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LA VOZ DE BRAZORIA COUNTY

El Periódico Más Interesante en el Condado

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Hispanic
Institute

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*Merry Christmas and
a Prosperous New Year*

NationalHispanicInstitute

**Crafting new thoughts, new strategies,
new leaders, for the 21st century Latino community**



**About
NHI**



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Mission

The National Hispanic Institute is both national and international in its work with high ability youth. Years ago, when NHI was first established, there was a realization that the organization had to be different and distinct from other organizations. Today its message continues to be as strong and exciting to the young people whose lives it touches as it is to the staff and hundreds of volunteers who annually conduct its work.

NHI does not focus on civil rights. It does not advance a reformist view of society or point

to existing social problems as the rally-call to civic involvement. It relies neither on government nor private charity to support its efforts. It does not depict Latinos as a community in urgent need in order to influence giving.

The National Hispanic Institute is an organization that values the talent of Latino youth, the potential they represent to the future of the Latino community and the extended sectors of American society, and provides private community settings through which they may become intellectually, culturally, and socially engaged in determining the roles they wish to play in shaping tomorrow's world.

High school youth who participate in NHI programs are intellectually challenged to alter old, strident views that have historically framed their understanding of Latinos in the past, present, and future.

- Instead of continuing the popularly held social notions of a people at the bottom of the human scale, students are presented with a new view, one of an energetic, dynamic, and powerful intertwined culture of global dimensions and potential.
- Instead of perceiving their educational development as being driven by the need to champion the cause downtrodden communities,

students develop an appreciation for the roles that intellectually, social, and cultural advancement play in guiding the equity, wealth, and skill-building trajectory of the future Latino community.

- Instead of viewing themselves as a collection of individuals from different nationalities, countries and backgrounds, students embrace the concept of a world-wide culture of Latinos tied together by a commonality of historical events, experiences, and language.
- Instead of being guided by an urgency to avoid causing potential harm to the American quality of life, students' calling to leadership is invigorated by the

excitement of supplying new strength, vigor, and promise to the American experience.

Ultimately, students not only sense a deep appreciation and value for the roles they are being asked to play in the future of the Latino community; they also realize the importance of making excellence at the highest levels possible a crucial element in their personal and professional development. These were the principal beliefs that guided the thinking and vision of the founders over two decades ago and continue to influence the work of the Institute today.

Some of the National Hispanic Institute's Programs

Young Leaders Conference

The YLC focuses on communication as a powerful tool of leadership.

The Young Leaders Conference (YLC) allows high school freshmen the opportunity to test and improve their written and verbal communication skills through organized discussions and debates about issues that impact today's Latino community. Students gain confidence in public speaking and an appreciation of communication as a powerful tool of leadership. Students gain experience creating content-rich arguments, communicating them through powerful, eloquent expression, and carefully analyzing the arguments presented by their peers.

After attending YLC, students benefit from:

- Expanded written and verbal communication skills
- Increased knowledge of advanced vocabulary
- Greater confidence in seeking out and taking on leadership roles
- Increased knowledge and awareness of issues vital to the 21st century Latino community

Mexico Language Project

The MLP focuses on the internationalization of perspectives and beliefs as key to 21st century leadership.

The MLP offers a month long (high school seniors), or six week long (college students), residential program on the campus of El Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM, or El Tec). Here students live, play, and study along side Mexican and international students while continuing the leadership discussion with senior NHI trainers.

After attending the MLP, students benefit from:

- Academic and practical guidance to understanding the Spanish language and Mexican culture
- Increased Spanish language writing and conversational skills
- First hand experiences with the extended global Latino community

National Hispanic Institute

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A Merry Christmas from La Voz de Brazoria County



Alfredo Santos c/s
Editor

As the Holiday Season continues, we would like to reflect on those things most important to us. In our business nothing could be more important or valuable than the trust and confidence our advertisers and our readership has placed in our newspaper.

The staff of *La Voz de Brazoria County* extends our warm wishes throughout the Holiday Season. We wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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New Education Blog

Today, the **Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options** launched its newest outreach project, the Daily Grito blog, which will be the only Internet source to broadcast the Latino perspective on education reform.

The blog is expected to be a valuable resource to Latinos, journalists, parents and the education reform community.

Hispanics are the second-largest student population in many states' school systems, but have the highest dropout rates of any groups in the nation. In often cases, Hispanics trail other ethnic groups on various state and national tests. The **National Center for Educational Statistics** reports that only 2 out of every 5 Hispanics 17 years old and over participate in adult education.

The blog will be updated daily with news and commentary. Two days out of the week will include special features: on Wednesdays, the Daily Grito will present interviews with influential leaders from the Latino and education reform communities and on Fridays the blog will feature a "round-up" of the week's best posts from other education reform blogs.

You can visit the Daily Grito at <http://endthecrisis.blogspot.com>.



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Letter to the Editor

Saludos Señor Santos:

Mi nombre es Carlos A Fernandez soy conductor de un programa radial con enfoque a la familia y al leer su periodico vi una puerta para compartir reflexiones a nuestra camunidad. Soy Dr en terapia de familia mi trabajo es sin fines de lucro permitame presentar un articulo y si es de su agrado le pido que me permita publicarlo en su periodico.

Atentamente
Dr. Carlos A Fernandez Ph.D

Estamos en tiempo de navidad epoca de reflexiones y buenos propocitos, regalos y tiempo familiar, desafortunadamente el consumismo nos alcanso y esto nos mantiene mas ocupados en los regalos y gastos de temoporada, que en la razon misma de la epoca (tiempo familiar) es triste como hoy gastamos lo que no se tiene para pagar a un precio muy caro lo que creiamos importante, me pregunto donde comprar y cuanto vale el abrazo de un padre la caricia de una madre la sonrisa de un bebe el calor de una mesa con la familia disfrutando, una familia funcional no surge de la casualidad es producto de mucho trabajo y compromiso de los que la componen es producto del amor mutuo la comprencion el perdon y la ausencia del egosentrismo, nuestras tradiciones son muy ricas y en tiempos como los que vivimos adquieren un valor incalculable, rescatemos la institucin mas antigua y mas importante de nuetra sociedad esto es la familia, aportemos el tesoro incalculable de nuestra cultura hispana a una sociedad materialista, asta la proxima su amigo y servidor carlos.

comentarios a eltabernaculo@msn.com y/o PoBox 2921 Avin Tx 77511

Flores Voted President of National Women's Political Caucus

Maria Luisa "Lulu" Flores of Austin, Texas was recently elected **President** of the **National Women's Political Caucus**.

This **Washington, D. C.** based organization is a multicultural, intergenerational, and multi-issue grassroots organization dedicated to increasing women's participation in the political process and creating a true women's political power base to achieve equality for all women.

Flores, who is an attorney and Of Counsel to **Hendler Law, P.C.** of **Austin, Texas** has been active in **Austin** politics for a long time and ran unsuccessfully for **Texas State Representative** in 2002.



She has served as Assistant Director for Intergovernmental Affairs of the **Railroad Commission of Texas** (1996-2001) and as Assistant Director for the Alternative Fuels Division of the **Railroad Commission of Texas** (1992-1996). Prior to working with the Railroad Commission, she was **Director for Governmental Affairs for the State Bar of Texas** from 1986-1991. **Lulu** was also Chief of Staff to the late **Irma Rangel**, first Hispanic woman elected to the **Texas House of Representatives**.

Lulu earned a B.A. with High Honors in Government from the **University of Texas at Austin** and earned her law degree from the **University of Texas School of Law**.

WHACHA SAY?

By Richard G. Santos

Being bilingual and bi-cultural has distinct advantages. The mind automatically and properly translates phrases from one language to another without relying on strict dictionary definitions. That is, that social, familial, regional or dialectic words or phrases are properly translated regardless of dictionary translations.

On the other hand, I truly enjoy throwing people off by giving dictionary-based answers to innocent and simple social questions. So, imagine all the Spanish you know comes from a dictionary when people ask the following questions. "Como amaneciste" which socially translates as "good morning" but according to the dictionary would be "how did you wake up this morning". I usually reply "de ladito planchando oreja" (on my side ironing the pillow with an ear).

To "como estas" (how are you) I usually answer "sentado" (sitting) or "parado" (standing) depending on my status at that particular moment. To "que andas haciendo" (what are you doing) I answer "ni tontos porque asi nacieron" (I am not making a fool out of anyone because they were born that way). To "como andas" (how are you or how have you been) which according to a dictionary translation would be "how do you walk" I answer "con los pies" (with my feet).

"Como te ha ido" (how have you been) is also asking "how has it gone for you". Thus I ask the person if he/she has several hours and if they want me to start at childhood or just since I moved to **Crystal City**. My answer to "como la pasaste" or "como la has pasado" (how did you pass the night/storm/etc.) depends on whether the person asking is a man or a woman, as well as level of acquaintance. This is due to the fact that according to the dictionary, the person is asking the listener "how did you pass it". The phrase leaves the person asking the question wide-open for all forms of replies.

Incidentally, I sometimes do the same thing in English as I give a social answer to a technical question. For instance, a waitress may ask, "can I get you anything" or "can I get you anything else" and I may say I want "a winning lottery ticket" or "a

wealthy widowed woman who resembles Xena Warrior Princess". This reminds me of someone in yankeeland who frequently told me not to say this or that. She blushed easily. hmmm

All kidding aside, the mind allows us to translate technical to social or social to technical questions and answers at ease. Consider the following, You are looking at a menu. The waitress is either softly tapping a foot or pretending her order book is a mini-drum as she taps a rhythm waiting for you to make up your mind. After looking at the menu, you tell her you "want a number four." You then tell her if you want it "well done, medium or rare." So, do you really expect the waitress to rush to the kitchen where the restaurant has an artist drawing numbers? And do you expect that Arabic or Roman "number four" to be carefully "well done"? Or are you expecting a drawing of the number so unique that an art critic would declare it to be "rare"?

No. The speaker did not actually mean what he/she said. Both the person ordering and the waitress listening were communicating in linguistic restaurant concepts. Had the speaker been a teacher in a classroom instructing elementary school children, then you could have expected "a number four well done". That is like a child coloring something without going outside the lines of the figure being colored. But note that coloring something without going outside the lines can be considered "rare".

Bottom line, being bilingual and bicultural, as well as being fluent or at least conversant in a language allows both speakers and listeners to communicate in a manner far beyond strict dictionary definitions. People who are mono-lingual (speaking one language) have problems translating social, technical or regional words and phrases. The same is true for people who speak a different dialect of the same language. That is, that both speaker and listener speak the same language but use different definitions and pronunciations for the same words. Moreover, sometimes a commonly used word in one geographic area can have a "socially unacceptable" meaning in a different area.



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Terra Firma — A Journey from Migrant Farm Labor to Neurosurgery

by
Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa

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*“You will spend the rest of your life working in the fields,” my cousin told me when I arrived in the **United States** in the mid-1980s. This fate indeed appeared likely: a 19-year-old illegal migrant farm worker, I had no English language skills and no dependable means of support. I had grown up in a small Mexican farming community, where I began working at my father’s gas station at the age of 5.*

Our family was poor, and we were subject to the diseases of poverty: my earliest memory is of my infant sister’s death from diarrhea when I was 3 years old. But my parents worked long hours and had always made enough money to feed us, until an economic crisis hit our country in the 1970s. Then they could no longer support the family, and although I trained to be a teacher, I could not put enough food on the table either.

Desperate for a livable income, I packed my few belongings and, with \$65 in my pocket, crossed the U.S. border illegally. The first time I hopped the fence into **California**, I was caught and sent back to **Mexico**, but I tried again and succeeded. I am not condoning illegal immigration; honestly, at the time, the law was far from the front of my mind. I was merely responding to the dream of a better life, the hope of escaping poverty so that one day I could return home triumphant.

Reality, however, posed a stark contrast to the dream. I spent long days in the fields picking fruits and vegetables, sleeping under leaky camper shells, eating anything I could get, with hands bloodied from pulling weeds —



the very same hands that today perform brain surgery.

My days as a farm worker taught me a great deal about economics, politics, and society. I learned that being illegal and

poor in a foreign country could be more painful than any poverty I had previously experienced. I learned that our society sometimes treats us differently depending on the places we have been and the education we have obtained. When my cousin told me I would never escape that life of poverty, I became determined to prove him wrong. I took night jobs as a janitor and subsequently as a welder that allowed me to attend a community college where I could learn English.

In 1989, while I was working for a railroad company as a welder and high-pressure valve specialist, I had an accident that caused me to reevaluate my life once again. I fell into a tank car that was used to

carry liquefied petroleum gas. My father was working at the same company. Hearing a coworker’s cry for help, he tried to get into the tank; fortunately, someone stopped him. It was my brother-in-law, **Ramon**, who climbed in and saved my life. He was taken out of the tank

BELOW: Place where Quinones crossed the border



ABOVE: Camper shell where Alfredo Quinones lived

unconscious but regained consciousness quickly. By the time I was rescued, my heart rate had slowed almost to zero, but I was resuscitated in time.

When I awoke, I saw a person dressed all in white and was flooded with a sense of security, confidence, and protection, knowing that a doctor was taking care of me. Although it was clear to me that our poverty and inability to speak English usually translated into suboptimal health care for my community, the moment I saw this physician at my bedside, I felt I had reached terra firma, that I had a guardian.

One of my mentors there convinced me, despite my skepticism, that I could go anywhere I wanted for medical school.

After community college, I was accepted at the **University of California, Berkeley**, where a combination of excellent mentorship, scholarships, and my own passion for math and science led me to research in the neurosciences. One of my mentors there convinced me, despite my skepticism, that I could go anywhere I wanted for medical school. Thanks to such support and encouragement, I eventually went to **Harvard Medical School**. As I pursued my own education, I became increasingly aware of the need and responsibility we have to educate our country's poor.

It is no secret that minority communities have the highest dropout rates and the lowest educational achievement levels in the country. The pathway to higher education and professional training programs is not "primed" for minority students.

In 1994, when I started medical school, members of minority groups made up about 18% of the U.S. population but accounted for only 3.7% of the faculty in U.S. medical schools. I



ABOVE: Alfredo Quinones in 1990 working as a welder in Stockton, California

was very fortunate to find outstanding minority role models, but though their quality was high, their numbers were low.

Given my background, perhaps it is not surprising that I did not discover the field of

neurosurgery until I was a medical student. I vividly remember when, in my third year of medical school, I first witnessed neurosurgeons peeling back the dura and exposing a real, live, throbbing human brain. I recall feeling absolute awe and humility — and an immediate and deep



ABOVE: Dr. Quinones walks with others in the hospital

recognition of the intimacy between a patient and a doctor.

That year, one of my professors strongly encouraged me to go into primary care, arguing that it was the best way for me to serve my Hispanic immigrant community.

Although I had initially intended to return to **Mexico** triumphant, I had since fallen in love with this country, and I soon found myself immersed in and committed to the betterment of U.S. society. With my sights set on neurosurgery after medical school, I followed my heart and instincts and have tried to contribute to my community and the larger society in my own way.

I see a career in academic medicine as an opportunity not only to improve our understanding and treatment of human diseases but also . . .

I see a career in academic medicine as an opportunity not only to improve our understanding and treatment of human diseases but also to provide leadership within medicine and support to future scientists, medical students, and physician scientists from minority and nonminority groups alike.

My grandmother was the medicine woman in the small town in rural **Mexico** where I grew up. As I have gotten older, I have come to recognize the crucial role she played not only in instilling in me the value of healing but also in determining the fate and future of others. She was my first role model, and throughout my life I have depended on the help of my mentors in pursuing my dreams.

Like many other illegal immigrants, I arrived in the United States able only to contemplate those dreams — I was not at that point on solid ground. From the fields of the **San Joaquin Valley** in



California to the field of neurosurgery, it has been quite a journey. Today, as a neurosurgeon and researcher, I am taking part in the larger journey of medicine, both caring for patients and conducting clinical and translational research on brain cancer that I hope will lead to innovative ways of fighting devastating disease. And as a citizen of the United States, I am also participating in the great journey of this country. For immigrants like me, this voyage still means the pursuit of a better life — and the opportunity to give back to society.

Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa is an assistant professor of neurosurgery and oncology and director of the brain-tumor stem-cell laboratory at **Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore**, and director of the brain-tumor program at the **Johns Hopkins Bayview** campus.



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Pew Hispanic Center

Chronicleing Latinos' diverse experiences in a changing America

English Usage Among Hispanics in the United States

Nearly all Hispanic adults born in the United States of immigrant parents report they are fluent in English. By contrast, only a small minority of their parents describe themselves as skilled English speakers. This finding of a dramatic increase in English-language ability from one generation of Hispanics to the next emerges from a new analysis of six **Pew Hispanic Center** surveys conducted this decade among a total of more than 14,000 Latino adults.

The surveys show that fewer than one-in-four (23%) Latino immigrants reports being able to speak English very well. However, fully 88% of their U.S.-born adult children report that they speak English very well. Among later generations of Hispanic adults, the figure rises to 94%. Reading ability in English shows a similar trend.

As fluency in English increases across generations, so, too, does the regular use of English by Hispanics, both at home and at work. For most immigrants, English is not the primary language they use in either setting. But for their grown children, it is.



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