering Latinos, acknowledges the contribution of Latina women to voter registration: "I think that women have participated in politics in terms of being active and registering more than men in the Latino community."

Many of these women who are active in voter registration are influential, professional Latinas in their early 30s and 40s. However, older Latina women whose roots are with *la gente del pueblo* likewise work to register eligible Latinos. What these women have in common are their humble roots, community and electoral activism, and network of relationships in the Latino community.

These women are typical of the *portavoces* or *alcadezas* of the community. In English, a *portavoz* is literally a megaphone, but is used to refer to a spokesperson; an *alcadeza* is the female form of *alcalde*, mayor — this term connotes a woman of great influence.<sup>8</sup> In an anecdote shared by a woman from South America who has mobilized Latinos in her neighborhood to join protests and to vote, one of these *portavoces* literally used a *portavoz* (megaphone) mounted on top of her car to publicize election day and rally the Latino neighborhood to get out and vote.

Another of the ways Latina women contribute to traditional politics in the Latino community of Boston is their role of *connector*, providing a link between City Hall and the community. When politicians want a Latino presence at a rally, they call on certain key women. When the mayor's offices need a Latino presence at rallies, these women are called. One woman explains:

*Han tenido reuniones en el State House, y Juan [the Mayor's Hispanic Liaison] me llamó...y también, cuando iban a dar nombramiento a [Mayor] Flynn, y querían que hubieramos muchos hispanos — me llamaron.*

There have been meetings at the State House, and Juan, [the Mayor's Hispanic Liaison] called me...and also, when they were going to honor [Mayor] Flynn, and they wanted a large group of Hispanics — they called me.



She recalled another time when Mayor Flynn's office called her. In an effort to gain visibility and votes in the community, the Mayor wanted to hand out toys to Latino children at Christmas time. His connection to the community was a Latina woman.

Latina women who work within the system of electoral politics as well as those who operate more at the grassroots level, are able to "deliver" large numbers of Latinos to show support for candidates and to increase voter registration. They are candid about the fact that the (male) officials are getting the Latino people there to attract votes within the Latino community. In this role they are serving the interests of the establishment; nevertheless, they are also working to draw fellow Latinos into politics.

### GENDER AND POLITICS IN LATINO SCHOLARSHIP: THE INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN

Contrast this presence and activism in traditional political roles with the invisibility of Latina women as political actors in the mainstream social and political science literature. While there have been occasional writings on the life experiences of Latina women following migration,<sup>9</sup> some mention of Latina community leaders or elected officials,<sup>10</sup> and some recent attention to Mexican American women in community organizing efforts,<sup>11</sup> there has been little research which includes an explicit goal of exploring Latina women and politics.

Mainstream social science research tends to restrict the study of women, in general, and of Latina women specifically, to their social roles. Most writing on Latina women focuses on women in the labor force, as victims of poverty, and, predictably, in relation to children. Other topics discuss Latina women's health, illness, mental health and mental illness.<sup>12</sup>

In general, Latina women are portrayed in this literature as "three times oppressed" — by racism, sexism, and cultural traditions (Melville 1980, Mirandé and Enríquez 1979, and Barragán 1980). The stereotype of the Puerto Rican and Mexican woman, in particular, is that of passivity and submissiveness. *Marianismo*, the feminine correlate to and opposite of *machismo*, derives from the image of the Virgin Mary — meek, mild, and supportive of men. Assertiveness in social, public, and political arenas by Latina women supposedly runs counter to these cultural traditions. Garcia and de la Garza (1977) include reference to a Latino tradition of "strong women" but these women are mythical figures; one would have to conclude that we are only comfortable with women in their reproductive roles or as goddesses.

In all of these books and articles, the political life of Latina women is rendered invisible. And yet, these women play an crucial role in mobilizing Latino communities.<sup>13</sup> How they think and work politically may be

the missing link in achieving the goal of increasing Latino political participation. But first, we must examine the reasons for their invisibility in the mainstream academic literature.

### REASONS FOR THE INVISIBILITY OF LATINA WOMEN AS POLITICAL ACTORS

One explanation for the invisibility of Latina women in political science was provided by a 34-year-old Puerto Rican woman activist in Boston. As we discussed a Latino community organizing resource center in Boston, I asked her if I should speak to a man I had heard was the president of the organization. She answered, somewhat indignantly, "I don't know how people got the idea that it's a man. I think it's more in people's minds how they perceive things. You can have ten women, but if there's a man, 'Oh, he must be the president!'"

This woman attributes the invisibility of women in politics, specifically as leaders, to a particular mindset: leaders must be men. She herself holds no lofty position and is not acclaimed in the Anglo press as a "leader"; she works to organize others politically. Her politics is not the politics of positions and public speeches; who is president is less important to her than achieving change. However, she leads in the truer sense of engendering a passion in others for social action and social change. Her work, and the work of other women like her, is rendered invisible by the mindset of researchers who look at public, official, and titular politics.

The (male) co-founder of the Latino Democratic Committee and former candidate, gives a related explanation: "Men are more easy to spot — and I told you that there are less men active in politics — although we make more noise than women." According to Latina women, some men, and researchers such as Pardo (1990), the male drive for public prominence in political life overshadows the mobilizing work of Latina women. Since the mainstream academic press (and the mass media) focuses on people in positions, the politics of women, especially in political roles that are outside of official positions and without official titles, are rendered invisible.<sup>14</sup>

A second explanation for the invisibility of Latina women in mainstream political science is that women in general — not just Latina women — have traditionally been left out of political analysis. Male political scientists such as Dahl (1961), Hunter (1953), and Lane (1962, 1969, 1972) have influenced the field of politics for decades; however, throughout their research, they have either ignored the role of gender in political theory or generalized to the population as a whole from the study of (typically white) men.

For example, Dahl's (1961) *Who Governs?* and Hunter's (1953) analysis of community power structure simply assume that "the people you study are men" (Bourque and Grossholtz 1974, 253). Others, like Robert Lane's works on "political man" (1972), political consciousness (1969), and political ideology (1962) imply knowledge about people in general

but are drawn from interviews conducted exclusively with white men.

In other cases, women have been present in the research, but the role of gender is ignored. For example, when Wilson and Banfield “revisited” the political ethos theory in 1971, they interviewed male homeowners in Boston. They mention in a footnote that *thirty-five percent of the black homeowners and thirty-two percent of the Irish homeowners were actually women* (Wilson and Banfield 1971, 1050; emphasis added). However, Wilson and Banfield discuss neither the possible impact of gender differences on political ethos nor the fact that these gender differences correlate directly with the ethnicity variable that is the major focus of their research.

The research on non-white women is likewise deficient. Women appear as a minority group, but minority women in politics are less likely to receive attention. For example, Bayes’ (1982) book on minority politics in the United States includes chapters on the politics of the black minority and the Chicano minority. However, when she addresses women in politics, the subject becomes women *as a minority*, not minority (non-white) women in political life.

Research on Latino political participation seems to follow the mainstream model of being a male preserve of knowledge — Latina women in political roles are ignored or dismissed. Women appear only in tangential ways: women are wives of candidates (Foley et al. 1977). Where they do appear, their contribution is reduced to a few sentences and paragraphs dispersed throughout an entire book (Gómez-Quiñones 1990). Most books on Latino politics include no mention of women in their chapter titles or index, or ignore them completely (Villarreal et al. 1988, Garcia 1988, Jennings and Rivera 1984, Gómez-Quiñones 1990, Hero 1992).

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Guzmán, identifies Chicana women as important reputational leaders within Mexican American communities and states that “the role of women as community leaders among minority groups has been neglected by scholars” (Guzmán 1976, 165). However, he fails to remedy this neglect when he devotes only two paragraphs in his book to this subject (1976, 60). Guzmán does include a discussion on barriers to the political socialization of Mexican American women (1976, 231-234). However, by discussing women as *blocked* from participating, he contributes to their invisibility in activist roles. And, although Santillan mentions the “increased visibility and participation of Hispanic women in the electoral process” (1988a, 337), in a later article, he dismisses the Latina contribution to politics:

The social inequality of labor based on both gender and wages has naturally spilled over into the urban political arena where Latino men are self-appointed as community leaders while women are relegated to the level of campaign supporters. As a result of this political discouragement, many Mexican-American and Puerto Rican women are redirecting their resources and energies into the fields of education, social services, law, and the private sector. *The near total absence of Latinas in community politics seems almost to guarantee the delay of any substantial social progress in these urban communities for the present* (Santillan 1988b, 474; emphasis added).

Even research on broader topics, such as Portes and Bach's (1985) *Latin Journey*, continues the pattern of generating conclusions based on research conducted solely on men. *Latin Journey* presents an analysis of the labor market experience of Latino immigrants in the United States as if it were generalizable to all Latinos. One has to search to find the one sentence that reveals that the data is drawn from Latino men only. Portes and Bach admit briefly that this is a flaw of their research, but what is their remedy? They later ask the men about other family members, "including wives." Latina women's own experiences and roles other than as wives are ignored.

A final explanation for why Latina women are invisible in mainstream literature may be found in the very way politics is defined. When gender differences are scrutinized, researchers typically compare women to men on behavioral measures of politics dominated by men and defined, most often by men, as politics: organizational membership, voting rates in elections, and attitudes about political participation. (See, for example, Christy 1987, Klein 1984, Baxter and Lansing 1981, Welch and Secret 1981, Powell 1981, Rule 1981.) While there is nothing inherently wrong with such a comparison, our understanding of the political life of women is constrained by male definitions of politics.

### LATINA WOMEN IN POLITICS: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

Ignored — or rendered invisible — Latina women have been denied recognition of their political roles in the mainstream literature. One might ask at this juncture why I am focusing so much attention on Latina women in political roles that reflect traditional conceptions of political life (running for office, joining party organizations, conducting voter registration drives, and connecting elected officials to Latino community residents) especially if one of my major points is that the definition of politics in these terms is a gendered construct. There are two answers to this question.

First, my point here is *not* that what the Latina women do as candidates, as ward leaders, or as promoters of Latino voting is necessarily different from non-Latinos, or even from men. My point *here* is "simply" that Latina women are political actors in Boston. They are participating in traditional political roles with great enthusiasm, effectiveness, and dedication.

However, the fact that Latina women demonstrate activism in electoral politics — traditional politics — is not really a simple point. It runs

counter to the view of the apolitical Latina woman, the passive and submissive Latina woman, that is the prevailing view. These are *Latina* women — the very women who are identified in the literature as submissive, passive, subordinated, and oppressed. Puerto Rican women, Dominican women, Mexican American women, and Central American women in Boston — with their actions, their words, and their perspective on politics — challenge the image of the passive, submissive, and apolitical Latina woman. We cannot underestimate the importance of rendering visible the contribution of these women to Latino electoral politics.

Second, what is more important in this discussion of Latina women and the nature of politics is that, in addition to the activism of Latina women in *traditional* political roles, Latina women were identified by both men and women as being the driving force for pulling Boston's Latinos into political participation. In addition to their roles as *connectors* between City Hall and the community, Latina women are *connectors* as they connect members of the community to each other to solve community problems. As several Latinos said, "There's more to politics than just voting." If politics is more than elections and public office — if we say that politics is about people joining together, collective efforts, better life conditions, or redistributive justice, the role of Latina women in mobilizing Latinos becomes more visible. If "the challenge is to envision the human future and then to inspire a passion in others for that vision" (Barber 1984, 171), the question to be asked is: If there is more to politics than electoral politics — the politics of representation — then how do gender and culture shape our understanding of this alternative?

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Latina women were identified by both men and women as being the driving force for pulling Boston's Latinos into political participation.

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## GENDER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF "WHAT'S POLITICAL?"

How does gender limit or enhance the definition of politics? One is reminded of Simone de Beauvoir's observation that men "describe the world from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (de Beauvoir 1952, 133; quoted in Ferguson 1987, 210). Some suggest that part of the reason politics is defined in terms of public behaviors and formal organizations is that public life *is* the male life and so politics has become defined in masculine terms as the public politics of elections, office holding, and political party (Ferguson 1987). In other words, the classical theory of politics as self-interested, atomistic, and, above all, public, is, in reality, a theory based on masculine experiences that stress self-interest, public forums, and hierarchical struggles for self-advancement. Under this theoretical framework, if we mean politics is

about electoral conflicts — then men rule.

Within the “absolute truth” of politics as constructed by men exists the essentially hierarchical ladder of representative government in which a few are elected to represent the interests of the many. And within much of current political theory, there exists a parallel hierarchy of political behaviors in which electoral politics is identified as “politics” while a whole wealth of political life is called a variety of other names: community organizing, community politics, grass-roots politics, to name a few. Above all else, the male image of politics is a politics of public life, of hierarchical representation, and of measurable behaviors, such as the vote.

A vision of participatory democracy is very different. Participatory democracy, as an alternative vision, is firmly rooted in beliefs about community, collective organization, self-government, and, above all, opportunities for participation by the maximum number of community members. Empirical examples of such participation in action and how an increase in participatory experiences is brought about are rare.<sup>15</sup> Another limitation of existing theories of participatory democracy is that the role of gender, again, receives little attention in current participatory theories.

“Grass-roots” politics is a term often used to reflect a more community-focused type of politics that involves greater opportunities for self-government and self-direction and that increases participation by the many rather than restricts it to the elite few. One of the major splits in how politics is defined is between “politics” and “community organizing.” However, political participation in a participatory model is the politics of local efforts to achieve change. The tension between local efforts on local issues and efforts to elect representatives to tackle larger issues is a false tension in participatory theory. Contrary to Schattschneider’s (1975) view of a hierarchy of “experts” and “ignorants,” there is a vision of people becoming self-governing at all levels of government, in the workplace, and in the community, through the act of participating.

## LATINA WOMEN AND PARTICIPATORY THEORY

This alternative vision of blending self-government, community efforts, and personal/private issues with public issues is not the unique purview of feminist political theory. However, it is true that the political lives of women, and of Latina women specifically, are examined with a less biased eye in the feminist press. Unfortunately, most of this literature is on Chicana politics.<sup>16</sup> There are only a few articles on Puerto Rican women in political roles; these include works by Cerullo and Erlien (1984) on Latina women in the Mel King campaign in Boston, Bonilla-Santiago (1989) on Latina legislative activities in New Jersey, and Pantoja and Martell (1989-1990) on Latina politics in New York City. A few writers examine Mexican American and Puerto Rican women working together: Bonilla-Santiago (1991) discusses Latina leadership roles in the United States, and Campos Carr (1989) describes group consciousness-raising

projects in the multi-ethnic Latino communities of three Illinois cities.

Latina women in Boston provide empirical evidence of a broader expanse of political activism at the grass-roots level. Even Latino men comment on this fact. For example, one male community activist describes the presence of women at the grass-roots level of politics in Boston: "I say that women have been a major force at the grassroots level in the Hispanic community — from the day we came here, from the day we came to the United States. *At the grass roots, the community level, women have been the major force for change.*" (emphasis added) Another man, a Puerto Rican elected official, told me that Latina women are crucial at the electoral level of politics, and he ties the women's political skills to their relationships with the community:

I think more than anything else, women have a lot more potential, Hispanic women have a lot more potential for getting elected. [I ask: Why is that? and he replies:] Because they're more involved in the community; they're organized — they're better organizers. I don't want to make these general statements, but they communicate better with people; they're there in the community, they're in the trenches all the time; they deal with the children; they deal with the household and they may work, but they have — I think they have a stronger network, where men have — sort of — these networks, but I think they're weaker, whereas the women have a stronger network.

In developing my lists of Latinos to interview, I began with the reputational leaders — people in the news, individuals commonly described as "leaders." On this preliminary list, sixty percent of the names were men. However, when these individuals were asked: "Who draws Latinos into participation?" — the list reversed itself to sixty percent women. In fact, aside from agency directors, functionaries, and people who hold jobs in city or state government, the vast majority (over 75 percent) of the people who were able to influence or draw people into the political process were women.<sup>17</sup>

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"At the grass roots, the community level, women  
have been the major force for change."

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It would be impossible to include all the ways the Latino men and women I interviewed lauded these women; a few quotes will have to suffice. "If you look at our community, you will see — if you look through the gamut and count numbers, there are more women working into the politics of empowerment of the community than there are men," states Tamara González. Another woman gives testament to the strong presence of Latina women in community politics despite the constraints Latina women face because of sexism and male concerns over power and turf:

The pecking order is such that it takes women a while to get involved, but, usually when they get involved, they get more involved [than men]. But around

community-based struggles, I have *never* seen one where the women were not *extremely* involved (emphasis in original).

Latina women in Boston, in their efforts to mobilize the community, embody key elements of a more participatory vision of political life. Women's vision of politics includes a stronger sense of community, cooperation, and collective processes of organization. Ferguson (1987) summarizes the gender differences in how women view political participation:

Women, on the whole, are more embedded in (and more aware of their embeddedness in) social relations than are men; women, as a group, are more inclined toward a morality of responsibility and caretaking, while men, as a group, give more allegiance to an ethic of rights and obligations; women's experience tends to incline them toward greater appreciation of the concrete and relational, while men give greater credence to that which is abstract and disembodied (Ferguson 1987, 213).

Feminist theorists<sup>18</sup> explore the meaning of political participation and help define the nature of politics in ways that male theorists such as Schumpeter (1943), Schattschneider (1975), Sartori (1962), and Verba and Nie (1972), who worried about global stability (and Anglo-American hegemony) did not.

One of the central debates in feminist theory that has implications for my study of politics is the question whether women see the world in ways different from men, in more relational terms (Gilligan 1982, Flanagan and Jackson 1990, Dietz 1989). Gilligan (1982), for example, reexamines the moral base of women and brings to light the caring and relationship-orientation of women in resolving social and personal issues. She argues that women view the world differently from men. Gilligan (1982), Chodorow (1974) and Tannen (1990) claim that personal interrelationships and connection are more important for women than for men. They also suggest that men view the world in positional terms, in terms of personal status, rather than in the relational terms of connection and intimacy. Some posit that the differences are rooted in biology and others that they are socially constructed.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of the source, the implication for political mobilization is that if political mobilization is more likely to occur when interpersonal relationships are the basis for politics, rather than access to hierarchically determined positions, then how women view politics is an essential element in any struggle for a more participatory America. The experiences of Latina women in Boston suggest that a more personally connected politics and a vision of politics as an interactive process based on personal relationships is more effective in mobilizing the Latino communities than a male vision of politics as access to power, positions, and formal structures (Hardy-Fanta 1991, 1993).

A second debate that frames the issue of gender differences and participatory theory is the permeability of the boundary between private and public politics. Juanita Fonseca, in her office at City Hall, said to me, "The personal is political. . . . What happens every day is politics. What's



going on right now — whether I agreed to meet you today — is politics.” And Carmen Gómez, a woman from South America who runs a social service agency, quietly declared: “Everything is political.” These views support Evans’ (1980) earlier contentions about personal politics — that the distinction between the personal and the political is artificially constructed.

For Latina women in Boston, politics is an interpersonal politics — a politics that blends personal relationships into political relationships. Josefina Ortega illustrates how connectedness and mutual relationships increase Latino political participation by weaving politics into the fabric of daily life. She also illustrates how electoral politics are not in a hierarchical relationship with participatory politics, but form an inseparable thread, perhaps a continuum, one dependent on the interpersonal relationships of everyday life.

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### **Portrait of Josefina Ortega: Connection and Mutual Relationships**

Doña Fina, as she is often referred to, is a woman in her 60s who was born in a “humble family” in Puerto Rico. She came to New York when she was 23 years old and became a professional singer of Puerto Rican folklore. She came up to Boston in 1966 and has spent much of her time here organizing and conducting dance classes for children in a studio in the basement of her modest home.

When I introduced myself on the phone she made comments like “*Pues, yo no tengo mucho que ver con eso de la política.*” (“I’m not very involved in things like politics.”) But with a little encouragement, she revealed that she does know many people who are politicians and that they have called and said, “Fina, we need a hundred people at this meeting.” They count on her ability to bring people to political events — an ability based on her connections to people in the community — to *la gente del pueblo*.

Josefina Ortega has numerous plaques and awards on her dining room wall honoring her community contribution, but she has not used her political connections to distract her from her community connections. Her major focus continues to be on the dance and on helping Latino children maintain their folklore, culture, and artistic heritage. Her dream is to develop a truly community-oriented cultural center. In contrast to old-time ward bosses she does not use her political connections for personal gain. She has never moved into any official position and continues to relate to the community as a dance instructor, as an organizer of cultural events, and as a volunteer at a program for *los ancianos* (the elderly) at a local community center. She encourages *los ancianos* to come out of their isolation by serving traditional Latin meals and joining them in traditional Latin songs. Doña Fina combines these cultural events with her concern about community problems. Because she knows so many people and is trusted by them, when she calls and says something is important, they respond.

Doña Fina and her grown daughter, who was present at the interview, also participate in electoral politics. She and her daughter attended the Democratic Party caucuses in February 1990. Josefina votes consistently and sees the vote as a crucial tool for community betterment. She also works on getting people registered and urging them to vote. She said she knows which of her friends are registered and which are not. She is one of the women described as putting a megaphone on the top of her car to publicize election day.

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This portrait suggests several important lessons for political analysts and mobilizers: connections must exist within a relationship built on mutuality and reciprocity. Because Josefina Ortega *gives* of her time and energy *to* the children, when she calls on the parents for a political rally, they respond. She donates much of her time for free, often charges no money for her dance classes and perceives herself as not being in it for herself. She does not use her political activity or connections for personal gain, but because of a belief in a public good, that something needs to be done to help people.

For Josefina Ortega, a political life consists of intertwining cultural activism, everyday relationships, dance instruction, and electoral politics. Latina women, in fact, mobilize around and through issues related to their daily lives. Women writing on Latin American women in politics support this notion that women's roles in the family may stimulate, rather than inhibit, political activism (Aviel 1981, Boneparth 1981).

Doña Fina also dispels the notion that alternative forms of politics suppress electoral politics; she is intimately involved with voting and elections. In many ways, she reflects the woman's way of combining everyday relationships and political activism. Her life as a political mobilizer clearly challenges the distinction between private and public spheres of politics and suggests that this distinction is a social construct rather than a reflection of a universal political reality. Her success in increasing Latino participation, even in electoral politics, is due precisely to her personal relationships.

Political participation, thus, is woven into the fabric of daily life. The boundary between public and private becomes blurred. People in poor communities, like the Latino community in Boston, may not respond to mobilization efforts that focus solely on the electoral and formal realms of politics:

More than anything, the low rate of voter registration and the use of the franchise, particularly by the poor, are evidence not of apathy, but of realism. Until we broaden our definition of politics to include the everyday struggle to survive and changing power relations in our society, working class [I add — Latina] political action will remain obscured (Morgen and Bookman 1988, 8).

It is the feminist literature, also, that at least touches on the Latina woman's political contribution. Compared to the dearth of attention to women in the Latino politics literature written by men (see above), the

feminist analysis of Chicana women's community organization focuses not on elections, but on political development; not on voting rates, but on ways of enhancing broader community participation. Mary Pardo, for example, writes: "The relatively few studies of Chicana political activism show a bias in the way political activism is conceptualized by social scientists, who often use a narrow definition confined to electoral politics" (Pardo 1990, 1). Instead, she focuses on the *process* of, what she calls, "transformation" to describe how non-participants develop political consciousness and political skills. She reiterates, as well, my earlier point when she cautions "against measuring power and influence by looking solely at who holds titles" (Pardo 1990, 3).

## GENDER, POLITICS AND POWER

The meaning of power is central to any theory of politics and political participation. However, the question of whether gender differences exist in how power is defined is another issue facing us in reconceptualizing politics in terms less biased by male experiences. For women, politics appears to mean the power to change rather than power over others. For example, a Mexican American woman who works in the human services profession, describes what politics is for her:

It's promoting change. And if you're promoting change, then you need to go about being there and identifying [problems] and knocking on doors and telling people, "We're here, this is what we need, and we want to do it for ourselves." That's political, that's what I mean by politics, that's what politics means to me.

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For women, politics appears to mean the power to change rather than power over others.

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She echoes Jean Baker Miller who suggests that male concepts of power as "the ability to augment one's own force, authority, or influence and also to control and limit others — that is, to exercise dominion or to dominate" do not acknowledge women's view of power, which is "the capacity to produce a change" (Miller 1983, 3-4). For women,

Power could be translated into empowerment, the ability to act with others to do together what one could not have done alone. Empowerment stresses the cooperative dimensions of human interactions and seeks to engage our imaginations, extend our potentialities, enable us as collective actors, ultimately to enrich our lives. . . . Empowerment, like power, is a process (Ferguson 1987, 221-222).

In other words, politics is the forum for achieving change. Women have concepts and styles of exerting power that achieve change without exercising dominion and control over others.

Latino men, in contrast to Latina women, were twice as likely to focus on power as politics than the women (Hardy-Fanta 1991, 365) and to see politics as the “power over.” For example, Armando Meléndez is a Puerto Rican man who is very well known in Boston’s Latino media and who, while dismissing personal ambitions, admits he could “easily be elected” because everyone knows him. When we were discussing the role of the media in affecting political participation, he said, “If I get on the radio and say, ‘Edwin Colina [a Latino official in Boston] is a bad person,’ then Edwin Colina becomes a bad person. You know, ‘Armando Meléndez said that — gee, if he said it, it’s true.’” In this example, he uses a hypothetical situation to show that 1) he has power to influence what people believe (even if it is not true), and 2) that power could negatively affect the aspirations of fellow person.

## GENDER AND HIERARCHY: DIFFERENT IMAGES OF POLITICS

In the feminist view, formal, especially hierarchical, organizations stifle participation. Male-orchestrated public forums, with their panels of experts, speeches, and rules of order, limit the free exchange of ideas, inhibit tentative explorations of new ways of thinking about community problems, and prevent the development of the personal relationships that lead to political activity.<sup>20</sup> Women’s skills at personal relationships set up looser affiliative groupings which are “nonhierarchical and decentralized,” which “encourage individual initiative and, at the same time, . . . respect interdependence and cooperation” (Hamilton 1989, 131). Latina women in Boston stress consciousness-raising, collective, non-hierarchical political organization and less formally defined leadership.

In conclusion, Latina women make up a large proportion of Latinos in traditional political roles. Empowering Latinos is the goal of most community activists in Latino communities and Latina women in many communities across the United States are important political actors. This fact alone merits more attention than it currently receives. However, I suggest that, even more important to the future of Latino political participation in this country, mobilization strategies based on male visions of politics and power cannot work. It is time to bring to light the contribution of Latina women working in politics, to document their effectiveness in mobilizing the communities, and to learn from their methods.

## ENDNOTES

1. Portions of this article, and a more extensive exploration of gender differences in Latino politics, have appeared in a book by this author: *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture and Political Participation in Boston*, (Hardy-Fanta, 1993). See also Hardy-Fanta (1991).

2. Source: 1990 Census for Puerto Rican data; other data is from Osterman (1992). Please note that the Puerto Rican population data in the Census differs from Osterman’s data; I utilize Osterman because the Census data for Latinos other than Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexican Americans are not available for Boston.

3. *La gente del pueblo* literally translates to "the people of the village." The term is generally used to mean "the common folk," or "the masses."

4. It should be noted that the campaign of Grace Romero was deeply rooted in the black community; nevertheless, she was a Latina woman.

5. Diana Lam's candidacy lasted only three days because of extensive news coverage of her family's failure to submit certain IRS tax returns until shortly before she declared she was running for office. This news coverage overshadowed her campaign platform and she withdrew. It was only after her withdrawal that the *Globe* began praising her appeal to many dissatisfied constituencies in the city. In addition, even *before* her financial difficulties were exposed, the *Globe* downplayed her candidacy — the announcement she was challenging Mayor Flynn appeared "below the fold." For an analysis of how the news media treats minority candidacies, see, for example, Alberts (1986).

6. Although my research is not a comparative study of Latina women and women of other racial/ethnic groups, it is useful to point out that Latinas may be running for office in greater numbers than their Anglo counterparts. For information on the proportions of women as candidates, see, Darcy and Schramm (1977), Rule (1981, 61), Karnig and Walker (1976), Darcy and Hadley (1988, 638).

7. All names other than public figures are pseudonyms.

8. Sacks (1988) and Garland (1988) would call them "centerwomen."

9. See, for example, Sánchez Korrol (1983, 85-117).

10. Pachon states, for example, that, despite the stereotype of *machismo* in the Latino community, "more Hispanic women vote than men; and while there is a large under-representation of Hispanic women in public offices, the proportion of Hispanic women in elected office is larger than for society in general. Nationally, women hold only 12 percent of all elected offices. In the Hispanic community, women hold 18 percent of the offices" (Pachon 1987, xvi).

11. See, for example, Rose (1990), Pardo (1990), Carrillo (1986), and Castillo-Speed (1990).

12. The bibliographic essay by Lillian Castillo-Speed (1990), "Chicana Studies: A Selected List of Materials since 1980" includes only about ten explicitly political references out of several hundred. Much of the work on Chicana women and politics focuses on organizing in the makeup and cannery factories, situations less pertinent to Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Central American women in the Northeast. In addition, a search of major computer data bases confirms my observation that the vast majority of literature on Latina women concentrates on women in their reproductive, social, and labor market roles.

13. See, for example, Hardy-Fanta (1991, 1993).

14. Pardo discovered a similar process when she examined the political organizing of Mexican American women in Los Angeles. She found that the Latina women mobilized Latino men "by giving them a position they could manage. The men may have held the title of 'president,' but they were not making day-to-day decisions about work, nor were they dictating the direction of the group. . . . *This should alert researchers against measuring power and influence by looking solely at who holds titles*" (Pardo 1990, 3; emphasis added). The obscuring of Latina women's role in politics by the exclusive focus on "designated" leaders may be similar to a process that occurs for black women. For example, Sacks (1988), in her study of black women's union organizing at Duke University Medical Center, "discovered that the equation of political leadership with public spokespersons 'obscured an equally crucial aspect of leadership, that of *network centers*, who were almost all black women.' The women were at the center of family-like networks formed around everyday relationships among friends, neighbors and colleagues. They drew upon organizing skills learned at home. . . . They stood at the center of their community and on-the-job networks, tapping and directing the groups' collective energies while remaining responsible to them" (Sacks 1988; quoted in Ferguson 1989, 13).

15. See Barber (1984) and Pateman (1970, 1989), and Ackelsberg (1991) for a critique of liberal democratic theory and a discussion of the key elements of participatory democracy. Barber provides prescriptions for what he calls "strong democracy" but is weak in providing empirical examples. A problem with Pateman and Ackelsberg's research is that they focus on participatory experiences in Yugoslavia and Spain, respectively.

16. See, for example, Margaret Rose (1990), "Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980;" Mary Pardo, "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists: 'Mothers of East Los Angeles'."

See also the literature on women in politics in Latin America, for example, Aviel (1981), Letelier (1989), and Carrillo (1986). Carrillo reveals the role of Latina women as presidential candidates when she describes the candidacy of Doña Rosario Ibarra in the 1982 Mexican presidential election. Carrillo "evaluates the impact of her campaign on women's political participation and organization within the Mexican Left" (Carrillo 1986, 96).

Mainstream literature analyzes the voting rates of Mexican women in comparison to white Americans (MacManus, Bullock and Grothe (1986), Shepro (1980). MacManus, Bullock and Grothe attribute recent voting increases in this population to an "increase in education, a decrease in discrimination, an increase in political consciousness and, more importantly for the present study, the fact that the *Latina women have a role as revolutionaries and that Latina mothers are agents for social change*" (1986, 606-611; emphasis added).

17. It is important to recognize that we're talking about "ideal types" — that there are exceptions to the general pattern of women as the people who encourage participation. Nevertheless, nine of twenty influential Latina women I interviewed were not agency directors or appointed officials; only three of the eighteen influential men were not.

18. It should be noted that feminism encompasses a wide range of political ideologies. Liberal feminism strives to gain access to the jobs, elected offices, and power held by men in the American political system. Marxist feminism attempts to locate women's oppression within capitalistic economic structures. Coole (1988) describes how radical feminists emphasize the "gendered rule of women by men" (see 260-261) and concludes that the so-called "feminine personality" is a social construction. There is a strain within feminist theory between ideologies that imply women and men are not inherently different versus those which attempt to "revalorize" women — to celebrate the differences. In the latter perspective, women as women can contribute to a more cooperative world order. The problem with this radical perspective is that it contains within it a "biology is destiny" component that has been used to disempower women in the socio/economic/political arena.

I do not ascribe to liberal feminist goals of access to male power circles and lean toward a view that women do have different perspectives on power and political relationships. Therefore, when I speak of feminist theorists I am referring not to liberal women seeking equality with men in a male-defined political world, but rather to the more radical perspective. The issue of the sources of gender differences (i.e., biology or social construction) and the theoretical problems implicit in this discussion will be left to others to unravel.

19. For a discussion of the debate about the social construction of gender differences and a caution against seeing male and female visions of politics in oppositional terms see Dietz (1989).

20. See Warren and Bourque (1985). The way political silence is orchestrated in formal organizations is not only discussed by feminist theorists. Lukes (1974) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962) detail the subtle ways people's awareness of their own needs and interests gets shaped. People may have grievances and needs that are unarticulated, covert or latent, and the power structure may work to suppress these grievances and needs. See, also, Arnstein (1969).

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# EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION OF HISPANICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE FAILING OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

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## INTRODUCTION

In the area of equal employment, thirty years of implementation of the 1964 U.S. Civil Rights Act has been framed virtually in terms of *black* and *white* (Fulwood 1993; Perez and Martinez 1993, p. 41; Yaffe 1993). Today in Los Angeles County (LACO) this has been extended to include Asians and Filipinos. Hispanics, who represent over 40% of the county's population, represent only 20% of the employees in the local government work force. Hispanics in the local public (non-educational) work force of LACO have experienced pervasive discrimination and underrepresentation in virtually all major local government jurisdictions, and in virtually all but the lowest occupational levels. Similar conditions have been noted throughout the nation in federal, state and local public employment (Dye and Renick 1981; Hubler 1992; Ingram 1992; Navarette 1993; Pyle 1991; Rehfuss 1986; Reimers and Chernick 1991; Simon 1990 & 1992; Sweeney 1985).

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Discrimination of Hispanics reflects historic entrenched values, perceptions, and realities which foretell of the prospects and expectations for effective and inclusive representative local governance and the delivery of quality public services. These historical attitudes and values, and their contemporary pervasiveness have become part of the ethos of the Los Angeles region (Davis 1992; Sanchez 1993; Yaffe 1993, 1994 & 1994a; Weintraub 1994). In spite of adequate and comprehensive (formal) equal employment policies, personnel codes and regulations, the (informal) implementation of equal employment systems, promote and rationalizes the underrepresentation of Hispanic employees.

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Governmental reform and equal employment opportunities for Hispanics underlie the ultimate and encompassing economic health and prosperity of the entire county population. But dependence and trust on local elected and appointed officials for assuring these reforms through the implementation of formal equal employment policies for Hispanic employees (and prospective employees) has become so weakened and threatened that any improvement and significant and lasting reform will require critical social, political and legal engagement on the part of those presently or potentially effected.

#### REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

An essential requirement and expectation of enlightened democratic political processes is that elected and appointed officials advocate, support and practice principles reflective of representative government (Wise 1992, pp. 567-72). One way in which this expectation is met is by the inclusion and representation of all affected racial and ethnic groups in governmental institutions, bureaucracies and enterprises (Reh fuss 1986, p. 454; Wise 1990, pp. 567-69). In a public work force some degree of *reasonable* employment equity or proportional representation is one visible sign of that inclusiveness and must be obvious and enduring for both employees and disenfranchised groups. This participative inclusiveness enables alternate and diverse inputs into governmental decision and policies and the continuous generation of representative and participative responsibilities and opportunities. If successful, this activity gener-

ates a system of mutual and encompassing empowerment between those governing and those governed (Fay 1987, p. 205; Meier 1975, p. 528; Ranson and Stewart 1989, pp. 11-17).

This reciprocity of empowerment, flowing from citizens to elected officials and back again, stimulates and perpetuates more meaningful and acceptable solutions to local social problems. This empowerment process enables community and elected officials to achieve more mutually satisfying solutions to common problems and creates opportunities to become more reputable, while at the same time provoking one another into being more responsive, active and reliable participants in the citizenship-governing process. All parties validate and empower one another through this on-going flow of input-responsiveness-action. This process contributes to an *active* realization of representative government, the formulation and refinement of major, but inclusive, policy decisions, and ultimately the quality and effectiveness of public services (see Cobb and Stewart 1971, *passim*; Ranson and Stewart 1989, *passim*; Reh fuss 1986, 454-455).

On the local level this connection and association between an active and outspoken population with the formation or implementation of public policy and programs is desirable, since local governance contains expectations which reveal a greater urgency, concern and significance than one would find on a state or federal level. Local concerns, issues and outcomes have more sensitive, immediate, recognizable and meaningful effects and impacts upon a populace. This usually results in more public scrutiny and accountability of official decisions and the resolution of social problems. However, when government is seen as unresponsive or non-responsive (i.e. when the process of mutual empowerment is dramatically impaired or perceived as absent) citizens and residents have both an obligation and a responsibility for challenging, criticizing, demanding, motivating—and if necessary, provoking—the expected social and political changes necessary for correcting perceived inequities and governmental failures (Fay 1987, *passim*).

Today, Los Angeles is considered “the first multiracial and multi-ethnic metropolis in the continental United States. It is on the cutting edge of the twenty-first century as a result of the waves of migration which have brought diverse peoples in the Los Angeles area in the last 25 years” (Pearlstone 1990, pp. 13 & 25). Still, the traditional efforts—those which are more acceptable to, the least demanding or confrontational of, the political elite and powerful—have failed to produce permanent changes in patterns of employment inequity where Hispanics are concerned.

The employment issues at stake are not just the disparity of 20,000 local public sector employment opportunities for Hispanics, and the disparity of approximately 10,000 to 15,000 promotional opportunities that were denied to Hispanics already in the public work force. They are also the increases in earnings and purchasing power, resulting in an improved standard of living afforded the Hispanic population of the region. However, given LACO’s demographic composition which is predomi-

nately Hispanic, and the effects of an improved standard of living for this population, all residents of LACO will be affected in one way or another by these seemingly Hispanic issues (California Business 1989, p. 24; Wiles 1992).

### **Study Focus**

This study addresses the work force inequities and salary disparities of Hispanic non-instructional/non-educational local government employees. The research presents data and analyses of public employees in both individual and aggregated local public sector governments in the geographic (Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area-PMSA) area of LACO (i.e. county government, Los Angeles City (LAC) government, the remaining (aggregated) eighty-seven municipalities, and the approximate (aggregated) 400 special districts). Data is also analyzed for individual public sector occupations using Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) job and salary categories. The focus of the analysis is on the inequitable distribution of Hispanic employees in these jurisdictions, Hispanic underrepresentation in official and administrative positions, and finally the salary inequities and other economic outcomes of this historic labor force discrimination. Employment data for the analysis came (or was calculated) primarily from a special data run from the EEOC (EEOC 1993), local government records, and population figures and projections published by various official state agencies in California (CA). Related collateral studies, research, and public documents were also utilized. Excerpts from EEO law, policy, and guidelines are also provided in order to more fully ground the author's arguments, the relevant issues, and the conclusions. The writer relies heavily on interpretations of EEO requirements contained in *EEO Law and Personal Practices* (Gutman 1993).

### **Definition of Terms**

Section 1607.3 of EEOC guidelines defines discrimination "as any test or selection procedure that produces unjustifiable adverse impact [on any designated population]" [Insert added]. Adverse impact refers to the effect that a particular employment practice may have on the ethnic or racial group (as opposed to discriminatory action on an individual). Gutman states that ". . . the Court viewed adverse impact as a way of maintaining the effects of past intentional discrimination. . . practices, procedures, and tests neutral on their face, and even neutral in terms of intent, cannot be maintained if they operate to 'freeze' the status quo of prior discriminatory practices" (Gutman, p. 29). "Affirmative action requires identification of underutilization; not documentation of causes" (Gutman, p. 283). Section 1608.3 of the EEOC guidelines recommends that "in an effort to eliminate discrimination, artificial restrictions, and underutilization in recruitment, hiring, training and promotions, an employer consider employee training plans and programs, extensive and focused recruiting activity, and elimination of adverse impact caused by

unvalidated selection criteria." Even the most recent and embattled 1991 Civil Rights Act did not change these basic expectations of employer voluntary equal employment plans (Gould 1993; Kellough 1991; Turner 1993).

*Hispanics* may be of any race, religion or nationality. Except for official data gathering purposes Hispanics are not a singular group, but represent a diverse group of people (e.g. Native born Mexican-Americans, Mexican immigrants, peoples from the Caribbean islands, Spaniards, Central and South Americans, and likely Sephardic Jews from varying "Hispanic" countries who self-identify ethnically rather than religiously). Other frequently used terms denoting Hispanics have been Chicanos (referring to the dominant Mexican-American population), and Latinos (synonymous with Hispanic), and Hispanos (a contraction of Hispanics and Latinos). In census reports prior to 1980 Hispanics were referred to as "Americans of Spanish descent," "of Spanish origin," or "Spanish-surnamed Americans."

Work force *parity* refers to the proportion or representation (as a percentage) of members of a protected group (e.g. blacks, Hispanics, Asians, women) reasonably reflective of their percentage in a given population parameter (e.g. city, county, state). In addition to population, a parity standard may also reflect proportions in the civilian labor force or in a specific occupation (occupational availability) or varying systems incorporating several of these criteria. Most local jurisdictions in LACO elected to use population as their parity standard to assure a diverse and balanced work force.

### A SUMMARY OF COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

In 1990, Hispanics in LACO represented 37.8% of the total population of 8.897 million. Outside of their native country LACO is home to the largest concentration of Mexicans outside of Mexico City, Salvadorans outside of El Salvador, and Guatemalans outside of Guatemala (Pearlstone 1990, pp. 53-66). However, four year old census data, combined with an officially acknowledged undercount in the 1990 census, contribute to an undercount of the actual Hispanic population of the region. Since 1960 Hispanics in LACO have grown at an average annual rate of between 0.8-0.9%. In 1965 Hispanics numbered 680,941 (9.9%), in 1970—1,291,214 (18.3%), and in 1980—2,063,790 (27.6%). Presently, (1993) Hispanics represent over 41.0% of the county's population (Yaffe 1994).

The current *Hispanic* population (3.4 million) of LACO is almost as large as the *total* population (3.6 million) of the City of Los Angeles (the largest city in the county, and second largest city in the U.S.). Fifteen percent of the nation's Hispanics reside in LACO. By the year 2000, the county's Hispanic population is projected to increase to 45.8%, and by the year 2010, to 52.0%. The white population will decrease from their 1990 level of 40.9% to 27.6% in 2010. The black population will also



decrease from its 1990 level of 10.6% to 8.8% in 2010 (State of California 1993). Updated county census figures from the California data center show that in January 1993 the population of LACO was 9.158 million. This is an increase of 251,000 residents, many of whom were Hispanic.

The predictable increases in the Hispanic population reflect the need for both private and public employers to utilize more accurate and updated local demographic figures for planning equal employment programs. The failure to update census data perpetuates the chronic use of artifactual population data—anywhere from one to nine years old. Demographic data provides one of the essential ingredient for assuring accurate implementation of equal employment plans and goals. This procedural shortcoming on the part of local governments exacerbates the problem of a cumulative underrepresentation of Hispanics, which leads to the continual de-emphasis of the Hispanic presence in Los Angeles (Stein 1986, p. 699; Yaffe, 1994). In accepting this situation as the status quo, local governments and bureaucracies acquire up to a ten year grace period for having to address Hispanic work force inequities.

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#### PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

In LACO, demographic or civilian labor force representation, in one form or another, provides the basis for determining reasonable and equitable work force representation for racial and ethnic minorities (and women). The LACO aggregated (non-educational) local government work force in 1991 consisted of over 157,400 employees (EEOC 1993). This aggregate is the second largest concentration of local government employees in the nation (with New York being the largest) (U.S. Department of Commerce 1992, 1992a). These employees provide essential administrative, public safety, criminal justice, health, recreational, social and numerous other mandated and elective services for Los Angeles County government, Los Angeles City government, all Special Districts, and all of the remaining eighty-seven municipalities. In many respects, these employees comprise what might be termed the human resource infrastructure of local governments.

The data in Table 1 contains the 1991 EEOC total job categories, Hispanic representation and disparities compared with 1990 population

**Table 1**

Los Angeles (PMSA) aggregated total 1991 local public work force: Hispanic employment by EEOC categories compared to 1990 parity, with corrections for underrepresentation.

Total work force positions and individual EEOC job categories	Hispanics		Disparity with 1990 population		# of positions if aligned with 1990 Parity
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total work force — 157,466	31,804	20.2	-27,718	-17.6	59,522
Officials-Administrators — 9,073	1,211	13.3	-2,218	-24.5	3,429
Professionals — 28,349	3,071	10.8	-7,644	-27.0	10,715
Technical — 11,030	1,509	13.6	-2,660	-24.2	4,169
Protective Services — 27,266	5,161	18.9	-5,145	-18.9	10,306
Paraprofessionals — 7,144	1,434	20.0	-1,266	-17.7	5,907
Administrative Support — 36,916	9,625	26.4	-4,329	-11.4	13,953
Skilled Crafts — 15,628	3,244	20.7	-2,663	-17.1	5,907
Services & Maintenance — 22,060	6,459	29.6	-1,879	-8.2	8,338

*Source:* Disparity and corrections calculated from EEO-4 data for Los Angeles PMSA—EEOC special data run, July 1993.

*Notes:* For all job categories the mean Hispanic underrepresentation is 43.3 percent when compared with the 1990 population parity of 37.8 percent for Los Angeles County. PMSA = Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area. Data is for permanent full-time employees only.

parity, and Hispanic representation if work force inequities were corrected to 1990 population parity levels for LACO (37.8%). Hispanics are not only underrepresented in the total aggregated local public work force, but also in each of the eight individual job categories. Were Hispanics represented at population parity they would occupy 59,522 total positions — an increase of 27,718 jobs over the existing number of 31,804. Comparing this 1991 representation to 1980 parity (27.6%) Hispanics in all but the lowest job category (services and maintenance) are below this 1980 level; and even in terms of 1970 levels (18.3%) Hispanics are below parity in the three highest paying job categories. Analysis of the different levels of government (i.e. Los Angeles County, Los Angeles City, Special Districts) shows similar results. Even when the 1991 Hispanic work force representation is compared to 1990 *civilian labor force* representation of 34.3% (used by some jurisdictions) Hispanics remain significantly underrepresented in *all* job categories and in the individual work forces of each government entity analyzed.

**Table 2**

Aggregated local government employment for Hispanics by jurisdiction:1991

Government level	Total Employees	Hispanic	
		Number	Percent
County Government	77,285	15,544	21.4
Los Angeles City	46,302	9,112	19.8
Aggregated cities	70,798	13,704	19.3
Aggregated special districts	15,842	3,666	23.1

Source: EEOC, special data run, 1993.

Notes: 1990 Hispanic population parity = 37.8 percent; Hispanic civilian labor force = 34.3 percent; Aggregated cities includes the preceding entry for Los Angeles City. Data is for full time permanent employees only.

Since 1964 this underrepresentation of Hispanics has been attributable to, or justified by, several different myths or rationales supported by both elected and appointed government officials, non-Hispanic employee groups, and society at large. These are the same historical discriminatory excuses espoused in previous employment related civil rights activities to prevent blacks and women from entering the work force, or once employed, from advancing to management, especially official and administrative, positions. The first is low work force availability. Regardless of educational or experience requirements, it is claimed that there just are not enough qualified Hispanics in the available labor pools from which to recruit and hire. Analysis and comparison of demographic representation versus work force representation shows that county-wide in LACO Hispanic new hires for all government jurisdictions were below those needed to bring Hispanics to a reasonable work force

representation. Low availability is a rationale that is ungrounded in reality (Yaffe, in press). But it is an argument still offered to explain and maintain lower representation for Hispanics even in the lowest occupational levels which require only minimal educational or experiential qualifications (e.g. paraprofessional, skilled crafts, operatives, services and maintenance).

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In the case of official and administrative positions  
Hispanics are underrepresented for all local  
government jurisdictions.

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Discrimination in hiring patterns has been documented in two recent studies on employment discrimination against Hispanics. Using employment auditing methods of matching applicants by identical qualifications, Hispanics in Washington, DC were discriminated against compared to Anglo (white) applicants in more than twenty percent of the cases, more than twenty-nine percent more in San Diego, CA, and thirty-three percent more in Chicago, IL (Bendick, Jr., et al., 1991; Cross et al., 1990). Ironically, this same argument of availability and preparation is also used as an excuse for the low rate of *promotional* opportunities and career advancement experienced by Hispanics. These employees have already met basic entry-level qualifications, achieved satisfactory (or better) annual evaluations, and acquired sufficient seniority in grade. Still, their presence in management and policy-making positions appears subject to the same discriminatory patterns. In the case of official and administrative positions, Hispanics are underrepresented for all local government jurisdictions. New hires for the total work force and for official and administrative positions fall short of effectively decreasing Hispanic underrepresentation. Instead, they seem more to give the illusion of commitment, concern and effort, geared more to placating special interests and diffusing or decreasing inter-ethnic group conflicts.

Responses to Hispanic population growth, combined with historic and contemporary ignoring of Hispanic underrepresentation within a system of non-representative local government, all coalesce into patterns of unequal employment implementation. These continuing dynamics underlie the increase in disparities over time. The fractured implementation and biased application of equal employment opportunities in local governments have increased the disparity between Hispanics and whites and between Hispanics and other minorities. The rates of new hiring for officials and administrators, and the work force in general, contribute to an already entrenched overrepresentation for whites (mainly in management positions), blacks in all positions, and for Asians and Filipinos (in virtually all categories). This has been accomplished by the manipulation of *rates, numbers and percentages* when reporting on affirmative action and equal employment.

**Table 3**

Los Angeles County (PMSA) - local public sector work force, new hires, and officials and administrators, by race-ethnicity: 1991

	Totals	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
LACO 1991 population and 1990 parity	9,003,500	40.8	10.5	37.8	10.2
Civilian Labor Force	4,538,364	45.1	9.5	34.3	10.5
Total 1991 work force	157,466	44.3	24.5	20.2	10.7
Total new hires	11,355	14.3	20.5	24.4	13.1
Officials-administrators	9,073	56.9	20.2	13.3	9.1
New hires-officials & administrators	369	56.9	13.2	18.9	10.2
<i>County government</i>					
1991 work force	77,285	37.3	28.3	21.4	12.7
Total new hires	4,818	34.6	21.7	27.9	15.2
Officials-administrators	2,953	61.0	19.6	11.6	7.5
New hires-officials & administrators	236	52.5	13.1	20.7	13.5
<i>Municipal Governments</i>					
1991 work force	70,285	51.4	19.5	19.3	9.3
Total new hires	4,673	46.0	19.9	21.4	11.8
Officials-administrators	2,027	75.6	9.0	8.1	6.9
New hires-officials & administrators	106	65.0	13.2	16.0	4.7

Source: EEOC, special data run, 1991.

Note: Data is for full time permanent employees, and new hires.

This same manipulation has provided the illusion that there are not sufficient numbers of Hispanic high school and college graduates (Yaffe, 1994b). Given the size of the Hispanic population in the greater Los Angeles, rates per hundreds or thousands do not reveal the actual number of graduates. And, it is the actual numbers which determine whether there are sufficient numbers of Hispanics available for meeting local labor force recruitment needs. What local government officials have allowed, supported and encouraged is what this researcher has titled *equal share* hiring and promotions. Each ethnic/racial group is afforded an approximate *equal share* of recruitment efforts, new hires and promotions *regardless of whether or not that group is under or overrepresented* (Yaffe 1994). This disguised benevolent paternalism is an attempt to "make everyone happy" and avoid confrontation mainly with non-Hispanic employees. This is akin to giving both the very wealthy and those below poverty levels an equal share of public assistance to enhance their life styles. To illustrate this point further compare (in Table 3) for each ethnic/racial group, the existing representation, the number and percent of new hires, and the same detail for new hires in official and administrative positions just for Los Angeles County and aggregated municipal governments.

#### ECONOMIC OUTCOMES OF WORK FORCE DISCRIMINATION

The effects of social and institutional discrimination against Hispanics are not just fewer jobs, but the ultimate depreciation and dismissal of a people, expressed in a denial of equal opportunities and comparable pay and salaries. An historic denial of these occupational and social advantages and benefits affect not only employee morale and group aspirations, but has serious consequences in terms of contributing to the number of unemployed and underemployed Hispanics living in, or close to, poverty levels (Stewart and Thomas 1979; California Business 1989; Perez and Martinez 1993; Wise 1990). And, it contributes to the overall reduced standard of living for Hispanic public employees. In many cases for high school drop-outs and semiskilled employees qualified mainly for lower level jobs, employment equity may mean the difference between poverty, public assistance or self sufficiency. Of a total of 1,308,255 persons in LACO living below the poverty level, 744,000 (or 56.8%) are Hispanic. And, there are 1.3 million Hispanics in LACO without medical insurance.

However, research shows that even when Hispanics do acquire all the necessary formal education and required experience, they still confront pervasive work force discrimination (Melendez and Figueroa 1991, pp. 1-20; Pyle 1991; Hubler 1992; Hubler and Silverstein 1993; Navarette, Jr. 1993). Often when they have achieved equal or superior educational successes, they are discriminated against in recruitment, application processing, and selection. Hispanics who do successfully reach the higher levels of public sector employment receive salaries below that of their organizational and professional counterparts. Previously cited studies

(Bendick, Jr, and Cross, et al.) showed that "one-in-five Latinos with credentials similar or superior to their white counterparts were discriminated against."

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Hispanics who do successfully reach the higher levels of public sector employment receive salaries below that of their organizational and professional counterparts.

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Another study conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* (Navarette, Jr. 1993) on the relationships between the educational attainment and earning levels of full time employees in California found that equal educational attainment did not close the gap in earnings between whites and minorities. An assessment of the average full time pay by ethnic groups revealed that Hispanics in California made about 59.0% of what Anglos (whites) earned annually. Average full time pay for Anglos was \$36,000, for Asians - \$30,027, for blacks - \$26,898, and for Hispanics - \$21,423. In the area of "executives and managers" Hispanics again earned the lowest pay among these same ethnic/racial groups. The average annual salary for Anglo managers and executives was \$47,109. Hispanics earned \$32,151, or 68.0% of Anglo earnings. Among high school drop-outs, Hispanics earned an average of only sixty-three cents for every one dollar earned by white drop-outs; and Hispanic college graduates earned an average of fifty-three cents for every dollar earned by white college graduates.

An analysis of recent census data for California shows that the mean personal income for managers with a Bachelor's degree was \$42,800 annually, while managers with post-graduate degrees earned \$54,800 (Hubler and Silverstein 1993). When comparing college degree level (acquisition) by ethnicity, for California and the nation, other reports have also disclosed the same consistent disparity in salary for Hispanics compared to other racial/ethnic groups (State of California 1992, pp. 5-6). In their research on income disparity, Andersen and Collins (1993, *passim*) even found this disparity for Hispanics with doctorate degrees. In 1979 a study of the differential economic rewards between ethnic groups, it was found that (up to that time) most theories on ethnic wage differentials (e.g. the differential skills hypothesis) were just variations of traditional human capital rationales. After an intensive analysis of economic performance, the researchers found that "the results of this analysis support the hypothesis that discrimination against particular groups has been a major contributing factor to differential economic performance (earnings) among groups" (Stewart and Hyclak 1979, pp. 1, 34-35).

In a recent nationwide study of factors leading to Hispanic poverty, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) concluded that "Hispanics were the

**Table 4**

Los Angeles County: 1991 median salary and percentages of each ethnic-racial group earning median salary for selected levels of the local public work force

	Median	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Aggregate local public work force	\$37,007	\$43,178 44.3%	\$31,112 24.5%	\$32,194 20.1%	\$35,772 10.7%
Municipal Governments	\$39,127	\$43,245 51.4%	\$32,305 19.5%	\$35,092 19.3%	\$38,105 9.3%
Special Districts	\$38,046	\$41,035 40.6%	\$36,786 26.6%	\$35,583 23.1%	\$39,472 9.0%

*Source:* Portions of this data originally appeared in "Perspectives on equal employment for Hispanics in local government in Los Angeles County" by J. Yaffe, 1994. Calculated from EEOC special data run.

*Note:* Median salary for all employees in all EEOC occupational and salary categories = \$37,007.



only major racial/ethnic group to experience an absolute decline in income over the 1980s." NCLR calculated that the difference between white male annual median earnings to Hispanic males was \$11,937 (or 50.8%); comparing white males to Hispanic females the difference was \$16,818 (or 90.3%) per year. And, they calculated that if the wage gap related to discrimination in employment for Hispanic males and females were eliminated, Hispanic male earnings would increase by 7.1%, and female earnings by 31.6% (Perez and Martinez 1993, pp. 35-35).

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"Hispanics were the only major racial/ethnic group  
to experience an absolute decline in income over  
the 1980s."

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In the total local public sector work force in LACO (PMSA), an evaluation of the salary distributions contained in the 1991 EEOC data reveals major discrepancies in median salaries between Hispanic employees when compared to the median annual salaries of white employees and between Hispanics and the total (group) median for employees in all ethnic/racial groups. In all but two categories (out of fifteen), Hispanics earned less than other employees on the same levels.

A sample was selected of 151,190 employees (96.0% of the aggregated local public sector work force of 157,466).<sup>1</sup> This group of employees consisted of all those employees who earned over the Los Angeles County 1990 per capita income of \$20,786. These employees are represented in the four EEOC salary categories for earnings of between \$20,000 to \$43,000 plus. Disparity between Hispanic and *total* median salaries was \$4,813 or 14.9%; disparity between Hispanic and white median salaries was \$10,984 or 34.1%; and Hispanic 1991 work force representation in the sample was 29,772 (19.7%). Given a 1990 population parity of 37.8%, Hispanic employees in our sample are underrepresented by 18.1%, or 32,773 positions.

If Hispanic representation were corrected to 1990 parity, Hispanic employees would occupy 51,753 positions (in the sample salary ranges). With this information available, several scenarios indicate the results of correcting representation and aligning median salaries: (1) Hispanics remain at current representation (19.7%) and current median salary of \$32,194. Annual earnings would be \$958,479,768; (2) Hispanics achieve a 1990 parity level of 37.8%, which increases positions to 51,753. At the current median salary, their annual earnings would be \$1,666,136,082 (an increase of 73.8% or \$707,757,314); (3) Hispanics achieve 1990 parity level of 37.8%, and their representation increases to 51,753 positions, *and* Hispanics are paid at the same "total" median annual salary of \$37,007. Their annual earnings would be \$1,915,223,271. This results in an increase over current earnings of \$956,743,503 or 99.8%; and (4) Hispanics achieve 1990 parity of 37.8%, and equity brings representation to

51,753, and achieve the same median annual salary of whites (\$43,178). Their annual earnings would amount to \$2,234,591,034. This is an increase over their current earnings of \$1,276,111,266 or 133.1%.

Taking this current local public sector salary analysis to more basic levels, for every \$1.00 earned by whites, Hispanics earned only seventy-four cents. Using the *white median* salary as a *base* or benchmark, calculations reveal that Hispanics (at *their* median salary) must work 2,683 hours (or invest 34.1% more hours) to achieve the same annual earnings as white employees. This translates into an additional seventeen weeks or four and a half months of work to equalize earnings. In effect, the lower median salaries for Hispanics contributes to the subsidizing of higher salaries, and therefore a higher standard of living, for whites and non-Hispanic minority employees.

Further analysis of this salary disparities shows that the ratio of whites to Hispanics earning over the total *median* is 3.5:1; 94,963 employees in the sample earned over the *total median* salary; 53,273 (56.0%) whites and 15,071 (15.8%) Hispanics. The median individual earnings for whites was \$10,984 or 34.1% above Hispanic earnings. For the four salary levels above, the total number of employees in each level increases progressively moving from the lowest level to the highest level. The percent of white attainment follows the same progression—a higher percentage of whites represent the greater proportion of top salary earners. For Hispanics the opposite is true—a greater proportion of Hispanics earn the lowest salaries.

#### LOCAL POLITICS AND HISPANIC UNDERREPRESENTATION

The challenge to obtaining reasonable representation for Hispanics in the local public sector work force can be described, at best, as having to overcome a never ending progression and bombardment of artificial and political obstacles and barriers. Subverted affirmative action practices endorsed by virtue of acquiescence on the part of elected officials have communicated an acceptance of preferential equal employment for non-Hispanics (Cayer and Schaefer 1981, p. 493; Kellough 1990, p. 564; Stein 1986, p. 708). Administrators are entangled by these vacillations, preferences and pressures from the very elected officials to whom affirmative action and equal employment officers are responsible. Departmental administrators are placed in the position of either compromising equal employment efforts, or being labeled as unresponsive for disregarding the politicized (and often contradictory and *unofficial*) preferences and biases and intrusions of elected officials (Larwood *et al.*, 1984; Rehfuss 1986, pp. 454-55).

Considerations of employment equity, coupled with significant demographic changes and increases in elected representation favoring the previously non-dominant minority, often result in anticipated or actual intergroup conflict (Hall and Saltzstein 1975). Whites and non-Hispanic

minorities find themselves in a position of having to defend against becoming the new minorities (relative to Hispanics). This *displacement anxiety* is expressed in the surfacing of offensive strategies in order to prevent a redistribution of resources (e.g. political power and influence, services and program funding, work force positions, and strategic alliances and advocacy). In order to prevent or minimize conflicts and disruption of the status quo, governing officials are more willing to pacify angry groups and forestall conflict or disruption rather than address, correct and prevent continuing employment inequities. In other words, good policy is not as important as reducing personal discomfort (see Cayer and Schaefer 1981, pp. 493; Winter 1003, pp. vii, 1, & 31).

In LACO in the area of political representation, Hispanic elected officials occupy 18.3% (ninety-seven positions) of the total 529 elected offices which represent LACO. Thirty-two (36.3%) out of the total eighty-eight cities in LACO have Hispanic elected mayors or councilpersons. Of the total 453 municipal elected governing positions, eighty-two positions (or 18.1%) are filled by Hispanics. The largest of these municipalities—Los Angeles City—has three council members (out of fifteen), and Los Angeles County government has one Hispanic supervisor (out of five). Of the seventeen congressional districts comprising LACO, four of them are represented by Hispanics; two (out of fourteen) senatorial districts are held by Hispanics; and, of the twenty-five state assembly districts, Hispanics occupy six seats.

Various studies have examined the relationship between minority political representation and public employment equity for minorities (Cayer and Schaefer 1981; Dye and Renick 1981, pp. 483-484; Ranson and Stewert 1989; Reh fuss 1986; Welch, Karnig and Eribes 1983; Wise 1990). Although these studies present conflicting conclusions as to the effects of numerical representation, there seems no question that the *quality* of representation may be of more significance than the number of representatives. This writer contends that in contemporary U.S. society political representation and advocacy are essential in overcoming organizational barriers to equal employment. And, unless Hispanic elected officials are in the forefront of this battle, non-Hispanic officials will delay or resist in any implementation of representative governance in these areas.

## ECHOES FROM THE PAST AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The analysis of the data on Hispanics in the local public sector work force of LACO raises serious questions as to whether affirmative action and employment equity for Hispanics is a major priority of elected and appointed officials of this county. In too many cases even the election of Hispanic local government officials has resulted more in passive rather than active representation in regard to equal employment. By virtue of government's ignoring or minimizing the Hispanic *presence* and aspirations, the Hispanic communities are compelled to redefine both their

own priorities and efforts, as well as their expectations of government's responsibilities in regard to equal employment and other civil rights in the public work force. Hispanics must develop new strategies to assure government officials and institutions are held more accountable for their political and programmatic shortcomings in regard to the lack of advocacy of civil rights for this neglected forty percent of LACO's population.

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Previous attempts during the past twenty-five years by Hispanic employee and community groups to address and correct employment inequities have too often been interpreted (and responded to) as the "fly in the ointment" of ethnic-racial accommodations by representative government and bureaucracy (Cobb and Elder 1971, pp. 906-07). This unchallenged position is intertwined with a chronic and acute suppression of Hispanic activism—one emerging from a collective fear, anger and indignation at the ensuing (and perceived) demographic, social, economic and political displacement of non-Hispanics by an approaching Hispanic majority (Fay 1987, pp. 119-20; Sanchez 1993).

Have you ever heard, in the history of the United States, or in the history of the human race, of the white race being overrun by a class of people of the mentality of the Mexicans? I never have. We took this country from Mexico. They did not take it from us. To assume that there is any danger of any likelihood of the Mexican coming in here and colonizing this country and taking it away from us, to my mind, is absurd (quoted in Sanchez 1993, p. 96).

Although this statement was made at a Congressional hearing in Arizona in 1926, it reveals commonly held attitudes today towards Hispanics. Hispanics were valued and treated in the early 20th century mainly as a cheap source of labor — relegated somewhat to the position of serfs or indentured servants and expected to behave accordingly. The larger society seems almost unwilling to give up these perceptions and include Hispanics in social and civil rights and other constitutional guarantees. Whites and non-Hispanics manifest (what this writer terms) *displacement anxiety* — a consequence of provisional but shared common historic cultural and social attitudes toward Hispanics as a modern-day colonized people. This fear rests on perceived or anticipated losses of opportunities for dominance, elitism, power, and political, social and economic resources and benefits. Collectively, both whites and non-Hispanics are also

confronted with apprehensions about of being treated as minorities in like manner as they have treated Hispanics.

One outcome of these conditions for Hispanic public employees, accentuated by demographic changes, is that Hispanic *underrepresentation* in local government employment has been increasing at an increasing rate. These conditions are guiding Hispanic activism towards an eventual confrontation with local institutions and officials. If successful, a beneficial outcome will be a sense of self empowerment and becoming decisive contributors in the shaping of their own futures. As such, they will become more instrumental in redefining the purpose and expression of all local political agendas so as to assure more constructive systems of governance and administration that actively includes *all* ethnic and racial groups into a potentially unified (though not unanimous) participative system. Hispanics will be confronted with the necessity and responsibility for creating a new local political reality—a reality based on “a state of collective autonomy in which [Hispanics] have to proportionally share the power to determine rationally and freely the nature and direction of their collective existence” (Fay 1987, p. 205).

An important question, in light of present political and social realities, is whether local elected officials and informal community leaders can proactively initiate and sustain reforms and thereby prevent major litigation and social conflicts. Is there a responsive political and local government climate conducive and committed to Hispanic efforts, strength, unity and empowerment sufficient to peacefully propel these dramatic changes into the more permanent and lasting fabric of LACO's future?

In response to similar concerns, the 1993 National Council of La Raza report on Hispanic policy agendas and directions concludes that “There is little basis for confidence that existing policies can effectively and significantly reduce labor market discrimination against Hispanics” (Perez and Martinez 1993, p. 41). This conclusion is echoed in a recent (1993) commission report on state and local government and public service: “Our political system is a reflection of our individual values and priorities. It will function properly only when it is led by those for whom leadership means more than the inclination to read public opinion polls. . . . The process has to start with executive leadership. It is the act of leading by example that more often makes the difference. It is this quality that is at the heart of public leadership, and it is this element that in too many cases is lacking” (Winter 1993, pp. vii-viii).

Given these considerations Hispanics must view with suspicion the future credibility of reactive government proclamations, commitments and concerns. In addition to the need for improving official commitments and implementation of equal employment programs, corresponding and supportive change is needed in civil service and personnel systems and practices. These modifications must include ethical monitoring and reporting, and accountability for political and organizational results. These recommendations do not require new or additional funding or financial resources—just a new distribution and implementa-

tion of existing activities and resources already allocated for affirmative action and equal employment responsibilities. However, should unanticipated additional funding be required it certainly would only amount to a fraction of what local government has already expended defending a defunct affirmative action system in terms of low morale, loss of valuable employees, grievance hearings, and financial settlements to avoid even more costly litigation.

Class action litigation, on a scale that initially resulted in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, may be the only conceivable legal recourse to the elimination of this region's institutional discrimination and artificial barriers to Hispanic employment equity. The Hispanic population will have to pursue efforts of this magnitude in order to compel compliance from those in power. "Citizenship in the public domain can require the strengthening of citizens to challenge their elected representatives. They have the right to resort to the courts and to the protection of the law to complain. . . against local authority" (Ranson & Stewart 1989, p. 17). Although short-term *solutions* do not seem effective, short-term *preparatory - efforts* preceding litigation are essential.

Preparatory activities might include the following: (1) eradication of artificial and destructive segmentation between the public and private sectors so as to bring to bear the combined influence and pressure from the private business and corporate sector; (2) the denial of election and reelection support and resources to uncommitted and ineffective Hispanic and non-Hispanic candidates, and challenges and refusal to campaign rhetoric. Both office holders and candidates must be required to present their strategies for *addressing work force discrimination*; and (3) the development of an Hispanic legal *offense* fund, and an umbrella Hispanic public employees association and oversight committee through which might come the formulation of legal and political strategies. The potential success of these actions, while activating a process of Hispanic empowerment, are further advanced by a corresponding intensified citizenship and education and voter registration effort. Increasing citizenship (and thus voter turnout) further expands and actualizes Hispanic empowerment and determination over their collective future.

## ENDNOTES

1. Portions of the economic and salary analysis originally appeared in *Perspectives on equal employment for Hispanics in local government in Los Angeles County* (pp. 28-37) by J. Yaffe, 1994, Los Angeles, CA: The Latino Coalition for a New Los Angeles. Used by permission.

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# THE COLORADO HISPANIC LEAGUE: A LATINO PUBLIC POLICY SYSTEM

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of a Latino<sup>1</sup> empowerment model can be the influencing of public policy. This paper proposes that the theory of coalitional politics and a social production model can be used as foundations for developing a Hispanic public policy system within any community. It also provides an example of such a system, the Hispanic League of Colorado, and the results of a survey designed to measure legislators' perceptions about the impact of such a system in the state of Colorado.

The paper covers 1) using the form of coalitional politics and a rationale for using it in the context of public policy; 2) three components to be used in impacting public policy; and 3) the methods for engaging and maintaining such a system. Often times the issues surrounding the formation of coalitions are sensitive and multifaceted. Therefore, defining outcomes and agreeing upon strategies becomes the primary challenge for the coalition.

## THEORY OF COALITIONAL POLITICS

Coalitions often form because of the empowerment gained in bringing together diverse groups with the same interests on an issue. Moreover, they can be formed with any combination of groups, organizations, and individuals. Coalitions potentially provide an increased level of resources, including expertise, political leverage, and finances. In some cases, coalition members may have distinct philosophical differences that are set aside (or at times not discussed) while dealing with the issue. For example, the issue of abortion has coalesced theological adversaries such as fundamentalist Baptist groups and Roman Catholic groups. While there has been much disagreement on scriptural interpretation and theology, there is agreement on the unacceptability of abortion.

Villareal and Hernandez (in Villareal and Hernandez, 1991) define empowerment of the Latino community as a process and identify the conditions for empowerment to occur. Specifically, they hypothesize that Latino leaders have relied upon a theory of coalitions as a strategy for empowerment. Such a theory is based on Stone's (1989) concept of regime politics which essentially characterizes "informal arrangements that surround and complement governmental authority." (pg. 3) Stone stresses that "informal arrangements are by no means peculiar to...government." (1989, pg. 3) Important to point out is Stone's observation that the "informal arrangements through which governing decisions are made are driven by two needs: 1) institutional scope, and 2) cooperation." (1989, pg. 6)

Villareal and Hernandez (1991) have defined coalition formation as a process initiated by a single person or group with the purpose of obtaining a specific goal. The process they have identified includes: "1) an initiation/formation phase, 2) maintenance/growth phase, and 3) an achievement/dissolution phase." (pg. 191) Furthermore, the conditions that must be met before coalitions can succeed include an agreement that must be reached on the basic goals for the alliance; and, assuming such agreement exists, an assessment of the potential sacrifice of material benefits, ideological differences, or cultural homogeneity that must be made. (Garcia and de la Garza, 1977)

The application of the theory of coalitional politics for developing a public policy system would engender a more detailed process to be engaged by the coalition. This process would include:

- *Identification of the Coalition's Goals*

Paramount to the success of the organization is the articulation of clear, agreed-upon goals to be pursued by the coalition.

- *Comparison of Respective Organizational Missions and Goals*

The coalition members need to compare their respective missions

and goals so as to understand the respective roles to be carried out and contributions to be made to the coalition.

• *Negotiation*

There must be some negotiations relative to roles to be played, the contributions to be made, and the benefits that can be expected by each coalition member and the overall coalition.

• *Integration of Public Policy Components*

Blumenthal (1986) describes a movement followed by neoconservatives in their attempt to influence public policy during the decade of the sixties and seventies. In influencing public policy, the neoconservatives developed a system that had three major components: initiating research, maintaining an information dissemination network, and formulating legislation/public policy. Most importantly, there was clarity about the roles to be played by the various members of the system within each component.

Taking the three public policy components (initiating research, maintaining information dissemination networks, and formulating legislation/public policy), communities seeking to address Latino issues should, therefore, identify the individuals and organizations to be involved in each component. The membership in each component can include public and private sector groups such as community based organizations, chambers of commerce, and advocacy groups. Depending on the legal restrictions placed upon the organizations, roles for each organization may be inherently proscribed or restricted. For example, an organization having a 501(c)3 Internal Revenue designation may not engage in direct attempts to influence public policy, i.e., lobbying. However, such an organization can be involved in providing information to educate interested parties about the issues.

## POTENTIAL ISSUES FOR HISPANIC COALITIONS

Flores (in Villareal and Hernandez, 1991) applies Derrida's Deconstruction theory to coalitions. Deconstruction is the notion that within every construct, both theoretical and physical, lies the seed of destruction of that construct's movement to another evolutionary level. This notion is important in analyzing prospective threats to the operation of an Hispanic public policy system that would rely significantly upon interdependence among the membership. For example, respective organizational missions, organizational histories, and individual personalities may be deconstructive factors to consider.

Also, while many organizations may desire to cooperate with others in

dealing with Latino issues, there may be constraining factors. For example, organizations may grapple with issues such as the legal restrictions mentioned earlier, and there are opportunity costs of redirecting resources. Therefore, each organization must continuously evaluate its role, expected level of contribution to the system, and the impact of such a role upon its own operation.

Neighbor (in Villareal and Hernandez, 1991) states that “to remain viable, each coalition must have access to substantial political resources, and each must satisfy its constituents’ interests sufficiently to maintain their allegiance.” (pg. 12) The political resources are the political networks and levers to which the respective members have access and control. Therefore, each member must feel some degree of commitment to the various issues that may arise and be addressed by the coalition. However, this rarely happens. That is, the level of interest and support for each issue will vary among the coalition members. Interest wanes and depending on the sets of issues addressed by the coalition, some members may even withdraw in time. Therefore, one working hypothesis for the development and implementation of a successful Latino public policy system would be that organizations would retain membership in the coalition as long as perceived benefits would outweigh the costs of maintaining membership in such a system. Moreover, the coalition leaders must continue to manage the issues and efforts in such a way as to keep all members at the table and actively involved. This implies a coalition management system that provides for achieving objectives without imposing a rigid structure of control, i.e., a social production model.

### SOCIAL PRODUCTION MODEL

Stone (1989) differentiates between a social control model and a social production model. The former model focuses on the cost of compliance—the difficulty of maintaining a comprehensive scheme of control. The latter, based on the Tillian view of society, focuses on “how to bring about enough cooperation among disparate community elements to get things done—and to do so in the absence of an overarching command structure or unifying system of thought.” (pg. 227)

Of importance in the social production model is the ability to marshal needed political and financial resources to carry out a public policy initiative. “The implications of defining governance in this way—not as a task of comprehensive control, but as bringing together essential elements in an otherwise fragmented world—are far reaching.” (Stone, 1989, pg. 227) This social production model establishes a basis for a public policy system.

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## COMPONENTS OF A HISPANIC PUBLIC POLICY SYSTEM

The purpose of such a public policy system is to influence public policy through the establishment of a coalition among interested organizations. The outcome of such a system would be an influence on public policy as a means to improve the quality of life for the Hispanic community.

One prospective arrangement of a coalition of organizations interested in public policy affecting the Hispanic community can be the organization of a Hispanic public policy system. This coalition would operate under the assumption that (1) there are issues around which the organizations would rally, (2) the desired outcomes for an issue or several issues would be negotiated, and (3) the respective issue(s) would dictate the level of interest and subsequent participation for each organization. Given these assumptions, the system would include three components: initiating research; maintaining an information dissemination network; and formulating and supporting legislation/public policy.

### **Initiating Research**

The purpose of this component is to identify problems, raise policy questions, and establish research objectives around issues impacting the Latino community. The research can be conducted by experts from various parts of the community, including institutions of higher learning, think tanks, community-based organizations, and other interested groups. It is more meaningful that the research meet the standards related to validity, reliability, and generalizability. To include such research can help these endeavors by providing standards for quality and success. However, political conditions sometimes require the coalition to eschew such standards.

### **Maintaining an Information Dissemination Network**

This step interfaces the esoteric world of academic research and the practical world of information sharing. The organization(s) involved in the component must: 1) be proficient in translating research findings into information understandable and useable by non-academics; 2) be knowledgeable about and have access to the various information networks within the community; and 3) conduct a series of information sharing sessions, e.g. seminars, workshops, etc. designed to inform the public about the findings.

### **Formulating and Supporting Legislation/Public Policy**

This component is designed to promote the development of legislation and/or public policy for addressing the research issues identified in the previous step. One (or more) of the member organizations would be responsible for cooperating with the appropriate policy makers to formulate and support public policy for the relevant issue.

Since the model is a system, each component is viable yet interdependent, implying that the process can begin with any component. For example, one can begin with the process of formulating and supporting legislation/public policy. However, one would need to collect research information and have begun some level of information sharing for the legislation/public policy to gain support. Such a public policy system was initiated in Colorado.

## **THE HISPANIC LEAGUE OF COLORADO**

As a result of the passage of an English-Only initiative in Colorado, several Latino organizations formed the Hispanic League of Colorado in August 1990. The League was formed as a community interest coalition with a mission of helping to shape public policy as a means to improve the quality of life for Hispanics in Colorado. Its membership was open to any interested person. The governance structure included two types of directors: 1) by organizations, i.e., 16 Hispanic organizations, and 2) by regions of the state (the state was partitioned into 15 regions) with each region allocated a number of representatives based on population. The League was incorporated as a 501(c)4 organization, i.e., a lobbying organization.

The League's organizational membership represented various sectors of the community, e.g., business, non-profit charitable organizations (501(c)3 organizations), advocacy, labor, and political parties (Republican and Democratic). Moreover, the League took the stance that it would be non-partisan in its approach to making policy decisions and supporting public policy.

The Hispanic League was established as a public policy system. This meant developing the capacity to initiate research, maintain an information dissemination network, and formulate and promote public policy. Such a system has been evident during the past three years, as the League has been involved in various issues such as redistricting, reapportionment, school reform, and a host of other issues.

For example, using the 1990 census data, the League conducted an analysis of the demographic changes and prospective impact of these changes on the election of Hispanics to the U.S. Congress and the Colorado legislature. Working with the Southwest Voter Registration Project, Hispanic League members conducted a series of workshops throughout the state designed to educate the various communities about the prospective impacts.

In cooperation with various interest groups, the leadership of the Colorado legislature, and community groups, the League participated in the development of legislation that, although not optimal in its design, improved the chances of electing Colorado's first Hispanic to the U.S. House of Representatives.

### THREATS TO THE COALITION'S EXISTENCE

Consistent with Derrida's Deconstructon Theory, the Hispanic League has experienced threats to its existence as a coalition. Its first threat was a philosophical difference over the Persian Gulf War, with some groups wanting to take an official stance against the war, while others (i.e., the G.I. Forum—an Hispanic veterans group) threatened to withdraw from the coalition (and, in fact, did withdraw). Eventually, the G.I. Forum returned to the League.

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The issue of nonpartisanship is crucial to maintaining an image of neutrality, thus allowing all vantage points to be discussed and considered.

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Another threat has been the concern on the part of the major political parties (Democratic and Republican) that the League, at times, is too partisan (this accusation comes from both parties, with the Democrats saying it is too Republican, and the Republicans feeling the League to be too Democrat). The issue of nonpartisanship is crucial to maintaining an image of neutrality, thus allowing all vantage points to be discussed and considered.

### SURVEY OF THE COLORADO LEGISLATURE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE HISPANIC LEAGUE

The Hispanic League identified four priorities for the 1992 Colorado legislative session: congressional redistricting, legislative reapportionment, school finance, and health care (mental and medical). As one measure of the impact of the Hispanic League on state legislation, a survey of the 100 Colorado state legislators was conducted in the spring of 1992 following the end of the legislative session.

#### **Survey Description and Methodology**

The objective of the survey was to elicit the perceptions of the legislature about the impact of the Hispanic League on the four priority areas. The survey include three types of variables:

**Demographic:** ethnicity, gender, age, education, employment, income, party affiliation, district size, and tenure in the legislature;



**Relational:** whether the legislator *had heard* about the League, *knew constituents, had contact* with League members, *the number of contacts* with League members, and *the length of time since the last contact*; and

**Impact:** whether the legislator *knew the League's position* on the issue, *agreed with League's position*, if *information provided by the League was useful*, and whether the *action taken by the League influenced the legislator's position*.

The survey and a self-addressed envelope were sent to each legislator at the end of the 1992 session. Thirty-four of the 100 Colorado legislators responded to the survey.

## DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Of the respondents 70.4% were male. Approximately 60% of the respondents were over 50 years of age; over 91% of those responding had at least a Bachelor of Arts degree. Eighty-two percent of the respondents were Caucasian. The ethnic/racial minority respondents included one African American, one Native American, and two Hispanics. The employment background of the respondents included: 44% were self employed, 44% were employees, and 12% were retired. Fifty percent of the respondents had incomes of \$50,000 or more. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were Republicans and 32% were Democrat. Approximately 80% of the respondents represented districts with populations between fifty and one hundred thousand. More than 91% had served at least two years in the legislature.

Of those responding, 97% had heard of the Hispanic League; and 55% knew constituents in their district who were members of the League. Furthermore, 44% had had some contact with Hispanic League members during the legislative session.

In the survey, the legislators responded to questions about each priority area. For each priority area, each legislator was surveyed to determine the level of impact made by the Hispanic League. The *Level of Impact* included the extent to which 1) the legislator knew the League's position on each priority; 2) there was agreement between the League and the legislator on the positions taken on the priority; 3) the information about the priority provided to legislator by the League was useful; and 4) the action taken by the League had a direct impact on how the legislator voted.

### Analysis of the Response Patterns

There were several types of analysis conducted: 1) an analysis of the number of responses per priority area and impact level, i.e., a breakdown of the number of responses received by *Priority Area* by *Level of Impact*; 2) an analysis of the number of responses categorized as *Agree/Strongly Agree* for each variable; and 3) cross tabulation of the relational and impact variables. The response patterns merit an analysis since they

provide some insight into the legislators' perception of the League. The first type of analysis provides some indication as to the extent that legislators were willing to share their perceptions of the League. The second type provides feedback as to what those perceptions are. The third type of analysis was designed to determine if one could predict the impact made on public policy by the Hispanic League as a result of the relationships established with the Colorado legislature.

### **Analysis of Legislators' Willingness to Share Perceptions**

Table 1 provides the results of the breakdown of the response patterns related to the legislators' willingness to share perceptions.

### **Results**

The results by priority area indicate that Congressional Redistricting attracted the highest degree of responses. Each priority area could potentially receive up to 136 responses (34 responses/level x four levels); the total number of possible responses was 544 (136 responses/priority area x 4 priority areas). The results by Priority Area indicate that Congressional Redistricting with the highest percentage of responses (80) had almost twice the response rate as Health Care which received the lowest percentage of responses (43).

The data also indicate that the *willingness* of the legislators to respond to the impact levels of *agreed with position*, *usefulness of information*, and *impact on vote* drop dramatically for school finance and health care compared to congressional redistricting and legislative reapportionment. An analysis of the *Level of Impact* variable indicates that the legislators were willing to respond to whether or not they knew the League's position on the issue. But, while most respondents knew the Hispanic League's position on the four priorities, there were dramatic differences in their willingness to list whether they agreed or not with the League's positions on the issues. There was similar reluctance to share their perceptions on the degree of utility of information disseminated by the League on the respective issues or the impact.

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted to determine if one could predict a relationship between the priority areas and the legislators' willingness to share their respective perceptions. The results did not provide statistically significant differences at the .05 level. That is, the null hypothesis that the two variables were independent was not rejected.

While it is not clear why legislators were reluctant to share their perceptions about the League, one can speculate. One possible explanation may be that in some cases the respondent was unsure about the response and, given the forced response format used in the questionnaire, may have chosen not to respond at all.

### **Analysis of the Legislature's Perceptions of the Hispanic League**

The second type of analysis involved the legislators' perceptions of the impact of the Hispanic League in the four priority areas. A four-point

Table 1

## Breakdown of Response Patterns in Survey: Legislators' Willingness to Share Perceptions

Impact	Priority Area				Total %
	Congressional Redistricting	Legislative Reapportionment	School Finance	Health Care	
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Knew Position	34 (100)	32 (94)	33 (97)	33 (97)	132 (97)*
Agreed Position	26 (76)	22 (65)	11 (32)	8 (24)	67 (49)*
Information Useful	24 (71)	19 (56)	12 (35)	8 (24)	63 (46)*
Impact on Vote	25 (74)	18 (53)	11 (32)	9 (26)	63 (46)*
Total	109	91	67	58	325
(% of Total) possible	(80)*	(67)*	(49)*	(43)*	(60)**

n= number of persons responding to this question

(%)=percentage of respondents: (# responses/34)

\*calculated as #responses for column/136 possible responses

\*\*calculated as 325 responses received/544 possible responses

Calculated Chi-Square: 13.99 d.f.=9 (p>.05)

**Table 2**

**Breakdown of Response Patterns in Survey: Legislators' Perceptions of the Hispanic League  
Priority Area**

Impact	Congressional Redistricting n (%)	Legislative Reapportionment n (%)	School Finance n(%)	Health Care n(%)	Total %
Knew Position	22 (79)	22 (65)	12 (35)	8 (24)	64 (49)*
Agreed Position	14 (54)	14 (64)	9 (82)	6 (75)	43 (64)*
Information Useful	17 (71)	14 (74)	10 (83)	6 (75)	47 (74)*
Impact on Vote	7 (28)	7 (39)	7 (64)	7 (28)	28 (49)*
Total	64	57	38	27	186
(% of Total) possible	(60)*	(63)*	(58)*	(47)*	(57)**

n= number of persons responding to this question

(%)=percentage of respondents responding Agree/Strongly Agree: (#responses of Agree/Strongly Agree/Total Responses Received for the category)

\*calculated as Total Responses of Agree/Strongly Agree/Total Responses received for the variable

\*\*calculated 186 responses/325 possible responses

Calculated Chi-Square: 3.59 d.f.=9 (p>.05)

Likert scale was used (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) in the questionnaire. The numbers in the cells in Table 2 are the number of respondents who *Agreed/Strongly Agreed* that the Hispanic League had some degree of impact on the priority areas during the 1991/92 legislative session. The numbers in the parenthesis represent the percentage of respondents who *Agreed/Strongly Agreed*.

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Legislators felt that the Hispanic League was more influential in the congressional redistricting issue that with the other issues.

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The results indicate that of the total possible number of responses (325), 57% *Agreed/Strongly Agreed* that the Hispanic League had some level of impact on the four priority areas. Legislators felt that the Hispanic League was more influential in the congressional redistricting issue than with the other issues.

Of those responding to the statements for each priority area, the range of those who *Agreed/Strongly Agreed* that the Hispanic League had some level of impact on the priority area was from 24 percent to 83 percent. When looking at all four levels of each variable the range was from 27 percent for health care to 73 percent for congressional redistricting.

#### **Cross Tabulations of Impact and Relational Variables for All Priorities**

A cross tabulation of the impact and relational variables was conducted to measure the ability to predict the impact of the League given its relationship with the legislature. This analysis allowed for assessing the overall approach used by the League.

Appendices A through C include the results of the cross tabulations for each of the three impact variables and each of the three relational variables. Appendix A depicts the results of predicting the dependent variable *Agreement with Hispanic League Position* when the value of each category (Knowing Constitutents, Contact with Constituents, Number of Contacts with Constituents, and Last Contact with Constituents) of the independent relational variable are known. Appendix B includes the results of predicting the dependent variable *Hispanic League Information Was Useful* when the value of the independent variables are known. Appendix C includes the analysis of the dependent variable *Hispanic League Impact on Vote* when the value of the independent variables are known. A Yule's Q measure of association for a 2 x 2 table was calculated; also, a statistical test for Yule's Q was conducted. The statistical test was a one tailed test ( $Q > 0$ ) with a critical z-statistic of 1.64.

#### **Dependent Variable: Agreement with Hispanic League Position**

The analysis of each independent variable with the dependent variable *Agreement with the Hispanic League Position* indicates a negative relation-

ship. That is, as the level of relationship between the Hispanic League and the legislators increased, there was a decrease in the likelihood of agreement between the two groups. However, as depicted in Appendix A none of the results were statistically significant at the .05 level. Therefore, there was no difference between the results and chance.

#### **Dependent Variable: Hispanic League Information Was Useful**

When analyzing the perceived utility of the information provided by the Hispanic League, Tables 7-10 in Appendix B provide insight. All four impact variables were significant at the .05 level.

If the legislators know some constituents in their district (in contrast to not knowing any) (See Table 7), they are more than three times as likely to agree that the information was useful. When legislators did not know constituents belonging to the League, there was virtually no difference in the perceptions of the utility of the information.

When contact was made, the legislators were almost twice as likely to find the information useful as when no contact was made (Table 8). There was no difference in the proportion of those agreeing and disagreeing when they were not contacted.

As depicted in Table 9, there was two and one-half times the support that the information was useful when the legislators were visited at least once. When the contact was made (See Table 10) within the previous few months the likelihood for support was almost five fold.

#### **Dependent Variable: Hispanic League Action Impact on Vote**

As depicted in Tables 11-14 in Appendix C, the legislators generally agreed that the League's actions impacted their respective votes to some degree. All four impact variables were statistically significant at the .05 level in predicting the impact of the Hispanic League action. That is, knowing the constituents, making contact with them, increasing the number of contacts, and making such contacts regularly increased the chance of having an impact on the legislators' vote.

Table 11 indicates that legislators were 5.3 times more likely to agree that the League's action made an impact when legislators knew some constituents in their district. On the contrary, the data indicate that legislators were more than 2.7 times likely to disagree that such an impact occurred when the legislator did not know Hispanic League members in the district.

When contacted by League membership (See Table 12), the legislator was one and one-half times more likely to agree that the League had an impact. On the other hand, when there was no contact, the legislators were more than twice as likely to disagree that the League had an impact on the vote.

As shown in Table 13, the legislators were twenty times more likely to agree that the League had an impact if at least one contact by League membership had been made. However, when no contacts were made, the legislators were five times more likely to disagree about such an impact.

If such contact was made within the previous few months (in contrast to no contact) the legislator was more than 8 times more likely to agree that the League had an impact on the vote. Also, when contacted the legislators were 21% more likely to state that the League had made some impact.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR A PUBLIC POLICY SYSTEM

The results of the legislative survey generally supports the ability of a coalition such as the Colorado Hispanic League to influence public policy. The influence was more noteworthy when legislators were familiar with the League and its stand on the issues. That is, through the implementation of relational-type activities, i.e., sharing the League's goals and priorities and maintaining regular contact, the Hispanic League was effective in influencing legislation.

The implications for a model such as the Colorado Hispanic League become clear as Latinos attempt to make a mark on public policy. Such a mark provides a sense of accomplishment for the principles of coalition building within the Hispanic community.

Also, the extent to which members of the coalition or those being influenced are willing to share their perceptions about such influence, a coalitional relationship can be improved. Moreover, measuring the level of impact of such influence has implications for the social production model, i.e., getting things done.

A coalition's credibility can be affected by the willingness of others outside the coalition to provide feedback on the trustworthiness and effectiveness of the coalition. It is incumbent upon the coalition to elicit such ongoing, frank, and timely feedback. At stake may be the future of the coalition.

## ENDNOTES

1. In this paper, the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* are used interchangeably.

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APPENDIX A

Impact Variable: Agreement with the Hispanic League Position by  
Relational Variable (All Categories)

**Table 3**

Know Constituents/Agreement

Know Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	25 (38)	13 (19)	38 (57)
Disagree	21 (31)	8 (12)	29 (43)
Total	46 (69)	21 (31)	67

Yule's Q= -.15                      z= -.57 (p>.05)

**Table 4**

Contact with Constituents/Agreement

Contact with Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	24 (36)	19 (28)	43 (64)
Disagree	14 (21)	10 (15)	24 (36)
Total	38 (57)	29 (43)	67

Yule's Q= -.11                      z= -.39 (p>.05)

**Table 5**

Number of Contacts/Agreement

Number of Contacts	At Least One	None	Total
Agree	32 (51)	7 (11)	39 (62)
Disagree	20 (32)	4 (6)	24 (38)
Total	52 (83)	11 (17)	63

Yule's Q= -.04                      z= -.12 (p>.05)

**Table 6**

Last Contacts/Agreement

Last Agreement	Two Weeks	Never	Total
Agree	33 (50)	11 (17)	44 (67)
Disagree	17 (26)	5 (8)	22 (34)
Total	50 (76)	16 (24)	66

Yule's Q= -.06                      z= -.20 (p>.05)



APPENDIX B

Impact Variable: *Hispanic League Information Useful* by Relational Variable (All Categories)

**Table 7**

Know Constituents/Useful

Know Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	38 (58)	9 (14)	47 (72)
Disagree	11 (17)	7 (11)	18 (28)
Total	46 (69)	21 (31)	67

Yule's Q= -.15                      z=-.57 (p>.05)

**Table 8**

Contact with Constituents/Useful

Contact with Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	31 (49)	16 (25)	47 (74)
Disagree	8 (13)	8 (13)	16 (26)
Total	39 (62)	24 (38)	67

Yule's Q= .32                      z= 5.71 (p<.05)

**Table 9**

Number of Contacts/Useful

Number of Contacts	At Least One	None	Total
Agree	40 (61)	11 (17)	51 (77)
Disagree	11 (17)	4 (6)	15 (23)
Total	51 (77)	15 (23)	66

Yule's Q= .14                      z= 20. (p<.05)

**Table 10**

Last Contacts/Useful

Last Contact	Two Weeks	Never	Total
Agree	39 (62)	7 (11)	46 (73)
Disagree	10 (16)	7 (11)	17 (27)
Total	49 (78)	14 (22)	66

Yule's Q= .56                      z= 2.55 (p<.05)

APPENDIX C

Impact Variable: *Hispanic League Action Impact on Vote* by Relational Variable (All Categories)

**Table 11**

Know Constituents/Impact

Know Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	24 (39)	4 (6)	28 (45)
Disagree	21 (33)	14 (22)	35 (55)
Total	45 (72)	18 (28)	63

Yule's Q= .6 z= 2.7 (p<.05)

**Table 12**

Contact with Constituents/Impact

Contact with Constituents	Yes	No	Total
Agree	20 (32)	8 (13)	28 (45)
Disagree	17 (27)	18 (28)	35 (55)
Total	37 (59)	26 (41)	67

Yule's Q= .45 z= 2.11 (p<.05)

**Table 13**

Number of Contacts/Impact

Number of Contacts	At Least One	None	Total
Agree	25 (41)	1 (2)	26 (43)
Disagree	27 (44)	8 (13)	35 (57)
Total	52 (85)	9 (15)	61

Yule's Q= .76 z= 3.27 (p<.05)

**Table 14**

Last Contacts/Impact

Last Contact	Two Weeks	Never	Total
Agree	25 (41)	3 (5)	46 (73)
Disagree	21 (34)	12 (20)	17 (27)
Total	46 (75)	14 (25)	61

Yule's Q= .65 z= 3.19 (p<.05)



# COMMENTARY

## HISPANIC VOICES: IS THE PRESS LISTENING?

**Jorge Quiroga**

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### INTRODUCTION

It wasn't so long ago that Hispanics in the United States read with great hope that the 1980s would be the "Decade of the Hispanic."<sup>1</sup> Cover stories in weekly magazines, newspapers and network television examined demographic increases and concluded that Hispanic clout would be felt both in the ballot box and the shopping mall. Certainly, Hispanics attained some significant achievements during the 1980s and their political influence did increase. But the predictions turned out to be vastly exaggerated and the milestones bitter sweet. Hispanic political impact on the Presidential elections of 1984 and 1988 was not conclusive. The income gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanics increased. And the expanded numbers created a backlash among non-Hispanics that produced the Official English movement and a bipartisan anti-immigration sentiment.

The unfulfilled potential of the 1980s has pushed Hispanics into the 1990s with even greater expectations. The U.S. Census projects that early into the 21st Century Hispanics will outnumber blacks as the nation's biggest minority. The extension of the Voting Rights Act to include linguistic minorities is promoting the election of Hispanic lawmakers in record numbers. Despite these achievements, the 1990s remains a paradox of increased opportunity and resistance to Hispanic growth in the

U.S. In California, politicians clamor that America has given too much away to its minorities, and Governor Pete Wilson suggests that to save money the government should strip citizenship from the children of undocumented Mexicans born in the U.S. In Texas, the Federal Government orders extra border patrols along the Rio Grande. In Somerville, Massachusetts, which had billed itself as a haven for new immigrants, school officials start demanding passports from students who have noticeable accents.

Hispanics in the U.S. are at a crossroads of economic and political assimilation. Yet the problems of underemployment, health, and education remain great obstacles that threaten continued marginalization. How well Hispanics fare at the turn of the century will, in part, reflect how the press continues to cover their particular issues and concerns. It is the media that shapes public awareness and political opinion. As the American humorist Will Rogers said many years ago, "All I know is just what I read in the papers." Add television, and there is still much truth in Rogers' statement.

Despite an occasional flurry of attention, press indifference toward Hispanics seems to be more the rule rather than the exception. Conversely, despite occasional attempts to engage public opinion through tactics such as boycotts, marches or strikes, Hispanics have remained passive to the inadequate press coverage. The problem itself can be traced to the process of reporting on Hispanics. Reporters and editors habitually seem to speak about Hispanics, not to Hispanics. Journalists are blind to the full range of diversity within this community. I call this the transparency of Hispanics before the American press. It is a curious attribute of being noted, not quite completely ignored, but not fully seen or counted. As such, the media influences how Hispanics view themselves as well as how Anglos perceive Hispanics.

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Despite an occasional flurry of attention, press indifference toward Hispanics seem to be more the rule rather than the exception.

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There is also a correlation between Hispanic communities where there is a lack of political or grassroots development and the lack of qualitative and quantitative press coverage of Hispanics. Where there is a lack of Hispanic clout, the media encourages a homogeneous view of Hispanics.

Dr. Louis DeSipio is a political scientist studying press coverage of Hispanics in America. He says, "The press gives the Anglo audience the wrong impression which allows Anglos to do less for Hispanics because they are not seen as distinct populations that need to be socialized into the American culture."<sup>2</sup> The broadest characteristics about the group are taken from the unadorned statistics that describe an Hispanic underclass. Hispanics are regularly presented by the press as uneducated immigrants

who are unable or unwilling to help or speak for themselves.

I have been a television journalist for nearly 20 years. In 1974 I was hired by WCVB, Boston to create and produce *Aquí*, a weekly program for and about the Hispanic community. Three years later I moved to the newsroom, becoming a reporter for NewsCenter Five, the highest rated television news organization in the Boston market.

Even the better news operations often fail to meet the challenge posed by a changing population. On those rare occasions when the press feels compelled to report on Hispanics, be it Boston or even Los Angeles, the rift between this emerging group and mainstream society seems even greater.

Writing a discussion paper about press coverage of 25 million Hispanics in the U.S. is, in and of itself, a daunting challenge. While there are many similarities in experiences, it is important to note there is no steadfast Hispanic monolith. Miami, for example, is one of the most distinct exceptions. There, Cubans are the majority and define their own press coverage by exerting a dominating influence on the city's economy and politics. San Antonio is also notable for its deep-rooted Hispanic heritage. More than half the city's residents are Mexican American and many can trace their ancestors to the early founding years, one hundred years before the Declaration of Independence. Boston, on the other hand, has a relatively small and diverse Hispanic community; only 10 percent of the city's residents are Hispanic.

For this discussion paper on the relationship between press coverage and Hispanic political development, I have chosen a case study approach. I have looked at the qualitative and quantitative coverage of events in various cities to establish a pattern of coverage of Hispanics as a whole. Some became national events while others received only local coverage. Among the factors that weaken the link between the press and Hispanics are newsroom attitudes, limited knowledge about Hispanics, stereotyping, and employment of Hispanic journalists and inconsistent efforts by Hispanics to hold the press accountable.

### **A Cross Burns in Charlestown**

Twenty-three-year-old Marisol Abreu peered out her living-room window and could hardly believe her eyes. There, in the front courtyard to her apartment a five-foot wooden cross had been set on fire.

"They make me feel like I don't have the right to live here," she said. None of the racial slurs, the hateful stares she'd endured during the time she'd lived in Charlestown hurt as much or seemed as threatening "as the powerful symbol of the burning cross, which is usually associated with the Ku Klux Klan."<sup>3</sup>

That hardened symbol of hate was hardly anonymous. At 7:30 P.M. a crowd of a hundred white teen-agers shamelessly gathered around the burning cross. Insults, taunts and racial slurs were directed at Abreu and other Hispanic residents in the public housing projects where she and her three-year-old daughter lived. No, this wasn't the 1950s in the deep

South, nor was it the 1970s when court ordered bussing stirred deep racial animosity in many Northern cities. This ugly scene took place in 1993, on a raw damp October evening in Boston, a city with its share of unhealed racial scars.

How the city's newspapers and television news covered this troubling episode reveals much about the media's detached relationship with Hispanics in the city and the profound degree to which Hispanic leaders perceive themselves alienated by the press.

### **No Hispanics in the Rolodex**

In Boston, the cross burning incident capped a night of violence following the stabbing of three white youths by a Hispanic teen-ager as retaliation for alleged harassment. Several hundred angry white residents chased the 18-year-old Hispanic suspect into a friend's apartment in the Bunker Hill Projects in Charlestown. As dumpsters were set ablaze, the mob screamed obscenities and racial slurs. Dozens of police were summoned to the rescue. Under heavy security, the Hispanic youth was arrested and whisked out of the building into a police vehicle.

The next morning, the *Boston Globe* wrote of a brewing racial confrontation: "Police speculated that the stabbings came after some youths had slashed the tires of three cars believed to be owned by the suspect and his friends. White youths are believed to be responsible for the tire slashings."<sup>4</sup>

Press accounts dealt with the facts, the racial framework of the violence and the changing demographics in the Charlestown's public housing. Once, residents in the 1,111 unit complex were all white. Today, they are 62 percent white, 17 percent Hispanic, 11 percent black and 9 percent Asian.

No one would excuse the bloody, alleged attack of the Hispanic suspect or the frenzied reaction by the white mob. But had this "race riot" involved black victims and a burning cross or Jews and Nazi anti-Semitic graffiti, the press in Boston would have certainly contacted community leaders. The spontaneous reaction from those groups would have also been more fervent.

Curiously, while two Hispanic eyewitnesses were interviewed, reporters did not seek out opinions from Hispanic leaders. It seemed as if there were no Hispanic names in the newsroom Rolodex. Reporters who felt the need to speak to Hispanic leaders were satisfied with simply interviewing the Hispanic director of the Boston Housing Authority, David Cortiella.

"Any community that is undergoing transition — where new neighbors are moving in—will have difficulties." Cortiella told the *Boston Herald* as he inspected the projects the next day.<sup>5</sup>

Speaking to a WCVB reporter, Cortiella warned, "Don't make it more than what it is. This is kids fighting kids."<sup>6</sup>

That "spin" came from Cortiella, the city official looking to calm a volatile situation. Later, Cortiella expressed dismay that other Hispanic voices were not sought out by the press. "If this had been a black/white incident, the *Globe* and the *Herald* would have certainly flipped through

their Rolodexes and invited reaction from a whole range of black community leaders and politicians," he said.<sup>7</sup>

Cortiella says when he didn't read any interviews with other Hispanic leaders in the city he called the *Globe* reporter covering the story and complained. "I even had to give him the names of three Hispanic leaders, but it was me giving him leads, trying to help him write the story."<sup>8</sup>

The story Cortiella wanted was not written. Subsequent reports did not include Hispanics in Boston representing a larger constituency. It was a missed opportunity to build bridges between the press and Hispanics.

Equally damning was the passivity of Hispanic leaders themselves. Their silence was so deafening that a week later it forced the *Globe's* Efrain Hernandez Jr., one of a handful of Hispanic reporters in the city, to write an analysis of it.

"For many in the city's Hispanic community, the lack of public outrage by Hispanic activists since the cross burning and other racial unrest in Charlestown has itself been an outrage. Some residents saw a lost opportunity to highlight the complex barriers faced by Hispanics in the city because, at least in public, activists remained largely silent."<sup>9</sup>

Hernandez later explained why so many remained so silent, "Latino leaders were hesitant to get involved because they felt the Hispanic kids were not innocent bystanders, that they were partly to blame for the violence that first night. Some activists felt they had to be careful. They were frustrated about the cross burning. They really did not know what to do. It shows people are intimidated by the media."<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to meaningful coverage of Hispanics in the United States, the American press chooses a passive role. The reasons and consequences have created a dysfunctional dynamic; distancing the press and Hispanics from each other. At times, Hispanic leaders and organizations have been indecisive in responding to specific events. Sometimes when they do react, they demonstrate a lack of sophistication and knowledge about using the media. The press, likewise has often shown a broad lack of understanding and awareness of Hispanics even in the aftermath of a confrontation thick with racial overtones, like the Charlestown melee and cross burning. Once again, reporters and editors opted to talk *about* Hispanics rather than to talk *to* them.

Maybe it seems simpler not to commit time and effort to understand a group that defies easy definition. What is a Hispanic after all? The answer varies.

Nearly 10 percent of the nation's population of 250 million is Hispanic. Although you can find Hispanics in every state, the majority, or nearly nine of every ten, live in just nine states: New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, New York, Florida, Nevada, and New Jersey.

Mexican Americans form the largest group accounting for 60 percent of the nation's Hispanic population. Puerto Ricans are the second largest group representing 12 percent of all Hispanics, followed by Cuban Americans at 5 percent. The remaining fourth, or 23 percent, come from the Dominican Republic and the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America.



Almost two-fifths or 38 percent of all Hispanics are foreign born.<sup>11</sup> Others are multi-generation Americans and still others have ancestors whose residences predate our nation's birth. About 62 percent of the Hispanic population was born in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Yet, influenced by the continued influx of immigration, Spanish is our nation's second language, spoken at home by over 17 million people. Among native born Hispanics the use of English increases with each generation. Among the native born, 62 percent of Mexican Americans, 50 percent of Puerto Ricans and 31 percent of Cubans speak English predominantly or exclusively at home.<sup>13</sup>

Felix Gutierrez, a fourth generation Californian, expresses a common sentiment among many Mexican Americans when he says, "My great-grandparents didn't cross the border. The border crossed them."<sup>14</sup>

For many, it is also hard to understand the diversity within a series of groups who hold nationality above ethnicity. Dr. Rodolfo de la Garza, a prominent Hispanic political scientist and researcher writes, "Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans have little interaction with each other, most do not recognize that they have much in common culturally, and they do not profess strong affection for each other."<sup>15</sup>

Some even see the term Hispanic itself as a forced label. Richard Rodriguez writes in his book *Days of Obligation*, "Hispanic is not a racial or cultural or geographic or linguistic or economic description. It is a bureaucratic integer. A complete political fiction." But the reality is that the dictionary definition of Hispanic — as someone pertaining to Spain and its language, people and culture — no longer applies in the United States. Today the term Hispanic, along with its colloquial synonym, Latino, refers to people whose origins are traced to Spanish speaking countries of Latin America.<sup>16</sup>

Acknowledging the bureaucratic birth of the term Hispanic in the 1980 U.S. Census, many see that within the context of an Anglo-Saxon majority in America, Hispanics, through a common language and a similar history, do have more in common with each other regardless of national origin.

"A group consciousness is emerging despite our differences" says Raul Yzaguirre, executive director of the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights advocacy group. "It is all contextual." He adds, "We are talking about these things as though they were opposites when in fact we are talking about a set of concentric circles."<sup>17</sup>

From Puerto Ricans in Boston, Salvadorans in Washington D.C. to Mexicans in Los Angeles, to Chileans in Chicago and Cubans in Miami, from every country in Latin America, Black, White, Indian, Mestizos, Hispanics, now account for one of every ten Americans. They are not a single monolithic community, but rather a series of communities as in concentric circles. It is a distinction lost on the mainstream press.

"I do not attribute a maliciousness or an agenda on the part of the networks to 'dis' Hispanics. I really think there is a genuine pervasive and overwhelming ignorance on the part of the networks toward this community," says Lisa Navarrate, a spokesperson at La Raza's headquarters in

Washington, D.C.<sup>18</sup>

Navarrate resists blaming the mainstream media of pernicious racism. "When you talk to the networks, they think Hispanics are immigrants, recent arrivals, that we just got here yesterday, and that most of us are here illegally. There are all kinds of myths and stereotypes that they take as the Gospel truth. When in reality, two-thirds of Hispanics (Mexican Americans) were born in this country. Their roots go back to before the English got here. But we can say that 'til we are blue in the face, and it doesn't quite resonate," Navarrate says.<sup>19</sup>

That is certainly the perception among dozens of Latinos interviewed for this report. From different countries of origin, foreign born or U.S. born, Spanish or English language dominant, from the East Coast or from the West, liberals or conservatives, Democrats or Republicans, there is one consensus: Hispanics are ill-served by the American press.

"There is a lack of understanding as to who Latinos are. The press is still very much driven by the black/white equation. They tend to see us in that context. How are we like blacks and how do we differ from blacks? The census tells them we exist, but they don't understand us in our own right," says Felix Gutierrez of the Freedom Forum and a former journalism professor.<sup>20</sup>

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Dr. DeSipio, a research associate with the Latino National Political Survey based out of the University of Texas in Austin, believes the way the press fails to cover contrasts among Hispanics creates a stereotype among Anglos (a loose term for English-speaking American-born whites of European decent). "They get periodic statistics from the Census Bureau that say things are terrible. Or they give a picture that is accurate for just one person," says DeSipio.<sup>21</sup>

From census reports, publishers and editors learn that Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. If census projections hold true as we enter the 21st century, Hispanics will become the country's largest minority group, surpassing blacks. Due to immigration and high birth rates, the Hispanic population grew over seven times as fast as the rest of the nation's population during the 1980s. (Hispanics increased by 53 percent, in contrast to growth rates of six percent for whites and thirteen percent for non-Hispanic blacks)<sup>22</sup>

Other snapshots show that Hispanics are the least educated, the poorest, and the least likely to be covered by health insurance. Hispanic children are twice as likely to be living in poverty than are non-Hispanic children.<sup>23</sup>

A growing population, extensions to the Voting Rights Act to specific language minorities, and court challenges to district boundaries, during the 1970s and 1980s had considerable political impact. In the Southwest, for example, de la Garza and DeSipio write that, "By freeing the Mexican American vote, the parties, particularly the Democrats in the Southwestern states, have become dependent upon Mexican-American votes for victory."<sup>24</sup> In New York, Hispanic elected representation to city, state and Congress doubled from 11 to 22 between 1986 and the November elections of 1992. Hispanic representation in the 103rd session of Congress, increased 60 percent. The 7 new Hispanic seats expanded the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to 17 members; still only a paltry 3 percent of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives.

The Hispanic political potential continues to be undermined by weak voter participation. Even a record setting 5 million Hispanic voter registrations in 1992 reported by the Southwest Voter Registration Project appears to be little more than treading water.<sup>25</sup> Voter registrations by definition include only voting-age U.S. citizens. Expand the base to include the influx of new immigrants, along with the younger, poorer and less educated traits of Hispanics as a whole, and there is in fact little proportionate progress in voter participation. Rodolfo de la Garza and Louis DeSipio studied the effects of the Voting Rights Act on Hispanics. They conclude that, "Despite significant improvements in eliminating structural barriers to participation and in electing Latinos to office, Latino registration and voting rates nationally have not increased beyond pre-1975 levels."<sup>26</sup>

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"The press seeks opinions from those it perceives to have influence, and in Washington, Hispanics are not there yet."

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Hispanic political influence is further diminished by the very nature of Hispanics who are elected. In Washington, members of the Hispanic Congressional Caucus represent the full political spectrum: liberals, moderates and conservatives. Fourteen members are Democrats and three are Republicans. Unlike the Black Congressional Caucus, Hispanics in Capitol Hill rarely vote as a single block. Some of today's most pressing national needs — welfare reform, crime, national health insurance, job creation, substance abuse, immigration and AIDS — have a disproportionate impact on Hispanics, but in Washington, when the national press covers these issues, Hispanics are seldom heard from. Their opinions are rarely sought. George Condon, Washington bureau chief for Copley News Service and the president of the White House Press Corps Association, does not mince words when he says, "The press seeks opinions from those it perceives to have influence, and in Washington, Hispanics are not there yet."<sup>27</sup>

Quantitative data provided by the U.S. Census has outpaced qualitative data available about this group. We know how many there are, how much they earn, where they live, their occupations, their legal status, the language they prefer, but we know much less about their opinions, feelings and values. Dr. de la Garza says, "The nation's knowledge about this group has lagged behind its interest in it, and this knowledge gap has become fertile ground for claims and counterclaims about Hispanics — who they are and what their presence portends for the nation."<sup>28</sup> Lacking substantive facts and/or interest, the press continues to pay minimal attention.

When Louis DeSipio looked at the largest circulation of daily newspapers in 40 major cities in the United States over a six-month period, he found that, "Overall, approximately 60 percent of the papers reviewed daily had no coverage at all...of the remaining 49 percent, the average paper contained 1.6 articles...In other words one would see two articles over about a three-day period."<sup>29</sup>

The population in each of these 40 cities was at least 10 percent Hispanic. The sampling included at least 90 percent of the Cuban, Puerto Rican or Mexican origin populations.

"I was surprised. I actually thought that was low. I thought that because so many papers served cities with large Latino communities, you'd find more written about Latinos," says DeSipio.<sup>30</sup>

The stories written about Hispanics tended to be local. DeSipio found no "national" Hispanic coverage. "Among the papers that do have coverage, few cover the same stories. This finding suggests the absence of explicitly Latino issues that editors uniformly recognize as meeting their papers' criterion for 'national' news."<sup>31</sup>

The relatively little coverage Hispanics do receive usually fits the typical definition of "news."

Emily Rooney, executive producer of *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings* is more blunt saying, "Most news is about conflict."<sup>32</sup>

David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "News, as defined by the people who write, edit, publish and broadcast it, is about the unusual, the aberrant—about triumphs and tragedies, underachievers and overachievers, it's about the extremes of life, not 'normal everyday' life."<sup>33</sup>

"It is only when the majority culture perceives the black cat is crossing its path that anybody says anything about Latinos," says Ray Suarez, host of National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation."<sup>34</sup> The former Chicago reporter watches national and local press coverage of Hispanics from his unique vantage point as the only Hispanic host of a national radio show. "I am in pretty exclusive company."<sup>35</sup>

Suarez, a former Chicago television reporter, says the conflict-driven nature of hard news offers rare opportunities for the public to see Hispanics in a fuller context: "It's either to highlight pathologies, drug sales, gang violence, school drop out rates or to do a Margaret Mead turn on that night's 'Evening News,' by going over to the other side of town and to see what those Mexicans are like."<sup>36</sup>

That is not the case for whites or Anglos who are routinely represented in many different types of news accounts. San Francisco State University journalism professor Erna Smith examined how the mainstream media covered different ethnic groups in the Bay Area.

"Whites were sources for all types of stories, but this was not true for people of color. People of color were more likely than whites to be news sources of crime stories and as a group were cited more frequently in these crime stories."<sup>37</sup>

The degree of one-sided coverage varies between newspapers and television news. The Bay Area may have a 15 percent Hispanic population, yet Smith writes, "On television... 12 percent of the Latinos were sources of crime compared with 14 percent for whites. In newspapers 60 percent of Latinos were sources of crime stories compared with 18 percent of the whites."<sup>38</sup>

The emphasis on news about Hispanic crime carries over from region to region. In San Antonio, Texas Thomas Llaralde looked at specific news coverage on KMOL-TV.

"Hispanics were overrepresented in crime stories and were generally portrayed as criminals, or victims. Thirty-one percent of Hispanic stories were crime related, while 21 percent portrayed Hispanics as victims of natural misfortunes. Within these stories Hispanics were rarely interviewed," Llaralde writes.<sup>39</sup>

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...more than a fourth or 29 percent of Hispanics live below federal poverty levels.

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Of all natural misfortunes afflicting Hispanics, poverty may be the worst. Nationally, more than a fourth or 29 percent of Hispanics live below federal poverty levels. The 3.1 percent increase in Hispanic poverty between 1991 and 1993 is the highest among any ethnic group in the nation. As Hispanic poverty rises, income drops. Per capita income for Hispanics in 1992 was almost half that of whites (whites—\$15,981, blacks—\$ 9,296, Hispanics—\$8,874).<sup>40</sup>

Curiously this emphasis by the press on Hispanic criminality and poverty does not temper an overriding impulse to overlook Hispanics. It is as if they possessed some unnatural quality of transparency to be noticed but not seen with certainty.

### **Symmetry of Exclusion**

The most racially charged incident of the decade provides an excellent example of the media looking through the Hispanic community. The police beating in Los Angeles in 1991 of 25-year-old black motorist Rodney King and the subsequent riots in the spring of 1992 were described by a Special Committee of the California State Assembly as the "worst multi-ethnic conflict in United States history."

Yet the image left from the news coverage of the riots was not really multi-ethnic. After viewing the police beating of King, the subsequent beating of the white truck driver Reginald Denny, and many other videotaped acts of arson and vandalism during the riots, viewers would be pressed not to describe the violence as something other than the rage of blacks against whites and Korean bystanders.

A careful look shows that was hardly the case at all. Hispanics experienced a symmetry of exclusion from beginning to end in the press coverage. They were excluded as perpetrators, as victims and as a community affected by the melee.

The first subtle omission by the press was a failure to consistently report that one of the four “white” officers charged in the beating of 25-year-old Rodney King was of Latino descent. Only one early article in the *Los Angeles Times* noted that as a youth Officer Theodore Briseno was routinely “teased about his Latino heritage by white friends in high school.”<sup>41</sup>

Peter Skerry, a noted scholar on Mexican Americans writes of this omission, “Yet in its news columns and editorials the *Times* has—with this notable exception—consistently referred to Briseno as one of ‘the whites’ who assaulted King. Indeed, in the continuing furor over this incident Briseno’s ethnic background has been almost universally overlooked.”<sup>42</sup>

Neglecting to identify one of the officers as an Hispanic, the media framed the conflict from the outset in the familiar black/white American paradigm of racial conflict. This pattern persisted almost a year later, when the L.A. riots erupted following the acquittal of the four “white” police officers by a Simi Valley jury.

On April 29, 1992, television cameras zoomed in at the intersection of Florence and Normandy Streets in South Central L.A., the epicenter of the riots. From the minute the television crews went “live” with the images of black rioters venting their anger against their unsuspecting victims, to the trial in October, 1993 of the two black suspects accused of beating white trucker Reginald Denny, the perception created by the media belies the facts. The press overlooked substantial evidence that the riot was a “class rebellion as well as a race revolt.”<sup>43</sup> Selective reporting and preconceived notions in the press coverage left Hispanics on the cutting room floor.

The problem with the race-tells-all explanation is that it overlooks the central, perhaps even dominant role that Hispanics played in the violence and suffering. According to the Los Angeles Police Department, Hispanics accounted for half of the 8,700 people arrested city-wide during and after the riots; in fact, the L.A.P.D. arrested *more* Hispanics (4,307) than blacks (3,083). Nineteen Hispanics also died during the civil disorders, just three short of the number of black fatalities. And while newscasts featured embittered standoffs between blacks and Korean shop owners, the L.A. mobs ravaged about as many Hispanic businesses as Korean-owned ones.<sup>44</sup>

Television news accounts projected a one-sided picture into living rooms around the world. Looking carefully at how the press framed the story reveals how little journalists knew about the city’s neighborhoods

and the complexity of urban tension that existed.

Familiar with the coverage of minorities in the press from her research in San Francisco, Erna Smith decided to examine local and national television news of the L.A. riots beginning April 29, 1992. Her study included a Korean-language news program and the nation's number one Spanish-language television network, Univision.

There were significant differences in the coverage on different stations. The network news coverage framed the story more in terms of blacks and whites than did the local stations in Los Angeles.... Blacks and whites were the central focus of 96 percent of the network news reports compared to 80 percent of the stories aired on stations in Los Angeles. Conversely, Latinos and Koreans were the central focus of 4 percent of the stories aired on the networks and 18 percent of the stories aired on the Los Angeles stations.<sup>45</sup>

The visual images and the framing of these news stories contrasts with the actual participants and the ethnic diversity of the affected neighborhoods. The areas of Los Angeles most decimated by the riots were heavily populated by Hispanics: Koreatown (80 percent), Pico Union (70 percent) and South Central Los Angeles (45 percent).<sup>46</sup> Those numbers, according to Smith, correspond with the arrest totals which showed that Hispanics "comprised half the rioters arrested in the City of Los Angeles and possibly 30 to 40 percent of the store owners whose businesses were destroyed by the violence."<sup>47</sup>

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The areas of Los Angeles most decimated by the riots were heavily populated by Hispanics...But in television news the L.A. riots had a vastly different face. It was not Hispanic.

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But in television news the L.A. riots had a vastly different face. It was not Hispanic. Smith found that "Latinos only comprised 17 percent of the residents and 10 percent of the store owners interviewed in the coverage."<sup>48</sup>

The Tomas Rivera Center in Claremont, California also conducted a comprehensive study of the L.A. riots and the aftermath. This project specifically tracked the Hispanic presence in the 14 most highly damaged neighborhoods (including Koreatown, Pico Union and South Central Los Angeles). In this broader geographical area Hispanics still accounted for 49 percent of the residents.<sup>49</sup> Analyzing the most highly damaged neighborhoods helps trace the roots of Hispanics' omission in news accounts.

East L.A. is the city's largest and best known Hispanic neighborhood. Because it was largely untouched by the violence, there was an initial assumption that "Latinos scarcely participated in and were mostly unaffected by the unrest."<sup>50</sup>

The result is that Hispanics in the newly emerging barrios that were in

the eye of the storm were seen but unheard in the news coverage. The framework created by this type of reporting was a double-edged sword. On one side, lack of prominence spared Hispanics public and official condemnation. On the other side, the failure to be visible initially kept Hispanics out of the round table negotiations after the riots.

As city, state and federal agencies began work to rebuild South Central Los Angeles, the initial effort mirrored the black/white framework of the coverage. None of the three commissioners who initially headed the Rebuild L.A. Committee was Hispanic.

The oversight became so glaring it forced a group of Hispanic business and social leaders to stage a rally outside of City Hall. They complained that Hispanics were being shortchanged in riot aid. Joe Sanchez, president of the Mexican American Grocers Association, says he remains convinced that "African American organizations have received disproportionate attention and post-riot aid because they have stronger ties to City Hall and because the news media often paint riots in a black-versus-white or black-versus-Korean conflict. Latinos were primarily seen as looters instead of victims."<sup>51</sup>

"We were left out of the reconstruction even in South Central L.A. which is nearly 50 percent Latino. It has grown to be a divisive issue. People still see the area as black, and resources still go predominantly to African-Americans. There is a real lack of comprehension of the demographic changes in these areas," says Magdalena Duran, spokesperson for the La Raza office in Los Angeles.<sup>52</sup> After one year, a Latino was finally added to the commission.

"When groups started to coalesce and develop strategies [to address the damage and destruction from the riots], the general feeling was that Latinos were not represented to the degree one would expect among groups like Rebuild L.A.," says Barbara Cox an editor for the Tomas Rivera Center in Los Angeles.<sup>53</sup>

So how is it possible that with a predilection to see Hispanics in stories of criminality and poverty, the press could have left Hispanics out of the L.A. riots story? How could there be no voice given to Hispanics in Los Angeles even when they were in the throws of a riot?

One Hispanic observer said part of the problem is that historically Hispanics have been slow to mobilize and demand public attention. "When you abuse a Mexican he leaves the room because he doesn't want to be where he's not wanted. We've got to wake up the system...we're going to bug everybody. We're here, and that ain't going to change," said Fernando Oaxaca, the owner of an L.A. public relations company.<sup>54</sup>

The pattern of exclusion also reflects the reporters and news executives listening in the newsroom and the fact that too few of them are Hispanics who know this community and its language.

### **Does anybody speak Spanish in the newsroom?**

It was a typical afternoon in the *Washington Post* newsroom, May 5, 1991, as reporters and editors worked toward deadline. At the assignment desk,



the police radios came alive with calls for backup in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of D.C. Soon, radio reports told of a major confrontation between police and Hispanic residents. Apparently a cop had shot a Hispanic immigrant, and people were angry.

"At the *Post* people started to gather around television monitors when the local stations cut in with live reports from the scene," says Greg Brock, Front Page Editor. "Then someone in the newsroom suddenly asked, 'Think we should send somebody down there?'"

Brock says there was no reporter in the city room who spoke Spanish, so the editors called the International desk and borrowed a Spanish-speaking correspondent who was sent to the disturbance.

The *Washington Post*, which prides itself on its national and international reporting was now covering a local disturbance in its own backyard as a foreign war. The scene is hardly surprising to one of the few Hispanics who worked at the *Post* before 1991.

"When I left the *Post* in 1989, I was one of only two Latino reporters, and the other one did not speak Spanish," says Zita Arocha, a staff reporter from 1985 to 1989.<sup>55</sup>

Prior to her stint at the *Post*, Arocha reported for the *Tampa Times*, the *Miami Herald* and the *Miami News*. In Washington, she specialized in immigration and Hispanic affairs. Arocha says before she left the paper she warned her Anglo editors that tensions between the city's burgeoning Hispanic community and the police department were near the breaking point.

"I spelled out for my editors that the Latino community was a time bomb for the city and that the *Post* did not have the resources to cover it."<sup>56</sup>

Two years later, the lid went off. The violence was set off after Daniel Gomez, a Salvadoran immigrant, was shot by a black female officer trying to arrest him for disorderly conduct. Police say Gomez had been drinking and lunged at the police officer with a knife.

What began as a largely Hispanic disturbance on May 5 in Mount Pleasant grew on May 6 into a free-for-all that spilled over into adjoining neighborhoods. At its peak 1,000 police in riot gear were involved and up to 600 black, Hispanic and white youths were engaged in running battles with the police. As of May 8, some 160 adults and juveniles had been arrested. Thirteen police officers had been injured, and six police cars, a handful of businesses, stores, and a city bus were set afire. While the shooting of 30-year-old Daniel Gomez set off the violence, Hispanics claim the eruption was the result of a history of mistreatment and neglect by police and the city administration.<sup>57</sup>

"The news organizations in general missed the boat on covering the Latino community and didn't take the opportunity to cover it adequately before the riot so that there was no anticipation on the part of the greater community that this could happen," said Milagros Jardine, a radio reporter for WMAL who covered the Mt. Pleasant riot.<sup>58</sup>

Jardine was one of several dozen journalists, city officials, and community leaders who met almost two months after the riots to review how well the city's news organizations responded. There was general agreement

that the media had missed the circumstances of the community's rage prior to the event and in its wake.

"Once the reporters got there I think they started generalizing and started taking in lots of theories and sort of projecting what they thought had happened rather than really listening to what the people in the community were telling them had happened. If there is a fault to be placed, it's the fact that the big news organizations have ignored this [Hispanic] community and for some reason don't see it in their best interest, don't see it as an interesting, exciting, stimulating story to cover," Jardine said.<sup>59</sup>

The capital's Hispanic population exploded during the 1980s with the arrival of thousands of Central Americans fleeing political unrest. The biggest influx came from El Salvador. Despite Hispanic growth the city's politics and demographics remain overwhelmingly black oriented. Apparently there were few reporters who had a working knowledge of the city's newest immigrant groups. Reports during the three-day melee included gross exaggerations, rumors and misinformation.

Television news reports, during live-shots from the scene, provided the most glaring unsubstantiated misinformation. "Some Anglo journalists went so far as to suggest a link between rioters and Central American leftist guerrillas, reporting that the reason the protesters were so successful in burning police vehicles and doing so much damage was because they had prior training and connections to guerrilla movements somewhere in a foreign land," said Clavel Sanchez of National Public Radio.<sup>60</sup>

Hispanic reporters blamed the misrepresentations of the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood on the lack of Hispanic staff in the city's major media outlets.

"I think it became very self evident to each of the media organizations just how out of touch they were with this particular community," assessed Carlos Sanchez, a reporter at the *Washington Post* who was later assigned to cover the disturbances.<sup>61</sup> Even Sanchez' boss could not disagree.

"Our coverage prior to the disturbances in Mt. Pleasant was inadequate," said Milton Coleman, the *Post's* Metro Editor. "I think our coverage got much better the day that Carlos Sanchez was assigned to do this full time. Having reporters who were culturally in tune with the community or who spoke Spanish became a necessity."<sup>62</sup>

Coleman said that the *Post* was able to recruit as many as six or seven Spanish-speaking staff to cover the story. "Not all of them were Latino. Many of them were Anglos," Coleman recalled.<sup>63</sup> The *Post* only had two Hispanic reporters at the time. Today, 12 Hispanics work in the newsroom; they make up 2.2 per cent of the staff.<sup>64</sup>

The employment picture for Hispanics in the news media 25 years after the Kerner Commission Report remains bleak despite recent gains.

Hispanics argue that more Hispanic journalists in newsrooms minimize distortions, exaggerations, and misrepresentations of their Hispanic communities because they understand the vast differences and commonalities among them.

“Employment is a vehicle toward coverage. The end result of diversifying the newsroom is supposed to be coverage and content; what is coming off the television screen or pages of the newspaper. If you do not have Latinos working in the newsroom, you are not going to be able to influence the coverage,” says Felix Gutierrez, a former journalism professor now working at the Freedom Forum.<sup>65</sup>

Hispanic employment in America’s newsrooms remains a thorny issue. Underrepresentation remains substantial despite modest gains. Even in markets with a substantial Hispanic presence, Hispanic employment in the newsroom remains low. You wouldn’t expect many Hispanics at the *Wichita Eagle* or the *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Yet in New York City which is 25 percent Hispanic, the *New York Times*’ newsroom staff is 3.6 percent Hispanic. Los Angeles is 40 percent Hispanic, yet the *Los Angeles Times*’ newstaff is 6.46 percent Hispanic. Locally or nationally, underrepresentation of Hispanics is widespread. The U.S. is nearly 10 percent Hispanic yet only 4 percent of the news staff at the top 57 daily newspapers in the country is Hispanic.<sup>66</sup>

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“That is nothing to write home about. The increases should be much higher than that considering the fact that there have been recruitment programs for nearly a dozen years,” says Zita Arocha, now a free-lance journalist who conducts an annual survey and report on the status of Hispanics for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. She says the typical excuse offered by news managers that able Hispanic reporters are hard to find does not hold true any more. “We have many young Latino journalists working in smaller markets who are ready and good enough to get up to the next rung in medium and large market newspapers. All they need is the opportunity.”<sup>67</sup>

Hispanic news managers, the decision makers in the newsroom, are an even rarer breed. Only 2.3 percent of newsmanagers in the top 57 newspapers are Hispanic.<sup>68</sup>

On the broadcast side of news the raw numbers imply Hispanics have made slightly better gains. “The minority share of the newsroom work force edged to a new high in television last year, but moved backward a bit in radio. Hispanics made substantial gains. The Hispanic share of all television news personnel went up from 3 percent in 1990 to 5 percent in 1991 and 6 percent in 1992,” writes University of Missouri journalism professor Vernon Stone after reviewing employment records from 411 television stations and 296 commercial radio stations for the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation.<sup>69</sup>

Yet Hispanic journalists analyze the same numbers and see in them

more than meets the eye. Aggregate industry totals are misleading.

"Before you go out and buy another television set, consider the fact that the network news still doesn't look like America, and neither does its prime-time programming," writes Zita Arocha.<sup>70</sup> "The University of Missouri study finds the proportion of Latino employees still smaller among television stations affiliated with the three major networks—ABC, NBC, and CBS—than among "other" stations sending up Spanish speaking fare generated by Univision and Telemundo."<sup>71</sup>

Arocha says, "The statistics do not break out differences between English and Spanish language television, but it is my gut feeling that a great part of the aggregate increase is due to the recent boom in Spanish-language television."<sup>72</sup>

"Most of us are the only one in the newsroom," says Diane Alverio, a television reporter in Hartford, Connecticut. "And the people in the newsroom making decisions, what stories, what angle and how to cover them are not Hispanic."<sup>73</sup>

Hispanic reporters tell stories that have a familiar ring to other minorities.<sup>74</sup> They say that pushing aggressively for Hispanic coverage beyond crime and welfare is like putting on a "sombbrero" in the newsroom that delegates the reporter to the so-called "taco beat."

"The hardest part is striking a sense of balance in your work. You do not want to neglect the community you care about, but you also have to show that you can cover anything if you are given the opportunity," says the *Boston Globe's* Efrain Hernandez Jr.<sup>75</sup>

In most markets where Hispanics have yet to make substantial economic and political gains, Hispanic reporters say the balance they are forced to strike tilts away from Hispanic coverage.

"If you are one of those rare Latinos in a newsroom, you will also have to make a career decision. You know that to rise in the system you do the front page stories or the lead stories in the broadcast and that Latino stories are not going to get that play," says National Public Radio's Ray Suarez. He says many Hispanic reporters choose professional survival. "So there you are; one of the only people on the inside who can pitch for a different look at the news, and if you do that and become perceived as an ethnic novelty act, you limit your own future opportunities. So you either whitewash yourself to get ahead or you become an advocate inside the newsroom and become marginalized."<sup>76</sup>

"They are struggling to be mainstream," observes Rita Elizondo executive director of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute.<sup>77</sup> At the Institute it is Elizondo's job to convince reporters to write stories that have a specific Hispanic interest and to include Hispanic opinion in reporting about the U.S. Congress. It is never an easy job, but often Hispanic reporters make it even harder to do.

"They are finally at the *Washington Post* or they are finally at NBC, and they are struggling so hard to be part of the team and the mainstream that they rarely venture out into covering Latino issues because they don't want to be tagged Latino. It is very disappointing because we certainly

don't get the coverage from the non-minority reporters."<sup>78</sup>

Without a concerted advocacy inside and outside the newsroom for more complete coverage of Hispanics, the impression and myths perpetuated are of a people lumped together as a monolith despite vast differences; a people unwilling and unable to help themselves.

"Indicative of that national mood is a 1990 national poll that found that compared to Jews, blacks, Asians and southern whites, Americans perceive Latinos as second only to blacks in terms of being lazy rather than hard-working and living off welfare rather than being self-supporting. The survey also reports that Hispanics are seen as the nation's least patriotic group."<sup>79</sup>

The low opinion of Hispanics makes perfect sense. Most people base their feelings about minorities from what they read or watch on television.

*Hispanic* magazine looked at all stories published by the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Antonio Light* and the *Washington Post* during a week in August, 1992. Despite the fact that all the cities serviced by these major dailies have sizable Hispanic communities, the authors "had to look carefully in each paper to find any story positive or negative, about or including Latinos. When Hispanics were mentioned in news articles, they were more likely to be found in a crime story as the perpetrator, victim or police officer."<sup>80</sup> The survey found a distinct absence of Hispanic political priorities and opinion, either from grassroots or mainstream political leaders.

In another survey, Unabridged Communications of Arlington, Virginia reviewed 4,000 articles published in seven major newspapers and three newsmagazines during July and August, 1992. Unabridged Communications notes that "there was no coverage devoted to Latino political priorities," and that the stories "failed to reflect positive contributions Latinos are making to society." The study's author concludes, "If you only had the articles that I culled over these two months, you would not have a feel for who the [Hispanic] leadership was or what the needs of this particular community of interests were."<sup>81</sup>

Newspapers provide slightly better coverage of the political priorities among Hispanics. DeSipio's survey found that of those stories with Latino-relevant political content, 30 percent dealt with electoral politics. But even this figure obscures an underlying indifference. "In one of the largest categories, electoral politics, mention of Latinos was limited to the inclusion of a Latino surname in 41 per cent of the coded articles."<sup>82</sup>

The overwhelming number of articles made reference to Hispanics in a political context without interviewing Hispanics. That pattern can be detected even in cases where Latino political importance is widely recognized.

### **Getting the Story to Page One**

It was a slow newsday in Boston. Massachusetts Governor William Weld had scheduled a morning press conference to introduce Deborah Ramirez, a Northeastern University Law Professor, as the chairperson of the newly

appointed Hispanic American Advisory Commission. The group was formed to examine the status of Hispanics in the state and make recommendations to improve their economic conditions.

When it came her turn to speak on that April morning 1993, Ramirez remembers looking out across the packed conference room. Present were Hispanic judges, business people, government officials, educators, along with regulars of the State House press pool. "I looked up," Ramirez recalls, "and I noticed that the old press hands at the State House, the political reporters, were not taking any notes."<sup>83</sup>

From her carefully prepared text, Ramirez, a former assistant U.S. Prosecutor who was hired by Weld when he was U.S. Attorney, spoke with passion about the plight of the state's Hispanics. Preliminary findings gave cause for extreme concern: Hispanics had surpassed blacks as the largest minority in the state; Massachusetts, not generally regarded as a Hispanic hub, had in fact the tenth largest concentration of Hispanics in the country; and Hispanics in Massachusetts suffered the highest Hispanic poverty rate in the nation. Ramirez said the purpose of the Commission was to find much needed ways to help Hispanics help themselves.

That evening only one television station carried a brief voice over on the news. The next morning not a word was printed about the Commission and its mandate in either of the city's two dailies, the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald*. Ramirez was flabbergasted. "What do you do when the problem is that no one will cover you? The story only got reported in the Hispanic press. But in the English language press, which is where we have to get our story out, there was absolutely nothing."<sup>84</sup>

Angry and disappointed, Ramirez phoned the *Boston Globe* to complain. She says she was assured an article had been written and it would be published. It was printed several days later, but the article had been buried, literally and symbolically, in the back pages of the Saturday edition next to the obituaries. The headline read, "New panel leader cites roots."<sup>85</sup> The article highlighted Ramirez' graduation from Harvard Law School and "her promise to her mother never to forget her roots."<sup>86</sup>

The "Rose Grows in Spanish Harlem" angle was not the emphasis Ramirez had hoped for. "The focus was on me personally and my story. It's as if this was a piece for the feature section. They didn't cover it as if this was a real news story," Ramirez says.<sup>87</sup>

The Hispanic American Advisory Commission scheduled four hearings across the state in the spring and summer of 1993. Planning efforts netted events that were well attended. Hundreds of residents were offered an opportunity to talk about the dire conditions faced by Massachusetts Hispanics. Problems were discussed in detail. Solutions centered around jobs and economic opportunity. Through it all, press coverage remained sporadic. Newspapers in smaller cities and towns tended to play up the hearings while the Boston press continued to ignore or bury the story.

Ramirez realized then that time was running out. The final report and

recommendations were due to the Governor in September. An important story was no story at all if it did not get on the front page. In Massachusetts that meant the front page of the *Boston Globe*.

"It is not as if the newspapers were not covering us at all. I couldn't quite say that. But it is the bad placement of the stories, the weak emphasis given, and the misleading captions that diluted our efforts," says Ramirez.

What became apparent to Deborah Ramirez and the 28 member commission would seem obvious to professional lobbyists and public relations specialists. Yet it is one that many grassroots, community-based or voluntary organizations miss. They are so busy working on "the cause" that little time and effort is given to getting the message out. The fact of the matter is that today the voices heard in the media are often individuals or groups who understand how to lobby or work the media. They know how the game is played.

Ramirez had to make her case not with the reporters who had covered the hearings, but with their editors who decided story placement and emphasis. A week before the final report was due, Ramirez persisted and was able to schedule a meeting with the *Globe's* senior editorial staff. Using the skills of an experienced prosecutor she argued for better coverage showing that the findings were substantive. "I presented the group with a copy of the report and the executive summary," says Ramirez recalling how she was able to seal the agreement. "I offered them an exclusive on the story if they covered the Commission's final presentation to Governor Weld."<sup>88</sup>

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Two days before the final press conference, a front-page story appeared in the *Boston Globe*. The headline read, "Report on State's Hispanics seeks services, business aid."<sup>89</sup> The article covered various recommendations for economic and social empowerment, emphasizing a proposed economic center to provide assistance for small businesses. Ramirez had succeeded.

After Governor Weld received the report, another article appeared; the headline, "Weld vows to fund business center for state's Hispanic community."<sup>90</sup> Various commission members were quoted outlining the commission's findings, cautioning that the document was only as good as its implementation. Deborah Ramirez got what she wanted: the Governor going on record in Boston's paper of record promising to help Hispanics. The Governor was quoted, "Our administration will use any recommendations in this report to call to action, to empower Hispanics in Massachu-

setts, and to break down cultural, economic and racial barriers.”<sup>91</sup>

“Going into the final weeks of the Commission’s work, I realized that 80 percent of what we were going to accomplish for the Hispanic community would come from getting our story in the *Globe*,” says Ramirez. “When it hit the front page of the *Globe* everyone started calling. Congressman Joe Kennedy’s office called, the Bank of Boston called. I even heard from the U.S. Attorney designate saying that he wanted to be responsive to the needs of the Latino community.”<sup>92</sup>

Without the front page coverage in the *Boston Globe*, the issues raised by the Commission might never have been noticed by the public or policy makers. Ramirez for one believes the prominent coverage may have prompted such swift action by the Governor.

## EMPOWERMENT, PRESS, AND PUBLIC POLICY

When Hispanics reach 10 percent of the population it means they are found everywhere from the unemployment line to the corporate office. Yet the disparity between Hispanics and non-Hispanics remains significant and poses important public policy implications for the future in employment, education, and political empowerment. The Hispanic population is younger and has higher birth rates. Improvements in their social and economic condition is critical to the country’s well-being predicts political researcher Robert Brichetto. “Hispanics in the United States will represent a larger share of the work force, of school enrollments and of the electorate. Non-minority whites will be a greater proportion of the elderly population.”<sup>93</sup>

To discuss the nexus between empowerment, public policy and press coverage I talked to Ernesto Cortes, the renowned community organizer and political activist of San Antonio, Texas.<sup>94</sup> Cortes is the founder of one of the most successful grassroots groups in the country. Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), writes Peter Skerry, “transforms informal, primary group ties between friends and neighbors into instrumental ties binding members of a formal organization.”<sup>95</sup> Since its first chapter was founded in 1974, COPS has spread to dozens of cities throughout the Southwest, West and Northeast. COPS effort is single-mindedly about the empowerment of members to make local governments accountable to their communities. Cortes says COPS efforts have met with much success because members are taught the importance of using the press.

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### Interview with Ernesto Cortes

**J.Q.** In your community organizing efforts there was an awareness of press coverage. What was important about the press coverage? How did it play out?

**E.C.** The reason the press was important is that when you are going up against power which is often arrogant and unresponsive, the press is an



ally, particularly if you understand the press' self-interest, and that is to inform and sometimes to expose. So much of what we taught our leaders is basically what good investigative journalists understand. We used to have our leaders read Woodward and Bernstein stuff on Watergate so they had a sense of how you dig at an issue, how you go at it slowly around the periphery and then move carefully step by step and how the whole point of asking a question is to get a reaction, which then generates the possibility of further action. So the whole understanding of how investigative reporters think was central to what we tried to teach people in how to carry out public drama.

**J.Q.** Was part of the effort to include teaching journalists about Hispanics and their issues?

**E.C.** Correct. But we also taught reporters that even though there are distinctions and dimensions of the issues we were involved in that impacted Hispanics, we also taught them that Hispanics had interests that were quite similar to those of African Americans and other groups. That our interests were not race specific, or ethnic specific. Therefore, even though the incidence of some of these problems impacted Hispanics disproportionately, the solutions to them had ramifications beyond the Hispanic community.

**J.Q.** Has the press learned not to see Hispanics strictly in the context of a black minority framework?

**E.C.** Because the framework for race relations has been couched in terms of relationships between African Americans and whites, it has been useful for Hispanics at times to work within it. For example, on affirmative action, Hispanics can say we want to be dealt with in the same way. But unfortunately, there have also been dimensions of that framework that have not been as helpful in the sense that they don't explain or define how our situation, our history, our culture and our language is much different.

**J.Q.** Many Hispanics complain that the message one often gets in the media about Hispanics is of people who are more often than not poor and uneducated and are unable to help themselves.

**E.C.** I have seen stories like that which are disconcerting. They make me think of an organizer I used to have in El Paso. When the media would come down to do a story on the "colonias," she'd say to reporters, "There are three ways you can do this story. One, you can look at how dirty the 'colonias' are and look at how miserable the people are. Two, you can ask, 'Isn't it awful?' Three, you can look at what the residents are doing to improve their conditions." And she'd say to the reporters, "If you are interested in the first story, I am not interested. I won't work with you at all. If you are interested in the second or third, then I am going to help you and I'll talk to you. But if you are not going to do the third, then don't talk to me at all."

**J.Q.** How well are Hispanics learning the lesson to be more demanding in the way they are defined by the press?

**E.C.** Not enough probably. But I'll tell you of my own experiences. We now have organizations in Hispanic communities in Los Angeles, East

Brooklyn, El Paso, Tucson, San Antonio, Phoenix, the Rio Grande Valley, the Mexican border, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, Houston, New Jersey, and the South Bronx. So there is an emerging understanding by Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, Mexicanos, Central Americans in those organizations of the need to shape the message about Hispanics presented in the press. Clearly that's not enough. But I have seen people in Boston and other areas who want to get organized and are willing to be assertive and are willing to define themselves appropriately. So I have some reserved cautious hopefulness.

**J.Q.** The mid-sixties through the mid-seventies was a decade of much Hispanic political activity. So much so that the press predicted that the eighties would be the "Decade of the Hispanic." Looking back at the results, many Hispanics feel the expectations were exaggerated. Is the press coverage of Hispanics and its impact today substantially different?

**E.C.** I remember years ago, Frank DeLomo was doing an interview with me and asking about the "Decade of the Hispanic." I said then that if Hispanics do not learn about politics and power and how to organize for power, the "Decade of the Hispanic" will be just so many beer commercials. Unfortunately, I was even more prescient than I thought then. Frankly, while we didn't exactly miss the boat, we certainly didn't take advantage of the opportunity to organize that was available to us.

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Hispanics need to become much more immersed in American history and understand the struggles and difficulties that different immigrant groups experienced so we don't think it is uniquely happening to us.

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**J.Q.** The nineties can be seen as a "decade of paradox" for Hispanics. The full effects of the Voting Rights Act offers greater political potential, while Hispanics continue to increase in numbers. Yet there is a simultaneous anti-Hispanic backlash brewing. The press calls it "compassion fatigue." What are the challenges Hispanics face?

**E.C.** First of all, people have to see these things with some perspective. There has always been reaction to immigrants in this country, be they Irish, Chinese, Italian immigrants. Hispanics need to become much more immersed in American history and understand the struggles and difficulties that different immigrant groups experienced so we don't think it is uniquely happening to us. We can not become immersed in our own victimhood and lose sight of that perspective. That is not to take away from the fact that there are serious problems and dangers. Xenophobia is always present in American life.

**J.Q.** As far as public policy and the press is concerned, what are your major concerns?

**E.C.** There are several institutions that are really important. Schools for one. It's important for Hispanics to teach parents to become actively involved in bringing about appropriate school reform and support for public education. Two is that our people are not going to be ready for the 21st century unless we get this administration to address significantly job training strategies for the long term. Third, Hispanic organizations and government are going to have to think very seriously about early childhood intervention strategies to deal with increased illegitimacy rates and teen-age pregnancy. Fourth, there is going to have to be much thought given to rebuilding some form of civic culture and community. From church, to workplace, to schools Hispanics have to be taught, in a non-partisan way, about the importance of political involvement. And fifth, the media must begin to pay attention to the efforts of heroic and important but not celebrity-type figures—people like the leaders in the COPS organizations, the ordinary men and women who are struggling to keep their families together. To write about what they are doing successfully and not just for the media stars.

**J.Q.** Why is that so important?

**E.C.** I think it is important for there to be legacies and stories and histories that inspire young people. It is important for them to have examples that come out of their experiences to which they can point.

**J.Q.** Is it the press' role to inspire?

**E.C.** The press' role is to report. And if there are people who are doing things that are real, they should be recognized. The press' role is to tell relevant stories.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Public policy decisions are influenced by the quality and quantity of media coverage. Whether it is riots, a cross burning, a mayoral election or a commission's findings on the status of Hispanics, governmental response may be framed by media reporting. Hispanic political development occurs apart from news coverage and sometimes despite the negative or slanted reporting. When there is an increase in Hispanic political clout, the press, being a reactive medium, reflects it in both the quantity and quality of the reporting. There are several steps that both the press and Hispanic groups can take to improve the range of Hispanic voices heard in American newspapers and television news. These recommendations include (1) increased employment of Hispanics in print and broadcast newsrooms; (2) promotion of a sense of importance and priority to Hispanic coverage and inclusion of Hispanics in stories that are not specific about a Hispanic community; (3) promotion of security among Hispanic reporters to explore their community without fear of being professionally tracked or stereotyped; (4) the education of Hispanic political and social interest groups about the nature of the press and how it functions; (5) the development of a well organized press strategy

by Hispanic political and social interest groups, nationally or locally, and high priority of this strategy in promoting the "cause" the group is working for; and (6) the consistency of a media strategy which is an ongoing effort.

## CONCLUSION

Improvements in Hispanic social and economic conditions are critical to the development of Hispanics as full participants in a democratic society. For non-Hispanics, there should be an overriding self-interest in helping Hispanics join the American mainstream. White America will depend more and more on Hispanics to help fuel the country's work force and tax base and to be care givers, teachers, doctors and entrepreneurs.

In turn, Hispanics must continue to organize for political power, utilizing the media with an understanding that public policy decisions are influenced by the press. Beyond the coverage of breaking news stories, Hispanic voices will only be heard when there is an ongoing dialogue between political interest groups and the media. Hispanics should not allow the media to define the issues that affect their community. If the above recommendations are implemented along with socioeconomic improvements in the lives of Hispanics, we will be able to look back at the 1990s and call them the "Decade of the Hispanic."

## ENDNOTES

1. For the purpose of this paper the term "Hispanic" is interchangeable with "Latino" and no political or social implication is intended.
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3. "Burning Cross placed outside Hispanic Home," Rakowsky, Judy and Dowdy, *Boston Globe*, Oct. 21, 1993.
4. "Melee Follows Stabbings, Arrests in Charlestown," Dowdy, Zachary R., and Lakshmanan, *Boston Globe*, Oct. 20, 1993.
5. *Boston Herald*, Oct. 21, 1993.
6. WCVB-TV, Boston, *NewsCenter Five at 6*, Oct. 21, 1993.
7. Interview, Nov. 2, 1993.
8. Interview, Nov. 16, 1993.
9. "Hispanic Activists Decry Silence on Cross Burning," Hernandez Jr., Efrain, *The Boston Globe*, Oct. 28, 1993.
10. Interview, Nov. 17, 1993.
11. Ibid.
12. *Hispanic Americans Today*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1993.
13. *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics*, de la Garza, DeSipio, Louis, Garcia, P. Chris, and Falcon, Angelo, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992.
14. Interview, Oct. 21, 1992.
15. *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics*, de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, and Falcon, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, p. 14.

16. De la Garza et al. report, in their 1992 survey of Latino political attitudes, little preference among survey participants for the pan-ethnic terms Latino or Hispanic. They write, "More respondents prefer to be called 'American'." (p.13) National-origin terms such as Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban is the preferred identity choice among respondents.

17. "Who is Latino?" *Talk of the Nation*, National Public Radio, Washington, D.C., Oct. 11, 1993.

18. Interview, Oct. 20, 1993.

19. Ibid., Oct. 20, 1993.

20. Interview, Oct. 21, 1993.

21. Interview, Sept. 19, 1993.

22. *Hispanic Americans Today*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Washington D.C., 1993.

23. Ibid.

24. "Save the Baby, Change the Bathwater, and Scrub the Tub: Latino Electoral Participation After Seventeen Years of Voting Rights Coverage," de la Garza, Rodolfo and DeSipio, *Texas Law Review*, June 1993, p. 1494.

25. The 5 million in 1992 is an increase from 4.4 million Hispanics registered to vote in 1988.

26. "Save the Baby, Change the Bathwater, and Scrub the Tub: Latino Electoral Participation After Seventeen Years of Voting Rights Act Coverage," de la Garza, Rodolfo and DeSipio, *Texas Law Review*, June 1993, p. 1501.

27. Seminar, Shorenstein Barone Center, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, Sept. 28, 1993.

28. *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics*, de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, and Falcon, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, p 2.

29. "Newspaper Coverage of Latino Issues in Forty Cities," DeSipio, Louis and Henson, University of Texas, Department of Government, Delivered at the meetings of the South-West Political Science Association, Fort Worth, Texas, March 28-31, 1990.

30. Interview, Nov. 11, 1993.

31. "Newspaper Coverage of Latino Issues in Forty Cities," DeSipio, Louis and Henson, University of Texas, Department of Government, Delivered at the meetings of the South-West Political Science Association, Fort Worth, Texas, March 28-31, 1990.

32. Interview, Oct. 20, 1993.

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34. Interview, Oct. 14, 1993.

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39. "News Coverage of Hispanics," Llaralde, Thomas, Policy Analysis Exercise, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, April 13, 1993.

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44. Ibid., p. 40.

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46. "When the Subject Turned to Race; How was it Covered?," presented by Erna Smith at the Washington Press Club, Oct. 22, 1993, based on her research project, *Transmitting Race: The L.A. Riot in TV News*.
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51. "Latinos Shortchanged in Riot Aid, Group Says," Baker, Bob, *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 15, 1992.
52. Interview, Nov. 8, 1993.
53. Interview, Nov. 10, 1993.
54. Ibid.
55. Interview, Nov. 2, 1993.
56. Ibid.
57. *Hispanic Link Weekly Report*, Vol. 9, No. 19, May 13, 1991.
58. Transcript from conference at the National Press Club, Washington D.C., sponsored by Hispanic News Media Association of Washington D.C., June 20, 1991.
59. Ibid, June 20, 1991.
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61. Ibid, June 20, 1991.
62. Ibid, June 20, 1991.
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66. *Hispanics in the News Media: No Room at the Top*, Arocha, Zita and Moreno, National Association of Hispanic Journalists Eleventh Annual Convention, Washington D.C., 1993.
67. Interview, Nov. 8, 1993.
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69. "Good News, Bad News," Stone, Vernon, *Communicator*, August, 1993.
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# FORUM

## A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS: BENEFIT OR BURDEN?

April 18, 1994

The ARCO Forum of Public Affairs, Harvard University

*Presented by the Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy. Co-sponsored by the Latino Student Caucus, the Asian Student Caucus, the Black Student Caucus, the Asian American Policy Review, the Journal of African American Policy, and the Student Advisory Committee of the Institute of Politics.*

**Alfredo Estrada, Editor and Publisher, *Hispanic Magazine* (moderator)**  
**Paul Kuroda, Director of Photography, *Daily Breeze Newspaper***  
**Xavier Becerra, Member, U.S. House of Representatives (D-CA)**  
**Antonia Hernandez, President and General Counsel,  
Mexican American Legal Defense Fund**  
**Muzaffar Chishti, Director, Immigration Project, International Ladies  
Garment Workers Union**  
**Peter Brimelow, Senior Editor, *Forbes Magazine***

**Alfredo Estrada:** Welcome, my name is Alfredo Estrada, I am the editor and publisher of *Hispanic Magazine*. It is truly a privilege for me to welcome you all to the Forum event at the John F. Kennedy School of Government — “A Nation of Immigrants: Benefit or Burden?” It is sponsored by a number of different groups here, and I would like to mention just a few of them. My thanks to the Dean’s office and Dean Carnesale, and particularly the *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*, the Latino Student Caucus, the *Asian American Policy Review*, the Asian Student Caucus, and the *Harvard Journal of African American Policy* and the Black Student Caucus.

Immigration is truly a hot issue. Immigration is something that we all talk about, that we read in the papers, that we see on CNN. The discussion often takes very extreme points of view. There are too many immigrants;



there aren't enough immigrants; we should stop the flow of immigrants; we should deport those immigrants; immigrants help this country; immigrants hurt this country. As you can see, we'll attempt to resolve or at least discuss in an objective fashion some of those issues here tonight. I think one point that is very important to make is that the discussion about immigration is not simply a political issue, it is an issue that affects all Americans. The debate over immigration is quite simply the debate over the future of America and what country America is and what country America will be. So, the discussion is actually quite important to all of us.

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The current issue of *Hispanic* magazine makes the point that immigration affects Hispanics uniquely, and I would like to bring out a couple of points in the article that I think are relevant to this discussion to set the tone.

A couple of incidents have happened recently, and I think many of you here in the audience will appreciate this. A few months ago, a 20-year-old college student in Santa Barbara, California, a very affluent community, was outside his home painting his parents' house. Some INS agents came by asking him to produce his birth certificate. He could not, and he was deported to Tijuana.

A similar type of situation happened to the Mayor of the small town of Pomona. Apart from being Mayor, he also ran an automotive parts business. One Saturday afternoon he was out in his truck picking up some parts for his business. Some INS agents stopped him and informed him that he fit the profile of an illegal immigrant. INS was about to deport him until he actually pulled out his wallet with the Mayor's badge.

These types of things are happening, and they affect Hispanics profoundly. But ironically, according to some very recent polls such as the Latino Political Survey, 1992, up to 84 percent of all Hispanics in this country say there are too many immigrants. So, it truly is an issue that is far from being resolved.

Certainly among the non-Hispanic population, many people feel there are too many immigrants. In 1993, a *Los Angeles Times* survey showed that 70 percent of Californians have a hard time distinguishing between legal and illegal immigrants. Of course, it is difficult to say why legal immigrants look different from illegal immigrants, but I think the point is well taken.

Often it is posited in economic terms. Do immigrants contribute more to the economy than they take out? Do they take away jobs? Do they add jobs? These are some of the issues we'll be discussing tonight.

We have a very distinguished panel, and I will introduce them all in turn. The format for the night is quite simple — each of the panelists will speak briefly. Paul Kuroda, whom I'll introduce in a second, will show us a film of some very interesting work of his. Following that, we will have an opportunity for questions from the audience. At that point we will have done enough talking. We want to hear from you. We want to hear what you think about what we've said; what issues are important to you and how best we can move on towards some clear definition of these issues. Let me stress at that point— it really is your show, so we do look forward to some comments on your part.

Mr. Paul Kuroda, is currently director of photography at *The Daily Breeze* in Torrance, California. He worked with three California newspapers — the *Fresno Bee*, the *Tribune*, and the *Orange County Register*. In 1992, he was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize for a story on immigration. That is the subject of the film that you'll be seeing this evening. In 1991, Mr. Kuroda was named the National Press Photographer Association Newspaper Photographer of the Year, the most coveted recognition in newspaper journalism today. It is my privilege to introduce Mr. Paul Kuroda.

**Paul Kuroda:** I want to tell you about myself. I am from Fresno and am second generation Japanese American because my mom is actually from Tokyo. My father is a *nisei*, a second generation Japanese American. He was incarcerated during the war, but he managed to get out and work on a farm where I grew up. On this farm, I grew close to the workers, the laborers, and the help. The help were vital to our farm, and they were all Mexican, all Mexican immigrants.

I really grew up with immigrant labor in California. I married a Mexican immigrant who took me back to her old village. It's incredible. Her big family lives in one room. There is no plumbing whatsoever. They are just striving, trying to make it. They all had these children, and the children worked too.

One night, we received a phone call. Jorge, my ex-wife's brother asked us to pay off the *coyote*, the smuggler, down in L.A. We got in the car, picked him up, paid the coyote three hundred bucks, and brought him back to Fresno all in one night. He settled and worked in Fresno and sent money back to the family.

Hence, the story. Working for the *Orange County Register*, I was assigned to do an immigration story. It was perfect because this is one story that I wanted to tell; a story of modern day struggle in coming up, crossing that line. I crossed the border with an assistant who spoke fluent Spanish. I wanted him to watch my backside because I didn't know if the border was full of *bandidos*.

We went out there and discovered first of all, how dark it was. It was incredibly black. We went out just north of Tijuana, a 14-mile area where 90 percent of all illegal immigrants enter Southern California.

The *coyote* said, "Get down, get in and be quiet." Even the babies were

quiet. I didn't make a sound. I went in the bush and didn't move. All of sudden helicopters came. It was horrendous. This huge, prodigious noise. All of a sudden the blackness turned to light, and I just wanted to run. I just had this primal urge to run. I realized how the border agents were shooting immigrants who had escaped. I also crossed the river. You'll see pictures in my presentation that show this horrid river, pitch black with raw sewage and chemicals from factories.

You're going to see some pictures of the really dangerous crossing — the San Clemente checkpoint. Many people are getting killed because they're trying to avoid this checkpoint seventy miles north of the actual border. Smugglers let off their *pollos*, their clients, before the checkpoint. If the checkpoint is open, the clients then cross eight lanes of freeway to avoid passing the checkpoint on the opposite side. They then cross over again. They cross it twice. Many of them are from small villages so they don't really know how fast these cars can go, and they get hit.

We followed two victims who had come up to visit their son in Santa Ana, California. They couldn't legally enter the country for this visit, so they made a crossing illegally and died together. I followed the bodies back to the small village, where there was a funeral that went for three days. It was one of the hardest things I ever photographed in my life. One of stark pictures I saw that I didn't take was next to the coffin. A little girl who was one of the grandchildren just looked up and her face was just wrought with tears and pain. I couldn't take the picture, but it was incredible. It was senseless to me because at the border crossings, there's human crossing signs on the freeway and I just wonder why is all this happening.

#### (VIDEO PRESENTATION)

**Alfredo Estrada:** Thank you very much Paul. Our next panelist, Congressman Xavier Becerra was elected in November, 1992 to represent California's 30th congressional district, located in the city of Los Angeles. He earned in B.A. in Economics in 1980 from Stanford University where he also received his law degree in 1984. He began his legal career working in a legal services office representing the mentally ill. He went on to run the Los Angeles district office of State Senator Art Torres apart from being appointed Deputy Attorney General with the California Department of Justice. Prior to his election to Congress, he served one term in the California Assembly as representative of the 59th Assembly District.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** Thank you and good evening. I'm glad that you can travel to Boston, Cambridge, any part of this nation now and discuss the issue of immigration and hopefully find it will be a reasoned debate on the issue.

But before I launch into my discussion today, let me perhaps share with you some words that you all probably know very, very well, but often forget.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

“All persons born in the United States are citizens of the United States. No state shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Whether it's the Declaration of Independence, Emma Lazarus and America's Statue of Liberty, or the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, these are words we respect in speech, but words we often neglect in practice.

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America's newcomers work long hours for indecent wages. They nourish families and religious values at a time when things like that are evaporating in America. They pay the same taxes that citizens pay, while utilizing assistance at much lower rates, if at all.

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Take for example, the immigrant. America's newcomers work long hours for indecent wages. They nourish families and religious values at a time when things like that are evaporating in America. They pay the same taxes that citizens pay, while utilizing assistance at much lower rates, if at all. They do all of this, and yet they find the finger pointed at them when this country has a recession, when we find our schools decaying, when we find increasing crime, and of course, when we find we have a crisis in our health and welfare system. As Rodney Dangerfield would say, “I get no respect.” I would tell Rodney Dangerfield to move over because he gets much more respect than do immigrants.

But then again, immigrants have always been the beast of burden in America. The involuntary immigration of Africans represents this country's most tortured and compelling case history of that. You can talk about the Irish, the Jews, the Poles, the Italians; the folks that laid the bricks that built the big eastern cities. You can talk about the Asian and Latino immigrants who built the tracks that brought those eastern cities to the pioneering West. And when the West needed more labor, it turned to immigrants again.

Today, the accomplishments of our immigrant mothers and our immigrant brothers are overshadowed, however, by high-tech twenty-second sound bite politics. California's Governor Pete Wilson blames the \$2 billion state deficit on undocumented immigrants. He forgets to mention that the state has lost nearly 800,000 jobs during his tenure,

200,000 in the aerospace industry alone. Immigrants didn't take jobs in the aerospace industry.

He also forgets to mention that California's immigrants did not sit in any of the board rooms of the savings and loans institutions which squandered \$24 billion at the expense of California depositors. That's just California. That will cost California taxpayers; not the folks in Massachusetts; not anywhere else in the nation. California's tax payers will pay \$1,000 each to bail out the savings and loans institutions, just in California.

Governor Wilson and other state leaders these days fail to mention that immigrants pay the same sales taxes and the same property and business taxes that each and every citizen in the State pays. Their paychecks reflect the same deductions as our paycheck. Yet, the immigrant worker who pays into unemployment, who pays into welfare does not collect because he or she is undocumented. The immigrant story, however, is not filled with those, as you saw today by Mr. Kuroda. Too often, the story of the immigrant is sculpted by the politician and not the statistician. Most refugees and immigrants, it should be told, enter the United States legally — eight out of ten or eleven enter this country completely legally.

The United States, it must be told, has a rational legal admissions policy, which is based on the values of family, freedom, and work. More than 60 percent of all the immigrants who enter this country do so because they are trying to re-unite with family members. Others enter because of political persecution or because this country wants their skills for the labor force needed in this country.

Contrary to the myth, immigrants, like their predecessors, are newcomers that are integrating rapidly, and very successfully into the American society. Thirty percent of immigrants marry outside their own ethnic group. Virtually all the children of immigrants not only speak English fluently, but actually prefer to speak that language rather than their own native tongue. Immigrant children, by the way, have ambition. Four-fifths expect to complete college, and 70 percent aspire to professional or business careers.

Most importantly on the economic front and contrary to all the speeches that you're hearing these days, the impact of our newcomers is decidedly positive. In a recent survey, top economists were asked to assess the overall effect of immigration on the nation's economic growth. Eighty-one percent said, "very favorable," and the other 19 percent answered "slightly favorable." Immigrants help the economy, and it makes sense. Most arrive when they're very young and healthy. Most are hard working, and many open businesses. As a result relatively few rely on public assistance programs. They do not utilize programs to the extent of our elderly poor or disabled.

What we have to recognize is that what goes into the Federal Treasury as a result of the immigrant tax dollars, doesn't always benefit the communities that are home to these particular immigrants. The majority of refugees and immigrants settle in certain states and cities. Los Angeles,

of course, is the prime example. More than half of all newcomers settle in places like Los Angeles and New York City, but they don't get back the dollars that the immigrants contribute. As a result, the short term costs related to education and health care are born disproportionately by areas like Los Angeles and New York City.

But the failure of Washington to enact cogent immigration policy should not doom immigrants to the firing squad. We have to do what the good physician has always taught us to do: treat the cause, don't treat the symptom. Let me mention to you what I think we should be doing. First we should recognize one very fundamental principle—the right of citizenship through naturalization underlies the greatness of our nation. Just take a look at the Declaration of Independence. Take a look at the 14th Amendment.

Second, as a sovereign nation, the U.S. has every right and a duty in fact to effectively regulate its borders.

Third, human dignity and respect are cornerstones of American democracy and tradition. All immigrants including the undocumented have basic human and civil rights.

And finally, and perhaps the most important, the truest means of reducing undocumented immigration involves the standard of living and improving life's opportunities in the countries that are sending us the immigrant.

Immigration reform will take time and some money, but we should avoid those sets of policies that would threaten civil rights, that would undermine our constitution, and that would threaten the well-being of people who are elderly, disabled or poor. There is no reason to trample on the rights and opportunities of hardworking Americans whether they've been here three generations or three years. It will only undermine national values, unity and progress.

I believe we must improve the effectiveness of the border patrol. We must provide them with more resources and better training. We have to improve their hiring standards so they don't hire people who have criminal records. And we must make sure that we're not allowing them to abuse the people that they are there to apprehend.

Let's also get tough on the smuggling rings that deprive people of their freedom and make them pay money at the same time. Let's make sure we're taking care of visa fraud. Let's make sure we're taking care of asylum fraud, so those who are coming into the country with valid claims are able to be processed through. Let's make sure we are developing foreign policies and developmental policies throughout the world which will encourage nations to build their infrastructure, so we don't have to worry about them sending people to our country because they can't afford to create the jobs that are needed there at home.

But perhaps sooner or later, the most important thing will hit us here, and more importantly in Washington, D.C., and that is a need for a cogent Federal policy which will provide money to those areas that are disproportionately impacted by immigrants at the local level. Until we do that, what

we will find is that there will be no peace because those local cities and counties and states will declare war on Washington until Washington begins to reimburse those states with immigrant tax dollars, based on the fact that these are immigrants who are working.

Over the years, I think it's fair to say that immigrants have been those who have endured insult; they've endured accusation; they've endured oceans; they've endured mountains; they've endured poverty and persecution; and today the assault is politics. But when you cross oceans, and you climb mountains, no fence, no ditch will stop you. No politics will stop you because what drives people here is humanity. It's an attempt to do better for yourself and your children, than you were able to get along with in your previous existence. And that won't change, whether Governor Pete Wilson wants this change or not, it won't change unless he does it the right way.

We are now entering a debate in Washington, D.C., which does nothing about trying to deal with the issues of immigration. I hope that by the end of this year, we will come up with some cogent policy which will deal with immigration and will deal with immigrants and separate the two.

**Alfredo Estrada:** Our next panelist was featured on the cover of *Hispanic Magazine* a couple of years ago. Antonia Hernandez is the President and General Counsel of MALDEF, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, a national advocacy organization that uses the law, community education and research to protect the civil rights of the nation's Hispanic community. Ms. Hernandez earned her B.A. at UCLA and her J.D. at the UCLA School of Law. She began her professional legal career as a staff attorney with Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice and later served in the Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by Senator Kennedy. An expert in civil rights and immigration issues, she received a number of different awards, including the Aguila Azteca presented by the Mexican government, the Hubert H. Humphrey Award, the UCLA Alumnus of the year award in the UCLA Law School — establishing an Antonia Hernandez Public Service Award for its graduates. Please help me in welcoming Antonia Hernandez.

**Antonia Hernandez:** Good evening, *buenas noches* to all of you. I am indeed pleased to be here with you, to discuss with you, hopefully in a rational manner, an extremely emotional issue. Immigration, like language, is one of those issues in the history of America that tugs at the inner ends of your tummy. There are no neutral positions on immigration and unfortunately throughout the history of this country, a lot of the debate is emotional. But what I want to do today is something rather simplistic. I, as an immigrant for better or for worse throughout my career, have been tagged as the person that should be involved in immigration, and I guess we're all victims of our stereotypes, and I've tried to make the best of it.

But what I want to do today is provide you with facts and statistics that will give you a foundation to truly discuss immigration in a rational manner, and sometimes we get into the debate without really knowing the facts.

As you all know, we're in the middle of an anti-immigrant mood in this country. And yet, when I speak with most people, and I ask them to tell me about immigration and what the problem is or what concerns they have, they don't know. So, let me tell you what our immigration policy in this country, so we can try to determine where the problem is.

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Immigration, like language, is one of those issues in the history of America that tugs at the inner ends of your tummy. There are no neutral positions on immigration and unfortunately throughout the history of this country, a lot of the debate is emotional.

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Immigration deals with several issues. You deal with the asylum issue, a political decision that is made every year by the State Department. On average for the last eight to ten years, about 100,000 to 150,000 individuals are allowed to come into this country as political refugees. In 1980, Congress passed a law expanding the definition of a refugee. But for all intents and purposes, up to three years ago, if you came from a communist country, you were granted asylum. If you came from Argentina, it wasn't good enough. If you came from Cuba, it was O.K. If you came from Poland, it was O.K. Of course, if you came from Russia it was O.K. If you came from El Salvador or Nicaragua, it wasn't O.K. It is strictly a political decision.

Individuals who come into our country with refugee status do get assistance for a period of time. Those are the only immigrants who receive assistance while establishing themselves in our country. The largest portion of immigrants who come into this country come legally through our immigration laws.

Until 1986, the last time we had major changes in our immigration policy was in 1965. Our immigration laws are rather simplistic, and every country from every part of the world has the same quota. An immigrant must qualify and file within the six or seven categories for legal immigration. The majority of the categories are family re-unification. However, a spouse, a child, or a parent of a United States citizen can enter the country outside the quota.

There's a great deal of debate of whether we're receiving too many legal immigrants or too few. When you hear about Congress talking about tinkering with the immigration laws, they are referring to changes in legal immigration. Then there is illegal migration. Illegal migration has been going on in this country since it began, with the original Pilgrims being undocumented. It is not a new phenomenon.



The other thing to consider is that immigrants come in, not just by land, not just through the southern border, but also through Canada and the airports — JFK, Miami, Los Angeles. A large and significant part of illegal migration comes through student visas or tourist visas. Students and tourists over-stay their visas, remain in this country and are harder to spot. They are the ones who come in with some economic means, and they are hard to fether out. It's hard to figure out in a Denver suburb whether you're from Canada or not. If you ask an immigration officer what an undocumented looks like, he'll define it to you as a person that looks just like me, only not dressed like me. And that is the problem that we have.

Now, I will tell you that in my 23 years of involvement in this issue, I want to state some facts unequivocally. They are basically the four fundamental principles that Congressman Becerra stated earlier. A group in California, calling itself PRIDE, has adopted these basic principles. We are asking political elected officials involved in an immigration debate to adhere to them. We have also asked Governor Wilson and all of those people running for office who find immigration the appropriate issue to discuss today to adhere to them.

The four principles are very, very simple. One is that birth in the United States entitles you to citizenship. It is the foundation of this country, and any attempt to change this principle will not only affect the child born here of undocumented parents, but it will affect what this country is all about. Our country was not founded on economic standings; we forgot nobility when we came to this land, and we all started new.

The other issue is the failure by this country to aid or encourage the Immigration and Naturalization Service mount a massive effort to naturalize the millions of legal residents who are non-naturalized. If you think about naturalization, it is not just a process. It is a means of assimilating those immigrants into our society.

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People are dying to come into this country. This  
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The second principle is that notwithstanding the fact that an individual is undocumented, all human beings have basic human rights. The two fundamental benefits, if you want to call them, that cannot be taken away are as follows: 1) if you're a child, a kindergarten through 12th grade education and 2) emergency medical assistance. It's not being noble. It's being smart.

The third principle is that we recognize this country is a sovereign country, and it should be entitled to protect its borders. We do not quibble with that. But what we say is that it must be civilian border enforcement. It cannot be militarized. It cannot be a Berlin wall. And I want you folks to really keep something in mind. People used to climb the

Berlin Wall to get out. People are dying to come into this country. This should be something that we should be proud of.

The final issue is that we have to treat migration at its source. Economic development and foreign policy statements and positions we take have an effect on migration. Five to ten years ago, there were a great number of Nicaraguans coming into this country illegally. That flow slowed to a trickle after the situation in Nicaragua stabilized, and in fact, many Nicaraguans returned. Instability in El Salvador is creating the push to come to this country. Those people involved in public policy must never divorce what the State Department is doing with what impact it will have on migration.

Now, with regard to what is going on in California and in the rest of this country. We recently participated in a press conference, and to dramatize our position, I had my staff research, and we took the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* for 1917, 1924, 1954 and 1994. We could have easily traded one for the other. There are some ugly things going on and unfortunately, political demagogues have opened up the genie bottle and a lot of the ugliness has been lashed out.

I will leave you with this final thought, about a month and a half ago, we received a copy of a flier that was being disseminated in Orange County, California, and it had the ugly picture/character of an Mexican pregnant woman with a tattoo. Inside that pregnant woman was a fetus, and the quote said, "We know why Mexicans breed. Because they're already born pregnant. Kill a Mexican." It also gave you a phone number. It is things like these that are going on that we need to control.

That is not to say that we cannot debate. I am here to debate numbers. I am here to debate how our immigration policy should be handled. But what we need to remember is that within our country, throughout history, this country has engaged in conduct that we have been ashamed of.

Additionally, I hope that as we debate this issue, that it is not a "Mexican" issue. If you look into this country, we have the largest communities of every country in the world. They're all looking for the same thing. We get the most motivated, the most creative, the most entrepreneurial and yet the issue before us is how to control the flow — not how we stop the flow because that will never happen. How do we control the flow so that the individuals coming and our society both benefit? And in that regard, I hope that this debate will be the beginning of that discussion so that we can enlighten the folks out there and hopefully come up with some relevant, cogent immigration policy.

**Alfredo Estrada:** Our next panelist, Muzaffar Chishti, is a lawyer and director of the Immigration Project of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which provides immigration legal services to members of the union through its offices in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. He was educated at St. Stevens College, in Delhi, India; the University of Delhi; Cornell Law School; and the Columbia School of International

Affairs. He's currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Immigration Forum, Secretary of the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, and a member of the Coordinating Committee on Immigration of the American Bar Association. Please join me in welcoming Mr. Muzaffar Chishti.

**Muzaffar Chishti:** Thank you folks and good evening, and it really is a pleasure to be at the Kennedy School for this Forum event.

You heard that immigration is hard not to be an emotional subject, and you've seen enough evidence of that today. What I want to point out in the immigration debate in the entire western world, we are today an extremely critical venture. In the debate in western Europe, the European democracies have concluded that immigration should be seen as a national security issue and that immigration should be fully stopped. We are not that close to that in the United States, but we are getting precariously close to the position that immigration will be seen as an important threat in the context of national security. And I think that's why the debate on immigration is no longer confined. The issues of undocumented immigration, the issues of costs and benefits are the very definition of what is threatening the national polity.

Debate on illegal immigration or immigration in general has always been an anxiety creating debate, but I suggest that in the last two years, high profile issues like the bombing of the World Trade Center, the killings of two CIA officials outside D.C., and some of the rhetoric that was generated in the Presidential debate, has brought immigration to a new point of anxiety. The general anxiety of immigration today is that we're having too many people come in and too many of the wrong kind of people come in.

The debate on immigration today as it has been — and Antonia pointed it out very successfully — is always framed in a mixture of fact, mixture of fear, mixture of myth and increasingly, a tinge of politics. First, facts — facts do dictate a good part of the framing of the debate. In the 1980s, we admitted about 8 million people to the United States as immigrants. That's about net of one million a year. That was the highest we have received since the two first decades of the 20th Century — that's a fact. Three-fourths of immigrants that come to this country come from 10 countries of the world — that's a fact. About three-fourths of the immigrants who come to the country settle in about six states of the country — that's a fact. About 90 percent of immigrants who came to the country in 1965 were European. Today, 90 percent of immigrants who come to the country are not European. They are Asian, and they're Hispanic. Therefore, it's easy to say when the complexion of the migration stream changes, fear in the body politic takes on a very palpable edge.

But there are also myths — and it is extremely important to be able to distinguish facts from myths. The myths, to put it in a very quick summary, are framed in four major concerns: (a) that immigration is out of control;

(b) that new immigrants are depressing the regions and working conditions of U.S. workers; (c) the new immigrants have a strong reliance on welfare and are a drain on our social services; and (d) I would suggest that new immigrants are difficult to assimilate because they are a different breed than the pre-1965 immigrants.

Luckily, there is an impressive body of literature and studies which do belie all these myths, and obviously we don't have the time to talk about all the myths that I mentioned. From my perspective of the union, let me only talk about two or three. First, whether immigration is out of control. We only take about one million immigrants a year. Comparing this number to our total population, it is significantly smaller than the number of immigrants to total population in France, Germany, Australia, and Canada. Despite our feelings of ourselves as being the country of immigrants, those four countries and the percentage of the population take more immigrants than we do. When you talk about illegal immigration, the best statistics on this issue will tell you that we probably have, at any particular time, not more than 3.5 million undocumented immigrants in the country. This sounds like a large number, but given the total population of the country, it is not an indication of a system out of control.

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...it really is a tragic framing of policy to see immigrants only as consumers of jobs. Immigrants come in and they create jobs.

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On the issue of jobs, it really is a tragic framing of policy to see immigrants only as consumers of jobs. Immigrants come in and they create jobs. Our union is a very good example of that. We represent garment workers all across the country, and garment workers in the last fifteen or seventeen years in New York have been increasingly Asian. We have 20,000 Chinese American workers working in the apparel industry in New York. There were five Chinese American shops in New York's Chinatown in 1959. Now there are 500 Chinese-American owned shops in New York — operated, financed, run by people who came to this country only in the last fifteen to seventeen years. I would suggest that is not an evidence of displacement of American workers; that is clearly evidence of immigrants having created jobs in this country.

Second, I think on the job front, the argument that I find particularly disregarded is how immigrants have been in America — I think *Business Week* recently called them — as our “urban boosters.” If you look at what's happened to the major metropolises of the country — in the last ten years or so, the population of the 10 largest cities of the United States rose by about 4.7 percent. I think that demographers will tell you that if there hadn't been immigrants coming into those cities, the numbers of those cities would have gone down about 8-10 percent. In New York City, which I know a little more about, if you look at the out-migration of people from

New York City, we would not have the level of population that we have in New York City — without the immigrants coming in and changing our neighborhoods — and changing the economy, obviously for the better.

Two points on reliance on welfare and other social support systems. Immigrants don't come here for the quality of air in New York City, and they certainly don't come to get a welfare check. If they had wanted to rely on welfare, they would have stayed home. People come because they want to work and they increasingly come in the younger and productive years of their lives.

With regard to the social security system, we do frequently get focused on the contribution of immigrants. I think there have been many studies which would show that if we keep on admitting about one million immigrants a year, which is the level we have today, the level of contribution in purely social security income will be about \$70 billion. These are immigrants who will never see their parents derive the benefit of the contribution that they made to our social security system. It will be essentially the parents of the native born U.S. worker who would be the beneficiaries of this contribution.

And last, quickly, a word about assimilation. I happen to believe that education is key to assimilation. If you look at the streams of population in the last ten years of immigrants, about 24 percent of immigrants who come to the United States have four or more years of college education. If you look at the comparable figures of the U.S. population, it's about 16 percent. You would actually say that we are getting a much higher percentage of the educated people coming to this country, which obviously has an interesting effect in the labor market.

About 60 percent of the scholarships that Westinghouse offers every year go to immigrants. Many of them actually go the children of Chinese American members who have been, I would suggest to you, in this country less than 15 years — chasing the American dream as everyone in the generations prior to that. I think since we are at a panel which has been sponsored by many of the Hispanic student groups, there is much more attention on the issue of assimilation with respect to the Hispanics, and I think unfairly so — that people are saying Hispanics are in particular not prone to assimilation. Seventy-five percent of Hispanic Americans speak English on a regular basis in about fifteen years after they have come to the United States. I would suggest to you that if anyone looked at the prior waves of immigration before 1965 of the European stock and other stock, it probably took them longer to feel comfortable in English within the same generation. Assimilation, by its very definition, is a generational phenomenon. If people are coming in today by the next generation, they will sound and behave like every other wave of immigrants that we have seen.

To conclude, I would say that people may be coming to this country speaking different languages, and they certainly are coming with different skin colors. But, today's immigrants are clearly the American middle class of tomorrow. Today's seekers of the American dream are clearly defenders of tomorrow's American dream.

We are, back to the point I started on, at the juncture of public policy on immigration today. We can follow the European example and shut the door, or we can follow the American example and keep the consensus of immigration as we did in our history. As an immigrant, I would tell you that I recommend that we follow the American example and not the European one.

**Alfredo Estrada:** Our final panelist, Mr. Peter Brimelow, is currently a senior editor at *Forbes Magazine*, as well as at the *National Review*. He was educated at the University of Sussex and received his MBA at Stanford. He's worked for a number of publications throughout his career including *Fortune*, *Barrons*, the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, and he's currently working on a book due out next year by Random House, called *Electing a New People: Common Sense About Immigration*. Please join me in welcoming Mr. Peter Brimelow.

**Peter Brimelow:** Thank you. I think I'm going to be the only person in the room who's in favor of some sort of restriction on immigration, probably the only person in Cambridge, possibly the only person in Massachusetts, but not the only person in the U.S. And I'd like to thank the Dean's office for financing my trip up here. They did so on condition I'd be controversial, and if not I would not get my return ticket from them. So, I have to be controversial here.

I do want to say, particularly as this is being taped, that the views that I'm about to enunciate are absolutely not those of my employer at *Forbes* — in fact, he takes exactly the opposite viewpoint — Steve Forbes, Malcolm Forbes III. He has a very serious servant problem in his estate in Far Hills — I'm not joking about this. There's a real class issue with immigration. Typically, the middle class and the upper middle class see immigrants as people who serve them behind the counter in all the marvelous Korean delis in New York.

It's the unskilled, native born American, the blue collar workers who get it in the ear because they face competition from what is predominantly a heavy unskilled in-flow. And that means, in this country, above all the blacks. And this is the third time it's happened in the last 200 years to blacks. First of all they were displaced from their jobs in New York City. A lot of them in the 1830s were maids and worked as servants in New York. They were displaced by the Irish. Then after the Civil War, there was some evidence that they were penetrating the industrial north. They were displaced by the great wave of immigration that came in the 1890s, and now, since 1965, the pathology of the most extreme kind is taking over the black community. Substantial numbers are not making significant advances.

The title of my new book, *Electing a New People*, comes from a poem by Bertold Brecht. In 1953, there was a riot against the Communist government in East Germany which was obviously very shocking to the Commu-

nist government because they thought it represented the proletariat. And here was proletariat in rebellion against them. Brecht wrote the poem in which he said the government should dissolve a people and elect a new one. I like this because that's actually what's happening in the U.S. The government has decided by public policy to dissolve the people and elect a new one.

If it wasn't for immigration, the U.S. population would probably stabilize in the early years of the next century. Without current immigration levels, the population would stabilize at about 250 million. Because of immigration, it will go up to 380 million. In 2050, a third of the population the U.S. will be immigrants and their descendants. That kind of growth, incidentally, is unprecedented in the industrial world. Most industrial countries are going to stabilize. And the year 2050 is also interesting because it is the point when the white population will slip below 50 percent of the total population. This has all been done by public policy. It's done because the government wants it to happen — at least, apparently wants it to happen. This is what immigration policy is organized to achieve.

There has never been as radical or as rapid demographic shift in any country in the history of the world as the one which is happening here. And I think it raises the question, is it going to work? There's a question of whether it's good for the environment and so on to have a population go up so much, but is it going to work? You can ask the other countries, the ones with increasing numbers of immigrants how they feel about immigration themselves. I've done this. It's a very enlightening experience. The Japanese, for example, drop the phone laughing. Immigrants to Japan? They don't even keep the numbers on it. It's not possible to immigrate to Japan if you're not Japanese. To immigrate to Mexico, you must go to Mexico City and apply in person at the appropriate ministry. That's why there's practically no legal immigration into Mexico. Now, of course you may say, people really don't want to go to third world countries because they're relatively poor, but of course, Mexico is very wealthy relative to other countries in Latin America. Furthermore, it's in these third world countries where one gets the greatest return to skills. That's why we see large numbers of young Americans now going to Eastern Europe. They have the skills to make money in such an environment.

There's absolutely no reciprocity in this area between America and the rest of the world. That's equally true, incidentally for the 14th Amendment. Very few countries have birthright citizenship.

Let's look at the economic debate. This is the one that I really want to focus on. There are very complex arguments about whether or not immigrants are taking more out of the system than they are putting in. I think, on balance, it's clear that they are. A lot of stuff you've heard tonight is based on figures for immigration that occurred 20 years ago. You have to look at the most recent numbers to figure out what's actually happening. The 1990 census numbers show that immigrants and the foreign-born, on the whole, do use more welfare than the native born.

And that's a particularly interesting fact because the number for native born is highly skewed and includes blacks and Puerto Ricans, who disproportionately use welfare.

I might say, by the way, that one of the most extraordinary groups who use welfare are the Soviet immigrants. Sixteen percent of them have gone on welfare, as opposed to about 7 percent of the national average. It's absolutely extraordinary because they are the most educated group. The reason, of course, is because as refugees, they are eligible for welfare right from the start.

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The question is not whether immigration is actually hurting the country, but is it necessary to have immigration? And if you ask this question, you find a very different picture because no economist seriously argues that immigration is necessary for the economy.

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I don't like this argument because it's essentially a minute argument. Whichever way you look at it, the amount of expenditures on immigrants is not all that large in the context of a \$5-6 trillion economy. The question is not whether immigration is actually hurting the country, but is it necessary to have immigration? And if you ask this question, you find a very different picture because no economist seriously argues that immigration is necessary for the economy. Look at the example of Japan. Since 1955, it's grown at a rate three times as fast as the U.S. over all. It has no immigration at all.

Why is this? Well, the reason is, what the economists call the factors of production are at least three-fold and not just two-fold — it's not just capital and labor, immigrants being labor. It's the third factor, an intangible factor. There's a great deal of literature on this in applied economics. They've never been able to show an increase in capital and labor together are worth as much as 50 percent of economic growth. There's some other factor driving the growth. That factor is technological change, innovation. That's what the Japanese have done.

The other way of looking at the contribution of immigration. In applied economics, there's a thing called the Harberger triangle, which is a way of looking at flows to one group from another from certain kinds of public policies. This, incidentally has been pioneered by a Cuban immigrant called Jorge Borjas, an economist at the University of California, San Diego, whose work I strongly recommend to you on this subject. If you do a Harberger calculation, the benefit from immigration is very, very small — it's a fraction of 1 percent of GNP. I mean, it's not surprising really. Immigrants are a small proportion of the labor force in the country, about 8 or 9 percent of the labor force. Secondly, we know this



labor force is relatively insignificant in its contribution to economic growth. As a matter of fact, it probably always was in this country. I mean, it's quite wrong to imagine, as I think some of the people do here who have spoken tonight, that immigration is a constant through American history. There was virtually no immigration from the revolution until the 1840s. Again, of course there was virtually no immigration between the 1920s and the 1960s. Between that were the tremendous waves followed by great pauses. Those pauses, incidentally, I think were crucial for assimilation.

The economists of the late 19th century make the point that per capita growth in the U.S. was not significantly improved by the flow of immigration. Even people in favor of immigration haven't been able to argue that it was worth more than four or five years of economic growth. All immigration in 1790 to 1920 was worth maybe somewhere between five and eighteen years growth in the capital stock. Insignificant. Highly significant to immigrants themselves, of course, but not very significant to the Americans who were here to start.

We are under a misapprehension about immigration, which I noticed tonight — immigrants are not lacking in numbers. The influx in the U.S. would have been about half what it is now if there had been no immigration after 1970 at all.

Anyway, the conclusion is that an economic case for immigration cannot be made. You can't show that it's necessary for economic growth. You have to make a political case. Now, there are many people here who are willing to make that political case. Some of them want to see their own ethnic groups increase in power; others of them are concerned for moral reasons and so on. Nevertheless, you can't make an economic case.

However, although there are people who make this political case in favor of immigration, the vast majority of people over the course of more than thirty years have been overwhelmingly opposed to it by factors of four and five to one. This is the deeply interesting thing about Alfredo's magazine. He prints here a survey of what Hispanics think about immigration. Eighty-four percent of non-U.S. citizens and Mexicans are against immigration. Of course, they're the ones who face the competition which seems hardly surprising. But even those in the wealthiest group, Cuban American — U.S. citizen Cuban Americans — 66 percent against immigration, 34 percent in favor of it.

Now when you have public opinion that is so firm on this question, so massively on one side, so unyielding over thirty years and a political elite which is dedicated to increasing immigration as they did in 1965 and again in 1990, questions about legitimacy of a system as a whole are raised.

And with that encouraging thought, I think I'll leave you.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Alfredo Estrada:** And now, as I mentioned, we're extremely interested in what you think and I invite you now to pose questions to any of the panelists. Please keep your questions brief and to the point and state a question.

**Question:** Is the denial of health coverage to young, illegal immigrants equivalent to the denial of public education, therefore constitutionally suspect? And, are any members of Congress protesting the President's decision not to include illegal immigrants in any kind of universal health coverage? Or, is it political suicide in today's climate to advocate for additional services? A legal question for Ms. Hernandez and the political one for the Congressman.

**Antonia Hernandez:** Your question about the constitutionality of denying benefits to illegal immigrants — let me tell you that up to very recently, the mid-'70s, immigrants were not entitled to benefits. The granting of social security benefits is a recent phenomenon. The other thing that you must keep in mind is that you are referring to *Doe v. Plyer*. That case was a decision was a 4-5 decision. Of all of the Supreme Court justices ruling in that decision, I believe we have one left. It is questionable, whether, in fact, the Supreme Court today would rule the same way. The Supreme Court has indicated that it is permissible to make distinctions based on citizenship and legal status. For the next ten to fifteen years, immigration and immigration status is seen as the next frontier on the development of constitutional civil rights within the Supreme Court.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** I'll try and quickly answer the second part of that. The President's health care plan does not deprive legal immigrants of health care benefits. Only the undocumented would not be included within the overall plan. They would have access to emergency services and some public health services through the President's plan. In terms of education, there is no constitutional right for those who are not citizens to an education. Most of the rights, in fact, through education are state rights through the state constitutions and not through the U.S. Constitution. And of course, the U.S. Constitution speaks in no way whatsoever of any fundamental right to health care. That is why we have 39 million people in this country who at some point or another in their lives have not had health insurance.

But in terms of the issue right now, it's clearly a political issue. I see immigrants as the "Willie Hortons" of 1994. And what you find is that it's very easy to assail someone who doesn't vote and someone who doesn't make large political contributions and try to deprive them of certain

benefits. Legal, not just undocumented immigrants, because it's very simple to go after that crowd and find some money at a time when it's very difficult to find money to pay for any type of program.

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...it's very easy to assail someone who doesn't vote and someone who doesn't make large political contributions and try to deprive them of certain benefits.

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So, politically, the issue right now is where the money can be found. A lot of folks are turning to immigrants, including legal, at this stage. Proposals, for example on the Republican side in the U.S. House of Representatives to deny any type of public benefit to legal immigrants have been suggested, even though they pay every single tax that you and I as citizens pay, and they have every obligation that you and I as citizens have up to and including going to war.

**Question:** I hear somewhat of a contradiction in a lot of what the panelists have said. On the one hand, the United States is a land of the free, home of the brave, land of opportunity. Immigrants want to come here. We want to let them in. It's a great country. On the other hand, it's peopled by a bunch of bigoted nativists who want to keep the immigrants out. It seems you either have one or the other. I am curious about why a lot of the panelists are just mystified at the opposition. They seem to think, "Who on earth? Why do these ignorant whites, basically, oppose it? What is their problem? They need to be re-educated or something."

So, I'd like to drag Mr. Brimelow in further. He hasn't been controversial enough for his quota. Mr. Brimelow, for those of you who don't know, wrote an extremely lengthy, but interesting article in *National Review* about a year, a year and a half ago, on immigration. But you did emphasize that there is a cultural angle to all this — it's part of the whole multicultural debate. So, I wonder if you might comment on that and hear if any of the other panelists have anything to say in response to that.

**Peter Brimelow:** We have at *Forbes* a columnist who is one of about three black conservatives in the entire country. He's done a lot of work on ethnicity and economics, and he makes the point that people don't reach maturity as a total blank slate. They carry what he calls a message — a cultural message. And this affects on how well they succeed in the work place. And that's why he's able to document that certain types of immigrants do better than other immigrants everywhere — not just in the U.S., but in other countries as well. They don't carry a message in terms of their economic abilities, but in terms of their political interests.

The point is that if you introduce large numbers of very diverse people into the country, the question whether the country is still the country or whether it becomes a foreign country is the real issue. It's a logical possibility that we can see the U.S. transformed. In fact, if you catch me in the right mood, a lot of these people in favor of immigration and so on, actually celebrate the fact that it is going to transform the U.S. into a bilingual society.

As I say, the real intriguing thing here is (a) the vast majority of Americans oppose this and (b) the fact that it's all the result of public policy. It's not something that's happened naturally. I'm not close enough to the door to get more controversial than that.

**Question:** My question is based on some of your comments about the legal immigration going on now, and I was wondering if any of you advocated changes in the legal systems right now (i.e. the asylum and quota system), and if any of you advocated a greater opening of immigration law in that respect.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** I can tell you that I don't think we need to either reduce or increase the level of legal immigration into this country. With regard to asylum and refugees, what we find right now is a dilemma. We are clogging the system. We have over 300,000 asylum claims that we cannot process because we don't have the people we need to do so, and as a result, we are letting a lot of folks who are claiming asylum out and we're not detaining them. Consequently, you get the fears that people are coming to this country to commit crimes. What we need to do is reform the system so we can unclog the backlog and let the system flow, so that we continue to allow people who have legitimate claims for asylum to go through and we're able to stop those who have frivolous claims.

The system does not need a great deal of changing except to streamline it so that claims can be processed faster. We have to devote more people to it. We can, perhaps, put in about one-twentieth of the resources into asylum processing that say, a country like Sweden or even England does, into our asylum system. If we do that, we take care of the backlog.

In terms of the immigration that comes in across our borders, I think we have to realize that we will not stop people from coming in — either crossing the borders or coming in with a visitor or tourist visa and over-staying. People will always come. It's more a matter of how can you try to prevent the flow from increasing. I think we can do a much better job of patrolling the border, perhaps putting a more aggressive force there in terms of numbers, not in terms of violations of civil rights, and try to apprehend people before they cross over. Once they're in, it's very difficult, and it also violates constitutional protection to try to apprehend people in many cases.

**Question:** This question is for Mr. Brimelow, and then anybody else who might want to respond is welcome to it. What was interesting to me about the portion that you gave is that you understate the issue by asking the question, "Is immigration necessary for economic growth?" It struck me because I don't think anybody else who spoke before claimed that it did. In fact, they were saying and acknowledged the fact that immigrants are a relatively small portion of the population, and, thus, the question of their contribution to economic growth relative to that of technology seems to me as a non-issue. Given that immigration exists and given that so many people in the United States are against it, the question then becomes "Why not?" and not "Why so?" Do you understand my question?

**Peter Brimelow:** Well I do, but I guess I basically don't see the point. It's up to Americans to choose how many immigrants they want, and you have to make a case for it. I don't agree with you, though, that people didn't imply here that immigration was good for economic growth. It seemed to me that's exactly what Muzaffar was saying when he was talking about the Chinese garment workers. It's a standard argument that's used to justify immigration.

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You have to want this immigration on political grounds. You have to make a case for it on political grounds. You can't make a case on economic grounds. It's not wise to because you simply can't show that it's necessary for economic growth. You have to absolutely want to transform America.

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**Follow-up Question:** I think saying that it's positive is one argument, but saying that it's necessary for economic growth, which you pose as a question and which I don't think people are saying makes me wonder why?

**Peter Brimelow:** I want to emphasize that you have to want this immigration on political grounds. You have to make a case for it on political grounds. You can't make a case on economic grounds. It's not wise to because you simply can't show that it's necessary for economic growth. You have to absolutely want to transform America.

**Muzaffar Chishti:** I want to add one thing. I would normally resist this temptation, but since I'm at Harvard, I won't. Harvard's distinguished economics professor John Kenneth Galbraith wrote a very interesting

book called *The Nation of Mass Poverty* in which he actually points to the declining economic stature of England and says that England lost its auto industry because England was insisting on making cars with Englishmen. That exactly is good part of the foundation of why immigration is necessary. It doesn't mean that people who are already there are not capable of engaging in a lot of economic activity. It is that when you do bring new energy, new enterprise and new education, it does spur the economy in a way which has been very, very productive for the U.S. and for other countries of the world which have opened their doors to immigration. And Japan is an example that Mr. Brimelow pointed out which tells you that Japanese growth did reach a stage for about 20 years and now people are questioning strongly whether Japan can keep its level of economic growth with its door shut to immigrants.

**Peter Brimelow:** I just can't believe that Galbraith would say something as silly as that because it's precisely when Britain went into its economic decline that it started to have a first mass immigration in nearly 1,000 years of the new commonwealth.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** Let me see if I can jump in real quickly, as well. I don't think it makes any difference if we think it's necessary or not, it's going to happen. Migration will happen throughout the world. Some of the migration will end up coming to the U.S. We have to realize that we cannot erect walls that will keep people from coming in. We can try to regulate and control our borders as best as possible and then we can try to figure out what the effects are of the immigration that has come in and hopefully, more regulated than not. But the fact remains that the immigrant that has come in cannot be denied the fruits of his or her labor. We would not have railroads stretching across this country, if it were not for the Chinese immigrant. We would not have the major cities that we have on the East Coast if it weren't for the Polish, Jew, the Greek, the Italian immigrants that came in. We would not be eating inexpensive fruit. You and I would be paying probably double the price for the garments that we wear at this stage were it not for the labor of immigrants. So, for people to deny that immigrants provide a benefit to this country to me is absurd. Now, whether or not you can actually come out with a balance sheet that says on the whole how much do they contribute or how much they consume — that's much more difficult, but clearly the signs are out there. You can step out this door and look at the person who's cleaning the streets probably and find out that we are benefiting tremendously.

**Antonia Hernandez:** Let me add a little controversy to this because I think that we really need to get to the heart of the issue. One is the economic issue — you can argue either way. In fact, the reality is that the immigra-

tion issue and the debate would be based on politics, based on emotion, and not based on economics. That is what we're dealing with today because I can get you an equal number of reports on the economic benefit or detriment — more on the benefit. I would say that this country, as we all know it, thrived on the backs of immigrants. We are a country of immigrants; we're not like England; we're not like Japan. This is a unique democracy, a unique country. And the debate today is about culture.

Let me frame it to you as it was framed to me by a Congressman. As we were discussing immigration, he said, "Antonia, I'm worried about the changing complexion of the country." He then continued, "Whoops, I guess that was really literal." This is what we're debating today. Whether the immigrant of today: whether it be the Polish, the Armenian, the Korean, the Mexican, the Salvadoran, whether that immigrant meets the stereotype, the image of what we perceive an American to be. And I believe that as individuals involved in this debate, we've got to hit straight on the issue and debate it on those merits. Otherwise we're talking in code words, and we're not going to make any point talking in code words.

**Alfredo Estrada:** And to respond to a point raised by one of the earlier questions, I don't think it's surprising at all that there is this type of opposition to immigration, and I don't think there's any point in being righteous about it, I think it's very understandable. People are very concerned with demographic change. It's something that produces a tremendous amount of anxiety when you look around and the very complexion of your neighborhood is changing very, very quickly. That's very, very understandable, and it's an emotion we need to understand to debate this in an intelligent fashion.

**Question:** My principal concern is about something that Congressman Becerra brought up: the protection of human rights of the undocumented immigrant along the border. I grew up in San Diego, California, and there, as a U.S. citizen, as an American and as a Chicano, I observed many times basic human rights being trampled upon, not only by private individuals, but also by police and the Immigration and Naturalization Service agents. I think Mr. Brimelow brings up, interestingly, the racial implications of immigration policy, perhaps not explicitly, but certainly he brings it up implicitly. As a Chicano, as an American, I find that the Immigration and Naturalization Service does a very poor job of being able to distinguish between undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, and citizens in their practices and basically terrorizes the Chicano/Latino community in the Southwest.

And finally, I don't know if the quote was accurate of the Hispanic Magazine. I have to tell you if 84 percent of Hispanics are against immigration, that absolutely amazes me, being a Chicano, growing up in the Southwest. It's as if I were somewhere else, but certainly where I'm from, there are not 84 percent of Chicanos and Latinos against immigration.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** Make sure you understand what the question in the survey was: "Do you oppose undocumented immigration — people coming in without documents or without legal status." I think you're going to find that people would say, "Yes, I oppose that because we should." We are a sovereign nation. We have a right to say how people can enter into our country. But ask individuals how they feel about the immigrants who are here if they are here to work or be on welfare and they will tell you, in vast majority, that they are here to work.

If you ask the Latinos in California if they support undocumented immigration they will tell you, no. But ask them now if they agree with Governor Wilson that the child who was born in this country to undocumented parents should be deprived of citizenship status because he or she is the child of the undocumented, they'll say, no. You have to distinguish, and that's what we're trying to say, and Antonia's point is well taken.

**Peter Brimelow:** The question was actually, "Are there too many immigrants?"

**Follow-up Question:** Zoë Baird might have answered that question. No, there should not be undocumented immigration, and yet she employed an undocumented woman. Agribusiness employs the undocumented. The textile industries employ the undocumented. So, again, the way the question is phrased is very important. But what I'm trying to convey is the fact that the undocumented immigrant is an integral part of this economy; they're an integral part of this culture; they're an integral part of the Chicano/Latino community and of the broader community — particularly, but not exclusively in the Southwest. And I think as we set up this polarization of those against and in favor, we really run into a lot of risk of the gray area again. The Zoë Baird example, I think a good one. Yes, I oppose undocumented immigration, but I have employees.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** That's what I said at the beginning. I hope what we do is distinguish between immigration policy and the issue of immigrants.

**Question:** During the discussion there was some sort of a separation between the politics of immigration and the economics of it. My sense of reading over the literature and talking to other people who actually study the labor market is that the majority of the flow of immigrants is market driven, and we've talked about the push from other countries. We haven't really talked about the pull from the United States to bring in immigrant labor. We've gotten so bad, we actually go to other continents and force people to work, i.e., slavery, in order to pick cotton.

To what extent is the flow of immigrants market driven? In other words, they don't employ themselves; they can't get the revenue; the loans. Someone is employing them.



**Muzaffar Chishti:** I think that's really an important point to be made. You can't have a decent debate on immigration unless you look both at the pull factors and the push factors. It's not just the polity of the sending country that is responsible or migration. Unless there was a demand, people would just not move. We have in this country, as all capitalist economies have, what economists call the secondary sector of the economy which is characterized by low wages, by very unsafe conditions, very little opportunity. We've had that throughout in our economy.

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You can't have a decent debate on immigration unless you look both at the pull factors and the push factors. It's not just the polity of the sending country that is responsible or migration. Unless there was a demand, people would just not move.

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Now, each country, I will submit to you, defines its own secondary sector. If you look at a sanitation worker job in New York and if you are third generation American, and you're black, you may not get it. There's no way an immigrant would get a sanitation worker job in New York because we have defined it to be a high paying job. But if you look a sanitation job in Germany, you won't find a German interested in that job because they've made it a dirty, low-paying job.

We have our own secondary sectors of economy. Our apparel industry is a very important component of that. This is, of course part of the debate we could not get into because immigration gets linked to trade policies. We have in the last twenty years pro-actively abandoned a good part of the manufacturing industry in the country and sent those jobs away. Now, if you have any part of a U.S. manufacturer staying in New York and competing against a company in Hong Kong, a company in Venezuela, you have no choice but to pay the lowest wages possible. And therefore, if you depress the wage to a level so that those jobs are not jobs a U.S. worker is interested in, you create a vacuum. That's when the immigrant, including the undocumented, is attracted.

So, if you really have to have a rational approach to plugging this vacuum. You really have to improve jobs in this country. Then you will get U.S. workers interested in them, and you will see the full effect of the vacuum being plugged and immigration have a certain semblance of control.

**Peter Brimelow:** From an economic standpoint, the rational thing to do is to descend to Latin America and to do all of the manufacturing involving this type of low skill work offshore. And that's how the Japanese have gotten around this alleged labor shortage. By and large, they tell you to export the lower skilled jobs.

Conversely, there is another form of incentive which hasn't been mentioned — at least only skirted around tonight — and that's a big difference between this wave of immigration, and the previous great wave from 1890 to 1920. That is the existence of the world's first welfare state and heavily subsidized public education.

If you look at the numbers you'll see that about a third, more than a third, nearly 40 percent of immigrants who came here from 1890 to 1920 went back home, primarily because they failed in the work force. They went back home to the farms because they just couldn't make it in the U.S. That's no longer happening. Net immigration is very high now. And I think that one of the factors behind this trend is the fact that if you fail in the work force now, there is this safety net in which immigrants are participating quite heavily, in fact.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** I think the best evidence of the pull factor causing people to come, not just the push factor, is the governor of California. This gentleman who is now indicting immigrants is the same gentleman who when he was then U.S. Senator Pete Wilson in 1986 did everything he could to make sure that the agribusiness industries in California had access to cheap immigrant labor to pick the crops in the field. He did everything he could. He did nothing else in the realm of immigration except that, and he succeeded. Now, eight years later, of course, he's condemning those same individuals who are in the state when he was, in fact, the person who helped create that pull factor and the jobs that were taken by these immigrants.

**Question:** It seems to me that what we're hearing is one side of the debate: that immigration is, in fact, good for the economy and then the other side saying that immigration isn't necessary for the growth of the economy. But I haven't heard anyone say that immigration is bad for the economy or laid out the reasons why it's bad. And so my question is, please, what are the reasons and let's get beyond this idea that somehow our democracy is at risk culturally with a new kind of immigrant because history belies that argument. That was the same thing said in the 1890s when immigrants came in a great wave, and I think it's actually a tribute to our democracy that we have continued so strongly with such a diverse group of people. So my question is what are the detrimental effects of immigration to our economy, not how much do they contribute to the economy?

**Peter Brimelow:** I have a feeling nobody else wants to answer that question, is that right? Twenty-five percent of all inhabitants of Federal prisons are aliens. The foreign-born population in the country at large is 9 percent. In other words, one of the effects of immigration has been to increase certain types of crime. This is true for all immigration. All of the great crime waves in American history coincide with massive num-

bers of immigrants, partly because they tend to be young men, and young men disproportionately turn towards crime, but that's just one area.

I can hear a lot of mutter in the audience at this point. But, it's amazing when I listen to this debate. I hang around the people who worry about immigration, and they think they're repressed. They think they're not allowed to discuss half the issues that we want to discuss. They think that the public debate is entirely controlled by the other side, and one of the reasons for that is that everybody is terrified of being called a racist. That's why I appreciate Antonia's comment, because the question is: what color do you want the country to be?

Another reason why we have to worry about immigration is what the Congressman just said. He's quite right that the benefits of immigration from the tax point of view float the Federal government, and the cost is borne by state and local government. So, in order to get around that, there has to be massive transfers from the Federal government to all other governments, and that means the Federal government is going to have to tax more. So, immigration will move the U.S. towards a more high-tax economy, which I happen to think is the reason why Europe is relatively stagnant compared to the U.S. In other words, immigration is going to force the partitions, which they want to do anyway and raise taxes.

**Antonia Hernandez:** Let me respond as far as facts and numbers. A lot has been said about the percentage of "aliens" in the penal system that are "undocumented." The statistics that are being quoted are taken from the Spanish-surnamed individuals in the penal system. If you segregate those numbers specifically, the number of undocumented individuals in the penal system, mostly in the Federal penal system because their immigration status comes to bear, is under 10 percent. And one of the problems with our census is that it is extremely difficult to discern if you have a name like Hernandez whether you're a citizen, whether you are resident or whether you are undocumented. As far as the economic issues, let's go to the issue of cost and that's one point that was made which is true.

A large percentage of the taxes that are paid by the undocumented goes to the Federal government. People live in localities and in places like California and Texas. Because the money is not sent back to the state and local governments and distributed, there is an increased cost to the localities, to the cities and to the counties. This occurs specifically in the area of public health hospitals because a lot of these individuals do not have insurance and go to the emergency room of the hospital, which is the costliest way to get health benefits. Also, this can be seen in the public schools because the children going to the schools here. So, when you talk about the cost to the cities, to the counties and to the state, it is localized, and the transfers of money are not made to where those costs are incurred. And in fact, that's one of the reasons why the state of Florida has sued the Federal government. In California, Xavier knows very well, the pressure from the state, the county supervisors and the mayors is on the Federal government trying to get them to offset some of those costs. So,

the problem is the allocation of the taxes and where they're going. The burden falls at the local level.

**Congressman Xavier Becerra:** I'm going to clarify the issue of the criminal alien because not only is it true that we go only by Spanish surname and decide that the person is undocumented, but, the same time, we don't distinguish between an alien who is here legally, commits a crime and then is sent to the Federal penitentiary, and between one who is here without documents and is sent to the Federal penitentiary. We don't identify those individuals. We don't segregate, and as a result, all we can talk about are those who have either Spanish surnames or we can talk about those who are foreign-born. There are a lot of folks who are U.S. citizens who are foreign-born, and those folks get lumped in. That's where you hear these numbers of 25 percent or whatever else it might be. They are inflated or they are misperceptions of reality, but we'll never quite know because there's no way to really count them unless we go to the prison to do so.

On the issue of taxes, the drawback is not that the immigrant brings with him or her the negative. It's that our governments are unwilling for political reasons to deal with the issue of immigration. If the Federal government is collecting more in taxes than it should and is distributing those monies to communities that don't call themselves home to those immigrants, then the Federal government is distributing money in an inequitable fashion.

The Federal government will not deal with it though because it means being able to get a vote from a member of Congress in Idaho or Wisconsin or New Hampshire because that dollar doesn't belong there. It should go to the community, say in Los Angeles or Texas or New York or New Jersey where the immigrants are paying taxes. Try to get a dollar out of a member of Congress either for immigration, education, health care, it makes no difference. There are 435 fiefdoms in Congress on the House side and 100 fiefdoms on the Senate side, and no one gives up a cent. So what we have to understand is the problem we have is that the Federal government is unwilling to live up to its responsibility in that regard.

Drawbacks to immigration? I'd say the underground economy (which is created by a lot of immigrants—documented and undocumented) does not benefit the Treasury as readily as it should. It's not just immigrants, of course who are in the underground economy. There are a lot of citizens who are trying to take advantage of an underground economy. But to the degree that we cannot collect the tax benefits of the underground economy, we all suffer some.

The avoidance of the governing system is another drawback. People who are immigrants, legal or not, often don't use governmental agencies because they're either afraid to or they don't know how to, especially in the cases of public safety and health. I think there could be drawback to the community, if in fact, there's something going on that we should know about.

But in terms of the economics, I must tell you that I do think on the whole that there is a net contribution by immigrants, not a net cost by immigrants. It's hard to prove. You can find studies and statistics that say one thing or the other, but I think on the whole you would find that economically, immigrants do provide much more than they ever did.

**Question:** This question is for Mr. Brimelow, and I'd like to hear the argument against immigration based on values and politics, without any economics in it. Earlier you told us that this was a closed matter, and it was not an issue. Somehow we spent half an hour or forty minutes around the economic circle again. If you could factor it out, it would inform the debate, I believe.

**Peter Brimelow:** Ultimately, the people of the U.S. are going to have to decide whether they want to be what they were in 1965, which was predominantly European. We had certain traditions which were very deeply rooted here and we had very clear and stable ethnic balance for well over 100 years.

Or is the U.S. going to become a different kind of country? Whether we're going to see areas of the U.S. which predominantly, Hispanic, Spanish-speaking or Haitian.

I think fundamentally, it comes down to a question of the union. Do you think the union is going to be preserved or do you think that diversity leads to divisiveness? You know, it used to be very popular at one stage to go on about U.S. strength and all this stuff.

**Question:** Would you say it's what color the face of America is at issue?

**Peter Brimelow:** You mean literally? That's one issue, sure.

**Paul Kuroda:** That's where I think the true issue lies — the complexion. I think historically the minority and the people that look different are scapegoats for the problem. We suffered as Japanese Americans. My father lost his business and everything because he was taken into a camp. He went to Stanford, and he was about ready to start his business.

I think the *bracero* program started up because of the need during the war to have labor. That was O.K. then. But once the economy changes, well then, hey, it's not O.K. anymore, and they're a threat; they're changing; they're different so maybe we should kick them out. I think ultimately they are used as political pawns, and I just feel that maybe that's the true root of our discussion tonight.

**Antonia Hernandez:** I'd like to say that I really thank Peter because we are having an honest debate about what's on the minds of a lot of people. In

order to have that honest debate, we have to put it in those terms, and I think that as we speak on this issue, it is not an issue of whether you're racist or not. It's a value system that we have to debate about how we perceive this country to be. I will tell you that I am involved in immigration debates *ad nauseum*, and I am really grateful to you Peter for putting it on the table as clearly as this and for our debating it that way. And I do think that folks in the audience need to appreciate the way it's been debated tonight, Peter's perspective, and our ability to debate it on those terms in a rationale manner. And for that, I do thank you Peter.

**Alfredo Estrada:** I think one of the benefits of being a moderator of this type of discussion is that you get to have the last word, and like a good lawyer, after making all the reasoned arguments, you like to finish with an emotional appeal. I'd like to say that I, myself, am an immigrant, and many of you on this panel are either immigrants or the children of immigrants. Something I believe very deeply, and many of the panelists may agree, is that my life and our lives in many ways embody the American dream. The American dream is a promise of endless horizons, of unlimited opportunities and was invented by immigrants. That's what the American dream is all about. In times of great change when we look to ourselves for some sort of renewal, the place where we'll find it is in this American dream, which is brought to us by immigrants, coming from across the world, every day to our shores. That's what I think is important to bring out of this — certainly if not for immigrants, you wouldn't have *Hispanic Magazine*. And I'd like to add, and correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Brimelow, you wouldn't have *Forbes* magazine either, which was started by an immigrant.

I want to thank you all of you very much for joining us here tonight. We appreciate it. Thank you very much. *Muchas gracias*.



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