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Report to the Mayor

"The Minneapolis Hispanic Community:  
Needs, Concerns and Recommendations"

Submitted by:

Minneapolis Hispanic Advisory Committee

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. Employment and Income
- III. Affirmative Action
- IV. Health Care
- V. Housing
- VI. Police Issues
- VII. Latino Affairs Committee
- VIII. Appendix

## INTRODUCTION

According to recent studies, Latinos are the largest minority group in Minnesota (49,500).<sup>1</sup> The large increase in Latinos, particularly migrant farm-workers, has taken place fairly recently. As a result of poor educational background and few job skills, the average Minnesota Latino's income is far below that of the average white Minnesotan. Compounding the problem is the fact that a majority of Minnesota Latinos consider English their second language.

The 49,500 population figure cited above only reflects the number of permanent Minnesota residents. This figure swells by 10 to 15 thousand when Latino migrants from the Southwest come into the state to help harvest the crops. According to the former Minnesota Office of Migrant Affairs, approximately 5% of all migrants who come to Minnesota to harvest crops each year decide to settle permanently.

According to the 1970 Census, 67.4% of Minnesota's Latinos moved into their present home between 1965 and 1970. Of all the foreign born Latinos in Minnesota, 47.3% of them state that they migrated to Minnesota between the years 1960 and 1970.<sup>2</sup> It is very possible that the 1980 Census will show an even larger immigration ratio for this decade. Both recent and current trends appear to indicate that there is an increasing Latino migrant settlement in Minnesota.

The majority of Latinos in Minnesota live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area (78%).<sup>3</sup> St. Paul has the largest concentration of Latinos, but the Minneapolis population has grown significantly the past few years. Updated 1970 census data indicates that 11,661 Latinos now reside in Hennepin County, the great majority of whom reside in Minneapolis.<sup>4</sup>

The Latinos in Minneapolis are not situated in one identifiable Barrio, but are spread out all over the city. In this sense, Latinos in Minneapolis encounter many more difficulties than the St. Paul Latino community where residents can go for cultural nourishment and support. They must fend for themselves whether they can speak English or not. (According to 1970 Census data, 66.28% of Minneapolis Latinos consider Spanish as their native language).<sup>5</sup> There is very little bilingual social service or economic and educational aid designed for Latinos.

The purpose of this report is to indicate some of the needs and concerns of the Minneapolis Latino community and to provide the Mayor with recommendations for action in each of the areas addressed. It is the community's hope that the Mayor will carefully consider the proposals made in the report and that he work to implement them. In pointing out some of the concerns and needs of the Minneapolis Latino community, it is essential that we state what is happening to the Latino nationally, statewide and metrowide. Much of the income and employment data available on Latinos in the above geographical categories can be used to provide us with a good indication of the situation of Minneapolis Latinos. Some of the data herein may now be dated, but this only serves to further demonstrate the importance of governmental commitment to closely examine the needs and overall plight of Latinos in Minneapolis.

#### INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT:

In March of 1976, about four million persons of Spanish origin, 16 years old and over, were in the U. S. civilian labor force, and the unemployment rate of these persons (11%) was three percentage points higher than for the rest of the population.<sup>6</sup> Of all Latinos in the work force, 10% were employed as farm laborers. Overall, one out of every two Latinos had incomes below \$5,000. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all Mexican women had incomes at or below \$5,000 a year. The median income for Mexican men was \$6,500; \$2,800 for



Mexican women. Puerto Rican men had a median income of \$6,700, while Puerto Rican women had a median income of \$3,800.<sup>7</sup>

The median income for all U. S. families in 1975 was \$13,719. In that same year, the median income for Latino families was \$9,551. "A substantial proportion of Latino families were in the lower income brackets; about 16% of all Latino families had incomes below \$4,000 in 1975, but for all families in the U. S., the proportion with incomes below \$4,000 was 8%." <sup>8</sup> Of the 2.5 million Latino families in the U. S., about 630,000, or one of every four, were below the poverty level. One out of every two families supported by a Latina were in poverty in 1975.<sup>9</sup>

A Minnesota Latino, aged 16 - 21, who is not a high school graduate, would have an unemployment rate 320% higher than the national average for this age group. The Latino in Minnesota had an average annual income of \$3,000, with 39% making less than \$1,000 a year. The Latino was 1.34 times more likely to be below poverty status than the average white Minnesotan, while he was 1.5 time more likely to have an annual income less than half of the defined poverty level. The percentage of Latino families between the 1970 poverty level in Minnesota was 9.7%, while the overall Minnesota average was 8.2%.<sup>10</sup>

Statewide, the Latino unemployment rate for 1975 was estimated at 9.4%, while the 1975 unemployment rate for the state as a whole was 5.9%. The Latino in 1975 represented 33% more of the state's unemployed than the Latino proportion of the population would suggest. The Latino was 2.7 times more likely to be an unemployed laborer and 2.2 times more likely to be an unemployed service worker than the average Minnesotan in 1975. While the Metro area unemployment rate for whites was 6.7% in 1975, it was estimated at 10.7% for Latinos.<sup>11</sup>

State government hiring practices have not helped in alleviating Latino unemployment. As of January, 1976, only 91 out of 28,944 state government employees were Latino. Compared with the statewide Minnesota work force, Latino men were underrepresented by 57% and women by 37.7%. Of the four ethnic groups reported (Black, American Indian, White, Latino), Latino males had the lowest salaries of all males, while Latinas had the lowest salaries of all females."<sup>12</sup>

Even at the University of Minnesota, there were only 11 Latinos among 1,972 individuals at the associate and professor levels. No Latina has ever received tenure at the University. The University non-student work force increased from 15,809 in 1974-75, to 15,892 in 1975-76. However, the Latino work force decreased from 129 to 120 (7%) in that same period.<sup>13</sup>

The data related above paints a very clear picture of the economic plight of the Latino. There is little reason to suspect that same situation does not exist in Minneapolis. Despite the recent economic recovery, the rise in unemployment in August of 1977 was borne entirely by minority people. So the situation may even have worsened for Latinos. There is a critical need for more jobs and training for Latinos, especially our youth. We are characterized by low job skills, poor education and high unemployment. The training that could be made available should concentrate on teaching our people skills that are marketable.

We would encourage the Mayor to do all he can to make sure that Latinos are included in any city plan designed to train people for skilled jobs and address the unemployment problems of youth. We would also ask the Mayor to encourage the private sector to hire more Latinos. CETA training programs should be bilingual when the need arises, and Latinos should have input on any task force dealing with employment which the Mayor may appoint.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:

The current affirmative action policy, as it relates to Latinos in Minneapolis, has been a great failure. The data on the economic condition of Latinos nationally, statewide and metrowide indicates that strong action must be taken to address the needs of the Latino unemployed. The matter of the lack of representation in government must also be addressed.

In general, representation of minorities on planning organizations, committees or commissions has been minimal, but Latino representation has been non-existent. The tables in the appendix will clearly indicate the gravity of the problem.

We would propose that the Mayor direct the City Director of Affirmative Action to begin putting pressure on city agencies to employ more Latinos. We would also propose that the Mayor make an effort to appoint Latinos to his administration and appoint Latinos to important, decision-making city commissions and committees. If Latinos are ever to have a voice in decisions made that relate to their community, there must be a genuine effort by the Mayor to involve them in government. We would like the Mayor to:

1. Have a Latino affirmative action officer to make sure that the Latino community has representation with regard to any employment policy which would affect them.
2. Encourage private businesses to go beyond the letter of the law with regard to affirmative action hiring in the hiring of Latinos.
3. Make sure that all city departments have a bilingual staff person.



HEALTH CARE:

In this area our community is not being served as well by facilities in Minneapolis as it could be. There are language and cultural differences that need to be addressed and accounted for by Minneapolis health care centers. Many times Latino clients cannot convey adequately, because of the language barrier, what is wrong with them. If there were bilingual staff people available, this problem could be lessened.

Beyond the matter of language obstacles, cultural differences have to be respected by health care centers. In the case of trying to get Latinos to use physical, and particularly mental health facilities, bilingual/bicultural (home health aides) outreach workers could be employed. Bilingual/bicultural staff should be important additions to health centers that serve the Latino community.

Cutting health care costs is another important proposal we hope you will consider. Health costs are intolerably high, so much so that many Latinos only go to see a doctor when they are very ill. Its terribly important that the Mayor of Minneapolis create a task force that will look into the matter of high health care costs, hopefully finding a way to bring them down. We expect the Latino community to be represented on such a task force.

HOUSING:

Latinos are having trouble finding low rent housing in Minneapolis. We realize that there is a shortage of housing generally throughout the Twin Cities. However, we feel that the Mayor and the City Council should take a strong stand in pushing to create more housing for the low and middle income. We also propose that the Mayor and the City Council encourage H.U.D. to create long-term, low payment loans for the low and middle income so that they may have the opportunity to buy a home.

H.U.D. offices should employ bilingual/bicultural personnel so that Latino clients will not be confused by applications and printed regulations. The rules and regulations governing who can live in subsidized housing should be reviewed so that low and middle income Latinos have the opportunity to live in it. This would also mean that more low rent subsidized housing would have to be created. We hope that the Mayor would strongly push to have more of this type of housing built in Minneapolis. We would also hope that Latinos would be appointed to any advisory committee on housing that the Mayor would choose to create.

POLICE ISSUES:

One of the main problems that exists is the lack of an adequate and fair inquiry into citizen complaints against police. The police internal affairs unit rarely takes action against an officer, and this policy of non-action may give police officers and the community the impression that police officers may take any action they please against a citizen.

The Latino community has been concerned with the difficulties that Black and Native American communities have experienced with police. We would encourage the Mayor to work with the Minneapolis Latino community in a joint effort to develop a mechanism for the effective handling of civilian complaints against police. We would propose either a citizen review board, an ombudsman or a police community commission. Whatever system is adopted, we would expect the Latino community to be fully represented.

We would have the Mayor encourage the police chief to hire more Latinos for the police force. We would also suggest that the Department require sensitivity training for police officers on a continual basis.

LATINO AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

We propose that the Mayor appoint a Latino Affairs Committee for the City of Minneapolis that would serve in an advisory role to the Mayor and the Council. The Committee would keep the Mayor and the Council abreast of Latino concerns and needs and would offer proposals on how to deal with those concerns and needs. This is a crucial part of this package of proposals. Giving Latinos constant access to the Mayor is critically important to the community.

We further recommend that the Mayor appoint a task force from the Latino Advisory Committee to do a needs assessment of the Minneapolis Latino community. The task force should have at its disposal adequate staff to do the field work and research necessary. Staffing could be obtained by way of CETA employment and making use of University of Minnesota graduate students in social work. The report made by the task force would be reviewed and then formally presented to the Mayor.

Hopefully, with the assistance of the Mayor, the Advisory Committee could acquire a building that would serve as a cultural center for Latinos in Minneapolis. The Mayor could be helpful in locating city owned buildings that are not currently being used.

We also recommend that the Mayor hire a permanent Latino staff person who would serve as a liaison between the city government and the Minneapolis Latino community.