



**Litigation and Advocacy Efforts that Impacted Midwest Latinos:
Past Challenges and Future Possibilities**

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I. Introduction

To understand legal and advocacy efforts that have impacted Latinos in the Midwest, it is important to frame the discussion within a context of critical forces and tensions that have shaped the Latino experience during the last few decades. One critical tension is the dramatic growth in Latino presence in large urban centers like Chicago, with its strong Latino history and roots, in contrast with the more recent Latino emergence in smaller towns and municipalities, not always welcoming of this new population. Each context demanded a separate strategy that in some cases necessitated litigation, the threat of litigation, or advocacy to ensure even the most basic rights for Latinos.

However, litigation is difficult, expensive and generally requires advocates and attorneys able to appropriately challenge the status quo. These two groups are the key to success because righting a wrong involves challenges to laws or policies enacted by the federal government, state

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governments, towns or municipalities, and even county governments. Successful litigation requires persons who are harmed to assert their rights, because under legal principles, only persons with “standing” can challenge alleged unlawful policies or practices. Moreover, even if a person with standing is willing to assert their rights, government institutions have deep pockets and a cadre of attorneys, who are well versed in the law and able to zealously advocate for their client(s). Unfortunately, the sheer number of issues and challenges facing Latinos makes it impractical to pursue litigation as the sole strategy, which is why vigilance and advocacy by community leaders to ensure the protection of Latino rights have been and continue to be necessary.

In large urban centers, important early legal victories in the Midwest saw non-Latino organizations and Latinos willing to stand up and “do the right thing.” These organizations worked with Latino communities and served as their initial legal advocates. They also provided support for the first generation of Latino advocates and attorneys who carried the immeasurable burden of being the “first” in the community to fight for the rights of Latinos—many who were, and to this day remain, unsung heroes of the struggle. These early pioneers selflessly helped others, usually for little to no pay, and are likely unknown to many or most of today’s Latino leaders. Their names are not in history books and likely never will be. But, because of their sacrifices, today Latinos are no longer relegated to the sidelines. Many Latinos now lead key government and non-government institutions in our community; many are leaders in business and labor, and because of their large numbers, some hold leadership positions in these organizations—they are now the “decision-makers” in a plethora of fields.

To understand the Latino experience in the Midwest also requires an appreciation of the nonlinear trajectory of progress characterized by numerous ups and downs. While the

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demographic growth and increased presence of the Latino population in the Midwest² offered opportunities to thousands of persons, it also caused conflict and led to push-back from systems and structures resistant to change and inclusion. The Latino presence challenged the status quo, and at times fueled waves of backlash that required legal action. Nonetheless, because of successful efforts in law and policy, we have seen slow but steady progress toward greater justice for Latinos.

This paper seeks to provide the reader with a glimpse into key litigation and advocacy efforts that impacted Midwestern Latinos.³ This snapshot is incomplete and is by no means exhaustive. It is provided through the lens of those whose background and experience was no different than that of others who fought for the rights of Latinos—advocates who sacrificed their time and talent, not to seek fame or fortune, but because they knew that by helping others, they would ultimately benefit the greater community. To be clear, while no paper can fully address the many issues Midwest Latinos have faced and the multiple contributions its advocates forged, it is nevertheless important to reflect on some accomplishments and identify the way forward. When reviewing the past, it is important to note that the inevitable inability of persons to recall all relevant key events or facts, some of which may have been the initial catalyst or spark that led to the progress, makes it virtually impossible to tell a complete story. Nevertheless, through this paper, we wish to identify some of the challenges and efforts that were encountered and

² During the early settlement days, advocacy and leadership strategies became an important source of support for Latinos. Today, places like Marshalltown, Iowa and Garden City, Kansas have substantial permanent Latino populations and are much more integrated. See <http://www.timesrepublican.com/page/content.detail/id/526911/Marshall-County-s-Hispanic-population-continues-to-grow.html>.

³ During the course of researching this paper, the authors or their assistants, including Robert Nelson and Samantha Fenton, interviewed a number of Latino advocates in order to obtain oral histories. The advocates were generally asked the same series of questions, such as: what were the biggest or most pressing legal issues facing the Latino community during the time you were growing up; how do you think the work you did was able to assist the Latino community; what organizations or people were also assisting the community; how have things changed for Midwest Latinos; and what are you most proud of having accomplished as an advocate. References to their comments or observations will be cited as: Interview of (name of Interviewee) conducted on (date of interview).

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undertaken to improve the lives of Midwest Latinos. Through critical areas such as language rights, political access, education, employment and immigrant rights, this paper will highlight how past litigation and advocacy efforts impacted Midwestern Latinos. We end this paper with a reminder that Latinos continue to face challenges and unabashed negative rhetoric that threatens their rights. Without a coordinated strategy and infrastructure to move forward, yesterday's successes will be tomorrow's losses.

II. The Land of Opportunity and Language Challenges

The increase of the Latino population in the Midwest was driven by the desire of a better life, a desire no different than for prior immigrant groups arriving in the United States.⁴ For many Latinos, the Midwest was the land of opportunity—a place to obtain a good paying job, and one that would offer a better future for their family. Some Latino families came from the South and Southwest to escape the seasonal and often back-breaking work of migrant farming, while others arrived to perform this work, often in the rural areas of the Midwest. Other waves of Latinos came later to work in the meat packing companies of Iowa, Nebraska, and elsewhere and eventually became integrated into the local community.

With their arrival, new Latinos also brought with them their culture and language. In fact, the inability to communicate in English, often with regard to obtaining even the most basic government services, helped spark initial waves of litigation. These efforts were generally led by the small but growing group of newly licensed Spanish-speaking Latino attorneys and the non-profit organizations whose mission included helping low income and vulnerable populations.

⁴ See *A Nation of Immigrants*, John F. Kennedy (1964).

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In the Chicagoland area, the majority of first⁵ generation Spanish-speaking attorneys began getting licensed in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶ Although this group was small, they were committed to using their newly obtained legal privilege to help the Latino community.⁷ The initial group of Latino attorneys was also involved in helping form local chapters of national Latino organizations, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens, commonly referred to as LULAC.⁸ Through LULAC chapters, Latino attorneys and non-attorneys focused on voter registration efforts, education issues, and sought to increase political representation.⁹ In some cases, these attorneys were often the only Spanish speakers local judges could turn to when community members appeared before the courts, unable to communicate because of language barriers.¹⁰ Thus, it is of little surprise that many initial litigation battles involved efforts seeking to protect the rights of Latinos through language rights (national origin) litigation.

Among those who led the efforts to protect Latino rights were attorneys for organizations such as the Legal Assistance Foundation of Illinois (LAF). These attorneys sought change through class action litigation and these efforts helped change the landscape for many Latinos,

⁵ The John Marshall Law School admitted William E. Rodriguez as its first Latino. Mr. Rodriguez graduated law school in 1912 and is recognized as the first Illinois Latino attorney. In 1915, he was also the first Latino to be elected to the Chicago City Council. See <http://news.jmls.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Rodriguez-Nov27.pdf>.

⁶ The first major wave of modern day Latinos admitted to the Illinois bar began in the 1960s and included trailblazers such as David Cerda, who later served as the first Latino judge on the Illinois Court of Appeals. In fact, it was Judge Cerda who helped advocate for opening the Chicago office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, an organization that had been formed in 1968 to protect the rights of Latinos living in the United States. Judge Cerda also mentored countless young attorneys, including Virginia Martinez, Illinois' first female Latina attorney who would subsequently become MALDEF's first Midwest Regional Counsel and would return in the mid-2000s to serve as its legislative attorney. Interview of Virginia Martinez, April 15, 2016.

⁷ Many Latino attorneys helped protect the rights of Spanish-speaking clients in a variety of individual circumstances, including real estate and contract matters. Interview of Mark Lopez, April 15, 2016.

⁸ See *La Causa Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, ed. Gilberto Cárdenas (2004) at p. 6; Interview of Mark Lopez, April 15, 2016.

^{9,9} See *La Causa*, Cárdenas, at p.6; Interview of Mark Lopez, April 15, 2016

¹⁰ According to current Cook County Circuit Judge Mark Lopez, whose father was one of the initial Spanish-speaking Latinos attorneys in the Chicagoland area, unfortunately, "if you didn't speak the language, the court system was simply not equipped to provide an interpreter and you [as a litigant] did not have many options." In fact, Judge Lopez recalls his father and others told him that in the 1960s, judges would recommend Latino lawyers to Spanish-speaking litigants because the judges did not know who else to call and because there were no legal service agencies at the time equipped for non-English speakers." Interview of Mark Lopez, April 15, 2016.

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often resulting in consent decrees setting forth future obligations of state agencies. Under the various consent decrees, these agencies agreed to such things as: provide Latinos the right to obtain basic services in their own language and hire bilingual workers.

One of the early battles LAF embarked on involved Latino children. Specifically, the plaintiffs in *Burgos*¹¹ targeted the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and argued that DCFS, its administrators and agencies were administering child placement and social services programs in a manner such that Latino families were being excluded from full participation and were being denied certain benefits.¹² The matter was eventually settled via a consent decree. The *Burgos* consent decree required DCFS for the first time to track ethnicity and language, to translate and provide all communications, notices, and forms in Spanish and to ensure that Latino clients know their rights.¹³ Ultimately, the *Burgos* plaintiffs continued to go to court in subsequent years seeking compliance and securing additional agreed orders.¹⁴

Other class action lawsuits followed *Burgos*, many also resulting in consent decrees in which the defendants agreed to offer services to plaintiffs in their native language. For example, the *Perdomo* consent decree provided Latinos eligible for federal assistance the opportunity to communicate with staff in Spanish.¹⁵ Specifically, the *Perdomo* consent decree required the

¹¹ *Burgos v. DCFS*, No. 75 C 3974 (N.D. Ill. 1975). This class action was filed in 1975 by several Puerto Rican parents in the Chicago area, who alleged that their children were discriminated against by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and they sought injunctive relief under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See <http://www.clearinghouse.net/detail.php?id=12407>

¹² See 1977 *Burgos* consent decree at <http://www.clearinghouse.net/chDocs/public/CW-IL-0008-0001.pdf>. In the most egregious example, DCFS would place Latino children in their custody in non-Spanish speaking homes, where the children would lose their identity and Spanish language capacity, breaking family bonds, and making it impossible for children to reintegrate successfully to their Latino family of origin. Ultimately, the *Burgos* plaintiffs settled and via a consent decree, DCFS agreed to place Spanish-speaking children with Spanish-speaking families, and employ bilingual staff and language policies to ensure Latino families could access basic family services.

¹³ On December 4, 1991, United States District Judge James B. Zagel entered an agreed order assigning a court appointed monitor to review compliance and enter recommendations concerning steps necessary to achieve compliance with the *Burgos* consent decree.

¹⁴ See, "Wanted: Spanish speakers as foster parents; Decades after lawsuit, DCFS shortages persist," by Ofelia Casillas, *Chicago Tribune*, 7 May 2006.

¹⁵ See *Perdomo v. Trainor*, No. 74 C 2972 (N.D. Ill. 1974).

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predecessor of the Illinois Department of Human Services to maintain a Cook County office designated as the “Spanish Service Unit” now known as the IDHS Office of Latino Affairs, to assist Spanish-speaking applicants, recipients, and persons regarding aid and services.¹⁶

In a separate matter, more than ten years later, the plaintiffs in *Quiñones* were represented by LAF and settled their case via another consent decree.¹⁷ The *Quiñones* complaint alleged that Illinois did not provide adequate bilingual services to Spanish-speaking persons applying for food stamps, including seasonal farmworkers.¹⁸ The *Quiñones* consent decree required the state to, among other things, translate all forms and certification materials and revise the agency’s rights and responsibilities pamphlet. Furthermore, it also required state employees to use only bilingual material with language certification and prohibited the use of minors or persons in waiting rooms as interpreters.¹⁹

However, by the mid-1990s, restrictions imposed on organizations such as LAF, prohibited the use of federal funds to support class action litigation.²⁰ This restriction led communities to turn to organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)²¹ and other organizations. Although MALDEF had been founded in

¹⁶ See *Perdomo* Consent Decree.

¹⁷ Specifically the complaint alleged that the IDHS (then “IDPA”) failed to implement the bilingual requirements of the Food Stamp Act and its implementing regulations in administering the Food Stamp Program in Illinois. *Quiñones v. Suter*, No. 86 C 5712 (N.D. Ill. 1989).

¹⁸ See *Quiñones* Consent Decree.

¹⁹ The state also agreed to increase interpreter/translation services in offices where there was a high concentration of Spanish speakers. *Quiñones* also helped establish the first bilingual staff language certification program.

²⁰ See <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/archive/0023.pdf>.

²¹ A number of former MALDEF staff later moved on to serve in a variety of key positions, including John Trasvina. Mr. Trasvina worked at MALDEF in the early 1980s and later went on to serve as U.S. Senator Paul Simon’s General Counsel and Staff Director for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution. On behalf of Senator Simon, Mr. Trasvina helped organize a judicial selection advisory committee to identify a more talented and diverse set of judicial prospects. Through this new process, Ruben Castillo was selected as the first Latino United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Prior to being selected for the bench, Judge Castillo served Regional Counsel for MALDEF’s Midwest Office. Judge Castillo currently serves as Chief Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Senator Simon, according to Mr. Trasvina, had a strong commitment to the Latino community and helped push for diversity among judicial nominees by encouraging minorities to apply for the bench. Interview of John Trasvina, April 13, 2016.

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1968, its Chicago-based Midwest Regional Office did not open until 1980, and then was initially created with the single focus to make certain Latinos were counted during the 1980 Census efforts. Almost immediately following the Census, it became clear that legal services were desperately needed in the Midwest, and MALDEF opened its litigation doors. It has operated a regional office in the Midwest since that time. Other local community-based organizations, including the Latino Institute in the 1980s and 1990s, and now the Latino Policy Forum, along with many other organizations, have also helped advocate for Latinos living in the Midwest.²²

The 1980 Census definitively showed the Latino community had grown quickly and was continuing to increase dramatically in population. However, this demographic change did not automatically translate into political power, Latinos had to assert their federal voting rights. This again required more organization and more litigation.

III. The “Snowsuit” Community and the Push for Latino Political Access

In 1970, the growing Latino population led to efforts at obtaining additional political representation. During this time period, a group of Latinos unsuccessfully challenged the ward map adopted by the Chicago City Council. Although the court that heard the legal challenge held that “the failure to include certain areas of blacks or Puerto Ricans caused them no discernible loss of voting strength,” this legal challenge represented a turning point signaling that the Latino community would no longer stand idle when it came to political representation and voting rights.²³

²² The Latino Institute was founded in 1974 after a group of Latino activists challenged the Chicago Commons Association. It also spawned groups like Latinos United, now Latino Policy Forum, and successfully lobbied the Chicago School Board to amend its bilingual education policy. *See* http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-08-01/news/9808010098_1_latino-community-troubled-institute-united-neighborhood-organization

²³ *See La Causa Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, (2004) at p. 20.

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By 1980, the Latino population in the Chicagoland area had increased exponentially. After the 1980 census, Latinos represented 14% of Chicago's total population and 5.56% of Illinois' population. Despite this fact, no Latino had been elected to a Chicago City Council seat since Mr. William E. Rodriguez in 1915, and no Latino from Illinois had ever been elected to the Illinois General Assembly or to the United States Congress. After the 1980 Census, Latino led organizations and individual members of the community began coming together to identify persons willing to serve as plaintiffs in a lawsuit aimed at increasing Latino political representation. Various groups of Latino organizations helped MALDEF develop a map, including Miguel Del Valle, who at the time served as director of a Latino nonprofit organization called Association House. Mr. Del Valle was very instrumental in working with other groups and supporting the litigation efforts led by MALDEF attorneys Virginia Martinez and Ray Romero, as well as other attorneys representing progressive interests.²⁴ Mr. Del Valle eventually agreed to serve as lead plaintiff. Through these efforts, Latinos were now visibly and actively protecting their community and demanding their rights under the federal voting rights laws. Eventually, litigation efforts led to a court approved settlement which adopted a map creating four majority Latino city wards. As a result, in 1986, special elections were held, increasing the total number of Latino aldermen from one to four.²⁵

At the state level, Latinos again had to resort to litigation to obtain their voting rights. In 1982, Latinos challenged the state Legislative Redistricting Commission's plan because the approved plan split up the two largest Latino concentrations in Chicago into several house and

²⁴ Interview of Ray Romero, April 18, 2016. Mr. Romero recalls that Miguel del Valle and Jesus "Chuy" Garcia were leading the efforts at a time when no other Latino elected officials were involved, Miguel del Valle was elected as the first Latino State Senator and Jesus "Chuy" Garcia as city alderman, later state representative and now serves as Cook County Commissioner.

²⁵ See *La Causa Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, Cárdenas (2004) at p. 22.

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senate districts.²⁶ The Latino community contended that although Commissioner Martin Murphy and Representative Michael J. Madigan (map drawers) were aware of the sizable Latino population centers –“they intentionally fractured both Hispanic communities by dividing each community among four separate legislative districts.” Interestingly, in explaining why they divided the Latino community, Murphy and Madigan stated that these districts were designed to “accommodate future growth and migration patterns which they allege[d] are characteristic of these Hispanic communities.” In addition, as noted in the court decision:

“Commissioner Murphy analogized this justification to buying a snowsuit for a young child — purchasing a suit several sizes larger than the growing child’s present dimensions is warranted in order to allow the child to grow into the suit and thus prolong its use.”²⁷

MALDEF, on behalf of its clients, retorted:

“no other racial, ethnic or political group was fitted to ‘snowsuit’ districts and that the Commission’s actions served to exacerbate existing underrepresentation of [Latino] interests in the General Assembly.”²⁸

Eventually, the parties reached a settlement in which Latinos constituted sufficient majorities in House District 20, House District 9, House District 10, and Senate District 5.²⁹

²⁶ See *Rybicki et al. v. State Board of Elections, et al.*, 574 F. Supp. 1082, 1123 (1982).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

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On the federal side, it would take another decade before Latinos were finally able to gain traction on voting rights. The 1990 Census results revealed that the Latino population had increased to over 19% in Chicago and over 7% in Illinois, yet it had no congressional district. Again, the community had to resort to litigation and it was through these efforts that the first Latino majority-minority congressional district in Illinois (Fourth Congressional District) was created.³⁰ After the 1990 Census, advocacy efforts also helped convince the Illinois Redistricting Commission to adopt a map that contained eight Latino majority house districts and four Latino majority senate districts, which also resulted in the creation of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus. During the 1990s, litigation was also needed to enforce minority voting rights in county government, this time in Kane County, Illinois.³¹

Latino representation at the city and state level were not the only challenges facing the Latino community. While parents faced language challenges, so too did their children. In fact, despite a United State Supreme Court decision requiring states to educate children regardless of immigration status, some Midwest parents continued to have trouble securing seats in the classroom for their children.

IV. Our Children – The Push for Equal Educational Opportunities

For Spanish-speaking Latinos, obtaining an education while also trying to master English was not always an easy feat. Between the 1920s and 1960s, education resources were limited and

³⁰ See, *Hastert et al. v. State Board of Elections*, 777 F. Supp. 634 (1991).

³¹ See “Hispanic group threatens to sue over Kane County Board map,” by Hal Dardick, *Chicago Tribune*, 6 December 1991; “Negotiations scheduled on Kane County Board map,” by Hal Dardick, *Chicago Tribune*, 10 December 1991; “Hispanic group asks court to throw out Kane remap,” by Linda Young, *Chicago Tribune*, 3 January 1992; “Kane map OK with Hispanics,” by Linda Young, *Chicago Tribune*, 8 January 1992.

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“sink or swim,” models of education for non-native English speaking students were the norm.³² However, that changed when educators and the federal government began to recognize the value of bilingual education. Through the federal Bilingual Education Act, followed by Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as well as the 1974 United State Supreme Court decision of *Lau v. Nichols*,³³ federal law clearly recognized the importance of educating non-English speaking students. In *Lau*, the Court noted that the requirement to know English was such that students who did not understand English were “effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.”³⁴ Nevertheless, despite clear obligations to provide students with meaningful educational opportunities, regardless of their immigration status, the Midwest faced challenges offering Latino children their lawful rights, including as it related to undocumented children.

In *Plyler v. Doe*,³⁵ the United States Supreme Court noted the importance of education for all when it stated the “American people have always regarded education and [the] acquisition of knowledge as matters of supreme importance.”³⁶ The *Plyler* Court recognized “the public schools as a most vital civic institution for the preservation of a democratic system of government,” and as the primary vehicle for transmitting “the values on which our society rests.” *Plyler* involved the state of Texas’ decision to withhold state funds for educating children who had not been legally admitted to the United States and to authorize schools to deny enrollment to these students. In reversing the state’s decision, the Court found that the Texas law was:

³² See “History of Language Minority Students,” Malakoff and Hakuda in *Advances in Language Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*, eds. Padilla, Fairchild & Valadez (1990).

³³ *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 1981.

³⁶ *Id.*

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“directed against children, and impose[d] its discriminatory burden on the basis of a legal characteristic over which children can have little control” — namely, the fact of their having been brought illegally into the United States by their parents.

The Court also noted that denying the children a proper education would likely contribute to “the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries. . .” Despite the *Plyler* decision, in the Midwest, year after year, school districts continued to deny this category of children the right to an education, quite often on the basis that their parents were unable to produce certain “papers.”³⁷ Moreover, in the mid-1980s, litigation against the Illinois state agency tasked with providing children with their right to a bilingual education was necessary.³⁸ In addition, during this same time period, litigation was also advanced to protect against the alleged misuse of funds intended for economically disadvantaged children, many of whom were Latino.³⁹

In 2006, education advocates had to challenge a suburban school district’s decision to equate speaking Spanish with bullying.⁴⁰ And, although the suburban school district promptly apologized,⁴¹ this treatment revealed that Latinos still faced many obstacles. In fact, in a 2007 matter, the Illinois State Board of Education had to take action to ban schools’ immigration

³⁷ See Letter from MALDEF to Dr. Sandra Ellis, Superintendent, North Chicago Community Unit Schools (9 Aug. 2007) at http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/immigration/files/north_chicago_school_district.pdf. This letter is also referenced in a 2009 National School Boards Association publication “*Legal Issues for School Districts Related to the Education of Undocumented Children*.” <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/09undocumentedchildren.pdf>.

³⁸ In 1985, plaintiffs filed an action in federal district court in which they sought injunctive and declaratory relief on behalf of all Spanish-speaking children of limited English proficiency who should be assessed as limited English-proficient (ELL). The court declared that school districts have a responsibility to serve ELL students, but did not mandate any specific program models. See *Gomez v. Illinois State Board of Education*, 811 F.2d 1030 (1987) at <http://openjurist.org/811/f2d/1030/gomez-v-illinois-state-board-of-education>.

³⁹ “Court Ruling Revives ’88 School Funding Suit,” by Maribeth Vander Weele, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 9 October 1992; “City school funds suit will proceed,” by Melita Marie Garza, *Chicago Tribune*, 9 October 1992.

⁴⁰ “Bullying policy under review, District 26 eyes changes in reference to Spanish,” by Stave Zalusky, *Daily Herald*, 14 December 2006.

⁴¹ “‘Bully’ contract leads to apology; District 26 denies Spanish speakers were targeted,” by Jeff Long, *Chicago Tribune*, 13 Dec 2006.

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related questions.⁴² That same year, a Latino school board president unabashedly argued that bilingual education was a way of coddling students.⁴³ Even today, every beginning of the academic year, Midwest Latino parents continue to struggle with enrollment of their children in school, often based on immigration-related matters.⁴⁴ Advocates continue to target the start of the school year as a time to educate and reinforce that Latino children have a right to an education regardless of immigration status.

By 2008, things were no better at the largest public school district in Illinois, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS).⁴⁵ In the early 1980s, the CPS had entered into a desegregation consent decree with the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). During the pendency of the consent decree, the DOJ also began looking at how CPS was providing (or not providing) its English Language Learner population with federally mandated services under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Upon request, the United States District Court allowed MALDEF and the ACLU of Illinois to serve as amicus curiae or friend of the court in this matter.⁴⁶ Eventually, MALDEF and the ACLU joined DOJ in its effort to try to prevent CPS from being declared as having attained “unitary status” or free from segregation. DOJ argued, and both MALDEF and the ACLU agreed, that CPS was failing to provide ELLs with appropriate language services.⁴⁷ Although there were small victories along the way,⁴⁸ eventually the Court

⁴² Plan bans schools’ immigration question: State board expected to adopt rule today,” by Kate N. Grossman, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 22 March 2007.

⁴³ Tony Reyes, Latino school board president of West Chicago Community High School District 94, pushed for a “no excuses” approach for students who don’t learn English. “Are Spanish-speaking students ‘coddled?’” by Rupa Shenoy, *Daily Herald*, 2 Sept. 2007.

⁴⁴ “School is accused of barring student,” *Chicago Tribune*, 10 August 2007. “School’s denial of kids probed N. Chicago district accused of blocking Mexicans’ enrollment,” by Bob Susnjara, *Daily Herald*, 11 August 2007.

⁴⁵ “Educación bilingüe, aún en problemas, MALDEF dice que algunos alumnos de CPS continúan recibiendo una educación inferior,” by Jaime J. Reyes, *Hoy*, 23 October 2008.

⁴⁶ See http://www.maldef.org/education/litigation/us_v_chicago/index.html.

⁴⁷ “Court to weigh in on city schools’ deseg efforts,” by Megan Cottrell, *Chi Town Daily News*, 24 September 2008; “For decades, Chicago Public Schools has operated under a legal decree requiring it to maintain as many desegregated schools as possible. But a federal judge may soon terminate that plan,” in “An End for Racially Integrated Schools?” by Linda Lutton, WBEZ News, Chicago Public Radio, 20 November 2008. See

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allowed CPS to escape consent decree oversight and declared it a unified school district. Unfortunately, despite the decades old ELL problem at CPS,⁴⁹ as late as 2015, some internal advocates finally began taking steps to review services ELL children at CPS were (or were not) receiving.⁵⁰ The question remains, however, how many Latino children were denied their federal rights between then and now?

Fortunately, there have been important victories for students. Although there was frustration with failed attempts to provide relief and new opportunities at the federal level to so-called “Dreamers,” the Illinois Dream Act represented a groundbreaking legislative effort enacted in 2011.⁵¹ With young Dreamers at the forefront of the campaign that included many of the same advocates under the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights umbrella, the Illinois Dream Act established a path for undocumented students to access the newly established and privately-funded Illinois DREAM Fund,⁵² the first in the nation to make scholarships available to children of immigrants who graduate from Illinois’ high schools. In addition, the Student Access Bill SB2196, currently under consideration in the 99th General Assembly, would

<https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/an-end-for-racially-integrated-schools/4e5340a8-d59c-48af-9292-843a87fa8543>; “Win for bilingual education,” by Rosalind Rossi, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2 May 2008.

⁴⁸ “Win for bilingual education,” Rossi.

⁴⁹ See <http://catalyst-chicago.org/2015/08/bilingual-services-audit-tackles-long-standing-problem-in-cps/>.

⁵⁰ See <http://catalyst-chicago.org/2015/07/audit-of-english-language-services-coming-to-all-schools/>.

⁵¹ The DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) ACT was first introduced in 2001, and then again several times through 2010 when a more restrictive version finally passed in the House, but it stalled in the Senate. The lack of success prompted the President to issue the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order in 2012.

⁵² The Illinois Dream Act was championed by Senate President Cullerton and veteran legislator State Rep. Eddie Acevedo, who also teamed up successfully on the TVDL legislation. The Illinois Dream Fund is administered by the volunteer Illinois Dream Fund Commission, which has raised over \$500,000 to date. The IL Dream Act also allows parents to buy into the State’s college savings plans and requires that all public school counselors be properly trained and provide accurate and comprehensive information to high school students considering college, regardless of citizenship status. “DREAM Fund to offer college scholarships to illegal immigrant students,” by Antonio Olivo, *Chicago Tribune*, 27 Oct 2012

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allow public universities to offer non-state funded financial aid to the over 1,500 undocumented students in the system.⁵³

V. Never-ending Immigration Challenges

Advances in language access, political access, and education were accomplished against a backdrop of uncertainty, and often fear, due to the changing anti-immigrant sentiment across the region. Many undocumented individuals and their families live “under the radar” to avoid detection from “La Migra,” the common term used to refer to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security). Immigration raids struck fear in the heart of the Latino community and their workplaces for decades. However, in the mid-eighties, initial federal immigration reform, including the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA),⁵⁴ helped thousands of Midwest Latinos attain legal status and integrate into the mainstream. These laws helped bring much needed relief to many Latino families who could now step out of the shadows. But this change also saw the emergence of widespread “notario” fraud, or unscrupulous agents who would provide unlawful legal advice, sometimes even posing as licensed attorneys. These persons, often members of the Latino community, took advantage of many community members. Their unlawful activity eventually spurred legislation restricting their conduct.⁵⁵

⁵³ SB2196 fact sheet available here: <http://www.latinopolicyforum.org/resources/fact-sheets#>

⁵⁴ IRCA, also known as the Simpson–Mazzoli Act, was signed into law by Ronald Reagan on November 6, 1986. The law contained restrictions and penalties for employers, but offered a path to citizenship for undocumented individuals who had entered prior to January 1st, 1982, and met several additional requirements.

⁵⁵ “Chicago Cracking Down on ‘Notarios,’” by Juan Perez Jr, *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 2014, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-05-08/news/chi-chicago-cracking-down-on-notarios-20140508_1_immigration-service-naturalization-process-providers; “Notorious Notaries: How Arizona is Curbing Notario Fraud in the Immigrant Community,” by Milagros A. Cisneros, https://www.myazbar.org/AZAttorney/PDF_Articles/AZAT0601_UPL%20Notarios.pdf; 815 ILCS 505, Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=2356&ChapterID=67>

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In the mid-2000s another wave of anti-immigrant sentiment took hold, exemplified by the ill-fated attempt at Comprehensive Immigration Reform also known as the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (or the Sensenbrenner Bill).⁵⁶ The so-called Sensenbrenner Bill was a catalyst for the massive immigrant reform marches, which began with a demonstration of over 100,000 in Chicago in March 2006.⁵⁷ The impact of these landmark events would be felt in both increased immigration enforcement, and in the dramatic growth of civic engagement and activism among a new generation of Latinos, most notably the “Dreamers.”

Despite the community mobilization, frustration at the congressional inaction was now coupled with heightened fear of deportation as ICE began intensifying raids and collaboration with local authorities. As massive workplace raids waned, ICE stepped up another strategy which relied on close coordination with local authorities, such as the Delegation of Immigration Authority 287(g) program and the Secure Communities program. Local enforcement of immigration laws such as 287(g) began to emerge across the nation, only to be rescinded or defeated later. Although many law enforcement agencies did not support this activity, because it eroded trust and relationships with community members and thereby impeded effective police work, village or town leadership began enacting these laws over the objection of law enforcement.⁵⁸ In the Chicagoland area, Waukegan was one of the many public battlegrounds for

⁵⁶ The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, H.R. 4437, available here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/4437>. The anti-illegal immigration bill known also as the Sensenbrenner Bill passed in the House but failed in the Senate.

⁵⁷ Avila, Oscar; Olivo, Antonio (March 11, 2006), “A Show of Strength: Thousands March to Loop for Immigrants’ Rights,” *Chicago Tribune*; “Protest sends a message; Immigrant crackdown effort draws strong reaction,” by John Keilman, *The Chicago Tribune*, 5 October 2006; “Immigration debate hits home,” by Larissa Chinwah, *Daily Herald*, 1 October 2006.

⁵⁸ “Sending them back, Stepped-up deportation efforts present enforcement challenges,” by Stephanie Czekalinski and Jill Riepenhoff, *The Columbus Dispatch*, 10 September 2008.

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287(g) implementation in the state,⁵⁹ led by the local sheriff and resulting in great division among residents.⁶⁰ Waukegan also faced related litigation involving the first amendment rights of Latinos.⁶¹ Eventually, in an apparent change of heart, the sheriff who initially supported these efforts later became an articulate opponent of 287(g) laws.⁶²

Another ICE collaboration that struck fear in the Latino community came in the form of so-called “ICE detainers.” These detainers were used after an undocumented person was stopped by local law enforcement, run through an ICE database, and found to be in the United States without authorization. ICE detainers required local law enforcement to hold persons for up to 48 hours. These detainers, however, set the stage for further civil liberties abuses. For example, some Midwestern communities, including some in Indiana, did not release detainees even after the 48-hour period, thus denying them their right to liberty.⁶³ Some communities released persons only after being threatened with litigation. In Cook County, Sheriff Tom Dart refused to honor ICE detainers⁶⁴ and entered into a very public debate challenging the boundaries of federal and local law enforcement. In 2011, the Cook County Board passed an ordinance restricting collaboration with ICE, establishing Cook as a sanctuary county, and requiring proper warrant

⁵⁹ “Protestors don’t sway council; Deportation initiative funding to be sought,” by Andrew L Wang, *Chicago Tribune*, 17 July 2007.

⁶⁰ “Collision course on 287(g) Waukegan will become ground zero Monday for clash of wills on extended immigration enforcement,” by Ryan Pagelow, *The News Sun*, 13 July 2007;’

⁶¹ “Federal judge rules Waukegan violated First Amendment rights,” by Ryan Pagelow, *The News Sun*, 24 December 2008.

⁶² 287(g) empowered local law enforcement to make immigration decisions in their daily interactions. Secure Communities gave authorities a direct link to the FBI database to identify individuals with serious criminal offenses. Eventually 26 out of 102 local jurisdictions were participating across Illinois, but data showed that only 22% of those deported had been charged with serious criminal offenses. Governor Quinn criticized the program as flawed and was the first governor to suspend and then pull out of the program. Other governors followed suit.

⁶³ MALDEF sued the Sheriff of LaGrange County and two jail administrators for their failure to release a young mother who was eligible for release from state custody 48 hours after having posted bond for felony charges relating to a \$10 “bounced” check. LaGrange County officials continued to detain her because the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement office had lodged an immigration detainer against her. See http://www.maldef.org/news/releases/maldef_files_suit_against_lagrange_0616210/index.html.

⁶⁴ Sheriff Dart’s refusal to honor ICE detainers was challenged in court by conservative groups like Judicial Watch. See “Sheriff Refuses to Honor ICE Immigration Detainers,” by Tom Fitton, *Breitbart*, 22 July 2013.

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documentation and remuneration of County costs.⁶⁵ Still, the fall-out of anti-immigrant fervor led to some residual denials of rights. For example, some individuals were denied the fundamental right to marry because they were not able to produce a social security card.⁶⁶

If the above were not enough, some Midwest communities⁶⁷ enacted local anti-immigrant legislation, legislation that was initially enacted in Hazleton, PA⁶⁸ and seemed to spread faster than California wildfires. The anti-immigrant laws were a “form” or “shell law” and often included general language which on its face did not have any factual basis.⁶⁹ Midwest lawsuits challenged the constitutionality of anti-immigrant ordinances, some of which were voter approved. While these lawsuits were not always successful, they revealed the importance of standing up for community rights. A number of Midwest legal challenges were championed by non-Latino lead plaintiffs, such as Stephanie Reynolds of Missouri⁷⁰ and Fred Keller of Nebraska.⁷¹ These non-Latino landlords opposed the laws prohibiting rental to so-called “illegal aliens” and “unauthorized aliens,” they stood up against community ridicule.

In contrast, landmark legislation in Illinois, championed primarily by members of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus, has led the nation and created a legal infrastructure of greater access and protection of rights for Latinos and immigrants throughout the state. But these legislative victories in the areas of immigrant rights, education, health, and citizenship have

⁶⁵ Fair and Equal County Ordinance 11-O-73, 07-R-240.

⁶⁶ See http://www.maldef.org/news/releases/maldef_files_class_action_05112010/index.html.

⁶⁷ See http://www.maldef.org/news/releases/reynolds8_1_13/index.html.

⁶⁸ See http://www.maldef.org/immigration/litigation/lozano_v_hazleton/index.html.

⁶⁹ “Anti-immigrant ordinances will not adequately address the issue of illegal immigration, but will instead invite litigation and create ill will in the community as a whole..” in “Legal and Policy Analysis: Local Illegal Immigration Relief Act Ordinances,” guide produced by MALDEF; “Suburb’s Hispanics feeling unwelcome after election,” by Ray Quintanilla, *Chicago Tribune*, 21 April 2007; “Immigration law backers conduct rally,” by Mary Shapiro, *Suburban Journals*, 18 October 2006.

⁷⁰ See <http://www.riverfronttimes.com/stlouis/valley-park-to-mexican-immigrants-adios-illegals/Content?oid=2483315>.

⁷¹ See http://fremonttribune.com/news/local/maldef-amends-lawsuit-against-fremont/article_8e587f1e-6b60-11e0-8526-001cc4c002e0.html.

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required patience and perseverance and have been decades in the works. For example, the Temporary Driver's Licenses for undocumented individuals was a battle that had roots as early as the 1990s.⁷² Moreover, the efforts of longtime activists, such as Henry "Hank" Martinez, helped create the Illinois Latino Family Commission, a state commission statutorily established to serve as an independent voice for Latino rights and equity in state government.⁷³

Latino legislators and advocates in the Latino and immigrant community have also advanced a statewide policy of immigrant integration and established the Office of New Americans, a strategy that has also been adopted by the City of Chicago. At the state level, the nationally recognized public/private partnerships established through the New Americans Initiative and Illinois Welcoming Centers have assisted over 50,000 immigrants in attaining citizenship and thousands more in gaining access to services and benefits.⁷⁴ Through its multi-ethnic advisory board, the City's Office of New Americans, the first of its kind in the nation, has been able to address language access through a new city ordinance and create greater accessibility to city programs and resources.⁷⁵ These important victories have helped thousands integrate into the larger community.

⁷² "Driver's License Discrimination Panel Flunks Test," by Barry Scholl, *The Chicago Reporter*, March 1992; "Tow policy in cross hairs; 'Driver certificate' could affect town," by Deborah Horan, *Chicago Tribune*, 2 May 2007; After 21 years President Cullerton and State Representative Acevedo led the fight in the General Assembly to pass the bill with bipartisan support in 2013.

⁷³ Established by PA95-619, the purpose of the Illinois Latino Family Commission is to advise the Governor and General Assembly, as well as work directly with state agencies to improve and expand existing policies, services, programs, and opportunities for Latino families. www.latinofamilycommission.org

⁷⁴ In 2010, The Migration Policy Institute awarded the E Pluribus Unum national honor for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives, to the public/private partnership between the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights that makes immigrant integration a deliberate, strategic priority of the state. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/Illinois-New-Americans-Integration-Initiative-EPUP>

⁷⁵ The Ordinance was approved by the City Council on 5/6/2015, amending the Municipal Code Title 2 City Government & Administration new Ch. 40 Citywide Language Access to Ensure Effective Delivery of City Services. The full report from the New American's Language Access Advisory Committee can be found here: www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/mayor/Office%20of%20New%20Americans/Recommendations_from_LAP_Committee.pdf

VI. Employment Challenges for Latinos

Latino workers also faced challenges in employment-related matters, including migrant workers. According to the Illinois Migrant Council, there are over 20,000 migrant workers in Illinois, down from 32,000 because of technological changes in the agricultural industry in the last decade. Unfortunately, abuses against seasonal farmworkers have remained constant, despite decades long efforts to protect the families that harvest our crops. Early efforts to organize legal representation for migrant workers began under the LAF umbrella, and under the leadership of Vincent Beckman. Specifically, LAF's Migrant Project⁷⁶ helped thousands of migrant workers access legal services and Mr. Beckman's impact can also be felt via the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project, which he co-founded in 1999. This project continues to provide legal representation, education, and outreach for farmworkers across the state.

One of Mr. Beckman's many victories was as lead counsel in the *Zarate* case, a case that helped assure the Illinois Department of Human Services (then the Department of Public Aid) was ensuring proper issuance of benefits to migrant farmworker households.⁷⁷ The *Zarate* consent decree also required the distribution of instructions to the local office administrators for restoring lost benefits due to state errors. Furthermore, the decree requires IDHS to provide training related to the provision of expedited food stamp benefits to migrant farmworkers to its employees at all IDHS local offices that have a concentration of migrant farmworkers and any staff of the Illinois Migrant Council contracted to work in a local office's service area.⁷⁸ In short, Mr. Beckman's dedication to justice and his commitment to train new generations of lawyers in

⁷⁶ The work continues as LAF's Illinois Migrant Legal Assistance Project.

⁷⁷ *Zarate v. Suter*, No. 87-2407 (C.D. Ill. 1989).

⁷⁸ *Zarate* Consent Decree.

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employment rights work exemplifies how non-Latinos from the 1970s to 1990s left an indelible mark. In fact, many of his initial advocates continue to serve the migrant population.⁷⁹

In smaller towns with emergent Latino populations, employment challenges have been enduring. For example, in Postville, Iowa, the huge influx of new Latinos eventually led to one of the largest ICE raids in U.S. history. On May 12, 2008, an ICE raid on a meat packing plant there resulted in nearly 400 arrests of immigrant workers, many of whom possessed false identification documents and were thus charged with identity theft, document fraud, use of stolen social security numbers, and related offenses.⁸⁰ Through the use of a makeshift court, which some described as a “cattle call,” some 300 Latino workers were convicted on document fraud charges within four days, the majority of whom served a five-month prison sentence before eventually being deported. The raid, which cost ICE millions, wreaked havoc on the economic and social fabric of the town of less than 2,500. The Pottsville raid also garnered national attention and wide criticism for the treatment of workers and alleged disregard for due process, resulting in a drastic reduction of ICE workplace raids in 2008.⁸¹

Employment discrimination based on race and national origin has, and continues to be, a constant struggle for Latinos, who are too often the victims of unfair labor practices and intimidation in the workplace.⁸² In addition, Latinos have also had to face issues relating to the decision of certain businesses to institute English-only policies. While businesses are generally

⁷⁹ Esperanza Gonzalez worked closely with Mr. Beckman and is considered one of the longstanding figures in migrant worker advocacy. But she noted that she sees little change for the migrant worker communities across Illinois. She helped institutionalize migrant worker advocacy by joining the Illinois Migrant Council, led by Eloy Salazar, in 1979. Interview of Esperanza Gonzales, April 11, 2016.

⁸⁰ “Taxpayers’ Costs Top \$5 million for May Raid at Postville,” by William Petroski, *The Des Moines Register*, 14 October 2008.

⁸¹ “Immigration Raids, Due Process and the Separation of Powers: Implications from Postville and Beyond,” DePaul University College of Law Center for Public Interest Law, 18 November 2008 available at http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.dsp_Content&contentID=6569.

⁸² “MALDEF testifies on national origin discrimination,” by Georgia Pabst, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 16 Nov 2013; “Discrimination Haunts Hispanics, Report Says,” by Matthew Davis, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 21 Feb 1994.

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allowed to prevent workers from speaking Spanish as long as they can prove a business or safety purpose, the ban on Spanish in the workplace can still contribute to a discriminatory environment that targets Latinos.⁸³ In fact, federal legislation was introduced, but defeated, which would have prevented the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from suing employers with English-only provisions in the workplace without a compelling reason.⁸⁴ Advancing litigation in wage theft, racial or sexual discrimination, or other labor abuses is complicated given that an employee's immigration status while not a legal barrier to file a claim, does prevent many workers from coming forward and asserting their rights for fear of retribution or deportation. .⁸⁵

VII. “El Futuro” for Midwest Latinos

The future for Latinos will always be tied to their past. However, without a strong sense of the trajectory of struggle, advocacy and litigation, many of today's Latino leaders may believe that things have always been as they are today—that, among other things, we have always had Latino federal and state judges; that we have always had Latinos representing our community in city hall and in state legislatures; and that we have always had Latino representation in the halls of the United States Congress. If today's Latino leaders believe this has always been the reality of Latino representation, they would be wrong. We also have an obligation to young Latinos and Latinas, especially those entering the legal profession, to share this rich history of struggle and inspire continued commitment to advancing Latino equity. Forging ahead requires us to stop and pause; we must look back and reflect on how far we have advanced and how we have gotten

⁸³ “Should '90 Civil Rights Act become law? – Yes! Bill would prevent workplace discrimination,” by Elaine Wishner and Arturo Jauregui, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 15 Sept 1990; *Colindres v. Quietflex Manufacturing Company* available at http://maldef.org/employment/litigation/colindres_v_quietflex/index.html

⁸⁴ “In plain English, bill is a bad idea,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 7 December 2007.

⁸⁵ “Redefining the Rights of Undocumented Workers,” Keith Cunningham-Parmeter, *American University Law Review* 58 (2009).

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here. And to be clear, reflection is important not only for the sake of knowing our own history, but in order to appreciate the sacrifices others have made for us, so that we too are prepared to make sacrifices in advancing the Latino community.

In this paper, we sought to provide the reader with a view into many past legal and policy battles, and the continuing advocacy efforts that were undertaken in order to obtain basic legal rights for Latinos. The victories and losses were not the result of the community standing idle and simply hoping for change; positive change occurred only because of the efforts and sacrifices of many advocates. These achievements were not handed to the Latino community; rather, they were lawfully obtained through the efforts of many—these are the unsung heroes, some of whom are identified above. These soldiers did not become wealthy through their work, nor did they live in fancy housing, and will likely never receive awards at fancy downtown luncheons or dinners. In fact, while most of us will never know who they are, it is they who really deserve recognition. They fought hoping that the community of tomorrow would be better for their children and grandchildren and for Latinos and non-Latinos alike.

In order to break the chain of discrimination, advance our community, and provide for our families, Latinos and non-Latinos must continue to join forces and fight oppression. Integration will help, but despite the significant advances for Latinos throughout the region, much remains to be done to improve rights, access, and equity for Latinos. Communities outside large city centers with small but emergent Latino populations need access to proven advocacy strategies and capable litigators to ensure swift action whenever Latino rights are threatened. Fortunately, there are now many legal aid institutions advocating for basic rights for Latinos, immigrants and others, including, but not limited to DePaul University's Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic, the University of Chicago's Young Center for Immigrant Children's

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Rights, the National Immigrant Justice Center, and the Chicago Bar Association Foundation, to name just a few. In addition, there are non-legal entities helping the Latino community such as El Valor Corporation,⁸⁶ Metropolitan Family Services, Latino Policy Forum, Gads Hill, Latinos Progressando and the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.⁸⁷ Moreover, unlike the early 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, today there are many more Latino and Latina attorneys able to represent those whose rights are violated.

Today, Latinos serve in top legal positions in both the private and public sector, including as partners in leading law firms, the general counsels of Fortune 500 companies, high elected officials, and judges on the highest courts in our federal and state judiciaries. These Latino attorneys will be the ones who can offer opportunity to those who are less fortunate and we must hold each other accountable, including Latino corporate leaders who are now in a position to support legal and advocacy efforts that can lift our entire community. They will be the leaders who change our community – this time from the inside out. The changing demographic, political, and legal landscape will open dramatic new opportunities for Latinos. But these opportunities will become realities only if today’s decision-makers remember that they are the beneficiaries of those who came before them.

⁸⁶ El Valor was founded by Guadalupe Reyes, a Latina mother with a disabled child who advocated for adequate services in the community, Vincent Alloco was the founding Executive Director, and following his retirement, long time board chair and corporate leader Rey B. Gonzalez has taken the helm to continue advocating for Latinos with disabilities.

⁸⁷ Nationally recognized civic leader, Dr. Juan Andrade Jr., heads the Chicago based U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI), which began as the Midwest Voter Education Registration Project in April 1982. USHLI has been a driving force in Latino civic participation, registering more than 2.3 million new voters.