

2010 LATINO YOUTH FORUM **Students Speak Out**

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, nearly one in five students in U.S. public schools is Latino. Latinos accounted for 60% of the growth in enrollment between 1990 and 2006. By the year 2050, there will be more Latinos in public schools than non-Latino whites. Despite these statistics, Latinos have a high drop-out rate of nearly 50%. Many young Latinos complain they have no voice and that their concerns go unheard in the media.

To address this issue, LATINO Magazine presented its first annual Latino Youth Forum in partnership with AT&T and the Hispanic College Fund on December 9, 2010 in Washington, DC. This first-of-its-kind event brought together a select audience of influentials, opinion makers and community leaders for a Town Hall meeting at the Newseum moderated by Ray Suarez, host of HITN's Destination Casa Blanca. [See *A Mission to Educate*, p. 17] Panelists included John Bridgeland, Civic Enterprises; Carlos Santiago, Hispanic College Fund; Deborah Santiago, Excelencia in Education; Jose Rico, Dept. of Education; Irasema Salcido, Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools; and Lily Eskelsen, NEA.

These leaders heard directly from young Latinos, both present at the event and via the internet, The Latino Youth Forum was webcast live to a national audience, accessible via desktop computers at homes and in schools. Questions were taken from viewers across the country. Present at the Newseum and at AT&T headquarters in Dallas were high school students from the Hispanic Youth Institute and the Cesar Chavez Public Charter School (see right), who voiced their concerns for the present and hopes for the future. The webcast of the event is available at www.latinomagazine.com.



(l-r) Alfredo Estrada, Deborah Santiago, John Bridgeland, Carlos Santiago and Ray Suarez



(l-r) Irasema Salcido, Jose Rico, Lily Eskelsen and Ray Suarez



Participants included students from the Hispanic Youth Institute.



Norelie Garcia, AT&T, welcomed the audience at the Newseum.



On Friday, December 3, 2010, eleventh grade students from Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy in Washington D.C. discussed the nationwide problem of the increasing drop out rate with representatives from throughout the DC area, including the DC City Council, DC Public Schools, non-profit organizations, businesses, and local universities. The scholars used research and their own experiences to create solutions to resolve one of the many troubling issues in the District. The program was sponsored by America's Promise Alliance.

The persevering scholars worked diligently for several weeks to prepare their presentations. During the Summit, some of the students shared personal experiences, such as the negative neighborhood influences surrounding them and members of their families who had dropped out of school. One student shared a compelling story about the obstacles his family faced and neighborhood issues that motivate him to stay in school. They also used creative ways to explain why it is important to stay in school. Several students created motivation raps about staying in school and one group made a video that showed examples of good teachers that motivate them to stay in school.

The essential concept of the Drop Out Summit was to obtain ideas from motivated students to combat the drop out problem through research-based solutions. When discussing the Drop Out Summit, Labrina Long, a junior at Chavez stated "It turned out to be good because everyone...went for it when it was game time...it turned out great."

Tyra Little is a junior at Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy

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