

4 March 1980

Dr. Garcia:

I would like to ask a favor of you by reacting to the attached brief article. It contains some ideas I've had for a while.

Are the parallel Themes valid? Is it understandable? Are the implications too abstract to grasp?

I'm beginning a second manuscript on leveraging the Hispanic community's domestic political muscle just as the Jewish community has done with Israel and would find your reactions helpful.

I hope to be hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Leopoldo Garza

AGENDA

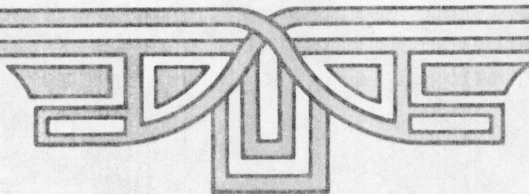
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Decade in the Sun



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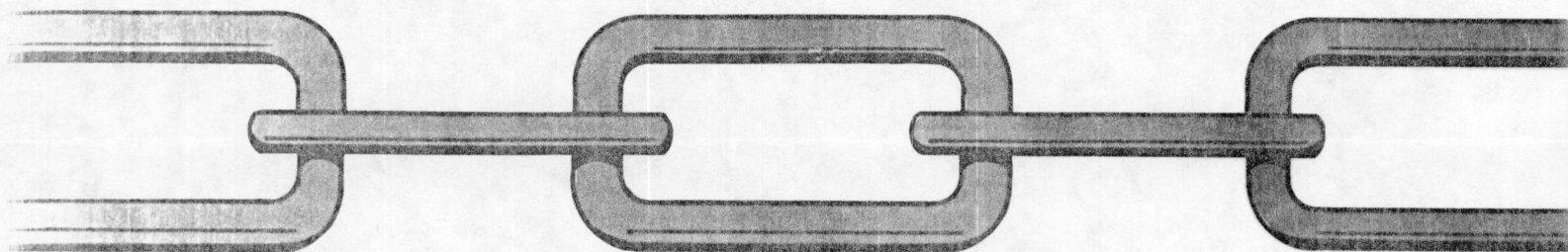
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Hispanic Americans Linking the Continents



by Leo Garza

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Heretofore, the Hispanic American community has had relatively little concern about U.S. foreign policy. Rather, its interests traditionally have centered on domestic issues such as employment, bilingual education, housing, data collection, and police brutality.

There is today a growing number of issues directly affecting the Hispanic community reaching beyond the borders of the continental United States. Undocumented immigration is one of those issues.

While domestic issues continue to be important, the Hispanic American community can begin to speak out and become involved in the determination of U.S. foreign policy, a formulation of interests reflecting principally our national security and economic well-being. How Hispanics respond to other competing national interests and assert their own interests abroad is really not a "foreign" issue at all. Just about everything from the price of gasoline that fuels our cars to the clothes we wear is affected by a complex set of social, economic, and political events around the globe. Because Hispanic Americans are wage earners, entrepreneurs, consumers, and taxpayers they have a stake both in the economic well-being of the United States and in the determination of U.S. foreign policy.

For example, U.S. economic ties with the developing world account for over one million jobs in the United States and cause over

one million acres of American farm land to be planted. Moreover, 82 percent of the total U.S. direct foreign investment in the developing world, some \$32 billion, is located in Latin America. This investment earns returns for the United States of nearly \$5 billion annually. In addition, Latin America purchases about \$20 billion in U.S. exports annually. Latin America also provides the United States 24 percent of its oil imports, 48 percent of its copper, 35 percent of its iron ore, and a host of food products.

These statistics represent a substantial and growing interdependence between the United States and the developing countries of the world. Moreover, the potential for still greater economic interchange, especially with Latin America, is enormous. The Hispanic American community has a beneficiary relationship in those economic ties in terms of potential employment creation for the next generation of Hispanic youth, future business opportunities for the Hispanic entrepreneur, and potential for greater communication among Hispanic subgroups.

There is, however, another darker side to this otherwise luminous relationship. Hispanics, as potential beneficiaries, should know that almost one-half of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean lives in poverty. Most countries in this region experience problems to one degree or another in meeting the basic human needs of their citizens, for example: a lagging agricultural

sector that cannot provide enough employment for its rural poor nor provide enough food supplies for the country, inadequate health care and education services reaching the urban and rural poor, explosive population growth rates overtaking most governments' abilities to provide any type of social services, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, and energy shortages forcing up inflation rates subjecting millions to an even lower standard of living. Thus, millions migrate northward beyond their borders in search of economic opportunity and betterment.

The Hispanic community can play a significant role in strengthening ties of understanding and betterment for all in this hemisphere. Moreover, there is a growing dialogue among the officially estimated 13 million Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central/South American, and Iberian Hispanic Americans about our foreign policy toward Latin America. This beginning dialogue represents a bridge among Hispanics and could lead to greater unity because it transcends regional subgroup differences. As Hispanics grow to become the largest minority group in the United States by the end of the century, the community's influence also will grow proportionately. The fact is that Hispanics need broader issues allowing for consensus among the various subgroups in order for the community to speak with unity and force.

Elected policy makers such as the President and the Congress respond to the sensitivities, needs, and concerns of their political constituencies. Currently, Hispanics make up at least five percent of the population in approximately 100 Congressional districts in the states of California, Texas, New York, Florida, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, and Utah. These are crucial states in deciding national elections. Thus, if the Hispanic community can speak with a united voice at the ballot box, it will begin to exercise considerable influence in both domestic and foreign policy.

How does the Hispanic American community, with over 13 million citizens from Los Angeles to San Juan, balance its many diverse interests and translate its concerns into policy? How does the Hispanic community balance its empathy for Hispanic nations in this hemisphere with U.S. national interests?

One way is to amplify the dialogue among Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central/South American, and Iberian Hispanic Americans on how foreign policy matters affect them and to speak out to policy makers such as the President and members of Congress. Representatives of Hispanic organizations have for many years conveyed the feelings and concerns of their national constituencies to these policy makers. Individual Hispanic citizens could supplement and strengthen their leaders' voices by writing their Congressional representatives and the President. The cumulative effects of the community speaking out in this fashion could be formidable.

As evidence of the growing influence of Hispanics, the State Department recently held a day-long conference with Hispanic American leaders during which the Secretary of State heard concerns about U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. This historic interchange was fruitful, and more importantly, marked an official recognition of the Hispanic community as a legitimate influence in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

Immigration

Hispanic Americans share a common language and culture with Latin America. Therefore, the natural inclination might begin by viewing various sides of U.S. relations with some Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially those closest to the United States. U.S. relations with Mexico have and continue to occupy a great deal of attention. Immigration, of all the issues at stake between the two countries, is perhaps the most emotionally sensitive and complex. Basically, the undocumented worker migrates north fleeing a desperate set of economic conditions. This person provides a beneficial service to the

U.S. economy by taking jobs that many U.S. citizens would not take. Often, this person is subjected to exploitation and deportation because of his or her illegal status. Rightfully, the Hispanic American community has spoken out against abusive treatment of undocumented workers and continues to advocate humane treatment on their behalf.

Does the Hispanic American community, however, have a clear picture of the positive and negative effects of this immigration, especially its long-term effects? For example, although there are no data available, are any Hispanic Americans being displaced from the labor market? Perhaps not, but this domestic implication of the immigration question should be viewed carefully, especially since Hispanic Americans have sustained an overall unemployment rate of approximately 10 percent over the past several years.

Another aspect of the immigration question worthy of community scrutiny is whether any negative aspects of immigration might diminish the community's growing influence. For example, is it possible that the Mexican government, unable to provide sufficient employment opportunities for its citizens, attempts to exploit Hispanic American empathy for the plight of undocumented workers in this country? Simultaneously, is it possible that Hispanic American empathy for the undocumented worker is perceived as disloyalty to the United States by others on this side of the border?

These examples of the domestic implications of a foreign policy question at first glance may appear to be far fetched. They represent extremes which community leaders and individual Hispanics should consider prudently in the future.

Puerto Rican Status

The status of Puerto Rico is another issue which all Hispanics should be aware of because of its implications. Although Puerto Rico is a commonwealth and all persons born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, many feel they are not truly part of the United States. As appears likely, the status question may arise again in 1981. If the majority of Puerto Rican islanders vote for statehood and if the Congress approves, this would mean that there would be at least six new members of the House of Representatives and two new Senators. Overnight, Hispanic representation in the Congress would double in size.

On the other hand, if the majority of islanders choose independence, and it is approved by the Congress, the result might possibly be that many islanders wanting to retain U.S. citizenship would migrate to the mainland. Conversely, some Hispanic Americans might emigrate to Puerto Rico to become citizens of the new island republic. Puerto Rican islanders might also choose to

retain their commonwealth, or "*estado libre asociado*" status, in which case, for example, they would continue not to pay federal taxes and not to have voting representation in the Congress.

Hispanic Americans should be aware of the many sides of this situation, one of the most important issues involving the second largest Hispanic American subgroup. Whatever the outcome on status, Hispanics could provide moral support for the eventual decision Puerto Rican islanders will face.

Cuban Relations

Another issue causing lively debate within the community is normalization of relations with Cuba. Among the many factors in the Havana-Moscow relationship is the fact that the Soviets have supported the Castro regime politically and economically for almost 20 years. Castro's vehement rhetoric against the United States at a recent world conference of nonaligned nations conveniently sidestepped the issue of the presence of at least 40,000 Cuban troops in Africa and leaves little doubt about the orientation to Moscow. Moreover, the presence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, plus the fact that Cuba's military arsenal far exceeds any other Latin American or Caribbean country's armaments, makes Cuban intentions suspect.

On balance, however, it appears to many that the majority of impoverished Cubans who remained on the island have benefited to some extent from the socialist redistribution of wealth. Almost a generation after the Cuban Revolution, Castro appears to have maintained the confidence and backing of most Cubans.

Some Hispanic Americans feel that armed intervention aimed at unseating Castro would be a solution to the problem of having a Soviet-oriented country 90 miles from the Florida shores. Other Hispanic Americans feel that some kind of formal diplomatic relations in the long run would serve the best interests of the United States in order to provide a forum for identifying issues and negotiating differences.

In summary, the three questions discussed above are examples of many-sided issues which the Hispanic American community could encounter as it begins to speak out in the foreign policy arena. Mindful of the poverty problems shaping the reality of existence for the majority in this hemisphere, Hispanics have much to gain by broadening their experience.

Hispanic participation in the foreign policy process as we enter the decade of the 1980s and beyond will be doubly beneficial: (1) to U.S. foreign policy because the concerns of 13 million Hispanic American citizens will be included, and (2) to the Hispanic American community because U.S. foreign policy will allow its various subgroups to dialogue on a broad subject of common interest. ◉