

Focus On

Hispanics

INVISIBLE NO MORE: THE LATINO STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

The story of Latinos fighting for their civil rights in the United States is largely untold—and therefore, little known. And that is a shame, because it is a story that is inspiring and engaging. It is a story of a people, whom many Anglos believed to be both intellectually and morally inferior, challenging America to live up to the ideals espoused in the Declaration of Independence. It is a story of people fighting for a better life for themselves and their children. It is a story in which Latino educators and students played a prominent role.

Together with the struggle of Blacks to achieve their rights, the Latino civil rights movement has re-shaped America, making it a country more closely aligned with its core values of liberty and justice for all. It has touched every aspect of life in the United States—from education and culture, to labor unions and politics. The story of the Latino civil rights movement demolishes the stereotypic image of Latinos as a people passively and quietly resigned to their fate as second-class citizens. Throughout the 20th Century, Latinos have been organizing, protesting, striking, boycotting, suing, lobbying, campaigning, and registering voters.

A MINORITY IN THE MELTING POT

“The question has always been whether Latinos will melt into the American mainstream like Irish and Italian immigrants did, or will they remain a distinct ethnic minority, like Native Americans or Blacks? I think the hate, venom and xenophobic intolerance that has characterized the debate over immigration ensures that Latinos will continue to be a minority for a long time to come.”

—Raúl Yzaguirre is the United States Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. For 30 years Yzaguirre lead the National Council of Raza (NCLR). He then became Executive Director of the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights at Arizona State University. Yzaguirre's grandfather was lynched during the race war in south Texas in the early 1900s.

LATINO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TIMELINE: 1902 TO 2009

The foundation for the Latino civil rights movement was laid in the first four decades of the 20th Century by community and labor organizers, men and women whose names few remember today. But those activists definitely passed something on to today's activists. It was a way of looking at life and their commitment to the fight for social justice. Contemporary labor organizer Baldemar Valásquez echoes those bygone organizers in these words: “It's OK if it's impossible; it's OK! The object is not to win. That's not the objective. The object is to do the right and good thing. If you decide not to do anything, because it's too hard or too impossible, then nothing will be done, and when you're on your death bed, you're gonna say, 'I wish I had done something.' But if you go and do the right thing NOW, and you do it long enough, good things will happen—something's gonna happen.”

Every generation of Latino activists has brought renewed energy to the struggle. Hence, while there has been an ebb and flow in terms of battles won and battles lost, as there is in every movement for social justice, at no time did the struggle

cease. In March, April and May 2006, for example, we saw more than a million Latinos, many of them young people, take to the streets in more than a dozen U.S. cities to protest proposals being considered in the Republican-led Congress to turn undocumented immigrants into felons. Some in the media, astounded by the sheer size of the demonstrations, wondered whether we were witnessing the birth of a new civil rights movement. But they were wrong. What we were witnessing was the next chapter in an ongoing struggle of Latinos to achieve their place at America's bountiful table.

Here are selected highlights of the Latino civil rights movement.

1900s

1902: Puerto Rican Isabel González is detained by immigration authorities in the Port of New York. They denied her entry to the United States on the grounds that she is an alien and is “likely to become a public charge.” She decides to fight, and her case goes all the way to the United States Supreme Court.



1903: In Oxnard, CA, more than 1,200 Mexican and Japanese farm workers organize the first farm workers' union—the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association. Later, it will be the first union to win a strike against the California agricultural industry.

1904: In *González v. Williams*, the Supreme Court rules that Isabel González is not an alien and therefore cannot be denied entry into the United States. The Court waffles, however, on whether she and other Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. The U.S. military had occupied Puerto Rico, a former Spanish colony, in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, and the island is still under military rule. Isabel González stays in the United States and for the rest of her life is an advocate for Puerto Rican civil rights.

1904: The U.S. establishes the first border patrol as a way to keep Asian laborers from entering the country from Mexico.

1910s

1910: The Mexican Revolution forces many Mexicans to cross the border into the United States, in search of safety and employment.

1911: The first large convention of Mexican Americans to organize against social injustice, El Primer Congreso Mexicanista, meets in Laredo, Texas.

1912: New Mexico enters the union as an officially bilingual state, authorizing funds for voting in both Spanish and English, as well as for bilingual education. The state constitution prohibits segregation for children of “Spanish descent.”

1914: The Colorado militia attacks striking coal miners in what has come to be known as the Ludlow Massacre. More than 50 are killed, mostly Mexican Americans, including 11 children and three women.

1915: Race war breaks out in south Texas. It starts with Mexican Americans, or Tejanos, rebelling. They are fed up with the loss of their lands to Anglo

and unwarranted attacks by Texas Rangers on small Tejanos ranchers, and they are empowered by the Mexican Revolution’s redistribution of land to the poor. The rebels destroy railroad bridges and equipment, attack prominent Anglo and Tejanos landholders, and clash with federal troops. After mounting raids, they often ride across the Rio Grande to Mexico to lay low.

1915: White vigilantes and Texas Rangers strike back with a vengeance. It becomes open season on any one who looks Mexican, whether they are a rebel or not. There are lynchings and random shootings of Mexicans across south Texas. Curfews are imposed on Mexicans—they cannot go out after dark. By 1919, an estimated 5,000 Mexican Americans have been killed and thousands more have been driven off the land. The rebels are, with a very few exceptions, either dead, in prison, or in hiding in Mexico. At no time had the rebels numbered more than two or three hundred, although initially they had widespread support among the Tejanos.

1916: On March 9, Mexican revolutionary Francisco “Pancho” Villa leads hundreds of his men across the border for an attack on the town of Columbus, New Mexico, to protest ill treatment of Mexicans. The attack raises tensions along the Mexico-U.S. border, and Anglo vigilantism increases.

1916: General John J. Pershing leads 12,000 men 400 miles into Mexico in search of General Villa. U.S. troops stay for ten months. Villa escapes; relations with Mexico suffer.

1916: Jim Crow-style segregation spreads throughout the Southwest. Many Mexican Americans in South Texas and Arizona lose their voting rights. Public facilities, including schools, are segregated. “No Mexicans Allowed” signs appear in restaurants and other public facilities.

1917: The U.S. Congress passes, and President Woodrow Wilson signs into law, the Jones Act. With a stroke of a pen, a million Puerto Ricans are made

U.S. citizens. And at a time when the U.S. is gearing up for war, Puerto Rican men become eligible for the draft into the U.S. military.

1917: Factories in war-related industries need more workers. Latinos from the Southwest begin moving north in large numbers for the first time. They find ready employment in meat-packing plants, steel mills, print shops and other manufacturing venues.

1918: Texas’ Spanish-language newspapers join Tejano political figures in supporting the U.S. war effort. They run extensive coverage of the experience of ethnic Mexican soldiers. Popular Tejano writer and educator J. Luz Saenz expresses his hope that the willingness of Mexican Americans to serve in the war will help in the fight for Latino civil rights. Luz is reportedly the first person to coin the term “Mexican American.” Before then, they were simply “Mexicans.”

1920s

1920: Mexican American veterans return home to find they are still very much second-class citizens. In particular, Luz and others raise their voices about the poor quality of education being provided Mexican American children.

1921: San Antonio’s Orden Hijos de América (Order of the Sons of America) organizes Mexican Americans to raise awareness of civil rights issues and fight for fair wages, education and housing.

1925: Mexican American rancher Adolfo Romo, Sr., sues the Tempe Elementary School District (Tempe, AZ) for denying admission to his four children in the new Tenth Street School. He wins, and his children are admitted, but because it is not a class action suit, the impact is limited.

1927: In Los Angeles, CA, the Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas (Federation of Mexican Workers Unions—CUOM) becomes the first large-scale effort to organize and consolidate Mexican workers.

1928: Octaviano Larrazolo of New

Mexico becomes the first Latino U.S. Senator.

1929: Several Latino service organizations merge to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The group organizes against discrimination and segregation and promotes education among Latinos. It's the longest-lasting Latino civil rights group in the country.

1929-35: With the onset of the Great Depression, the U.S. Congress passes and President Herbert Hoover signs the Deportation Act. This law gives counties, working in conjunction with the U.S. Immigration Service, the power to send Mexicans back to Mexico. County officials in Texas, southern California and Arizona organize so-called "sweeps" of barrios and labor camps, arresting anyone who looks Mexican, especially if they are involved in union activities. And they put them on "deportation trains." Some who were sent to Mexico are U.S. citizens, born in this country, and there were numerous instances in which families are torn apart. In all, half a million to one million Mexicans and Mexican Americans are deported. It is the largest forced migration in U.S. history. Texas leads the way with the most deportees, with California a close second and Arizona third. Mexicans are also rounded up as far away as Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.

1930s

1930: LULAC organizes its first school desegregation case in Del Rio, Texas. The case is eventually lost on appeal. While the court rules that segregation based on race is unconstitutional, it also declares that in this case the segregation was for instructional purposes. In fact across the Southwest, the reason (excuse) cited by Anglo school officials and politicians for segregating Mexican American children is that the children's low scores on I.Q. tests show they are not capable of rigorous learning. In the years ahead, the legendary Latino educator and scholar George I. Sanchez will take on this argument and dismantle it brick by brick.

1931: Female Mexican American garment workers in Los Angeles are unionized by Rose Pesotta.

1932: Benjamin Nathan Cordoza, a descendent of Sephardic Jews, becomes the first Hispanic named to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1933: Latino unions in California lead the El Monte strike, possibly the largest agricultural strike at that point in U.S. history. In July, the growers agree to a settlement which includes a wage increase to 20 cents an hour, or \$1.50 for a nine-hour day of work.

1936: Bert Corona, of El Paso, Texas, begins to organize unions for cannery and warehouse workers in the Southwest. In time, Corona will move to California and become one of that state's most successful labor and community organizers.

1939: El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Española (The Spanish-Speaking People's Congress) holds its first conference in Los Angeles. Founded by Guatemalan-born Luisa Moreno, an educator, and Mexican-born Josefina Fierro de Bright, a UCLA pre-med student turned union organizer, it is the first national effort to bring together Latino workers from different ethnic backgrounds: Cubans from Florida, Puerto Ricans from New York, and Mexican Americans from the Southwest. The Congress emphasizes the need for a unified labor movement to fight discrimination and poverty.

1940s

1941: LULAC protests discrimination by the Southern Pacific Railroad, which refuses to provide skilled apprenticeships to Mexican Americans.

1941: The U.S. government, under pressure from Black labor leader A. Philip Randolph, forms the Fair Employment Practices Committee to handle cases of employment discrimination. Latino workers file more than one-third of the complaints.

1942: Hundreds of thousands of Latinos serve in the armed forces during World War II, and they earn an inordinate number of medals for their valor.

1942: The Bracero Program begins, allowing Mexican citizens to work temporarily in the United States. U.S. growers support the program as a source

LATINOS IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

Latinos have had a tremendous (but underappreciated) impact on the union movement. For decades, Latino workers have shown themselves willing to join unions, embrace the concept of solidarity, and engage in collective action to improve their wages and working conditions and advance the cause of social justice for all workers. They have helped put the "move" in movement, infusing it with energy, leadership, and determination, often under the most hostile of circumstances. Today, Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. labor movement. Between 1983 and 2008, the percentage of Latino unionized workers doubled, and now they make up 12 percent of all union members and 14 percent of the American workforce.

of low-cost labor. The program welcomes millions of Mexican workers into the U.S. until it ends in 1964.

1943: In June, gangs of servicemen fill the streets of downtown Los Angeles in a week-long assault against Mexican American youth. It becomes known as the "Zoot Suit Riots" after the popular clothing style of the day—baggy pants and long jackets. While the L.A. police do little, Navy, Marine and Army men drag kids, some as young as 12-years-old, out of movie theaters and cafes, tearing their clothes off and viciously beating them. In response to an appeal from Josefina Fierro de Bright to the Roosevelt Administration, the military orders all personnel to stay out of the Mexican districts of Los Angeles.

1944: Senator Dennis Chávez of New Mexico introduces the first Fair Employment Practices Bill, which prohibits discrimination because of race, creed or national origin. The bill fails, but it is a major predecessor for the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

1945: The first great wave of migration from Puerto Rico, to the mainland United

States begins and lasts until the late 1960s. The daily Eastern Airlines flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico to New York City is dubbed “the Puerto Rican Mayflower.” Why are Puerto Ricans willing to brave cultural and language barriers, discrimination and a cold climate to come to the mainland? They are leaving poverty and hopelessness in search of economic opportunity and a better education for their children.

1945: Latino veterans return home with a new feeling of unity and determination. They push for equal rights in the country they defended. And they use their G.I. benefits to get a college education and to buy homes.

1945: Ganzalo and Felicitas Mendez, in Orange County, CA, Westminster Elementary School District, send their children off to the “all-white” 17th Street School, only to have their youngsters denied entry. They are directed to send their children to the district’s “Mexican School.” They think this is unfair and set out to do something about it.

1946: Under the guidance of civil rights lawyer David Marcus, and with the support of the NAACP, LULAC, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), 5,000 Mexican American parents in California, including the Mendezes, sue several California school districts, challenging the segregation of their children in inferior schools. The case becomes known as *Mendez v. Westminster*. At this time, in fact, 80 to 90 percent of all the Latino children in the Southwestern U.S. attend segregated schools.

1947: Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation, hires Fred Ross, Sr., to organize Latinos in southern California. Ross creates the Community Service Organization (CSO) to encourage voter registration and provide grassroots political support on issues such as education, housing, and jobs. The CSO produces leaders such as Ed Roybal, the first Latino Congressman from California; Cruz Reynosa, the first Latino on the California State Supreme

Court; and Dolores Huerta and César Chávez, founders of the United Farm Workers.

1947: In *Mendez v. Westminster*, U.S. District Court Judge Paul McCormick rules that denying Mexican American children access to the “all Anglo” schools was a violation of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, which states that all persons are entitled to equal protection and due process. He rejects the argument made by the school districts that because of their poor language skills, poor personal hygiene and lack of moral values, the Mexican children are not qualified for the “all Anglo” schools. *Mendez v. Westminster* laid the groundwork from *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, and is cited as a precedent in that historic decision.

1948: The mortuary in Three Rivers, Texas, refuses to handle the reburial of Army Private Félix Longoria, winner of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He had been killed on the island of Luzon in the Philippines and initially interred there. Latino veterans are outraged and protest. Through the efforts of Texas Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Longoria is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

1949: Mexican American veterans meet in Corpus Christi, Texas, to protest discrimination and poor service in the Veterans Administration hospital in that city. This protest leads to the establishment of the American G.I. Forum (AGIF), under the leadership of Dr. Héctor Pérez Garcia, World War II combat surgeon who had taken an active role in the Longoria affair. AGIF quickly develops a broad agenda of Latino civil rights goals. Throughout the 1950s and into the early 60s, AGIF fights school segregation in Texas, leads voter registration drives, and provides leadership development for young men and women.

1950s

1950: The Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers strikes Empire Zinc Company in Bayard, N.M. The union is led by Latinos and many of the workers

are Latino. The strike is a bitter one with local and state law enforcement siding with the company. But after 15 months, the union wins against overwhelming odds. The award-winning 1954 film, *Salt of the Earth*, depicts the strike and the courageous tenacity of both the workers and their wives.

1953-58: The U.S. Immigration Service, in response to a surge in the number of undocumented workers crossing the U.S.-Mexican border, launches “Operation Wetback”. More than 3.8 million Mexican nationals and some U.S. citizens are rounded up in California, Arizona and Texas, and deported to Mexico.

1954: *Hernandez v. Texas* is the first post-World War II Latino civil rights case heard and decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. At issue is whether a Mexican American defendant (Pete Hernandez) can receive a fair trial in a county where Mexican Americans are never chosen to serve on juries. Chief Justice Earl Warren and the rest of the Supreme Court unanimously rule in favor of Hernandez, and order that he be retried with a jury composed without regard to ethnicity. Even more significantly, the Court holds that the Fourteenth Amendment protects those beyond the racial classes of White or Negro, and extends to other racial or ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans.

1960s

1960: Throughout the 1960s, the term “Chicano” gains widespread currency as many younger Mexican American civil rights activists call themselves Chicanos. The Chicano movement embodies both a celebration of Mexican American art and culture as well as the fight for Mexican American civil rights. “All Chicanos are Mexican American, but not all Mexican Americans are Chicanos,” the activist Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales is quoted as saying.

1961: Dr. Antonio Pantoja and a group of Puerto Rican educators and professionals found ASPIRA (which means aspire in Spanish) in order to

THE TEACHER BECOMES A LABOR ORGANIZER

“My first job out of college was as an elementary school teacher. I only lasted a year. I couldn’t stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes. I thought I could do more by organizing farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children.”

—Dolores Huerta is co-founder of the United Farm Workers, and she directed the UFW’s national boycott of grapes. At age 78, she continues to fight for Latino and women’s rights and is President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, which supports home-by-home organizing in Latino neighborhoods and communities, following the model created by the Community Service Organization.

address the exceedingly high drop-out rate and low educational attainment of Puerto Rican youth. Over the years, ASPIRA has grown from a small nonprofit organization to a national organization with associate organizations in six States and Puerto Rico. ASPIRA focuses on developing leadership potential and pride in cultural heritage among Puerto Rican youth.

1961: Henry B. Gonzales becomes the first Mexican American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Texas.

1962: César Chávez and Dolores Huerta organize the National Farm Workers Association in Delano, California. It later becomes the United Farm Workers (UFW). Under Chávez and Huerta’s leadership the new union joins a strike started by Filipino grape pickers in Delano.

1963: Miami’s Coral Way Elementary School offers the first bilingual education program in public schools, thanks to a grant from the Ford Foundation.

1963: The Chicano Youth Leadership Conference is held in Los Angeles and inequality in education is a major topic of discussion. And at this conference, a network of Chicano education activists, college students and younger faculty members begins to be forged.

1963: In East Los Angeles, parents form a group called the Mexican American Education Committee. They call for boards of education in the area to recognize their children’s language and culture; for the teaching of Spanish at the elementary level; for the inclusion of Mexican history and literature in the curriculum; for the recruitment and hiring of bilingual teachers, counselors, and administrators.

1965: Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales is appointed director of Denver’s War on Poverty program. In 1966 he will create the Crusade for Justice, and in 1967 he writes the epic poem “I Am Joaquín,” which becomes something of an anthem for the Chicano movement.

1965: The Immigration and Naturalization Act limits immigrants from countries in the Western Hemisphere to 120,000 per year.

1965: César Chávez, Dolores Huerta and the UFW begin a national grape boycott, targeting Schenley Industries and the Di Giorgio Corporation. The boycott becomes one of the most significant social justice movements for farm workers in the United States.

1965: NEA sponsors in Tucson, AZ, a first-ever Conference on the Spanish-Speaking Child in the Schools of the Southwest. The conference members conclude that Spanish-speaking children are not deficient learners but rather victims of inappropriate materials, under-trained educators and poor teaching methods.

1966-67: California State Assistant Superintendent Eugene Gonzalez and his research team survey 896 California

school districts. They find: 86 percent of the districts lack programs for students with limited English proficiency; 68.5 percent fail to conduct regularly scheduled conferences between Mexican American parents and teachers, and 80 percent have inadequate financial resources to serve migrant children. In response to these deficiencies, educational reformers in California organize a series of conferences focusing on the education of Mexican Americans.

1966: César Chávez and the UFW march from Delano to Sacramento, arriving 25 days later on Easter Sunday.

1966: Congress passes, and the President signs, the Cuban American Adjustment Act allowing Cubans who lived in the United States for at least one year to become permanent residents. No other immigrant group has been offered this privilege, before or since.

1967: The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is founded and becomes a major advocate for Latino civil rights, including equal access to a quality education.

1967: The National Education Association elects Braulio Alonso as its President. He is NEA’s first minority and first Latino President. Alonso plays a key role in the merger of NEA and the American Teachers Association (ATA), the organization representing Black teachers in segregated schools. He is an outspoken advocate for the integration of schools and NEA.

1968: Herman Gallegos, a community organizer; Dr. Julian Samora, an educator, and Dr. Ernesto Galarza, an educator, found the Southwest Council of La Raza (SWCLR) in Phoenix, Arizona, as a first step in the creation of a national civil rights organization that will advocate

EXCERPT FROM I AM JOAQUÍN BY RODOLFO “CORKY” GONZALES

*Yo so Joaquín,
perdido en un mundo de confusión:
I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion,
caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,
confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,
suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society.
My fathers have lost the economic battle
and won the struggle of cultural survival.*

for Mexican Americans. Funding from the Ford Foundation, the National Council of Churches and the United Auto Workers enables the fledgling organization to get off the ground. In 1973, SWCLR changes its name to the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), moves its headquarters to Washington, D.C., and expands its focus to Latino civil rights. Today NCLR has 35,000 members in more than 300 affiliates in 41 states, revenues exceeding \$42 million, and is the largest Latino civil rights group in the U.S.

1968: Chicano high school students in East Los Angeles, desiring a better education, present a list of demands to the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education. When the Board fails to act, the students, college activists, and a high school teacher, Sal Castro, organize a massive strike or blowout. Thousands of students from five schools walk out. The Board refuses to meet with representatives of the striking students. After a week, the strike ends after a violent police crackdown.

1968: The L.A. Police Department arrests 13 Chicano leaders, including teacher Sal Castro, and indicts them on conspiracy charges. Sal Castro is also banned from teaching. To protest the ban, students and activists organize picketing of District headquarters. When that fails, they hold a sit-in in the boardroom of the Los Angeles Unified School District for the teacher, and the sit-in lasts seven days, until the Board agrees to reinstate Castro. As a result of the blowouts, the District does increase the number of college-prep academic courses available to Mexican American and Black students.

1968: The Chicano student movement spreads throughout the Southwest, with demonstrations and rallies demanding improved education for Mexican American students.

1968: After a three-year lobbying effort by NEA, Congress passes the Bilingual Education Act, which mandates that all school districts with sizable populations of Spanish-speaking students provide

TWO LATINO EDUCATORS TAKE A STAND, PAY THE PRICE AND ULTIMATELY ARE VINDICATED

BRAULIO ALONSO

February 19, 1968, 35,000 of Florida's teachers went on strike. Florida had not conceded to their compensation demands. A federal judge ordered NEA President Braulio Alonso to call off the strike with a 24-hour mandate. "There is no way I could do that," said Alonso later. "I never considered turning my back on those teachers who stood for what I believed in for all of my life." Alonso defied the court order and traveled back to Washington as a warrant was being issued for his arrest. In solidarity with the striking teachers, he defiantly resigned from his principal's position in Tampa just before being summarily fired. On March 7, the strike ended when the Florida legislature passed an education bill with funding provisions to satisfy the strikers, including an additional \$2,170 for every classroom and an increase in salary for every teacher. Alonso's school district never rehired him, and Alonso concentrated his energies on raising college scholarships for Latino students. But some 30 plus years later, the same district that had fired him named a high school after him.

SAL CASTRO

Social Studies teacher Sal Castro's support for the student walkouts from the Los Angeles barrio high schools in 1968 earned him an arrest, a criminal charge of conspiracy and the loss of his job. Eventually the criminal charge was dropped after intense pressure from Chicano activists and Mexican American parents in East L.A. And as noted previously, it took a sit-in in the district's boardroom to get his job back. Still, the district officials remained angry, and one was quoted as saying they want to take Castro "to the guillotine." So they meted out their revenge by transferring him repeatedly, something that would be extremely difficult to do under the current United Teachers of Los Angeles contract with the district. After teaching for many years and continuing to advocate for Latino students, Castro retired—from teaching, not advocacy. In the 2006 HBO film *Walkout*, directed by Edward James Olmos, Castro was played by Michael Peña. And in 2009, the Los Angeles Unified School District named a school after Salvador B. Castro.

special programs for those students' education.

1970s

1970: After losing millions of dollars to La Huelga, the California grape growers capitulated, signing a contract with the UFW, agreeing to grant rights to the workers and raising their minimum wage. This is the first of many successful boycotts that César Chávez and Dolores Huerta lead on behalf of grape pickers, lettuce pickers, and all the other workers dear to their hearts.

1974: In the case of *Lau v. Nichols*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules students' access to, or participation in, an educational program cannot be denied because of their inability to speak or understand English. The lawsuit began as a class action by Chinese-speaking students against the school district in San Francisco. But the decision benefits other ethnic groups as well, especially Latinos.

1974: Congress passes the Equal Education Opportunity Act to make bilingual education more widely

FROM A "LETTER TO A CHILD LIKE ME" BY JOSÉ TORRES

"Whatever your ambition, you must educate yourself. School is a great gift our society offers you. It provides you the key for your future. You must accept this gift, not disdain it. . . Most of all, you should learn that it's *you* who are responsible for your future."

"There is a basic principle you should never forget: Don't be ruled by other people's low expectation of you!..."

"Your best defense against the ignorance of bigots and haters is pride in your own heritage. . . Be proud of your ethnicity and language. Don't be afraid to use it. Don't give up to the stupidity of those know-nothings who insist one language is better than two or three."

—Jose Torres was born in a small barrio in Puerto Rico and rose to become the light-heavyweight boxing champion. He later distinguished himself as a writer. (*Parade Magazine*, February 24, 1991.)

available in public schools.

1974: Willie Velásquez establishes the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, and registers more than two million Latino voters in the first 20 years of operation.

1975: After English-as-a-second-language speakers testify about the discrimination they face at the polls, Congress votes to expand the U.S. Voting Rights Act to require language assistance at polling stations. (The original 1965 act applied only to Blacks and Puerto Ricans.) The new Act leads to increased Latino participation in voting and the political process.

1980s

1980: Throughout the 1980s, most Latino civil rights groups, including NCLR, struggle to survive as their funding declines.

1980: The number of immigrants from depression-racked Dominican Republic increases significantly in the 1980s, and continues doing so through the 1990s. According to Pew Hispanic Center tabulations, the number of Dominicans in the U.S. more than doubled between 1990 and 2005, with most settling in New York, New Jersey and Florida. In fact, Dominicans become the second largest immigrant group from the Western Hemisphere.

1986: Congress approves the Immigration Reform and Control Act. It provides legalization for certain undocumented workers, including

agricultural workers. The Act also sets employer sanctions in place, making it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers.

1988: President Ronald Reagan appoints Dr. Lauro Cavazos as Secretary of Education. He is the first Latino to serve on a President's cabinet.

1989: Miami's Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Cuban American, becomes the first Latina elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

1990s

1990: In the 1990s, the number of immigrants from Colombia begins to increase, as more Colombians flee the drug wars and violence in that country.

1994: California Republicans, led by Governor Pete Wilson, seek to stop what they term the "browning" of California. To achieve this end, they champion Proposition 187, a measure that would deny undocumented immigrants Medicaid, welfare, immunization programs, food stamps, and other public programs. It would also deny their children U.S. citizenship, even if they were born on U.S. soil. Proponents of Proposition 187 vilify Mexicans at their rallies and grossly exaggerate the number of "illegal aliens." Proposition 187 passes, but it proves a Pyrrhic victory for the Republicans, because it drives many Latino voters to the Democrats. Proposition 187 also galvanizes a new generation of Latino college students in California. It is a wake-up call.

1994: Miguel Contreras becomes political director of the Los Angeles County Council Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. And in 1996 he is elected Executive Secretary-Treasurer. As a top labor leader in L.A., Contreras inherited three time-honored axioms. The first was that nobody actually worked campaigns—walking precincts, making phone calls, knocking on doors. The city was too big. Campaigns consisted of fundraising and advertising; money in and money out, no activists need apply. The second was that it would take years, perhaps decades, for the wave of Latino immigrants to exercise real political power. And third, the union movement in L.A., as everywhere else, was a dinosaur on its way to extinction. In the nine years before his untimely death, Miguel Contreras proves the conventional wisdom wrong on all three counts. He transforms the city's politics and union organizing. Immigrants from Guatemala and El Salvador, along with Mexican Americans, energize L.A.'s union movement.

1996: Loretta Sanchez defeats "Bomber" Bob Dornan in California's 47th Congressional district in Orange County. Arch-conservative Republicans such as Dornan had held the seat for decades. Nothing dramatizes the demographic changes in southern California better than Sanchez's victory. It's been 52 years since Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez moved to Orange County and leased a small farm.

1997: A U.S. District Court judge overturns Proposition 187, ruling it unconstitutional.

1998: Sanchez beats Dornan again, and he retires.

1999: After 60 years of U.S. Navy exercise-bombings of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, Latino and African American civil rights activists join the residents of the island to mount protests. The protests culminate in lawsuits, non-violent civil disobedience on the island, and the arrest of more than 180 protesters, including Edward James Olmos.

2000s

2001: In the five years following the terrorist attack of 9/11, the Southern Poverty Law Center reports that “Latino immigrants face a surge in discrimination and bias.”

2002: Lily Eskelsen is elected Secretary-Treasurer of the National Education Association, making her the first Latina executive officer of NEA. She goes on to be elected Vice President.

2002: Latinos are pronounced the nation’s largest minority group, after the new Census figures show that the U.S. Latino population reaching 37.1 million.

2005: Just as key provisions of the Voting Rights Act are about to expire, English-only conservatives oppose its renewal, citing the expense of bilingual ballots. But President George W. Bush reauthorizes the Act. The reauthorized Act is named the “Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King and Cesar Chavez Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act.”

2006: In response to proposals being debated in the Congress to criminalize undocumented immigrants, Latinos mount huge demonstrations in more than a dozen U.S. cities in March, April and May—they are the largest demonstrations the nation has seen since the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The demonstrators sing “We shall overcome” in Spanish, and they carry signs proclaiming “Immigrant Rights are Civil Rights” and “We are not criminals”. Everyone, including established Latino

civil rights organizations, is surprised by the size of this mobilization. It turns out that much of the organizing was done by ad hoc coalitions in which high school and college students used text messaging, email, MySpace, Facebook, and cell phones to spread the word. The Spanish-speaking media also played a huge role. More than half a million, including tens of thousands of students who walked out of middle and high schools, march through downtown L.A. in March. And in April, 300,000 march in Dallas and 300,000 in Chicago. Other cities with large demonstrations include San Jose, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Fort Myers, New York City, Oakland, Portland, Seattle, Tucson and Salt Lake City.

2009: Sonia Maria Sotomayor becomes the first Latina Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, 107 years after Puerto Rican Isabel González refused to take “no” for an answer and launched her legal fight for citizenship.

THE FUTURE OF THE LATINO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Will there be a need for a Latino civil rights movement in the months and years ahead?

Veteran civil rights warrior Raúl Yzaguirre thinks so. “Our greatest challenge is not what Anglos and other non-Latinos do or not do; the future of our civil rights struggle depends on us. Power, rights, inclusion, social and economic equality will not be forthcoming without action and perseverance.”

Salsa now outsells ketchup in America today, and clearly Latinos have

journeyed a long way from the early 20th Century. But when it comes to the equality gaps between Latinos and Anglos—in income, housing, health care, employment, and education—Latinos still have a long way to go.

One thing is quite certain, if the past is any guide: Education—“better schools for our children”—will continue to be a rallying cry around which Latinos will organize and mobilize. Education remains a top issue among Latinos, along with the treatment of undocumented immigrants. And Arizona’s passage of a law which empowers the police to stop and question any person they have a “reasonable suspicion” of being in the country illegally ensures immigrant rights will continue to be a hot button issue in America. Eleven states have weighed in on the side of Arizona as the U.S. Department of Justice seeks to overturn the law in the U.S. Court of Appeals. And at least 70 Republican members of Congress also support the Arizona law.

“Despite the current xenophobia over the immigration issue, I am very optimistic about the future of Latinos in the U.S. We are hard working, we are very patriotic, we have strong families—and we do not see ourselves as victims.”

—Raúl Yzaguirre

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