



LALDEF

The Latin American
Legal Defense and
Education Fund

~ Newsletter ~

December 2007

P.O. Box 80
Princeton, NJ 08542

DEAR FRIENDS:

We at LALDEF are preparing for a busy season of work on behalf of the Latino Community in the Princeton Regional Area. We are thankful for your past support and eager to share with you some of the accomplishments of the last year

- On June 25 we successfully organized an Inaugural Immigration Reform Roundtable in partnership with the Princeton Center for Migration and Development and the New Jersey League of Women Voters. Twenty one experts, including academics, politicians, members of religious organizations, and representatives of advocacy groups with widely disparate positions came together in a climate of dialogue and tolerance to discuss avenues to resolve the immigration quandary. Despite their differences they identified six areas of common agreement. This was an unprecedented achievement that we hope to replicate in the future for the benefit of politicians and media personalities. A 28-minute DVD has since been produced and is being disseminated among public officials and media personalities. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the DVD at a discounted cost, please let us know.
- On September 29, on the occasion of a performance by the world acclaimed Ballet Folklórico de Mexico at the McCarter Theater, we hosted a reception bringing together immigrant children and their sponsors as they interacted with members of the dancing company in a climate of hospitality and mutual appreciation. The event was an inspiring show of solidarity in these times of difficulty for the immigrant community.
- Our *Bienvenida* Program continues to assist immigrants in their pursuit of citizenship or as they challenge abuses. When needed we have provided legal referrals, transportation, counseling and medications to the victims of violence.
- Under the direction of Moises Santizo, The Latino Reform Youth Council (LRYC) continues its stellar performance in support of the educational aspirations of Hispanic youngsters. We actively lobby for in-state tuition for striving college students in our community.
- On December 10th, LALDEF presented a testimony before Governor Corzine's Blue Ribbon Panel on Immigrant Policy. Included in this newsletter is a copy of that document.
- Finally, and most important, please read more about our Victim's Fund in this newsletter.

Will you help us to continue these and other efforts? We have been fully accredited by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as 501(C)3 organization. Your contribution to LALDEF is fully deductible.

In anticipation, I thank you profusely and welcome this opportunity to wish you and yours a glorious Holiday.

Patricia Fernández-Kelly
Chair



Immigrant Youngsters and Princeton University students pose during the reception organized by LALDEF after the performance of the Mexican Folklórico Ballet at the McCarter Theater on September 29.

CRIME VICTIMS FUND - AN URGENT APPEAL: LET US DOUBLE YOUR MONEY!

A year ago we launched a Crime Victims Fund to address the unmet needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Since that time LALDEF has assisted five victims. These are their stories:

L was kept as an indentured servant working from dawn to dusk at a local ranch and subjected to sexual abuse by her employer. After suffering a life-threatening horse kick to the head that left her partially paralyzed she continues to pursue justice through the courts and she survives with the help of her church and other community organizations. LALDEF has been assisting with her medication, dental care and legal fees.

A was viciously assaulted in Princeton late one night on his way back from his janitorial job. They stole his bike -his only means of transportation- and his week's wages. LALDEF has assisted with the legal fees to obtain a U-visa

D was subjected to severe domestic abuse, able to break off the relationship, but was left to fend for herself and her two children, one with hearing and learning disabilities. LALDEF paid legal fees to stay D's deportation to her home village where the abuser now lives..

Ten-year-old K was subjected to sexual assault by a school worker. LALDEF is paying the legal fees to obtain a U-visa and assisting obtain psychological therapy.

G and her child were taken into a women's shelter after escaping an abusive relationship. LALDEF provided her with a NJ Transit bus pass for several months to get around.

Our funding is running out. We need your help to continue helping these and other victims. A generous donor has agreed to match the first \$2,500 in donations, but the offer runs out at the end of the year. We need your help to rise to the challenge!

Please send a check with as generous a contribution as possible to:

LALDEF
PO BOX 80
PRINCETON NJ 08542

Write "Crime Victims Fund" in the memo line
For questions or to refer a victim, call (877) 452-5333

Thank you for your continuous support!



Founded in 2004

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www.laldef.org

Helping People Get the Help They Need

TESTIMONY

Governor's Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy
Patricia Fernández-Kelly, Ph.D.
Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF)
Monday, December 10, 2007

I am privileged to address you in my capacity as Chair of the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF); an organization created by volunteers and socially committed individuals in Princeton to address the needs of the growing Latino community in Central New Jersey. On behalf of the LALDEF Board of Trustees I thank you for this invaluable opportunity to lend voice to our organization and to express our serious concerns.

The formation of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigration Policy is a welcome step in the right direction. We have seen with alarm the failure of the federal government to implement rational and comprehensive immigration policy; a failure that has wrecked havoc at the local level giving rise to contradictory and ill-timed legislation that places immigrant families at risk of numerous abuses. Fears of deportation, even on the part of people here legally, has led many to take cover foregoing medical care and other services necessary to preserve the public good.

I am here to exhort those of you in a decision-making capacity to take a pro-active stance towards three decisive issues.

First, let's abandon the politics of denial, the illusion that thousands of immigrants, both legal and without authorization, will conveniently disappear. The total number of foreign-born persons increased 25 percent in New Jersey from 967,000 in 1990 to 1,208,000 in 2000. Many of these are professionals, individuals endowed with what former Labor Secretary, Robert Reich, calls symbolic skills but many more are unskilled and semiskilled workers who fill needs in construction, the hospitality industry, landscaping, agriculture, and other such sectors. Many have an ambiguous legal status or none at all. Recent estimates put the number of unauthorized foreign born persons in the State of New Jersey at 430,000. Many are part of families whose other members are legal residents or citizens. Many have children who were born in the U.S. None belong in a separate category of people—all are part of families and communities in our midst. They are everywhere among us. When the wellbeing of Latino residents of any kind is forsaken, so is the wellbeing of the community at large.

Second, the most vulnerable members of the Latino Community in our state are children, many of whose parents face harsh treatment, including deportation, from the immigration authorities. When a family is destroyed by separation at the altar of a failed immigration policy, irreparable harm is inflicted, whose unintended consequences we are only beginning to feel. When mothers and fathers are detained in front of their sons and daughters, placed in detention centers or deported, a new generation will turn their eyes away from the America of their dreams, the place of opportunity and fair play, to make their dashed aspirations dependent on new forms of camaraderie like those found in gangs. Their disillusionment will match our political blindness.

America the Great was created largely through the extension of opportunity and the benefits of inclusion. Through hostility and pettiness we will create America the Small. Congressman Tom Tancredo lashed out against immigrants by focusing on someone he thought was an emblematic representation of "criminal aliens," Jose Carranza, a 28-year old Peruvian who led the horrendous murder of several young students in Newark earlier this year. Tancredo failed to notice that Carranza arrived in this country at the age of 12. He is a singular product of this our country, of the limited opportunities in education and employment confronted by many new arrivals. America does not need more Jose Carranzas.

It is therefore imperative that the Governor's Office endorse and make possible greater access to legal, educational, and health related services for immigrants and their families. Disease, whether social or physical, knows no legal boundaries—it affects citizens as well as the foreign born. To promote health among Latinos is to promote health in the larger society.

Third, it is morally unacceptable as well as impractical to deny rights to children born abroad but who have grown up in the United States. Under present legislation those children are susceptible to deportation to countries that they cannot remember and where they do not belong. Between two and three million youngsters nationwide are in that category. They face limited opportunities in education and employment although they are as American as those born here. In 1982, in the case of Plyler vs Doe (457 U.S. 202), the nation's Supreme Court, firmly decided in favor of children's rights. Governor Corzine should do the same.

On behalf of LALDEF I encourage Governor Corzine to actively and decisively support educational and health-related rights for the children of immigrants. Increase access to medical services and in-state tuition for qualified immigrant youngsters eager to advance their education. Governor Corzine should encourage colleges and universities in our state to voluntarily extend in-state tuition for such youngsters without waiting for legislation to be enacted. Such a policy would represent no cost to the tax payer and make right what is presently an evident affront to justice and equality.

Immigrants, especially those without legal authorization, have become an easy target for political opportunists, fear mongers, and those who profit from racial discord. We are hopeful that through enlightened policies Governor Corzine will create an example for other states in the nation to emulate.