

Nuestra Causa

Our Cause

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF OREGON'S IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

FALL 2011

Uniting Communities: Supporting ALL Latin@s

By: Aeryca Steinbauer

It's been a year since Causa launched our Uniting Communities initiative! In this newsletter we bring you an update on our work to integrate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality into the core work of Causa. While we have always worked as an ally with LGBT organizations, in this past year we included the struggle for LGBT equality as a core part of our organizational values.

Our understanding of and commitment to LGBT issues has grown in many ways.

We educated ourselves on the issues that LGBT Latin@s face, and forged relationships with LGBT Latin@ groups such as SOMOS, whose leaders helped organize our most recent Equality Assembly in Portland. Causa's own LGBT Latin@s group has expanded to meeting every Monday in Salem, currently the only group to organize LGBT Latin@s in the mid-valley.

We increased the broader Latin@ community's understanding of LGBT issues by bringing queer DREAM Activist Yahaira Carrillo to speak at Immigrant Action Day and including Causa's LGBT Latin@s group in the May Day program. We launched a new series of leadership classes and community Equality Assemblies that include LGBT issues. In partnership with Basic Rights Oregon, we launched a Spanish-language radio advertising campaign that addressed the importance of family acceptance and marriage equality.

Throughout this year we've been asked many times why we're doing this work. We work for LGBT equality because it's a part of our organizational values of dignity and respect for all. We work for LGBT equality so we can better serve all members of the Latin@ community, especially since LGBT Latin@s are disproportionately affected by issues such as immigration reform, driver's license access, and health equity.

Finally, we support LGBT equality because it is strategic. We simply can't move forward a pro-immigrant agenda in this political climate alone. We must build alliances around common values with many sectors, including the LGBT community. Alliance building already made us stronger in our ability to mobilize, raise funds, and develop leadership in our base. Alliance building will be crucial in achieving driver's license restoration, tuition equity, immigration reform, and justice for ALL Latin@ families, including LGBT families.

We were honored to accept a 2011 Equality Champion award at Basic Rights Oregon's annual dinner, and we recognize the many ways our alliance has made us stronger, from joint fundraising to strategizing on legislative and electoral campaigns to mobilizing our bases in support of each other's issues.

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Causa is Oregon's statewide, Latino immigrant rights organization. We work to defend and advance immigrant rights through coordination with local, state, and national coalitions and allies.

www.causaoregon.org

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A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak

**By: Francisco Lopez,
Executive Director**



One of my favorite verses from the Old Testament is from Chapter Three of the Book of Ecclesiastes: “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak”. I believe this is the time to sew and to speak. *Sewing* is like organizing that brings to life the stories of our Latino community which are like stitches in the garment of history in Oregon. These stories *speak* very loud about our kindness and humanity. I would like to share three great stories from our work among the Latino community in Oregon that show these values:

The first story is about a dinner gathering: There was a gathering at The Cascade Aids Project in Portland organized by SOMOS, an organization working to protect the civil and human rights of LGBT Latinos in Oregon. At this gathering of twenty Latinos on a Friday evening, we shared stories that reflected the importance of family, hope, justice and dignity and our goal to work towards the full integration of ALL Latinos in our community. Barbara Ghio, Causa board member and immigration attorney, did a presentation about knowing your rights and the importance of participating in civic engagement activities in Oregon. SOMOS and Causa understand that the cause of fairness and equality is one common struggle, and that by working together we can achieve our respective goals more quickly.

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Participants of Portland Leadership Class

The second story is about an award: On September 3rd Causa received a very important award for all the advocacy work that we do in Oregon. The award was not from the governor, not from a social service institution, not from a religious institution, not from a university and not from the private sector. We received an award from the Latino Club at the Oregon State Penitentiary! Out of the 3,000 inmates at the Penitentiary, 350 are Latinos. In front of the Latino inmates and their families a plaque was presented to Causa for the work we do in the community. I will remember this award for the rest of my life. Appreciation for Causa’s work comes from places of pain and hope in Oregon.

The third story is about a donation: We recently received a donation from Clean It Up Mark Corporation. Mark and his Latino crew started in 1990 to scrap out construction sites. He started with an old pickup and a 7-yard trailer. His company has grown to a fleet of 8 trucks and numerous employees. They now clean construction sites in Portland, Salem, Albany and Eugene. The workers of Clean It Up Mark Co. have pledged to donate a share of the money that they make from the metal scraps that they collect.

Of course it takes money to do Causa’s work. Our resources are well spent in service of engaging in a grassroots dialogue on issues of affordable housing, education, immigration reform, safety, health equity, and jobs and the economy that will benefit 450,000 Latinos in Oregon. I invite you to follow the example of the Clean It Up Mark Corporation workers and make a monthly contribution to continue our leadership development classes, voter registration, education, and grassroots mobilization.



Portland Equality Assembly Attendees

To recognize Causa’s year of working for LGBT equality more intentionally and publicly, we are throwing a Coming Out Party! Join us on December 8th to celebrate and support this work. Causa’s Coming Out Party will take place from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Slate (2001 NW 19th Ave #104 Portland, OR). Learn more about the event and purchase tickets for \$15 online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/201409, or contact Christian at christian@causaoregon.org or (503) 737-7014.

Voter Registration Experiment: Building Power for Change

by Ranfis Villatoro

It was a clear-skied, 90-degree day in Cornelius. My partner and I approached the front steps of a brown ranch-style house with sweat dripping onto our clipboards. We were there to register new voters.

We introduced ourselves and were quickly welcomed with ice-cold glasses of jamaica (hibiscus water). Fully refreshed, we began to address Causa's legislative agenda of the past 6 months—tuition equity and restoration of driver's licenses for the undocumented community. What unraveled before us in this home was no different from the previous or the next: the initial joy of hearing the good news that something was being done, the prodding questions that inquired, "Do you think we can achieve it?" or "How did my legislator vote?" and the expressed pessimism with the political process that nears total disengagement.

As we walked away from this household, we had in hand a new registered voter and new Causa volunteer. Why did they register to vote when the current political climate and unkept promises give them reason to disengage? Simple: family, dignity, justice, hope and the acknowledgement that change will have to come through their engagement in politics.

This past summer, Causa partnered with the Oregon Bus Project's Politicorps program to register voters in key legislative areas with emerging Latino communities: Cornelius, Gresham, Woodburn, and West Salem. We knocked on 4,000+ doors, talked to over 800 individuals, recruited 344 new volunteers, and registered 80 new voters. The summer was filled with successes and lessons learned that Causa will use to build a much larger voter registration initiative with a goal to register 3,000 new voters by the end of summer 2012. The mathematical equation before us is simple: building votes builds power, and what builds power builds momentum for change. This is where you fit into the equation; we need your help to build the votes, to build the power, to construct change. Can we do it? For our families, for dignity, for justice, for hope?

For volunteer opportunities to engage in Causa's Voter Registration Project contact Ranfis Villatoro at 971-242-9964 or ranfis@causaoregon.org.

Funding Change: One Person at a Time

by Luis Guerra

Causa's many programs, events and activities are made possible by people like you. The support that we receive from individuals who volunteer, participate, and donate is essential to the effectiveness of our organizing work. As Francisco Lopez, Causa's Executive Director, likes to say, "we need organized people but with that we need organized money". This statement exemplifies the importance of a movement with sustainable sources of funding. Currently most of Causa's income comes from private foundations. We are working to change that by building our base of donors, one person at a time.

A tool that has allowed us to develop relationships with new supporters is house parties. This year, we have held three house parties that have showcased Causa's work to our community and have also served as very successful fundraisers. We could not have done this without the help of our hosts and co-hosts: Andrea and Ramiro Flores, Paul Krissel, Carol Papinchak, Cathy Howell, Heather Conroy, Carla and Lee Moyer, Barbara Ghio, Angelica Vega, Danny Santos, and Brena Lopez.

Individual donations keep our work moving forward. A recurring monthly donation is the most important way that an individual can support our efforts and promote the sustainability of our work. We appreciate all of our donors that range from people who give \$5 a month to people who give a one time \$200 donation.

If you are interested in hosting a house party of your own or becoming a Causa donor, contact Luis Guerra at 503 999-5940 or luis@causaoregon.org. You can also donate online at www.causaoregon.org or by sending a check made out to Causa Oregon at 700 Marion St. Salem, OR 97301. Your donations are tax-deductible.

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Upcoming Events:

Causa's Coming Out Party: December 8th, 2011 6:00-8:00 pm at the Slate (2001 NW 19th Ave #104 Portland, OR). Learn more about the event and purchase tickets for \$15 online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/201409, or contact Christian at christian@causaoregon.org or (503) 737-7014.

Immigrant Action Day: January 21st, 2012, contact Lorena Manzo for more information at lorena@causaoregon.org or (503) 984-4823.

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