

Parents in Action formed to solve racial tensions at 9th Grade Center

By Fernando Rosendo Ramirez

"Parents in Action" is the new Hispanic organization that was formed because of the racial tension on the Memorial High School 9th Grade Campus last May.

After meeting several times with school administration officials to discuss the investigation of the fight between Hispanic American students and African American students at the campus, the parents formed "Padres en Accion" (Parents in Action).

They were assisted by the Catholic Church's Director of Hispanic Affairs, Jesus Abrego, members of the Southeast Texas Hispanic Education and Cultural Center Inc. (HCEC), and Father Blanco, the Priest of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. While they work to become a non-profit organization, the Board and membership of HCEC voted to make them an Ad-Hoc committee working on parent and student issues.

They went from an angry, unorganized mob demanding justice from the Port Arthur Independent School District to a structured and focused parent group working hand in hand with the PAISD administrators to resolve any problems that would hamper the learning of students.

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caused by five years of unresolved issues at the 9th grade campus and other campuses in PAISD. Conditions at the school were inherited by the new Superintendent and his staff due to the inconsistent administration structure after consolidation.

"Padres en Accion" recently had a gang awareness seminar at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church to inform parents and students that the PAPD Gang Unit has identified several gangs in Port Arthur. The most visible of which are the rival Hispanic gangs "Sur 13" (South 13) and Norte 14 (North 14). They invited Port Arthur Police Chief Mark Blanton and the members of the Gang Task Force to the meeting because the root problem of the fight last May was gang related. The fights were said not to be racially motivated but of rival gangs that were Hispanic and Black.

Unlike the past administrations, PAISD and PAPD did not sweep the gang problems under the rug. They publicly admitted there was a

gang problem and quickly took steps to identify and remove the gang element from the streets and schools. One of the biggest obstacles facing the PAISD and PAPD task force is parental denial. As Chief Blanton says, "If he/she looks like a gang member, acts like a gang member, and hangs with gang members, he/she is a gang member. There is no such thing as "want to be" gang members. For this reason they spoke to a group of 100 or more Hispanic parents at the parish hall. They spoke in Spanish or were translated so everyone could understand what was being said.

I want to commend this group of parents for their efforts to work together in solving the biggest problem facing our community — and that is gangs. This is just the first step. Next comes the baggy clothes, but that's another story.

By working together and using the core beliefs of God, Country and Family we will have a better community.

IS AMERICA READY?



Jimmy Smits leads the cast of Cane.

CBS series Cane brings Hispanic culture into millions of homes

A lot of eyes are waiting to see how the new CBS series Cane fares.

If the show is a hit, it will be the first successful hour long drama focusing almost entirely on Hispanic characters on an English-language broadcast network.

"It calls a lot of attention to itself," series creator Cynthia Cidre told the Arizona Republic. "This is an all-Hispanic, all-Spanish-speaking cast in a big show. It's not a small show."

She's not boasting. Cane is a sprawling drama focusing on the Duque family, a Cuban-American clan that runs a successful rum and sugar business in Florida. The show features bursts of salsa music, bits of Spanish dialogue and a plot that is heavy on the Dallas suds and light on the telenovela melo-

dramatics.

The series isn't just large in scope. The cast is big, with 11 regularly featured characters. A trio of heavyweights headline the show: Emmy-winners Jimmy Smits and Hector Elizondo, plus Rita Moreno, an Oscar winner for West Side Story.

Certainly the show has the potential to be a hit, regardless of the ethnicity of the cast members.

But why has it taken so long to see such a program? It's not as if the numbers aren't there.

Census figures last year put the number of Hispanics in the United States at 44.3 million, making them the nation's largest minority and 15 percent of the U.S. population. A show like Cane seems long overdue.

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