

Our Stories—Sí Se Puede

In our last newsletter, we began a section called “Our Stories—Sí Se Puede” and featured two persons. In this newsletter we continue sharing about persons who have made a significant difference in the lives of others. Sal Castro, even though now retired, continues to serve Latino youth. See related story in this issue.

—Valverde

SAL CASTRO

*Teacher and Counselor, retired
Los Angeles Unified School District*

You know that when people use words of powerful definition to describe people of mediocre accomplishments, those words soon lose their effect. Such is the case with the word, “legend.” When a true legend comes along, you hope the term does him or her justice. Sal Castro is a true legend in the most literal and real sense of the word.

Sal Castro was born and raised in East Los Angeles. He received his B.A. in Social Science from Los Angeles State College and did graduate work at U.C.L.A. I in Social Science, Education, and Political Science.

He served as Student Coordinator of the Southern California Region for the “Viva Kennedy” campaign in 1960. “He was a

Korean War-era veteran attending college on the G.I. Bill at the time. He was also a member of M.A.P.A. (Mexican-American Political Association), and founding member of A.M.A.E. (Association of Mexican American Educators)” (Munoz, Jr., Carlos, Youth, Identity, Power, 1989).

In 1963, while teaching at Belmont High in Los Angeles, where Chicano/Raza are the majority, he encouraged his Chicano students to run for student government. To conceal their agenda, they referred to this as the “Tortilla Movement.” When the results of the election came in, Chicanos won a landslide victory. “His involvement resulted in his being transferred to Lincoln High, another predominately Chicano/Raza student population school on the “Eastside” (Salazar, Ruben, Los Angeles Times, February 25, 1964).

On March 3, 1968, under the leadership and guidance of Sal Castro, Lincoln High School students and other students in East Los Angeles walked out because of the conditions that existed. Not only was this the first time Chicano students walked out, but also it was the “first major mass protest explicitly against racism under taken by Mexican Americans in the history of the United States” (Munoz, Jr., Carlos, Youth Identity, Power, 1989). By the time the historic “Blowouts” were over a week and a half later, more than 20,000 students from the five Eastside high schools had participated. “The Los Angeles walkouts called national attention to the Chicanos’ plight in education and encouraged other walkouts throughout the Southwest and Midwest” (Acuña, Rodolfo A., *Occupied America*, 1988).

Sal Castro and twelve other political activists from Los Angeles were indicted by the county Grand jury a few months after the protests (del Olmo, Frank, Los Angeles Times, June 17, 1983). Each of the “L.A. 13”, as they were called, faced a minimum sentence of 150 years in prison if found guilty. Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, presidential candidates in the 1968 Democratic Primary both contribut-

ed money to their defense fund. The indictments “were overturned in 1970 by the California Appeals Court which ruled that the felony indictments, if permitted to stand, would have a chilling effect on the right of free speech said the A.C.L.U.” (del Olmo, Frank, Los Angeles Times, June 17, 1983).

Sal Castro has been one of the greatest contributors towards the betterment of our community. He is featured in the 1996 PBS documentary “Chicano! Taking Back the Schools” and was invited to the White House by President Clinton in May 1996. While now officially retired, Sal Castro maintains the struggle for our people through his involvement in student leadership training in the Los Angeles Unified School District, as he has for the past forty years.



Second Report on Education Condition in SW States Forthcoming

In 2001, HBLI published its first report *Compromised Commitment* of the educational condition of Latinos in the five southwestern states it services, i.e., Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. Each state report was written by an HBLI Scholar from the respective state, with the exception of New Mexico. The contributing authors

are: Baltazar Acevedo, UT Brownsville, Roberto Haro, retired San Francisco SU, CA; Leonard Baca, U of Colorado; and Leroy Ortiz, U of New Mexico. Along with the five state reports, there is a national overview and a regional summary.

The HBLI scholars have been asked to update their respective reports in order to publish a second report. They have done so and we

are in the process of doing a regional summary and updating the national demographic data. It is anticipated that the second report to be titled, *The Public Obligation Unfulfilled*, will be available this fall semester.

It comes as no surprise to scholars, graduate students and most informed practitioners that the overall educational status of Latinos has

not changed significantly. Progress or gains have been off set by worsening economic conditions of states and the nation. In short, high school drop out rates remain high (30 to 40 percent) and are typically underestimated or reported numbers are suspect. The achievement gaps continue to persist between Latinos and

See *Commitment Forthcoming* on page 4

From the Executive Director

With the start of this fall semester, HBLI begins its eighth year of service. Over these years, we have remained true to our mission, but as most vibrant organizations, we have varied our approach. Like a good conjunto accordion player, we have squeezed in and stretched out so as to keep playing. We have attended to national affairs as well as local concerns. Our involvements have expanded our circle of associates and friends, from national foundations to community advocacy groups.

We are currently pressing in on the accordion, (our staff is smaller in number) but we are working on a GEAR-UP proposal (in partnership with some local Phoenix school districts) that, if funded in

2005, will allow us to expand our services. The GEAR-UP proposal is a natural outgrowth of the Lumina Foundation support of our Early Start to College program. From the stories in this issue of *Adelante*, you should be able to conclude that ESC has been well received and, as a result, we are being sought out by school districts and community agencies.

Staying true to our mission, we are planning now to convene two small but select groups of practitioners, academics, and public servants (all who during their careers have attempted to bring about significant change) so as to have dialogue about lessons learned over the past 30 years. The first group to be brought together (anticipat-

ed October/November and in Phoenix) will focus on the K-12 public schools and the second group will concentrate on higher education, anticipated in January 2005, place to be determined. We plan to make a summary of the proceedings available in print and on our web site. We will continue our Early Start to College Program without the parent component, due to reduced funds. (See related story in this issue for more information.) Also, we will be working on producing the second issue of our educational condition report. See related story in this issue.) We hope this Fall issue of *Adelante* conveys our progress, achievement and continued involvement in improving the education of Lati-



nos. As usual, I end with the customary invitation to our readers, please share ideas with us.

Leonard A. Valverde