

WINTER-SPRING

DIALOGUE
ON DIVERSITY

DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

1629 K STREET, N.W., SUITE 300

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

TEL: [FFXVA] 703-631-0650, FAX: [FFXVA] 703-631-0617

E-MAIL: DIALOG.DIV@PRODIGY.NET, URL: WWW.DIALOGUEONDIVERSITY.ORG

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FROM THE PRESIDENT --

MA. CRISTINA C. CABALLERO

The last of Dialogue on Diversity's 2007 programs, the Holiday Fair and Children's Gift Collection, was celebrated December 8th in Washington as the season of holidays of our many constituent cultural communities gathered speed. This year's Holiday Fair was staged at the La Tasca restaurant at the edge of the capital city's Chinatown commercial district. Photos of some of the children and speakers on hand for this event appear on the Dialogue's Web-site. The children, representing the range of communities whose economically disadvantaged households are the focus of concern in this program, arrived at La Tasca under the aegis of a variety of the city's non-profit agencies. Among the Dialogue's helpers greeting them were dynamic Erika Rubino and seven interns from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. Dialogue on Diversity regular, the perennial spirit of the Holiday Fair, Roscoe Swann, presided with a characteristic mix of diplomatic aplomb and friendly encouragement for the coterie of young singers and dancers bravely performing carols and dances of the season. Norma Garza of the Department of Education, along with representatives of the White House education office and the Library of Congress, were a welcome part the festive company. The flurry of holidays, bunched at year's end, swiftly came to a conclusion, the participants exhausted, warily eyeing the stacks of credit card bills, and suffering a species of post-festum depression. Having survived all, we gratefully nourish agreeable memories of family and friends and good times, and buckle down to the budget of tasks -- and very exhilarating ones they are -- that form our 2008 projects.

Ms. Garza and her associates at First book, an organization furnishing children's books to local groups mentoring children with a range of needs, among them the acute need for a comprehensive literacy capability, have grown to be a significant force for children's basic faculties of literacy -- and for the newly born reading practices that literacy permits to flower -- targeting children in the less affluent reaches of the nat-



Raul Yzaguirre congratulated upon Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Rep. Hilda Solis, with Ma. Cristina Caballero of Dialogue on Diversity.

ional population -- where neither family, neighborhood, nor school have managed to close the literacy gap, in dismal contrast to the customary outcomes in the more abundantly enabled strata of a rich society. They have

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brought about the distribution of well over a million children's books -- the most engaging feature of their programs is that the distributing community organizations working with First Book must, as a condition of their participation, give assurance that they can and will mentor each child in attaining the reading skills to negotiate the perhaps mystifying marks on the paper, the often unknown words in the lines of text, and the grammar of the sentences page by page, and stick with each child until the book is read! For a million books, if all goes by plan, there is thus no useless residue of unread books. First Books now proposes to extend its programs geographically to benefit children in Latin America. The topic of early childhood education, coupled with the urgency of a serious dedication to the fundamental social need for effective literacy, formed

one of the chief segments of Dialogue on Diversity's Public Policy Forum (set for March 6th at the Rayburn Building on Capitol Hill). It is likely, if all is viewed in a dispassionate perspective, that the fancied social perils of ethnic diversity, whatever the clamor on immigration questions in the superheated steam of 2008's political discourse, scarcely form a significant menace to a sound and productive society, while the threat of a "diversity" between an upper middle class coached from the cradle on in word, number, and computer literacy, and an "underclass" of neglected potential, whose skills in all these respects remain minimal, is a real and imminent threat to social productivity and tranquility.

The 2008 cycle of Dialogue on Diversity programs includes, alongside the March 6th public policy review, a specialized health care symposium in May, and, later in the year, a colloquium focused specifically on housing issues. The annual Entrepreneurship/IT Conference returns in 2008 to a Washington site, the National Press Club, after presentations in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago for the three years just preceding. The annual program cycle concludes with the Awards (see the note in this newsletter on the call for nominations!) and the Holiday Fair.

2008 HEALTH CARE SYMPOSIUM

May 14th Dialogue on Diversity marshals its distinguished lineup of expert researchers and practitioners for the 2008 Health Care Symposium, the eighth in its annual series, is to be held once more this year at the auditorium, National Education Association in Washington. Again, see the Web-site for details and registration instructions. The 2008 Symposium agenda includes segments on the economics of health care and the public policy debates over costs, funding the future of Medicare, and related matters; discussions of mental health, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, migrant health, and the growing utilization of information technology in expediting and "rationalizing" the provision of medical care. Speakers from the pharmaceutical industry review the economic and policy questions specific to the industry and offer insights into the essential research that powers the industry and, through the ever expanding healer's pharmacopeia, structures cutting edge practice throughout the medical community. In turning from biochemistry to sociology, with a presentation recounting at first hand the moving scenes of health care disparities by social and ethnic class -- just those depicted in a recent PBS documentary pointing up the obtuseness of a medical establishment that is often deaf to the nuances of culture -- the Symposium agenda fixes its focus on the crucial concerns centered in "cultural competence", that is to say, the delivery of care in ways that conform to the language, manners, and psychological habitudes of the patients' communities.

THE CRITICAL YEARS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A sleeper topic, one not dominating the headlines, but promising an effect perhaps as determinative of the texture of a future society as any of the more flamboyant controversies of the season -- the question of education of the young set, and the role of literacy and books in the project of making them conversant with the world around them and its puzzling ways, bringing them that modicum of sophistication that gives an effective edge to the advocacy of one's interests and to an enjoyment of work, leisure, and the creative enterprise. The Library of Congress has just recruited what might be called a children's book czar (the formal title: National Ambassador for Young People's Literature), the writer Jon Csieszka, who himself has turned out a train of sharply drawn, often iconoclastic, and generally irresistible books for children. This figure, appointed by the Librarian of Congress upon the recommendation of its literacy arm, the Center for the Book, and a board of

. . . the fear that a corrosive stratification of American society is underway, one threatening to produce a national community divided between an opulently housed, well provisioned upper class and a disaffected, relatively impoverished "underclass". In fact these strata are both the issue of a single, however fractured, educational system . . .

children's book publishers, is tasked with traveling the country, the doughty campaigner, trumpeting to young people, their teachers, and their parents, the excellences and the transforming powers of the Book. The introductory note to this bulletin begins the story of the remarkable labor now underway, that of sending massive streams of books far and wide for the children of towns and cities around the country, and soon, it is hoped, the children in habitations throughout the Americas. These developments, each of quite finite size in itself, are telling signs of a concern that is coming to be pervasive in American society. The notorious conclusion -- reached some two decades ago by a learned commission, the kind regularly appointed to study rankling problems of a swift moving society -- that a mortal enemy of the American state could not have better sabotaged its power than its own educational system has managed to do, has for some few years rankled with the thoughtful contingent of the population. The force of the observation, hyperbolic as it doubtless is, has found a sharp focus in the fear that a corrosive stratification of American society is underway, one that threatens to produce a national community divided between an opulently housed, well provisioned upper class and a disaffected, relatively impoverished "underclass". In fact these strata are both the issue of a single sprawling national educational system, which on the one hand nurtures its members from infancy on in a flood of

experience and learning, and, on the other, leaves its less fortunate members with only a meager and rudimentary acquaintance with the wider world. While the education of the first sees children learning the concepts and manipulations of the calculus in the high school years, and schools them in such refinements as the intricacies of Japanese or Arabic grammar (less often of the Latin), the children of the other moiety are left to stumble as they work through a page of simple English. If these are elements of a problem, then the solution is to be found partly through the diffusion of books for young children, while other parts lie in projects of early childhood education, targeting the universe of children in infancy, when the wits are the freshest and most absorptive, and in habits of ample and well conceived nutrition. This circle of questions becomes the subject of attention through this year's Dialogue on Diversity programs, first in the Public Policy Forum in March and later in the health Care Symposium on May 14.

HOUSING: AN AMERICAN TRANSFORMATION?

If the drive for housing, specifically home ownership, is a value lying deep in the grain of American life, then the present stresses afflicting the country's economic life as a whole, and the fortunes and the lifetime trajectories of some millions of families may call that value into question. This is one of the provocative suggestions brought forward by reflective op-ed articles in the best papers, and by speakers at Dialogue on Diversity's autumn 2007 Housing Issues Colloquium. The Dialogue's internet site [www.dialogueondiversity] has a report on the colloquium, augmented by updating information on the still developing infirmities of the

Is it the compelling power of the vision of home ownership that has drawn the country's financial institutions, its civil society cheering from the sidelines, and countless citizens committing themselves to the loans that were to enable the American dream -- all into the present straight?

banking industry, on the welter of partial remedies being discussed for the hapless homeowners caught in the crunch of loans they cannot manage, and the ramifying effects of the growing financial disorders that threaten to send the life of commerce, here and elsewhere in the world, into a skid. If so, should the dream be scaled back, should it be re-cast as the striving for other assets than real estate, or is some other transformation of the scheme of American values to be sought? In fact, of course, it is the careless overextension of credit on the part of the banks and an equally reckless overextension of debt obligations on the part of the real estate buyers, the unhappy knights of unachieved homeownership, that have converged to produce the present distress. The careful extension of home ownership, on the other hand, in a movement based in experienced, responsible hou-

sing counseling, inculcating a classically correct property owner's ethos, imparting the rudiments of financial sanity, and responsibly ensuring that subsidies, where necessary, and feasible payment streams are part of the package, together with monitoring of the launch into home ownership – all this can keep the ideal alive and well. The discussion among participants in the Housing Colloquium of September 2007, when the crisis, as it is now called, was taking shape and just beginning to become visible in its starkly ominous contours, exhibited a notable prescience. The problem in its total breadth was clearly seen to embrace both the question of institutional reform to inhibit repetition of the errors of the recent past, and the more urgent task of seeking swift and effective relief for the persons whose domestic existence was to be thrown into acute peril by the collapse of their living arrangements. In devising remedies, it was seen, some well considered care is, as always, to be recommended, since a frontal attack on a problem is likely to be freighted with a bundle of the proverbial “unintended consequences”, rendering the effort little effective or even perversely counter-productive. In the matter, however, of mitigating the blows to the unlucky or even foolish debtors, any attempt to fashion too exquisitely refined distinctions between the worthy and unworthy is likely -- it seemed then, and now all the more -- to delay relief to all while the families thrust into the cold await resolution of the debates of their governors.

THE HOUSING DEBACLE: ARE THE REMEDIES JUSTICE-DRIVEN?

In the arduous labor of untangling the multiple strands of the present housing and financial problems, the inquirer is forever finding new puzzles enclosed within the old, so that the solution to each only brings one face to face with another no less enigmatic. In gauging the relief that ought to be afforded to various players in the housing markets, there is first the question whether a particular form of relief is expedient from the point of view of preserving the vigorous working of the larger economic system. But at once one encounters the question whether in some sense considerations of “justice” require repairing the harms – some or all of the harms -- that are being experienced by the several classes of players – while players of certain other classes in the system can prudently be left hanging out to dry.

An Op-Ed essay in a recent issue of the New York Times, expounding the views of an academic economist, argues that, in the general case, persons suffering losses or harms or a constriction of opportunities, through the events in the housing industry or the financial industry, are simply to be left to “eat” the loss, that no duty of justice can be erected to require that the community, or any parties within it, repair the harms to the persons (*conclusion of this article is on page 11*).

DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY
PRESENTS 2008 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM:
HOUSING, IMMIGRATION, EDUCATION:
THE HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Dialogue on Diversity, in sessions held March 6th at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill, presented the 2008 edition of its Public Policy Forum, with the title *The Heat Comes Early: Civil Discourse in a Contentious Year*. The Forum purpose each year is to convene people of many cultures all working for a reasoned civic consciousness and for economic viability through entrepreneurship. The public policy programs of Dialogue on Diversity, of which this is the first in the 2008 program cycle -- the annual Health Care Symposium follows on May 14th -- are targeted to women entrepreneurs and professionals, members of women's organizations, students and Congressional staff, and interested citizens. This year three basic topic areas dominated the Forum agenda: Housing, Immigration, and Education.

In each of these three policy realms a panel of scholars, private- and public-sector experts, advocates, members of the Congress, and public officials came together to analyze the social, economic, and policy dimensions.

The day's high point, beginning the midday session, was the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to **Raul**



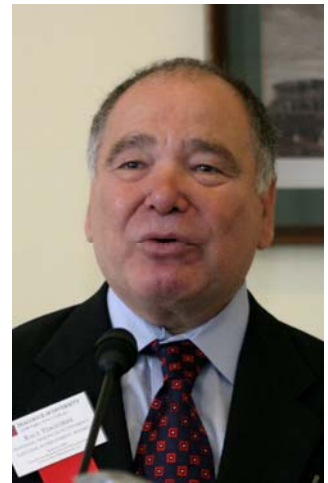
Rep. Hilda Solis

Yzaguirre, President Emeritus of the National Council of La Raza and now Professor in Arizona State University at Phoenix. The award was given by **Rep. Hilda Solis** of California, whose citation noted the unique role Mr. Yzaguirre has filled through the decades of his leadership in the NCLR's evolving activities on behalf of the U.S. Latino communities. In reviewing the train of

achievements recorded by Mr. Yzaguirre, Rep. Solis recounted the stages of his career and the contribution of each to the advancement of the fortunes of the U.S. Latino communities.

Mr. Yzaguirre's very gracious remarks in receiving the award reflected on the campaigns, many of them arduous struggles, that over the last two score years have brought the Latino population of the country very far on the way to prosperity and a due civic influence. Mr. Yzaguirre, speaking at length on these questions, with the cumulated experience of decades on the firing line, reviewed briefly the historical performance of La Raza, but turned directly to the nub of the matter: the present critical times for the Latino population. The time had come, he

suggested, for the long-time U.S. residence of so many of the Latino population, now a mature and meaningful block in the structure of the American nation, to be deemed in itself the substance of their belonging as true and integral parts of our society. At the same time he decried the demonization of the term "amnesty" -- a noble word for a noble policy action, one which has very frequent, indeed venerable, application in the American legal tradition, being often employed, indeed as an administrative device in a variety of sectors throughout the framework of laws that govern and impart a humane tone to our social lives. In a penetrating disquisition on the popular highjacking of the notion of "amnesty" in the fevered resis-



Raul Yzaguirre

tance to the establishment of a more hospitable legal regime for the Latino newcomers in the country, he pointed out the dismal fact that in current political discourse the word has come to denote a gross vice of public policy, one to be shunned and rejected out of hand by the right thinking. Amnesty, etymologically the act of forgetting, is precisely forgiveness, the generous and decent faculty of civilized societies by which a healing of the present is achieved through a deliberate abandoning of quarrels of the past. It is seen in the notion of limitations periods, setting bounds to complaints eligible to be brought in the law courts, in the frequently employed device of a tax amnesty, or a firearms surrender amnesty, and in the magnanimity given voice to in such foundational documents as the second inaugural address of Lincoln -- all these a society's actions of which those railing against the present day immigrants might very happily enjoy the advantages in the other parts of their lives. An amnesty, generously designed, is surely an appropriate -- and a very American -- part of the reconciliation of the country's constituent cultural strains.

[Ed.Note: The objection to the institution of an amnesty with regard to the "illegals" is ostensibly an insistence on the seriousness, not to say majesty, of the law, with which compliance has been wanting. The difficulty encountered by persons advancing this argument is that the wisdom and justice of the law itself is now being put in question as a new, supplanting scheme of regulation, presumably to be better, more appropriate, more nearly just and sensible, is being fashioned. The laws violated, therefore, in years past, are confessed to have been less than appropriate, just, and sensible. Does it make sense to enforce, for old times' sake, a law whose expediency and justice the agreed wisdom of the

community now rejects? Old laws are preserved by the courts as required in order to achieve a just outcome for persons claiming benefits under those laws, now superseded, when such claimants may assert an expectation, duly paid for, of those benefits. The purposes of deportations, along with any other sanctions under the immigration laws, on the other hand, are not of this kind.]

The Forum's early after-noon session cast the spot- light on a new celebrity on the Washington scene, public schools



Chancellor Michelle Rhee

Chancellor **Michelle Rhee**, who recounted her initial reluctance, then eager acceptance of the task, which conventional wisdom deemed an impossible one, of dismantling much of a dysfunctional school system and fashioning a world-class one from the usable parts of the old and from much that will be new. Ms. Rhee's confidence and a near mythic determination give reason to believe she may indeed succeed where a decades-long train of Com- missions, Councils, Boards, and even a General, had scarcely made a dent. The capital city awaits the dénouement.

On the housing questions that have come to dominate much of the domestic policy picture, the Forum heard from a lineup of panelists highlighting both the financial and the humanitarian aspects of the larger problem. The housing panel, designed and presented by the Dialogue's co-host, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), took up the continuing mortgage crisis and the by now well-known congeries of related prob- lems. With foreclosure rates still climbing, the panel explored the future of the growing host of borrowers in distress, and outlined a range of immediate mea- sures, urgently recommended



Rep. Maxine Waters

as remedies, that promise to stabilize the housing sector, whose health and robustness are key ingredients of national life both economically and socially. The lineup of speakers for the housing segment included **Rep. Joe Baca**, **Rep. Maxine Waters**, **Aracely Panameño**, Latino Affairs Director at the Center for Responsible Lending; **Nelson Merced**, Director of National Initiatives and Applied Research for NeighborWorks America; and **Frank Nothaft**, chief

economist for Freddie Mac; with **Anna Alvarez Boyd**, chief of CHCI's HOGAR program, and **Alejandra Louden** as Moderators. Rep. Baca's narra- tive brought on-the-ground ob- servations of the distress of homeowners in his south Cali- fornia district and elsewhere in the country, setting the stage for subsequent analysis. Rep. Max- ine Waters, also representing a California constituency, did not spare a take-no-prisoners explora- tion of a painful topic, in which what she characterized as the greed and recklessness of powerful people who should know much better were arraigned for much of the ensuing social and economic wreckage.



Rep. Joe Baca

Aracely Panameño recited an unvarnished account of the painful circumstances that are overtaking the people her

organization has sought to mentor and protect – a task whose difficulties are exacerbated by the measures enacted in Prince William County, Virginia in the Washington exurbs imposing, in practical effect, a variety of restrictions and disabilities on the Latino population. It was this circumstance that led Ms. Panameño herself to mount a last-minute write-in campaign for a council seat in last No- vember's municipal elections. An unsuccessful campaign, but one showing the flag for the notion of America as a nation of immigrants in a time and place where this can be a dangerous, or at least much disfavored, sentiment.



Aracely Panameño

Nelson Merced is Director for National Initiatives and Applied Research for NeighborWorks America. This or- ganization is the key link in a chain of Congressionally established entities marshaling the strengths of local orga- nizations (now numbering some 230) in cities around the country, matching these with the functions of NeighborWorks as an information clearinghouse, source of essential counsel, and intermediary with the worlds of big- league finance and political power, and finally with the role of Neighborhood Housing Services of America (NHS) as the financial anchor of the system, guaranteeing the promises to pay of the residents being placed in housing in a myriad of localities. Commenting on the present collapse of the texture of financing across broad swaths of the population, Mr. Merced remarked that it is the losses of value in the houses – the puncturing of the housing price bubble -- that



Nelson Merced

has instituted training for hundreds of housing counselors who strive, in support of the homeowners, to work out adjustment of loan terms permitting households to remain intact in their properties or otherwise to mitigate the impacts of the financial strains.



The analytic eye of the professional economist was in evidence with the remarks of **Frank Nothaft**, Freddie Mac's chief economist since 2001, whose added credentials include an earlier stint as economist with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve system and a doctorate in economics from Columbia University. Mr. Nothaft, in reviewing the broader scope of the malaise that has invaded the housing and related markets, pointed out the special position of immigrants, those who, in great numbers, got into home ownership and into the attached loan obligations, often with little experience and little savvy in the ways of even elementary financial transactions. Their pain, as a group, is now the greatest, as the harsh loan terms are crashing about them. The result is the current housing slump, with the inescapable repercussions that reflect much of the pain on the farthest reaches of the economic universe. Summing up his less than sanguine assessment of economic conditions, in the housing and broader markets as well, Mr. Nothaft opined that the present stresses, together with a diminished pace of business activity, are likely to persist, on the most favorable estimate, for no less than three years.

eroded the owner's equity, often rendering any sale of the house unworkable, while the loan terms suddenly impose unmanageable cash flow burdens on the homeowners. Foreclosure sales, when they result, blight the neighborhood and thus send prices down more precipitately yet, with deepening of society-wide financial problem and the sense of hopelessness in the communities affected. Neighbor Works has set up a hotline and



Brent Wilkes

a fair assessment of the actual interests of all the stakeholder communities, among them – here the strikingly innovative feature of the argument – the populations in Latin America and elsewhere whose economic and social conditions are giving the impetus to the migrations that end with crossings into the U.S. The realistic and indeed morally right course of action in these circumstances, Mr. Wilkes suggests, may be to aid the educational and economic development in these quite identifiable “sending” districts – an action which would remove some of the pressure, often a very painful force affecting the migrants themselves, to pull up stakes and move to strange climes to survive.

On immigration, a set of issues generally conceded to be in large measure off the legislative calendar for the year but remaining, as before, at the core of national economic and civic life, **Brent Wilkes**, Executive Director of LULAC, and **John Amaya**, a legislative attorney at MALDEF, were joined by **Dr. Jeanne Batalova** of the Migration Policy Institute. These immigration experts set out to fit the present facts of economic life and civic existence into the

historic framework of a society of immigrants, assessing the prospects for legislative changes, and analyzing the likely effects of these changes on recent and future newcomers within our borders. **Brent Wilkes**, National Executive Director, LULAC, persuasively argued that a national discourse on immigration to the U.S. should be governed by a principle of reasonableness, by which is understood

Another facet of the immigration phenomenon, emphasized by **John Amaya**, a legislative attorney at the Mexican



John Amaya

American Legal Defense and Education Fund (known for short as MALDEF), was the proliferation of restrictive and punitive local laws targeted to the migrants, especially the undocumented but often the documented as well. Many of these are believed to run afoul of long-standing legal principles barring alienage discrimination, a source of authority sounding in the Constitution itself. Mr. Amaya pressed the notion, with considerable energy and ingenuity, that a sizeable corpus of entitlements, or “rights”, under the actual American constitutional system, inhere in residents, indeed persons in any wise present on the territory of the U.S., and therefore are not subject to qualification or diminution by acts of a legislature or by administrative fiat. Among these, presumably, are such entitlements as the

liberty, subject to safety regulations binding all residents, to drive a car -- an incident of ordinary existence in contemporary society. Whether these entitlements are equally secured to undocumented persons present in the U.S. as well as to those here instead with permission of the sovereign authority (the federal government) is another, not entirely settled, question. Adverting to the Forum subtitle, whose words on civil discourse, and to the subtitle of the Immigration topic, speaking of a rational scheme of regulation, Mr. Amaya pointedly contrasted the colloquy of counsel and judge in the federal courts, an eminently rational exploration of a question, with the style of the interchange (which he characterized as chaotic) all too often engaged in with persons, even those in responsible public positions, in nearly every other setting. In this wide world of discourse on immigration-related topics, the newcomers, particularly the undocumented, are broadly denigrated as prone to crimes and terrorism, their significance in the world of employment, commerce, and affairs of the public fisc, is measured solely by a rough and ready toting up the supposed immigrant-caused shares of local government expenditures in policing and administrative functions, their influence on host communities seen as the vitiation of a salutary native language and culture, manners and morals. More friendly participants in the discussion may helpfully argue that the disposition to crime is in fact less among the newcomers, both those allowed and those undocumented, than in the general population, that their net effect on the larger economic picture is one of very substantial benefits conferred, and that their own cultures are studiously family oriented, their housekeeping practices debt-financing-averse, and their language an ancient and honorable one. The interlocutors, actuated by an animus to the migrants, are not persuaded. The deep psychological springs of the animus may lie in a simple xenophobia or in the inclination to fix blame on a not quite familiar target for the many ills our own follies, bad luck, recessions and bad weather, and a generally harsh world inflict. His disposition is that of the embattled knight, avid to vindicate his wronged client. If they get us, we will go after them, he repeated. Busy seasons ahead on the litigation front,

[Ed. Note: Mr. Amaya is concerned, for all this, to construct the legal defenses available to the migrants in the face of the myriad of restrictive enactments around the country (a swarm of these in a lengthy file of local jurisdictions), defenses founded on a careful examination of a long train of judicial decisions, not always consistent or clear, and a handful of constitutional provisions whose import is a plaything of very sincere judges, torn among conflicting lines of judicial reasoning, and a not quite settled public philosophy in this realm.]

Dr. Jeanne Batalova, director of the "Data Hub" at Washington's Migration Policy Institute, laid before attendees a detailed picture of the directions and qualitative characteristics of historic migration flows around the world, with a special focus on the experience of the United States,

one of the principal magnet societies globally. It is this background that has to lie at the base of any productive discussion of the policy aspects of the present state of these migrations as they affect contemporary American society. Dr.



Jeanne Batalova

Batalova has been concerned especially with the economic lot of the migrants and with that of the residents of the host country under the impact of the newcomers. In careful sociological and economic analysis of these effects, in contrast to the way they are represented in much political discourse, are complex in their mechanisms,

and immensely varied from time to time, place to place, and population to population.

Jeanne Batalova holds a doctoral degree (in sociology) from the University of California at Irvine and an MBA from Roosevelt University in Chicago, following studies for an undergraduate degree in the Academy of Economic Studies at Chisinau (formerly Kishinev) in Moldova (a district adjacent to Roumania, formerly part of the Soviet state, now an independent republic, the larger part of the population of Roumanian ethnicity and speaking a form of the Roumanian language, which had been written in the Russian rather than the Roman alphabet in historical periods during which Russia exercised hegemony over the territory). Dr. Batalova herself is Russian speaking and has had a part in Voice of America discussions, broadcast over the Russian service, of migration phenomena in both the U.S. and Russia. She has extensively studied the phenomenon of international migrations, the factors that actuate the migrants and the effects on their new neighbors when they land -- a subject exemplified in some sense by her own peregrinations under the impetus of the dominant historical currents of the last several decades. This and other individual histories are writ large in the massive migrations of persons of many countries and ethnicities in the times after the second world war and again after the dissolution of Soviet power in Europe, and in the western hemisphere during the last half century, driven by the economic histories of both the U.S. and Latin America that continue to power movements of labor from areas of unemployment (and consequent low wages) to areas of economic vitality whose higher wage levels operate as magnets. The Migration Policy Institute in Washington, for which Dr. Batalova heads the data services and drives the analysis of the economic import of these flows of migrants, has assembled perhaps the best corpus available of factual information about the magnitude and the quality of these hosts of human population in motion.

EDUCATION

The third large subject matter area for the 2008 Forum was education, from pre-kindergarten to college. Here the agenda featured experts on each phase, together with an emphasis on literacy as the central problem at all the schooling levels – in the more advanced stages to the extent that failures in the earlier grades have left us with a population of high-school graduates ill equipped to handle the more advanced concepts and the daunting cargo of



Reg Weaver Makes a Point to Delighted Audience

information to be processed in the phase of higher learning. With only a small percentage of minorities graduating from college, and while many high school graduates are ill-outfitted to take on productive roles in an increasingly complex, technology-oriented society, experts from think tanks and Congress joined to review the critical problems of the American educational system and to sketch a role for the imaginative public policy measures needed to solve them.



Rep. Rubén Hinojosa

Expert speakers on tap for the education seminar were **Rep. Rubén Hinojosa** and **Mr. Reg Weaver**, President of the National Education Association. Rep. Hinojosa, a member of the House Education and Labor Committee and Chair of its Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifetime Learning, and Competitiveness, Rep. Hinojosa, making his third, and very welcome, appearance at Dialogue on Diversity's Forums, reviewed the state of legislative proposals on a variety of facets of the national education agenda. Rep. Hinojosa outlined the ominous – but scarcely surprising – fact, with respect to the profile of college attendance in the U.S., that low-income ethnic students were concentrated in districts enjoying only limited educational funding. These students tend, therefore, to be funneled into the less effective college milieux. Clearly enough, the problem calls for designing means for leveraging more resources to the rescue. Pell

grants will probably be expanded over the next half dozen years, interest charges on student loans could be, and ought to be, moderated by federal action, with subsidies for preparation of top flight faculty, while more ample funding should flow to a variety of student loan programs. Services for students under a range of programs should be coordinated so that the client, the needy student, might access the gamut of programs through a “one-stop service” point.

Mr. Weaver's spirited presentation stressed that a nationwide host of eager and teachable pupils, teamed with brigades of able teachers, are often stymied because they find only inadequate tools to work with by way of teaching instrumentalities, infrastructure, and the like – a lack of will for the carefully designed funding that could power a world-class educational system. His remarks concluded with a powerful appeal to his hearers, as the thoughtful and often influential members of their communities, to turn their skills of advocacy and political action to the cause.



Sarita E. Brown

Sarita E. Brown leads Excelencia in Education, an organization dedicated to fostering research and exploration of the smartest and most effective practices in higher education for Latino students. In a career of no few years' studying, amassing facts and measures, and eagerly experimenting, questing for the secrets of success that will bring

new cohorts of minority students into, through, and beyond colleges and graduate studies, Sarita E. Brown has evolved a repertory of tested patterns for recruiting, instructing, and placing these students, predominantly of Latino communities, in the greatly varied matrix of educational institutions and opportunities across the country.

The Education seminar concluded with the presentation of **Kathleen Leos**, former Deputy Secretary in the Department of Education, now heading her own organization, the Global International Institute for Literacy and Language Development. Ms. Leos, whose specialty lies in the acquisition by young children of a second language, asserted the key importance in this task of presenting the learning of language squarely in the context of genuine subject-matter content – a task requiring teaching skills of a high order. The teaching of language and of the substantive sciences, the things language talks about, have to be bound together in a single lesson if either is to be effective. This is the conclusion Ms. Leos persuasively urged in discussion with a goodly cluster of very attentive hearers at the Gold Room. The question comes to be of acute importance when the

language being taught is not the learner's usual, or native, idiom. If the language lesson, in the regular case in English, and the learning of content (mathematics, geography are split into distinct sessions, in place, time, instructor, books and charts and pictures, the language learning is desiccated and dull, while the substantive instruction itself ends up little understood and shorted for time. Here trained instructors are the name of the game – Ms. Leos pointed out that the good-hearted mother of one of the children who comes



Kathleen Leos

around to the school to help the children on the language end of the task but stops short of the content of the curriculum, is perhaps marginally helpful but is really not the answer. One cannot be satisfied with an English as a second language class taught by kindly ladies from the neighborhood – however indispensable their efforts surely are in a great many other needful tasks. If two languages, not one, are being learned, then the wits of the very busy children seem to be greatly sharpened and the grasp of the content, the substantive learning areas, more firmly in hand than ever. An effective bi-lingual outcome is the by-product of these methods. Ms. Leos points out that, in addition, quite apart from the skills, both linguistic and substantive, developed in the individual students in their traversal of the arduous years of schooling, a population outfitted with bi-lingual capacities is a valuable asset to the subject graduates themselves and to the society they are the lively part of -- an asset worth aiming for in its own right, especially in an era of ubiquitous global links in commerce and communication.

The Forum's midday session featured a Congressional Roundtable reviewing the 2008 legislative picture. The roster of participating House members included, along with Rep. Hilda Solis of California, **Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee** of Texas, and **Rep. Diane E. Watson** of California.

Rep. Jackson Lee commented on prospects for legislation touching the three key problems brought into focus by the Forum. Appearing near the close of the midday session in the midst of a day crowded with a series of votes in the House chamber across Independence Avenue, offered a thoughtful recital of steps variously available as potential policy expedients for the relief of homeowners caught in the toils of predatory loans. In a pointedly stated addendum, however, Rep. Jackson Lee turned abruptly to another, quite different topic, lamenting the destructive tendencies, observed



Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee

throughout the country with disquieting frequency, in the regime of juvenile encounters with the criminal law, where interventions of a harsh, punitive kind do little to prevent offenses but do manage all too often to wreck the lives of young people already on the wrong track – and their families and communities. In an impassioned excursus she reflected on the system of “Juvenile justice” in many corners of the country, a system which, she urges, is not always the constructive and benign force its name suggests. Her comments directed the spotlight onto the often harsh and destructive juvenile justice practices that may in effect throw askew the life prospects for the juveniles and for their families and communities.

[Ed. Note: Rep. Jackson Lee's comments were made against the immediate backdrop of a widely publicized report calculating that the U.S., in its federal and all state jurisdictions, has imprisoned something on the order of one of every hundred human beings within our borders, a rate asserted to stand higher indeed than that of any other country. The suspicion grows that this practice of an enlightened society, while an extraordinarily expensive way to house and feed 1% of the population (and a significantly higher proportion of the African American population), is also a factory for recidivism, and an exercise in that punitive lashing out that has for long perversely compromised family life in affected households and communities and does little at all to undo any harms that past criminal activity has worked. It in effect is a well targeted means for undermining efforts to educate a vulnerable group and to build a fair human capital capability in a country needing all its residents in functioning order. A very large portion of the imprisoned population are detained on account of drug offenses -- and for distribution and property offenses derivative of addictions. Addiction, as a psychological and medical challenge, is a tough thing to beat, and detention in a prison environment is probably not a particularly efficacious means. The use of punitive mechanisms to deal with all these items is clearly of minimal effectiveness and at once costly in the extreme, both in money and in social damages. Some form of maintenance, pending development of effective anti-addictive medications, is probably the reasonable way to bring a major social wound down to the status of a merely noticeable irritant.]

Rep. Watson raised the troubling question of hostility among minority ethnic communities themselves, describing actions initiated by the Cherokee Nation to exclude the descendants of African American forebears from their midst. The remarks of Rep. Watson of California focused on a problem particularly painful for the diverse minority communities of the country: what is to be done when the battle is not one asserting the interests of a minority, an isolated population, a group of newcomers on the national scene, in the face of a balking and excluding mainstream population, but instead the forces of one ethnic or racial group are turned against another. These situations inevitably constitute potential dangers standing in the background of our diverse national life; sometimes again they break destructively into the open and cry out for our concern to convert ethnic difference into an engine for innovation and new forms of harmonious cohabitation on the North American continent. The situation to which Rep. Watson refers is a controversy between the leadership of the Cherokee Nation and a portion of their community descended from African American slaves. The Cherokee Nation has determined that the latter are less than perfectly authentic Cherokees and has moved to exclude them from the Cherokee lands and society. This program of what in other settings is termed "ethnic cleansing", Rep. Watson notes, is not only offensive to a common national sense of racial and ethnic security and equality but is undertaken apparently in contravention of treaty obligations binding the Cherokees in their residence within U.S. territory and affording them their autonomy. The Cherokees themselves had held slaves up to the time of the Civil War, and the treaty, concluded after the War, essentially incorporated the terms of the anti-slavery amendments that were then being written into the U.S. Constitution. The remedy, now a century and a half later, is not entirely clear, although the use of influence from many quarters and the invoking of the regular methods for enforcement of legal judgments would be indicated. Clearly some exertions of government and of civil society groups concerned with these problems is in order, since the interests of both parties may be found in some wise compatibility, and the good offices of the large communities surrounding may be helpful in the premises.

DIVERSITY: A NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR AN EMBATTLED CONCEPT

While the notion of Diversity has been displeasing to some of the wise writers on the best Op-Ed pages, it is more hospitably received by the celebrated Thomas Friedman writing in the New York Times of last November 11. The column recounts the visit of the Saudi King, 'Abdu-Allah bin 'Abdu-l'Aziz, to the Pope, Benedict XVI, at the Vatican, bearing gifts of a jeweled sword and a miniature sculpted camel driver. The donee with a gingerly touch of the fingers largely evaded the former, and went on to praise the form of the latter. The ensuing discussion was cordial and of undetermined productiveness. That it occurred at all was a new, and surely hopeful, thing on the face of the earth. Mr. Friedman queries, though, whether the

. . . Pope receives Saudi King at the Vatican. Is it imaginable that the King might receive the Pope at Riyadh? The shortest way on a long road may be a roundabout course . . .

King might have reciprocated the Pope's invitation – the overarching question, whether in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and, if the question is posed more or less acutely as to other polities of the Islamic world, a diversity of religions might be tolerated, indeed might be useful, or enriching: might the Pope be received by the King at Mekka, the sacred central point of Islamic inspiration, or, at the least, in the secular capital of Riyadh? Under the conditions of theological thought, those prevailing in the present years respectively of the Hijra and of the Messiah, and within the short-run outlook of our contemporary history, it seems much less than likely.

A dialogue – another word coming once more to have a certain favorable currency – is the workable mode of communication, and, well attuned, it can be productive. In the theological realm, first of all, dialogue can engender the earnest exploration by the believer, steeped in the lore of an intricate system of dogmas and sentiments, of his own position is likely to disclose insights that will prove to be an exposition, from a special, and newly fruitful, angle of view, just the insight discerned by the other in his own position. But the course of historical reflection is likely to be the m Mr. Friedman suggests, however, that not a direct theological onslaught, but a common reflection on our history over a

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more distant time horizon, might make for more accommodating relationships. A dialogue – another word coming once more to have a certain favorable currency – is the workable mode of communication, and, well attuned, it can be productive. The examples of Andalus (Andalucia), the mediaeval Islamic realm in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, the kingdom of the Muslim king Akbar in northern India in the time of Europe's Renaissance, the practices of the Ottoman Sultans in their extensive empire, all illustrate an inclusiveness of governing spirit, the ethic of the most enlightened and successful of these states – against which Europe's principalities were for the most part singularly illiberal -- gathering to their courts the wisdom of the most diverse thinkers in secular and spiritual realms alike.

Akbar, Mr. Friedman notes, is said to have been visited on his deathbed by Jesuit scholars at his Court as they sought to bring him around -- unsuccessfully, for he proved a tough nut to crack, but the point of interest is that these experts of a different system of dogmas and spirituality were present in the Court and had access to the rulers of the Islamic state. Europeans, for their part, have been perennially fascinated by the story of the visit of St. Francis of Assisi to Salahu-'l-din (Saladdin), the legendary commander of the Islamic forces in crusader times, engaging him in dialogue on the faith and the burdens of war and peace. – they have marveled that a dialogue on the gentler topics, between unlike figures in their respective histories, might proceed in tranquility, the still eye in the hurricane of the crusade that was raging all about. The logic of this avenue of approach is that out of political motives – not initially a religious inspiration -- a diversity of learning and the vitality of a many-faceted court may engender a prosperous common life and a generous sensibility, a state of affairs that may well produce a more pacific accommodation of the religious moments in a society and of the contending theological projects of the large, distinct communities whose enterprises insistently agitate the environing social whole.

HOUSING AND OTHER DEBACLES – THE ELUSIVE CAUSE OF JUSTICE (from page 3)

initially impacted. A certain plausibility attaches to this argument in view of what appears to be an obvious conclusion in the mirror-image situation: consider the person whose position is now not damaged, but is in fact sharply improved by some quirk in the market's operations

Should this second subject be obliged, by a corresponding logic, to sign over the boon to the community of his concitizens – a position which, as stated, has few adherents. Again, it was maintained, no duty is felt on the part of a buyer to indemnify an outmoded producer when the buyer switches his business to a lower cost producer (an entrepreneur more innovative, harder working, etc.).

These observations, are not, however, quite as persuasive factually as they might be. In the case of the boon to the fortunate operator, the progressivity in the system of taxations in fact absorbs some portion of his boon precisely for the benefit of the community of taxpayers. Progressive taxes have several functions in an advanced society: they tend to even out good luck and hard luck, in that the economic agent with poor luck is taxed at a low rate, while the agent with rich luck is hit with a considerably higher rate. Again, the expenditures on education, through public support of higher education, are biased toward the natively smarter, or more favorably situated, in a society – a fact clearly enhancing their income relatively to that of the less favored. The progressive rate structure recoups some of this enhanced income for the community, that is, for the less favored. This is a bow in the direction of justice, but, to be sure, far from a precise evening up of benefits. As for the twinge of guilt felt by consumers over abandoning the old faithful high cost producer for the low cost operator who supplants him, in fact, while individuals are only seldom motivated to relieve the distress of the abandoned producer, the community, through civil society organizations and through public action, often is. The farm program, for example, re-training programs, and other measures are designed to repair harms suffered, or compensate the displaced and distressed. Again, these programs are at best a bow in the direction of justice, but not a precisely calibrated rendering of a thing due.

The anatomy of the question of reparation, or compensation for the incidence of loss and ill turns of events: at the root of these woes lies the obsolescence of skill – which is the ugly side of the benign phenomenon of technological change. Perhaps the only rule is that the persons in any occupation are on notice that their skills, whatever they may be, are at risk – they must be ready to rise, like phoenixes, in new skill incarnations, while the community must ease the way with funds and aid toward their regaining a respected and comfortable social niche,

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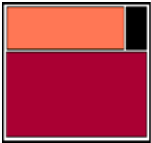
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