

# THE OBSERVER

## de Portland

### Latinas Need More Educational Opportunities

BY RAUL YZAGUIRRE

As America's youth return to school, it's too bad they won't all have a fair shake.

A recent report compiled by my organization, the national Council of La Raza discovered serious inequalities in the U.S. educational system.

In our travels around the country we have seen schools that work well, and those that don't. Schools that work well demonstrate a deep commitment to the belief that all children can learn. In these schools, teachers are committed, parents are involved and school officials hold themselves accountable for achieving positive results. Not surprisingly, Latino children in such schools, by every measurable standard, are learning and achieving.

One often finds such schools in

unusual places. In the Calexico Unified School District along the California-Mexico border, 98 percent of kindergartners enter school knowing little or no English. By fourth grade, nearly all are in English-language classrooms. Nearly 80 percent of the district's students go on to college, 20 percent to four-year institutions - all this in the country with the lowest per-capita income in the state of California.

But, to our dismay, we have also seen far too many under-financed, overcrowded schools in which Latino children do not have access to current materials, computers, or even basic school supplies; schools with teachers who are unprepared or apathetic; schools in which Latino parents are deterred and even excluded from participating in their children's educa-

tion. We have seen school officials who, despite protestations to the contrary, apparently believe that Latino students are doomed to failure. In these schools, not surprisingly, Latino children are not learning. Their teachers hold them back at high rates. They have lower test scores and higher drop-out rates.

Successful schools like those in Calexico provide irrefutable proof that Latino children can meet the highest educational standards. They demonstrate that schools with sufficient resources and commitment can successfully educate students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and arrive speaking little or no English. Most importantly, they show that the crisis in Latino education is occurring not because Latino students are failing in

school, but because the schools are failing these students.

Currently, about three in 10 Latinos live below the poverty level. Even more dramatically, two in five Latino children are growing up poor. Latinos have a higher poverty rate than black or white Americans. While many other factors are involved, the single most important predictor of economic opportunity and poverty status in this society is educational attainment.

By and large, the education system gets an "F" in educating Latino children. Denial of full educational opportunity begins at a young age. Latinos are the least likely of all children to be included in early education programs. Less than 20 percent of Latino 3- and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool programs.

At the elementary and middle-school levels, Latino children are especially likely to score poorly on important achievement tests, particularly in reading and math.

By high school, 15 to 17-year-old Latinos are the most likely of all students to be below grade level and the least likely to graduate from high school and enter college.

Latinos are also half as likely as their non-Hispanic white peers to receive a bachelor's degree, and less than one-third as likely to earn an advanced degree. Once Latinos drop back, they are likely to fall further and further behind. There is no educational "safety net" in place.

Over the next several decades,

Latinos will constitute more than 40 percent of new entrants into the labor force. As the baby boomers retire, the health of the social Security and Medicare system - not to mention every other government service from defense and law enforcement to highways and national parks - increasingly will depend on the tax contributions of Latinos raised in our school system.

We shouldn't leave our country's economic future to chance. We need a purposeful approach to education - and opportunities for children of every race, ethnic and economic background.

Raul Yzaguirre is president of the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Latino advocacy group.



RICHARD LUCCHETTI (CENTER), A REPRESENTATIVE OF HISPANIC PARENTS ASSOCIATION IS JOINED WITH RON HERNDON (AT RIGHT) OF BLACK UNITED FRONT. BOTH PARTIES ALONG WITH CMAC HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW STANDARDS WHICH MEASURE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.)

## \$30,000 US West Grant Helps Miracle Build BRIDGES

It's been said that "all the world's a stage," so naturally, a good place to work on improving our world is under the footlight's glare. That's why Portland's Miracle Theatre Group will use a \$30,000 grant from the US WEST Foundation to take its BRIDGES program on the road. Through BRIDGES, Miracle Theatre boosts Hispanic participation in the arts while promoting cultural tolerance in communities all over the Northwest.

BRIDGES is an artist-in-residence program that teams professional actors with youths from rural communities that have limited or no performance arts venues. BRIDGES par-

ticipants spend two to three days getting arts training, rehearsals and finally, a chance to perform. Social events, such as pre-show picnics, provide further opportunities for diverse sectors of the community to interact and build greater tolerance.

The result? "The process of putting on a performance - working together toward a common goal - gives people from different cultures a chance to learn about each other," notes Teatro Milagro's Artistic Director, Danielle Malan. "Our program fosters tolerance. It also lets us build confidence and instills cultural pride in at-risk and minority youth."

BRIDGES debuted in 1997 with

pilot programs in four rural towns. The program was so successful in raising community involvement and cultural appreciation, Miracle decided to expand it. "The US WEST Foundation has provided more than a third of the money we need to double the number of communities we'll visit and reach hundreds more participants over the coming year," says José Eduardo González, co-founder and Executive Artistic Director for the Miracle Theatre Group.

Beginning in the fall, Miracle will bring BRIDGES to five states served by US WEST's local telephone service: Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah and Montana.

## Involucramiento De Los Padres En Las Escuelas Publicas

Porque es muy importante

La continua participación de los padres en la educación formal de sus hijos se ve, en la actualidad, como la base de los esfuerzos por reformar el sistema escolar. Esta opinión fue expresada por el Presidente Clinton en su presentación sobre el estado actual del país en 1994.

Resultados cuando los padres participan en la educación

Nosotros en las escuelas, al ver miles de casos, hemos podido determinar que la participación de los padres en la educación de sus hijos, afecta a los niños positivamente, mas esfuerzos académicos, actitud positiva respecto a la escuela, comportamiento positivo cuando tienen padres que se preocupan, alientan y se involucran en la educación formal.

Tengo que ir a la escuela para estar involucrado?

No hay definición precisa cuando hablamos de la involucración de los padres ni tampoco significa que hay que estar en la escuela para hacerlo. El padre involucrado puede estar en casa, fijándose que los niños hagan sus tareas, controlar el tiempo frente del televisor, dormir lo suficiente, llegar a la escuela a tiempo y una cantidad de oportunidades que nosotros como padres debemos de guiar a los niños a crecer con cuerpo sano y mente sana, también debemos de estar en comunicación con la escuela y los maestros.

**El personal de las escuelas y los padres necesitan trabajar juntos.**

Los padres que conocen a los maestros de sus hijos, apagan el televisor,

ayudan a sus hijos con sus tareas, los educan sobre lo correcto y lo incorrecto, son los padres que si hacen una diferencia.

**La Educación no es muy importante para los padres Hispanos**

El mito de que nosotros los Latinos preferimos el trabajo a la educación es solo eso "un mito" que a pesar del involucramiento de muchos padres seguira siendo la norma de muchas personas ya que es muy difícil borrar sus creencias que han sido el pensamiento de maestros, educadores, administradores y del público en general, nunca yo he visto, a un padre Hispano que diga, "ojala que mi lujo deje la escuela para que se meta a trabajar" al contrario, el sacrificio que muchos padres hacen para que los niños se graduen es tremendo.

## Inmigrantes Con Delitos Permaneceran En Carceles

La última parte de la reforma en inmigración será efectiva de ahora en adelante y todo inmigrante que cometa algún delito grave se considerará que lo deben de deportar hasta que cumpla su sentencia en los Estados Unidos, la ley de 1996 finalmente entrará en vigor.

Esta ley obligará al INS que encarcele a todos aquellos que tienen delitos graves y que afectará

a todos aquellos que son residentes legales y también a personas sin documentos.

El INS le ha suplicado al Congreso que les den dos años más de gracia para que puedan deportar a muchos criminales que no son violentos ni que posan un peligro para la comunidad, claramente esta ley impone en nosotros un gran dilema ya que nos quita la flexibilidad de decidir quien se

encarcela y quien puede salir libre bajo fianza, dijo un vocero del INS. Y añadió que sufren de poco espacio en las cárceles y que esta nueva ley les posa un gran dilema.

El comité en inmigración bajo la dirección del Republicano Sr. Lamar Smith-San Antonio por medio de un vocero acusa a la agencia del INS de falta de responsabilidad y ganas de implementar la ley.



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Piense: Su hijo es inteligente, saludable y encabeza la lista para ir a la universidad. Le encanta la trayectoria que su carrera ha tomado. Está haciendo muchas de las cosas

que planeó y hasta otras que no había planeado. Vivir la vida en plenitud es fácil cuando tiene una familia que lo respalda. American Family Insurance. Llame ahora mismo y platique con nuestros agentes amables.

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