

Clinton's Relaciones Raciales Provoca Duda Entre Latinos

Por Edgar Ortega Barrales

Aunque los dirigentes hispanos ven con agrado la formación de una junta asesora para examinar las relaciones raciales y étnicas en los Estados Unidos por parte del Presidente Clinton, muchos sienten pesimismo con relación a las probabilidades de que la junta enfoque eficazmente las necesidades de los hispanos u otros grupos.

La junta está constituida por una latina, una asiático-americana, dos negros y tres anglo-americanos. La vice-presidenta ejecutiva de la AFL-CIO, Linda Chávez-Thompson, es la única hispana en la junta.

Juan José Gutiérrez, el organizador principal de la marcha latina en Washington, D.C., del octubre pasado, dice que Chávez-Thompson es una capacitada defensora de los latinos en la junta, pero él no cree que haya suficiente representación hispana como para reflejar los diversos intereses de la comunidad hispana.

Varios otros dirigentes hispanos concuerdan en que la junta carece de equilibrio y se

preocupan de que la misma termine enfocando primordialmente las relaciones entre negros y blancos.

Las tensiones surgieron inmediatamente durante la primera reunión de la junta el mes pasado, cuando Angela E. Oh, miembro de la junta, instó a sus colegas a moverse más allá del "paradigma de negro y blanco" con respecto a las relaciones raciales. El presidente de la junta, John Hope Franklin, la refutó subrayando que las relaciones entre negros y blancos son, de hecho, la raíz del racismo.

Aunque los medios de comunicación le dieron mayor importancia al conflicto entre Oh, que es de ascendencia coreana, y Hope Franklin, que es afro-americano, el Presidente Clinton elogió la primera sesión como un debate saludable. A diferencia de la Comisión Kerner de 1968, la junta es dirigida personalmente por el presidente.

Cruz Reynoso, vice-presidente de la Comisión de los Estados Unidos sobre Derechos Civiles, dice que los medios informativos se enfocaron demasiado sobre el

conflicto entre los miembros de la junta asesora. El es uno de los que confía en que la junta puede elaborar recomendaciones que hagan mejorar a las relaciones raciales en la nación.

Los miembros del grupo tienen un itinerario de viaje a través del país, efectuando vistas y consultando con funcionarios y dirigentes locales, durante los meses próximos.

Clinton usará sus hallazgos para bosquejar un informe, que él ha prometido incluirá propuestas concretas para mitigar las tensiones raciales e implantar soluciones en terrenos tales como la enseñanza, la oportunidad económica, la vivienda, la atención a la salud y la delincuencia. El dice que espera que su informe, tras su publicación el verano próximo, se convierta en una señal distintiva de su presidencia.

Una propuesta que Clinton ya ha enlazado con la iniciativa es una en pequeña escala que ofrece estímulos económicos para alentar a los maestros a trabajar en distritos escolares rurales y urbanos con

altos índices de pobreza.

Angelo Falcón, presidente del Instituto para Cursos de Acción Puertorriqueños, con sede en Nueva York, duda que el país esté preparado para enfocarse en sus divisiones raciales y étnicas. El se preocupa porque la junta no tiene el "enmarque conceptual sobre el modo de hablar acerca de la raza. Una gran parte de esto no se presta para respuestas fáciles".

Siobhan Nicolau, presidenta del Proyecto para Desarrollar Cursos de Acción Hispanos, con oficinas en Nueva York y en Washington, D.C., sugiere, "No creo que la mayoría de las juntas nacionales puedan hacer mucho más que proveerle visibilidad nacional a este asunto."

En la década de 1960, recuerda ella, los blancos estaban enojados con los negros y actuaron contra ellos mudándose a los suburbios. Pero en la del 1990, dice ella, "todos están enojados."

Nicolau recomienda a la junta enfocarse sobre los efectos que están creando los cambios demográficos en la

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News Brief

Thousands Start Losing Food Stamps Today

Thousands of legal immigrants in California will begin losing their food stamps today, the most sweeping action since welfare reform was adopted by Congress last year and one that could overwhelm food banks, reports The San Francisco Chronicle.

Legal immigrants receiving food stamps are ineligible as of today if they do not meet certain criteria. September 1 will be the first month they will not receive their monthly allotment of about \$71 per person.

"A lot of people are going to have to decide whether to pay their rent or eat," said Jenny Ocon, spokeswoman for the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights. "Chances are they're going to feed their bellies, and many will end up homeless."

The state Department of Social Services reported that there are 365,000 legal immigrants receiving food stamps. Officials said 182,000 will continue to receive food stamps because they meet the exception criteria, including having worked 10 years or more in the United States. Of the remaining 183,000 legal immigrants, the administration of Governor Pete Wilson projects 61,000 will become citizens by September 1 and therefore will not be affected. But the projection depends on the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Bay Area food banks are bracing for increased requests for help. Paul Ash, executive director of the San Francisco Food Bank, said his agency will not be able to fill the need.

"There was already a line at most places serving food," Ash said. "These people are going to have to stand in the back of the line."

"Food assistance programs are already seeing an increase in people coming to them for help," said Jennifer Tujague, an analyst for California Food Policy Advocates. "The food program funded by the state last week is not going to make a dent in the problem." The program contained in the state budget allocates \$35.6 million to provide food stamps for about 40,000 legal immigrant children and seniors who are cut off from the federal program. To qualify for an exemption, a legal immigrant must be a veteran or active military, or the family of such persons. Waivers are also granted to a refugee who has been in the country less than five years, someone seeking asylum who has been in the country less than five years, and a person who has been in the country less than five years and whose deportation has been withheld.

Billionaire Enters Drug War

Philanthropist George Soros says he's using his wealth to fight America's drug policies because politicians lack the courage to do it themselves, reports Associated Press.

"Our drug policy is insane," he said in an interview in this week's Time magazine. "And no politician can stand up and say what I'm saying, because it's the third rail - instant electrocution."

The billionaire is giving \$15 million over the next five years to groups opposing America's war on drugs.

He says the "unintended consequences" of the war, including the criminalization of a vast class of drug users, far outweigh the limited and costly success of interdiction. "I do want to weaken the drug laws. I think they are unnecessarily severe."

The currency trader who supplied his native Hungary with photocopiers to fight censorship says he has turned his attention to the United States to stir debate on the role of its government.

In the issue that hits newsstands Monday, Soros says he has spent more than \$90 million in recent years to promote less severe drug laws, needle exchange programs for addicts and research to reduce the number of people in jail.

Soros worries the U.S. government is relying too heavily on prisons and has abdicated its responsibility to help new immigrants get on their feet, treat drug addicts and help people die with dignity.

Calif. Can Enforce Prop. 209

A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday California can enforce Proposition 209, the law that bans race or gender from being a factor in state hiring or school admissions, unless the Supreme Court intervenes, reports Associated Press.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request by civil rights groups to prevent the law from going into effect as planned Thursday.

The groups hoped to suspend enforcement until the Supreme Court decides whether to take up the case. The American Civil Liberties Union plans to appeal.

Chief U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson barred enforcement of the measure three weeks after it passed and said opponents were likely to prove it unconstitutional.

He said it affected only preferences for women and minorities while leaving intact other preferences, such as those for military veterans and the children of college alumni.

But a panel of the appeals court overruled Henderson in April, saying Proposition 209 was a neutral measure that promoted equality. The court said race-conscious programs are constitutionally suspect and can be abolished by a state.

"The state has demonstrated the clear possibility of irreparable injury to its citizens if a stay ... is granted," the three-judge panel ruled.

The ruling was reaffirmed Thursday when opponents failed to persuade a majority of the court to order a new hearing on the issue.

Diversity in Higher Educ Debated

As some universities prepare to open this fall without affirmative action-influenced classes, supporters and opponents of the policy agreed Sunday that something must be done to ensure all Americans have access to top schools, reports Associated Press.

Universities "have to find ways to be creative," Kweisi Mfume, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"It's not enough to simply take the top 10 percent of graduates and assume they're the only ones who can qualify for entrance," he said, suggesting universities consider the top 25 percent instead.

But William Bennett, an affirmative action opponent who served as education secretary under President Reagan,

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Comentarios de Bidal

by Bidal Agüero

It continues to amaze me how absent minded some people are. Not that I want to write about this but I guess anything is better than writing about cats and the poem in last week's paper to which I continue to get daily phone calls. I guess some people just don't like cats.

Yesterday one of my friends told me a story. You know how it is. Having a few beers, talking about a little bit of nothing. We my friend started his story by using that age old statement: "Guess what happened to me yesterday?" Not wanting to really know, I changed the subject to "Do you want another beer?" Well you guessed it. He did. As soon as he said that I got up and went to the refrigerator, opened it and you guessed it. We were out of beer. This definitely meant a trip to the strip. Well, on our way to the beer store, my friend once again asked me "Guess what happened to me yesterday?"

Then we saw a cop during his daily duty of stopping people on the Intersate. "I guess it must be the end of the month and they have to get their quota," I said. I forget what he responded but we finally got to the strip, asked for a 30 pack and ice then proceed to go back to the office. No opening a beer of course...because it's against the law to drink when you drive. I always wait til I safely in my house or office. Well I never found out what happened to my friend yesterday. I don't really know what the point of this column was. I guess you can say that absent mindedness runs in everybody.



Female Elected Politicians Set New Agenda For Mexico

MEXICO CITY—Amalia Garcia remembers well the battles in the late 1980s, when she was fighting to criminalize sexual harassment and her fellow federal deputies tried to convince her the problem didn't exist in Mexico.

"They said that sexual harassment was an Anglo-Saxon practice," Garcia recalled with a rueful smile. "Mexico, they said, has courtship."

Garcia knew better. And so did all the young female pages who worked in the Mexican Congress. Even as Garcia and other female deputies were persuading male deputies to vote to outlaw sexual harassment in 1990, they had to threaten to make "a huge scandal" if their male colleagues didn't stop bothering the pages.

This September Garcia and feminists are going to have company in their war for gender equality in Mexico. The new Congress, elected in July will include more women than ever before. Those women are already shaping cross-party coalitions and preparing an agenda focusing on women's concerns.

"Whether it's about the budget or health care members of congressional commissions need to start thinking about gender," said Garcia, who is leaving Mexico's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, to serve as a senator representing the left-of-center Democratic Revolutionary Party.

The attraction of women's issues has not been lost on the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI, and on its standard-bearer, President Ernesto Zedillo, who this month announced a new social service program aimed primarily at women and girls. Girls in Mexico drop out of school more often than boys. Of adult Mexicans who are illiterate, 70 percent are women. Women also have been hit hardest by Mexico's economic woes, Garcia said.

"We have what's called 'the feminization of poverty' in Mexico," Garcia said. "Women here are the poorest of the poor."

The Democratic Revolutionary Party, or PRD, which focused heavily on women's issues in this year's campaign, is fueling the rise of women in Mexico's legislative bodies. In the July 6 elections, the party doubled the number of female deputies it will have in the lower house. With 30 female deputies, it will have the largest percentage of female elected officials of any of the three major parties represented in the 500-seat chamber.

Among the PRD's deputies is a Lesbian feminist who is making history as the first openly gay national legislator in Mexico. Patricia Jimenez is a newly elected federal deputy and the first openly gay person to serve in Mexico's Congress. She ran as a candidate for the Democratic Revolutionary Party.

In total, the chamber is 17 percent female as of September up from 14 percent previously. And unlike the past, the female lawmakers are seeking to build a solid voting bloc to advance women issues.

On June 23, two weeks before the elections, a coalition of women from all political parties put aside their many ideological differences and signed an accord to seek certain reforms to protect women.

Among the priorities, the woman declared, is the need for better laws to make fathers responsible for their children and to specifically ban discrimination in employment and salaries.

"The constitution says there should be no discrimination between men and women. But then we have reality," said Patricia Espinoza de Parrodi, a deputy elect representing the conservative National Action Party, or PAN. Espinoza, who has served as a coordinator of

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The Color Purple -- And Who We Used To Be

By Victor Landa

I went back to the old neighborhood in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, across the border from Laredo, Texas, a couple of years ago to show my children where I'd grown up. But the old neighborhood was no longer there.

The mound of gravel I used to stand on to pitch rocks into the cornfield across the street had become a two-story house under construction. The cornfield itself had been replaced by a line of colorful houses with terraces over carports.

The most peculiar thing about the old neighborhood was the half-paved street that ran along the edge of the corn field to a slope that led down to the river. For 12 years, the street remained paved on one side only, for no apparent reason. The street had since been completed. Even that relic of idiosyncrasy was gone.

Only the house we lived in seemed to remain, but it looked much smaller than I remember. Memory has a way of making things larger.

The place of enchanted summers, the nooks and crannies

filled with mischief, the best hiding places for hide-and-seek -- they were all gone. I found myself saying things like, "There used to be a tree there," and "This is where crazy Quique from down the street busted his nose trying to jump the length of three old tires on his bike." He called himself Quique Knevil. We used the rag he wore as a cape to swab the blood off the street.

Maybe in the larger scheme of things, the old neighborhood has no importance. But I needed it to be present, in some form, so I could show it to my children as evidence of what used to be.

All of this came to mind this month, when writer Sandra Cisneros took up the cause of memory and of evidence of things past here in San Antonio.

The story has been played out in the media as having to do with the color of her house. Some call it the purple house; periwinkle has been mentioned, as well, and even Cisneros herself will point to a picture in a Texas wildflower brochure and make note of the

similarity in hue with the Texas mountain laurel.

Some members of the San Antonio Historical Review Commission ran out of forehead for their raised eyebrows when Cisneros had her house painted such a hue. It seems the color had not been properly approved. What's more, such a purple wasn't on the official Historic Housepaint Palette put together by a paint company somewhere in New England.

The real story, though, isn't so much about color. What's at stake here is the dignity of memory, the right of historical inclusion.

The argument against the periwinkle-purple house is that there is no documented proof that such colors were used in the past to paint the exterior of houses in the Historical King William area. But the question must be asked: Whose houses are we talking about?

For questions leading back to the construction of the pyramids in Mexico, Latinos have painted houses in purple and bright pinks, lime green and

canary yellow. It's been ignored by historians, and architects never documented it. You can't find those colors on official historic palettes. And the point is, they should be, because those colors are as much a part of the history of this country as is battleship grey.

So what's to be done about it? The argument over purple will go on, but there is much work to be done.

Cisneros has dreamed up the idea of calling for the people from the old barrios of the city to record oral histories of their neighborhoods. The vision is to compile and publish the histories of places and colors, and have them stand as documented proof of what was, and is.

It's a vision of the dignity of memory, the evidence of what was -- like the colors of front porches and window sills and Quique Knevil's old rag cape.

In the recognition of who we used to be lies the legitimacy of who we are.

(Victor Landa is news director of KVDA-TV Telemundo in San Antonio, Texas.) (c) 1997, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

Rare Union Victory in Tijuana

EDITOR'S NOTE: Winning a strike in the United States may be a rare event, but in Mexico, particularly in the border-straddling factories called maquiladoras, the odds against even building an organization are almost prohibitive. One such effort, hailed as a victory in June, now seems to be settling into a battle of endurance. PNS associate editor David Bacon is a former union organizer who writes widely on labor and immigration.

BY David Bacon, Pacific News Service

Baja California -- Each morning as the sun rises, thousands of workers stream out of this city's dusty barrios, up the hillsides, and into the industrial parks on the mesas above.

But on June 2, that human wave stopped at the gate of Han Young de Mexico as the plant's 120 workers went on strike.

They demanded negotiations -- first with their bosses, and then with the authorities of the National Conciliation and Arbitration Board (the JNCA, equivalent to the U.S. National Labor Relations Board). By the end of the second day of the walkout, the company had agreed to bargain, a first in the maquiladora industry, where managers have almost absolute power.

Since then, Han Young managers have moved to regain control, most dramatically by firing Emeterio Armenta, the strike's leader, in early August. The managers were not acting on their own, but as part of government-industry network that sets the rules for labor relations in Tijuana. After the strike, the JNCA insisted the company hire Luis Manuel Escobedo Jimenez as personnel director -- it was Escobedo who fired Armenta and two other strike leaders.

Escobedo is a labor consultant -- local activists call him a "psychological warfare expert." Mexican employers haven't used such people in the past, but maquiladora managers seem to be adopting the hardball U.S. model of labor relations.

Han Young de Mexico is a "feeder" factory. Its workers build truck trailer chassis and huge metal shipping containers for the huge Hyundai manufacturing complex. The June walkout was fueled by low wages -- \$36-48 (US) a week and some of the most dangerous conditions in a city well-known for workplace accidents. Han Young workers complain they often lack welding masks, gloves and safety shoes. The plant has no ventilation system, and lead fumes from soldering cause permanent eye damage.

But the Han Young workers' core demand was company recognition of their independent union. Han Young has had a union since the factory was built years ago -- a union that holds no meetings, rarely if ever sends representatives to visit the plant, and does not help workers with complaints. Workers call it a company union.

If Han Young workers won recognition of an their union, "the formation of independent unions could sweep like a wave through the factories of Tijuana, where conditions are the same," says Enrique Hernandez, president of the Civic Alliance, a community organization which gives workers legal advice.

That possibility may explain why Han Young fired Armenta and two co-workers. Company spokesmen have declined to comment on the reasons for the firing.

Han Young may also have felt threatened because the workers sought help from Mexico's Frente Auténtico de Trabajo (Authentic Labor Front), for

help. The FAT, Mexico's most independent labor federation, has been cooperating with the U.S.-based Teamsters Union and United Electrical Workers on organizing drives. A victory by Han Young workers would give the FAT a base in Tijuana, a situation which would particularly threaten Hyundai -- possibly the city's most important industrial corporation.

Hyundai's Tijuana operations are particularly vulnerable. The company's effort to expand by taking land at the city's outskirts in the community of Maclovio Rojas has been a particular focus of resentment -- Han Young strike leader Armenta lives in Maclovio Rojas, and has been active in the resistance to Hyundai's attempted takeover.

In addition, workers employed in Hyundai's main plant complain of being hit by Korean foremen. They also report that safety sensors are often disabled, and complain of numerous mutilating workplace accidents. These allegations seem to be supported by high turnover rates.

"In seven years over 7600 workers have passed through a plant which only employs 1500," says Jaime Cota, of Tijuana's Workers' Information Center.

Two key factors helping to sustain the Han Young workers' efforts as Hyundai resists. One is the continuing support of Maclovio Rojas residents -- and the ability to connect the strike with the community.

The other is aid from U.S. activists pushing a new tactic in labor's arsenal -- cross-border organizing. San Diego's Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers mobilized southern California unions to send money, fire off telegrams, and bring down observers during the strike. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers donated \$5,000 to the workers' center. Other support has come from San Diego's janitors' union, the San Diego-Imperial Counties Central Labor Council, and unions at the University of California, San Diego.

"We try to even the odds faced by maquiladora workers who get into fights with factory owners and the government," says Mary Tong of the San Diego committee, "and educate people in the U.S. at the same time. In a global economy, the jobs and livelihood of people north of the border can depend on the outcome of the struggles of workers south of it, at factories like Han Young."

the nation's changing demographics are creating while appealing to the vested economic interests of all groups.

Gutierrez, who heads One-Stop Immigration Service in Los Angeles, is concerned that the board's report will acknowledge a racial problem exists without offering specific remedies. "It's a big problem," he says. "To simply be told 'don't worry, be happy' and that we have made progress and have a president who wants to build a bridge to next century, is not going to make it. People want the real thing."

(Edgar Ortega Barrales is a reporter with Hispanic Link News Service in Washington, D.C.) (c) 1997, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate

El Color Morado - Y Quienes Acostumbrabamos Ser

Por Victor Landa

Hace un par de años, regresé a la antigua vecindad de Nuevo Laredo, del otro lado de la frontera entre México y los Estados Unidos, frente a Laredo, Texas, para mostrar a mis hijos donde yo había crecido. Pero la antigua vecindad ya no estaba más allí.

El montículo de gravilla sobre el cual acostumbraba pararme para tirar piedras al maizal del otro lado de la calle se había convertido en una casa de dos pisos en construcción. El maizal mismo había sido reemplazado por una hilera de casas coloridas con terrazas encima de los cobertizos para automóviles.

Lo más peculiar acerca de la antigua vecindad era la calle semi-pavimentada que corría a lo largo del borde del maizal hasta una ladera que llevaba en declive hacia el río. Durante 12 años, la calle permaneció pavimentada sólo por un lado, sin razón aparente. La calle había sido terminada desde entonces. Hasta esa reliquia de idiosincrasia había desaparecido.

Sólo la casa en que nosotros vivimos parecía permanecer, pero lucía mucho más pequeña que como yo la recordaba. La memoria tiene un modo de hacer que las cosas parezcan más grandes con el tiempo.

El lugar de los veranos encantadores, los recovecos y vericuetos llenos de travesuras, los mejores escondites para jugar a las escondidas, todos habían desaparecido. Me hallé a mí mismo diciendo cosas tales como, "Había un árbol aquí," y "aquí es donde Quique, el loco que vivía calle abajo, se rompió la nariz tratando de saltar el largo de tres neumáticos viejos con su bicicleta." El se llamaba Quique Knevil. Nosotros usamos el trapo que él usaba como capa para limpiar la sangre de la calle.

Puede que en el infame "plan mayor de las cosas," la antigua vecindad no tenga importancia. Pero yo necesitaba que estuviera presente, de algún modo, para poder mostrársela a mis hijos como evidencia de lo que solía ser.

Todo esto me vino a la mente esta semana, cuando la escritora Sandra Cisneros asumió la causa del recuerdo y de la evidencia de las cosas pasadas aquí, en San Antonio.

El relato ha sido presentado en los medios informativos como un asunto del color de su casa. Algunos la llaman la casa morada; la hierba doncella se ha mencionado también, y hasta ella misma señalará a una fotografía de un folleto sobre las flores silvestres de Texas y hará notar la

semejanza de matiz con el laurel de montaña de Texas.

Algunos miembros de la Comisión de Revisión Histórica de San Antonio se quedaron sin frentes para sus cejas alzadas cuando ella hizo pintar su casa de dicho color. Parece que el color no había sido aprobado adecuadamente. Lo que es más, ese morado no estaba en el "Paladar Histórico de Pinturas Caseras" preparado por una compañía de pinturas en algún lugar de la Nueva Inglaterra.

El relato verdadero, no obstante, no trata tanto de color. Lo que está en juego aquí es la dignidad de la memoria, el derecho a la inclusión histórica.

El argumento contra la casa de color de hierba doncella o morado es que no hay prueba sustanciada de que tales colores se usaran anteriormente para pintar los exteriores de las casas en la zona histórica de King William. Pero debe formularse la pregunta: ¿A quiénes pertenecían las casas de que estamos hablando?

Durante generaciones que se preceden a la construcción de las pirámides en México, los latinos han pintado sus casas de morado y rosado brillante, verde lima y amarillo canario. Eso ha sido pasado por

alto por historiadores y arquitectos que nunca los documentaron. No se pueden encontrar esos colores en los "paladares" históricos oficiales. Y lo cierto es que deberían estar, porque esos colores son tanto parte de la historia de este país como lo es el gris de los barcos de guerra.

De modo que, ¿qué ha de hacerse sobre ello? La batalla sobre el morado continuará, pero hay mucho trabajo que hacer.

Cisneros ha concebido la idea de pedir que las personas de los antiguos barrios de la ciudad graben relatos verbales de sus vecindades. La visión es recopilar y publicar los relatos de lugares y colores y hacer que sirvan como prueba substanciada de lo que fué y es.

Es una visión de la dignidad del recuerdo, la evidencia de lo que fue -- como los colores de los portales delanteros y los alféizares de las ventanas, y de la antigua capa andrajosa de Quique Knevil.

En el reconocimiento de lo que acostumbrábamos ser descansa la legitimidad de quiénes somos.

(Victor Landa es director de información de la KVDA-TV, afiliada de Telemundo en San Antonio, Texas.)

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Clinton's Race Board Project Leaves Latinos Wary

By Edgar Ortega Barrales

Although Hispanic leaders welcome President Clinton's formation of an advisory board to examine race and ethnic relations in the United States, many of them are pessimistic about the board's chances of effectively addressing the needs of Hispanics or other groups.

The board is made up of one Latina, one Asian American, two blacks and three Anglos. AFL-CIO executive vice-president Linda Chavez-Thompson is the sole Hispanic on the board.

Juan Jose Gutierrez, chief organizer of last October's Latino march on Washington, says Chavez-Thompson is a qualified advocate for Latinos on the board, but he doesn't believe there is enough Hispanic representation to reflect its varied concerns.

Several other Hispanic leaders agree the board lacks bal-

ance and express concern that it will focus mainly on the black-white relations.

Tensions surfaced immediately during the board's first meeting last month, when board member Angela E. Oh urged her colleagues to move beyond the "black-white paradigm" of race relations. Board chairman John Hope Franklin countered by underlining black-white relations as the root of racism.

While the press played up the conflict between Oh, of Korean descent, and Hope Franklin, an African American, President Clinton praised the first session as a healthy discussion. Unlike the 1968 Kerner Commission, the board is personally led by the president.

Cruz Reynoso, vice-chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, says the media focused too much on conflict between advisory board

members. He's one who feels confident the board can come up with recommendations that will improve the nation's race relations.

Members of the group are scheduled to travel the country, holding hearings and consulting with local officials and leaders, over the next several months. Clinton will use their findings to draft a report, which he has promised will include concrete proposals to alleviate racial tensions and implement solutions in areas such as education, economic opportunity, housing, health care and crime. He says he expects his report, when issued next summer, will become a hallmark of his presidency.

One proposal Clinton has already tied to the initiative is a small-scale one, offering financial incentives to encourage teachers to work in high-poverty rural and urban dis-

tricts.

Angelo Falcon, president of the New York-based Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, questions whether the country is ready to address its racial and ethnic divisions. The board doesn't have the "conceptual framework on how to talk about race," he says. "A lot of this stuff doesn't lend itself to easy answers."

Siobhan Nicolau, president of the Hispanic Policy Development Project, with offices in New York and Washington, D.C., says, "I don't think most national boards can do much more than give national visibility to this issue."

In the '60s, she recalls, whites were angry at blacks and acted out against them by moving to the suburbs. But in the '90s, she says, "Everyone is angry."

Nicolau recommends the board address the effects that

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Lone Latina On Clinton's Race Board Discusses Her Role

(Editor's Note: This interview with AFL-CIO Executive Vice-President Linda Chavez-Thompson was conducted by Hispanic Link News Service reporter Edgar Ortega Barrales. Chavez-Thompson is the only Hispanic on the seven-member advisory board to President Clinton's Initiative on Race. Her answers have been edited for length and clarity.)

Q: As the board's only Hispanic, you will certainly be looked to for expertise on Hispanic civil rights issues. How are you preparing yourself for this responsibility?

A: I've spent almost 53 years at it. I guess, personal experience. I've been there, I've had to struggle. I've been called a token. You have to be twice as good as the next person. Your efforts have to be twice as hard to make half as much a difference. I did it, despite the obstacles as a Latina in Texas and in the labor movement. As Latinos, we're just not thought of as good enough.

Q: Are you meeting with Hispanic leaders?

A: Constantly. We have a working relationship with Belen Robles (president of the League of United Latin American Citizens), Antonia

Hernandez (president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Raul Yzaguirre (president of the National Council of La Raza). I'm getting input from everybody who wants to give me information about a particular issue that I can bring to the table. I'll share my information with the other board members.

Q: Do you know why were you were selected by President Clinton?

A: The president met with 30 or 40 civil rights and labor leaders -- like (AFL-CIO president) John Sweeney -- to talk about what he wanted to do with his initiative on race. John Sweeney felt there needed to be a labor voice on this panel and recommended that I be appointed.

Q: Did you agree to serve right away?

A: I had a few questions about it. We're not going to be rubber stamps, are we? Are we going to be able to dissent? To file minority reports, as the

case might be? In our first meeting with the president, he assured us that he didn't want us just to agree with him. I accepted because I felt very much that labor needed to be counted in this discussion.

Q: How different -- or alike -- do you see the experiences of Latinos and other non-white groups in the country? How do their civil rights experiences compare?

A: Latinos haven't burned buildings yet. That's one description I heard some years ago. That's why, perhaps, we're not as far ahead as we should be, despite our numbers in some cities. Latinos got caught somewhere in the middle. We are not black and we are not white, and somehow we've kept waiting for our turn. It will be our turn soon. Our turn to be given our status in this country has never come.

African Americans have made greater strides because they have organizations like PUSH, or the NAACP, or the

Continued on Page 6

cal que no ha empujado algunos de estos asuntos. El movimiento sindical necesita enfocarse sobre los asuntos latinos, sobre la inmigración y los asuntos que tienen que ver con la educación.

P: ¿Ve usted semejanzas en los problemas a que se enfrentan los distintos grupos raciales y étnicos?

R: Sí, decididamente. Pero lo que también encuentro perturbador, y sobre lo cual necesitamos hablar, es el conflicto entre los grupos de color.

Continúa en la página 6

Female Elected From Page Front Page

women's issues for the PAN, was one of the women who signed the June accord.

With the nonpartisan agreement, the women also are seeking to outlaw a controversial practice that conservatives and liberals alike abhor: forced pregnancy testing of women applying for jobs at factories, chain stores and alleged some Mexican government offices.

"The law is not explicitly against this, so we need to outlaw it and impose sanctions," Espinoza said. She said some companies, including a number of U.S. owned factories and border-region maquiladora manufacturing plants, force job applicants to take pregnancy tests and will hire them only if the exams are negative.

"If you later get pregnant," Espinoza said, "there is pressure to get an abortion or quit." Some differences linger. Abortion is one area where the PRD and the PAN—the two largest opposition parties—go their separate ways on women's rights.

The PAN follows an anti-abortion philosophy. The PRD advocates abortion rights and a national referendum on decriminalizing abortion. Members of the PRI are split on the issue; many female PRI leaders have advocated legalizing abortion in the past.

The PRI remains the largest party in the new lower house but lost its overall majority for the first time in the July's elections. Although the PRD might not immediately push for debate on abortion, it won't retreat on the issue said Maria Rosa Marquez, the director of the PRD's Women's Secretariat.

The PRD also differs from the other Mexican parties in its willingness to institute quotes or after firmative action—to ensure that no more than 70 percent of one gender serve on a party committee or staff.

"If the culture refuses to change, then I believe you have to force it to do so," said Garcia, a strong advocate of making sure women are represented in circles of political power. Garcia was one of a number of PRD women who criticized Mexico City Mayor-elect Cuanthemoc Cardenas, a top PRD f-gure, for neglecting to initially name a woman to his transition team. Cardenas promised during his campaign to select a Cabinet that was 50 percent women, Garcia noted.

In July's vote, female candidates in Mexico City showed they can flex political muscle in one of the world's biggest cities. Women won 26 percent of the seats in the city's Legislative Assembly, which, along with the mayor, government ems the sprawling Federal District. The number, which includes women from all parties, is the highest in history.

Zedillo's new social program, called Progresá, will offer monthly stipends to select impoverished families to help them buy food and keep their children in school. The money will be given to mothers, rather than fathers, to control because women are believed to be the more responsible parent when it comes to buying food and other essentials. And the efforts to keep children in school will focus on girls.

Garcia and Marquez both criticized Zedillo's program, calling it a gimmick to win votes for the PRI and a policy that fails to get to the root of discrimination and underemployment.

In the new Congress, they said feminists will try to convince legislators that the Mexican budget should be revised to take into account women's needs for better health care, job training and access to credit for businesses.

"We're the government now."

Latina Solitaria En Junta Racial De Clinton Trata De Su Papel

(Nota del Editor: Esta entrevista con la vice-presidenta ejecutiva de la AFL-CIO, Linda Chávez-Thompson, fue efectuada por el reportero Edgar Ortega Barrales, de Hispanic Link News Service. Ella es la única persona hispana en la junta asesora de siete miembros de la Iniciativa sobre la Raza, creada por el Presidente Clinton. Sus respuestas han sido editadas por razones de extensión y claridad.)

Pregunta: En su calidad de única persona hispana en la junta, se le mirará a usted como experta sobre asuntos de derechos civiles hispanos. ¿Cómo está preparándose usted para esta responsabilidad?

Respuesta: He pasado casi 53 años en esto. Me imagino que con la experiencia personal. Yo he estado allí. He tenido que luchar. Se me ha llamado "ficha simbólica." Hay que ser el doble de bueno que la próxima persona. Los esfuerzos de uno tienen que ser doblemente fuertes como para hacer la mitad de la diferencia. Yo lo hice, a pesar de los obstáculos a que me enfrenté como latina en Texas y en el movimiento sindical. Como latinos, no se piensa en nosotros como que somos lo suficientemente buenos.

P: ¿Se está usted reuniendo con dirigentes hispanos?

R: Constantemente. Tenemos una relación de trabajo con Belén Robles (presidenta de LULAC), Antonia Hernández (presidenta de MALDEF), Raúl Yzaguirre, (presidente del Consejo Nacional de La Raza). Estoy obteniendo impresiones de todo el que quiera darme información sobre cualquier asunto en particular que yo pueda llevar a la mesa. Compartiré mi información con los demás miembros de la junta.

P: ¿Sabe usted por qué fue seleccionada por el Presidente Clinton?

R: El presidente se reunió con 30 o 40 dirigentes de los derechos civiles y sindicales -- como John Sweeney, presidente de la AFL-CIO -- para

hablar sobre lo que él deseaba hacer con su iniciativa sobre la raza. John Sweeney creyó que se necesitaba una voz sindical en este grupo y recomendó que se me nombrara.

P: ¿Aceptó usted en seguida a prestar sus servicios?

R: Tuve unas cuantas preguntas. ¿Seríamos sellos de goma? ¿Podríamos disentir? ¿Presentar informes minoritarios cuando surgiera la necesidad? En nuestra primera reunión con el presidente, él nos aseguró que no quería que nosotros nos limitáramos a estar de acuerdo con él. Acepté porque creí enérgicamente que el sindicalismo necesitaba estar contado en este debate.

P: ¿Cuán diferentes --o semejantes-- ve usted que sean las experiencias de los latinos y de otros grupos no blancos en el país? ¿Cómo se comparan sus experiencias respecto de los derechos civiles?

R: Los latinos no han quemado edificios aún. Esa es una descripción que escuché hace varios años. Esa es quizás la razón de que no hayamos adelantado tanto como deberíamos haberlo hecho, a pesar de nuestras cifras en algunas ciudades. Los latinos quedamos atrapados en algún punto del centro. No somos negros ni blancos, y de algún modo nos hemos quedado esperando nuestro turno. Nuestro turno será pronto. Nuestro turno a nuestro lugar en este país nunca ha llegado.

Los afro-americanos han hecho grandes adelantos porque tienen organizaciones como PUSH, o la NAACP, o la Liga Urbana, que han venido empujando, y empujando, y empujando.

Por otra parte, tenemos organizaciones latinas que no están ni cerca de ser tan sólidas como deberían ser. Tenemos un movimiento sindi-

de la pagina primera nación, mientras apele a los intereses económicos creados de todos los grupos.

A Gutiérrez, que dirige la entidad Servicio de Inmigración de Una Sola Parada en Los Angeles, le preocupa que el informe de la junta recon-

cerá que existe un problema racial sin ofrecer remedios específicos.

"Es un problema grande," dice él. "El que se nos diga sencillamente que no nos preocupemos, que seamos felices y que hemos progresado y que tenemos un presidente que de-

sea construir un puente hacia el siglo próximo, no va a ser suficiente. La gente quiere algo verdadero."

(Edgar Ortega Barrales es reportero de Hispanic Link News Service en Washington, DC.)

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Washington State Has A Dirty Secret

By Ricardo Sanchez

The Washington state legislature's passage of a temporary housing bill, and its subsequent veto by Gov. Gary Locke, has heightened public awareness of a problem that has plagued farm workers and their families for decades.

The governor's succinct answer to the proposal to sanction the construction of farm workers' living quarters without heating, insulation, running water, electricity or toilets: "Our state can do better."

The nation -- the world -- pays attention to what Washington state does. Boeing and Microsoft have national and international reputations. So does Washington's agricultural industry, which produces 72 percent of the nation's hops, the popular beer-flavoring crop. The state also leads the nation in the production of sweet cherries and produces more than half of its apples.

Washington's dirty secret is that thousands of its farm workers live on river banks and in fields, where their health and safety are threatened. Tourists who step outside the Space Needle and Mt. Rainier environs can find that our rivers and untreated water serve as bathing facilities for farm-worker families and that raw sewage bubbles up from the ground, entering rivers for lack of infrastructure.

The value of apples in Washington topped the \$1 billion mark for the first time in 1995, an increase of more than 300 percent since 1982. Here, agribusiness agents proudly proclaim that "good management and economies of scale" have made Washington "a showcase" state. People from all over the world come "to see how it's done."

What they don't admit is that phrases such as "economies

of scale" are really just cruel euphemisms for exploited Mexican workers. Many apple workers still are paid what they earned 20 and 30 years ago -- \$8 to \$10 for picking a 1,000-pound bin of apples. Some workers are deemed illegal; some are not. Either way, agribusiness knows it needs them, and you and I depend on them to help us maintain cheaper prices for produce than any industrialized nation in the world.

The federal government winks at the industry's widespread practice of hiring undocumented workers, at least until the annual harvest is over. State government stands by ineptly. It does little to enforce laws that could provide protections for workers against abuses and dangerous working conditions. State and federal governments have ignored the unbridled growth of the agricultural industry that has created huge environmental, health and safety problems.

A stark example exists in eastern Washington's Columbia River Basin. Here, as reported in the New York Times last fall, "Absentee owners send in migrant crews from the West and Mexico to train, thin, pick and prune the trees with assembly-line efficiency. Dozens of young orchards 250 acres and larger have been planted by large fruit packers since the early 1990s. In some areas of the basin, orchards have been planted 1,000 acres at a time."

In the midst of this immense growth lies Mattawa, a town with no sewage system. An article in the Wenatchee World contrasts "well-kept parks, new school buildings and children playing in this town" with another reality that has created a state of emergency there: "raw sewage running through streets and pooling in alleys, and

single-wide trailers divided into four-plex apartments." Mattawa Mayor Judy Esser points to cases of tuberculosis and other diseases that commonly come from South America and Mexico. "It's not a matter of if we have a breakout of hepatitis," she said. "It's when."

Near Mattawa, Port-a-Potties would be a vast improvement over what farm workers often get in the fields -- filthy, wooden outhouses placed over holes in the ground that aren't moved until they are filled with excrement, and no hand-washing facilities.

Thousands live on the river's edge or in the fields under conditions we would associate with South Africa's hateful apartheid system. It is not uncommon to see shelters made of cardboard.

Given these conditions, who could possibly say there are not public health, safety and environmental concerns that require permanent solutions? Who could possibly disagree with Mayor Esser's assessment? "This is America, and no one should have to live like that."

Yet unlike other significant public policy issues that cry out for careful consideration, the agricultural industry here has gone unchecked. This negligence, willful or not, has led to the point that our legislature would vote to house people in facilities better designed for livestock.

The need -- indeed, the moral imperative -- to change the culture and eliminate the protective covering that surrounds the agricultural industry is absolute. All of us should recognize that in providing adequately for farm workers, who have made this nation's agricultural industry a world showcase, we preserve and protect our environment and the health and safety of consumers throughout the world.

El Estado De Washington Tiene Un Secreto Indecente

Por Ricardo Sánchez

La aprobación por la legislatura del estado de Washington anteriormente en este año de un proyecto de ley sobre vivienda temporal y su veto subsiguiente por parte del Gobernador Gary Locke han aumentado el conocimiento del público sobre un problema que ha plagado a los trabajadores agrícolas y a sus familias por espacio de varios decenios.

La respuesta sucinta del gobernador a la propuesta de que sancionara la construcción de viviendas para los trabajadores agrícolas sin calefacción, aislamiento térmico, agua corriente ni servicios sanitarios fue: "Nuestro estado puede hacer algo mejor."

La nación y el mundo prestan atención a lo que hace el estado de Washington. Boeing y Microsoft son gigantes industriales de nuestro estado y disfrutan de aclamación mundialmente. El otro gigante es la industria de la agricultura, que ahora forma el 20 por ciento de la economía del estado de Washington.

Este produce más de la mitad de las manzanas de la nación. En 1995, la producción de manzanas sobrepasó la marca de los mil millones de dólares por primera vez, lo cual fue un aumento de más del 300 por ciento desde 1982. Entre otros productos con cifras elevadas, Washington produce el 72 por ciento de los lúpulos de la nación, la cosecha popular que da sabor a la cerveza, y encabeza a la nación en la producción de cerezas dulces.

En nuestro estado, los agentes de los negocios agrícolas proclaman orgullosamente que "la buena administración y las economías de escala" han hecho de Washington un "estado-vitrina" internacionalmente. Personas de todo el mundo vienen "a ver cómo se hace."

Lo que ellos deberían reconocer, sin embargo, es que las frases tales como "economías de escala" son realmente sólo eufemismos crueles para los trabajadores mexicanos de jornales bajos que pueden ser explotados fácilmente. A muchos trabajadores de las manzanas se les paga todavía lo que ganaban hace 20 y 30 años -- entre \$8 y \$10 por llenar un recipiente de 1,000 libras.

El secreto indecente de Washington es que millares de trabajadores agrícolas viven en las márgenes de los ríos y en los campos, donde su salud y su seguridad están amenazadas. Los turistas que salgan de los ambientes de la Aguja del Espacio y de Mount Rainier pueden hallar que nuestros ríos y aguas de irrigación no tratadas sirven como instalaciones de baño para las familias de los trabajadores agrícolas, y que las aguas crudas de albañal "burbujean" desde el terreno, invadiendo a nuestros ríos y sistemas de irrigación debido a la falta de infraestructura.

Y sí, se estima que algunos trabajadores son ilegales; algunos no lo son. De cualquier manera, el negocio de la agricultura sabe que los necesita y que ustedes y yo dependemos de ellos para ayudarnos a mantener precios más baratos para los productos agrícolas que los de cualquier nación industrializada del mundo.

Mientras tanto, el gobierno federal se hace de la vista gorda sobre la práctica muy extendida de los negocios agrícolas, de contratar a "trabajadores hispanos," por lo menos hasta que haya terminado la cosecha anual. Entonces, ellos se convierten en "extranjeros ilegales." El gobierno estatal se queda pasmado ineptamente y hace poco para ejecutar las leyes que podrían dar protecciones a los trabajadores contra los abusos

y las circunstancias de trabajo peligrosas.

En el estado de Washington, los mayores fracasos de los gobiernos estatal y locales han sido el permitir el crecimiento desenfrenado de la industria agrícola. Esto ha creado asuntos enormes de ambiente, salud y seguridad. La carencia de viviendas es únicamente la manifestación más visible de esto.

Un ejemplo absoluto se halla en el este de Washington, en la Cuenca del Río Columbia. Aquí, como se informó en The New York Times en el otoño pasado, "los propietarios australianos envían cuadrillas migrantes desde el oeste y México para adiestrarse, entresacar, recoger las frutas y recortar los árboles con eficiencia de línea de montaje. Docenas de huertos, de 250 acres y mayores, han sido plantados por los grandes envasadores de frutas desde principios del decenio de 1990. En algunas zonas de la cuenca, los huertos han sido plantados a razón de 1,000 acres de una vez."

En medio de este inmenso crecimiento yace Mattawa, un pueblo sin alcantarillado. Un artículo reciente con fotografías en el Wenatchee World contrasta a los "parques bien cuidados, los edificios nuevos de escuelas y los niños que juegan en esta ciudad" con otra realidad que ha creado un estado de emergencia allí: "aguas crudas de albañal que corren por las calles y se empozan en los callejones, y remolques de ancho sencillo divididos en cuatro aposentos". La alcaldesa de Mattawa, Judy Esser, señala a los casos de "tuberculosis y otras enfermedades que acostumbran llegar desde la América del Sur y México. No se trata de si tenemos un brote de hepatitis, sino de cuándo lo tendremos".

Cerca de Mattawa, los Port-a-Potties serían una gran mejoría sobre lo que tienen a menudo los trabajadores agrícolas en los campos -- excusados asquerosos situados encima de agujeros en la tierra, que no se mueven sino hasta que estén llenos de excremento, sin instalaciones para lavarse las manos. Millares de personas viven al borde del río o en los campos en circunstancias que relacionaríamos con el anterior sistema de apartheid en Sur Africa. No es inusitado el ver albergues hechos de cartón.

Dadas estas circunstancias, ¿quién podría decir que no hay preocupaciones de salud pública y ambientales que exigen soluciones permanentes? ¿Quién podría estar en desacuerdo con la evaluación de la Alcaldesa Esser? "Estos son los Estados Unidos, y nadie debería tener que vivir así."

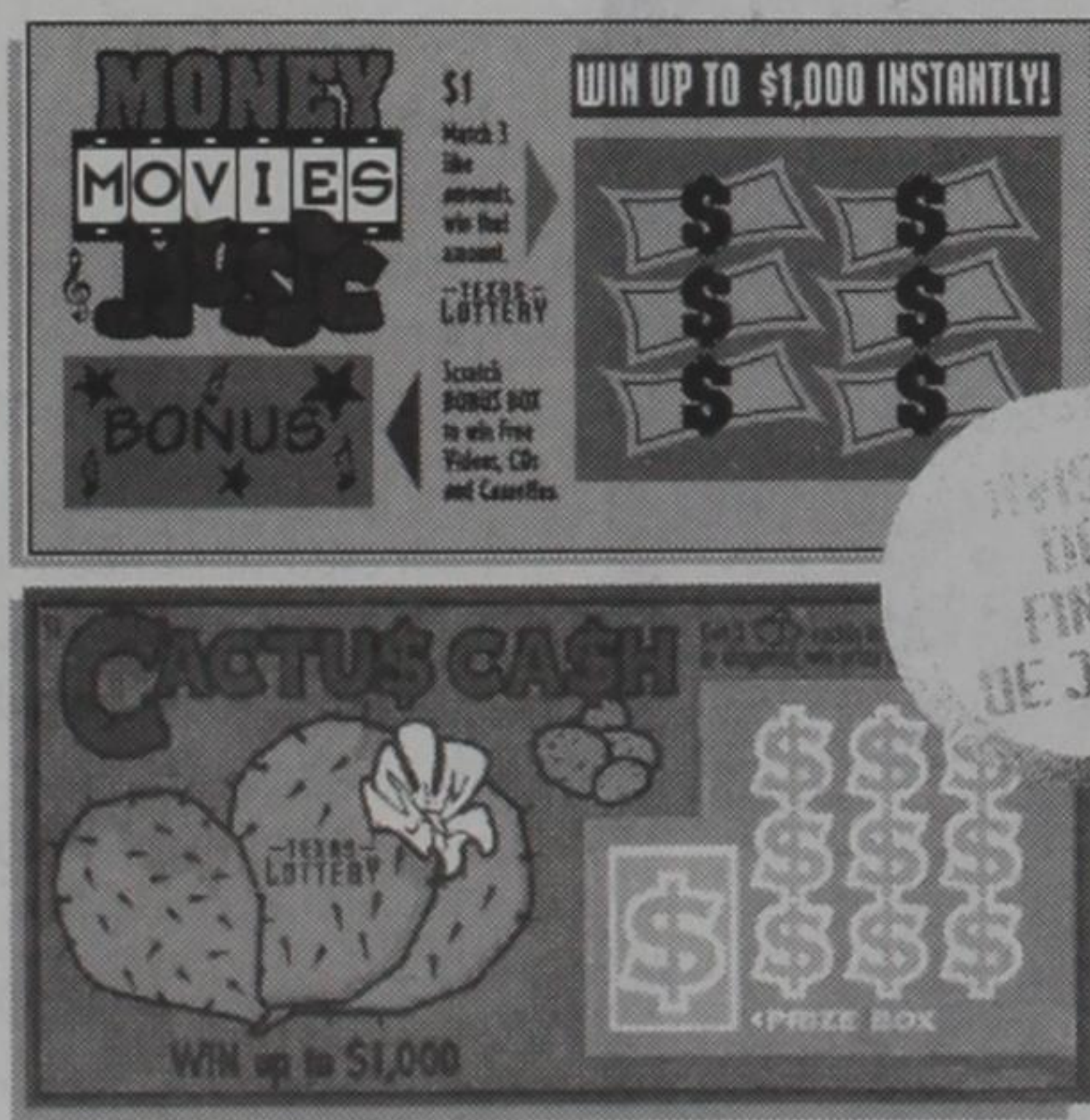
Empero, a diferencia de otros asuntos importantes de cursos de acción públicos que claman por una consideración cuidadosa, la industria agrícola ha quedado sin ser inspeccionada. Esta negligencia, voluntaria o no, nos ha llevado hasta el punto de que nuestra legislatura esté dispuesta a votar para alojar a las personas en instalaciones más apropiadas para el ganado.

La necesidad -- en verdad, el imperativo moral -- para cambiar la cultura y eliminar a la cubierta protectora que rodea a la industria agrícola, es absoluta. Todos nosotros deberíamos reconocer que, al suministrar lo adecuado para los trabajadores agrícolas que han hecho de la industria agrícola de esta nación una "vitrina de muestra" para el mundo, conservamos y protegemos nuestro ambiente, así como la salud y la seguridad de los consumidores de todo el mundo.

(Ricardo Sánchez es un escritor por cuenta propia y consultor sobre comunicaciones y enseñanza, de Seattle, Washington.)

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My Purple House -- Color Is Language And A History

By Sandra Cisneros

SAN ANTONIO -- My life is such a telenovela! One day I painted my house *tejano* colors; the next day, my house is in all the news, cars swarming by, families having their photos taken in front of my purple *casita* as if it were the Alamo. The neighbors put up an iced-tea stand and made 10 dollars!

All this happened because I chose to live where I do. I live in San Antonio because I'm not a minority here. I live in the King William neighborhood because I love old houses. Since my neighborhood is historic, certain code restrictions apply. Any house alteration plans must be approved by the Historic Design and Review Committee. This is to preserve the neighborhood's historic character, and that's fine by me.

Because I thought I had permission, I gave the go-ahead to have my house painted colors I considered regional -- but as it turns out, they hadn't been approved. However, I was given the chance to prove them historically appropriate. So I did my research, and what I found is this: We don't exist.

My history is made up of a community whose homes were so poor and unimportant as to be considered unworthy of historic preservation. No famous architect designed the houses of the *tejanos*, and there are no books in the San Antonio Conservation Society library about houses of the working-class community, no photos romanticizing their poverty, no ladies' auxiliary working toward preserving their presence.

Their homes are gone; their history is invisible. The few historic homes that survived have access cut off by freeways because city planners did not judge them important.

Our history is in the neighborhoods like the famous Laredito barrio, heart of the old *tejano* community and just a block from City Hall; it proved so "historically

valuable," it was demolished and converted into a jail, parking lot and downtown police station, with only the *casa* of *tejano* statesman Jose Angel Navarro as evidence Laredito was ever there.

Our past is present only in churches or missions glorifying a Spanish colonial past. But I'm not talking about the Spaniards here. My question is, where is the visual record of the *tejanos*?

The issue is bigger than my house. The issue is about historical inclusion. I want to paint my house a traditional color. But I don't think it unreasonable to include the traditions of *los tejanos* who had a great deal to do with creating the city of San Antonio we know today.

I wouldn't mind painting my house a historical color, but please give me a broader palette than Surrey beige, Sevres blue, Hawthorne green, Frontier Days brown and Plymouth Rock grey. These colors are fine for some houses, and I think they look handsome on the dignified mansions on King William Street.

But look at my *casita*. It's not a mansion. It's a late-Victorian rental cottage, built circa 1903. In 1913 my house was sawed in two like a Houdini magic act and wheeled to its present location. This accounts for its architectural affinity with the houses in Baja and Lavaca communities.

Frankly, I don't understand what all the fuss is about. I thought I had painted my house a historic color. Purple is historic to us. It goes back a thousand years or so to the pyramids. It is present in the *Nahua* codices, book of the Aztecs, as is turquoise, the color I used for my house trim; the former color signifying royalty, the latter, water and rain.

But we are a people *sin documentos*. We don't have papers. Our books were burned in the conquest, and ever since, we have learned to keep quiet, to keep our history to

ourselves, to keep it alive generation to generation by word of mouth, perhaps because we feared it would be taken away from us again. Too late -- it has been taken away.

In San Antonio when we say "historic preservation," we don't mean everyone's history, even though the Historic Review office is paid for by everybody's taxes. When they ask me to prove my colors historically appropriate to King William, they don't mean *tejano* colors. But I am certain *tejanos* lived in this neighborhood, too.

Color is a language. In essence, I am being asked to translate this language. For some who enter my home, these colors need no translation. However, why am I translating to the historical professionals? If they're not visually bilingual, what are they doing holding a historical post in a city with San Antonio's demographics?

Color is a story. It tells the history of a people. We don't have beautiful showcase houses that tell the story of the class of people I come from. But our inheritance is our sense of color. It has withstood conquests, plagues, genocide, hatred, defeat. Our colors have survived. That's why you all love fiestas so much, because we know how to have a good time. We know how to laugh. We know a color like bougainvillea pink is important because it will lift your spirits and make your heart pirouette.

We have a tradition of bright colors. Dr. Daniel Arreola of Texas A&M University has written that in a survey of 1,065 houses in a Mexican-American district in San Antonio, 50 percent showed evidence of brightly painted exteriors, even if only evidenced in the bright trim. From the Arab influence of elaborate paint exteriors carried over to the Iberian peninsula, as well as to the use of intense pigment in the pre-Columbian structures, our people have always decorated their exterior walls brightly.

In some pre-Columbian centers there is not only evidence of a love of color, but a love of vivid visual effects; in Teotihuacan, it is the drama of red contrasted with blue. That passion for color is seen even now in our buildings on both sides of the border. Mango yellow, papaya orange, Frida Kahlo cobalt, Rufino Tamayo periwinkle, *rosa mexicana* and, yes, even enchilada red. King William architecture has been influenced by European, Greek Revival, Victorian and Neoclassical styles. Why is it so difficult to concede a Mexican influence, especially when so many people of Mexican descent lived in the city?

This issue is not about personal taste, but about historical context. It belongs not only to the architecturally elite, but also to *los tejanos*, as well as the Irish, French, Native American and yes, even the poor. History belongs to us

all. My purple house colors are not deemed historically appropriate because "there is no evidence or documentation these colors were ever used in King William." But if the HDRC is true to its word, oral testimonies should count as evidence. I am inviting the community to assist me.

I invite Brackenridge High School, especially, which, I'm told, adopted my purple house because it's their school color. So why not an oral history project they could get credit for? Why not a documentation of our ancestors? It's about time we had our history count on paper.

El Editor, 1M Documented Immigrants Lose Food Stamps

Nearly 1 million documented immigrants have been lopped off the federal food stamp rolls since the nation's welfare law was rewritten last year, and food pantries and soup kitchens say they cannot possibly make up for the welfare law's cut in food stamps - estimated at \$22 billion over five years, including \$3.7 billion for immigrants, reports Associated Press.

"The law really is harsh on most legal immigrants," said Christine Vladimiroff, a Benedictine nun who is president of Second Harvest, HN0041@handsnet.org, the nation's largest charitable emergency food provider.

By month's end, the last of the 935,000 noncitizens losing their eligibility for benefits will have received their final federal food stamps, which average \$172 a month per household.

So far, 10 states have taken steps to extend food stamp benefits to some noncitizens cut off by Washington in the law enacted a year ago. Typically, the states have offered help for children, the elderly and the disabled. Neither federal nor outside policy experts can predict how many people the state relief will benefit.

The cuts hit particularly hard in four states - California, Florida, New York and Texas - which account for three-quarters of all noncitizens on food stamps.

Of the four states, Texas alone has taken no steps to provide relief to the 168,000 immigrants there who were receiving food stamps earlier this year.

Authors of the 1996 welfare overhaul turned their attention to noncitizens while looking for ways to curb growth in such programs as food stamps, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid. The cutbacks in noncitizens' benefits accounted for nearly half of the \$55 billion in savings envisioned over five years under that law.

Proponents of the cuts noted that immigrants must sign a pledge upon admission prom-

If you know someone who lived in San Antonio at the turn of the century who remembers the colors of the *tejanos* who lived in the King William/La Vaca community, document their stories on paper. Would you like to be part of a collection of *tejano* oral histories? If so, tell me your stories. I would love to collect them and publish them in a book we could gift to the San Antonio Conservation Society, the San Antonio Public Library, the King William Association, the Historic Review Office, the City of San Antonio.

After all, maybe somebody else will be inspired and fol-

low my example, and paint his or her house a beautiful South Texas color, too, and nobody would raise a fuss. Now wouldn't that be something? Send your testimonies to on paper, video or audiotape or disk, to: Sandra Cisneros, P.O. Box 831754, San Antonio TX 78283.

(Author Sandra Cisneros' books include "The House on Mango Street" and "Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories.") Hispanic Link News Service. (c) 1997, Sandra Cisneros. First published in the San Antonio Express-News. Reprinted by permission of Susan Bergholz Literary Services, New York. Distributed by the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

Using not to become public charges. Those who sponsor immigrants into the United States - often family members - must be the first recourse for needy new arrivals, they said.

But advocates for immigrants contend the cuts are unfair, both in their size and because they amount to a change in the rules mid-game for documented immigrants, who work and pay taxes. The working poor make up most of the immigrants on food stamps, they say.

"These are good economic

times for us, and I would think that we would want to share that bounty with those who are being cut off," said Ms. Vladimiroff of Chicago-based Second Harvest.

Immigrant-rights lobbyists managed to persuade Washington to restore the Medicaid and SSI benefits to noncitizens, and they now are pressing lawmakers to revive their food stamp eligibility as well. Several proposals to restore at least some of the aid have been introduced in Congress.

A Piece of My Mind

by Randall Carpenter

Our Sheriff said he is hurt and disappointed that he did not receive a pay increase. I agree with Commissioner Flores that the position merits an increase providing certain fringe benefits are eliminated.

Inmates at the County Jail are required to purchase hygiene needs at the jail commissary. Last year the Sheriff added socks and underwear to the list. The inmates cannot purchase outside the jail. Relatives do not bring tooth brushes or paste, shaving lotion, razor blades, socks or underwear to their loved ones incarcerated in our jail. Therefore, it results in a big business, a small investment, low rent, and salaries of less than \$10,000 a year making the commissary an attractive business venture.

Gross sales at the jail commissary are in excess of \$270,000 per year. Net profits exceed \$100,000 per year. These profits are distributed at the end of each quarter. In 1995 cash distributed amounted to \$105,000 dollars.

My suggestion to the Court was to give the Sheriff the raise and put the commissary out for bids. Doing this the County could increase the Sheriff's salary \$30,000 per year and retain the profits of the commissary. This would result in a net gain of \$75,000 for the inmate fund.

The main objection to this is from the Sheriff who says that it would take an additional 5 jailers to run the commissary resulting in a cost of what exceed the profits. Apparently he has not reviewed the audit prepared by the county auditor. Salaries paid out were less than \$8,000. The reason for no salary expense is county employees are operating the commissary.

I wonder what the grievance committee vote would have been had the Court explained the fringe benefits of the office.

What the Sheriff should have done was changed is title from Sheriff to Chief Sheriff which would pay more money. This is how our County Judge gets pay raises his employees. he changed the Maintenance engineer's title to Chief Engineer with a pay increase of \$8,000.

The Sheriff's retirement is based on what he is making at the time of retirement. Why not change his title to Chief Sheriff and give him the raise he required.

After all, whats good for the goose is good for the gander.

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News Briefs From Page 1

said the key to diversity is to make sure blacks get good early educations so they can compete for spots at top schools.

"We have to increase the pool (of candidates). That means an emphasis not on a person's race," Bennett said. "I want competence, competence, competence."

Universities in California and Texas open this school year under a new policy banning race and gender preferences in admissions.

As a result, just one black student is expected to enter the new law school class at the University of California at Berkeley. Similar though less dramatic declines are occurring at two other major law schools that dropped affirmative action this year - the University of Texas and the University of California at Los Angeles.

Michael Rappaport, dean of the UCLA law school, said his school expanded the definition of a qualified applicant to include students of any race who have been economically disadvantaged and those with leadership potential.

But expanding the pool also brings in many students who are already well represented in the applicant pool, he said, concluding, "Broadening the pool will not solve the problem."

Govt Beefs Up Border Patrol

Doris Meissner, chief of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, announced a \$3.5 million operation intended to reduce undocumented immigration into Texas and New Mexico by adding manpower and equipment, reports Associated Press.

For now, 69 agents are in and around Brownsville but they will be replaced next year by trainees. In all, the section that includes Brownsville will receive 230 additional agents under Operation Rio Grande, bringing the area's total to more than 750 agents by October.

Other Border Patrol stations in Texas and New Mexico are receiving more agents and equipment, but the bulk is headed to south Texas.

"We are not simply bringing people in for spot operations and removing them," Ms. Meissner said. "This is a permanent investment in border enforcement."

Immigrant advocates worry that undocumented immigrants will just seek out more isolated - and more dangerous - places to cross.

"This is just another example of a policy that will squeeze them out into more rural areas," said Nathan Selzer of the Valley Coalition for Justice, an immigrant rights' organization. "It's not to say the INS is out there killing these people, but their policies are doing harm."

Parents Like Vouchers, Standardization

According to a poll on school programs, large numbers of Americans want national standardized tests to measure how well children do in school, reports Associated Press.

And more than half the parents of children in public schools support using tax money to send students to private and parochial schools, the survey by the Gallup Organization found.

National tests rank high on President Clinton's list of educational goals, and he'll be touting school issues when he returns to Washington in September. He also must fight an effort in the House to deny funding for voluntary national tests.

Opponents and supporters of voluntary national tests claimed the survey results showed the public leaning in their direction.

"We think that not only does it have the support of the American people, but we believe that those standards and establishing national tests will improve students' performance in the long run and prepare our kids for the challenges of the 21st century," said White House spokesman Barry Toiv.

The poll was conducted for Phi Delta Kappa, a professional society for educators.

Seventy-seven percent of the people surveyed in June believed that "establishing national standards for measuring the academic performance of the public schools" would help students "a great deal or quite a lot."

A smaller number, 67 percent, supported using "standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students."

Yet a smaller number, 57 percent, said they favored Clinton's specific proposal to have students tested at "two different grade levels." Clinton wants fourth-graders to be tested on reading and eighth-graders to be tested on math.

A lead opponent of the Clinton plan, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said the poll shows public support is dropping.

"Just last week the White House and the U.S. Department of Education indicated that more than 80 percent of the public support national tests," said Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee. "This new poll, however, shows that public support has dropped to 57 percent."

He says national measures of educational progress already exist, and states already give standard tests. The current measures of national progress don't grade individual students.

Goodling noted the survey reflected greater public support for school choice, with 55 percent of parents with children in public school agreeing that the government should help pay tuition at private and parochial schools. That number is up from 49 percent in 1996 and 48 percent in 1994.

Republicans support broader use of vouchers to help poor children attend different schools. Clinton opposes such use of tax dollars.

The pollsters interviewed 1,517 adults, including 1,017 parents of public school children. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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También tenemos que hablar sobre los afro-americanos que incendian las tiendas de los coreano-americanos, o los delitos de odio contra los filipinos en algunas partes del país cometidos por latinos o afro-americanos.

P.: Los medios informativos nos presentan comúnmente peleando unos con otros. Una imagen recurrente es la de los hispanos que desplazan a los afro-americanos de los empleos con poca paga. ¿Ve usted esto como un problema real?

R.: En las mentes de los afro-americanos, es muy verdadero. Lo que sucede es que los inmigrantes aceptan los empleos que pagan menos y que nadie quiere aceptar. Creo que algunas personas quieren usar ésto como pretexto para el conflicto entre las razas y para mantener hirviendo el caldero.

P.: ¿Cuál es su respuesta a los críticos que dan mayor importancia a lo económico versus lo racial? Ellos argumentan que a los hispanos que han estado aquí durante un espacio de tiempo considerable les está yendo bien, mientras que únicamente los inmigrantes recientes -- de costumbre con poca instrucción y carentes de habilidad en el inglés -- son los que están teniendo problemas.

R.: Estoy en desacuerdo. Es un problema económico, pero también se trata de raza. Nosotros (los sindicalistas) proponemos que la división por raza es una división económica, en la que las personas de color ocupan los niveles más bajos. De interés primordial son los latinos, que son los que están en el fondo del baril en lo tocante a las ganancias económicas y a la oportunidad económica.

Hallamos, y las estadísticas prueban, que a las personas de color que son miembros de sindicatos les va mucho mejor. Los afro-americanos sindicalizados ganan un 30 por ciento más que los afro-americanos no sindicalizados; los latinos sindicalizados ganan un 30 por ciento más; los blancos ganan un 24 por ciento más cuando son miembros de sindicatos. Esa es la razón de que creyéramos que el sindicalismo tenía que ser parte de la conversación.

P.: ¿Teme usted que la presentación que hacen los medios informativos de los desacuerdos de la junta puedan socavar las gestiones del presidente? Según una encuesta de Gallup, sólo el 34 por ciento de los blancos está a favor de que el gobierno haga "todas las gestiones posibles" para mejorar la situación económica y social de los grupos que no son blancos.

R.: Me preocupa la tergiversación negativa que los medios informativos hacen de nosotros, pero no voy a dejar que me moleste lo suficiente como para dejar de creer que vamos a traer este asunto a la vanguardia. Nos veremos demorados debido a la cuestión de si deberíamos tratar el paradigma entre negros y blancos primero. Oigo a una cantidad cada vez mayor de latinos y asiático-americanos que dicen, "Nos sentimos muy excluidos de este debate." Sé que, por la mayor parte, tendremos consenso. Somos una junta cuyos miembros se respetan mutuamente, quienes comparten las ideas y los conceptos.



Un Rayito De Luz

por Sofia Martinez

La Palabra de Dios nos dice que "van al infierno todos los que mueren en pecado mortal".

El momento de la muerte es decisivo. El alma permanece eternamente en el estado en que se halla en el último instante de nuestra vida; por lo consiguiente, si está en pecado mortal, va inmediatamente al Infierno y comienza su desgraciada eternidad.

No puede saberse si tal o cual alma está en el infierno. Eso no lo podemos saber sin una revelación especial.

Para evitar el infierno hay que evitar el pecado y practicar la virtud. "Apártense del mal y obren el bien", dice el real profeta: éste es el gran secreto para conservar la paz del alma durante la vida, y para alentarse en los momentos supremos y angustiosos de la muerte, con inmortales esperanzas y consuelos suavísimos.

San Agustín dijo: "En vez de querer evitar una muerte prematura, hagamos todo lo que esté de nuestra parte para evitar el pecado que es la causa de la muerte eterna". "El que dice que no tiene tiempo para pensar en la eternidad, tendrá en la eternidad tiempo sobrado para arrepentirse del ello". Vale más pensar ahora, que arrepentirnos después... (San Mateo 16, 24).

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Urban League, who have pushed and pushed and pushed. On the other hand, we have Latino organizations that are nowhere near as strong as they should be. We have a labor movement that has not pushed on some of these issues. The labor movement needs to focus on Latino issues on immigration and issues having to do with education.

Q: Do you see similarities in the problems confronting different racial and ethnic groups?

A: Yes, definitely. But what I also find troubling and (we) need to talk about (is) the conflict between our races. We also have to talk about African Americans burning down Korean-American grocery stores or hate crimes against Filipinos in some parts of the country by Latinos or African Americans.

Q: The media commonly portray us as fighting with each other. A recurring image is that of Hispanics displacing African Americans from low-paying jobs. Do you see this as a real problem?

A: In (African-Americans') minds, it's very real. What happens is that immigrants take the lowest-paying jobs that no one wants to take. I think people want to use it as an excuse for conflict between the races and keep the pot boiling.

Q: What's your response to critics who underscore economics over race? They argue that Hispanics who have been here for a substantial amount of time are doing well, while it is only the recent immigrants -- usually with little education and lack of English skills -- who are having problems.

A: I disagree. It is about eco-

nomics, but it's also about race. We (in labor) advocate that the division in race is an economic division, with people of color in the lower levels. Of primary concern are Latinos, who are the ones at the bottom of the barrel as far as economic gains and economic opportunity.

We find, and statistics prove, that people of color who belong to unions fare much better. Unionized African Americans earn 30 percent more than non-unionized African Americans; unionized Latinos make 38 percent more; whites earn 24 percent more when they belong to unions. That's why we thought labor had to be part of the conversation.

Q: Are you afraid that the media's portrayal of the board's disagreements may undermine the president's efforts? According to a Gallup poll, only 34 percent of whites favor the government making "every possible effort" to improve the economic and social position of non-white groups.

A: I am concerned about the negative spin the media gives us, but I'm not going to let it bother me enough to stop believing that we are going to bring this issue to the forefront. We will be delayed because of the question of whether we should deal with the black and white paradigm first. I hear more and more Latinos and Asian Americans saying, "We feel so left out from this discussion." I know for the most part we'll have consensus. We are a board who respects each other, who shares ideas and concepts.

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