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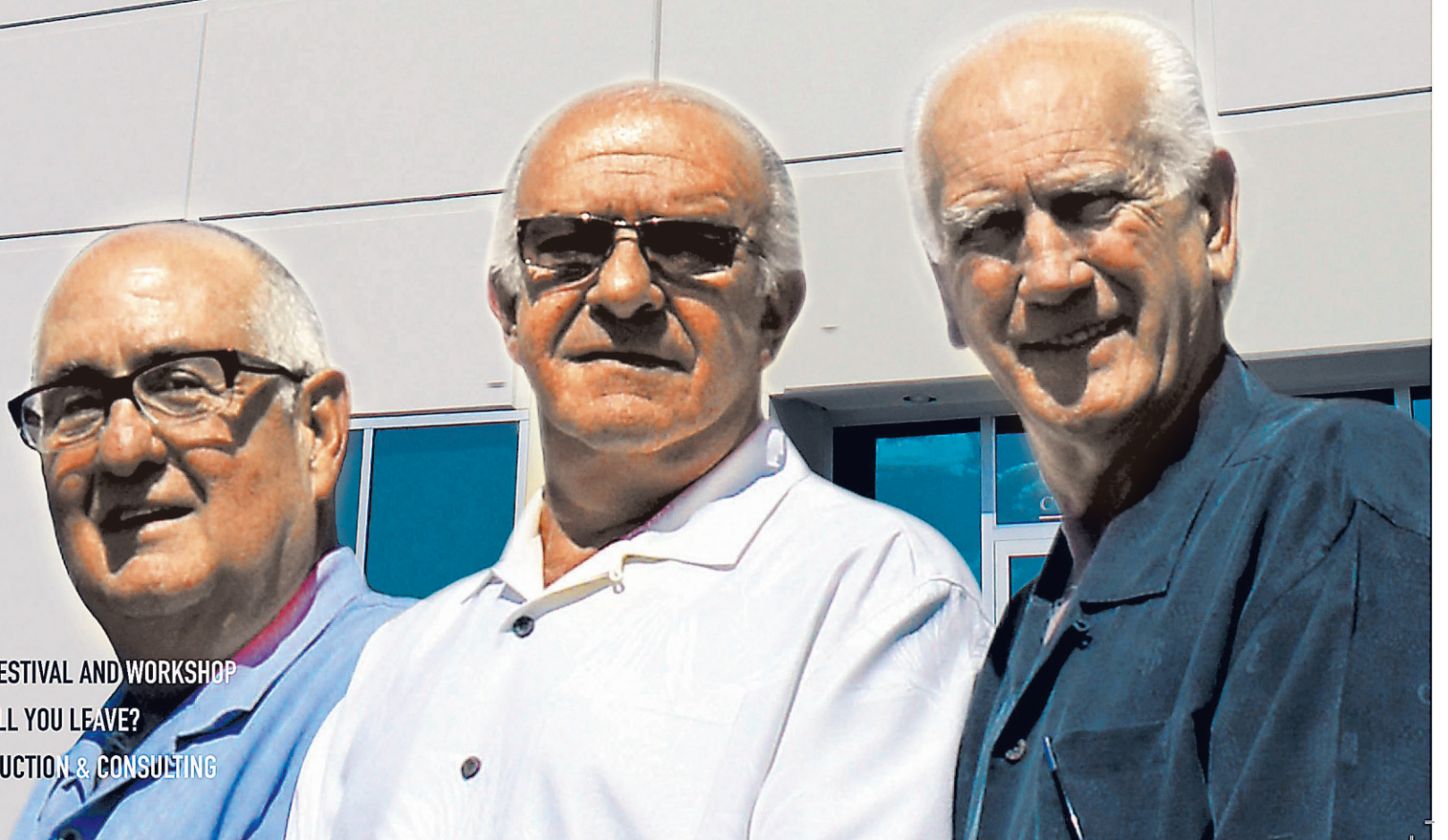


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AN AMERICAN  
SUCCESS STORY

 **JS PRODUCTS, INC.**



## INSIDE

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All editorial content is prepared by the Latin Chamber of Commerce, which is solely responsible for such content.

# JS Products Inc. is a true American success story

*Longtime friends tool company into multinational corporation*

By DAN TAFOYA and TOM RODRIGUEZ

Two men — one American born, the other Cuban born — met while working for Sears Roebuck and Co. in California in 1968. We are certain that neither one of them knew that day that a lifelong partnership would be formed.

The two became friends and as the saying goes, the rest is history. And what a great history these men have created. Through the years, both men golfed and vacationed together with their families and they also partnered in various small business ventures. As the years went on they both climbed up the Sears' corporate ladder holding several executive positions. One stayed with Sears for 16 years and the other for 25 years. For many individuals that kind of career progression would have constituted a full and successful career, but not for these two unique men.

In 1981, Juan Mora and his friend, Steve Brantley, patented a new specialty lighting device used by technicians in various industries to provide better lighting on the work at hand. They formed a company called Pan American Industries and for the next five years marketed and distributed their one product. They also engaged the services of Joe Zorrilla, a friend and attorney, to help them organize their business. Collectively, they became known as the "Three Amigos."

In 1986, the group sold Pan American Industries and, in November of that year, established JS Products Inc. JS Products is headquartered in Las Vegas. The company was founded to develop, manufacture, market and distribute specialty tools and equipment to the professional automotive and industrial markets; it currently has 90 U.S.-based



In the warehouse at JS Products Inc., from left, Katherine Loyola, Juan Mora, Vicenta Mendoza and Sebastian Olivieri look over orders and designs for new products.

employees and 90 China-based employees. The distribution of their products is worldwide.

Remarkably, Mora, Brantley and Zorrilla have remained close friends for the past 44 years and 35 years, respectively, and continue to run JS Products with a talented group of supporting leaders such as Chief Executive Officer Rick Sawyer, a longtime friend and former vice president and general merchandise manager of Sears Automotive Group with 38 years of experience with Sears Corp.; Chief Financial Officer Roger Wisenauer with nine years of experience with Arthur Young and seven years of experience with Bekins Van Lines and who is now in his 16th year with JS Products; and Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing Johnny Mora, who has been with JS Products for 13 years and is a proud graduate of the Univer-

sity of Nevada, Las Vegas. Impressively, including Mora and Brantley, JS Products has 176 years of Sears experience among its personnel.

Today, JS Products has blossomed into a multinational corporation that markets more than 4,000 products. JS Products is an industry leader in providing customers with innovative products in five business segments including automotive back shop, industrial, OEM (original equipment manufacturer) and retail. Some of its key customers are Ace Hardware, Advanced Auto, Cornwell Quality Tools, Costco, Honda, Toyota, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Lawson, Lowe's, Mac Tools, Matco Tools, McMaster Car, MSC, Pepboys, PTS, Sears back shop, Snap-on Tools, Stanley and Wal-Mart

► SEE JS PRODUCTS PAGE 15  
*Quality, customer service reign supreme*

## ON THE COVER

Longtime friends, from left, Joe Zorrilla, Juan Mora and Stephen L. Brantley head JS Products Inc. and are often referred to as the "Three Amigos."





A performance by the Clark County School District's mariachi and ballet folklorico students was among the highlights of the Mariachi Festival and Workshop at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts.

# Mariachi fest debuts at Smith Center

By TOM RODRIGUEZ

On Friday evening, May 18, 2012, before a sold-out house at the beautiful Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts, the Latin Chamber of Commerce of Nevada presented the world-renowned Mariachi Cobre, direct from Walt Disney World's Epcot theme park; our very own Clark County School District mariachi and ballet folklorico students, and the Clark High School Philharmonic Orchestra, who treated attendees to a remarkable evening of professional artistry, student participation and orchestral performance.

At the heart of this year's Mariachi Festival and Workshop was Mariachi Cobre. Since its founding in 1971, Mariachi Cobre has played a key role in the preservation and dissemination of Mexico's most representative musical folk art form. They are also responsible for popularizing the educational/festival format that has come to be known as a Mariachi Conference. This concept has spread rapidly throughout the United States and Mexico and, as a result, the importance and popularity of these festivals and conferences has caused an upsurge of dozens of youth mariachis

and heightened the level of study and appreciation of this musical art form.

Back in 2004, Mariachi Cobre came to Las Vegas to perform at the first Mariachi Festival and Workshop. While here, they worked with students from the Clark County School District's budding mariachi program, which began in 2002 with 250 students from four schools. Today in 2012, on the 10th anniversary of the program, the CCSD mariachi program boasts about 3,000 students from 16 middle schools and high schools.

Randy Carrillo, a co-founder of Mariachi Cobre and a workshop instructor, said, "Certain guys in the group are accredited educators and they get a big charge out of the educational work we do with students. Other guys love performing and they get a big kick out of being on stage and performing with symphony orchestras. Me personally, I love performing but I also love being able to teach a classroom full of young people, sharing with them what knowledge I have and what experiences I have had. It's satisfaction on all levels."

Carrillo went on to say, "We cover a lot of bases. At a good music program in public schools, middle schools, high

school or at the university level, you learn that music relates to other art, to cultural events, political events, it's all intertwined. Any music program worth its salt will cover all of these things. Music is culture. Along the way, students learn a lot about Mexican and Latin-American culture as they are educated on the context and history behind the songs they sing."

In 2002, Marcia Neel, the school district's coordinator of secondary fine arts, with the support of School Board Trustee Larry Mason recruited Javier Trujillo, an alumni of Mariachi Cobre, who at the time was running a high school mariachi program in Tucson, Ariz., to start up a mariachi program in the Clark County School District. Neel, who retired in 2007, said that, "Clark County has the largest mariachi program in the United States, without a doubt. It's growing like crazy in the big urban districts and in some rural communities as well."

Neel said she recently advised Nashville, Tenn., school district, which is starting mariachi, hip-hop and bluegrass

► SEE **MARIACHI** PAGE 17

*Fourteen schools participate*

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## COMUNICACIÓN

### Senior Editor | Writer

Daniel J. Tafoya

### Editor | Writer

Tom Rodriguez

### Photographer

Edward Dorville

### Published by Latin Chamber of Commerce, Nevada, Inc.

300 N. 13th St., Las Vegas NV 89101

Phone: 385-7367 | FAX: 385-2614

Email: info@lvcc.com

Web: www.lvcc.com



# Chamber remembers Latino legend Manny Cortez

By TOM RODRIGUEZ

*Editor's note: Manny Cortez had a long association with the Latin Chamber of Commerce, dating back to its establishment in 1975. Throughout the years, he was a keynote speaker at many of the Chamber's luncheons and banquets. In 1986, Cortez was awarded the Outstanding Hispanic of the Year Award. In 1991, I included Cortez in my book, "Hispanic Profiles in Nevada History: 1829-1991." In that book, I wrote, "Manny Cortez has left his mark on Las Vegas and for that he will never be forgotten." I will always remember how much he loved this city. This was his home for more than 60 years and he never wanted to be anywhere else. Now, he will be here forever — in the spring, summer, fall and winter — in the only place he called home.*

Manuel "Manny" Cortez was born on April 29, 1939, in Las Cruces, N.M., the oldest of two children born to Edward Cortez, a baker, and the former Mary Tapia, a retailer. In 1944, before Cortez was old enough to start grade school, the Cortez family moved to Las Vegas. Cortez later recalled, "My dad came through here on a troop train when he was in the military, and he decided to

come back. He was a baker by trade and a horse player by profession. That's why he always wanted to come to Las Vegas, and eventually he did. He packed up the family, sold the family business and moved here."

As a youngster, Cortez attended St. Joseph's grade school in Las Vegas and then went on to graduate from Las Vegas High School. When he was in his late teens, Cortez worked as a parking attendant at several Las Vegas hotels. Cortez said that the Las Vegas of his childhood did not resemble the international tourist destination that it is today.

"When I was growing up, the town revolved around the downtown area. That is where the big casinos were, the movie theaters, the drug stores and the jewelry stores. It was a good town to live in because it wasn't a cosmopolitan town in the true sense of the word. It was also a great town to live in because of the education you got in terms of real life."

In 1956, Cortez joined the Army and served on active duty in Korea for 16 months. Cortez returned to Las Vegas in 1959 and promptly enrolled at Nevada Southern University, now the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he attended school on the GI Bill from 1960 to 1963.

In 1963, Cortez married Joanna Marie Musso.

For the next 10 years, Cortez worked at jobs as a polygraph examiner in the Clark County Public Defender's Office and as an investigator in the Clark County District Attorney's Office. In 1973, Governor Mike O'Callaghan appointed him to be the administrator of the Nevada Taxi Authority, a position he held until 1976, the year that he ran for and was elected to the board of Clark County Commission.

Cortez was elected to the County Commission in 1976 and served four terms. During the course of his 16 years on the commission, Cortez served on the following important committees and boards, and in many positions including chairman and vice chairman of the board of county commissioners; chairman, Clark County Liquor and Gaming Licensing Board; vice chairman, University Medical Center Board of Trustees; chairman and vice chairman, Clark County Sanitation District Board of Directors; vice chairman, Las Vegas Valley Water District Board of Directors; vice chair-



Manuel "Manny" Cortez, who died in June 2006, left his mark on the Las Vegas Valley through his service on the Clark County Commission and Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

► SEE CORTEZ PAGE 6

*Insights helped shape tourism in Las Vegas*



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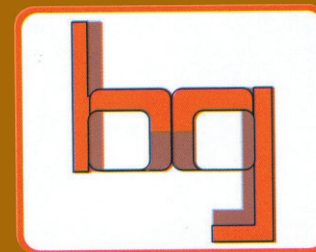
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## ► CORTEZ: Insights helped shape tourism in Las Vegas

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

man, Kyle Canyon Water District Board of Trustees; chairman, Strip Traffic Congestion Committee; vice chairman, Metropolitan Police Committee on Fiscal Affairs; and chairman, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. Cortez served on the LVCVA board of directors from 1983 to 1984, and as its chairman from 1985 to 1990.

Cortez said that one of the highlights of his time on the County Commission was the county's decision to expand McCarran International Airport, even when the commission was criticized for building a Taj Mahal. Cortez also was on the commission when the resort town of Laughlin began its tremendous growth on the Nevada-side of the Colorado River. Of his involvement, Cortez said "There are only a handful of people in my profession that can say they helped to give birth to a new city. I want to say that I was in it at the beginning and helped guide it."

On Jan. 7, 1991, Cortez resigned his seat on the Clark County Commission, an event covered widely by the local media. On the day he announced his resignation, Commissioner Karen Hayes said, "Manny had a real talent for looking at a situation and grasping exactly what the problem was. Manny was never afraid to bite the bullet. If there was a motion some of us were hesitant to make, Manny would make it."

Then-mayor Ron Lurie from the city of Las Vegas said, "Manny kind of kept everything together. They (the commissioners) listened to him and respected his opinion."

Pat Shalmy, the longtime county manager, said this: "He and Bob Broadbent (the late former county commissioner) were two of the best I've ever seen."

Billy Vassiliadis, a well-known political consultant, said, "Manny was one of those people that worked pretty hard to bring people together rather than divide them."

Upon leaving, Cortez said that he was "eager to retreat from the public eye" and that he did not expect to run again for public office.

On July 2, 1991, Cortez began his appointment as president of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. When Cortez took over the convention authority, Las Vegas had 73,730 hotel and motel rooms and two major convention centers. That year, Las Vegas hosted about 21.3 million visitors. When he left the LVCVA in July of 2004, the visitor count had grown to more than 37 million and the number of hotel rooms in the valley nearly doubled, rising from 73,730 to about 130,000. According to Trade Show



Manuel "Manny" Cortez and his family, from left, wife Joanna Cortez, daughter and Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and son-in-law Paul Masto visit the elementary school named in his honor.

Executive magazine, the number of convention delegates in Las Vegas grew from 1.8 million in 1991 to 5.7 million in 2003.

In 1995, after only four years on the job, Travel Agent magazine named Cortez one of its People of the Year. Cortez was the only American named on the list, who, the magazine said, had "made the strongest impact on worldwide tourism." The others on the list were from Great Britain, Jamaica, South Korea, Mexico, Tahiti and Israel. The magazine also said that Cortez "helped shape the city from the bottom up" in his positions as the taxicab authority administrator, as a Clark County commissioner and as the chairman and president of the convention authority.

In February 1996, Cortez provided some brilliant insights into the travel and tourism industry — insights that foretold what was to occur in Las Vegas during the Great Recession of 2008. Cortez said, "It's a competitive industry and even Las Vegas can't afford to rest on its laurels. That's particularly true when courting the travel and tourism industry. While the city hosts more than 200 trade shows a year, that's only about 13 percent of our business. The bulk of our business really is tourism and travel — the free and independent traveler that comes on his own. That is not a piece of business that you can take for granted. The tour and travel business is a very fragile industry. By that, I mean that it's affected by the economy. Any downturn in the economy — anything that affects household income — affects travel because travel is the first thing they will cut back on."

Cortez went on to say, "The key to our future is not only being able to provide

entertainment and the ability to gamble, but also to make sure prices are competitive. We're the best bargain in the world right now, and we need to be conscious of that and need to be sure we remain the best bargain. Room rates are low, meals are inexpensive and entertainment is first-class, and that's really the key to our future."

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Cortez expertly oversaw the marketing strategy that helped Las Vegas recover quickly from the U.S. economic slowdown that followed. The strategy produced the now famous "what happens here, stays here" tag line, that even today continues to entice tourists to visit. In 2003, Cortez stirred some controversy when he wisely spoke out against a Nevada Commission on Tourism advertising campaign to call Las Vegas Sin City.

"I've lived here for 50 years and have sold this city for 40, and I can say we've never used that kind of terminology in our ads."

As a result, the ad was never used.

On May 4, 2004, Cortez announced his decision to resign his position as the president/CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. At age 65, Cortez felt that it was time to go and do other things. In his resignation letter to the LVCVA board, he quoted a line from "The Gambler," the popular Kenny Rogers song. "You've got to know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em," he said.

He was also quoted saying, "It's time to move on. We've accomplished just about everything we've wanted to accomplish. Business is back, times are good. It's time to move on."

Upon his announcement, Mayor Oscar

Goodman said, "There comes a time in people's lives when they want to leave at the top, and that's what Manny is doing."

Paul Christensen, a former Clark County Commissioner, said, "Putting Manny Cortez in charge of the convention authority was one of the better moves we ever made. He never told you he would do something that he wouldn't back up."

In June 2005, Cortez opened a political and business consulting firm and busied himself helping his daughter, Catherine, in her race for attorney general for the state of Nevada, a race she went on to win shortly after Cortez's death.

Cortez also kept busy by serving on the boards of directors for Southwest Gas and St. Rose Dominican Hospitals. Cortez was past president of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Las Vegas and also served on the boards of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Southern Nevada and Girls and Boys Town-Nevada.

Cortez also spent time visiting the Manuel J. Cortez Elementary School, named in his honor in March 1999, and the Academy of Travel and Tourism magnet school that he helped to develop at Valley High School in 1995.

On Sunday, June 18, 2006, a little more than two years since his retirement, Manny Cortez died suddenly at his home from a heart attack. He was 67 years old. The reaction to Cortez's death was one of shock and almost immediately the accolades began to pour in.

His longtime friend Vassiliadis summed up Cortez's remarkable life in this way, "I can't think of a lot of things Manny didn't do passionately or with gusto. I don't think Manny was cheated by one day of his life in his 67 years. He loved Las Vegas and he loved Nevada. I know it's corny and people say that about a lot of people, but it was true with him. He played such a critical role in what we have become today. He came along at a time when Clark County needed great leadership, when we needed someone strong and very decisive. He was incredibly determined, very smart and a man of great vision, whether it was his belief in the convention center or whether it was his support for improving transportation or his support of strong law enforcement, I don't know that we have ever had a better, more rounded leader in this community than Manny Cortez."

Christensen said "I am sick that he is gone. He was a master of give and take, a savvy politician and administrator. He just knew how to get to the problem and solve the problem."

► SEE CORTEZ PAGE 17  
*Legacy long lasting*



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# New Teachers of Year bring exuberance to students

By PENNY RAMOS-BENNETT

It is not surprising that a local neighborhood boy, Daniel Cano, teaches at a school close to the neighborhood where he grew up. He wanted to do what his mother suggested, “give back to the community.”

He thought he would become a firefighter, but he changed course mid-stream in his education at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas after working as an instructional assistant at Jay W. Jeffers Elementary School. Cano was bitten by the education bug and has never looked back.

Aptly, he was nominated as a New Teacher of the Year in his first year of teaching. He was in good standing with 31 other teachers who were also nominated but he pulled ahead to be one of seven who were chosen for the honor.

A bilingual male superstar teacher is a true gift to a school like Jeffers, where more than 90 percent of the student population is Hispanic and more than 71 percent are limited English language proficient. Cano is a role model to students and a welcomed confidant to parents who struggle with how to support their children’s education. Surrounded

by his students, it is obvious that he wants to educate them not only in their studies but also with life skills.

His twin brother, Miguel, also recently finished his studies in education and wants to be a teacher just like his younger brother. Miguel made sure to share with me that he was the older of the two. As they prepared together to take a class on a field trip to the Las Vegas Natural History Museum, both brothers smiled as they answered questions for the inquisitive students in the classroom.

Speaking as a mother, I am sure their mother is proud that her two sons chose to give back to the community by becoming teachers.

Another bright Latina shining star is C.T. Sewell Elementary School teacher Judith Alfaro. She, too, was honored as a New Teacher of the Year. Surprised by special visitors to her classroom, she received the information on her selection surrounded by her cheering students.

“I will never forget that day,” Alfaro said.

She did some of her observation hours at Sewell and reminisced about how she felt that the staff was friendly and how she enjoyed the outdoor classroom halls



C.T. Sewell Elementary School first-grade teacher Judith Alfaro rewards students for positive behaviors. “Manners take a student a long way,” Alfaro says.



Third-grade teacher Daniel Cano of Jay W. Jeffers Elementary School works at the Las Vegas school near the neighborhood where he grew up.

that made her feel more connected to nature. This all-star teacher also is married to a teacher. Education seems to run in her family, too.

While meeting with Alfaro and her students, I observed her rewarding them for the positive behaviors they displayed in class during instruction time. It was clear why this talented elementary school teacher was honored. Her class was eager to participate and were respectful to their classmates.

“Manners take a student a long way,” Alfaro said. “They can make people notice you.”

Students sometimes need additional support, and Alfaro shared that the business community can play a role in that.

“Not just money but volunteers are also needed,” Alfaro said.

She wants the business community to see how great the students she works with really are. This is especially important in this economy. With the budget hardships affecting the school district, Alfaro shared her views on the broader

discussion of community support.

“It is a sad situation that schools and teachers don’t get the support we should. These kids can grow up to do great things. But if we are cutting teachers and staff, what will happen to these kids? As a teacher, you want to make sure you reach all students — that they grow as they should. But it is hard. We, as a community, need to prioritize education. The fact that we don’t do it is sad, but I have a job to do and it is job that I love.”

She smiled as she expressed her love for her job, and that, too, was crystal clear.

## BUDGET WOES WEIGH ON TEACHERS

While the love of one’s job and recognition for doing it well are important, very often that is not enough. Employee evaluations in determining whether a teacher will be let go have become a po-

► SEE TEACHERS PAGE 17

*Budget cuts may eliminate brightest teachers*



# Rising Latino stars show pride in heritage, make difference

By TOM RODRIGUEZ

*Editor's note: The next generation of Latino leaders is already making a difference throughout Southern Nevada. With pride in their rich Latino heritage and using their education and ingenuity, they are taking steps to prepare themselves to assume future leadership roles in Las Vegas and throughout the state of Nevada.*

## NELSON ARAUJO

Nelson Araujo was born in Las Vegas to Salvadorean immigrants. After a divorce by his parents, Nelson was raised by a single mother, who dedicated her life to provide for her family. Araujo says that it was because of his mother's tenacity and hard work that he was inspired to be successful.

Like many Latinos, Araujo became the first person in his family to graduate from high school in 2006. After high school, Araujo enrolled at the Univer-



Nelson Araujo

sity of Nevada, Las Vegas and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in political communication studies and a master's degree in public administration.

Araujo also was fortunate to work for U.S. Sen. Harry Reid for five years, beginning as an intern and ending as the Senate Majority Leader's lead staff person on housing-related matters. Recently, Araujo was hired as the director of community development and partnerships for the Financial Guidance Center (formerly the Consumer Credit Counseling Service).

"The housing crisis has affected all Nevadans, both directly and indirectly, and this new position gives me the opportunity to continue to help struggling Nevadans to save their homes," Araujo said.

Although Araujo says he is not sure what the future has in store for him, he says, "I am excited about the journey. I want to make a positive impact in people's lives, the same way that my mother and mentors were able to impact mine."

Given his young age and impressive credentials, there is little doubt that Nelson Araujo will become one of this community's outstanding leaders.

## SARAH SAENZ

Sarah Saenz is a native Las Vegas and the daughter of two immigrants from Nicaragua. Saenz also is a proud 2012 graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. During her years at UNLV, Saenz was able to help found a chapter of Sigma Omega Nu, a Latina-based sorority.



Sarah Saenz

Saenz says, "I am proud to have been a part of establishing a new sorority that was greatly needed on the UNLV campus. Our sorority focuses on academics and helping Latinas and Latinos reach their educational goals. Our sorority also reaches out to our community through community service projects like Project Skyline, which involved us spending a day in a north town neighborhood cleaning up the street, repainting old signs and removing graffiti from the streets."

Saenz says that the most memorable part of her college career was becoming the first Latina student body president at UNLV.

"I served for one year and will never forget that experience. I have always enjoyed student government and see myself in the future working with students who love to get involved in making their schools a better place. As CSUN president, I was able to build relationships with people all over the state of Nevada and used those relationships to represent students when it came time to be an advocate on their behalf. I also began a blog so that students would be able to quickly see what I was doing for them.

"I was honored to have been able to serve students and then graduate with all of those memories and experiences," Saenz said.

Saenz said she is looking forward to continuing her education by pursuing a master's degree in public administration at UNLV. To the benefit of our community, Saenz says, "I know that I will stay in Las Vegas because I love this diverse community and want to continue to help the people in my city and to be a part of the growth and change that Las Vegas is always experiencing."

## Congratulations to Wal-Mart Las Vegas Corporation of the Year

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# Education champions recognized at awards gala

*Señoras of Excellence, Señores of Distinction named during annual celebration, scholarship fundraiser*

By DAN TAFOYA

On May 11, 2012, Ms. Latina Las Vegas, aka Sandy Colon-Peltyn, put on another of her unforgettable education fundraising events. This time it was the 2012 Awards Gala of the Señoras of Excellence and Señores of Distinction, an event now in its eighth year, which was founded by Colon-Peltyn, Isabel Pfeifer and Alma Garcia-Vining in 2005.

The purpose of the event is to honor the Señoras of Excellence and Señores of Distinction of the Las Vegas community and simultaneously to support the educational progression of young Latinos and Latinas in the Las Vegas community. The event also benefits the Latin Chamber of Commerce Community Foundation Scholarship Fund. Impressively, the Latin Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Program is now in its 27th year.

The festive event, which was attended by more than 400 guests, was held in the Palace Ballroom of the beautiful and luxurious Caesars Palace. This year's event was co-hosted by Colon-Peltyn and Garcia-Vining. The emcees for the evening were Tony F. Sanchez and RJ Pelton. A special addition to the event this year was the presence of past and present scholarship recipients.

The scholars were provided with much-appreciated words of wisdom from some of the great leaders in Nevada. The Latin Chamber of Commerce salutes the 2012 honorees, and the Señoras of Excellence and Señores of Distinction Events Committee for their outstanding work.

The illustrious list of 2012 award recipients, who were honored for their humanitarian efforts and for their contributions to the betterment of education in the Las Vegas community, included:

#### Señoras of Excellence:

Heather J. Allen, M.D., FACP, Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada

Sherri Allen, chief operating officer, HealthCare Partners of Nevada

Lynette Chappell, first lady of Siegfried & Roy Productions, personal manager

Catherine Cortez Masto, attorney general for the state of Nevada

#### Señores of Distinction:

Robert (Bob) Brown, publisher, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Fred J. Keeton, vice president of finance, external affairs and CDO, Caesars Entertainment Inc.

Luis F. Valera, DC, Back to Health Chiropractic, co-founder Latin American Medical Association

#### Salute to a Legend:



Dressed to kill and enjoying the festivities were, from left, Fred Keeton, Siegfried Fischbacher, Sandy Colon-Peltyn, Roy Horn and Joe Ripoll.

Jerry Tarkanian, UNLV Runnin' Rebels 1973-1992 Championship basketball coach

#### Corporation of Distinction:

ND Insurance Exchange, James C. Hooban, president and CEO

#### Life Time Achievement Award:

Steve Schorr, vice president of public and government affairs, Cox Communications

Congratulations to all of the 2012 recipients and to Sandy Colon-Peltyn and Alma Garcia-Vining for their continued commitment to our Hispanic youth.



Scholarship recipients, present and past, enjoy the evening's festivities.



2012 scholarship recipients played maracas during the awards gala.





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<sup>1</sup>2010 Community Reinvestment Act government data.

<sup>2</sup>2011 Small Business Administration federal fiscal year-end data, in dollar volume.

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# 'Change Your World — Vote' mural has a message

## Power of the printed word explored

By PENNY RAMOS-BENNETT

Words make an impact. You are reading them right now in this article and in other materials that you come across in your everyday life. We are impacted by words used by the media and colleagues daily.

How those words are processed, taken in and shared is the focus of the artwork I create. As a writer, a public information specialist and artist, I am immersed in the perfect and not so perfect word. When asked to write an article for *Comunicación* to share information about my most recent mural in the Las Vegas art corridor, I wanted to let the readers of *Comunicación* in on a secret. Well, it is not so much of a secret if you have seen my artwork. I am driven by my history and the history that is unfolding around us daily.

The history that propels me is one that began prior to my mother's birth and lives within the spirit of my immigrant grandmother, whose life was threatened while crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, pregnant with my mother. My grandmother, Margarita, lived in the United States and was returning to her family

My grandmother, Margarita, lived in the United States and was returning to her family and husband after a visit in Mexico. At the U.S. border she had her papers taken away and destroyed to keep her in Mexico. Never were the words on that paper she was carrying so important, until she could not rely on those printed words to get home.

and husband after a visit in Mexico. At the U.S. border, she had her papers taken away and destroyed to keep her in Mexico. Never were the words on that paper she was carrying so important, until she could not rely on those printed words to get home. In an effort to reach her family in the U.S., she made the crossing while being shot at. She made it back but the experience changed her, her unborn child (my mother) and me forever.



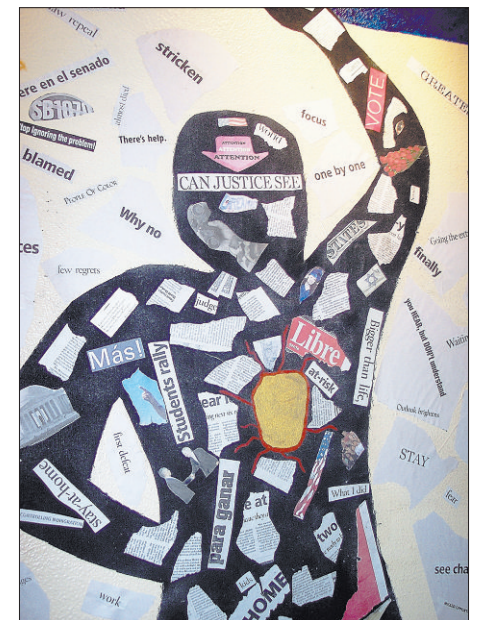
Penny Ramos-Bennett's mural, "Change Your World — Vote" is history that comes to life and helps tell the story of her family.

My artwork is a realization of that experience, a form of collage that utilizes powerful words from newsprint and marries those words with images fleshed out in oil, acrylic and watercolor paints. History comes alive with a voice of its own in my artwork, which represents religious, political and racial themes that have taken place over time. The artwork portrays a picture of how those themes have or have not changed over time.

One of the most recent portrayals of history came alive in a protest art mural May 4 at Simpo Sandwich, 300 E. Charleston Blvd. The conception of "Change Your World — Vote" was driven by the importance of the Latino vote in recent and upcoming elections. This piece covers many aspects of history when looked at closely and explores themes from slavery, racism, violence, immigration, education and much more.

The giant collage wall is covered with words that appeared in English, Spanish and Chinese newspapers. The newsprint words are meant to lead the spectator into the world of their own perceptions and biases. The mural and artwork are intended to evoke emotional responses that can only be felt by each individual spectator's connection to the words and images displayed.

Penny Ramos-Bennett is the daughter of a social activist and politician who marched with Cesar Chavez in support of human rights in the 1970s. She ventured into art at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and expanded



Words taken from English, Spanish and Chinese newspapers are meant to evoke emotional responses from viewers.

her time in studio as a self-trained artist. "The Change Your World — Vote" mural is the latest portrayal of history; it can be viewed at Simpo Sandwich during business hours. Similar works also are on display at the nonprofit City of the World Gallery, 1229 S. Casino Center Blvd., at the corner of Casino Center and Colorado Avenue, or at pennyramosbennettart.com.



An exhibit of works by Penny Ramos-Bennett is on display at the City of the World Gallery at the corner of Casino Center Boulevard and Colorado Avenue.





Located within the Rafael Rivera Community Center, Oportunidad will assist the unemployed, underemployed and youth as they seek a better quality of life.

## Oportunidad: New center to provide empowerment

By Dr. RENE CANTU

On April 4, the Las Vegas City Council voted unanimously to approve the lease of the Rafael Rivera Community Center to the Latin Chamber of Commerce Community Foundation. The Latin Chamber Foundation is now one step closer to its vision of creating a “campus” in the Hispanic community that can provide much needed help to the unemployed, underemployed and youth.

The facility will be named Oportunidad at the Rafael Rivera Center. “Oportunidad” was selected as the name of the facility because it speaks to a commodity — opportunity — that is a necessary ingredient for our community’s recovery from the lingering impacts of the Great Recession. “Oportunidad” through education, training and employment is the pathway to a better quality of life and a stronger community, and that is what will be in great supply at the center. The Oportunidad Center had a soft opening in early May with a grand opening later in the summer.

The Oportunidad Center will be home to the Casa Verde Project and the Healthcare Opportunities Today programs, which focus on helping unemployed Nevadans enter the workforce in health care and green sector positions.

The Latin Chamber Foundation also is getting ready to launch the Green Initiatives for Tomorrow Program, which will provide training, academic support and work readiness/experience to 16- to 21-year-old youths in Las Vegas. That pro-

gram is being launched via a consortium that includes the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority, Clark County School District, University of Nevada, Las Vegas and other partners.

Unbeknownst to many, the Latin Chamber Foundation has been quietly serving as an ally and funded partner of Workforce Connections in providing programs that help unemployed adult and dislocated workers and youth to receive training in high-demand areas and, most importantly, to find work that pays decently and has a future.

Negotiations are under way with a variety of partners to strengthen the work of the Foundation and make the center a vital economic resource in our community — especially in the high-demand fields identified in Gov. Brian Sandoval’s Economic Plan for Nevada.

This is important because the disproportionate impact of the recession on Hispanics has devastated the community. More than 100,000 construction jobs disappeared practically overnight. Similarly, the service and resort/gaming industry also was impacted, leaving thousands of families without work and without opportunity. The perfect economic storm that devastated Las Vegas was locked into place as the bottom fell out of the housing market. As the clouds break in the economic storm and the sun peaks through the clouds, the Oportunidad Center will be there to provide a ray of hope to those who seek the dignity of a job and a future.

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# What will your legacy be when you're gone?

By TOM RODRIGUEZ

One of my favorite quotes by the late Cesar Chavez speaks loudly to the importance of giving back to your community by helping others.

Here is what Chavez said, "In this world it is possible to achieve great material wealth, to live an opulent life. But a life built upon those things alone leaves a shallow legacy. In the end, we will be judged by other standards."



Along those same lines, Chavez also said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

Personally, what I believe Chavez was trying to say is that far too often people get so caught up seeking wealth and fame and acquiring possessions that they forget about where they came from and the people they left behind.

On March 31, I read Cesar Chavez's two quotes at the Luz Coalition's annual Cesar Chavez Awards Banquet, where I was honored with the 2012 "Spirit of Cesar Chavez Award."

It was given to me in recognition of my many years working on behalf of our Hispanic community.

In my personal and professional life, I believe that I have tried hard to live my life in the spirit embodied by Chavez, which is to help others. My doing so, however, sometimes resulted in me being criticized, vilified, disavowed by my own people and held back in my professional advancement.

Unfortunately, that is the price that activists like myself have had to pay for advocating on behalf of our people. Being an activist is not easy, and an activist is always at risk. But the rewards, when they finally come, are always worth the risks and the all-too-familiar setbacks.

The late Robert "Bobby" Kennedy, an activist of the highest order, said it best when he wrote, "Each time a man stands up for an idea, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their peers, the censure of their colleagues, or the wrath of their society. Moral courage is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to

change."

On the night of my award, I shared with the audience some of my experiences growing up in Topeka, Kan., during the 1950s. Topeka is famous for being the national headquarters of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, and somewhat infamous for being the city named in the famous "separate but equal" civil rights case, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.*, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954.

I informed the audience that during my youth, Mexican people in Topeka were not allowed to eat in most restaurants and were often forced to order food and pick it up in sacks at the back door. I also told them that in my lifetime, when Mexicans in my hometown wanted to go to a movie, they had to sit in segregated sections reserved for Mexicans and blacks. When I was a young boy, if Mexicans in Topeka wanted to go swimming during the oppressively hot Kansas summers, they either had to swim in the dangerous Kansas river or were limited to swimming on Thursdays at the only public pool that would let them in, because on Friday the pool was drained.

In spite of growing up in that harsh environment, I persevered and with the strong values given to me by my beloved Mexican immigrant parents, I was able to rise above the pervasive ethnic discrimination of my youth by graduating from high school, serving in the military, attending college, earning several degrees and working in several high-paying, emotionally rewarding professional jobs.

I then talked about how far Hispanic people had come from the years of my youth, which I said was best exemplified for me by the success of my children, who I introduced and asked to stand up. First was my son, Darren, who graduated in May from the Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Next, I introduced my daughter, Alexis Havana, who graduated from high school this month, and who will be almost a junior in college when she graduates due to earning credits at the College of Southern Nevada's High School/College Program. Thirdly, I introduced my youngest daughter, Lyla, a very bright 10-year-old who graduated from grade school this month and will enroll in middle school.

I told the audience that because of the activism and advocacy of the "Chicano Movement" and the advocacy of Latino leaders during the 1960s and 1970s, our children will never have to experience the overt ethnic discrimination that existed during my youth. I then shared with the audience three of my involve-

**So what will be your legacy? What will people say about you when you are gone? Will you be remembered as someone who tried to make things better for others? Or will you be remembered only as someone who acquired wealth and possessions, but did nothing for our people?**

ments that opened up many doors for Hispanic people in Las Vegas.

The first involvement I discussed was the employment discrimination complaint that I filed as president of the Hispanics in Politics against the Clark County School District in 1987. That contentious two-year battle was played out in the media and resulted in a new school district administration and, ultimately, in a significant increase in the number of Hispanic employees in the Clark County School District — from about 400 in 1989 to more than 4,000 in 2012.

The second involvement I discussed was the discrimination complaint I filed against the State Industrial Insurance System, which resulted in the firing of two high-level administrators and the firing of the agency's lead physician. As a result of that complaint, the SIIS paid for a \$50,000 study that resulted in better services to Hispanics, particularly those who did not speak English well.

The third involvement I discussed was the creation of the Latino Youth Leadership Conference in June 1994 by myself and Dr. Maria Chairez. I proudly related that the Latino Youth Leadership Conference is still going strong after 19 consecutive years and has provided valuable leadership training to more than 1,000 Latino students, many of whom are now lawyers, medical doctors, college professors, businessmen and businesswomen, etc.

Lastly, I talked a little about the five books that I have written and how they have helped to dispel the widely held myth that Hispanics were an "invisible minority." Today, in part because of those books and the tremendous growth of the Hispanic population, no one refers to our Latino community as an "invisible minority" and never will again.

## WHAT KIND OF LEGACY ARE YOU BUILDING?

All of us are fellow travelers on this earth. We come and we go all too quickly,

and no one gets a second chance to live their life over again. Yet, I am certain that everyone wants to be remembered and to feel that their life had meaning. Unfortunately, the truth is that very few individuals are remembered for very long after they pass on.

I was thinking about these things recently when I thought about local Hispanic leaders who have died since I first arrived in Las Vegas in 1981. They were men that I laughed with, broke bread with, attended meetings with and worked with to improve the lives of Hispanic people. I am talking about Latino legends such as Arturo Cambeiro, Manny Cortez, Eddie Escobedo Sr. and John Mendoza. Those individuals, besides attaining wealth and possessions, are best remembered for the good works they did during their lifetime. Each of them gave unselfishly of their time and talents to try to make things better for other Latinos and for their community in general.

They were individuals whose ambitions were, like Cesar Chavez said, "broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others." They were also individuals who had the integrity and commitment to serve as strong advocates for Hispanic persons, particularly those who were without power, influence or money.

So what will be your legacy? What will people say about you when you are gone? Will you be remembered as someone who tried to make things better for others? Or will you be remembered only as someone who acquired wealth and possessions, but did nothing for our people? I hope that everyone who reads this article will think hard about these questions because it is never too late to begin building a legacy of giving and helping. It is never too late to give some of your time and money to provide scholarships for poor Latino students wanting to improve their lives. It is never too late for you to speak out against injustices that you know are directed toward our people because of the color of their skin or their lack of correctness in speaking the English language.

As Cesar Chavez said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community."

Remember that quote because someday after your life is over, the life you lived will be judged by those left behind, and it will be judged not by the material wealth and possessions that you accumulated, but by the good works that you did, or did not do, and by the people you helped throughout your life.

So again, what legacy will you leave?



# ► JS PRODUCTS: *Quality, customer service reign supreme*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

back shop.

Core product lines include air tools, automotive specialty tools, back shop products, cordless power tools, diagnostics, hand tools, lighting and service tools.

The company headquarters are in Las Vegas, with branch offices in Bentonville, Ark.; Columbus, Ohio; Mooresville, N.C., Guangzhou, China, and Hong Kong. Staff includes 10 in-house key account managers and more than 100 field sales representatives.

In-house marketing capabilities include a full design team, ad layouts, graphic design, video production, press releases and Web design.

JS Products has 10 project managers assigned by product group across all business segments. This allows the project managers to focus on their individual areas of expertise. The project managers' scope of responsibility is from concept to packaged product allowing them to coordinate with sales, the customer, manufacturing, logistics, graphics and quality control to ensure their project is completed successfully. Besides their 10 project managers based in Las Vegas, JS Products has positioned a buying agreement with a group of eight engineers and quality control managers with offices in Taiwan and Shanghai.

The two things that strike you most in talking to Mora are his obvious commitment to quality and customer service. For Mora, those are the key ingredients that have made JS Products successful.

Mora says that, "Strong customer relationships are the key to our success."

Mora also believes that, "Quality is understanding the requirements of our customers and consistently meeting or exceeding these requirements. For instance, the mission of our quality control department is to ensure that each product sold by JS Products meets our stringent quality levels and continuously improve internal and external processes to reduce waste and increase efficiency."

## THE LOWE'S CONNECTION

In 2011, Lowe's formed a strategic relationship with JS Products and, according to Lowe's Social Responsibility Report, that has been integral to the success of Lowe's hand tool category.

Mora, president of JS Products, says Lowe's has created new and promising opportunities for JS Products.

"To supply Lowe's, we knew we had to deliver world-class service, and that has allowed us to enhance our structure and has elevated our company performance

in several areas."

By handling all of Lowe's private-label Kobalt mechanics' hand tools — more than 600 items — JS Products has helped propel Lowe's to the forefront of tools within the industry. To help JS Products to build on its success, Lowe's merchandising team nominated the company for membership in the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) Corporate Plus program. The NMSDC program is designed to recognize the national capabilities of the highest caliber minority business enterprises, bringing them to the attention of more than 3,500 NMSDC members.

With Lowe's recommendation and assistance JS Products is now part of an exclusive group of NMSDC small businesses with greater opportunity to expand both its business and workforce. This elite classification, awarded to only 96 of more than 16,000 certified minority businesses, adds JS Products to the Corporate Plus database used by corporations to identify vendor opportunities.

According to Mora, "We have been in business for 25 years, and we could not have done this without Lowe's."

To continue advancing the partnership, Lowe's plans to mentor JS Products through the process and benefits of NMSDC Corporate Plus membership. With the Hispanic community's significant population increase in this census cycle, including a 56 percent increase in Nevada, Mora believes that partnering with Lowe's and staying committed to innovation and diversity are important to maintaining the company's success and reaching all corners of the market. Presently, JS Products has a 39.6 percent minority workforce.

## THE JUAN MORA STORY

Mora was born in Santiago de Cuba on April 23, 1942. He attended Colegio de Delores in Santiago de Cuba for his primary and secondary education, and the University of Villanueva in Havana, Cuba.

In October of 1960, Mora departed Cuba for the United States with the first wave of Cuban immigrants. From 1960 to 1963, Mora worked with several companies while attending Miami University and taking courses in business administration. Looking for a fresh start, Mora moved to San Pedro, Calif., in 1963. Shortly afterwards, Mora began what was to become a 26-year career with Sears Roebuck and Co., while also enrolling in extension courses from UCLA. While at Sears, Mora had several jobs ranging from home entertainment



Visiting the JS Products Inc. showroom are, from left, Dan Tafoya, Steven Brantley, Nevada state Sen. Ruben Kihuen, Rick Sawyer and Juan Mora.

manager, men's store manager, and five years each as the Sears store manager in Santa Ana and Thousand Oaks.

In 1981, Mora and Brantley started Pan American Industries, a company they sold in 1986 to Pentron Products. That same year JS Products was founded and for the last 25 years the "Three

Amigos" continue to work together and grow their business.

In 1994, Mora moved to Las Vegas. Mora has been married for 36 years and has three children and three grandchildren. Mora was recently honored as the Minority Entrepreneur of the Year by The Entrepreneurs Organization.

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# Immigration Issue: Example of 'Violent Agreement'

By DANE MARALASON

I once observed two friends arguing a point on which I knew they both agreed. They argued semantics, inflections, corollaries and other abstracts, but at the core, it seemed they agreed on the substance of the issue. Another friend familiar with the exchange referred to it as “violent agreement.” Violent agreement is when people agree at the core but argue fringe issues as if the fringe was more consequential than the core issue itself.

And so it is with the immigration debate.



## STARTING WITH LANGUAGE

We all agree that anyone passing from one country to another without following immigration laws is entering that country illegally. Where we are in violent agreement is when we debate, not the core immigration issue, but the term we are to use to describe these people.

On Dec. 17, 2010, the American Journalism Review posted a comprehensive debate and analysis of the proper term to be used when describing those who have entered the U.S. illegally. The article is titled: “Undocumented or Illegal?” The posting was a response to The Associated Press Stylebook continuing to use the term “illegal immigrant” in its latest issue.

The AP Stylebook is the writers’ bible in journalism for ensuring that a term has the same meaning for every writer in every publication that uses the AP Stylebook. Of course some of the larger newspapers, such as the New York Times and the L.A. Times have their own stylebook, but the AP Stylebook is the most widely used and accepted authority on journalistic writing.

David Minthorn, the AP’s deputy standards editor, defends the use of the term “illegal immigrant.” He says the AP Stylebook created its entry on “illegal immigrant” in 2004, in response to the heightened debate over border security and the enforcement of immigration laws after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

“Together the terms describe a person who resides in a country unlawfully by residency or citizenship requirements,” Minthorn said in an email interview. “Alternatives like ‘undocumented worker,’ ‘illegal alien’ or ‘illegals’ lack precision

or may have negative connotations. Illegal immigrant, on the other hand, is accurate and neutral for news stories.”

Linguist Otto Santa Ana, a founding member of the Cesar Chavez Center for Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, finds both “illegal immigrant” and “undocumented immigrant” to be partisan. Santa Ana prefers “unauthorized immigrant,” which he says doesn’t soft-pedal the issue of people entering and staying in the country without permission, but also doesn’t characterize them as felons.

Ironically, as reported on March 8, 2012, by Carolyn Salazar, a poll conducted by Fox News Latino carried the title, “Almost Half of Latino Voters Find ‘Illegal Immigrant’ Offensive, Says Poll.” Almost half? Not 99 percent? No. In fact the same poll found that about 42 percent (also almost half) found the term either accurate or were neutral.

In my own opinion, and based on my experience, if this survey had been conducted exclusively among those here illegally, 99 percent of them would not have been offended by the term “illegal immigrant” in a conversation about immigration. In fact, the people I find objecting most to the use of “illegal” or “illegal immigrant” are almost always U.S. citizens.

## SECURING THE BORDER

There is agreement on both sides that the first step in immigration reform is to secure the border. But when the discussion shifts to what tools are to be used for security, the simple agreement becomes violent agreement.

The left would seem to argue three alternatives to secure the border: 1. Open it to a point where no one crosses illegally because the legal process is open to an infinite degree. 2. Accept that truly securing the border is impossible. 3. Make the U.S. economy so unattractive as to remove the financial incentive for coming to the U.S. in the first place.

The right says very clearly that the right combination of border infrastructure, personnel and technology — all working in unison can secure the border.

## ESTABLISHING A LEGAL STATUS

The right and the left are in agreement that immigration reform must address the legal status of the illegal immigrants and their children presently in the U.S.

But the chasm opens wide only to be filled with complete disagreement on what that legal status should be. Hyper-

libs immediately call for the passage of the Dream Act or some other path to citizenship, whereas conservatives see lowering the bar for citizenship makes a mockery of the whole process, particularly for those immigrants who have stood in line for 10-15 years to meet the requirements to become a citizen. These are the immigrants who have learned the language, gained a basic understanding of U.S. history, and have come to understand the fundamentals of how the U.S. government works.

But this last step to becoming a U.S. citizen marks the difference between someone coming to the U.S. for a job versus someone coming here to embrace and enhance our culture, and that is to “renounce all foreign allegiances and vow to uphold the Constitution and be willing to defend the United States and perform civilian or armed services.”

Violent agreement is exemplified by this question: Is the following statement from a Democrat or Republican candidate’s website:

“Provide these workers a way to earn legal status by learning English, finding a job, paying fines and back taxes, going to the back of the line and passing a criminal background check.”

Democrat

Republican

Go to the end to see the answer. The proof that we are in agreement on the immigration issue is that an equal number of people will answer on both sides of this question until they find out whose site the statement comes from.

## OBAMA’S IMMIGRATION RECORD

The left criticizes the right for being tough on immigration yet silent when it comes to Obama, except for a few voices such as Jorge Ramos, a popular anchor at the Spanish-language network Univision, who says, “the Obama Administration is responsible for the separation of thousands of families with children who are U.S. citizens.” Ramos points out that, “Obama has deported more immigration (sic) — over 1.2 million — than any other president in history.”

Ramos asked in 2008 to then-candidate Obama if he would commit to reforming the immigration system. Obama said, “I cannot guarantee that it’s going to be in the first 100 days. But what I can guarantee is that we will have in the first year an immigration bill that I strongly support and that I’m promoting and that I want to move that forward as quickly as possible.”

This observation is mirrored by local community activist and radio personal-

ity Miguel Barrientos who added, “I don’t think Obama is pro Hispanic and I think he’s doing a terrible job at finding a solution for immigration reform as he promised during his campaign.”

The impact of Obama’s turn on the Hispanic community is detailed in the latest Pew Hispanic Center Findings from its April 23, 2012, report: “The largest wave of immigration in history from a single country to the United States has come to a standstill.”

Most disturbing about the Obama enforcement policy is the breakup of Hispanic families, as Pew finds, “In 2010, fully 87 percent of those sent back to Mexico were male, which is much higher than the share of men in the overall Mexican immigrant population (54 percent).” Are some of these men husbands, fathers or sons? Pew study says that one-third were married and one-third were the child of a head of household.

As if breaking up families were not bad enough, Pew reports a rise in the humiliation standard reporting that in 2005 only 3 percent of unauthorized Mexican immigrants were apprehended at work. In 2010, under Obama, that rate grew to 17 percent. Moreover, in 2005, apprehensions of those who had been in the U.S. for a year or more were 6 percent. In 2010, under Obama, that rate is up to 27 percent.

## MARCO RUBIO PROVIDES A SOLUTION

On Sunday, May 6, Marco Rubio sat with Chris Wallace on Fox News Sunday and offered a simple immigration reform plan that I think will sweep the Republican Party into agreement by the time they get to Tampa.

“We use the existing immigration system. We give them a non-immigrant visa, which we do now for people that we’re allowing to stay here legally and study and work. And at some point in the future, if they decide they want to stay here permanently, as I suspect most of them will, they will be able to do so but they’ll have to avail themselves of the existing system,” Rubio said.

He continued, “Existing visas, not a special one like the Dream Act.”

So, the truth is that immigration is not really the issue at all; it’s citizenship versus a legal status. If Obama truly cared about Hispanics, he would adopt Marco Rubio’s plan immediately! But no, Obama wants to keep Hispanics suffering and blaming the right. When your political strategy is to divide and conquer, truth is the first casualty.

(Answer: Democrat — <http://www.shelleyberkley.com/issues/immigration/>)



## ► **MARIACHI:** *Fourteen schools participate*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

programs to better appeal to its diverse students.

Trujillo is chairman of the Latin Chamber of Commerce and has stayed involved with the mariachi program that is dear to his heart. This year when he found out that the school district's budget cuts meant that the annual Mariachi Festival and Workshop needed a sponsor in order to continue, he used his position as chairman to rally support to keep the festival and workshop going. Trujillo remembered that "I was just like these kids. I was 8 or 9 years old and wanted to be in Mariachi Cobre. Becoming a mariachi gave me the self-confidence and self-motivation that led to my earning my undergraduate degree and then a master's degree and later, to work in government. It gives you the self-esteem to go out and perform, which translates to having a professional life."

All told, 216 students from eight middle schools and six high schools participated in Friday's musical part of the program. The middle schools represented were Bailey, Bridger, Fremont, J.D. Smith, K.O. Knudson, Monaco, Orr and

Von Tobel. The high schools represented were Canyon Springs, Desert Pines, Las Vegas Academy, Rancho, Sunrise Mountain and Valley.

The middle school musical directors were Erik Ramirez, Bailey; Adalberto Garcia, Bridger; Albert Avila, Fremont; Daniel Gonzalez, J.D. Smith; Martin Lopez, K.O. Knudson; Yvette Sital, Monaco; Raul Guerrero, Orr; and Xavier Gastelum, Von Tobel.

The high school musical directors were Guadalupe Gonzalez, Canyon Springs; Daniel Valdez, Desert Pines; Michael Sital, Las Vegas Academy; Roberto Lopez, Rancho; Fernando Gonzalez, Sunrise Mountain; and Noe Ramos, Valley.

The dance directors were Jacquelyn Guzman, Ballet Folklorico Sol de Rancho; Rocio Herrera, Ballet Folklorico del Canon; and Sarah Sital, Ballet Folklorico de Monaco High School.

The Mariachi Festival and Workshop was made possible through the generous support of the many contributing sponsors including Barrick Gold, N.A., Clark County School District, El Tiempo and the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Golden Nugget, Outdoor Promotions, Photo Vegas, Public Education Foundation, Cox

Communications, Justice Law Center, Hispanic Council, NV Energy, El Mundo, Wells Fargo, Budget Vegas, National Healthcare Access, United Healthcare and Wal-Mart. The Latin Chamber of Commerce appreciates the support of the many sponsors, and we look forward to a continued partnership aimed at providing our children with future world-class educational experiences.

Last, but certainly not least, for 37 years the Latin Chamber of Commerce has served as Nevada's premier Hispanic organization. Our programs and efforts have always been led by our vision to serve as Nevada's leading advocate for Hispanic businesses, plus the cultural and educational communities. Because we recognize the important roles that education and cultural awareness play in the development of our youth, we strive to build strategic partnerships that will create programs that not only encourage and empower our youth to pursue post-secondary education but also serve to foster and instill positive self-esteem and self-confidence. Working together we can continue to bring programs such as the Mariachi Festival to the people of Southern Nevada. Mil gracias to all!

## ► **CORTEZ:** *Legacy long lasting*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Cortez is survived by his wife of 45 years, Joanna; another daughter, Cynthia Cortez Musgrove, a sister, Patricia Snider, and two grandchildren, Andrew Musgrove and Christina Musgrove, all of Las Vegas.

Looking back on Cortez's remarkable life and career, one cannot fail to be impressed with the scope and breadth of his accomplishments. Without a doubt, Manny Cortez left his mark on the Clark County we live in today.

Cortez's impact is felt each day by Clark County residents as they drive on modern freeways and streets, drink safe water, flush their toilets, catch a plane at McCarran International Airport, play a slot machine or card game, make a bet in a licensed casino, and sleep safely in hotels protected by the strictest fire safety codes in the world. This is Manny Cortez's legacy. A legacy that has earned him a significant place in Nevada's history books.

## ► **TEACHERS:** *Budget cuts may eliminate brightest teachers*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

litical football in education.

At the heart of the issue is how our depressed economy, and in turn, how budget cuts to education, will affect the school district's newer teaching staff. Sadly, teachers like Cano and Alfaro are often the first to be let go or "reduced-in-force."

This unwelcome reality is because of the District's 2012-13 budget, which will be about \$35 million less than the 2011-12 operating budget due to decreased property tax revenues.

The district has sought to help balance its budget in the last two years and has tapped reserves from its general fund to cover declining revenues. Specifically, the school board approved a transfer of \$20 million for the 2012-13 school year from the reserve fund, bringing the fund below the 2 percent safety net required by board policy. The CCSD has fought hard to protect jobs but was forced into

a reduction-in-force, yet, it only makes sense to keep our most effective teachers in our classrooms.

Under the teachers union's rules, approximately 150 teachers who have unsatisfactory evaluations for the last two years will remain in classrooms while some of our best and brightest educators will receive layoff notices.

The district is disheartened by being forced to issue pink slips to some of our brightest teachers.

Sadly, the business of making ends meet in education will make a difference in our workforce because the children and teens in our schools will soon be the workforce of the future.

Therefore, the district will pursue an agreement with the Clark County Education Association to modify its agreement with the association that will allow Clark County District students to remain the focus by keeping our top-performing teachers in the classroom because, in the end, that's what is best for kids.



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# Ortiz finds success from Las Vegas to Las Vegas

*New Mexico native passionate about helping others*

By DAN TAFOYA

In this edition of *Comunicación* magazine we are proud to profile Felicia Ortiz, the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Cluster Construction and Consulting. Ortiz epitomizes the American Latina dream.

Ortiz states: "The one key ingredient to success is be passionate about your chosen business."

I personally cannot think of a better piece of advice for those seeking to open their own business. Her story brings to mind a quote from Debbi Fields: "The important thing is not being afraid to take a chance. Remember, the greatest failure is to not try. Once you find something you love to do, be the best at doing it."

In addition, when you read this story I hope you see, as I did, the importance of having good role models in one's life. If you would like to be profiled in *Comunicación*, please contact the Latin Chamber staff.

**LATIN CHAMBER: Tell us about your background.**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** I was born in Las Vegas, N.M., and raised in a ranching community north of Las Vegas called Rociada. It was a wonderful upbringing; I feel like I was truly raised by the community. The morals and values instilled in me by my parents and growing up on a ranch taught me the importance of work ethic and helping others.

I went to college in Las Vegas, N.M., at New Mexico Highlands University and shortly after graduating I moved to Las Vegas, Nev., and I have been here for almost 11 years.

**LATIN CHAMBER: Tell us about your business.**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** Cluster is a consulting firm that specializes in project management and project management information systems consulting. Our specialty is deploying business process automation software for large construction projects or programs. We help the teams that are managing projects create a collaborative Web-based work environment that ensures that team members have visibility into the status and cost of the project(s) in real time from anywhere they can get on the Internet. Many of our clients have project team members all over the country and some across the globe; the systems we deploy ensure that no matter where in the world team members are, they can work consistently and collaborate with other team members.

**LATIN CHAMBER: Please tell us what being a business owner means to you and why you became an entrepreneur?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** Being a business owner means that I have the ability to determine my destiny. It gives me the opportunity to help our clients and employees achieve their goals and make an impact on their lives and the community we live in. It also gives me the flexibility to dedicate time to my role as president of ALP-FA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building Latino business leaders.

I think that entrepreneurship runs in my blood. My father is an electrical contractor, which is where I learned the construction industry. My mother has also always been very entrepreneurial minded; she was known to sell her homemade goodies and do bookkeeping before she went back to college to become a teacher. The decision to become a business owner felt like a natural next step for me.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What or who has been your greatest influence in business?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** There are so many successful people that have influenced me over the years but right now my greatest influence is Tony Hsieh from Zappos. I have never met him in person, but I keep up with his endeavors locally. He has done amazing things with his company and has created an environment and culture where people not only enjoy working, they thrive. Beyond that, he is using the money he has made to improve the local community and involves his staff in community projects. One of our goals as a company is to be the next Zappos in Las Vegas, create more jobs and be a company that people want to work for.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What would you say is your greatest professional accomplishment to date?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** My greatest accomplishment to date has to be the success we have experienced in our business. My business partner, Mark Bodner, and I had talked about starting our own business for several years, but I don't think that either of us imagined that we would be so successful so quickly. We are so grateful to our clients and staff for having faith in us. We started the business in February 2011 and are up to 11 employees.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What's the best advice you have received in business?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** I have received lots of great advice over the years but there are several things that have helped us to be successful. 1. Go into business to do something you enjoy or are passionate



**"Go into business to do something you enjoy or are passionate about; being a business owner is a 24/7 gig, and you have to love what you do to be successful."**

**FELICIA ORTIZ**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
CLUSTER CONSTRUCTION AND CONSULTING

about; being a business owner is a 24/7 gig, and you have to love what you do to be successful. 2. Hire people smarter than you, and leave it to the experts. 3. Plan well; your plan is your road map to success. 4. Invest in your employees, and that doesn't just apply to their wages; benefits and the opportunity to learn and be innovative makes for happy and productive employees.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What has been the most effective marketing initiatives or programs you have used to promote your business?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** We have actually been blessed to get all of our business through word of mouth and/or social media, primarily LinkedIn. We started a LinkedIn group several years ago when we were users of a software we deploy; the intent of the group is to share tips and tricks, issues and give other users a platform for asking questions of other users. This group has led to several new clients.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What one thing have you learned as a small business owner that has served you well over the years?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** I have learned that one of the most important things in business is relationships. People remember you for how you made them feel so being sincere is key. I've learned it's not just about meeting people, it is about getting

to know them and connecting with them. I always try to focus on how I can help the people I meet rather than how they can help me.

**LATIN CHAMBER: Are there any resources or tools you'd like to share with other small business owners?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** We decided early on to use other Web-based software to run our business. It is not only convenient since we have employees in Atlanta, Seattle, New York and Calgary, Alberta, but also very cost effective. We use Microsoft 365 for our email, MS Office and Sharepoint (document sharing and team Intranet site). We also use Replicon to track our time and expenses.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What do you do for fun?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** Believe it or not I love to travel. I travel for work almost weekly, but still look forward to taking the leisure trips. I love seeing new places and meeting new people. One of my hobbies is photography so when I travel I love to go places where I can capture great shots of architecture or nature.

When I am home I like to spend time with friends and family, especially my two godchildren, Jr. and Jaslene; they are my pride and joy. I also like to do interior decorating, including building/refurbishing furniture. When I really need to relax, I like to lose myself in a good book.

**LATIN CHAMBER: What is your No. 1 business goal you plan to accomplish over the next year?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** We would like to double our revenue and staff over the next year. I have to say, the most fulfilling part of being a business owner has been giving good people good jobs in this economy. We have built a wonderful team, we all work hard but above all we have fun!

**LATIN CHAMBER: What's the best way for our readers to connect with you?**

**FELICIA ORTIZ:** You can connect with me through our website [www.clusterllc.com](http://www.clusterllc.com) or on LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com/feliciaortiz](http://www.linkedin.com/feliciaortiz) You can also follow me on Twitter @FOrtiz505.

**LATIN CHAMBER: How is it being a woman in the construction consulting industry?**

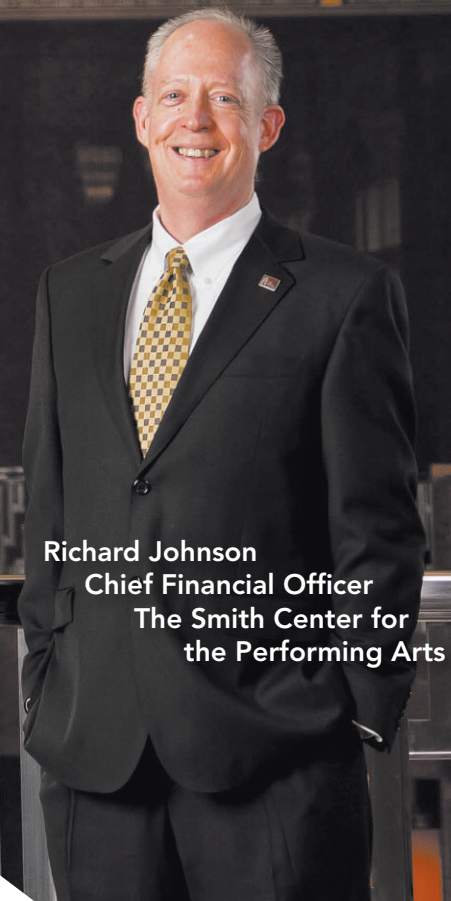
**FELICIA ORTIZ:** I am not going to sugarcoat it. Being a woman in the construction industry is not easy. I think the biggest challenge I have had throughout my career, in all industries, has been earning the respect of those I work with since I am young and a woman. I have had my fair share of sexist comments, but I have never let it hold me back. It takes a little longer than I would like but it eventually happens. I feel like I am making inroads for other women in the industry and serve as a role model for others.



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