

The Immigration Rights Marches & anti-immigrant Backlash: bridging the gap is the challenge for our generation

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Las Marchas

- 3.5 - 5 Million people demonstrated in several thousand marches in the Spring of 2006.



HR 4437 The Catalyst

- Jim Sensenbrenner
- Extends Border Wall 700 mi
- Criminalized illegal presence
- Criminalized "knowingly aid unauthorized"
- Mandated employment status check
- Expedited deportation



March 10, 2006 Chicago

100,000 - 300,000

- 'El Gigante despierta'
- Established immigrant rights
- Rafael Pulido & the Spanish DJs decide to get the message out
- Inspired subsequent marches in Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and L.A.



L.A. - 'La Gran Marcha'

500,000 to 800,000: 'Si Se Puede'

- Cardinal Mahoney
- "Blameful and Vicious Bill"
- Mahony pledged civil disobedience in New York Times editorial
- Quotes the Gospel, In Lent asked for prayers for the undocumented
- LA inspires marches in the West, Las Vegas, Phoenix



La Gran Marcha Fallout

- Student walk outs throughout California, Orange, San Diego, L.A. County and the Valley
- Protesting the anti-immigrant and racist messages of HR 4437
- "Freeway, Freeway"

Las Vegas - The Birth of a Movement

- Latino/as comprise 22% of the population
- Half of the students are Latino/a.
- Locals viewed immigration as the 2nd biggest problem in the valley.
- No previous PACs or local organizations to lead the rallies.

Las Vegas - Middle and High School Walkouts

- Cesar Chavez Day
- Entirely organized by students



High School Marches



- Spread via cell-phones, instant messages, myspace, e-mail bulletins, and word of mouth.

March 31st

- Largest Student Walkout
- 2800 Students
- Marched to the Courthouse
- 19 Area High Schools
- Biggest civil rights action since 1960s



Overview of the HS Marches

- Strong on passion and spontaneity, but without a clear message
- Mixed reaction from the 'man on the street'
- Strong Family Support
- Jump-started the rest of the local movement.

The Students Reorganize

- UNLV Students from various student orgs begin to get involved.
- MEChA, SOL, Students Stand Up.



April 10 - The National Day of Action

- March is planned in conjunction with National rallies.
- 3,500 people including HS & College Students, workers, and families.



April 10 - The Differences

- There was a mixed Crowd
- US Flags only
- Students Stand Up delivered a 5-point message to local government explaining what they were marching for.



The Five Points

- Avoid classifying illegal immigrants as criminals
- Reject Fence
- Improve immigrant living conditions
- Create an easier path towards citizenship
- Take Measures to reunify families



May 1 - A Day Without Immigrants

- National Boycott to show how important the immigrant workforce was to the US Economy.
- Many leaders feared a potential backlash.
- Nationally, there were calls to leave work and school, and boycott goods.

May 1st Negotiations

- Marches were originally planned for the daytime.
- Culinary Union and Casino execs negotiated an agreement to have the march at night and to close down half of the Strip for the march.
- March was not permitted, Culinary used its contacts with police

The coalition closes down the Strip!

- 5 Mile Twilight March
- 50,000 to 100,000 (best est 63,000)
- Letter and delegation to Congress urging immigration reform.



The March

'A celebration of humanity here in Vegas... a very positive experience' casino executive

'I have never lived or felt such intense emotions in my life' student leader

'It was a moment of common humanity and hope.' union leader



May 1 - L.A.

- 650,000 - 700,000 people.
- Massive Student Walkouts and major union organization.
- Open support from political elite.



May 1 - Chicago

- 400,000 - 700,000 People.
- Most Multi-Ethnic Rally: Support by PUSH, SE Asian groups, Eastern European groups, Africans, etc.
- Oldest median age at 28.



The Legacy



- The Counter-Narratives
 - Human Rights and dignity do not rest on citizenship or how one arrived.
 - 'We Are Humans, Not Aliens'
 - Harsh Provisions cast a wide net.
 - Being labeled a criminal packed an emotional punch.
 - Coming here to work, bc you have no alternatives at home does not make you and your family a criminal

The language of the gospel is the language of human rights

It is our Gospel mandate, in which Christ instructs us to clothe the naked, feed the poor and welcome the stranger.... Providing humanitarian assistance to those in need should not be made a crime, as the House bill decrees. As written, the proposed law is so broad that it would criminalize even minor acts of mercy like offering a meal or administering first aid.... That does not mean that the Catholic Church encourages or supports illegal immigration. Every day in our parishes, social service programs, hospitals and schools, we witness the baleful consequences of illegal immigration. Families are separated, workers are exploited and migrants are left by smugglers to die in the desert.

- *Cardinal Mahoney* NY Times editorial (Mar. 3, 2006).

The Legacy

The Counter- Narrative II

- We are still a nation of immigrants, and people here want to legally reside.
- We build America, don't destroy it
- A claim to be an American based on your contribution to this society
- Mayflower pilgrims were illegal too



Political Identity: "Can You Hear Us Now?"

- Differences in Latino/a demographics have prevented this minority from voting in a uniform block.
 - Geographic Differences
 - Nativity vs Foreign-Born.
 - Age Gaps
- Emerging "LATINO" identity, two in three feel that after the marches there was more of a common experience and similar political goals.

Hometown associations, a new commitment to US political action

- HR 4437 was an accidental catalyst for action and unity.
 - HR 4437 reminded foreign nationals that they are a racialized minority; being criminalized & the threatened break up of families was too much.
- "coming out" from the shadows and becoming involved in political action as a matter of survival, not choice.
 - I can be a Latino in US, and still be a Mexican from Michoacan; I want my kids to be latino activists

Creating future leaders, Student activism, in Chicago, LA, Las Vegas, ???

- Leadership that challenged the establishment and succeeded
- See themselves as "racialized," subject to majority prejudice & backlash
- Often went agst parents, or converted
- Believe the US system can respond



Middle America's concern: 12 million unauthorized within our borders



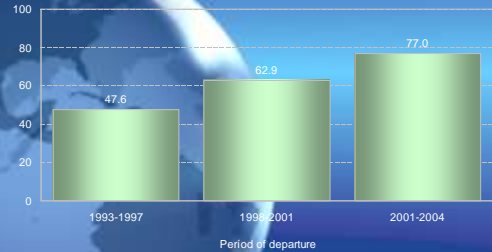
Middle America's concern: Border security

- Each year 200,000-500,000 more undocumented immigrants are thought to come to the United States
- These flows of undocumented will continue in the foreseeable future



A border patrol agent watches as a group of Mexicans climb the 20' wall guarding the border. Washington Post Border Crossing photo report

Unauthorized migrants going to the US from Mexico 1993-1997, 1998-2001 y 2001-2004



Fuente: Estimaciones de CONAPO con base en ISTAT, CONAPO, INM y EL COLEF, Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF), cuestionario de Procedentes de Estados Unidos, 1993-2004.

Anti-immigrant backlash from the Marches

- Proliferation of "backlash" ordinances.
 - English only in local government
 - First Amendment right to "talk" to your govt
 - Police & state workers are to arrest undocumented.
 - Illegal to rent to undocumented
- State legislatures are considering more "anti-immigrant" bills
 - No access to state tuition or scholarships for undocumented students
 - Drivers licenses

Did the Vote Reflect the Spirit of the Marches?

- Nationally: Latina/o voters swung more towards Democratic candidates.
- Economy, Iraq, and Public education were more important issues to Latina/o and middle America
- Harsh anti-immigrant candidates were generally defeated.



*"Hoy Marchamos,
manana votamos"*

- By 2006, 17.2 Million Latina/o eligible voters;
- In 2006, 8% of the electorate.
- Slightly higher turnout from 2002 (57.9%) to 2006. (58.9%)
- Latina/o electorate did not sway from general population voting tendencies.