

Commission on Hispanic Affairs



**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Memorial Day 2008
- Centralia College Clocktower Diversity Project
- Facts & Myths About Immigrants

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Message from the Director

As 2nd quarter 2008 eludes us and summer is at the

forefront we reflect on what we have accomplished, encountered, and attained.

It is also a time to take a step back and look at the big picture surrounding the current issues of the rural farm worker communities in Washington State. It is our hope not only to uncover stories of disparity and injustice but also explore them and reflect upon each story's significance to the struggles and triumph of our people.

An issue of relevance is our recent visit to Omak, Washington, described by the Omak Chamber of Commerce as the heart of the Okanogan, a four-season playground where one can get away from it all for a weekend or a lifetime! A city that celebrates cultural diversity at their many events and activities, including the Omak Stampede, Pow-Wow, and Cinco de Mayo!

Omak is the largest city in the Okanogan County with a population of 5000+ residents. Agriculture and forestry are the major economic

generators for the county.

The work force in both the agricultural industry as well as forestry predominantly consists of migrant/immigrant workers. These workers are usually at an increased risk of injury because they are most directly involved in production tasks. Other factors are the inherent hazards such as machinery, chemicals, and dangerous environmental conditions.

While I recognize that all occupations have a degree of risk, what was most disturbing was the amount of disheartening "stories" that were presented by Hispanic farmworkers at our Omak public meeting. I ask myself, "Is it the fact that they do not have an adequate understanding of existing reporting and support structures such as Workers' Compensation, the lack of bilingual physicians/surgeons or simply a misunderstanding". Mediocre and or lack of services for a group of people who are the backbone of the local economy are simply inexcusable.

Other issues in Omak and surrounding communities included:

- Hispanic clients not being treated equally in the provi-

sion of services

- Hispanic residents being stopped for a burnt out light and ICE is called
- When word gets out regarding such actions; Latinos consequently stop calling the police
- Need for a hotline where one can call to file discrimination complaints
- Transportation is a major issue for all

The stories and comments provided at the Omak public meeting have impelled us to unite with Labor & Industries personnel to organize and plan a meeting to address the many "injury claim" issues in Omak and the surrounding communities. In addition, an Ad Hoc committee is currently forming to facilitate resolution of these issues.

A substantial amount of community action that led to the creation of CHA rose out of the Yakima Valley as well as other areas with high farmworker populations; subsequently the Commission was created by a Governor's Executive Order and established in statute in 1971. Hispanic farmworkers continue to be the backbone of Washington's agricultural industry; therefore, we must continue to strive for better working con-



“The Commission was appropriated \$150,000 by Legislature to conduct a Latino Achievement Gap Study”

Message from the Director *continued*

ditions and equal treatment in the delivery of government services to this population.

Heartfelt thanks to Commissioner Jorge Chacón for his efforts in the planning and organizing of the Omak public meeting. The packed city hall was evidence of the outreach to his community. Thanks are also in order to the late Dale Sparber, Mayor of Omak for his hospitality and the use of city hall for our meeting, to the panel members for their participation, to the community in attendance, and to MECHA for the wonderful reception and dinner.

In other news

The Commission was appropriated \$150,000 by Legislature to conduct a Latino Achievement Gap study. The Interagency Agreement has been drawn between CHA and the University of Washington; Dr. Francs Contreras will be the

lead on the study. She has begun to assemble her team and will be working closely with our Education Committee Chair, Lillian Ortiz-Self. Meetings will be conducted throughout the state and partnerships will be formed with various school districts. A preliminary presentation will take place at the Shelton Commission Study Session on June 28, 2008 with a formal presentation to follow at the August 22nd public meeting in Everett. The entire research team will be introduced at that time.

The Governor recently appointed Bob Cepeda as Commissioner of Spokane, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend, and Stevens County. Congratulations Bob and welcome to CHA. Pasco Commissioner Gabriel Portugal former Vice-Chair and Walla Walla Commissioner Victor Chacón’s terms will be ending on August 1, 2008. I bid them farewell and thank them for their contributions, dedication and devotion to

their communities and our mission. I would also like to acknowledge Commissioner Ninfa Gutierrez for her dedication and commitment to our communities.

Congratulations to all high school and college graduates throughout Washington State. In particular, those that have volunteered at our office. Congratulations Richard Diaz (St. Martin’s University) and Jovany Torres (Black Hills High School).

Last but not least, thanks to Nina Hinton, Intern from Evergreen State College for the many hours that she worked during 2nd quarter 2008 and for her efforts in planning and organizing the Shelton public meeting. In addition thank you to Salima Benkhalti, freshman at Capitol High School for her time and incredible diligence.

May you all have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Special Invitation

You are cordially invited to join us at the:

Everett Public Meeting
Everett Community College
August 22, 2008
6PM to 9PM

Further details on the meeting will be posted on our website in the very near future.

Save the Date

Latino Business & Consumer EXPO

Meydenbauer Center
Bellevue, WA

October 5, 2008

12:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Memorial Day 2008 by Gus Chavez

Memorial Day was celebrated Monday, May 26th. Our nation celebrated and paid tribute in honor of our fallen men and women warriors. This day of honor has been around since the American Civil War and over the years has gained importance and significance to generations of families whose sons and daughters made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. While questions remain over the wisdom of engaging in particular wars, there is no question over the patriotism, participation and ultimate commitment exhibited by the U.S. Latino and Latina warrior community.

This has been most evident when we see that over 500,000 Latinos fought and were involved in World War II and thousands more in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Latino combined death toll in these three wars alone was in the thousands and represented warriors from all communities including Puerto Rico. More recent, the final number of Latinos and Latinas sacrificing their lives due to our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq is unknown at this time, but given the instability of these countries and others in the world, many will continue to perish.

Unfortunately, until recently the Latino and Latina U.S. military experience had never really been accepted or recognized by many public and

private entities, including some in our community, as being vital and important to our history. We, the Latino and Latina community, whether we are citizens, resident aliens or undocumented persons, have been loyal fighting patriots. The first recorded American death in Iraq was 28 year old U.S. Marine Lance CPL Jose Gutierrez, a U.S. green card holder from Guatemala City, Guatemala. He was killed on March 21, 2003.

Today over 4,000 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq and as in past wars, many have been Latinos. To date, more than 391 Latinos have been killed in Iraq.

Latinos and Latinas have made an impact on our nation's ability to defend itself. Some have asked, "Why are Latinos opting into military service?" University of California San Diego Professor Jorge Mariscal responds pointedly when he analyzes the strong military Latino and Latina recruitment campaigns in our communities. He states, "Mexican American or Chicano/a youth -- that is, the children of families who have been in the U.S. for many decades, if not centuries -- continue to have a relatively limited range of life opportunities."

Today there are over 45 million Hispanics in the U.S. and growing. Given our numbers, it is not surprising to read

about the military's interest in our youth. According to John McLaurin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Human Resources, who spoke recently about the size of the "Hispanic ... recruiting market." The goal is "to boost the Latino numbers in the military from roughly 10 percent to as much as 22 percent."

Will Memorial Day continue to be as significant a day of honor in the future for the Latino and Latina community? If successful in his quest, the latter comments by John McLaurin strongly suggest that Memorial Day will continue to be an important day for Latino families as we honor and pay our respect in remembrance of our heroes. Rafael Ojeda from Tacoma, Washington states "Some gave some, some gave all."

To our fallen Latino and Latina warriors on this Memorial Day, we don't say goodbye to you, we say gracias and may you rest in peace.

Gus Chavez, Co-founder
Defend The Honor



“ We, the Latino community, whether we are citizens, resident alien, or undocumented persons, have been loyal fighting patriots”

Newly Appointed Commissioner



Bob Cepeda

Counties: Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens

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Commissioner Cepeda is a born and raised native of New York City (Harlem) who currently resides in Spokane with his family.

He has over twenty-five years experience working in the criminal justice field and seventeen years in the military special operations. He is a Consultant and Trainer on gangs, terrorism, ethics, crime prevention, and use of force issues and is also a subject matter expert with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.

Commissioner Cepeda is on staff at Gonzaga University as Associate Director of Campus Public Safety & Security. He is a member of the BRIDGE staff; a program that is a “pre-orientation” designed to assist ethnic and cultural minority students in making a smooth and successful transition to Gonzaga University and the local area.

“Partnnering for
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Go Far, Go
Together”



**Partnering for Student Success:
Go Far, Go Together**
A conference for educators, families & community groups

October 2-3, 2008 ~ Yakima Convention Center

Conference Highlights:

Keynote Speaker: Karen L. Mapp, Ed. D, Harvard Graduate School of Education and co-author of *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*

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Centralia College Honored Latino Leaders

The faces of Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney and Tomas Villanueva were added to Centralia College Clocktower Diversity Project on Thursday, May 8, 2008.

The Centralia College Clocktower Diversity Project, established in 1997, honors Northwest individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to the history, community or culture of the Northwest, or have distinguished themselves in their chosen fields.

State Rep. Phyllis Gutiérrez Kenney (D-Seattle) was honored in recognition of her legislative and community accomplishments.

Gutiérrez Kenney is the daughter of Hispanic immigrants and she grew up immersed in the plight of migrant workers. Since 1997, she has served the people of the 46th Legislative District in the Washington State House of Representatives. She currently chairs the House Committee on Community and Economic Development and Trade and was the former chair of the Higher Education Committee for many years. She diligently works to help minorities achieve success and is an advocate for education and the rights of individuals in the state and nationwide.

Tomás Villanueva, a former labor organizer and civil rights pioneer, was also honored in this ceremony. Villanueva emigrated from Mexico with his family at the age of 14 and, after college, worked to establish the Pacific Northwest's first Farm Worker Cooperative, Community Service Center and Farm Workers Medical Clinic.

He was influenced most by Cesar Chavez, the founder of the National Farm Workers Association. Since his meeting with Chavez in 1966, Villanueva has worked to unionize farm workers, helped open the first and largest medical clinic in the Northwest and fought and won new legislation giving farm workers the right to unemployment insurance, minimum wage and fair labor standards and child labor laws.

Mr. Villanueva was also the first Chairman of the Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs formerly known as the Commission on Mexican American Affairs.

Current honorees include the Cowlitz Indian Tribe;

George Tsutakawa, noted second-generation Japanese-American artist; Jimi Hendrix, musician; Floyd Schmoie, peace activist and humanitarian; Dixy Lee Ray, former Washington governor; Hazel Pete, Chehalis tribal basket maker; Billy Frank, Jr., Native American fisheries advocate; Merce Cunningham, dance choreographer; George and Mary Washington, founders of Centralia; Mother Joseph, educator; Elmer Smith, labor advocate; and Juan Perez, Spanish explorer.



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle
Gathering at Clocktower ceremony.



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle
State Representative Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney and farm labor organizer Tomas Villanueva embrace after plaques in their honor were unveiled in a ceremony at the Centralia College Clocktower Diversity Project.



Dr. Jim Walton, College President
and Tomas Villanueva



Dr. Jim Walton, College President
and Rep. Phyllis Gutierrez-Kenney

“In the Secure Fence Act of 2006, signed by President Bush on October 4, 2006 undocumented immigrants are classified in the same group as terrorists”.

What Are They So Afraid Of? The Facts and Myths about Immigrants by Henry Cruz

The term “myth” assumes a conclusion without a determinable basis of fact. This article offers facts that dispel these myths and, assuming those facts to be true, proposes the following question: What are proponents of tighter immigration restrictions and militarized borders so afraid of?

Myth 1: Undocumented immigrants are “illegal”

The term connotes criminality and, more importantly, assumes an individual’s very existence can be unlawful. The fact is the term does not exist in immigration law or in any other U.S. law. The term is misleading because unauthorized presence in the United States is a civil offense, not a criminal one. While someone can have an unauthorized presence by entering the U.S. without inspection, an act which is a crime, other forms of unauthorized presence (e.g., visa overstay) can result from non-criminal activity.

Myth 2: Immigrants cause a rise in crime

In fact, studies show immigrants have the *lowest* rates of imprisonment for criminal convictions in the United States, and

U.S. nativity is the stronger predictor of incarceration. One study found first-generation immigrants (*i.e.* foreign-born) were 45 percent less likely, and second-generation immigrants were 22 percent less likely, to commit violence than were third-generation Americans.

Myth 3: Immigrants don’t pay taxes yet come here to take welfare

Undocumented immigrants are large contributors to – rather than recipients of – Social Security. In one study, 2 percent of undocumented Mexican immigrants had ever received public benefits or Social Security payments, yet 84 percent paid taxes. Moreover, undocumented immigrants use public services much less than others do. A 1997 study found a *negative* association between the anticipated value of public benefits and illegal migration.

Myth 4: Immigrants take away jobs from Americans

Most economists will tell you that immigrants do not take jobs from Americans. While it is true that over the years low-skilled immigrant

workers have lowered the wages of low-skilled American workers, the effect has been minimal. The overwhelming amount of data shows that immigrants bring skill, capital and entrepreneurship which create a net boon (nearly \$10 billion annually) for the U.S. economy. Recent studies have found that immigrants are starting businesses at a higher rate than Americans.

Myth 5: Immigrants are a threat to national security

In the Secure Fence Act of 2006, signed by President Bush on October 4, 2006, undocumented immigrants are classified in the same group as terrorists. The fact is the restrictions and other measures targeting immigrants in the name of national security thus far have resulted in no successful terrorism prosecutions. Most security experts will tell you, and as the British have shown us, it is good intelligence that helps prevent terrorist attacks. Moreover, during a period of increased border enforcement, illegal immigration actually *increased*.

Perhaps the mosaic that the United States claims to be is turning a bit to

What Are They So Afraid Of? continued

brown. But make no mistake about it – most undocumented immigrants do not want to break the law; they come here to be with their families, to work, and to get an education. The problem is the law itself: arbitrary numerical visa quotas, artificial allocations that give the same number of visas to every country, and archaic work visa allotments. The solution is not a wall; it is comprehensive immigration reform that includes a reduction of the visa backlog, legalization, and a humane guest-worker program. If you look at the facts, one must wonder what the motivation is behind these myths. We know what the opponents of the Civil Rights Movement feared; what are opponents of comprehensive immigration reform so afraid of?

The following is an edited version of the article. The complete article, including all citations, is found at www.lbaw.org.

Henry Cruz is an immigration attorney with the law office of Rios Cantor, P.S. He is also a board member of the Latina/o Bar Association of Washington (LBAW) and is Co-Chair of its Subcommittee on Immigration. The mission of LBAW is to represent the concerns and goals of Latino attorneys and the Latino community in general in the State of Washington. LBAW considers immigration reform one of the major issues affecting Latinos today, and one of its goals is to educate the public on immigration matters.

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NHLI is coming to Seattle!

We are delighted to invite you to register for the National Hispana Leadership Institute's (NHLI) Latina Empowerment Conference scheduled for Friday, August 22, 2008 at the Westin Seattle, 1900 Fifth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101, from 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Join NHLI, the premier leadership institute for Latinas in the country, for a morning packed with professional and leadership development, networking, knowledge, and inspiration.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- 8:00 - 8:30 AM **Registration/Breakfast**
- 8:30 - 9:15 AM **Preparing Latinas for Leadership Positions Presentation – NHLI**
- 9:15 - 11:15 AM **The Seven Demands of Leadership – Gallup Organization**
- 11:15 - 12:30 PM **Latinas Sharing Their Secrets of Success – Panel Discussion**

Latinas are leading a significant and powerful trend in America today! Latinas are the fastest growing business segment, are entering the workforce in record numbers, and are making a statement as they run for political office and are appointed to boards and commissions. Latinas also represent 62% of the \$800 billion purchasing power of U.S. Hispanics. NHLI is proud to be at the forefront providing leadership development to thousands of Latinas across the country. NHLI's programs provide participants with the tools needed to become positive change agents in their communities and work places.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs is to represent the Hispanic community in state government in order to empower Hispanics to exercise their right to equal opportunity in education, housing, health and economic development. The Commission strives to define issues pertaining to the rights and needs of Hispanics in order to provide recommendations to the Governor, the legislature, and state agencies. The recommendations can have a profound effect on state policies and lead to the improvement and the overall quality of life and future for the Hispanic community in the State of Washington.

www.cha.wa.gov

Goodbye and Thanks for your Service



Commissioner Portugal



Commissioner Chacón

On behalf of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Commissioner Portugal and Commissioner Chacón for their valuable contributions to our agency during their terms.

Commissioner Portugal served a two year term; 2002-2008. He also served as Vice Chair. Commissioner Chacón served a one year term; 2006-2008.

May you have good memories of your as CHA Commissioner and may you continue serving our people.

CHA Staff & Commissioners

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