

STATEMENT
BY
THE RAZA ASSOCIATION OF SPANISH SURNAMED AMERICANS
(RASSA)
TO THE
REPUBLICAN PLATFORM COMMITTEE
MIAMI, FLORIDA

On behalf of the Raza Association of Spanish Surnamed Americans (RASSA)

I would like to thank the Republican Platform Committee for this opportunity to present our views.

On June 26, 1972 the Raza Association of Spanish Surnamed Americans presented a similar position paper to the Democratic Platform Committee and we were successful in having most of it incorporated into their national platform.

We are confident that the Republican party can become to the more than fourteen million Americans with Spanish Surnames a national political party that will demonstrate a new and sincere commitment by effectively responding to our needs.

The Raza Association of Spanish Surnamed Americans is a permanent, national, non-partisan organization engaged in effective legislative and administrative advocacy and lobbying for the needs of the more than fourteen million Spanish-speaking/Spanish Surnamed Americans in this country. The needs of our community are monumental and too numerous to adequately cover in the time allotted. We will, therefore, present some issues which are realistically attainable given the present political climate.

I. Bilingual/Bicultural Programming

Our purpose is to strive for a truly pluralistic society that respects the language and culture of all peoples. To that end, we want what we call Federal Bilingual/Bicultural Programming. It is not enough to have

a federal program that simply allows some school districts to institute token Spanish language instruction. We need a truly bilingual and bicultural approach in all social and educational programming. This means that every Head Start Project, every Job Corp Center, every Neighborhood Youth Corps Project, every Manpower Program, every Adult Basic Education Class, every Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and all the numerous other programs that deal with Spanish-speaking/Spanish Surnamed people must be bilingual and bicultural.

11. Bilingual Federal Districts

RASSA favors Federal legislation similar to that adopted by Canada to deal with its French speaking citizens. Such legislation might take the form of the creation of Federal Bilingual Districts. These districts would become operative in areas where 10% or more of the population speaks a language other than English. These districts would institute the following procedures:

- a. Simultaneous translation of all court proceedings into the other indigenous language.
- b. The recruitment of new Federal employees would be based on the ability to speak both languages.
- c. One of the requirements for advancement and promotion of all Federal employees in that area would be based on the ability to communicate in that other language.
- d. All official publications for those districts would be printed in both languages.
- e. Guidelines for all Federal programs in these areas would require the employment of bilingual personnel and a bilingual/bicultural approach.

III. Statistical Data

Our people have often been referred to as the "invisible minority". This lack of visibility is encouraged by the absence or inaccurate collection of data pertaining to our community by the present Federal agencies. As a first step towards eliminating this invisibility, we request specific policy changes within the following federal agencies:

A. Population Statistical Data

1. The U.S. Bureau of the Census should begin identifying the Spanish speaking community with an ethnic breakdown of at least four categories which include (1) Mexican Americans, (2) Puerto Ricans, (3) Cubans, and (4) Latin Americans (those not originally from Mexico).
2. The Census reporting forms sent to heads of Spanish Surnamed households should be printed in both English and Spanish.
3. Census takers should be bilingual in those areas where the English language is not the only language spoken.

B. Employment and Income Statistical Data

1. The Bureau of Labor Statistics should begin reporting current unemployment and income data of the Spanish Surnamed community with an ethnic breakdown of at least the four categories as recommended to the Census Bureau in section III,A1.

C. Health Statistical Data

The National Center for Health Statistics within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare since 1940 has not recorded the major health problems of the Spanish Surnamed community. We know by their records that heart disease is a major killer of the Anglo white; we know through their records that the Negro is the select victim of

I now will quote from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' report entitled "Mexican-Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest, March, 1970. "The Commission's investigations showed that belief in law enforcement prejudice is widespread and is indicative of a serious problem of police community relations between the police and Mexican-Americans in the Southwest". (page 13)

The Civil Rights legislation on the books continues to be an unfulfilled promise to the Spanish Surnamed community. Grand and petit juries in the Southwest continue to be unrepresentative of the Mexican-American population. Recourse against hostility and abuse by law enforcement officials is non-existent and often times dangerous to the Mexican-American citizen. These injustices must be ended at once, and RASSA firmly requests from the Republican party a specific and affirmative commitment towards the implementation of the recommendations urged within the text of the Federal government's own U.S. Commission of Civil Rights' report of 1970-Mexican-Americans and the Administration of Justice in the Southwest.

VI. Elimination of Poverty

The fact of poverty in the midst of plenty is pathetic and a shameful disgrace to all responsible and sensitive Americans. We call for strengthening of the poverty and other social programs including full funding and the strong participation by the poor. At the present time, no one, including those that manage the programs themselves have an idea of how the poverty programs are affecting the Spanish-speaking poor. The managers of these poverty programs cannot tell you or me in terms of dollars and cents how these monies are benefiting the Spanish-speaking communities throughout the country. It appears that even in programs designed for the Spanish-speaking poor, it is anyone's guess if our people are truly the recipients.

We call for the utilization of community organizations that are controlled by our people in implementing these programs in our community. But this is not enough. The unemployment rate of Mexican Americans is more than twice that of the Anglo, and throughout the Southwest as a whole more than a third of Mexican American families live in "official" poverty on incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. In South Texas, over 50% of our families live in poverty. Yet, hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens and "legal" green card workers come across the border to take our jobs.

The American immigration policy cannot continue to be a function of the American economic policy at the expense of the Spanish Surnamed/Spanish-speaking population.

But even if we do all this, it will not be enough unless we address ourselves to the fact that this country has a regressive tax system where the poor pay a greater percentage of their income than the rich. This system must be overhauled immediately, not in piecemeal reform, but in a complete overhaul.

We support a different approach to funding public school systems as called for in two cases now before the Supreme Court whose plaintiffs are, incidentally, Mexican-American. If the judicial approach to this problem fails to obtain redress, we call for Federal legislation to deal with this inequity.

Through RASSA, we intend to closely monitor the implementation of our recommendations by all decision-makers and to convey the responsiveness or the lack of same to our community. No longer will we be called upon at election time for our views only to be forgotten after November.