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# **Immigration Coverage in Spanish Language Print Media**

## **Media Content Analysis: May 2006 – July 2007**

Prepared for The Opportunity Agenda by Elena Shore, Editor/Latino Media Monitor, New America Media

### **I. MAJOR FINDINGS**

- Hispanic media played a leadership role in mobilizing Latinos and advocating for their communities.
- Hispanic press coverage focused on human stories.
- The Hispanic press linked anti-immigrant messages to racism.
- The Hispanic press failed to respond in a clear, unified manner to the attacks on immigrants from conservative media.

### **II. SEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Over the course of 15 months, beginning May 2006 through July 2007, I have monitored Hispanic print media for articles on immigration—both the stories that the mainstream media is not covering and unique ethnic media perspectives on larger stories. This monitoring consists of reading articles on the websites of an estimated 10 daily publications each day, 10 weekly newspapers each week, and another 10 publications through mail or email subscriptions. These stories are translated and summarized on the New America Media website.

In writing this report, I made a list of 175 stories that we monitored, translated, summarized or posted on immigration since May 2006. These came from 30 print media outlets: 20 Spanish-language, seven bilingual and three English-language publications. A list and brief description of the media outlets monitored is attached as Appendix I.



### III. CLASSIFICATION OF ARTICLES

The sample broke down as follows:

<u>Type</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>
News	97
Features	45
Broadcast	5
Op-eds, editorials, columns	27
Letters	1

The articles were then sorted into 15 topical categories:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>
<b>Hispanic Media as Civic Leaders</b>	
Community Activism	11
Civic Participation	15
Political Criticism	9
Know Your Rights	6
<b>Tracking the Anti-Immigrant Movement</b>	
Tracking Anti-Immigrant Bills	26
Raids, Detentions and Deportations	18
A Look at Anti-Reform Latinos	3
The Racism Connection	11
Anti-Immigrant Messages in Media	5
The Spanish-English Debate	4
<b>Tracking the Immigrant Rights Movement</b>	
Perspectives on the Immigration Bill	5
Moral Argument/Role of Religion	7
Border Fence	2
Covering Protests	37
<b>Human Stories</b>	16

### IV. TOPIC SUMMARIES

#### A. Hispanic Media as Civic Leaders

1. Community Activism
2. Civic Participation
3. Political Criticism

#### 4. Know Your Rights

##### **B. Tracking the Anti-Immigrant Movement**

1. Tracking Anti-Immigrant Bills
2. Raids, Detentions and Deportations
3. A Look at Anti-Reform Latinos
4. The Racism Connection
5. Anti-Immigrant Messages in Media
6. The Spanish-English Debate

##### **C. Tracking the Immigrant Rights Movement**

1. Criticism of the Immigration Bill
2. Moral Argument/Role of Religion
3. Border Fence
4. Covering Protests

##### **D. Human Stories**

##### **A. Hispanic Media as Civic Leaders**

###### **1. Community Activism**

The Spanish-language press has a long tradition of community involvement that goes beyond its editorial coverage. Hispanic media have historically played a leadership role in its community, engaging in social activism and advocating on behalf of the rights of immigrants and Latinos. In the last year, the Spanish-language press was at the forefront of the immigration reform and immigrant rights movement.

Although this report focuses on Hispanic print media, the role of Hispanic radio and TV—which reach a larger audience than their print counterparts—cannot be underestimated.

- Hispanic media were key in mobilizing millions of people in the immigration marches in cities across the country. Spanish-language radio and newspapers called on immigrants and Latinos to take to the streets, wearing white T-shirts and waving American flags, to protest the Sensenbrenner bill in 2006 and to call for fair, comprehensive immigration reform and an end to the raids in 2007.
- Univision Radio's syndicated morning DJ Eddie "El Piolín" Sotelo led a caravan to Washington, D.C., in June 2007, carrying one million signed letters from U.S. citizens calling for immigration reform.
- Spanish-language newspaper publisher ImpreMedia and broadcaster Univision partnered with the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) in January in a citizenship campaign entitled "Ya es hora: Ciudadanía" (Citizenship: The time is

now). The campaign began its second phase in July, urging Latinos to vote in the 2008 elections.

- Following the defeat of federal immigration reform, Spanish-language newspapers have helped their communities navigate an increasingly anti-immigrant climate.
- The bilingual Georgia newspaper *Atlanta Latino* published a July 4, 2007 pocket-size guide to clearly explain Senate Bills 529 and 38, in order to prevent rumors and misinformation about the two new state laws that crack down on undocumented immigrants.
- The weekly Alabama newspaper *Latino News* started a community service campaign to give immigrants a more positive image in Alabama, from collecting trash along the river to visiting a senior citizens' home.
- Spanish community weekly newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo* in Lilburn, Ga., organized a series of neighborhood meetings to educate the community and quell panic.

## 2. Civic Participation

In addition to citizenship and voter registration drives, the Spanish-language press encouraged political activism and civic participation through editorials and features on voting, citizenship, boycotts, immigration reform provisions, sanctuary cities, anti-immigrant ordinances and the first presidential debate to take place on Spanish-language television.

- A May 3, 2006 editorial in the Los Angeles newspaper *La Opinión* reminds its readers of the motto from the national immigration marches: “Hoy marchamos, mañana votamos!” (Today we march, tomorrow we vote.) “The marches were good, but nothing supplants the power of the vote,” editors write. “Only then are immigrants truly integrated and able to affect change in the most direct way possible.”
- An August 2006 commentary in the Milwaukee newspaper *El Conquistador* calls on Latinos who participated in the marches to change strategies, and focus on financially supporting and electing a candidate who supports a pathway for citizenship for millions of immigrants. The commentary calls for donations to the campaign of Democratic candidate Bryan Kennedy to replace Republican U.S. Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner.
- A Nov. 6, 2006 report from the Dallas newspaper *Al Día* notes that immigrants across the country have a lot at stake in the Nov. 7 elections. “Latino voters have the same concerns as the rest of Americans: better education, health care, and

better opportunities for their families and communities,” Arturo Vargas, NALEO executive director, told *Al Día*, “Nevertheless, Latinos want their voices heard in this intense debate over immigration.”

- A November 2006 feature in San Diego’s *Enlace* newspaper interviews young Latinos who are voting for the first time because of immigration reform. “My mother cannot voice her opinion, but I can do it for her,” Sonia Salazar told *Enlace*. “And maybe I can help other families, too,” she added, reflecting the theme of Spanish-language ads that encourage those who can vote to do so for their families.
- A July 2007 editorial in Milwaukee’s *El Conquistador* calls on immigrants to use their remaining weapon—their economic power—to advocate for immigration reform by directing their purchases toward businesses that support immigration reform.
- An editorial in the July 9, 2007 edition of *Atlanta Latino* states that immigrants should understand the U.S. political system: Instead of marching, it says, what works in this country is voting, contributing to political campaigns, calling and writing representatives, and making it clear to anti-immigrant broadcasters that immigrants will boycott their products if they don’t stop promoting racist language.

### 3. Political Criticism

Through editorials and news reports, the Spanish-language press criticized politicians and organizations that did not support immigrant rights and immigration reform, including Republicans and Democrats, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and President Bush, among others.

- A January 25, 2007 editorial in *La Opinión* notes that while President Bush was speaking to the country about the importance of immigration reform, among other topics, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents detained some 700 people in various raids in Southern California.
- A June 29, 2007 editorial in the Dallas Spanish-language *El Diario La Estrella* blames the failure of the immigration reform bill on “the stubbornness of a Republican majority.” “The undocumented will continue in the shadows... until those anti-immigrant legislators are replaced by others with a more humanist stance,” the editorial states.
- A June 29, 2007 editorial in *La Opinión* blames “nativist” Republicans and “the ignorant populism of radical radio commentators.” But they also point out that some Democrats voted against reform, including several who switched their votes in the last two days. *La Opinión* also points a finger at the AFL-CIO, saying that,

“in rejecting the guest worker program, the AFL-CIO neglected to give the benefit of the doubt to a project that could have helped millions of exploited workers.”

#### **4. Know Your Rights**

Spanish-language newspapers informed their readers about their legal rights in accessing services and under new local ordinances that crack down on undocumented immigrants, as well as what to do in the case of immigration raids.

- A September 7, 2006 article in Chicago’s Spanish-language *La Raza* newspaper provides information about a new pamphlet to aid immigrants in accessing state services.
- A series of articles in *Enlace* in October 2006 clearly explains the provisions of the new rental law passed in Escondido. According to one article, “Latino leaders say their biggest worry is not the ordinance itself, but the lack of information about it, especially in Spanish,” which led to fear and misinformation.
- An April 2007 report from the Washington, D.C., Spanish newspaper *El Pregonero* tells readers what to do in the case of a raid: if you are arrested; if you are undocumented; if the police come to your house; if immigration agents come to your work; and if you are stopped in the street.
- A June 27, 2007 article from Fresno’s bilingual newspaper *Vida en el Valle* provides information about a legal advice hotline for Mexican immigrants.
- A July 30, 2007 article in *La Opinión* tells readers how to locate relatives who have been detained by ICE.

### **B. Tracking the Anti-Immigrant Movement**

#### **1. Tracking Anti-Immigrant Bills**

Some 26 articles in the Spanish-language press focused on the growing number of anti-immigrant bills proposed in cities and states across the country. Most of these document the broader effects of these bills on all Latinos. Many point to the human effect of these ordinances, interviewing immigrants whose lives they affect, and showing that all Latinos—not just immigrants or undocumented immigrants—are impacted. Several articles also point out the economic impact as immigrants flee areas that have enacted such laws, such as Colorado and Farmers Branch, Tex.

- An October 19, 2006 article in *La Opinión* reports that Escondido was the first city in California to pass a measure prohibiting renting homes to undocumented

immigrants. According to one woman who spoke on condition of anonymity, all Latinos will be affected by this ordinance: even if they are legal, they may have a relative who is undocumented and that would be sufficient to be kicked out of their apartment, she said.

- A May 14, 2007 article in *Al Día* interviewed a man who was leaving Farmers Branch, Tex. after seven years, and held a garage sale hours after the measure passed in preparation for his family's move. "The hostility against Hispanics in Farmers Branch became more apparent with the ordinance, but it's been that way for a long time," he told *Al Día*. "Even if they don't enforce the law, the racism and scorn against Hispanics can only increase," he said.
- A June 28, 2007 article in Georgia's Spanish-language newspaper *Mundo Hispánico* reports that the new laws in Georgia will lead to greater racial profiling, increased fear among crime victims to seek help, and a negative impact on the state's economy as immigrants leave the state.

## 2. Raids, Detentions and Deportations

Eighteen articles from the Spanish-language press focused on immigration raids, detentions, or deportations. Several of these articles show the broader impact of raids on families, children, and the economy.

- A December 20, 2006 article from the San Antonio Spanish-language newspaper *Rumbo*, titled "The Raid that Changed Cactus, Texas," reports on a town that lost 10 percent of its population due to immigration raids, and is still reeling from the loss. The article describes the case of one pregnant woman who hid in her home for three days before coming out when she started having contractions. Volunteers at a local church brought her to safety. Her husband was one of the 295 persons arrested by ICE at the local Swift and Co. meatpacking plant. A spokesperson for the Church of St. Peter and Paul of Dumas told *Rumbo* Saturday that no representatives from Child Protective Services had shown up to look after the children of those deported.

Several articles document the fact that many of those who have been detained have no criminal record:

- A January 30, 2007 article in *Al Día* reports that a state program meant to stem drug and human trafficking is being used to deport immigrants after traffic stops. Of some 47 men, women and children held in a federal detention center in Dallas, 33 were victims of racial profiling after being pulled over by police for alleged traffic infractions according to the Mexican Consulate General.

The majority of articles about the detention of immigrants focuses on the poor, prison-like conditions of detention centers:



- A December 2006 article from *Rumbo*, titled “Bitter Christmas for Undocumented Children,” reports on minors who have to spend Christmas in a detention center in Nixon, Tex. Many of these young people came to the United States to escape violence and poverty, find a job, and often reunite with their families, *Rumbo* reports. But they often get depressed around the holidays because they believe they have failed.
- A February 13, 2007 article in *La Opinión* reports that more than 200 children of undocumented immigrants are living in jail-like conditions as their parents await deportation proceedings. Facilities like the T. Don Hutto Detention Center look like prisons, *La Opinión* reports, with high, windowless walls and razor-wire fencing. Children wear prison jumpsuits while guards stand watch. The federal government hired the Corrections Corporation of America to run the facilities in April 2006.
- A March 22, 2007 article in *Atlanta Latino* reports that immigrant detainees at the Stewart Detention Center staged a hunger strike to protest mistreatment and inadequate diet. One detainee who suffers from Parkinson’s Disease, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS told *Atlanta Latino* that it routinely takes two to four days to receive medical attention. Another man reported that no staff would help him when he had schizophrenic episodes.

### 3. A Look at Anti-Reform Latinos

Three articles look at the anti-undocumented immigration movement through the eyes of Latinos who oppose immigration reform.

- A feature article by Dennis Romero in the February/March 2006 issue of Los Angeles magazine *Tu Ciudad* examines the untold stories of Latinos who support a crackdown on illegal immigration.
- A May 2006 news report in *Vida en el Valle* interviews Latinos who are part of the anti-undocumented immigration group You Don’t Speak for Me.
- A March 5, 2007 article in *El Diario/La Prensa* reports on The People’s Alliance for Latino Advancement, a Latino group in Kansas that met with the Kansas Minutemen Civil Defense Corp. to discuss strategies to combat illegal immigration in the United States. Bob Hernandez, director of the Hispanic group, said Mexico should not be excused because it keeps salaries low and only serves the rich. “We want the U.S. to stop pandering to Mexico and for Mexico to take care of its people,” he said.

#### 4. The Racism Connection

A recurring theme throughout a number of articles was the racism, xenophobia and bigotry behind anti-immigrant ordinances. This was reflected in reports on racial profiling, fears among whites of a growing Latino community, and numerous interviews with residents who called measures that crack down on undocumented immigrants racist.

In addition to these, eleven articles from the Spanish-language press made an explicit connection between anti-immigrant groups and racists.

- A July 2006 commentary in San Diego's bilingual newspaper *La Prensa San Diego* is entitled "The Most Racist City in America - Hazleton, PA."
- An April 2, 2007 article in *La Opinión* reports that, according to the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center, existing guest worker programs resemble "modern-day slavery." Workers accrue debts to recruiters before they come to the country, do not earn promised wages, live in deficient housing and receive threats of deportation if they complain, according to the report.
- A May 11, 2007 editorial in *El Diario La Estrella* argues that the Farmers Branch, Tex. measure banning landlords from renting apartments to undocumented immigrants has done nothing but stir up anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobia.
- In an exclusive report for *El Diario/Prensa* on July 27, 2007, Cristina Loboguerrero reports that the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups are gathering in a public meeting with anti-immigrant groups in Morristown, N.J. to support the mayor's ordinance that would train the police to act as immigration agents.

#### 5. Anti-Immigrant Messages in Media

Only five articles show the role of the Spanish-language press as a watchdog of anti-immigrant messages in mainstream media, from Lou Dobbs to local radio shows. Several of these were written after the failure of immigration reform in the Senate.

- A March 15, 2007 editorial in *El Diario/La Prensa* protests as racist local radio show hosts the Jersey Guys, who called on their listeners to turn over suspected undocumented immigrants to authorities, in a campaign they called "Operation Rat-a-Rat/La Cuca-Gotcha." "This type of public call for vigilantism is especially troubling in the context of the increasing hate-crime violence directed at Hispanics in New Jersey over the past two years," editors write. *El Diario/La Prensa* reports having documented more than a dozen cases in which someone was attacked because they were Hispanic. "The Jersey Guys are not calling for this violence," editors add. "But to dehumanize someone is the first step towards

condoning violence against them.”

- An editorial in the May 3, 2007 edition of *El Diario/La Prensa* criticized CNN for posting a link on Lou Dobbs’ page on its website that directed visitors to an anti-immigrant group in Hazleton, P.A. “If CNN, a division of Time Warner, one of the largest corporations in the world, wants to advocate measures that drive poor, undocumented families out of their homes, that’s the network’s editorial prerogative,” the editorial argues. “But helping to fundraise for these efforts steps over a line traditionally observed by news organizations. Shame on you, CNN. It is bad practice and bad politics.” After receiving criticism by the National Institute for Latino Policy, CNN agreed to take down the link.
- A June 29, 2007 article by Pilar Marrero in *La Opinión* reports that, in the end, the opinion of the majority of Americans didn’t matter. Other messages took on greater importance, she writes: the anti-immigrant rhetoric of a handful of Republicans and “the mistreatment of immigrants, day after day, on English-language radio programs, in the afternoons with Lou Dobbs on CNN and even in ‘moderate’ media.”

## 6. The Spanish-English Debate

Four articles took on the debate over assimilation and bilingualism, responding to comments made by Newt Gingrich, Arnold Schwarzenegger and others, and defending the use of Spanish and challenge notions of assimilation.

A comment by former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, in which he compared Spanish-speakers to those who live in a “ghetto,” prompted a sharp outcry in the Spanish-language press.

- An April 6, 2007 commentary by Sergio Alférez in *La Opinión*, entitled “The Idiomatic Ghetto,” argues that knowledge of Spanish or any other language saves us from a greater, spiritual “ghetto.” “The person who can watch and understand the (English-language) news on Channel 7, but prefers that of (Spanish-language) Channels 34 or 52, has access to an amplitude of opinions and internal enrichment that is infinitely superior to that of someone who can only understand one language.” The “ghetto,” he adds, is where U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales lives, who, despite his clearly mestizo features, cannot communicate in Spanish with his peers in the Hispanic community.
- One week after Gingrich’s comments, Univision anchor Jorge Ramos wrote in his April 2007 syndicated column that the movement to make English the official language of the United States is “ridiculous.” “The United States is the only country I know where people are convinced that speaking only one language is better than speaking two or three.”

Calif. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's comment at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists' convention that Latinos should turn off their Spanish-language televisions and learn English also provoked strong reactions in the state's Hispanic press.



A June 2007 editorial in *La Opinión* writes that the governor used the false argument that Latino immigrants don't want to learn English. In fact, the editorial notes, there aren't enough adult English classes to meet immigrants' demand for them. The editorial also defended the importance of Spanish-language media: "The governor doesn't know the United States' long history with media that inform and help numerous immigrant groups in their language, groups that have gone on to enrich this nation."

One article takes these arguments a step further, examining the meaning of assimilation and challenging the notion that Latinos don't assimilate.

- Hiram Soto of *Enlace* writes in July 2007 that anti-immigrant forces used a common argument: the perception that Latinos are too different to assimilate, do not learn English, and are unraveling the fabric of the identity of a nation that was, ironically, created by immigrants. "Latinos are assimilating, but in their own way, keeping much of their identity," he writes. "Tamales at Christmas. Turkey and menudo at Thanksgiving. English at work and Spanish at home."

## C. Tracking the Immigrant Rights Movement

### 1. Perspectives on the Immigration Bill

Several articles presented critiques of the Senate's immigration bill, reflecting the divisions among immigrant rights groups that came out on opposite sides of the bill.

- An editorial in the May 18, 2007 edition of *El Diario/La Prensa* argues that the Senate's immigration bill does not make progress toward reform, but merely replaces one set of problems with another.
- However, despite their criticism of some of its provisions, the majority of articles in the Hispanic press supported passage of the bill, arguing that many of its flaws could have been addressed and improved in the legislation process.
- Syndicated columnist and Univision anchor Maria Elena Salinas wrote an open letter to the U.S. Senate in June 2007, calling for senators to move forward with immigration reform and advising them on how to navigate the debate without being "blinded by irrational anti-immigrant forces."
- A June 8, 2007 editorial in *La Opinión*, entitled "Painful Failure in Congress," notes that the immigration bill had many flaws, but the attraction of a path to legalization was an important reason to keep the bill alive. "It's a sad day for

millions of families who hoped to stop hiding, to be able to earn a decent salary, to live without the fear of deportation and to be able to enter and leave the country. In short, to live a normal life,” the editorial concludes. “This is a painful failure because it doesn’t help anything, other than continuing with an unjust system that exploits the undocumented.”

- A June 11, 2007 editorial in *El Diario/La Prensa* argues that by winning this skirmish (and seemingly killing the immigration proposal), the Republicans have won a Pyrrhic victory by which they risk alienating a whole generation of Latinos—much like with Proposition 187 in California—and invigorating citizenship and voter registration efforts.

## **2. Moral Argument/Role of Religion**

Two articles touched on a moral argument for immigration reform, calling deportations inhumane and reporting on marchers carrying signs that said, “No human being is illegal.” Six other articles explored the role of religious organizations in advocating for immigrant rights, from Catholic churches to Latino evangelical leaders that spoke out against deportations and offered sanctuary to immigrants including Elvira Arellano in Chicago.

## **3. Border Fence**

Two other articles took aim at the border fence proposal, using cultural, environmental, pragmatic and economic arguments, and refuting the link between immigrants and terrorists.

- An October 2006 article in *Rumbo* reports that the proposed border wall would divide three Native American nations that live there, and thus have devastating cultural and environmental effects on the area.
- Univision anchor Jorge Ramos calls the border wall a “700-mile mistake” in his Oct. 4, 2006 syndicated column. Ramos uses three arguments: pragmatism, economics, and countering the terrorism/national security claim. It is a “supreme naivety” to think that a 700-mile wall would prevent a hungry young person from reaching the United States, he writes. The illegal immigration problem is economic; he writes: as long as there is unemployment in Mexico and jobs in the United States, they will come. “The American government is confronting the subject of illegal immigration as if it were a war, and it isn’t. Mexico is not at war with the United States; the immigrants who cross to the north are not al Qaeda.”

#### 4. Covering Protests

Of the 51 articles tracking the immigrant rights movement, 37 covered the national immigration protests.

- On May 1, 2006, *La Opinión* posted as its front page a short statement: “We, the workers in the Hispanic media are immigrants. We are the children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren of immigrants. Our brothers and sisters are immigrants. To us, an America without immigrants is unimaginable: an empty page.” The statement appeared printed on a large white page, in Spanish and English. The same statement also ran in *La Opinión*’s sister newspaper, *La Raza* in Chicago.

#### D. Human Stories

The vast majority of articles from the Spanish-language press portrayed the human side of immigration, including interviews with people whose lives have been affected by immigration policy and anti-immigrant sentiments.

In addition to these, sixteen articles focused specifically on these human stories behind the raids, deportations, and immigration policies. Many of these centered on the experience of women, children, students, and families that were separated due to deportation.

- A May 17, 2006 article from *El Diario/La Prensa* reports on a group of Latina mothers whose children have been deported.
- In the November 2006 article “Love Unites Them, La Migra Separates Them,” San Jose Spanish-language newspaper *El Observador* reports on couples who have fallen in love and decided to marry, only to have one of the partners deported.
- A series of three articles from December 2006 in *El Diario/La Prensa* reports on the story of a young girl who was abused by coyotes and went missing for months.
- An April 2007 article from *La Prensa San Diego* tells the story of 16-year-old Leslie Muñoz whose parents were deported to Mexico. Now she takes care of her younger siblings while she balances bill paying, tax season, and mortgages with her honors classes.
- A May 28, 2007 article in *Al Día* reports that young undocumented college graduates can’t get jobs because of their immigration status. One young woman graduated last year from the University of North Texas with a 3.8 GPA and received 10 job offers for bilingual teaching positions. She could not accept any of them because she is undocumented. Students like Janet would have a chance to

become legal residents under the proposed Dream Act, *Al Día* reports.

## V. ANALYSIS

Immigration coverage in the Spanish-language press reflected the unique needs of its audiences. The mainstream media frame of the “immigrant striver,” for example, was largely absent from Spanish-language articles—not because they were any less aware of these stories, but because they did not need to convince their own audiences of a positive image of the hardworking immigrant.

Spanish-language coverage of immigration issues responded to the unique needs of Latinos and immigrants, from informing them of their legal rights under new anti-immigrant bills to mobilizing people to march in immigration rallies.

### **1. Hispanic media played a leadership role in mobilizing Latinos and advocating for their communities.**

The Spanish-language press was at the forefront of the immigration reform and immigrant rights movement, mobilizing millions of people to take to the streets in national immigration marches, urging immigrants to become citizens and register to vote, advocating on behalf of immigrants and informing people of their legal rights.

### **2. Hispanic press coverage focused on the human stories.**

One of the ways Spanish-language print media framed the immigration debate was by showing the human side of immigration. Articles on raids, deportations, and immigration policy often included interviews with immigrants—both legal and undocumented—whose lives have been affected by them. Several feature articles focused entirely on these human stories. Interestingly, many of these centered on the experience of women, children, students and families.

### **3. The Hispanic press made a connection between anti-immigrant messages and racism.**

Another recurring theme throughout a number of articles was the racism behind anti-immigrant ordinances. Some articles made an explicit link between anti-immigrant groups and racists. Many included interviews with residents who called the measures racist, or reported on incidents of racial profiling and other forms of discrimination surrounding immigration laws.

#### **4. The Hispanic press failed to respond in a clear, unified manner to the attacks on immigrants from conservative media.**

Despite the fact that they linked the anti-immigrant movement to racism, articles in Spanish-language newspapers did not present a clear, unified response to what they deemed racist messages.

“We Must Respond to the Lies” - An editorial in the July 27, 2007 edition of *La Opinión* presents a critical self-analysis of Spanish-language press coverage of immigration. “The defeat of the comprehensive and humane changes to immigration laws was the triumph of a deafening slander that never met much resistance,” editors write. “The marches were impressive; the collection of signatures demonstrated that getting out the vote is crucial for the future. However, there was no response to the hysterical lies promoted by conservative hosts on talk radio. The repeated lies—from comparing the law to an amnesty, to blaming undocumented immigrants for all the ills of society—were not challenged at the same level, and they convinced thousands to pressure their senators to reject reform. The lesson is that we must respond to these talk shows, unite in an effort to confront them concretely and not allow this to happen again.”

Hispanic media presented largely reactive coverage of immigration policy, showing how people were affected by the raids and deportations. They did not frame the debate in cultural terms, as did opponents of immigration reform.

Speaking at the National Council of La Raza’s 2007 conference in Miami, NCLR President and CEO Janet Murguía said, “We thought we were having a debate on immigration policy. But it was really a debate about who decides what it means to be an American.” While Latinos have been trying hard to be civil and fair, she said, “some of our opponents have taken a different tack,” using hatred and bigotry. “Take this statement, quoted in the Washington Post: ‘Man, I didn’t realize how many Mexicans there were here. If we don’t get control over this, pretty soon all of America will be outnumbered.’ That doesn’t sound like a policy debate to me. That sounds like fear, ignorance, bigotry, and hate.”

The Hispanic press did not, for the most part, reframe the debate as an inter-ethnic issue or focus on the ways immigration policies affect all ethnic groups.

Spanish-language coverage made the immigration issue broader than just about the undocumented—showing how it would affect all Latinos—but largely failed to widen the lens to include the struggles of other ethnicities, including the black civil rights movement.

There are, however, several notable exceptions to this:

- A series on black-brown tensions in Los Angeles by Pilar Marrero in the April 16-18, 2006 editions of *La Opinión* compared the struggles of blacks and Latinos.



- Spanish-language coverage of the national immigration rallies included the diversity of marchers, including African Americans, Asians and other non-Latinos.
- “Time for Another March on Washington” – An op-ed in the May 10, 2006 edition of *El Diario/La Prensa* calls on immigrants to lead a march in Washington for dignity, in the same spirit as the 1963 march led Martin Luther King, Jr. “Latinos, Chinese, Poles, Indians, African Americans, we are workers and we are brothers,” writes Machuca. “We are fighting together against discrimination.”

Only a handful of articles addressed the economic contributions of immigrants, countering arguments made by anti-immigrant groups that immigrants take the jobs of Americans or cost the state money in education, health and social services.

One of the few articles to address the economics of immigration was a May 6, 2007 article in *La Prensa San Diego* that reported that undocumented graduates could fill the shoes of retiring baby boomers.

The Hispanic press did not clearly convey the importance of immigration reform to the broader American public. This is, in part, because articles were directed at an audience that already supported immigration reform and, because most were in Spanish, were not accessible to the English-speaking public.

“Accepting Blame for Immigration Reform Failure” – A July 25, 2007 article in *La Opinión* reports on the mistakes made by groups that supported comprehensive immigration reform. According to Nilda Pedroza, spokesperson for Florida Republican Senator Mel Martínez, “We haven’t done a good job explaining to the rest of the country why immigration reform is important for them too.”

## **Recommendations for Advocates Working with the Hispanic Press**

### **1. Reframe the debate.**

Advocates must work with media, advocacy groups and strategists to develop a clear, unified message to respond to the attacks on immigrants from conservative media. In the immigration debate, advocates of reform must not only respond but must reframe the debate.

### **2. Present a unified front.**

Advocates must work with media to develop a central message. One of the reasons many Democratic Senators voted against immigration reform in 2007 was the perception that Latino organizations were not united in their support for comprehensive immigration reform.

**3. Integrate and participate.**

Advocates must work with media to continue to support voter mobilization efforts and Latino participation in American civic, social and economic life.

**4. Widen the lens.**

To pass immigration reform, its supporters must win over the larger American public. Advocates must work with media to reframe the debate as inter-ethnic, showing the rest of the country that immigration reform is not just about Latinos, but affects everyone.

**5. Make the economic argument.**

The future of the U.S. economy depends on immigrants, and this economic argument has been largely absent from the national immigration debate. Advocates must work with media to show that immigration reform is not only a question of justice; it is also a question of economics. Its repercussions extend to all sectors of our country and our economy. Hispanic pollster Sergio Bendixen has been a key advocate of this economic argument, predicting that migrants will become the most important “commodity” of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**APPENDIX I**

Al Día (Dallas) – Spanish-language daily sister paper of the Dallas Morning News  
Atlanta Latino (Norcross, Ga.) – Bilingual weekly Georgia newspaper  
Diario La Estrella (Fort Worth) – Spanish-language weekly sister paper of Star-Telegram  
Eastern Group Publications (Los Angeles) – Bilingual weekly independent chain  
EFE (nationally syndicated) – Spanish-language news service based in Spain  
El Conquistador (Milwaukee) – Spanish-language weekly community newspaper  
El Diario/La Prensa (New York) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (ImpreMedia)  
El Mensajero (San Francisco) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (ImpreMedia)  
El Nuevo Herald (Miami) – Spanish-language daily sister paper of The Miami Herald  
El Observador (San Jose) – Bilingual weekly independent newspaper  
El Pregonero (Washington, D.C.) – Spanish-language weekly community newspaper  
El Sentinel (Orlando) – Spanish-language weekly sister paper of Florida Sun Sentinel  
El Tecolote (San Francisco) – Bilingual biweekly community newspaper  
El Tiempo Latino (Arlington, Va.) – The Washington Post’s Spanish-language weekly  
Enlace (San Diego) – Bilingual weekly sister paper of San Diego Union-Tribune  
Hispanic Business (Santa Barbara) – English-language national monthly magazine  
Hispanic Link (Washington, D.C.) – English-language national newsweekly  
Hoy (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles) – Spanish-language daily (Tribune, ImpreMedia)  
La Opinión (Los Angeles) – Spanish-language daily newspaper (ImpreMedia)  
La Prensa (Riverside) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (The Press-Enterprise Co.)  
La Prensa (South Florida) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (ImpreMedia)  
La Prensa San Diego (San Diego) – Bilingual weekly community newspaper  
La Raza (Chicago) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper (ImpreMedia)  
La Voz del Pueblo (Lilburn, Ga.) – Spanish-language weekly community newspaper  
Latino News (Gadsden, Ala.) – Spanish-language weekly community newspaper  
Rumbo (San Antonio) – Spanish-language Texas newspaper chain (Meximerica Media)  
Tu Ciudad (Los Angeles) – English-language magazine  
Univision Online (nationally syndicated) – Columns printed in Spanish-language papers  
Vida en el Valle (Fresno) – Bilingual weekly sister paper of the Fresno Bee  
Washington Hispanic (Washington, D.C.) – Spanish-language weekly newspaper