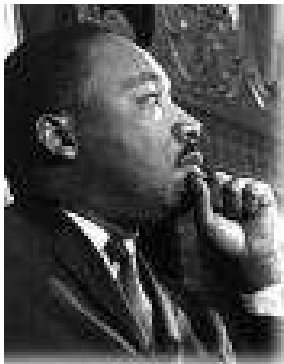




Dorothy Day



Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Cesar Chavez



Saul Alinsky

The Social Justice Saturday School

2011

Austin, Texas

Sponsored by:

Austin Voices for Education and Youth

**The Mexican American Center for
Community and Economic Development**

**The Center for Mexican American Studies at
The University of Texas at Austin**

**Austin Community College's
Center for Public Policy and Political Studies**



Students at the 2006 Social Justice Summer School think about a point a guest speaker has just made. From left to right: Eduardo Sifuentes, Brittany Lovato, Luis Orozco, German Sifuentes, Dadrian Gage, C.J. Lovato and Julian Padilla.

2011 Social Justice Saturday School

Austin Voices for Education and Youth
5604 Manor Road
Austin, Texas 78723
(512) 450-1880

Introduction

Before Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in December of 1955, she spent time at the Highlander Folk School in Mount Eagle, Tennessee learning about the history of social protest. Before Cesar Chavez began organizing farm workers in California and undertaking the table grape boycott in the 1960s, he spent time at Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation in Chicago learning how poor people can build power in their communities. Even Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, went back to "school" to learn about the gospel of social change. Over the last 100 years those who have been engaged in social change understand the importance of passing down the knowledge and insight of what has been learned in the battles for social justice and equality.

Program

This spring, Austin Voices for Education and Youth, The Center for Mexican American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin and several community based organizations, are once again hosting the Social Justice Saturday School. This seven week program will begin on January 22, 2011 and run through March 5, 2011. Classes will be held in the Texas Union on the UT campus from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The purpose of the project is to identify and produce a group of community activists who are not afraid to stand up and practice the art of creative civic engagement in their schools and neighborhoods. A total of 30 students are expected to participate.

Instruction will include, guest speakers, short films, discussion groups, power point presentations and field trips. Instructors for the school will be community activists in the Austin area, staff members of Austin Voices and students from the local universities. Parents of students in this program are welcomed to attend classes at any time as are other members of the community. For those who complete the program, there will be certificates of completion awarded.

For those who wish to remain on campus, students are invited to the UT Underground where bowling and billiards is available to everyone at no cost.

Section Two

Curriculum for Social Justice Saturday School

The idea of what to teach at a Social Justice Saturday School is modeled in part from what is taught at the Highlander Folk School in Mount Eagle, Tennessee, The Social Justice Education Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, union organizing classes from the United Farm Workers of America in Keene, California, and a course titled Organizing: People Power and Change from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, which is taught by Dr. Marshall Ganz

Among the topics that will be entertained during the Social Justice Saturday School are:

1. Economics and the Origins of Poverty
2. Social Movements in History
3. *Buscando la Vida* - The Search for Identity in America
4. Superman was an Illegal Alien - Immigration Issues and the Current Debate
5. The Social Construction of Community
6. Education vs. Schooling and what Mark Twain had to say about this
7. Understanding Public Narratives: The Story of You, Us and Now
8. The "Ins and Outs" of the Texas Criminal Justice system
9. Current and Upcoming Issues

**Enrollment Application for
*Social Justice Saturday School***

NAME: _____ **AGE:** _____

Last

First

ADDRESS:

Street

City

State

Zip Code

TELEPHONE: _____ **ALTERNATE PHONE:** _____

LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED: _____ **GRADE:** _____

HOW WILL YOU GET TO THE SATURDAY SCHOOL? _____

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS SATURDAY SCHOOL? _____

PARENT OR GUARDIAN: _____

PARENT PHONE NUMBER: _____

ANSWER ONE OF THE TWO QUESTIONS BELOW (On a seperate shee of paper)

1. Please describe why you would like to participate in the Social Justice Saturday School.

2. Describe someone you know or have read about who has worked to change things in America.

Permission to participate in this Saturday school for _____ Student's name _____

is hereby granted by _____ **DATE:** _____

Please submit this completed application to Alfredo R. Santos c/s at P.O. Box 19457 Austin, Texas 78760 or you can scan and email it to d.santos@sbcglobal.net

Studying for Justice

Austin students get a summer immersion in activist history

BY MICHAEL MAY

JULY 14, 2006:

Eduardo Sifuentes, Luis Miguel Orozco, and German Sifuentes discuss politics with Alfredo Santos. Tim Eubanks of Austin Voices for Education and Youth stands in the background.
photo by Michael May



Down a silent and dusty hallway on the second floor of Lanier High School, a group of students are spending their summer learning how to build a social movement. These aren't button-wearing, slogan-chanting activists poring over *The Anarchist Cookbook*. Most of the dozen or so here are ordinary immigrant students who protested for the first time this spring, after the U.S. Congress proposed an immigration bill that would have criminalized members of their families. Now they're taking part in the Social Justice Summer School – sacrificing their sunny afternoons to sit under fluorescent lights and figure out how they can distill that flash of youthful energy and emotion into something that lasts.

Alfredo Santos, 54, is their professor of protest. As a young man in the Seventies, Santos organized in California,

alongside César Chávez and the United Farm Workers, and he clearly identifies with his students' budding political awareness. "I never thought I'd see walkouts like that again in my lifetime," says Santos. "It's like us back then. They're not afraid."

Santos is an organizer with Austin Voices for Education and Youth, the main sponsor of the summer school. The group aims to get students involved in their education, and last year it arranged several community wide meetings to discuss AISD's effort to redesign its high schools. After the student protests this spring, the organization saw an opportunity. The students involved were clearly passionate, but the effort lacked organization and a well-defined message. Santos suggested creating a summer program similar to the Highlander Folk School, which trained Rosa Parks in the Fif

ties. The principal at Lanier offered them space to hold the five-week Social Justice Summer School, and they recruited students who had participated in the marches at Lanier, Johnston, and Akins high schools. The hope is that these students will evolve into leaders who can help improve their schools and communities.

One day last week, Santos led the group of high school and college students through a discussion of culture and identity.

One day last week, Santos led the group of high school and college students through a discussion of culture and identity. "Identity is something fluid that can change in different situations," he said. "For instance, when I was growing up in the 1960s in a small town, I felt ashamed of my dark skin. I never danced salsa or anything

like that. But after I got to college and was exposed to the Chicano movement, I really reinvented myself. I was all over the dance floor.” For emphasis, he snapped his fingers and shook his belly with a grin.

The soul-searching conversation that followed vividly illustrated just how hard it might be to organize Texas Hispanics around a common cause. There’s Luis Miguel Orozco, who came from Mexico five years ago and felt very alienated from many Mexican-Americans at his middle school, most of whom, he says, dropped out before high school. “It seemed like they didn’t know where they were from, Mexico or America,” he said. “And so they had no respect for anything. It made me ashamed, and I wanted to be different.”

There’s Julian Padilla, who identifies most strongly as an intellectual and a gay man. “I went to school at McCallum High,” he said. “So most of my friends were white, and I didn’t really act that different than them. Still, the world sees me as a Latino.”

“I don’t consider myself American,” she says. “What’s the point? Americans just see me as a Mexican, and I’m proud to be Mexican! But, at the same time, I feel excluded from the foreign-born students. We need a new Chicano movement, but it’s hard when there are those divisions.”

And there’s Yvette Garza, who grew up in a small town on the border. “I don’t consider myself American,” she says. “What’s the point? Americans just see me as a Mexican, and I’m proud to be Mexican! But, at the same time, I feel excluded from the foreign-born students. We need a new Chicano movement, but it’s hard when there are those divisions.”

The students crowded around a laptop to watch part of the documentary film *The Times of Harvey Milk*, about the ground breaking gay San Francisco city board member assassinated in 1978. They watched the final scene of the film, when thousands of people holding candles turn the San Francisco streets into a constellation of grief. For several students, it was their first exposure to the gay rights movement. Santos believes it’s important to teach them the history of social movements, from Gandhi to the Zapatistas. “These are important lessons they don’t get in school,” he said. “You see how other movements succeeded and failed. You understand that it sometimes takes decades to win a battle, and it takes perseverance and tenacity.”

Creating Leaders

The Santos method seems to be working. The students are beginning to realize that they are living through one of those historical moments when it pays to fight back. Hispanics may be divided along cultural and political lines, but most have friends or relatives who are undocumented immigrants. Lanier junior Orozco, for example, fled his abusive father in Mexico to join his mother’s family here in Austin. He and his mother are here legally, but his aunts, uncles, and grandparents are undocumented. “Any laws that affect undocumented immigrants are going to affect me and my family,” he says. “Americans need to understand that people come here out of necessity. They are fleeing desperate conditions in Mexico. I understand that because that’s what my mother and I did.”

If the Social Justice Summer School is going to produce a teenage, Hispanic Rosa Parks, Orozco’s a likely candidate. When he heard last spring that the U.S. Congress was considering anti-immigrant laws, he knew he

had to do something. Some other students were talking about the national protest planned for March 30, but no one was organizing the effort. Orozco naturally took charge. He arranged a meeting place and led hundreds of students on the eight-mile walk to the Capitol. Along the way, he kept the march peaceful and on track. “I felt very proud,” he says. “It really proved what we can do if we raise our voices together. And we got some good things out of it. The school created a program after the walkout where students discussed immigration issues. It made more people aware of what’s going on.”

He feels a sense of responsibility to maintain momentum, and students check in with him to get the latest on the immigration debate, as if he were a one-man CNN.

The experience profoundly changed Orozco. He feels a sense of responsibility to maintain momentum, and students check in with him to get the latest on the immigration debate, as if he were a one-man CNN. And on the last day of class this year, he helped stop a potential race riot. A group of Hispanic students were plotting to fight as many African-American students as they could find because one black student had stomped on a Mexican flag in September. “This happened like eight months earlier,” he says, “and now some guys decided they were going to take revenge on every African-American. It was crazy. So a few of us sat down with these guys and told them that there really wasn’t a problem, and, if there was, they certainly weren’t going to solve anything by beating up random people. Thankfully, they calmed down.”

Living the History

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Living the History

Orozco says he knew very little about other social-justice movements until this summer. The story of Mahatma Gandhi has particularly impressed him. “He shows what you can do by fighting and not fighting at the same time. He defeated the great British Empire, but he did it peacefully.” Orozco can relate because he finds it a struggle to convince his fellow students that violence is not the answer. “It’s hard to work with teenagers,” he says, laughing. “I mean, I’m a teenager myself, but sometimes I feel like I’m not. They’re very hyper and passionate. During the march, some started shouting at me, ‘Why should we listen to you?’ Eventually they realized we were all fighting for the same thing.”

Several other Lanier students are also taking part in the Social Justice Summer School, and they all say they’ll march again, and this time they’ll be better prepared.

Several other Lanier students are also taking part in the Social Justice Summer School, and they all say they’ll march again, and this time they’ll be better prepared. “If a reporter asked me why I was angry before,” says German Sifuentes, a recent immigrant, “I didn’t know how to answer. But now I know about the economics of immigration. If people accuse us of stealing from the U.S., I can talk about the taxes we pay and the other ways we contribute to the economy. I can now truly represent my people.”

Santos plans to continue guiding these young activists throughout the next school year. He and the other leaders at Austin Voices for Education and Youth plan to start “Stand Up” clubs in the high schools, providing students with a specific time and place to or

ganize. He hopes to encourage a student movement that’s more proactive, one that will take aim at injustices happening right at school, like the large number of Hispanic dropouts. “It’s not enough to feel that there’s an injustice,” he says. “You have to show your face to make a difference. The students who participated in the walkouts have taken a public position and are changed from within. And you’re going to see millions more following in their footsteps.”

School teaches social justice

Six-week course covers topics from history to political organizing

Dennis Killian

Posted: 7/12/06

Students who participated in the Social Justice Summer School at Lanier High School got a glimpse of UT Tuesday, while taking a field trip to campus.

The School of Social Work and Austin Voices for Education and Youth organized the trip. Students took a tour of the campus, including the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, where they saw paintings depicting social and political injustices. Afterward they toured the Tower and the Martin Luther King Jr. statue. Barbara White, dean of the School of Social Work, welcomed the students to UT and said it was encouraging to have young people recognize the importance of social justice.

After participating in the pro-immigrant rights school walkouts in March and April, some area high school and middle school students expressed an interest in learning more about social justice, said Alfredo Santos, a community organizer for Austin Voices. The six-week course, which ends Thursday, covered a variety of issues ranging from history of social injustice to agenda-setting in the Latino community, he said.

Santos said community activists and members of Austin Voices taught classes, which usually attracted from 10 to 20 students. The classes were designed to provide a context for social justice and generate a discussion about how students can organize for change within their school and community, he said.

Luis Orozco, a junior at Lanier High School, said he was grateful for the opportunity to take these classes.

"I learned many things about how to get people united and organized behind a social issue," Orozco said. "We are trying to organize a group at Lanier right now to address some of the racial conflicts that have taken place between some Hispanic and African American students there."

One instructor, Federico Subervi, a professor of journalism and mass communication at Texas State University, lectured the students about the representation of Latinos in the news and entertainment media. Subervi said he was happy with the students' interaction and enthusiasm.

"A small classroom setting, no grading or no sanctioning on what they had to learn to pass lets the students freely share their experiences and absorb what others were saying," Subervi said. "I was able to analyze their experiences with the media and then make connections to concepts."

Ramon Gomez, director of community affairs at The School of Social Work, gave a lecture to the class about overcoming the barriers of racial differences and finding common ground with other minority groups. Gomez said the students he taught weren't just Mexican immigrants, but included blacks and U.S. natives.

"If you're going to stand up for social justice, you have to fight oppression for all groups," Gomez said. "Today the hot topic is immigration, but it may be something else in the future." The Social Justice Summer School project plans to continue in the fall and spread to several high schools in Austin and the surrounding community, Santos said.



C.J. Lovato, age 9, views a photo screenprint, "Sin Rastros," "Without a trace," on display at The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art during his tour of the UT campus as a part of the Social Justice Summer School class. Eugenio Dittborn, created the series of "airmail paintings" as an expression of political protest to violence, censorship and injustice.